



# BECOMINGS

**Sam Hayden**  
**Works for solo piano**

**Ian Pace**  
**Piano**



**métier**

# BECOMINGS

Sam Hayden [b.1968]

## DISC 1:

Becomings (Das Werden) I-VII [2016-18]	46:46
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1	I	4:36
2	II	9:39
3	III	6:31
4	IV	7:32
5	V	8:54
6	VI	5:22
7	VII	3:51

Total playing time	46:46
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## DISC 2:

1	Fragment (After Losses) [2003]	4:44
2	...still time... [1990]	12:19
3	Piano Moves [1990]	25:25

Total playing time	42:45
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IAN PACE

piano

## BECOMINGS

This album features the first ever recordings of Sam Hayden's complete music for solo piano, performed by contemporary music specialist and indefatigable champion of new music, Ian Pace, a pianist with a formidable reputation for mastering the most challenging of new repertoire. The centrepiece is Hayden's monumental 7-movement cycle, *Becomings* (*Das Werden*) I-VII (2016-18), the most recent work on the album and the most ambitious and demanding in terms of scale and sheer virtuosity. *Becomings* is accompanied by two shorter acoustic works, *...still time...* (1990) and *Fragment* (*After Losses*) (2003). Both of these earlier works reflect a diversity of post-war European modernist and American experimentalist influences and in different ways they can be seen as sowing the seeds for *Becomings*. Solo works for acoustic instruments as such have been relatively rare within Hayden's output, and most of them are fairly recent, the result of close collaborations with specific performers who are interested in his brand of 'complexity'. Other notable examples include *attente* (2018-19) for solo flute, written for Ine Vanoeveren, *remnants* (2018-19) for solo contrabass clarinet, written for Richard Haynes, and *AXE[S]* (1997) for solo guitar, written for Mats Scheidegger somewhat earlier in Hayden's career. A different soundworld is provided by *Piano Moves* (1990) for amplified piano.

Although Hayden's output for solo piano spans three decades, he has regularly used the piano (and other keyboard instruments) in chamber, ensemble, orchestral and electronic music contexts, often focusing on the instrument's percussive and resonance characteristics. Given Hayden's interest in combining multiple layers of sound, evident in his ensemble pieces and most overtly in *Substratum* (2008) for large orchestra (which includes a significant piano part), it is perhaps unsurprising that his solo instrumental works are also often combined with live electronics, such as *schismatics II* (2010) for electric violin and computer, written for Mieko Kanno, or *instabilités* (2016-19) for solo cello and computer, written for Séverine Ballon in collaboration with the Centre Henri Pousseur (Liège).

Hayden's more recent output reflects his interests in 'spectralist' approaches to composition and Xenakis-inspired stochasticism, as much as the works of composers

more overtly associated with traditions of 'complexity'. Given these compositional approaches all tend to involve different kinds of microtonalities, this explains in part his relative reticence towards writing for solo piano and preference for the instrument within an ensemble context. When he has used the piano in recent works, such as in the duo version of his *surface/tension* (2012) for oboe and piano, commissioned by Christopher Redgate, released by Divine Art/Métier on the album *Music for a New Oboe, Volume 2* (MSV 28531), the piano acts both as a polyphonic elaborator of rapid oboe gestures and as a resonator for more sustained sonorities based on oboe multiphonics and computer analysis of their partials, via a combination of 12TET piano sonorities and oboe microtonalities. This process of sonic expansion of the oboe line, a concept borrowed from electronic music, was expanded further in the ensemble version of *surface/tension*, written for Cikada Ensemble, again with Redgate as soloist. This idea of a soloist being elaborated by an ensemble *and* through live computer processing can be observed in his earlier keyboard-centred work *Emergence* (2004) for solo accordion, ensemble and live electronics, written for the Oslo Sinfonietta with Frode Haltli as soloist in collaboration with Notam (Oslo), an ensemble which includes both a piano and a MIDI keyboard playing accordion samples tuned in quarter-tones, in addition to the soloist.

