

# Hervie Christian Syan

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## Profile

**Hervie Christian Syan** is a highly versatile composer, pianist, conductor and music educator from the UK. Over the last ten years, his music productivity has been highly creative, diverse and unique. From performing in a variety of artistic contexts, composing inimitable notated words, developing meaningful workshops of sound to the study of socio-musical philosophy, Syan has been working at the forefront of musical/ethical discourse in contemporary times.

## Notable Achievements

### **an equality between expressions**

Recorded in 2003, the music of Syan's first album can no longer be heard as music. It is an indefinable presence existing within sound and space – a presence that is clothed in the language of music. *an equality between expressions* is a staggering artistic achievement in modern piano music.



### **Satyagraha**

In 2007, Syan explored in musical form the principle of *Satyagraha* (non-violent resistance) created by Indian spiritual, political leader Mahatma Gandhi (1869 – 1948.) With awesome photography and historical images of Gandhi and India shows in film, audiences hear strains of Indian classical music and the Mahatma's speeches in dialogue with Syan's live piano performance. In three movements – *Conflict*, *Compassion* and *Satyagraha* are a modern interpretation of Indian music and Gandhi's message to the world.

### **The Sound Ashram**

*The Sound Ashram* is a highly unique workshop created by Syan in 2005. This workshop develops strategies for nonviolent communication and/or conflict mediation through the utilization of sound, structure and form. Participants take part in making music that emphasizes an equality of relationships through listening, dialogue, empathy and compassion. Linking Gandhi's ashram with sound is a beautiful way of bringing diverse communities into experiencing a model of equality, social interaction and peaceful relations that can be taken and shared within other domains of life.

### **ynsa**

*ynsa* is a vision, philosophy, directive and commitment for change through social art. Founded by Syan in 2003, the directive of *ynsa* has been to develop strategies for nonviolent communication and conflict mediation through all forms of artistic interaction. Honouring equality of relationships through listening, dialogue, empathy and compassion are paramount to this directive. The practice of *ynsa* through art has proven successful over the past ten years in a variety of social art projects.



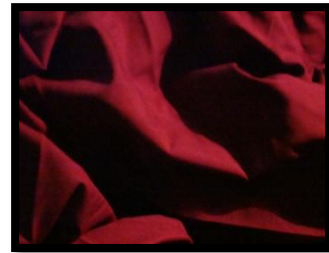
## Pianist

An exponent of Western classical music, Jazz, Indian and contemporary classical styles, Syan has performed all over the world. However, at the core of all his musical expression, lies *wu wei* – absence of thought/ correct action. As practitioner of *wu wei*, Syan performs solo concerts that are spontaneously generated.

- *Satyagraha* – multi-media concert based on the civil disobedience techniques of Gandhi. Notable performances included the Vanlose Culture Center (2/2007) in Copenhagen, Denmark, as part of an arts festival celebrating the philosophy of Gandhi. In Taiwan, performances held at the Taipei Artists Village (4/2007) and at Taishin Bank Arts and Culture Foundation (10/2007). The Taishin concert was sponsored by the Indian Trade Office in Taipei in remembrance of Gandhi's birthday.

### *36 misogi* (2008)

- *36 misogi* (in honour of 36 years of being) – acts of sonorous purification in minute – to– minute chronology. Performances most recently in Hong Kong and Singapore (2008). *36 misogi* often includes a narrative of photography shown during the music.



- Taiwan performances of both solo concerts, and multi-media events in collaboration with photographer, videographer Tobie Openshaw and painter Hamish Stokes. Venues included the Taipei Artist Village (2007 & 2009), The Riverside Café (2004–2006) and The Living Room (2006–2009).
- Solo concert tour of Canada (1998–1999) – cities included Montreal, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Toronto and Calgary. Venues included The Music Studio in Toronto, Banff Centre for the Arts and the Lorne Watson Recital Hall in Brandon, Canada (1998–1999). In Brandon, these included 2 benefit concerts for the charitable organisation, Habitat for Humanity and involved performing with the Indian singer, Ananda Bali, who won the President's Award in 1962 for Best Singer in India and jazz saxophonist Greg Gatien.
- UK performances of solo concerts that combined improvised vocal and instrumental music with theatre, comedy, poetry and philosophy. Venues in England included the Lawrence Batley Theatre, St. Paul's Hall in Huddersfield, and the Hebden Bridge Arts Festival. Other performances in England were in Leeds, Edinburgh and Manchester (1995–1998).
- Pianist and conductor with the new music ensemble *YON* in England (1996–1998). *YON* continually aimed to perform works by young composers with less often performed music by more established contemporary figures. Projects included an appearance in the 1995 National Festival of Women Writers and in 1996 concerts at Huddersfield University, Bradford University, and Rochdale Jazz & Blues Club (April/May 1996).
- Founded and directed two free improvisation groups in England: *The Gibbon Trio* (trombone, harp, and piano) and *The Collective* (flute, trumpet, trombone, tuba, violin, piano, guitar and percussion) with performances in Yorkshire (1996–1998).

