



Michael  
**NYMAN**

The Man  
Who Mistook  
His Wife  
For A Hat

A close-up, profile photograph of Michael Nyman. He is looking to the left, and his face is partially obscured by a large, textured, brownish object that resembles a hat or a piece of fabric. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on his forehead and nose, and deep shadows elsewhere. He is wearing a dark suit jacket and a tie.

Treviño • Sjöwall • MacPherson  
Nashville Opera • Dean Williamson

**Michael  
NYMAN**

(b. 1944)

**The Man Who Mistook  
His Wife For A Hat (1986)**

Libretto by Oliver Sacks, Christopher Rawlence and Michael Morris  
after *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat* (1985) by Oliver Sacks

Dr P ..... Matthew Treviño, Bass  
Mrs P ..... Rebecca Sjöwall, Soprano  
Neurologist ..... Ryan MacPherson, Tenor

**Nashville Opera Orchestra**

Principal Violin ..... Dave Davidson  
Second Violin ..... Conni Ellisor  
Viola ..... Simona Rusu  
Principal Cello ..... Michael Samis  
Second Cello ..... Sari Reist  
Harp ..... Mary Alice Hoepfinger  
Piano ..... Amy Tate Williams  
Page Turner ..... Karen L. Haas  
Orchestra Contractor ..... Pamela Sixfin

The Nashville Opera Orchestra Musicians are members of  
the American Federation of Musicians Local 257

**John Hoomes, Stage Director**  
**Dean Williamson, Musical Director**

This recording was made possible through a gift from Sue and Earl Swensson,  
and the support of Ocean Way Nashville and Belmont University

Originally performed from 8th to 10th November, 2013, at the Noah Liff Opera Center, Nashville  
Production co-sponsored by Judy and Joe Barker, Zach and Jessica Liff

With additional support from Ingram Industries, the Nashville Opera Guild, the Judy and Noah Liff  
Foundation, Metro Nashville Arts Commission and the Tennessee Arts Commission

<b>Scene I: Prologue</b>			
1 Prologue	2:35	11 The Rose	1:57
<b>Scene II: The First Examination</b>		12 The Glove	2:12
2 The First Examination	7:40	13 The Chess Game	2:37
3 The Shoe	3:20	<b>Scene IV: Testing Visual Memory</b>	
4 The Slides	2:06	14 The Street	2:26
5 The River	4:45	<b>Scene V: Paintings As Pathology? An Argument</b>	
6 The Dressing Ritual	2:20	15 The Paintings	5:41
<b>Scene III: The House Call</b>		<b>Scene VI: The Prescription</b>	
7 The House Call	1:32	16 The Wife	1:57
8 Ich Grolle Nicht	2:37	<b>Scene VII: Epilogue</b>	
9 The Solids	6:12	17 The Prognosis	5:00
10 The Photographs	3:11		

**Production conceived and directed by John Hoomes**

Barry Steele ..... Lighting and Video Design  
J. Randall Williams and John Hoomes ..... Set Design  
Pam Lisenby ..... Costume Design  
Sondra Nottingham ..... Wig and Makeup Design  
Amy Tate Williams, Pamela Sixfin ..... Musical Preparation  
Kat Slagell ..... Stage Manager  
John Hoomes ..... Supertitles  
William O. Whetsell, Jr., M.D., Jan Lewis Brandes, M.D. .... Medical Consultants

**Nashville Opera Association**

John Hoomes ..... CEO/Artistic Director  
Noah E. Spiegel ..... Executive Director  
Dean Williamson ..... Music Director  
Katie Arata ..... Community Engagement Manager  
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Kristin Starling ..... Director of Development  
Amy Tate Williams ..... Chorusmaster and Principal Accompanist  
J. Randall Williams ..... Director of Production  
Anna Young ..... Director of Education and Outreach  
Diane Zandstra ..... Senior Director of Development

## Michael Nyman (b. 1944)

### The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat (1986)

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to programme a varied and diverse selection of operas, and Michael Nyman's chamber opera *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat* had long been on my bucket list of works for consideration. I have always been an admirer of Nyman's talent, and I felt that with this opera he had created a taut masterpiece of drama and music. However, I was unprepared for the audience response to the show. The moment the performance ended, there was a brief silence, and then the entire room erupted into such a cacophony one would think we were attending a sporting event. Who could have imagined that a chamber opera about neurology could evoke such an overwhelming response? But that is the magic of this piece. With this original cast recording, we hope to recapture some of that magic.