While the computer is not used for live processing and sonic spatialization in performance, Hayden's compositional processes themselves are nevertheless often computer-mediated, especially in his recent works. He uses IRCAM's OpenMusic computer-assisted composition software to generate underlying duration structures and their rhythmical subdivisions, and pitch field transformations between invented 12TET or 24TET scales and more overtone-based pitch structures, something that was very much the case during the composition of *Becomings*. Such computer-generated structures are always regarded by Hayden as starting points or 'found objects' for further elaboration, rather than being ends in themselves. Nevertheless, *Becomings* involved some of the most extensive OM programming Hayden has undertaken to date, in which both rhythmical and pitch materials were combined by the computer algorithmically during the highly formalised 'pre-compositional' stage before being overwritten to a large degree.

During the relatively few occasions when Hayden has engaged with the piano purely as an *acoustic* solo instrument (he has also written specifically for *amplified* piano) the medium is generally pushed to its sonic and physical limits. His acoustic solo piano works have in common constant transformation, existing at the extremes of gesture, polyphony, density, register, dynamic range and textual juxtaposition, very much reflecting an aesthetic alignment with modernist traditions. With *Becomings*, there is something of an implicit sense that Hayden was waiting for the right moment and the right performer to explore the full potential of the solo piano medium. One might compare this with how Hayden also came relatively late to composing his first *String Quartet 'Transience'* (2014), written for Quatuor Diotima, another large-scale multi-movement work for a 'traditional' classical instrumentation. Hayden had to find strong reasons to compose for such acoustic instrumental means with immense traditions, repertoire and symbolic hierarchical positions in the canon of Western art music. It was through the mediation of technology that he found ways to think about the medium of the solo piano and a conception of musical material consistent with the modernist idea of the necessity of the new.

### ***Becomings (Das Werden) I-VII* (2016-18)**

Ian Pace himself gave the first public performance of the complete cycle of *Becomings* in 2019 at City, University of London. The piece was originally commissioned by José Menor who had played selected movements prior to the completion of the set.

*Becomings* is the latest in a cycle of Hayden's recent pieces that combine ideas related to 'spectral' traditions with algorithmic approaches to composition, using IRCAM's OpenMusic. The piece oscillates constantly between dense, energetic, hyper-virtuosic gestural materials and moments of relative clarity, but never settling one way or the other, in an unresolved tension. The sonic surfaces constantly ebb and flow, coalesce and decompose in a state of flux, inhabiting an unstable continuum between computer-generated 'synthetic' scales and quasi-spectral harmonic fields quantized to 12TET. Hayden's intention was to create a piece with the maximum surface diversity and proliferation of materials whilst maintaining an underlying formal coherence. The title refers to the philosophical sense of 'Becoming' dating back to Heraclitus (ca. 500 BC), whose idea of a world in constant change was in opposition to the idea of Being as an eternal, perfect and unchanging essence: for Heraclitus, things *are* change. Essential to

the conception of the piece is therefore the absence of clear pre-existing musical 'objects' (or 'beings'), if we understand musical 'object' as the primary unit upon which a piece of music is based (e.g. tone, chord, interval, motive, rhythmical structure and so on): only musical 'becomings', where transformation itself is the very basis of the music. In other words, it is not only that the music is in constant change but that change itself is the essence of the music. The title is deliberately both plural (in English) - because each movement could be said to represent a different attempt at musical 'becoming' - and singular (in German where no plural exists), alluding to the weightier philosophical sense(s) of Becoming.

The first movement functions as something of a 'prelude', in which can be found many of the gestural tendencies later developed in the other movements. In particular, a delicate and continuously transforming polyphonic 'lattice', often embellished with trills and tremolos, dominates the texture, occasionally interjected with short, rapid filigree-like gestures and some vertical chordal structures.

