

## Amos Elkana

### *Biography and CV*

Amos Elkana was born in Boston but grew up in Jerusalem. At the age of 15, he picked up the electric guitar and began to study music which soon became his primary occupation in life. In 1987, aged 20, he returned to the United States to study jazz guitar at the Berklee College of Music and composition at the The New England Conservatory of Music. In 1990, he moved to Paris to study composition with Michele Reverdy. He also took composition classes with Erik Norby in Copenhagen, and with Paul-Heinz Dittrich and Edison Denisov in Berlin.

In 1992, Amos Elkana returned to Israel and settled down in Tel Aviv, where his two daughters were born. His work has since then been performed and recorded by ensembles and musicians all over the world, such as the Berlin Symphony Orchestra, the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, the clarinetist Richard Stoltzman, Musica Nova Consort, the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, the pianist Gábor Csalog, the Berlin Saxophone Quartet, Stockholm Saxophone Quartet, the flautist Yossi Arnheim, the New Israeli Woodwind Quintet, the Carmel String Quartet, Akademia String Quartet, the ICSQ (Israel Contemporary String Quartet) and many more.

Elkana has an MFA in music/sound from Bard College, New York. While being at Bard, he focused on electronic music and took lessons with Pauline Oliveros, David Behrman, Richard Teitelbaum, George Lewis, Maryanne Amacher and Larry Polansky among others.

Amos Elkana composes concert music for orchestras, ensembles and individual performers as well as music for dance, theatre and films. Recent works were commissioned by the University of California SC, Schloss Neuhardenberg, the Jerusalem Symphony, Berlin Festival, Tel Aviv Municipality and the Israel Ministry of Education and Culture.

Elkana is also a part of the duo Concoct Sonance with Yaaki Levy. The duo performs improvised music and tours on a regular basis.

Many of Elkana's compositions are written for traditional orchestral instruments, but without the traditional boundaries. They are his attempt to carry the listener's imagination and senses into new territory. One of Elkana's best known works is "Arabic Lessons", a multilingual song cycle for three sopranos and chamber ensemble that sets to music 13 poems by the German writer and poet Michael Roes. Commissioned jointly by the Berlin Festival and The Tel Aviv municipality, the work won the 2003 Golden Feather of ACUM, Israel's Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers.

In its review of Arabic Lessons, the English daily Jerusalem Post called it "a perplexing, beguiling 40-minute opus in which the composer challenges the so-called 'acceptable' form of the lieder, shattering it and building it anew, as if constructing a new world from its ashes. ... Arabic Lessons is one of the most significant works composed in Israel for quite a while."

## List of Compositions:

- 2010 **Laconic Pentatonic** – For Saxophone Quartet (4 min)  
*Commissioned by the Israel Composers League*
- 2010 **Solitude** – For Viola solo (4 min)  
*Premiered by Eugene Cibiescu-Dutan on March 11<sup>th</sup> 2010 at the Cluj-Napoca Academy of Music, Romania*
- 2009 **24 moments** – For Violin, E-Guitar and Piano (10 min)  
*Premiered on Nov. 10, 2009 at the Felicja Blumental Music Center in Tel Aviv*
- 2009 **Whither do you go home** – For Cello and Electronics. (10 min)  
*Commissioned by the Central European University.*  
*Premiered on Jun. 15, 2009 by Istvan Varga at the Academy of Science in Budapest*
- 2009 **Manifest Functions** – 6 channels electroacoustic composition (endless loop)  
*Commissioned by the 2009 Robert K. Merton Conference CEU.*  
*World premiere on Jun. 7, 2009 at CEU - Budapest*
- 2009 **After Hamlet** – Dance/Theater piece. For Voices, Electric Guitar & Computer (80 min)  
*Commissioned by the theater arts department, UC Santa Cruz*  
*Premiered on Mar. 19, 2009 at UC Santa Cruz*
- 2008 **Prague 1588** – Clarinet solo (4 min)  
*Premiered on Mar. 2, 2008 in Berlin by Freyja Gunnlaugsdóttir*
- 2007 **High Command** – electroacoustic (18 min)  
*Installed from Oct. 4-31, 2007 at the High Command exhibition in Tel Aviv, Israel*
- 2007 **Hommage à György Ligeti** – Chamber concerto for 13 instrumentalists  
*Premiered on Nov. 21, 2008 in Berlin by the Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Germany*
- 2006 **Lies and Lethargies** – Electric Guitar, Voice and Computer (8 min)  
*Premiered by Amos Elkana on Dec. 10, 2006 at the Felicja Blumental Music Center in Tel Aviv*
- 2006 **Gefunden** – 4 channels electroacoustic (5'30 min)  
*Premiered on May 11, 2006 in Jerusalem, Israel.*
- 2006 **Eight Flowers** – Piano (6'30 min)  
*Commissioned by the Neuhardenberg Festival in honor of György Kurtág's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday.*  
*Premiered by Gabor Csalog on Jun. 11, 2006 in Neuhardenberg, Germany.*
- 2006 **The Age of Anxiety** – 4 channels electroacoustic (*An installation*)  
*Collaboration with the visual artist and sculpture Alexander Polzin.*  
*First installed from Apr. 6 – 29, 2006 at the Goethe Institute in New York City.*
- 2005 **Plexure** - Oboe (doubling English Horn) and Contrabassoon (6 min)  
*Commissioned by the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra.*  
*Premiered by B. Schmutzler and D. Karamintzas on May 11, 2005 in Jerusalem, Israel.*
- 2004 **String Quartet No.2** (20 min)  
*Premiered by the Carmel String Quartet on May 17, 2004 at The Henry Crown Auditorium in Jerusalem, Israel.*

