



# CHRISTINA OOREBEEK

A PORTRAIT



Music Center  
The Netherlands

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Music Center the Netherlands is the resource and promotion center for the professional music world.

Its mission is to propagate and enhance the position of Dutch musical life, both nationally and internationally.

## BIOGRAPHY



Christina Viola Oorebeek is an American-Dutch composer writing acoustic and electro-acoustic music. She is interested in music theatre and developing ways of using various disciplines that embody her artistic paths of discovery.

She worked for a long period as a teacher and improvising pianist at the Department for Dance at the Arts College in Amsterdam. During these years, in which she earned a degree at the Conservatory of Amsterdam with pianist Willem Brons, she decided that 'making' autonomous music was the most important thread which she wanted to follow.

At age 50, she commenced officially on her career as a composer studying at the Rotterdam Conservatory with Klaas de Vries. She was granted the Composition Prize upon graduation in 1999. At the Conservatory of Amsterdam, she studied instrumentation with Theo Verbey. She participated in master classes with Magnus Lindberg in Amsterdam and Toshio Hosokawa at the Akiyoshidai Music Festival in Japan.

Her interest in electro-acoustic music has been supported by temporary residencies at STEIM in Amsterdam, from 2002-2008 for writing among other works a chamber opera with live-electronics, "The Pitch Shifter"

Her work has been played in Barcelona, the Music Factory Festival in Norway, the Feniks Festival in Antwerp, the 2002 ISCM World Music Days in Yokohama, Japan, the New Music Indaba in South Africa, the Ultima Festival 2008, the SICPP week at the Boston Conservatory 2008, and in Italy and France.

In the Netherlands, her work has been performed in the Gaudeamus Music Theatre Festival (2004), the Festival "Live" festival for electro-acoustic music

(2006), the Concertgebouw (2006), the Doelen in Rotterdam and in many other venues in the country. In 2007 she performed "Chromotoy III" for Disklavier and live electronics in the ISCM World Music Days in Hong Kong.

Christina Viola Oorebeek won a prize in the International Dutilleux Concours (1999) and at the Gaudeamus Young Composers Workshop in the Netherlands (1997) In 2003 she was invited to teach workshops at the New Music Indaba Festival in South Africa in June, 2003 with Theo Loevendie and Kevin Volans.

She was invited to give lectures, concerts and composition classes with Joel Ryan and Daniel Schorno (STEIM) in China, 2008.

In October, 2009, the composer performed a new work, "on/off" for erhu and live electronics with Ma Jiamun at the Shanghai Electroacoustic Music Week in Shanghai in 2009.

[www.christinaoorebeek.com](http://www.christinaoorebeek.com)

## COMPOSING BETWEEN ARCADIA AND THE ARCADE

The first thing that stands out upon reading Christina Viola Oorebeek's (1944) biography is her late calling to composition. Oorebeek had already been taking private composition lessons for some time – with, among others, American-in-Holland co-expats Ron Ford and Jeff Hamburg – but was fifty by the time she had the courage to start studying with Klaas de Vries at the conservatory.

In 1999, she graduated in Rotterdam with a prize in composition: the beginning of a new walk in life at an age when most people are thinking about retirement.

Oorebeek certainly was not. Perhaps because she grew up in the sixties – the time of Fluxus, John Cage, the Beatles and India, the time where everything seemed possible and anyone with good ideas could be an artist, no diploma required. At age twenty-one, still living in America, Oorebeek taught herself about the blues and jazz, and took courses in Indian music in Los Angeles and San Francisco at the schools of Ravi Shankar and Ali Akbar Khan. This was the foundation then, for the open, “a touch naive” – as described by a reviewer – perspective with which she greets the world and also her music. After all, who dares write and compose the libretto and music for a playful, tongue-in-cheek science fiction opera (*The Pitch Shifter*)? And what composer dares to give a piece such a fairy-tale title as “the enamoured cricket” (*una Cicala innamorata*)? Those might also be the benefits of starting to compose late in life: none of the shame and endless questing of her juvenile colleagues, but rather an unfettered – or in Oorebeek's own words, reckless – unfolding of a foundation she put down quite a while ago. “To me, some little motive I hear in a piece of hiphop music is so truly glorious that I want to quote it,” says Oorebeek. “I feel that I am like a crow, also on the lookout for little jewels to bring into my musical nest. It also leads to a chaotic organization problem, but that is another subject.”