The second movement is the most substantial of the seven, within which there is a clearer dialectal interplay between complex polyphony across the full range of the piano and chiming vertical structures (already hinted at in the first movement). These two aspects are often superimposed during several cyclical 'waves' of gradual crescendi, formal contours within which chromatic polyphony evolves into quasi-spectral harmonies, based on approximations of the overtone series, with clear quasi-fundamental pitches. Each 'wave' moves towards declamatory chordal interjections, a process which is sometimes interrupted by unexpected appearances of highly compressed delicate textures. The form as a whole builds incrementally towards some of the densest and most extreme music of the whole cycle.

The third movement starts with a texture somewhat reminiscent of the opening of the first. However, rather than the gradual linear elaboration which occurred previously, this movement has a much more chaotic, fractured and fragmented form, featuring again the rapid filigree-like material, though often interrupted either by angular staccato writing in the low register or chiming sforzando chords in the upper register. These structural juxtapositions contrast formally with the large-scale directionality of the second movement. This movement represents something of a transition from the

epic scale of the second movement to the subtler, more introverted and subdued lyricism of the fourth movement. Another feature of the third movement is that the quasi-spectral harmonies are more identifiable within the polyphonic sections themselves.

The fourth movement could be seen as something of a 'slow movement', beginning with the elaboration of a slow, upwardly moving line in the right hand with chordal accompaniment, perhaps the most transparent music of the entire cycle. This upwardly moving line later appears in the low register with tremolo chords in the right hand and becomes a recurring gesture. In actual fact, this material is a very temporally stretched-out version of the filigree-like material heard previously, and the movement embodies something of an exploration of how the extreme augmentation or compression of similar materials yields sonic results which are *perceptually* very different. What begins as a process of linear elaboration, ends as the superimposition of several identifiable gestural types (points, chords, polyphony, tremolos, staccato bass-notes and so on).

The fifth movement (originally intended as a kind of 'finale' before Hayden made the decision to write two further movements) is something of a continuation of the territory explored in the extended second movement, except that the combination of staccato chords and rapid linear structures is a feature from the outset. The repeating cycles between chromatic and spectral harmonies is now much more transparent due to the increasing dominance of vertical structures as the movement progresses. The chordal close of the fifth movement is the most overt articulation of quasi-spectral harmonies thus far.

The sixth movement features some of the most rapid and continuous music of the cycle. A 'new' element is the use of multiple grace-note gestures, acting like upbeat gestures either for attack points within linear writing, or for chordal interjections and clusters. The music is generally less polyphonic, the textures being more starkly characterised according to particular gestural types. The movement closes with a stark juxtaposition of rapid delicate textures and slowly evolving widely spaced chiming chords to an extent representing a clarification of previous materials.

The opening of the seventh movement quite deliberately refers to the very opening of the first. The movement as a whole is intended to function as a kind of coda

incorporating hints of all the tendencies from the earlier sections of the cycle. Yet there is always the sense of unfinished business and the essential paradox of the piece remains. Rather than concluding with some sense of large-scale architectural closure and recapitulation, perhaps of an implied arch-like structure, the music remains in a continual sense of 'becoming' to the final gesture.

### ***Fragment (After Losses)* (2003) for solo piano**

Originally composed for Stephen Gutman, this piece takes some of its opening material from a section towards the mid-point of Hayden's orchestral piece *Sunk Losses* (2002), a work which features two important piano parts and, for a while at least, resembles a double piano concerto. He regarded this material as having enough interest in itself to be further developed within the more transparent solo piano context.

The main challenges in composing *Fragment (After Losses)* were (a) to compress material originally written for two pianos into a single solo part, and (b) to treat the materials in a much more temporally concentrated way than was typical for Hayden at that time, in contrast to the more extended time structures he employed in works for large ensembles and orchestras. At the time of writing, Hayden tended to use the piano as an ensemble instrument for the purposes of adding resonance or percussive 'edge' to a complex multi-instrumental texture. The exclusive focus on piano sonorities in a solo work necessitated a starker exploration of harmonic, rhythmical and registral parameters.