Nyman's music, with its use of clever rhythmic repetition and varied orchestral colour, pushes the story forward and builds dramatic tension, even if the scene in question is nothing more than a routine visit to a doctor's office. But, like the best operas, the music tells us there is indeed something unseen hiding just below the surface. As the opera progresses, the drama and the music meld further, until music becomes the dominant, driving, healing force in the characters' lives. With this chamber opera, Nyman captures the wonder and mystery of the workings of the human brain, and then allows us to feel the humanity behind the science.

John Hoomes

### Synopsis

#### Scene I. Prologue

The neurologist delivers an address concerning his approach to neurology and introduces the case of Dr P.

#### Scene II. The First Examination

Dr and Mrs P arrive at the neurologist's clinic, having been

referred by an ophthalmologist. A series of routine neurological tests is carried out, revealing little. As he prepares to depart, P makes several alarming mistakes and the neurologist resolves to see him again.

#### Scene III. The House Call

Baffled by his first meeting with P, the neurologist determines to observe his patient in the environment of his own home. The investigation continues as the neurologist engages P in a variety of visual exercises designed to reveal the nature of P's condition: geometric solids, cartoons, television, photographs, rose, glove, chess game.

#### Scene IV. Testing Visual Memory

The neurologist asks P to describe the buildings and layout of a local street they both know well.

#### Scene V. Paintings as Pathology? An Argument

The neurologist discovers that P is a talented amateur painter. Upon examining a portfolio of his paintings, he concludes that P's illness is reflected in these works, which have moved from representational figurative painting to the purely abstract. This conclusion angers Mrs P, who insists that the change in her husband's painting style is an expression of his artistic development, not of his deepening illness.

#### Scene VI. The Prescription

As P continues enjoying his tea, Mrs P explains to the neurologist how her husband manages, through music, to cope with daily life in spite of his perceptual problems.

#### Scene VII. Epilogue

The neurologist delivers his concluding remarks on the case.

## Michael Nyman



Michael Nyman was born in Stratford, East London on 23rd March, 1944. He was educated at the Sir George Monoux Grammar School, Walthamstow. He studied at the Royal Academy of Music from 1961-64 – academic studies with Dr Peter Fletcher, composition with Alan Bush and harpsichord with Gerard Jones. Between 1964-67 Nyman was a Ph.D student in Thurston Dart's newly-founded music department at King's College, London.

1976 was a key year in Nyman's career. Two soundtracks composed in that year can now be seen as symbolising the populist and structuralist poles of Nyman's subsequent work: Robert Young's *Keep It Up Downstairs* and Peter Greenaway's *1-100*. Needless to say, it is Nyman's collaboration with Greenaway, as fellow artists rather than as filmmaker/soundtrack composer, that has brought Nyman's music into prominence, from *The Draughtsman's Contract* of 1983 to *Prospero's Books*, their last collaboration from as long ago as 1991. Nyman has subsequently worked with Patrice Leconte, Jane Campion (*The Piano*), Neil Jordan (*The End of the Affair*), Michael Winterbottom (*Wonderland*, *The Claim* and *A Cock And Bull Story*) and Andrew Niccol's increasingly relevant *Gattaca* in 1997.

More recently his work as a soundtrack composer has confined itself to silent films from the late 1920s: Jean Vigo's *A Propos de Nice*, new soundtracks to three Dziga Vertovs – notably *Man with a Movie Camera*, *The Eleventh Year* and *A Sixth Part of the World* and, in 2011, *Battleship Potemkin*. The majority of Nyman's work, however, was written for the concert hall and the opera house: a bunch of operas, starting with *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat* in 1986, through *Facing Goya* (2000) to *Man and Boy: Dada* (2003), five string quartets and eight concertos. Since the end of 2012, he has been working on a network of 19 symphonies.

