

Biography | September 2025

Isabelle van Keulen | violin
Christian Gerber | bandoneón
Ulrike Payer | piano
Rüdiger Ludwig | double bass

The Isabelle van Keulen Ensemble was founded in 2011. During a Carte Blanche concert series at the Concertgebouw in Haarlem, the Netherlands, the internationally renowned violinist and violist Isabelle van Keulen took the opportunity to perform Ástor Piazzolla's Tango Nuevo masterpieces at the highest technical and musical level and formed the ensemble for this purpose.

The members consist of Christian Gerber, one of the most important bandoneon players of his generation and winner of several prizes, including the German Record Prize; pianist Ulrike Payer, who impresses with her versatility and familiarity with all musical genres; and double bassist Rüdiger Ludwig, a charismatic musician who is affiliated with the NDR Radiophilharmonie as deputy solo bassist.

Since their very first performance, the Isabelle van Keulen Ensemble has delighted their audiences and over the years have performed at major music festivals, such as the Rheingau Music Festival, the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, the Istanbul Festival and the Delft Chamber Music Festival, as well as in major halls, such as the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, the Auditorium Nacional Madrid, the Sala Verdi Milano and the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg.

In 2013, the ensemble's first CD/DVD entitled "Tango!" with well-known works by Ástor Piazzolla was released by Challenge Classics, followed by "Grand Tango!" in 2015 and "Angeles y diablos" in 2018. All three CDs were received enthusiastically by the international press, and several Dutch and German radio stations honoured the recordings with awards. Hessischer Rundfunk, Bayerischer Rundfunk and Norddeutscher Rundfunk declared them "CD of the Week".

The CD "Variations on Buenos Aires" was released by Berlin Classics in January 2022. This recording is a collaboration between the ensemble and the Deutsche Kammerakademie Neuss, under the artistic direction of Isabelle van Keulen. The music of Ástor Piazzolla can be heard in new, sonorous sound due to the unusual combination of tango ensemble and string orchestra.

In their concerts, the Isabelle van Keulen Ensemble offer the audience a combination of the highest perfection with musical intensity expressing the poignant beauty, power and melancholy of Piazzolla's music in a direct and fascinating way.

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Short version

The Isabelle van Keulen Ensemble was founded in 2011. During a concert series at the Concertgebouw in the Netherlands, the internationally renowned violinist and violist Isabelle van Keulen took the opportunity to perform Ástor Piazzolla's masterpieces of Tango Nuevo and formed the ensemble for this purpose. The ensemble consists of bandoneon player Christian Gerber, pianist Ulrike Payer and double bass player Rüdiger Ludwig.

Since their very first performance, the Isabelle van Keulen Ensemble has delighted audiences. They have performed at major music festivals and important concert halls and have released several CDs which have received enthusiastic reviews from the international press. Several Dutch and German radio stations have awarded prizes for these recordings.

In their concerts, the Isabelle van Keulen Ensemble offer a combination of the highest perfection with musical intensity, which expresses the poignant beauty, power and melancholy of Piazzolla's music in a direct and fascinating way.