A fragmented and somewhat pointillistic opening section reminiscent of the European post-war avant-garde, gives rise to a series of more pulse-based and angular but short-lived musical mechanisms, whose combinations of pulses moving at different speeds and rotations of limited chromatic pitch sets in fixed registers have some echoes of the music of Harrison Birtwistle. All of Hayden's earlier compositional characteristics are in evidence: dense chromatic, and at times Messiaen-like, harmony also projected into the linear dimension, fluid surface fluctuations and stark formal disjunctions, the rapid permutation of a limited number of harmonic and rhythmic elements, the formal intercutting of recognisably different gestural materials and the polyrhythmic combinations of pulses. New for Hayden, at the time, was the simultaneous



exploration of stochastic and vertical treatments of the piano, making use of the full range of the instrument, exploiting the lower registers in particular.

**...still time...** (1990) for solo piano

As the earliest of Hayden's acknowledged acoustic pieces for solo piano, this work nevertheless shows some of the tendencies that he would later revisit in *Becomings*. A fundamental feature of the work is its extreme contrasts between loud and rapid polyrhythmic textures and quiet isolated chords, such sudden formal intercutting of compressed gestural writing with extended silences deliberately disrupting any momentary sense of linear continuity. The kinds of chromatic vertical pitch structures used in each of these dense and sparse textures respectively are actually very similar but are rendered within vastly differing temporal contexts. Both textures have a tendency to expand in terms of durational, registral and dynamic extremity as the piece progresses, eventually closing with solitary static sounds at the limits of audibility. *...still time...* certainly shows some influence of Karlheinz Stockhausen's earlier *Klavierstücke* from the 1950s, early music of Morton Feldman and especially Michael Finnissy's early solo piano works, such as *Song 9* (1968), perhaps unsurprising, given that Finnissy was one of his composition teachers. At the time of writing this piece, Hayden had in mind a binary of human attitudes towards the passing of time, either in existential struggle or stoical acceptance, ideas that can be seen to be represented by the binary of directional and non-narrative musical materials.

**Piano Moves** (1990) for amplified piano

This work is something of an exception in Hayden's early piano works, being composed specifically for *amplified* piano, utilising reverb and compression to highlight the resonance characteristics of the instrument and to create a massive sound continuum that accumulates as the work progresses. The piece has something of a more (post)minimalistic, process-based formal conception (with some occasional nods to Ligeti and Xenakis) as opposed to the more discontinuous gestural writing characteristic of Hayden's other piano works. The repeating opening major 2<sup>nd</sup> (D/E) dyad in the middle register is gradually expanded into chords, oscillating between hands with superimpositions of polyrhythmic pulses. This material becomes

increasingly intercut with more chromatic linear writing and dense clusters, as the music is projected outwards towards the extremes of register in a series of harmonic 'moves', gaining momentum all the time. After reaching a plateau of energy and saturated noise, the music gradually subsides, returning towards the middle register as oscillating rhythmic textures transform into more arpeggiated linear writing. What follows is an extended coda-like section which is something of a recapitulation of the overall harmonic structure of the first half of the piece but reduced to a series of repeating chords of gradually increasing intensity, but without the linear aspects, dense chromaticism or polyrhythmic elaborations heard previously.

*Notes © Sam Hayden 2020*

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Will Goring (recording, mixing)

Sophie Nicole Ellison (recording, mixing, editing, mastering)

Sam Hayden (post-production)

Photo of Sam Hayden: Charles Linehan

Photo of Ian Pace courtesy of Dr. Pace

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## THE COMPOSER : SAM HAYDEN

Sam Hayden studied composition with Martin Butler, Michael Finnissy and Jonathan Harvey at the University of Sussex, Joseph Dubiel and David Rakowski at Columbia University, Louis Andriessen at the Royal Conservatory, The Hague, and Brian Ferneyhough at Stanford University. He has been the recipient of many awards including first prize in the 1995 Benjamin Britten International Competition and first prize in the 2003 Christoph Delz Foundation Competition for Composers. He has had composition residencies at the Civitella Ranieri Center, Umbria, and the Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, and computer music collaborations with NOTAM, Oslo, and the Centre Henri Pousseur, Liège.