Besides her studies in blues, jazz, Indian music, and her later composition lessons in the Netherlands, Oorebeek was also influenced by her experiences as the singer in a semi-acoustic rock band in San Francisco, by her piano lessons with Willem Brons, and by her work as a teacher and improvising pianist in the Dance department at the Amsterdam School for the Arts.

This hands-on experience as a performing musician can certainly be found in her compositions, which are always formally organic, melodically expressive and well-worked out in timing. They radiate a kind of freedom, and a courage that is not so common in new music. "In all this arcadian beauty, a graceful dance rhythm comes out now and again," wrote critic Aad van der Ven about a performance of Oorebeek's *una Cicala innamorata*. He added with surprise: "Where do you hear that these days?"

To prepare for that work, written in 1999-2000, Oorebeek listened to the summer sounds of the fields on Japan's Akiyoshidai. She explains that she made her own "translation of insect sounds" based on the "numeric relationship in symmetrical mathematical rectangles." There you have a perfect illustration of the two elements which Oorebeek tries to bring together in all of her works: the expressive freedom of an imagined Arcadia – "escapism, I like it a lot," said the composer in an interview about *The Pitch Shifter*. On the other hand is a firm foundation in mathematics, which provides the controlled and permutative building blocks for an organic and sometimes fantastic nature, which Oorebeek translates into music. It is as if she is saying that it is only a small step from Arcadia to the exhilarating statistic processes of an arcade game.

This fascination for games and the *omo ludens* is a third element that appears in much of Oorebeek's music. Very literally in *Chromotoy I – III* for all kinds of (toy) pianos and pianolas. Or in *...and god invented dice* (2002), a theater work for two women singers, small ensemble and electronics. Here Oorebeek places the singers at a gambling table while the electronics play the polyphony of slot machines in a Las Vegas casino. For Oorebeek, there is little difference between the complex collective song of crickets or the clicking,

rattling and ringing of a slot machine. Freely, she translates the beauty of both in sound. But there is also always a world of thoughts behind the notes: “My fascination for the casinos and gambling went from the banal but nirvanic sound in the Las Vegas casinos that I sampled to the idea of win-lose in Bukowski, to the sublime texts of Mallarmé in the last song, summing up the continuous gamble that life seems to be from second to second. Or is it fate?” Play is also the subject of the opera *The Pitch Shifter* (2004), where singing the right pitch is of life and death importance to the inhabitants of planet Zingula – how much more playful can really you be in choosing the name for such a vocally focused planet? You could even see the life-force-giving melodic codes of the Zingulans as a kind of Indian raga, just as the repeating C of the oracle (“the ancient unhearable”) is a kind of primeval state of music. *The Pitch Shifter* is also one of the many works in which Oorebeek’s fascination with electro-acoustic techniques comes out.

Oorebeek’s interest in a broad range of music from Ligeti and Nancarrow to Cage and Indian tradition can be heard in her early ensemble piece ‘...en souvenir de Shalimar’ (1997). She explains: “The form of this piece was inspired by the *alap*, a term used to describe the beginning of an Indian raga, in which the tones of the mode are slowly introduced by melodic fragments.”

But also in the more recent *Min-su-ryu-ko* (2006), Oorebeek uses openly and freely – as always – elements from eastern and African music. “*Min-su-ryu-ko* is created from my own mixture of the four pitch sets used in old Japanese court music. Despite the twelve tones of the chromatic gamelan, I still took my material in the Far East, while the sound colour and playing technique stay unmistakably that of the gamelan. By adding marimba and woodblocks, the faster rhythms, based on African patterns, stand out. At the end of the piece, there are descending lines which imitate Western clocks. All told, *Min-su-ryu-ko* is a fusion of several musical worlds which I’ve been interested in for a long time as a composer.”

**Anthony Fiumara, 2008**

translation: **Terri Hron**

photo cover: **Gerrit Scheurs**

## COMPOSITIONS

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### PIANO AND KEYBOARDS

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#### **Chromotoy** (2006)

for toy piano, midi-keyboard in the form of a toy piano, acoustic piano and live electronics

Duration: 16'

#### **Chromotoy II** (2005)

for partially prepared yamaha disklavier and live electronics

Duration: 15'

#### **Tremors and Quakes** (1998)

for piano

Duration: ca. 11'30"

#### **The Zapdream** (1999)

a story and music voor piano quattres-mains, narrator and percussionist

#### **Tuning Studies** (1999)

for Yamaha Disklavier en piano samples

Duration: 15'45"