## Composer

Over the last twenty years, Syan has written a diverse body of notated music and spontaneously created works for the piano. His music is intuitive, original and ineffable.

## Notated Works

- 1990: *Piano Quintet* – (performed in the Leeds Music Festival)
- 1991: *Variations on a Menimonee Dancing Song for the South God* – for string quartet  
*TCB* – for female speaker and piano
- 1992: *Stopping by the Woods* – for tenor and small ensemble (performed by members of the Huddersfield University)  
*Today is a Fine Day to Die* – for ensemble (performed by Firebird ensemble)
- 1993: *Shine, Perishing Republic* – for Baritone and piano  
*Music for Oboes and Bassoons* – for four oboes/cor anglais and four bassoons/contrabassoon  
*Two Pieces for Piano*
- 1994: *My Song* – for soprano and ensemble (performed by Firebird in St. Paul's Hall, Huddersfield)
- 1995: *Ô Lacrimosa* – for soprano, 2 tenors, 2 basses, violin, cello and guitar
- 1996: *Oda y germinaciones* – for speaker, tenor, flute, viola and double bass (performed by YON ensemble at St. Paul's Hall)  
*Las Vidas* – for harp and guitar
- 1997: *El deseo* – for piano trio (Commissioned by Shirley Lawrenson)  
– for ensemble (Commissioned by and performed at the Hedben Bridge Arts Festival in collaboration with COMA)
- 1999: *Las furias* – for string quartet (Completed as part of a Leighton residency at Banff Centre For The Arts)  
*Two Songs* – for soprano, violin and cello (performed at the Brandon New Music Festival)  
*O lest this world should task you to recite* – a madrigal for SATTB voices  
*An die musik* for large SATB choir and version for string orchestra  
*4 Minatures* for piano, 2 alto flutes and flute
- 2003: *Unknown* for piano
- 2007: *Prashantha* for flute
- 2010: *Love's Rite* for speaker and violinist  
*Li-yin* for acoustic guitar and viola



#### Piano Works

1998: *sound of waves on pebble shore* (performed on tour in Manitoba, Canada)

*india* (performed in Manitoba, Canada)

*descent* (performed at Brandon University, Canada)

*the darkness of snow* (performed in Toronto, Canada)

1999: *conflict, compassion, satyagraha* (performed at Calgary University, Canada)

*at first light* (performed at Winnipeg University, Canada)

2000: *sunset* (performed in Winnipeg, Canada)

*hsueh* (performed at the Habitat for Humanity benefit concert in Brandon, Canada)

*spirit* (performed at Brandon University, Canada)

2003: *an equality between expressions* (ynsa CD release)

2007: *ynsa*

*Satyagraha* – a multi-media concert with film, soundtrack and live piano performance

(performed in Copenhagen as part of the Gandhi Festival 2007, the Taiwan Artist Village, 2007

and at the Taishin Bank Performance Hall, 2007 – sponsored by the Taipei Indian Music and Culture Organisation and Taishin Bank Foundation for the Arts and Culture, Taiwan)

2008: *part 1 – ritual, part 2 – sacrifice, part 3– radiance* (performed at the Tri-M benefit concert in

Taipei, Taiwan)

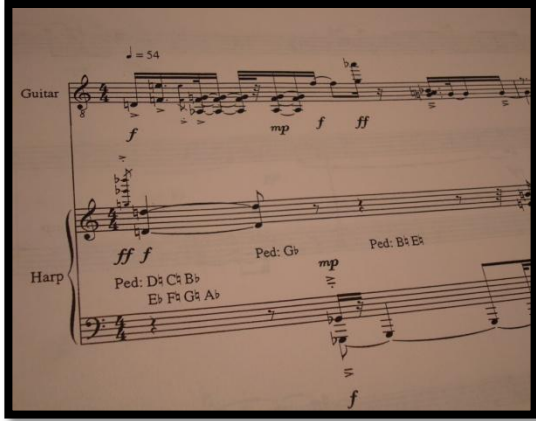
*for angela*

*lullaby*

*for joyce*

*isabel*

*36 misogi* (in honour of 36 years of being)



Opening of *Las Vidas* (1996)

