



THE LEGACY OF UKU MASING IN TARTU

Tuesday, April 26, 2022 at 1:00 PM

**This event will be held online via Zoom
Advance registration is required at
<https://rb.gy/psfaeg>**

Programs are subject to change and cancellation



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Join us online for a celebration of Uku Masing's achievements of a key literary and academic figure in modern Estonia. The panel discussion with literary and musical interludes will include the following participants, Külliki Kuusk, Indrek Peedu, Lauri Sommer and Ülo Valk. The celebration will also take us to memorable places in Tartu, connected to the cultural heritage and legacy of this unique man and his city.

Uku Masing (1909 – 1985) was an Estonian poet, theologian, historian of religion, folklore specialist and philologist. His extraordinary intellectual powers, broad grasp and charisma have made him a mythical figure in Estonian literary and humanitarian circles.

A graduate in theology from the University of Tartu, Masing dedicated his life's work to his alma mater, first as a postgraduate and then as a professor of comparative religion, Old Testament and Semitic languages studies. During WWII, Masing, at a great risk to himself, hid one of his students, Isidor Levin, from the Nazi authorities, ultimately, saving student's life. For that heroic deed, Uku Masing, was honored as the Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem in Israel. In the Soviet years, Uku Masing became persona non grata in the eyes of the authorities. All of his academic and creative work during the Soviet period passed in internal exile in Tartu. Nevertheless, Uku Masing had a great influence on Estonian intellectual life. Many of Masing's written works circulated widely as samizdat. As a spiritual teacher, too, Masing achieved a cult-like status, where he had a great influence, especially among the generation of young poets and humanitarians of the sixties.

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

Külliki Kuusk is a researcher at the Estonian Literary Museum, who has written extensively on the poetics of Uku Masing. She is also a member of the Collegium of Uku Masing, the trustees board maintaining Masing's legacy.

Indrek Peedu is a lecturer and a research fellow at the School of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Tartu. His field of research has two main directions; analytical methodology in the study of religion, focusing on epistemological problems, evolutionary and cognitive aspects; secondly, he is studying the intellectual history of the social, cultural and religious evolutionism in modern Estonia.

Lauri Sommer is an award-winning Estonian writer, literary scholar, translator and a musician. In the 1990s, he was a member of the literary group *Erakkond*. Mixing fact and fiction, he has addressed the life of Uku Masing several times, including his latest book, *The Lights of Toome Hill*. Sommer has released several music albums, mostly under the moniker Kago and happens to be a recipient of the Order of the White Star, V class (2021).

Ülo Valk is the Professor of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, University of Tartu. His publications include *The Black Gentleman: Manifestations of the Devil in Estonian Folk Religion*, and two edited volumes: *Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life*, and *Storied and Supernatural Places*. During 2003-2004 he was Fulbright Fellow at the Center for Folklore and Ethnography, University of Pennsylvania. During 2005-2009 he served as president of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR). His recent research has focused on belief narratives, place-lore, folklore in the social context, and vernacular Hinduism.



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