

Biography

Frank Nuyts was born in Ostend on 3 February 1957. He studied percussion and chamber music at the Royal Conservatory in Ghent (under the guidance of Claude Coppens, among others) and composition at the Institute for Psychoacoustics and Electronic Music (IPEM) with Lucien Goethals.

He wrote his first works in a modernist post-serial style. For one of those, 'Alsof de hand nooit meer weggaat', he was awarded the 1979 Tenuto Prize for composition. However, with his 1986 work 'Rastapasta' for solo strings and flute, he broke away from this idiom.

Together with Boudewijn Buckinx, he became one of the most important representatives of postmodernism in Flanders from 1986 onwards. Since then, his work has been characterised by a neotonal musical language and a very personal treatment of influences from more commercial music genres.

Together with Iris De Blaere, he founded Hardscore in 1989, in search of a suitable sound idiom for his new style. He composed six 'Hardscore Books' for this band, Books 2 through 6 were released on CD worldwide.

Yet, Frank Nuyts also continued to write compositions for classical ensembles: in addition to loose orchestral works, he wrote a great deal of chamber music, including his first three symphonies, the marimba concerto 'Woodnotes', the electronic chamber opera 'Ga.n', and works for large crossover ensembles.

Since 2002, he has been writing music for the theatre company Ensemble Leporello (e.g. 'Bekket' in 2003; 'De wijdere wereld van water', presented at the Zaragoza World Exhibition in 2008; 'Arabische Nacht' in 2009).

Hardscore was temporarily dissolved in 2001, after which a series of large works quickly followed: 'Different from habit' (2004; commissioned by the Flanders Symphony Orchestra; reprise in 2016 by the National Orchestra of Belgium), the 4th Symphony 'Brandgang' (2005; commissioned by Zonzo Compagnie), 'Rats and rabbits' (2005; for the Concertgebouw Bruges), 'Bajadillas' (2005; for the Táman Trio), 'The Trances' for percussion quartet (2006; for the Transit Festival), 'The abduction of the East' (2006; for the Spectra Ensemble), '... where the wind goes ...' (2007; commissioned by I Solisti del Vento), the piano concerto 'Innocence in admiration' (2008; commissioned by the Emanon Ensemble, now Flemish Sinfonietta, with soloist Erwin Deleux and led by Raf De Keninck), the 5th Symphony 'Fetish' (2009; also commissioned by Emanon), the street opera 'De trouw van Mira en Miro' (2009; commissioned by MiramirO), and 'Sacha' (2010; for the Ensemble Klang.)

Vocal music gradually started receiving more attention as well: Nuyts composed a series of six-part a capella works for the Australian ensemble The Song Company led by Roland Peelman (including 'Airs à gogo' (1996), 'Old Airs' (2006) and 'The XXX Songs' (2007)). He composed the chamber opera 'Middle East' (2010) on text by Philippe Blasband commissioned by LOD Musical Theatre (director: Johan Dehollander; actor: Thomas Bellinck; vocals: Ruth Rosenfeld; musical performance: Spectra Ensemble, led by Filip Rathé). Two new musical theatre works followed: 'Tongval', a chamber opera, with its own lyrics (directed by Ronny Lauwers), and 'Noite Inquieta', a monodrama based on lyrics by Pessoa for the youth string ensemble 'Amadeus' and sung by the Portuguese mezzo Inês Madeira (directed by Eddy Becquart).

In the summer of 2013, another chamber opera, 'Paternel', premiered, again on text by Philippe Blasband in collaboration with Trefpunt and The School of Arts Ghent, which was given a prequel in 2015, 'Chut!', presented at De Bijloke in October 2016. 'Double Takes' (2015) for two singers and four instrumentalists was awarded the incentive prize for vocal music from the province of West Flanders (2016). 'Cambio Madre Por Moto' (2014), on an original libretto by Rosa Montero, was commissioned by Gerard Mortier for the Teatro Real de Madrid but was eventually removed from the program due to censorship by the managing director.

From 2002, Frank Nuyts also started a cycle of 24 piano sonatas, which he completed in 2018.