### Distinguished Events

- Holder of the Leighton Residency at Banff Centre for the Arts, Canada (February to March 1999) with full commission to compose *Las Furias* (string quartet).
- Toured Canada performing original music and guest lecturing at Canadian concert halls and universities (September 1998–April 1999) including Simon Fraser University (Vancouver), Wilfrid Laurier University (Waterloo), University of Manitoba, University of Brandon, University of Calgary and University of Regina.
- Commissioned by Hebden Bridge Arts Festival to compose music for the festival in 1997.
- Commissioned by Shirley Lawrenson in the UK to compose *El Deseo* (piano trio) in 1997.
- Leader of *YON* Composition projects at Farnley Park High School in Leeds with G.C.S.E pupils and at Royds Hall High School in Huddersfield with primary school pupils (May/June 1996).
- Held a third Composers' Exchange at Huddersfield University (June 1996).
- Led a two-day improvisation workshop with *YON* ensemble (October 1996).

Scores – *Oda y germinaciones* (1996), *Las Vidas* (1996) and *Ô Lacrimosa* (1995)



### Music Educator

- Designer and workshop leader of *The Sound Ashram* workshop which deals with Gandhian conflict resolution through sound making. Notable participants of this workshop included the Danish Union of Musicians and on another occasion, attendants of The Gandhi Arts Festival at the Vanlose Culture House, Copenhagen in February 2007 arranged by performance artist Kenneth Balfert.
- Currently researching for a thesis/book that deals with ecology and sound as part of a PhD program at Winchester University. The work examines the role sound can play in educating a person musically.
- Author and lecturer of an undergraduate course on improvisation at the Music Department of Huddersfield University, covering a wide range of music culture including Jazz, African, Indian, Native American and Western contemporary idioms (September 1996–July 1998).
- Teacher of piano for several years for The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music in the UK (1990–1998).
- Workshop leader for the disabled music group, Musical Arc, resulting in concerts at the Lawrence Batley Theatre and the West Yorkshire Playhouse in Leeds at the end of the project (November 1997–June 1998).
- Workshop leader for COMA (Contemporary Music for Amateurs) at the Hebden Bridge Arts Festival (June 1997).
- Workshop leader for Leeds Northwest Holiday Fun, a summer activities camp for primary school children (August 1997).
- Musical play worker at Weetwood Primary School in Leeds mixing various musical and other creative activities into the after school club curriculum (April 1997 – July 1998) and (October 1999 – January 2000).



### Summary of Qualifications/Awards/Scholarships

- 2010 – Currently studying on PhD program at Winchester University
- 2001: Awarded the Dorothy Kitchen Scholarship for outstanding academic achievement on the Masters in Music programme at Brandon University
- 2001: Courses in Music Education/ Philosophy (Master's Degree level)
- 1998: Full Scholarship awarded to attend Banff Centre of the Arts to hold the Leighton Residency for Composition
- 1996: Master of Arts Degree in Music Composition
- 1995: Full Scholarship awarded to attend Darmstadt International Summer School for New Music
- 1994: Bachelor of Music with Upper Second Class Honours

### Education

- 2010 – The University of Winchester, Winchester, England, UK. SO22 4NR
- 2000 – 2001: Brandon University, Brandon, Manitoba, Canada. R7A 2J9
- 1991 – 1996: The University of Huddersfield, Queensgate, Huddersfield, UK. HD1 3DH
- 1985 – 1990: Lawnswood High School, Ring Road, West Park, Leeds, UK. LS16 5AG

### Extra studies

- Studied semantics and translations of Tao texts such as the ancient writings Chuang Tzu and Lao Tzu at a Tao temple in Taiwan (July 2001–June 2006).
- Studied with Dr. Wayne Bowman, author of *Philosophical Perspectives of Music*, by attending Music Philosophy courses at Brandon University, Canada in 2001.
- Attended the Darmstadt International Summer School for New Music in Germany on a full bursary in July 1996. Composition tuition was with prominent composers – Karlheinz Stockhausen, Brian Ferneyhough and Klaus Huber.
- Attended lectures given by leading contemporary composers Louis Andriessen and Gyorgy Ligeti at The Huddersfield Contemporary New Music Festival in November 1995.
- Attended the Easter Chamber Music Course held in Durham, UK within a piano trio in March 1995. Coaches included pianist Ronan O'Hara, violinist Malcolm Layfield and cellist William Conway.
- Studied Composition with Dr. Christopher Fox (1994–1996)
- Studied Composition with Prof. Richard Steinitz OBE (1991–1994).



Referees

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Dr. Christopher Fox: Department of Music, Brunel University, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UK. UB8 3PH. Telephone: Tel: +44 (0)1895 274000



*rather than defining what music is or what music ought to be,  
it is my belief that the term-concept music is directional  
pointing participants towards what is worth seeking  
in music and elsewhere in life*

Hervie Christian Syan