

THE BEST OF MINIMAL PIANO MUSIC

Jeroen van Veen *piano*



Best of Minimal Piano Music

Philip Glass b.1937

1. Opening from Glassworks	8'54
2. Metamorphosis I	7'00
3. Metamorphosis II	6'55
4. Metamorphosis III	4'22
5. Metamorphosis IV	5'52
6. Metamorphosis V	6'06
7. Mad Rush	15'12
8. The Hours	7'13
9. Modern Love Waltz	4'57
10. Truman Show	2'10
11. Etude XI in C minor	8'29

John Adams b.1947

12. China Gates	5'54
13. Phrygian Gates	28'14

Simeon ten Holt 1923-2012

14. Aforisme II	4'19
15. Canto Ostinato, 1st Edition	25'38

Jacob ter Veldhuis b.1951

16. The Body of Your Dreams	8'40
17. On & Off Situation Blues	1'53
18. Sound	1'06

Yann Tiersen b.1970

19. Comptine d'un autre été, l'après-midi	2'30
20. Le Moulin	3'34
21. La Dispute	2'13
22. Sur le Fil	5'09
23. La valse d'Amelie	2'35

Michael Nyman b.1944

24. Big my Secret	3'57
25. Lost and Found	3'12
26. The heart asks pleasure first	4'18

Arvo Pärt b.1935

27. Für Alina	18'44
28. Variationen zur Gesundung von Arinuschka	5'56
29. Fratres*	11'44
30. Spiegel im Spiegel*	9'10

Ryuichi Sakamoto b.1952

31. Biba no Aozora**	6'36
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Erik Satie 1866-1925

32. Gymnopédie I	4'46
33. Gnossiennes I	5'27
34. Gnossiennes II	2'46
35. Gnossiennes III	4'05
36. Gnossiennes IV	4'03

Jeroen van Veen b.1969

37. Minimal Prelude 32	7'40
38. Minimal Prelude 18, Lego	9'33
39. Minimal Prelude 15	2'42
40. Minimal Prelude 23	7'02
41. Minimal Prelude 48	8'55
42. Minimal Prelude 50	6'26
43. Minimal Prelude 61	6'39
44. Piano concerto, II Movement	8'46

Yiruma b.1978

45. River Flows in You	3'30
46. May Be	3'53
47. Kiss the Rain	3'52
48. Yellow Room	3'49
49. Destiny of Love	3'56

Zbigniew Preisner b.1955

50. To See More	4'34
51. The Art of Flying	4'18
52. A Good Morning Melody	5'19
53. A Tune a Day	4'56

Ryuichi Sakamoto b.1952

54. Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence	4'31
55. The Sheltering Sky	5'12
56. Seven Samurai - Ending Theme	5'40
57. The Last Emperor II	5'44
58. Thousand Knives	5'56

Max Richter b.1966

59. Andras	4'30
60. H for New England	1'56
61. The Family	2'41
62. Written On The Sky II	5'18

Ludovico Einaudi b.1955

63. Una Mattina, long version	9'05
64. Le Onde	4'47
65. I Giorni	6'52
66. Primavera	7'36
67. Nuvuole Bianche	6'33
68. Passaggio	6'23

Seven Days Walking

69. Gravity	6'37
70. A Sense of Symmetry	2'31
71. Cold Wind	8'43
72. Low Mist	6'35
73. The Path of the Fossils	10'05

74. The Tower

3'48

Jeroen van Veen *piano*

with * Douw Fonda *cello* · ** Carel Kraayenhof *bandoneon*

Recordings:

tracks 1-10 - 23-28 October 2006, Barbara Church, Culemborg, The Netherlands;
 track 11 - 27 & 28 February 2017, Studio II, Pernissimo, Pernis, The Netherlands
 tracks 12-13 - December 2016, Studio II, Pernissimo, Pernis, the Netherlands;
 tracks 14-15 - 22-23 April 2020, Studio IV, Steffeln, Germany;
 tracks 16-18 - 2012 & 2013, Studio I, Culemborg, The Netherlands
 tracks 19-28 - 22-23 April 2020, Studio IV, Steffeln, Germany;
 tracks 29-30 - March 2014, Zeeuwse Concertzaal, Middelburg, The Netherlands;
 track 31 - April 2020, April 2020, Studio Kraayenhof & Studio IV Steffeln, by Rimmert van Lummel
 tracks 32-43 - 22-23 April 2020, Studio IV, Steffeln, Germany;
 track 44 - June 2015, Beauforthuis, Austerlitz, the Netherlands
 tracks 45-49 - 24 & 26 June 2014, Studio I, Culemborg, The Netherlands;
 tracks 50-53 - November 2017, Studio II, Pernissimo, Pernis, The Netherlands;
 tracks 54-58 - 12-26 May 2019, Studio IV, Steffeln, Germany;
 tracks 59-62 - July 2016, Studio II, Pernissimo, Pernis, the Netherlands
 tracks 63-74 - 22-23 April 2020, Studio IV, Steffeln, Germany