His ten song cycles take texts from Shakespeare, Neruda, Octavio Paz, Paul Celan, Milton, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Mexican 'folk' poets, amongst others. He has also worked with musicians from outside the western/classical/experimental traditions, such as the Orquesta Andalusi de Tetouan, Rajan and Sajan Misra, U. Shrinivas, Estrella Morente, Seijin Noborakawa, Ute Lemper, Evan Parker, Peter Brötzmann, Paolo Fresu, Mike Giles, the Flying Lizards, Dagmar Krause, Sting, Damon Albarn, David McAlmont and Alva Noto.

2014 was also the year of Nyman's 70th birthday celebrations and he is continuing his plan, devised in December 2012, of writing a series of 19 symphonies. Other commissions for this year are *Aztecs in Liverpool* (a visual companion piece to his *Symphony No. 11: Hillsborough Memorial*); *War Work*, based on visual material from the First World War; and *Symphony No. 12: Habla de la ciudad* at the Cervantino International Festival in Guanajuato, Mexico, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Octavio Paz.

www.michaelnyman.com

## Matthew Treviño



Photo: teneightcreative

Recipient of the 2011 Austin Critics' Table "Best Singer Award" for his performance in *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat*, Matthew Treviño is one today's most sought-after young basses. Recent operatic credits include Sparafucile in *Rigoletto* (English National Opera, Vancouver Opera, Opera Memphis, Hawaii Opera Theatre); Colline in *La bohème* (Florentine Opera, Opera Carolina); Hobson in *Peter Grimes* (English National Opera); Leporello in *Don Giovanni* (Opera Colorado); and Ashby in *La fanciulla del West* (Opera Omaha). Highly regarded for his acting and keen musicianship, Matthew Treviño is well suited to new works, recently performing the rôle of The Ghost in Gordon Getty's new opera *The Canterville Ghost* in Leipzig and returning to Nashville Opera as Eddie in Carly Simon's *Romulus Hunt*. He was a finalist in the Loren L. Zachary Foundation Competition, Dallas Opera Guild Competition, Fort Worth Opera's McCammon Voice Competition, and the recipient of the Thomas Stewart Award for Vocal Excellence at Baylor University.

## Rebecca Sjöwall



Photo: Kirsten Koromilas

Born and raised in Wisconsin, soprano Rebecca Sjöwall studied political science at Luther College and music at UCLA. Lauded for her powerful, flexible and clear voice, as well as her dramatic commitment to each work, she has performed a wide variety of rôles, such as the Governess in *The Turn of the Screw*, Mimi in *La bohème*, Alice Ford in *Falstaff*, the Williamson girl in *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field*, Countess Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro*, and Violetta in *La traviata*. She has collaborated with many composers including Garry Schyman, Craig Bohmler, Christina Thomas, Stephen Edwards and Mark Carlson, and has appeared as Anna Roosevelt in the world première performances of *The First Lady* by Kenneth Wells. On record, she sings the "Rapture Anthem" for the award-winning video game *BioShock* and is the voice of the Hollywood Starlet on *The Seduction of Ingmar Bergman* by Sparks.

## Ryan MacPherson



Photo: Rebecca Fay

Ryan MacPherson is one of the most highly sought-after young tenors of his generation. With a vast and growing repertoire, he is well-known for his captivating stage presence, as well as his expertise in modern and contemporary music. He has performed with New York City Opera (Anatol in Barber's *Vanessa and Iff*, the Water Genie in the world première of Wuorinen's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*), at the Buxton Festival (Horace in Gounod's *La colombe* and Kornélis in Saint-Saëns' *La princesse jaune*), Chicago Opera Theater (title rôles in Mozart's *Lucio Silla* and Glass' *The Fall of the House of Usher*), Central City Opera (Alfredo in *La traviata*), Lyric Opera Dublin (Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*) and at Nashville Opera (Duke in *Rigoletto*). He can be heard on the CD release of Glass' *Orphée* in the rôle of Heurtebise (Orange Mountain label), and on the DVD of the world première production of Wuorinen's *Brokeback Mountain*, as Jack's Father (Teatro Real, Madrid).