#### **Prismatic Blues** (1997)

for piano solo

Duration: 9'30"

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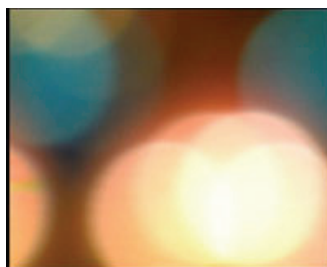
### PERCUSSION

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#### **Edges** (2006)

for amplified plexiglass board and Super 8 projector (2006)

Duration: 13'50"



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### WINDS

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#### **Traces of an Anthem** (2006)

for flute/alto flute and partially-prepared piano

Duration: 13'

#### **Crosspoints** (2005)

for Hobo, Sopraan Saxofoon, Clarinet in Bes, Bass Clarinet en Fagot

Duration: 12'30"

#### **Xenolith** (1994)

for English horn solo

Duration: 6'

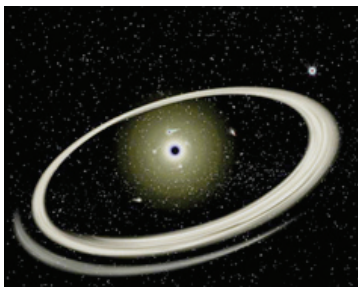
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## VOCAL WORKS - SOLO AND WITH ENSEMBLE

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### **The Pitch Shifter** (2004)

a science fiction chamber opera  
soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, baritone, fl, cl, cl-bas, bas, trp, mand, harp, perc2, v2 vla, vc, cb, midi-keyboard, midi-controller and live electronics  
Duration: 65'



### **... and god invented dice** (2002)

for soprano, mezzo-soprano, midi-keyboard, cello, percussion and sound collages  
Duration: 24'30"



### **das letzte Gold verfallener**

#### **Sterne** (2003)

for soprano and ensemble  
Duration: 12'56"  
soprano, fl, ob, cl, cl-bas, perc, harp, celesta, vl2, vla, vc, cb

### **Satie and his Sense of Shoelaces**

(1996)  
a mini music drama in the form of three songs  
Duration: 9'

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## WORKS FOR ENSEMBLE

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### **Min-su-Ryu-ko** (2006)

for marimba, woodblocks and chromatic gamelan  
Duration: 11'15"

### **Fulgura Frango** (2002)

for trumpet, bugle, Eb trumpet and ensemble  
Duration 14'36"  
fl/p, ho, cl, cl-b, tr, ba perc, pno, harm, ho

### **temptations of the beat** (2001)

for 5 strings and 3 percussionists  
Duration: 12'27"  
3 perc, 2vl, vla, vc, cb

### **una Cicala innamorata** (1999)

Duration: ca. 11'30"  
fl, ob, cl, mand, gtr, harp, pno, perc, vl, vla, vc, cb

## COMPACT DISCS



### **Fulgura frango**

Marco Blauw, trp ; Doelenensemble o.l.v. Arie van Beek

'Dutch new music'

\*Q Disc 99002

### **Tremors and Quakes**

Ivo Janssen, piano

\*NM Classics 98015



### **Prismatic blues**

Marcel Worms, piano

'Red, white & blues'

\*Attacca 27013 & 27104



## PUBLICATIONS ON THE COMPOSER

*Gaudeamus Live Electronics Festival, Muziekgebouw aan het IJ, Amsterdam*

In “Chromotoy III”, that had its premiere yesterday, Christina Viola Oorebeek took a position (*with her computer*) on the side of the podium. She stretched the sounds produced by pianist Tomoko Mukayama on toy grand piano and concert grand, to delicate, bell-like tapestries.

*Jochem Valkenburg in the NRC Handelsblad, November 24, 2006*

“Chromotoy for Disklavier and electronics” by the Dutch-American composer Christina Oorebeek, has much atmosphere. With her computer, she is able to conjure up beautiful Debussy-like sounds.

*Rinus Groot in: the Haarlems Dagblad, December 15, 2005*

Over its 17-year life, the fine and malleable new-music-minded ensemble Xtet has been more than a lurking presence on the performance scene but less than a steady one. The advent of its first residency at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, a three-concert series that began Wednesday, promises more continuity in public and a well-deserved opportunity to flex its agenda. That agenda involves the usual new-music business of giving premieres, but also tapping the annals of 20th century music. Wednesday’s concert filled the bill nicely, the the U.S. premiere of Christina Viola Oorebeek’s “temptations of the beat, number 1”

Overall, the program was an easy-does-it affair, whose most atonal and arrhythmic moments came from Oorebeek’s work for three percussionists and five strings. Though ostensibly inspired by Dizzy Gillespie and hip-hop, the score follows an abstract course, craftily resisting temptation to give in to the beat or a tonal center.

