

Incorporating an historically inspired modernistic approach to Brahms' orchestral music into the curriculum of the Conservatory of Amsterdam

In my Phd research at Leiden University I research the performance practice of Brahms' orchestral music in the nineteenth century.

As a conductor I am especially interested in the question if there are elements of the lost performance practice of the nineteenth century that I can rediscover and use to shed new light on the performance of Brahms' music for orchestra today.

With the rise of a new performance practice in the 1920s and 30s, often referred to as 'structuralist' or 'modernist', large parts of nineteenth century performance practice were discarded.

Much work has been done on rediscovering the lost traditions of the nineteenth century, especially with regard to tempo manipulation, use of vibrato and use of portamento, for example by Robert Philip, Christopher Dymont and Clive Brown.

Part of my research consists of selecting the historic evidence and reflecting upon it from my own perspective as a performing musician and finding new information, for example in orchestral material used in the nineteenth century in Meiningen and Brussels.

A second and equally important part of my research will take place in four project weeks (each third week of September 2019-2022) during which I will look to implement the old techniques. Together with a project orchestra I will perform and record all Brahms symphonies and concertos as part of my research

In the third part of my project, I intend to take a step back and investigate the wider context of this kind of historically informed performance practice.

I will look at its place in the larger field of performance practices of today, particularly in higher music education, and I will look at its intrinsic qualities.

What is it exactly that we are doing when we base our performance practice on historical information, knowing that any complete reconstruction of a historical past or truth is impossible?

In my presentation I propose to focus on the second part of my research, in which, together with the Brahms project-orchestra, formed by professors, students and alumni of the Conservatory of Amsterdam, I bring to life the results of my research.

A film about the first project week of September 2019, can be found here:

<https://vimeo.com/386180930>



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Johannes Leertouwer is a violinist and conductor.

He is artistic leader and chief conductor of De Nieuwe Philharmonie Utrecht, an orchestra that plays a repertoire ranging from baroque to twentieth century on period instruments. Before assuming this post, he was concertmaster of some leading international period instrument ensembles and orchestra's such as Anima Eterna in Belgium and De Bachvereniging in The Netherlands. Johannes Leertouwer recorded a number of cd's including the complete works for violin and piano by Beethoven and the complete works for violin and orchestra by Mozart. With his period instruments string quartet he will perform all Beethoven quartets in the upcoming Beethoven year 2020. At the Conserv-

atory of Amsterdam Johannes Leertouwer has been a professor of violin and chamber music since 1989. He was appointed chief conductor of the orchestra class, Philharmonic Fridays, since it's reintroduction into the program in 2014. He also teaches 'History of the orchestra' and 'Style in practice' at the CvA. Since September 2018 he is conducting a (Phd-) research project into the historical performance practice of Brahms' orchestral music at Leiden university. Integral part of this project will be a recording of the 4 Brahms symphonies and his 4 concertos on period instruments. In the orchestra that Johannes has formed for this project, professors, alumni and students of the CvA are playing together, exploring nineteenth century means of expression such as tempo modification, conscious use of vibrato and expressive portamento.