- 2003 **OMI** – Chamber ensemble (3 min)  
*Commissioned by the Music OMI artist residency.*  
*Premiered by the Art OMI ensemble on Aug. 18, 2003 at the Goethe Institute in New York City.*
- 2002 **Remains** - Electroacoustic (8 min)  
*Collaboration with choreographer Sommer Ulrickson and artist Alexander Polzin.*  
*Premiered on Apr. 18, 2002 at Sophiensaele in Berlin, Germany.*
- 2001 **String Quartet No.1** (11 min)  
*Commissioned by The Central European University.*  
*Premiered by the Akademia String Quartet on Oct. 15, 2001 at The Central European University in Budapest, Hungary.*
- 2000 **Zwischenspiel** - Electroacoustic (9 min)  
*Collaboration with choreographer Sommer Ulrickson and artist Alexander Polzin.*  
*Premiered on Oct. 26, 2000 at Podewil Center for Contemporary Art in Berlin, Germany.*
- 1998 **Four Loops** - Saxophone Quartet (6 min)  
*Commissioned by the Tel Aviv Biennial for New Music.*  
*Premiered by the Stockholm Saxophone Quartet on Mar. 6, 1998 at The Tel Aviv Museum of Arts.*
- 1998 **Arabic Lessons** – A song-cycle for 3 Sopranos and Chamber ensemble (40 min)  
*Commissioned by the Berlin Festival.*  
*Premiered by an ad hoc ensemble conducted by Konstantia Gourzi on Mar. 9, 1998 at the Hochschule der Künste in Berlin, Germany.*
- 1997 **Hagigit** - Electroacoustic (13 min)  
*Commissioned by the Isham Dance Company.*  
*Premiered on Feb. 4, 1998 at Z.O.A in Tel Aviv, Israel.*
- 1995 **Ru'ach Quintet** - Woodwind Quintet (10 min)  
*Commissioned by the Israel Ministry of Education.*  
*Premiered by the New Israeli Woodwind Quintet on Mar. 20, 1995 at The Henry Crown Auditorium in Jerusalem, Israel.*
- 1995 **Revadim** – Oboe, Clarinet, Piano, Violin and Cello (10 min)  
*Commissioned by the Musica Nova Consort.*  
*Premiered by the Musica Nova Consort on Feb. 6, 1995 at The Tel Aviv Museum of Arts.*
- 1994 **Tru'a** - Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra (12 min)  
*Commissioned by Master Musicians Collective.*  
*Recorded by Clarinetist Richard Stoltzman and the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Jerzey Svoboda at the Warsaw Symphony Hall in summer 1997.*
- 1993 **Color in Time** - Symphony Orchestra (3 min)  
*Commissioned Master Musicians Collective for The Bratislava Radio Symphony Orchestra.*  
*Recorded by The Bratislava Radio Symphony Orchestra in 1995.*
- 1992 **Saxophone Quartet No.1** (8 min)  
*Commissioned Master Musicians Collective.*  
*Premiered by The Berlin Saxophone Quartet on Apr. 28, 1993 at Carnegie Hall in New York City.*