Best of Minimal Piano Music

From the American underground culture of the late 1950s to blockbuster movies of the twenty-first century: minimal music has made a spectacular journey. This collection of cd's explores minimalism at its most melodious and varied.

The music style we now call minimal arose around 1960 in New York and was part of a much broader artistic flow, in which artists were looking for a pure, direct form of creation. In their paintings, poems and music they did not describe, imitate or comment on the real world. On the contrary: their art had a reality of its own. For music, this meant a focus on sound itself, not on a narrative or on fixed musical codes of conduct.

With pieces by Satie, Glass, Richter, Yiruma and many others, this collection offers music from inspirators to minimalism, as well as standard-bearers of the genre, but also from those inspired by it. Together, these composers show the enormous bandwidth one can achieve while concentrating on a small detail. As pianist Jeroen van Veen says: 'I enjoy finding silence in music. Composers like Arvo Pärt and Erik Satie explore infinity and emptiness. But the counterpart, for instance the "fuller", more complex music by John Adams and Jacob ter Veldhuis, is just as important.'

One of the key pieces for Van Veen, one he performed on almost all continents, is Simeon Ten Holts *Canto Ostinato*. For this collection, he recorded a version not often heard: the primal composition, the way Ten Holt played it himself on just one piano, instead of the more usual four instruments. 'It is a very malleable piece. By continuously applying small new nuances in the repetitions you never play the same thing again. That principle I administer in a lot of minimal music. In the course of the years I arrive at a kind of "best functioning" form, but flexibility remains determinative. A composition never turns out the same way it did earlier. In that way, a cd recording is just a temporary structure.' Van Veen plays with this idea in his *Minimal prelude 18: Lego*. 'It is compiled from small fragments, bricks one can click together at one's own discretion. My recording is just one of many possible buildings.'

Not by coincidence, this cd-box contains a range of pieces that are also bestsellers in the form of sheet music. Zbigniew Preisner, Yiruma and Yann Tiersen created melodies people play at home, in school or even train stations all over the world.

On *The best of minimal piano music* you will find a lot of pieces used in, or written especially for cinema. Composers like Michael Nyman, Ryuichi Sakamoto and Yann Tiersen reached millions of listeners with their music for movies like *The piano*, *The sheltering sky* and *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain*. Jeroen van Veen: 'All these soundtracks gratefully use the principle of repetition, helping the brain to create images more easily. This music literally gives room.'

Room one can use in many ways. Philip Glass for instance intended his *Glassworks* especially as a 'walkman-suitable work', to be listened to during a bus ride or a workout. The workout itself is subject of Jacob ter Veldhuis' *Body of your dreams*, which, by the way, lends itself perfectly for getting in shape. 'Three thousand muscle contractions!' in just eight minutes. Yiruma's *River flows in you* became a wedding evergreen. People use Ludovico Einaudi's *Seven days walking* to create their own (mental as well as physical) itinerary. Van Veen: 'People use my online streams as a background for working or studying.' Or relaxing, of course, as many listeners find ultimate peace surrendering to their favourite minimal music.

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From the artist

Dear listener, you are holding an incredible collection of music from my recorded repertoire of the last 25 years. Allow me to tell you how it came together and what you can expect.

Early March 2020 *Corona* virus triggered a lockdown in the Netherlands. Suddenly, my entire concert schedule got cancelled. As a performing artist, I took the opportunity to practice, read, relax and record. Then mid-March I got a call from Brilliant Classics, asking if I would like to make a new album; a collection containing the best of minimal piano music. With my empty schedule ahead, I asked if I could take the time to re-record a few pieces. In the end, new recordings take up almost half the album.

