

Hörður Áskelsson was born in Akureyri in the north of Iceland in 1953. He studied music in Akureyri and Reykjavík, before moving to Düsseldorf, Germany, in 1976 to study at the Robert Schumann Hochschule. He graduated as organist and cantor in 1981 summa cum laude.

After a year as organist in the Neanderkirche in Düsseldorf Áskelsson moved to Reykjavík, where he has been organist and cantor of Hallgrímskirkja since 1982. In the same year he founded the Motet Choir of Hallgrímskirkja and was instigator of the founding of the Friends of the Arts Society of Hallgrímskirkja; choir and Friends are twin cornerstones to the artistic activities in the church. In 1987 he established the Festival of Sacred Arts, since then a biennial event on the cultural scene in Iceland. In 1993 the Summer Evening at the Organ concert series started and in 1996 Áskelsson founded the chamber choir Schola cantorum, which has already become one of Iceland's most respected choirs.

Hörður Áskelsson has received much recognition, and with his choirs he has participated in various music festivals and international competitions, winning prizes in Cork, Ireland 1996, Noyon, France 1998 and Gorizia, Italy 2002. He has conducted many oratorios, often with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, and premiered a number of Icelandic compositions. His performances have been recorded for radio and television and issued on numerous CDs. A recording of the oratorio *Passía* by Hafliði Hallgrímsson conducted by Áskelsson and released by the internationally renowned record company Ondine in 2003 has received outstanding reviews in BBC Music Magazine, Gramophone, International Record Review and other media.

Hörður Áskelsson has also been a teacher of the organ and choir conducting at the Iceland National Church's Music School and in 1985-95 he was lecturer on liturgy at the University of Iceland Faculty of Theology. In the year 2000 Áskelsson was musical director of the events held to celebrate the Millennium of Christianity in Iceland. In 2002 he received both the Icelandic Music Prize and the Culture Prize of the newspaper DV for his outstanding activities in the year 2001. He was appointed Municipal Artist of Reykjavík in 2002, received the Knight's Cross of the Icelandic Order of the Falcon in 2004 and the Icelandic Optimism Prize in 2006. From 2005 to 2011, Hörður served as Director of Music for the National Icelandic Church.

Education:

Akureyri Grammar School, Akureyri Music School, Reykjavík Music Academy (music teacher degree 1975, organ degree 1976), Staatliche Hochschule für Musik, Robert Schumann Institut, Düsseldorf 1976 - 1981 (Evangelical church music degree 1981 summa cum laude), various courses in Iceland and abroad Teachers among others: Philip Jenkins, Marteinn H. Friðriksson, Róbert A. Ottósson, Hans Dieter Möller, Almut Rössler, Hartmut Schmidt

Positions:

Organist at the Fríkirkja in Hafnarfjörður 1973-1976
Cantor at Neanderkirche in Düsseldorf 1981-1982
Organist and cantor at Hallgrímskirkja in Reykjavík from 1982
Lecturer on liturgy at University of Iceland Faculty of Theology 1985-1995
Chairman of the Board, Iceland National Church's Music School from 2001
Teacher at the Iceland National Church's Music School from 1983
Music Director of the Millennium of Christianity in Iceland festivities in 2000
Artistic and Managing Director of the Friends of the Arts Society of Hallgrímskirkja from 1982
Artistic Director of the Festival of Sacred Arts from 1987
Artistic Director of the concert series Summer Evening at the Organ from 1993
Conductor of the Motet Choir of Hallgrímskirkja from 1982
Conductor of the chamber choir Schola cantorum reykjavicensis from 1996
Hörður Áskelsson has been a member of the board of the Society of Icelandic Organists for many years and is a member of the Organ Committee of the National Church and the Icelandic Hymnbook Publication Committee. Director of Music for the National Icelandic Church from 2005 to 2011

Pioneering activities:

Founder of the Friends of the Arts Society of Hallgrímskirkja 1982
Founder of the Motet Choir of Hallgrímskirkja 1982
Founder of the Festival of Sacred Arts 1987
Instigator of the purchase of the Klais organ in Hallgrímskirkja and the fundraising "Give an Organpipe"
Instigator of an international composition competition connected to the consecration of the Klais organ in 1992
Founder of the concert series Summer Evening at the Organ 1993
Founder of the chamber choir Schola cantorum reykjavicensis 1996

Acknowledgements:

Sonning Grant, 1983

DV Culture Prize, 1990
Honorary Prize of Brunabótafélag Íslands, 1992
Honorary Prize of VÍS, 1999
Icelandic State's Artist's Grant, 1999
Icelandic Music Prize,
Performer of the Year, 2001
DV Culture Prize, 2001
Municipal Artist of Reykjavík, 2002
Knight's Cross of the Icelandic Order of the Falcon, 2004
The Icelandic Optimism Prize in 2006

Compositions written for/premiered by Hörður Áskelsson:

Atli Heimir Sveinsson: Hallgrímsspassía, for choir, soloists, reciter and brass
Áskell Másson: Sonata for organ, 1986 (premiered during Nordic Organ Days in Düsseldorf 1986)
Bára Grímsdóttir: Vorvísa, motet, 2002 (commissioned by Reykjavík Arts Festival 2002)
Elín Gunnlaugsdóttir: Svo er skrifað, motet for choir and organ, 2003 (premiered during the Festival of Sacred Arts 2003)
Gunnar Andreas Kristinsson: Með gleðiraust og helgum hljóðm, Christmas hymn arrangement, 2005
Gunnar Reynir Sveinsson: Gloria, for choir, 1985
Fyrir þitt friðar orð, motet, 1989
Hafliði Hallgrímsson: Introitus, for choir, organ and percussion, 1994 (premiered during Reykjavík Arts Festival 1994)
Passía, op. 28, for choir, two organs, mezzo-soprano and orchestra, 2001 (comm. by the Friends of the Arts Society for the Millennium of Christianity in Iceland festivities)
Hjálmar H. Ragnarsson: Ave Maria, motet, 1985
Concerto for organ and orchestra, 1997 (premiered by Hörður Áskelsson and the Iceland Symphony Orchestra during the Festival of Sacred Arts 1997)
Hróðmar Ingi Sigurbjörnsson: Introitus, for choir and organ, 1997 organist and choir conductor Hörður Áskelsson
Hugi Guðmundsson: Signing, for trombone and organ, 2001 (premiered during Summer Evening at the organ 2001)
Adoro te devote, for choir and saxophone quartet, 2005 (commissioned by Hörður Áskelsson)
John A. Speight: Barn er oss fætt, Christmas oratorio, for soloists, two choirs and orchestra, 2001 (commissioned by the Friends of the Arts Society)
Pax fyrir Hörð, for organ, 2003 (premiered during Summer Evening at the Organ 2003)
Drottinn er styrkur minn, for soprano, choir, 12 brass players, timpani and organ, 2005 (premiered during the Festival of Sacred Arts 2005)
Jón Hlöðver Áskelsson:
Upp, upp, mín sál, motet, 1996
Tignið Drottin, motet, 1997
Sjö orð Krists á krossinum, motet, 1998
Súlur 2000, for organ (commissioned by Summer Evening at the Organ and Reykjavík European Capital of Culture 2000)
Dagsöngvar um frið, cantata, 2001 (commissioned by the Friends of the Arts Society)
Da pacem domine, for two trumpets and organ, 2005
Jón Nordal: Óttusöngvar á vori, for soloists, choir, cello, organ and percussion, 1993 (Skálholt Music Festival)
Jónas Tómasson: Davíðssálmur 23, motet, 1985 Dýrð Krists, for organ, 1996 (commissioned by the municipality of Ísafjörður)
Kjell Mørk Karlsen: Sinfonia Arctandriae, for organ, 1993
Oliver Kentish: Turn Thee Unto Me, motet, 1999 (premiered during the Festival of Sacred Arts 1999 by Schola cantorum)
Páll Pampichler Pálsson: Óðurinn til kærleikans, motet, 1994
Tryggvi M. Baldvinsson: Introitus, for choir, brass ensemble and percussion, 2000 (commissioned for the Millennium of Christianity in Iceland festivities)
Þorkell Sigurbjörnsson:
Kvöldbænir, for choir, 1984
Easter oratorio, for choir and small orchestra, 1987
Snertur fyrir Hörð og nýja orgelið, 1992 (premiered in the consecration concert of the Klais organ of Hallgrímskirkja in December 1992)
Þorkell Sigurbjörnsson: Innsigli, for organ, 2002 (premiered during the festival held 10 years after the consecration of the Klais organ)
Áskell Másson: St Cecilia, Oratory for Choir Soloists two organs and Orchestra, 2009
Sigurður Sævarsson: Hallgrím's Passion for Choir, Soloists and Chamber Orchestra 2008
Haukur Tómasson: Flétta for two choirs, Soloists and Chamber Orchestra (premiered during Reykjavík Arts Festival 2011)
Hafliði Hallgrímsson:

Sónhenda for choir a capella 2011
Rura, rura barni for choir and trumpet solo 2012
Endurkoma for choir a cappella 2012
Gunnar Andreas Kristinsson: Klukkur I-III for organ solo 2011 (premiered during Internatinal Organ Summer 2011) ,
Introitus for Choir, organ and brass 2010 (premiered during Festival of Sacred Arts 2010)

Selection of major compositions conducted by Hörður Áskelsson:

Johann Sebastian Bach: B Minor Mass
Johann Sebastian Bach: Christmas Oratorio
Johann Sebastian Bach: St. John Passion
Johann Sebastian Bach: St. Matthew Passion
Johann Sebastian Bach: Motets, BWV 225-230
Johann Sebastian Bach: Magnificat BWV 243
Johann Sebastian Bach: various cantatas
George Friedrich Händel: Joshua
George Friedrich Händel: Saul
Georg Friedrich Händel : Israel in Egypt
Georg Friedrich Händel: Messiah
Frank Martin: Mass for Double Choir
Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy: Elijah
Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy: St. Paul
Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina: Missa Papae Marcelli
Camille Saint-Saëns: Christmas Oratorio
Heinrich Schütz: Historia der Geburt Jesu Christi
Antonio Vivaldi: Gloria, RV 589
André Campra: Requiem
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Requiem
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Mass in c- minor
Arvo Pärt: [Passio Domini Nostri Jesu Christi secundum Joannem](#), Berliner Messe, Adam's Lament, Magnificat, Nunc dimittis and many other motets

Concert venues as conductor:

Bergen International Festival, Klangbogen Wien, Nice, Marseille, Paris (Notre Dame), Orléans, Chartres, Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Düsseldorf, Heidelberg, Freiburg, Budapest, Oslo, Trondheim, Stockholm, Uppsala, Lund, Helsinki, Tallinn, Copenhagen

Concert venues as organist:

Hallgrímskirkja, Cologne Cathedral, Bruxelles Cathedral, St. Sulpice and Église Saint-Louis des Invalides, Paris, Neanderkirche and Johanneskirche, Düsseldorf, Ratzeburg Cathedral, Bergen Cathedral, Riga Cathedral, Tampere Cathedral, Shostakovich Hall (St. Petersburg Philharmonia), Toronto, Zürich, Malaga, Marbella, London and many other cities in Europe

International choir competitions:

International Choir Pau Casals competion Catalonia, Spain, The Hallgrímskirkja Motet Choir, Grand Prix and three first prizes, 2014, Festival de Picardie, France, First Prize, Schola cantorum, 1998 Gorizia, Italy, Second Prize, Schola cantorum, 2002 Cork, Ireland, Audience's Prize, Motet Choir of Hallgrímskirkja, 1996

Compact discs:

As organist:

The New Klais Organ of Hallgrímskirkja, music by Araujo, J.S. Bach, Franck, Jón Nordal, Þorkell Sigurbjörnsson and others, 1993
Dýrð Krists, music by Jónas Tómasson, 1997
Oboe, horn and organ, with Daði Kolbeinsson and Joseph Ognibene, 1999
Camille Saint-Saëns: Symphony No. 3 (Organ) with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, 2000 (AC Classics)
Trompetería, 2 trumpets and organ with Ásgeir H. Steingrímsson and Eiríkur Örn Pálsson, 2002
Míning, Flute and organ with Guðrún Birgisdóttir
Hörður Áskelsson plays the Klais Organ in Hallgrímskirkja, works by Bach, Guilain and Marchand, 2014

With the Motet Choir of Hallgrímskirkja:

Icelandic Church Music, 1990
Requiem by Maurice Duruflé, 1996 (Thorofon)

Sól eg sá, music by Jón Nordal, 1997
Christmas in Hallgrímskirkja, 1997
Lýs, milda stjarna, Christmas music, with Jóhann Friðgeir Valdimarsson Tenor 2002
Passía by Hafliði Hallgrímsson, 2003 (Ondine)
Barn er oss fætt, Christmas Oratorio by John A. Speight, with Iceland Symphony Orchestra, 2005
Jólagjöfin, Christmas CD with Ísak Ríkarðsson Boy Soprano and Sigurður Flosason Saxophone, 2005
Ljósíð þitt lýsi mér CD/DVD
Heilög stund, Christmas CD with Kristinn Sigmundsson Baryton and Björn Steinar Sólbergsson organ
Flétta by Haukur Tómasson, CD/DVD with Schola cantorum and Chamber Orchestra of Reykjavík 2012

With Schola cantorum:

Principium, music by Tallis, Schein, Gesualdo and Byrd, 1999
Audi creator coeli, new Icelandic choral music, 2001
Sálmar í gleði, hymns from the Icelandic hymnbook, 2002
Hallgrímsspassía, Passio by Sigurður Sævarsson 2009
Foldarskart, Icelandic Choral Music 2012
Flétta by Haukur Tómasson, CD/DVD with Motet Choir and Chamber Orchestra of Reykjavík 2012
Hafliði Hallgrímsson Choralwork, 2013

BIS, Jón Leifs Edition:

Jón Leifs: Hekla (Iceland Symphony Orchestra, Schola cantorum, chorus-master H.Á., Motet Choir of Hallgrímskirkja a capella, cond. H.Á.), 1999
Jón Leifs: Hafís (Iceland Symphony Orchestra, Schola cantorum, chorus-master H.Á.), 2000
Jón Leifs: Dettifoss (Iceland Symphony Orchestra, Motet Choir of Hallgrímskirkja, chorus-master H.Á.), 2001
Jón Leifs: Baldr (Iceland Symphony Orchestra, Schola cantorum, chorus-master H.Á.), 2002
Jón Leifs: Víkingasvar (Iceland Symphony Orchestra, Motet Choir of Hallgrímskirkja, chorus-master H.Á., Schola cantorum, chorus-master H.Á.), 2004