## Nashville Opera Orchestra



Photo: Reed Hummell

Under the leadership of Nashville Opera's Music Director, Dean Williamson, the Nashville Opera Orchestra is an extraordinary group of instrumentalists consisting of some of the finest musicians in the city of Nashville. Masters of style – from Aldridge's gospel tinged *Elmer Gantry* to sweeping orchestrations of Puccini's *Turandot* – the players of the Nashville Opera Orchestra are as comfortable playing operatic scores as they are working with the biggest stars on Nashville's legendary Music Row. In addition to their work with the opera, many players have advanced solo or small group careers including recordings, GRAMMY® nominations, and awards for a wide range of classical, contemporary or newly composed pieces. The musicians of the Nashville Opera Orchestra elevate opera to new heights with highly polished technique, inspired playing, and an indelible connection to each work they perform.

## John Hoomes



Photo: Reed Hummell

Nashville Opera's Artistic Director since 1995, John Hoomes, has directed over 150 productions of opera and musical theatre in the US, South America, and Canada. In Nashville, he has directed the company's greatest successes including productions of *Turandot*, *Florencia en el Amazonas*, *La traviata*, *Salome*, *The Pearl Fishers*, *Pagliacci*, *La fanciulla del West*, *Andrea Chénier*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Carmen*, *Tosca*, *Rigoletto*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Don Giovanni*, *La bohème*, *Il trovatore*, *Hydrogen Jukebox*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Madame Butterfly*, *La cenerentola*, *The Magic Flute* and *Otello*. He has led productions for the Teatro Colón, Cincinnati Opera, The Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Opera Philadelphia, Florentine Opera, and Pittsburgh Opera. Recently, John Hoomes staged the world première of Robert Aldridge's *Elmer Gantry*, based on the famous book by Sinclair Lewis, also recorded on Naxos (8.669032-33), winning two GRAMMY® Awards. *The New York Times* declared the work "An Operatic Miracle... in Nashville."

## Dean Williamson



Photo: Kevin Clark

Dean Williamson has a versatile career in standard and contemporary repertoire, and is earning worldwide acclaim for his perceptive and commanding conducting. He currently serves as Music Director of Nashville Opera where select conducting credits include *Hydrogen Jukebox*, *Così fan tutte*, *Florencia en el Amazonas*, *Romulus Hunt*, *La fanciulla del West*, *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field*, Michael Nyman's *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat*, *Roméo et Juliette*, and *Samson and Delilah*. Other career highlights include *Pagliacci*, *The Turn of the Screw*, and *Le nozze di Figaro* at Seattle Opera; *The Rake's Progress*, *Don Pasquale*, *Falstaff*, and *La cenerentola* at Wolf Trap Opera; *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *Carmen* at Opera Theatre of St. Louis; and *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Sondheim's *Passion* with Minnesota Opera. The production of *Le Comte Ory* he conducted at Des Moines Metro Opera was nominated for an Emmy Award.



Michael Nyman's one-act chamber opera *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat* takes as its subject Dr P, a man suffering from visual agnosia, or 'mental blindness', and is adapted from the neurological study in the book of the same name by Oliver Sacks. For Nyman, Dr P 'requires music as a lifeline, cue, clue, cure', living as he does in a world lacking visual meaning. It is through his musical gifts that Dr P reclaims meaning from chaos, Nyman's tautly conceived masterpiece providing a perfect medium through which the moving drama can be explored.

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**Dr P** ..... **Matthew Treviño, Bass**  
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**Neurologist** ..... **Ryan MacPherson, Tenor**

## **Nashville Opera • Dean Williamson**

A full track and artist list can be found inside the booklet.

The libretto can be accessed at [www.naxos.com/libretti/660398.htm](http://www.naxos.com/libretti/660398.htm)

This recording was made possible through a gift from Sue and Earl Swenson,  
and the support of Ocean Way Nashville and Belmont University.

Recorded at Ocean Way Nashville, Tennessee, USA, from 23rd to 25th May, 2014

Executive producers: John Hoomes and Noah E. Spiegel

Producers: Pat McMakin and Dean Williamson

Recording and mixing engineer: Pat McMakin • Assistant engineer: Josh Ditty

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