

Johannes Leertouwer, violinist, conductor and researcher

Biography (short version)

Johannes Leertouwer was born in the Dutch city of Groningen on December 5, 1959. He started playing the violin at an early age, and received lessons at the local music school in Groningen. After obtaining his Gymnasium-alpha diploma in 1979 he moved to Amsterdam in order to study the violin with professor Bouw Lemkes at the Sweelinck Conservatory of Amsterdam. During the National Violin Competition of 1983 he was awarded the Elisabeth Back prize (2nd prize) and the Buma-price for best performance of a contemporary composition. In addition to this he received a special stipendium from the Ministry of Culture and Education. This allowed him to continue his studies with professor Joseph Suk, both as a student at the '*Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Künste*' in Vienna, and privately with Josef Suk in Prague. After returning to the Netherlands, Johannes graduated at the conservatory of Amsterdam in 1986.

In the years 1983-1987 he worked as a *remplaçant* in the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. His interest in the world of Historically Informed Performance Practice, which had always been a driving force in his musical development, was stimulated by the orchestra's guest conductor Nicolaus Harnoncourt, who invited him to come and study the Schubert Symphonies in a summer project in Graz, Austria in the summer of 1987.

Johannes Leertouwer became a member of the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra (1988-1990). He became concertmaster of the Orchestra of the Netherlands Bach Society (1988-2016) and the orchestra Amina Eterna, with Jos van Immerseel (1989-2000). With all of these orchestra's he also appeared as a soloist.

Chamber music has always been an important part of his work. After finishing his studies in Amsterdam, he was invited to make his debut as a recording artist and record the complete works for violin and piano by Beethoven for the Dutch Cd-label 'Globe' with pianist Julian Reynolds. This recording, with two double Cd's was followed by period instrument recordings of music by Bach, Mozart, Schubert and Schumann (all available on Spotify).

With the Ensemble Schönbrunn, which he formed with flautist Marten Root and cellist Viola de Hoog in 1987, he performed and recorded a series of Cd's dedicated to well-known repertoire such as the Musical Offering by J.S. Bach, and some lesser-known composers in a series of recordings named 'Out of the Shadow of the Masters'.

In the Mozart year of 2006, Johannes Leertouwer, as a soloist and conductor of his own ensemble *La Borea*, released a double-Cd with the complete works for violin and orchestra by Mozart. At present he is first violinist of the 'Narratio' string quartet. After being invited to perform the five last Beethoven quartets in Holland Festival of Early Music on five consecutive nights in the festival edition of 2009, the Narratio quartet now performs the complete Beethoven quartets on period instruments in six concert programs.

Johannes Leertouwer plays a violin made by the Brothers (Antonio & Hieronymus) Amati in Cremona in 1619.

Since 1989 Johannes Leertouwer has been a professor of violin at the Sweelinck Conservatory of Amsterdam. He gave masterclasses and guest lessons in many countries in Europe and elsewhere. At the Conservatory he has held a number of different positions,

teaching violin to young talents, Bachelor and Master students, teaching chamber music, conducting orchestra projects (1989 until today) and leading the department for Young Talent (2014-2018). In 2015 he was appointed chief conductor of the orchestra class of the conservatory. In addition to this he teaches 'History of the Orchestra' and 'Style in Practice' as part of the Bachelor and Master Program at CvA.

In 2018 the Conservatory invited him to do PhD research on the historical performance practice of Brahms's orchestral music for 4 years as part of a program to stimulate research in the arts by its professors. For this purpose Johannes Leertouwer developed a special program sharing the results of his research in practice with his fellow professors, alumni and students of the Conservatory of Amsterdam, integrating his research at Leiden University (ACPA) into the curriculum of the school. By 2022 his PhD project will result in recordings of the complete symphonies and concertos by Brahms, 4 documentary films about the project and a doctoral thesis. These will all be published on this website, Johannes' Brahms.

From 2009 until 2021, Johannes Leertouwer has been chief conductor and artistic leader of the '*Nieuwe Philharmonie Utrecht*' (NPU). With this orchestra he has played and conducted a wide range of repertoire, from a debut program in 2009 with Ravel and Stravinsky to annual tours with Händel's Messiah and Bach's Matthew Passion. The orchestra played on period instruments, also in 19th and 20th century repertoire and invested a lot of time and energy in education. Many of the productions of Johannes Leertouwer and NPU have received high praise in the press. The performances of Matthew Passion were described in the national newspaper NRC as the best in the country in 2017 in a five-star review (*****).

Cd productions, such as the live recording of Beethoven symphonies 4&7 and Berio's Chorale for violin and orchestra with violinist Joe Puglia, were also received very positively by the international music press. Another example of a remarkable project is the production of Mahler IV for the Maastricht Festival 'Musica Sacra' in 2018 in which for the first time since the early twentieth century, when it was quite normal, a Mahler Symphony was played on gut strings in the Netherlands.

From 2021 on, Johannes Leertouwer will continue the artistic mission he developed for the NPU under his own name, a list of the projects and concerts of his orchestra can be found on his website www.johannesleertouwer.nl.

For Brava television Johannes Leertouwer has made 68 short films, explaining the theological and musical content of each of the individual movements of the Matthew Passion. From the spring of 2021 these films will be available with English subtitles. The films can be found on a YouTube channel: *Matthäus volgens Johannes*.

In April 2021 Johannes Leertouwer has put on performances and a recording of a recently completed reconstruction of a single choir very early version of Matthew Passion of J.S. Bach. This project was made possible through a very successful Crowdfunding campaign. The stream of a video registration of this production has been viewed by thousands of people.