*Josef Woodard in the Los Angeles Times, November 15, 2002*

Also, *Fulgura Frango*, a trumpet concert by Christina Viola Oorebeek, offered a fascinating experience. Although Oorebeek is in her fifties, she is a newcomer to the Dutch composers' world. At once, her music makes clear that she knows what she wants: color, dialogue, and organic development. Solist, André Heuvelmans and the Doelen Ensemble provided a beautiful interpretation. The focus of the piece is a glittering passage for piccolo trumpet and melted mixture chords after which the one-pointedness gradually subsides.

*Frits van der Waa in de Volkskrant, March 20, 2002*

*The Day of the Mechanique, the Toonzaal, s'Hertengenbosch*

The nice thing about mechanics is that they are always made by people. In Tuning Studies for Disklavier and tape, Christina Viola Oorebeek expanded the possibilities of the piano through technique. In the middle of the hall, a computer-driven grand piano worked through the thirds, fourths and octaves and used by a piano tuner, along with variations. The sounds of the tape were divided over 8 speakers around the audience, so that you felt that you were in the middle of a giant instrument through which the music moved. By using different timbres, the total sound was of a great richness.

*René van Peer in the Brabants Dagblad/Brabants Daily 2001*

*Gaudeamus Week September 1999, Felix Meritus, Amsterdam*

Also, surprising in a totally different way, is "una Cicala innamorata" by the American Dutch composer, C.V. Oorebeek. She listened to summer sounds in the fields of Akiyoshidai in Japan. Tasteful and made with a feeling for poetic sound, this work would probably been greeted with applause by Ravel. In all of this arcadian beauty a graceful dance rhythm even appears. Where do you hear that these days?

*Aad van der Ven in the Goudsche Courant, September 7, 1999*

# MUSIC EXAMPLES

## San Shi Liu Ji Zhi Liu (6 of the 36 Strategies)

♩ = 72  
Molto agitato, nervoso

Text: Anonymous  
Music: Christina Viola Oorebeek (2008)

Tenor

Alto Recorder

Panflute

Erhu

Viola da Gamba

Double Bass

Percussion

5 Temple blocks

Log drum-low

*mf*

*mf*

*f*

*f*

*mf*

*f*

*f*

5

A

Tenor

Alto Rec.

Panflute

Erhu

V. da G.

D. Bass.

Perc.

5 Sizzle Cymbal

*p*

*mf*

*p*

*mf*

*f*

*p*

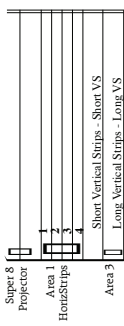
*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

\*\*\* wide tremolo, reaching 1/4 tones

# Edges Part 1



Molto nervoso, circa ♩ = 84

1. Super 8 Projector at Speed 9
2. Oscillator 1, 4/16 ♩ = M.M. 120
3. Sample 1 ON\*

Christina Viola Oorebeek (2008)

Super 8

Area 1

Area 2

Area 3

Horizontal Strips

Short VS

Long VS

Small Super Ball

Big Super Ball

reach the halfway point to the top of Vertical Strips

flow on at end of HorizS3

bouncing movement

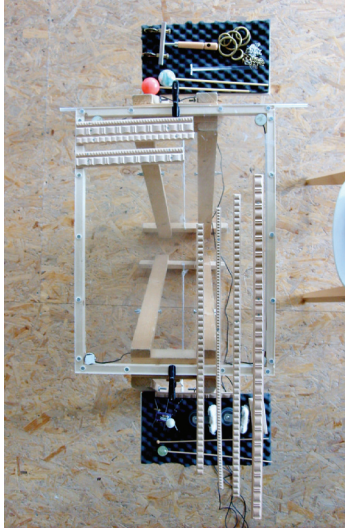
mf

roll small Super Ball between HorizShips 3 & 2 on the left side of the frame

Stuttering sound on the HorizS3

move to the top of the Vert. Strips make iter move water wheel faster

\*Version III, Sample 1, 4 should be programmed in loop mode



Legend: names of strips in score, playing areas

**Horizontal Strips\_** Strips placed **horizontally** on the plexiglass plate:

- HorizS1 = shortest strip, middle width
- HorizS2 = third longest strip, thin width
- HorizS3 = second longest strip, middle width
- HorizS4 = longest strip, biggest width

