

# WIM MERTENS

The Belgian composer Wim Mertens is an international recording and performing artist who has given countless concerts as a soloist and with his ensemble, across Europe, North and Central America, Japan and Thailand. He is also the author of *American Minimal Music (1980)*, the first book to deal in depth with the school of American repetitive music.

His early landmark albums included *Vergessen* and *Struggle for Pleasure (1982)*. Since then, he has composed pieces in different formats. Short, accessible songs or Lieder can be followed by magnanimous and complex three- and four-part cycles for solo piano, chamber music ensembles and symphony orchestra. Since his recording debut in 1980, *For Amusement Only*, an electronic composition for pinball machines, Mertens has released more than 70 albums.

## Vocals, ensembles and cycles

The 1985 album *Maximizing the Audience*, saw the introduction of vocals in Mertens' music, using a high-pitched voice in a language of his own invention.

His releases have included the ambitious 37-CD cycle *Qua* started in 1991. Other special releases included 1997's guitar album *Sin embargo* and *Moment* (2003), a 13-album box set with 80 compositions.

## Movies, theatre and scores

Other notable projects include original music for piano and voice for the silent movies *La femme de nulle part* by Louis Delluc and *The Land Beyond the Sunset* by Harold Shaw in 1993.

Wim Mertens also works for the theatre and movies. Scores have included Jan Fabre's performances *The Power of Theatrical Madness (1984)*, Peter Greenaway's film *The Belly of an Architect (1987)*, *Je pense à vous* by the Dardenne brothers (1992), Marion Hänsel's film *Li - Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea (1992)* and Paul Cox's *Father Damien (1999)*, among others.

## 2011: a broader musical scale

The music of Mertens has been used to grace numerous occasions. These include *A Starry Wisdom* for the Festival van Vlaanderen in Belgium, live recordings with the Tenerife Symphony Orchestra (OST) in de Sala Sinfónica del Auditorio de Tenerife Adan Martin, a live composition for the city of Guimarães, Portugal, Capital of Culture 2012, and *Voice of the Living* for the FPS Chancellery of the Belgian Prime Minister to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First World War in Ypres.

To celebrate his 40<sup>th</sup> artistic anniversary, the Belgian composer released *Inescapable* in 2019, a 4-CD limited edition box set. It was followed by a tour that ran for two years, the double studio album *Heroides* and the ensemble studio version of *Voice of the Living* in 2023. In 2024, *Ranges of Robustness* explored the forms and degrees of the notion of 'robustness'.

The following year, *As Water is to Fish* considered the relationship between fish and water. Do they need a name for it? If a fish cried would we even notice?

### **The live experience**

Wim Mertens regularly performs with different settings and ensembles: solo piano, duo (violin or trumpet, piano), trio (violin or trumpet, cello, piano) and also with a symphony orchestra. After a series of shows in Greece, one reviewer wrote, "Intimate yet gripping, he reaffirmed the value of listening—and the audience followed. One of the most powerful musical moments of 2025."

<https://www.wimmertens.com>