



CHANNEL CLASSICS

CCS 4592

messiaen  
VISIONS DE L'AMEN

ives  
3 QUARTER-  
TONE PIECES

van zeeland  
INITIALS

PIANODUO

*Gerard Bouwhuis & Cees van Zeeland*



**CHANNEL CLASSICS**

CCS 4592

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Production & Distribution by  
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MUZIEKINSTRUMENTEN

## Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992)

### Visions de l'Amen pour deux Pianos (1943)

- |     |  |        |
|-----|--|--------|
| [1] | Amen de la Création                              | 6'10"  |
| [2] | Amen des étoiles, de la planète à l'anneau       | 5'44"  |
| [3] | Amen de l'Agonie de Jésus                        | 7'13"  |
| [4] | Amen du Désir                                    | 10'36" |
| [5] | Amen des Anges, des Saints, du chant des oiseaux | 7'12"  |
| [6] | Amen du Jugement                                 | 3'10"  |
| [7] | Amen de la Consommation                          | 7'33"  |

## Charles Ives (1874–1954)

### Three Quarter-Tone Pieces (1923/24)

- |      |         |       |
|------|---------|-------|
| [8]  | Largo   | 4'40" |
| [9]  | Allegro | 2'55" |
| [10] | Chorale | 4'09" |

## Cees van Zeeland (1954– )

- |            |                 |        |
|------------|-----------------|--------|
| [11]       | Initials (1989) | 16'25" |
| TOTAL TIME |                 | 77'00" |

## PIANODUO

Gerard Bouwhuis & Cees van Zeeland—*pianos*

DDD





Cees van Zeeland (l.) & Gerard Bouwhuis  
photo: Marco Borggreve

## Pianoduo

Pianoduo has its roots in the Dutch group Hoketus. Gerard Bouwhuis and Cees van Zeeland were involved as pianists in this group from its founding. The group existed from 1976 to 1986 and within it a strong ensemble developed between the two pianists.

After working in the group for a number of years Bouwhuis and van Zeeland began to perform as Pianoduo. Although they consider the performance of new works an important objective, such pieces are usually combined with an 'established' 20th century repertoire or pieces which are seldom or never performed. The current CD is a good example of this. Many composers have now written for Pianoduo. Through this expansion of the repertoire for two pianos, Pianoduo hopes to lend an extra dimension to the art of music.

### Initials (1989)

Cees van Zeeland (1954 -)

For a long time I have been interested in bringing together in my compositions the various sorts of music which have affected me during my lifetime. The piece Initials is the first in which I have not used different types of music as my point of departure. Instead I have sought a form in which to give shape to a number of worlds of sound which are new to me. This time my starting point does not lie in music external to myself, although the listener will doubtless be able to find a nexus with music of the past.

Although the piece consists of one whole, distinct sections are discernible. The transition from one section to the next becomes increasingly blurred and thus material which is initially rich in contrast becomes steadily more integrated.

### Three Quarter-Tone Pieces (1923-24)

Charles Ives (1874-1954)

Of the three short pieces that I've composed with the use of quarter-tones, the first and last were originally intended for a quarter-tone piano, two keyboards, and for one player.

The first movement, *Largo*, is primarily diatonic, using quarter-tones as passing-notes or suspensions and quarter-tone chords as extensions or variants, though the middle section is of quarter-tone chord extensions.

The second movement, *Allegro*, for two pianos, one tuned a quarter-tone sharp, is mostly made of rhythms contrasted or 'split' between the two pianos. From a pure quarter-tone harmonic standpoint it doesn't amount to much.

The last is a 'Chorale' played by two pianos as it stands written for one piano; there is very little doubling. It attempts to work along the pure quarter-tone harmonic lines outlined in the second section of this paper, and is based principally on a primary and secondary chord. A *cantus firmus*, taken by the upper voice in the coda, is made of a phrase in quarter-tones going to one in half-tones and ending in whole tones, while the harmonic plan remains throughout on a quarter-tone basis

### Visions de l'Amen pour deux pianos (1943) Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

"Amen" has four different meanings:

- Amen, let it be so, the act of creation.
- Amen, I submit, I accept. Your will be done!
- Amen, the wish, the desire, let it be so, that You give Yourself to me, and myself to You!
- Amen, it is as it will be, everything is for ever determined, and has reached fulfillment in Paradise.

To this I have added the lives of creatures that say Amen through the simple fact that they exist. I have tried to express the diverse richness of the term Amen in seven musical visions.