Initially I was asked to create five albums. I ended up with six :) The extra album is one that I had in mind already: Ludovico Einaudi. Since my recording of *Waves* (7-cd set) in 2007, I have been playing his music frequently and I have always been first to buy new scores when they become available. Early 2019 they released his *Seven Days Walking*; almost 100 pieces for piano. Surprisingly, some of these end in *fortissimo*, a new element for Einaudi; his music normally fades into silence. I took my iPad with all the scores and made a pleasing variation of moods and keys. The opening of this last album had to be his *Una Mattina* (the long version, which I had never recorded before). It then continues with *Le Onde*, *I Giorni*, *Primavera*, *Nuvuole Bianche* and finally *Passaggio*: a nice sequence that I use a lot in my concerts.

Most of the collecting and recording took place in my home in Germany, in Steffeln. This area is called the Vulkan Eifel; my house is literally sitting in the rocks from the last volcanic eruption 10.000 years ago. It's a beautiful area, so every morning I start the day with a walk. One day as I got back, I decided to start this set of albums with music by Philip Glass. After all, he was the pioneer of minimalism. His Opening (from *Glassworks*) is always good to get into the mood: a basic triad

repetition with three notes in the right hand and two in the left. It continues with his *Metamorphosis I-V* (inspired by the book by Franz Kafka from 1915). His *Mad Rush* is also included; originally written for organ for the entrance of the Dalai Lama in New York in 1979, today it is mostly played on the piano. Via *The Hours*, *Modern Love Waltz* and the *Truman Show* I'm closing this first Album with his *Etude No.11 in C Minor*. Interesting to note how different this music is from his first scores.

While Philip Glass was based in the east coast; John Adams was active in the west (L.A.). During my study at the Utrecht Conservatory I was asked to play Adams' *Grand Pianola Music* in 1990. It was love at first 'hearing': the change of patterns and his use of the piano and instrumentation is outstanding. I consider the music of Adams to be more like the romantic version of minimalism. In a way, it is almost *maximalistic*, with enormous climaxes like in a Rachmaninoff Symphony. In 1997 I premiered his *Hallelujah Junction* for two pianos in The Amsterdam Concertgebouw with my brother Maarten. His Solo pieces *China Gates* and *Phrygian Gates* have been on my repertoire for a long time.

When Simeon ten Holt attended a concert by Philip Glass and his ensemble in the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, he got so inspired by the music that he started working on a composition for multiple pianos. *Perpetuum* was the name of his new composition. It was tonal and repetitive, in stark contrast to his earlier works. A slightly modified version would later come to be known as *Canto Ostinato*. However, between 1973 and 1976 he recorded a short version with quite a classical ending. This version was published last year, so it made sense to me to include it in this box.

On one of my frequent visits with Ten Holt I played his sketches for him; *Aforisme II*. He liked it so much that he asked me to write it down, which I was glad to do. If you listen to the *Chopin Berceuse opus 57*, then listen to *Aforisme II* and finish with *Canto Ostinato*, you can clearly hear the classical roots.

Another Dutch composer (who became a friend) is Jacob ter Veldhuis. Although his *Winterscenario* is a highly minimalistic piece; the three works I chose to record have

a really interesting background. For example, in *Body of Your Dreams* Ter Veldhuis uses a commercial of a workout machine. He cuts the audio apart and used the pitch and rhythmical structure for his new composition.

During the *Corona* lockdown I spoke with bandoneon player Carel Kraayenhof, with whom I work frequently. We talked about the possibility to do a *Corona*-proof recording. His sound engineer Rimmert van Lummel installed software on Carel's computer allowing him to record Carel from home without being physically present at the recording sessions. He took an existing recording of mine of "*Bibo No Aozora*" (by Sakamoto) and recorded over it. The result was so overwhelming (one track without editing) that I decided to include this into the box. I hope we can record another album in the future!

From Sakamoto in Japan to Erik Satie in France. Erik Satie was the first composer to write music without bar lines. His first *Gnossienne* can go on forever. Or take *Vexations*, which is (almost comically) limited to 854 repeats! His use of slow tempi, repeats and clear textures were a revolution in his time. He lived during the industrial revolution, yet his pieces sound remarkably refreshing even today.

Last but not least, music written by me is being played and used a lot. But money was never the driving factor behind this. I started composing simply because of a need to write down music, especially minimalist music. My compositions are like bricks of LEGO; they fit together in many ways. This gives the performer maximum freedom. In 2014 I was asked to play in a special concert for an Oil Sheik in Amsterdam. He asked me to play some of my own *Minimal Preludes* and Yiruma. Yiruma was a new composer to me. I discovered that he had written many pieces and I asked permission to record it for Brilliant Classics. I had never even dreamt about a million streams on Spotify for an album; but this album broke all personal records; in 2019 the album was played over 34 million times!