- 1992 **Trio for Flute, Viola and Harp** (11 min)  
*Premiered by L. Elkana, F. Gabor and J. Sverdlov on Feb. 19, 1993 at the Jerusalem Music Center.*
- 1991 **Shir** - Flute Solo (3 min)  
*Premiered by flautist Yossi Arnheim on Jan. 23, 1997 at the Jerusalem Music Center.*

**Discography:**

- 2008 **Perspectives II** – MMC Recordings (USA)  
 2008 **Live Concert** - DVD  
 2005 **Works** – CD  
 2004 **String Quartet No.2** – CD Single  
 1996 **Works 1992-1996** – CD  
 1995 **MMC New Century Vol. 1** – MMC Recordings (USA)

**Articles:**

- 2007 *Fractals and Composition* – Published in Tav+ music periodical.

**Grants and Awards**

- 2009 Civitella Ranieri Foundation Fellowship  
 2009 Culture Foundation of the Israeli Lottery award  
 2008 Culture Foundation of the Israeli Lottery award  
 2008 CAP award, American Music Center  
 2007 Rabinovitch Foundation - Israel  
 2005 Ministry of Education and Culture - Israel  
 2004 Rabinovitch Foundation - Israel  
 2004 Israel-America Culture Foundation – Israel  
 2003 Golden Feather Award, Israel (for Arabic Lessons)  
 1996 Ministry of Education and Culture - Israel  
 1993 Tytte and Lillemor Faurschou's Foundation – Denmark

**Residencies**

- 2010 Civitella Ranieri, Italy  
 2006 Villa Montalvo, USA  
 2003 Art OMI, USA

**Scholarships:**

- 2006 Bard College, NY  
 2005 Bard College, NY  
 2004 Conductors Institute, NY  
 2004 Bard College, NY  
 1989 New England Conservatory of Music, MA  
 1987 Berklee College of Music, MA

**Education:**

- 2006 MFA, Bard College, NY
- 2004 Conducting workshop, Conductors Institute, NY
- 1994 Master Class in Composition with Edison Denisov and Paul Heinz Dittrich, Brandenburgisches Colloquium fuer Neue Musik, Berlin
- 1993 Private composition lessons with Erik Norby, Copenhagen
- 1992 Private composition lessons with Michèle Reverdy, Paris
- 1990 New England Conservatory of Music, Boston, MA
- 1988 Berklee College of Music, Boston, MA

**Employment:**

- Ongoing: Commissions to compose music for concerts, dance, theatre and films.
- Ongoing: Television director and producer of live concert productions.
- 2009 Lecturing about my music at the Munich Academy of Music
- 2009 Lecturing about my music at the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music, Tel Aviv University
- 2009 Lecturer at the University of California Santa Cruz
- 1998-2000: Computer programming and web authoring.
- 1996: Member of the steering committee for the 1<sup>st</sup> Biennial of Contemporary Music at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art; Editor of the Biennial program.
- 1995–1996: Editor of “Opus”, music periodical published in Israel.
- 1993-1996: Teaching guitar, composition, music theory, harmony and solfege.

**Press quote:**

"Amos Elkana's Arabic Lessons is a perplexing, beguiling 40-minute opus in which the composer challenges the so-called "acceptable" form of the lieder, shattering it and building it anew, as if constructing a new world from its ashes. Arabic Lessons are performed by three female singers. One sings in Hebrew, one in German and the third in Arabic. But they do not necessarily sing individually. More often than not - and this is when the work is really exciting - they sing in tandem. Not in an operatic-style trio but three individual expressions which crystallize into a meaningful whole. When the singers perform individually, the intriguing part is the way Elkana combines the human voice with instruments like a drum set or saxophone and bass guitar. Even more sensational is the way the more traditional flute, trumpet and cello intertwine with bass guitar and percussion. Aside from the unique instrumentation, this work reaches its apex when the singers sing together. Here we are confronted with a new musical language, philosophy and aesthetic, a so-called "lieder for the 21st century," a language that does not make it easy on the audience. A few days after the world premier in Tel Aviv, Arabic Lessons, one of the most significant works composed in Israel for quite a while, premiered to great critical acclaim at the Berlin Festival."

Michael Ajzenstadt, The Jerusalem Post 3/24/1998