

# BIOGRAPHY

Yann Tiersen's ninth studio album, and his first solo piano album, is **named *EUSA***, the Breton name for the island of Ushant. Located 30 kilometres off the west coast of Brittany in the Celtic Sea, the island is where Tiersen lives and, with *EUSA*, he has created an album of sparse beauty.

Living on the island Tiersen is immersed in remote, rugged natural surroundings every day and his objective with *EUSA* was to make a musical map, a tool for the listener to navigate and experience his surroundings. Tiersen doesn't want to tell the listener what to think or feel, rather *EUSA* is intended as a guide for the listener.

Yann Tiersen first came to prominence when his early albums were used to create the Bafta-winning soundtrack for the film *Amélie* (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001) and his musical output has been diverse from the beginning.

From the stripped back production of his debut, *La Valse Des Monstres* (1995) and his break out album *Le Phare* (1998), both later mined for *Amélie*. Then moving to a larger band presentation of his past three albums:  $\infty$  (Infinity, 2014), tracks from which were recently used for a new film titled *Hurricane*; the critically acclaimed *Skyline* (2011) and *Dust Lane* (2010), all exhibiting Tiersen's depth and a fearless confidence. New album *EUSA* moves into more minimalist contemporary sounds, showing the continuation of Tiersen's diversity.

*EUSA* was not originally intended as an album, but as a book of sheet music for ten new piano pieces. *"At the beginning the idea was to release a piano book and to start a musical map of the island where I live"*, explains Tiersen.

Tiersen released the sheet music in December and premiered his performance of the compositions during a sold-out European tour in the spring (which included two dates at Barbican). The tour saw the ten piano tracks performed solo, inspiring him to go on to record the album. The album was recorded in Studio 1 at Abbey Road, further highlighting the pure, stripped-back approach of *EUSA*.

The collection of ten solo piano pieces do indeed form a musical map of Tiersen's home island of Ushant; each of the ten pieces was created in and named after a specific location on the island. When the tracks were released as sheet music, each piano piece was accompanied by a coordinate for its location on Ushant, a field recording from the exact spot referred to in the piece of music, and an image of the area.

Tiersen writes: *"What we are is always relative to where and when we are; our sense of self is made up of what we feel to be our home.*

*So — I am the granite stones of my house which were once rocks in the sea, I am 'gwalarn', the northwest wind that blows over the island of Ushant and all over Brittany, I am the sheep's wool, I am the smell of the moor, I am the dead trees and the ones still standing, I am my music and my music is all of this. I'm not a big city and I'm not Montmartre — I am my island, I am the wildernesses I have cycled through."*

For the album, Tiersen electronically manipulated his original field recordings of the

natural sounds on the island to create a subtle drone, then went to Abbey Road and recorded the solo piano. Location has always been important to everything Yann Tiersen creates, and here he takes the element of location and his connection with the land still further. Tracks are divided by improvisations – all entitled “Hent”, which translates into English as “path” - leading the listener across the island from one location to another.

Taking in the tracks and the sounds of their surroundings, the listener is shown how to get on the island and being immersed in its raw, natural beauty, with the gentle sound of the sea in the distance, and local wildlife. The map guides the listener to the rustic isolation and exposes earthy way of life in which Tiersen immerses himself, and his love of desolate, sparsely-inhabited landscapes.

The album reflects both the location and Tiersen’s own state of mind – a sense of place and solidity, being settled in this location and engaged to be married. *“Now I’m living full time in Ushant”,* he explains. *“I was on tour a lot before, but I spent the last year not moving that much and I am in serene surroundings, having a quiet life.”*

*“We are more and more, because of capitalism and this crazy world, completely disconnected from nature so this has become something of a political statement. I want to explore this and the small piece of land where I live. There is part of the land in the music for sure, they are connected.”*

Born in Brest, Brittany, in 1970, Tiersen’s classical training was short, almost non-existent, as he quickly left the musical academies in Rennes, Nantes and Boulogne. Instead he grew up with the diversity and energy that the Route du Rock festival brought to his doorstep each year. Tiersen’s punk background and love of electronic music (Neu!, Kraftwerk, and Moderat are all favourites) is what has ended up shaping the music he makes – and that diversity is all in the solo piano of *EUSA*.

*“It’s been really unexpected”,* he says. *“Because it was a book first, I had time to transform the field recordings, do the improvisation and create the links between the songs and through this, it became something longer and something special.”*

Listen to Porz Goret, taken from *EUSA*: <https://youtu.be/KwwwWz6Ef3I>

Watch a short film of the Abbey Road recording of Roc’h Ar Vugale here: <http://po.st/YannTiersenRoch>

<http://eusasound.bzh/>  
[www.yanntiersen.bzh](http://www.yanntiersen.bzh)  
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