

# Áskell Másson - Biography

Áskell Másson (b. 1953) is amongst Iceland's leading composers. He commenced his musical studies on the clarinet in 1961 and later studied percussion at the Reykjavik College of Music and privately in London with James Blades.

From 1973-75 he worked as a composer and percussionist of the Ballet of the National Theatre in Iceland and in 1978-83 he was a producer at the Music Dept. of the Iceland State Radio, after which he has devoted his time exclusively to composition. He was Secretary General of the Society of Icelandic Composers 1983-85, and President of the Performing Rights Society (STEF) from 1989-99.

Másson has worked in Copenhagen, Stockholm, London and Paris, collaborating with such artists as Roger Woodward, Evelyn Glennie, Benny Sluchin, Gert Mortensen and Christian Lindberg.

Autodidact as a composer, his music has been described as:

"...ethereal in sound and has an expressive character that is withdrawn yet full of intensity".

"...unusual sounds reminiscent of both the human voice and of electrical instruments..."

"...striking on account of its large dimensions and its brilliant piano writing".

-Göran Bergendal, New Music in Iceland.

"...an essential lyricism coupled with a seductive, even sensuous manipulation of sound".

-Geoffrey Norris, The Daily Telegraph.

"...to describe its character, one is almost forced to use words such as ethereal and luscious sounds, and a melodic liquefying..."

-Borås Tidning, Sweden.

"...gripping melodic lines which weave and melt together and which seek to explode the common sonata frame..."

-Aachener Volkzeitung, Germany.

(Másson)"...has extraordinary insight into the unique attributes of each instrument for which he writes..."

-Hilary Finch, Nordic Sounds.

"...of lyrical predisposition, who builds up the emotional climate of the music by the means of refined juxtapositions of sound colours".

-Marek Podhajski, Dictionary of Icelandic Composers.

Amongst his main works are the grand opera THE ICE PALACE, the symphony SINFONIA TRILOGIA, concerti, for Violin, Clarinet, Viola, Snare Drum, Piano, Marimba, Trombone, Percussion, Trumpet and Tuba, orchestral works RÚN, FÖR, OKTO NOVEMBER and HVÖRF, chamber works WOODWIND QUINTET, PIANO TRIO, VIOLIN SONATA and instrumental solos SONATA for Organ, BLIK for Clarinet, HRÍM for Cello, TEIKN for Violin, CADENZA for Trombone, and PRIM for Snare Drum. In addition to concert music, he has composed music to numerous plays, films and TV programs. His music has been heard in most parts of the world and has been recorded on several records and CD discs, which are listed in this catalogue.

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