

Christian Mason, Composer

Biography

"Mason's music is astonishingly inventive and powerful, generating a searing, hypnotic intensity." The Strad, January 2021

Christian Mason carefully explores phenomena of spectral harmonies and divergences in his works that can be described as luminously resonant. Born in London in 1984, he was already attracting attention with first orchestral works in his early 20s, and when he won the Composers' prize of the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation in 2016, the press described his music as "delicate, initially nearly tender, self-aware, shimmering, yet never boastful. (...) Rarely has the music of a young composer managed to radiate such magic" (Fono Forum).

Since then, Christian Mason has been developing his musical universe with great productivity and focus, as his projects in the current and previous seasons show: with his Octandre Ensemble, which he founded in 2011 together with conductor Jon Hargreaves, he was a guest at the Glasgow Cathedral Festival at the beginning of the season with *time space sound light*, a programme of interwoven compositions in various instrumentations, which was also released as a CD on the Winter & Winter label in spring 2024. In October, the ensemble can be heard at the Little Missenden Festival with the British premiere of the work *Figures in a landscape (awaiting eternity)*, the world premiere of which took place in summer 2024 as part of his residency in the music village of Ernen. An orchestral work already recorded in 2015 by the Orchestre National de France under the direction of Maxime Tortelier will be premiered in February 2025: *Sympathetic Resonance* will be performed by the hr-Sinfonieorchester first in Frankfurt and then at the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg. In March, cellist Elinor Frey will perform *Tristesse pour les temps perdus*, composed in concerto grosso form, with the Il Gardellino Ensemble in Brussels, before another major world premiere with the Ensemble Modern and the SWR Vokalensemble follows in May: *The Oddity Effect*, based on a text by Paul Griffiths inspired by the shoaling behaviour of fish, will be performed at the Alte Oper Frankfurt, the Theaterhaus Stuttgart and the ACHT BRÜCKEN festival in Cologne.

Major projects in recent seasons include a flute concerto for Noemi Gyori and the Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liège, the Hölderlin cycles *I would sing of thee, but only tears* and Hölderlin's Madness for the mezzo-soprano Lotte Betts-Dean, Thorwald Jørgensen (theremin) and the Explore Ensemble, *Invisible Threads*, a 70-minute performance installation for the Arditti Quartet, the Neue Vocalsolisten, Gareth Davis and Krassimir Sterev, performed at the Wittener Tage für neue Kammermusik in 2023 and at the Eclat Festival Stuttgart in 2024, and *The Singing Tree*, an environmental cantata with texts by Paul Griffiths for the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, the Neue Vocalsolisten and Finchley Children's Music Group, premiered in Birmingham under the direction of Michael Wendeborg. The sound installation *In Unknown Elements... In Endless Transmutation...* was presented at the Pierre Boulez Saal Berlin and the Tonhalle Zurich to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation. In France, a two-year collaboration with the Orchestre National d'Auvergne ended in 2023 with the world premiere of *Voix Terrestre* for string orchestra, complemented by a one-hour radio portrait by France Musique. 2022 saw the completion of *Time and Eternity*, a three-part orchestral cycle premiered respectively by the Vienna Philharmonic under Christian Thielemann, the Konzerthausorchester Berlin under Christoph Eschenbach and the hr-Sinfonieorchester under Michał Nesterowicz.

Past commissions include pieces for the Philharmonia Orchestra, the Munich Chamber Orchestra, the Orchestre National de France and the Lucerne Festival Contemporary Orchestra, among others; he has written ensemble works for Ensemble Recherche, the CONNECT project (London Sinfonietta, Ensemble Modern, Ensemble Remix, Ensemble Asko-Schönberg), the Lucerne Festival (Ensemble intercontemporain) and the BBC PROMS (London Sinfonietta); and he has composed chamber music works for the Arditti Quartet, the Ligeti Quartet, the Britten Sinfonia and the Festival Nouveaux Horizons at the Grand Théâtre de Provence in Aix and solo/duo works for Carolin Widmann, Jean-Guihen Queyras, Momo Kodama, Midori, Mieko Kanno, Jack Adler-McKean (tuba) and the Orléans Concours International.

A 2015 winner of an Ernst von Siemens Musikstiftung Composer Prize, Christian Mason is a mentor for the LSO Panufnik Young Composers Project, the Philharmonia Composers' Academy and the Hong Kong Composers' Scheme (2023/24). He has been a resident artist at Eton College, Villa Concordia, Civitella Ranieri and at SWR Experimental Studio in Freiburg. In 2012 he was awarded the Mendelssohn Scholarship and received a British Composer Award. Christian completed a Ph.D at King's College London with George Benjamin and worked as Composition Assistant to Sir Harrison Birtwistle. He previously

studied at the University of York. He is a founding Artistic Director of the Octandre Ensemble and plays the Theremin. His works are published by Breitkopf & Härtel. His works are recorded on the London Sinfonietta Label, LSO Live, Col Legno, Winter & Winter and nonclassical.

2024/25 season

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