**Horizontal Extended Strips\_** portions **extending horizontally** over the plexiglass:

- H-extS1 = shortest strip, middle width
- H-extS2 = third longest strip, thin width
- H-extS3 = second longest strip, middle width
- H-extS4 = longest, widest strip

**Vertical Strips\_** Strips placed **vertically** on the plexiglass board

- Short VS = shortest strip furthest from the right edge
- Long VS = longer and wider strip next to the right edge

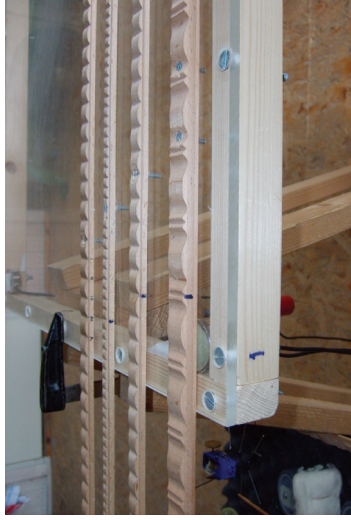
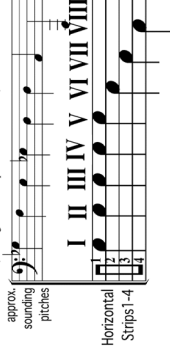
**Playing areas of the plexiglass board**

- Area 1 = lower left corner, horizontal strips
- Area 2 = lower right corner, plexiglass only
- Area 3 = upper right corner, vertical strips
- Area 4 = upper left corner, plexiglass only
- Area 5 = diagonal plexiglass "corridor" from Area 4 to Area 2

**Pitch nodes on Horizontal Strips** (see photo for pitch nodes!)

- HorizS1 each rounded division = circa one half tone
- HorizS2 marked node = pitch D below middle C
- HorizS3 marked node = pitch A, one minor 10<sup>th</sup> below middle C on the piano
- HorizS4 marked node = pitch A 8ba

nodes are played on the nodes of the Horiz.Strips with fingers. (see diagrams for the positions of the nodes)



# temptations of the beat

number 1

Christina Viola Oorebeek  
(2001)

Largo eroica - (circa  $\text{♩} = 54$ )

Vibraphone

Perc 1 *f*

Perc 2 *mf*

Perc 3 *mf*

Violin 1 *mf* *f* *mf*

Violin 2 *mf* *f* *mf*

Viola *mf* *f* *mf*

Cello *f*

D. Bass *f*

1 Concert toms: medium high, middle, low  
two rules (two sticks)

*mf* *f* *mf*

*mf* *f* *mf*

*mf* *f* *mf*

*mf* *f* *mf*

*mf* *f* *mf*

*mf* *f* *mf*

1/4 tone vibrato

1/4 tone vibrato

(\*) *f*

4

P. 1 *p*

P. 2 *f* *mf*

P. 3 *pp*

VI. 1 *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

VI. 2 *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

Vla *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

Cel. *p* *mf*

Db. *p* *mf*

non vib. *p* vib. out *mf*

non vib. *p* vib. out *mf*

1/4 tone vib.

(\*) *p*

# Satie and his sense of shoelaces

## I. Coming untied

Christina Viola Oorebeek

**Tenor**

$\text{♩} = 54$  Confidential, nervous  $\text{♩} = 60$   
Speaking voice

Sa - tie is ha - ving trou - ble  
*mp*

**Pianoforte**

*pp*

*mf*

*leggiero*

*mf*

*normale*

they keep co - ming un - *mf*

*mp* *mf*

# Prismatic Blues

## I. Primary Blue

Christina Viola Oorebeek

Ritmico come boogie woogie ♩ = 132

5

10

13

17

21

*mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mf* *f* *ff* *mf* *f* *pp* *f* *pp* *p* *mf* *pp* *p* *pp* *mp*

*poco rit.* *poco meno mosso* *nervoso*

S#b-----  
S#b-----



**Music Center The Netherlands**

Rokin 111  
1012 KN Amsterdam  
T+31(0)20 344 60 00

[www.mcn.nl](http://www.mcn.nl)