Minimalist music is perhaps more popular than you might think. The repetitive modules are used everywhere. For instance, minimal-based music from Yann Tiersen,

Michael Nyman, Pärt, Yiruma, Preisner, Sakamoto, Richter and Van Veen have all been used in movies. In fact, most composers on this box wrote for movies. *The Piano* for Nyman (and another 118 credits on iMDB), *Amélie* for Tiersen (and 30 other credits) are just two examples. Arvo Pärt's music is used in 131 movies! His *Spiegel im Spiegel* is a real bestseller; and the recording on this box is made with Douw Founda on cello. Also his *Fratres* for cello and piano is included. Both works are introduced by *Für Alina* and *Variationen zur Gesundung von Arinuschka*. Both pieces for piano solo use a lot of space between the notes; a simple structure and limited notes. Less is more!

© Jeroen van Veen

Corrections: Joeri van Veen

Jeroen Van Veen (1969) started playing the piano at the age of 7. He studied at the Utrecht Conservatory with Alwin Bär and Håkon Austbø. In 1993 he passed the Performing Artists' Exam. Van Veen has played with orchestras conducted by Howard Williams (Adams), Peter Eötvös (Zimmermann), Neal Stulberg (Mozart & Bartok) and Robert Craft (Stravinsky). He has played recitals in Europe, Russia, Canada & the USA. Van Veen attended master classes with Claude Helffer, Roberto Szidon, Ivan Klánsky and Leonid Hambro. He was invited to several festivals; Reder Piano Festival (1988), Festival der Kunsten in Bad Gleichenberg (1992), Wien Modern (1993), Holland Dance Festival (1998, 2010) Lek Art Festival (1996-2007). Van Veen recorded for major Radio- and Television companies. In 1992, Van Veen recorded his first album as Piano duo Van Veen. In 1995 Piano duo Van Veen made their debut in the United States. They were prize-winners in the prestigious 4th International Murray Dranoff Two Piano Competition in Miami, Florida. After this achievement they toured the United States and Canada many times. The documentary "Two Pianos One Passion" (nominated with an Emmy Award 1996) portrays them as a duo. In 2016 Van Veen was awarded with the NPO Radio 4 2016 Award, for his efforts and promotion of classical music beyond the concert halls. His lie-down (ligconcert) concerts were praised as an example how classical music can attract new audiences. He fills halls and factories with over 1000 people bringing their own mattresses. A unique experience that attracts many youngsters to discover classical music.

The various compositions by Van Veen may be described as Minimal Music with different faces, Crossovers to Jazz, Blues, Soundscape, Avant-Garde, Techno, Trance and Pop Music. His Minimal Preludes for piano, and his NLXL are some of his most played pieces worldwide. His latest Minimal Piano Concerto Continuum was a great success. In 2015 he premiered his Incanto No.2 in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw with Sandra van Veen.

Currently Mr. Van Veen is director of Van Veen Productions, Chairman of the Simeon ten Holt Foundation, Pianomania Foundation and artistic director of several music festivals. He is also active as Overseas Artistic Director in the Murray Dranoff



Two Piano Competition based in Miami. Over the last 25 years Van Veen recorded more than 185 albums and 5 DVD's, mostly for Brilliant Classics. His dicography includes: Adams, Einaudi, Glass, JacobTV, Minimal Piano Collections, Nietzsche, Nyman, Pärt, Reich, Riley, Satie, Stravinsky, Tiersen, Ten Holt, Van Veen, Yiruma and many others.

Van Veen is also praised for his productivity some say; 'the man who records faster than his shadow'.

"Dutch pianist and composer, Jeroen van Veen, the leading exponent of minimalism today", Alan Swanson (Fanfare)

"Jeroen van Veen has for many years been a powerhouse in the piano world of the Netherlands and beyond", Dominy Clements (Musicweb-International)

"The Maximal Minimalist Missionary", Raymond Tuttle (Fanfare)

Thanks to Jochem Grund, Mascolori © Rotterdam

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DDD (mostly recorded at 96khz, 24 bit)

Microphones: DPA ST4006A

Piano: Yamaha Grand Piano C7, Fazioli Concert Grand (278) on CD 1

Produced by: Van Veen Productions

Photo cover: Joeri van Veen

Photo Jeroen van Veen: Vera Cornel-Pianomania shoe for Jeroen van Veen

Executive Producer: Jeroen van Veen

Engineered & Mastered by: Pianomania

Software: Pro Tools, Logic & Sequoia

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