Sonatas 1 to 18 were presented at six concerts, spread over three years, at Muziekcentrum De Bijloke under the impetus of the then director Daan Bauwens. Three different pianists performed at each concert, both young virtuosos (Benjamin Van Esser, Elisa Medinilla, Marc Masson, Tae Yoshioka, Katerina Konstantourou, Gabi Sultana, Ivo Delaere, Erwin Deleux) and well-known names (Luc Van Loo, Ralph Van Raat, Vitaly Samoshko, Daan Vandewalle, Jan Michiels, Keiko Shichijo, Johan Duijck, Roland Peelman) (sonatas 13 to 18 were commissioned by De Bijloke). A CD with live recordings was released later. Sonatas 19 to 24 were composed for Liang-yu Wang, Roland Peelman, Gabi Sultana, Keiko Shichijo, Luc Van Loo and Barbara Baltussen). These will also be released on record together with a new 1st sonata (sonata 1B) played by Katarina Konstantouro.

Hardscore was rebooted in 2013 and first performed with new versions of a number of songs from the original books, but in 2014 Frank Nuyts composed 'Carbon Fixation', a reflection on the current relevance of the early environmentalism of the hippie movement at the time. Tomas Hendriks created the original visuals.

The new ensemble 'Beat Love Oracle' with several musicians from Hardscore (Frank Debruyne, Stijn Deldaele, Ronald Dhaene and Frank Nuyts) made its debut at the 2017 Ghent Trade Fair. For this occasion, he had already composed a repertoire of more than 90 minutes of music revolving around Frank Zappa's famous question: 'Does Humor Belong in Music? The first vinyl LP 'Who's counting?' is released in 2020. Meanwhile, the band continues to expand its reach: concert tour to the Baltic states and highly appreciated concerts in several Belgian venues. These activities lead to the

recording of 2 more CDs/LPs ('Turning the Table' and the soon to be released 'Dangerous liquids'. A 4^T CD is recorded at the end of 2023 with the Taiwanese/American pianist Liang-yu Wang.)

From 2015 on also several commissions for orchestra: 'Tripping the light fantastic' (Kade Deinze); 'T.a.n.s.t.a.a.f.l.e.' (Festival of Flanders Ghent for Casco Phil, conducted by Ben Haemhouts); 'City Rounds' (Academy Vilvoorde 2022). And more chamber music commissions by Tomma Wessel and Apsara (rec), oboe (Piet Van Bockstal), clarinet (Raf De Keninck), duo Vandewalle-Ermert, Stephan De Jonghe Stichting for piano, several pieces for the young ensemble Extended Music Collective (Stef Van Vynckt) and Oxalys.

In 2022 a new chamber music/poetry formation 'Les Nièces de Diderot' is formed with Jana Arns, (poetry and flute), Frank Nuyts (marimba and compositions), Iris De Blaere (piano) and Joris Vanvinckenroye (double bass)

The opera 'Cambio madre por moto' was premiered in Festival Ghent 2023, conducted by Ben Haemhouts, in a coproduction by Festival Ghent, Transparant, Aslko-Schoenberg and La Monnaie. Aïda Gabriels was the stage director. This production will travel to Barcelona and Madrid in '25-26.

In September 2024 the booklet 'Het verkeerde been' about the music by Frank Nuyts, compiled by Dirk Ooms, was presented during 'Frank Nuyts 65' combined with several concerts featuring his music.

During one weekend in September 2024, the 24 piano sonatas will be performed by large number of pianists in Quatre Mains Ghent

2024 will also the first performances by Keiko Shichijo, Triple Feat, Spectra Ensemble, Wilfried Van den Brande and Marie-Juliette Ghazarian.

From 2010 to 2015, he organized the annual music festival 'Voorwaarts Maart/En Avant Mars' together with Iris De Blaere and in collaboration with De Bijloke.

Frank Nuyts was awarded the Prize for Contemporary Music Flanders - Québec (1990), the first prize in the Muizelhuis Composition Competition (1991), the Culture Prize of the City of Ghent (1995), the Prize for New Music of the Province of East Flanders (2011) and the Sabam Award for Contemporary Music for Sonatas 13-18 (2013).

Until 2016, he taught composition and orchestration at the School of Arts of Ghent University College.

Websites:

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www.hardscore.be