### **I. The Amen of the Creation.**

Amen, let it be so! "God said, Let there be light; and there was light" (Genesis). The first piano plays a double-layered rhythmic ostinato like a carillon, with non retrograde rhythms which are augmented or diminished with each repetition. The second piano plays, in long and solemn chords, the theme of the Creation, the main theme of the whole work. The whole movement is one crescendo. It starts from an absolute pianissimo, the mystery of that ancient mist which already contains the germ of light; all the bells quiver in that light, and hence in Life itself.

### **II. The Amen of the stars, of the planet with the ring.**

A wild dance. The stars, the suns and Saturn, the planet with the multicoloured ring, "God calls them and they answer: Amen, we are here!" (Book of the Apocrypha). The second piano plays the theme of the dance of the planets. The first development: beneath the polymodal turbulence of the first piano, the second piano varies the beginning of the theme (consisting of the 5 notes) through rhythmical changes and unexpected changes in register. Second development: the beginning of the theme varies through elimination, as well as through contrary and parallel motion. A third development is superimposed: the first piano plays the beginning of the theme with a rhythmic ostinato. The second piano plays the beginning of the theme with changes in register. Then follows a varied repetition of the dance of the planets. This mélange of movement evokes the life of the planets and the stunning rainbow which colours the revolving ring of Saturn.

### III. The Amen of the Agony of Jesus.

Jesus suffers and cries, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. In this let Your will and not mine be done" (the Gospel according to Matthew). He accepts, Your will be done, Amen.

- Jesus is alone on the Mount of Olives and faces his coming death.

There are three musical motifs:

1) the malediction of the Father against the sins of the world which are at that moment represented by Jesus;

2) a cry, a rhythmical and expressive group "up-beat - accent - conclusion";

3) a heart-rending lament on 4 notes in contrary rhythms.

- This is followed by another invocation of the theme of the Creation. A great silence broken by a few pulsations evokes the suffering of that hour; an inexpressible suffering, conveyed somewhat by blood and sweat.

### IV. The Amen of Longing.

There are two themes expressing longing. The first, slow, ecstatic, the longing for deep tenderness, a foretaste of the calm pleasant scent of Paradise; the second extremely passionate, the soul is drawn by a terrible love which expresses itself carnally (see the Song of Songs); but there is nothing carnal here, only an intense thirst for love. To finish, the first theme creates a great calm. The two principle voices appear to merge until there is only the harmonious silence of the heavens...

### V. The Amen of the Angels, the Saints, the birdsong.

The song of the purity of the Saints; Amen. Vehement voices of birds; Amen. "Angels kneel before the Heavenly Throne; Amen" (Book of Revelations). First comes the song of the Angels and Saints, very simple and pure; then comes the "world" of birdsong, generating brilliant piano playing. These really are the strains of nightingales, blackbirds, chaffinches, whitethroats; an animated and endearing

mélange. There follows a reprise of the song of the Saints with a canon of non retrograde rhythms on three levels, then a short Coda about the birds.

#### VI. The Amen of the Judgement.

Three icy notes, the clock strikes the hour of truth; Verily I say unto you, Amen. "Get ye hence, ye who are doomed to damnation!" (the Gospel according to Matthew). The damned are fixed in their state of damnation. A deliberately severe and short piece.

#### VII. The Amen of the Fulfillment.

The Fulfillment, Paradise. The life of the chosen in a carillon of light. "Light to light" (Proverbs). Amen. The second piano recapitulates the chord-theme of the Creation and takes it into a long and glorious choral. The first piano surrounds the second (combining extremely low and extremely high registers) with a constant carillon of chords and brilliant scintillating rhythms in rhythmic canons succeeding each other more and more rapidly; jewels of the Apocalypse which reverberate, collide, dance and impart color and fragrance to the light of Life.

"Visions de l' Amen" was conceived and written for two pianos and demands of these instruments the utmost of force and variety of tone. I have entrusted to the first piano the rhythmical complexities, the chords, everything that involves speed, charm and quality of tone. To the second piano I have entrusted the main melody, the thematic elements and everything that demands emotion and force.

Translation: Taalcentrum VU



Olivier Messiaen (1908 -1992)

Visions de l'Amen pour deux Pianos (1943)

[1] Amen de la Création	06.10
[2] Amen des étoiles, de la planète à l'anneau	05.44
[3] Amen de l'Agonie de Jésus	07.13
[4] Amen du Désir	10.36
[5] Amen des Anges, des Saints, du chant des oiseaux	07.12
[6] Amen du Jugement	03.10
[7] Amen de la Consommation	07.33

Charles Ives (1874 - 1954)

Three Quarter-Tone Pieces (1923/24)

[8] Largo	04.40
[9] Allegro	02.55
[10] Chorale	04.09

Cees van Zeeland (1954-)

[11] Initials (1989)	16.25
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total time 77.00

COLOPHON

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