

Biography | September 2025

Ton Koopman studied organ, harpsichord and musicology in Amsterdam and was awarded the Prix d'Excellence in both instruments. From the very beginning, he was fascinated by the Baroque era, authentic musical instruments and historical performance practice. He focused on baroque music early on and soon became a leading figure in the historical performance practice movement.

After founding his first baroque orchestra at the age of 25, the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra was established in 1979 and the Amsterdam Baroque Choir in 1992. Together, the ABO&C made a name for themselves as one of the world's leading early music ensembles. With a repertoire ranging from early Baroque to late Classical, Ton Koopman and the ABO&C have performed at the world's most prestigious concert halls, including the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, the Barbican and Royal Albert Hall in London, the Musikverein and Konzerthaus in Vienna, the Philharmonie Berlin, Carnegie Hall New York and Suntory Hall in Tokyo.

Ton Koopman has conducted many of the most important orchestras in Europe, the USA and Japan and has produced more than 400 recordings, including for Erato, Teldec, Sony, Deutsche Grammophon and Philips. In 2003, he founded his own label called Antoine Marchand as a sub-label of Challenge Records.

Presumably his most comprehensive project, the complete recording of all cantatas by Johann Sebastian Bach was honoured with the German Echo Klassik Record Award, the Prix Hector Berlioz and the BBC Award, and nominated for the Grammy Award and the Gramophone Classical Music Award. He has also been committed to the dissemination of Dieterich Buxtehude's works for many years and has recorded Buxtehude's complete works on a total of 30 CDs with the Opera-Omnia project.

Koopman is President of the International D. Buxtehude Society and has been President of the Bach Archive Leipzig since 2019. He has received many honours, including the Bach Medal of the City of Leipzig (2006), the Buxtehude Prize of the City of Lübeck (2012), the Bach Prize of the Royal Academy of Music in London (2014) and the Edison Classical Award (2017).

He is professor emeritus at the University of Leiden, honorary member of the Royal Academy of Music in London, honorary doctor at the University of Linz and the Musikhochschule Lübeck and artistic director of the French festival Itinéraire Baroque.

In 2024, Ton Koopman was appointed 'Commandeur des Arts et des Lettres' by the French Ministry of Culture. Ton Koopman received this award in particular for the social impact of the Itinéraire Baroque Festival he founded 23 years ago in the Dordogne. The 'Commandeur des Arts et des Lettres' is the highest honour for artists in France. It recognises significant contributions to art and literature, in particular to the enrichment of French cultural heritage. Ton Koopman thus joins an illustrious list that also includes personalities such as Woody Allen and Brigitte Bardot. Dutch people who have previously received this honour include Hans van Manen, Ivo van Hove and Rem Koolhaas.

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Short version

Ton Koopman studied organ, harpsichord and musicology in Amsterdam and was twice awarded the Prix d'Excellence. His passion for the Baroque era and historical performance practice has characterised his career and made him a leading figure in the early music scene. He founded the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra and the Amsterdam Baroque Choir, which became recognised worldwide as leading early music ensembles.

Koopman has conducted major orchestras and has made over 400 recordings for prestigious labels. His most notable projects include the complete recording of all cantatas by Johann Sebastian Bach and the recording of the complete works of Dieterich Buxtehude.

He is President of the International D. Buxtehude Society and the Bach Archive Leipzig. His numerous awards include the Bach Medal of the City of Leipzig, the Buxtehude Prize of the City of Lübeck, the Bach Prize of the Royal Academy of Music in London and the Edison Classical Award; he is Professor Emeritus at the University of Leiden, Honorary Member of the Royal Academy of Music in London, Honorary Doctor at the University of Linz and the Musikhochschule Lübeck and Artistic Director of the French festival Itinéraire Baroque.

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