Recent commissions include works for the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Séverine Ballon, Christopher Redgate and Cikada Ensemble, ELISION Ensemble, London Sinfonietta, Ensemble Musikfabrik, Ensemble Mosaik, Frode Haltli and Oslo Sinfonietta, Quatuor Diotima, RepertorioZero and Steamboat Switzerland, performed at festivals including Ars Musica (Brussels), BBC Proms (London), Música Contemporánea Fundación BBVA (Bilbao), Bludener Tage zeitgemäßer Musik, Gaudeamus Muziekweek (Utrecht), Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Festival Images Sonores (Liège), London Ear Festival, MaerzMusik (Berlin), Musik im 21. Jahrhundert (Saarbrücken), Spitalfields Winter Festival (London), Tage für Neue Musik (Zürich), Ultima Festival (Oslo) and Warsaw Autumn.

Other performers of Hayden's works include ASKO Ensemble, Ensemble Antidogma, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, Canto Battuto, Ensemble Cattrall, De Erepijs, Ensemble Ernst, Ensemble Exposé, Gruppe für Neue Musik Baden, Takao Hyakutome, Ictus Ensemble, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Mieko Kanno, Kokoro Ensemble, José Menor, Darragh Morgan, NYXD Ensemble, Ian Pace, Mats Scheidegger, Ensemble Surplus, Uroboros Ensemble, Ine Vanoeveren and Orkest de Volharding.

Hayden is Professor of Composition at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance.

<http://www.samhaydencomposer.com>

SAM HAYDEN



IAN PACE

## THE PERFORMER : IAN PACE

Ian Pace is a pianist of long-established reputation, specialising in the farthest reaches of musical modernism and transcendental virtuosity, as well as a writer and musicologist focusing on issues of performance, music and society, and the avant-garde. He studied at Chetham's School of Music, The Queen's College, Oxford, and, as a Fulbright Scholar, at the Juilliard School in New York with Hungarian pianist György Sándor, and later obtained his PhD at Cardiff University, on 'The reconstruction of post-war West German new music during the early allied occupation and its roots in the Weimar Republic and Third Reich.'

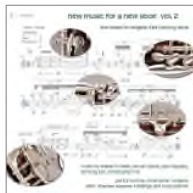
Based in London since 1993, he has pursued an active international career, performing in 24 countries and at most major European venues and festivals. His vast repertoire, which extends to all periods, focuses particularly upon music of the 20th and 21st centuries. He has given world premieres of over 300 piano works and has recorded 34 albums.

He is Reader in Music and Head of Music at City University, London, where he has worked since 2010. He previously held positions at the University of Southampton and Dartington College of Arts. His areas of academic expertise include 19<sup>th</sup> century performance practice, issues of music and society, contemporary performance practice and issues, music and culture under fascism, communism and the Cold War, modernist music and the post-1945 avant-garde, especially in Germany, critical musicology, music historiography, and issues relating to ethnography and auto-ethnography.

The volume *Critical Perspectives on Michael Finnissy: Bright Futures, Dark Pasts*, co-edited with Nigel McBride, was published by Routledge in April 2019, and the volume *Researching and Writing on Contemporary Art and Artists: Challenges, Practices, and Complexities*, co-edited with Christopher Wiley, by Palgrave Macmillan in June 2020. He is currently working on histories of musical modernism in Weimar and post-war Germany, and a history of specialist music education in the UK.

<http://ianpace.com>

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surface/tension  
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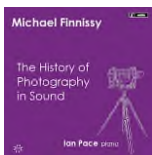
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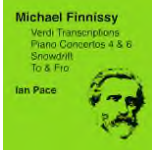


## Ian Pace recordings from Métier



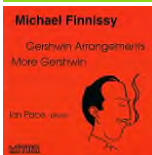
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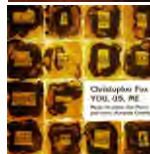
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Ian also performs on MSVCD 92055 – Peter Maxwell Davies: Chamber works

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