

Biography | July 2023

Since her breakthrough in 1984 winning the Eurovision Young Musician of the Year, a competition that was broadcast all over Europe and watched live on television by millions, Isabelle van Keulen can now look back on many years of musical diversity. Not only is it always vital for her to approach the musical score with honesty and with an extremely conscious approach to interpretation, she also strives to communicate with her audiences and musical partners, allowing her to perform in an inspirational, lively and enthusiastic manner.

Her versatility lies in the fact that she not only plays the violin, but as well viola with the same energy, performing chamber music in any thinkable combination and directing chamber orchestra performances. Whether in the over 20 year intense collaboration with the Dutch pianist Ronald Brautigam, concerts with mezzo Christianne Stotijn, performing/directing the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra, combining violin and viola in one appearance, founding a chamber music festival – from 1997 until 2006 Isabelle van Keulen was Artistic Director of the Delft Chamber Music Festival – giving masterclasses or being a soloist with orchestras such as the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Berlin Philharmonic or NHK Tokyo. Above all, being faithful to the music is her highest priority.

She has over the course of her career engaged works written by contemporary composers. She had many concertos written especially for her (Theo Loevendie, Erkki-Sven Tüür) and has many other 20th and 21st century works in her repertoire: concerto by Henri Dutilleux, John Adams, Lera Auerbach, Oliver Knussen and Brett Dean. She also likes to perform less known works by Colin Matthews and concerto by Krenek, Pettersson and Busoni.

Isabelle van Keulen has made many recordings in the past decades, the most recent ones are Bergs Violin concerto (Chandos), a CD of violin-piano sonatas by Strauss, Nino Rota and Respighi (Channel Classics), Mozart's Clarinet Quintet with Sharon Kam (Berlin Classics), Bach's Goldberg Variations with the Leopold String Trio (Hyperion) and Prokofiev Complete Works for violin and piano with Ronald Brautigam (Challenge, December 2012). With the ensemble she leads, she has already released three CDs with works by Astor Piazzolla. In January 2022 the CD "Variations on Buenos Aires" was released.

Since autumn 2012 she is professor for violin, viola and chamber music at the Luzern University of Arts.

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Short version

Isabelle van Keulen is one of the few musicians who has been able to establish herself equally as a violinist and violist on the major concert stages. As a soloist, Isabelle van Keulen frequently works with major orchestras from all over the world under leading conductors.

She was Artistic Director of the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra for three years. As leader and soloist of the orchestra, she undertook extensive concert tours in addition to performances in Oslo. Since the 2017/2018 season, she has been Artistic Director of the Deutsche Kammerakademie Neuss am Rhein.

Another focus of her artistic work is chamber music. As artistic director, she played a major role in shaping the Delft Chamber Music Festival between 1997 and 2006.

Performances of contemporary works are also a major concern of hers - her repertoire includes numerous works of the 20th and 21st centuries. Of these, the recording of Erkki-Sven Tüür's Violin Concerto dedicated to her deserves special mention.