



Photo by Georg Schreiber, Germany / Essen

The German conductor, Oliver Leo Schmidt (born in Oberhausen/Rhineland) holds the position of Professor of Conducting at the Folkwang University of the Arts in Essen, Germany (Folkwang Universität der Künste). The time-honoured Cologne Concert Society was led by him from 1997 to 2011. He is the musical director of the University Orchestra of Duisburg, Essen since 2002.

Since childhood he was deeply interested and involved in art and music. It followed then that his academic pursuits also centred around these two subjects: conducting at the Folkwang University, painting, art history and art education in Essen. For Oliver Leo Schmidt today, his passion for art forms the "meaningful moment" and is "essentially elemental" to his growth as a conductor and for his work as a pedagogue.

In his student years, Oliver Leo Schmidt received extra lessons from the conductors Sergiu Celibidache and Leonard Bernstein, who especially left a mark on him as a concert conductor. His professional journey as conductor started in the nineties as a musical assistant to Spiros Argiris (Monte Carlo) at the Teatro Bellini in Catania/Sicily and at the German Opera on the Rhine/Dusseldorf. As a scholarship holder of the 'Herbert von Karajan Foundation Berlin' he was a conducting intern also at the Salzburg and Bayreuth Festivals.

At home and abroad, renowned symphony orchestras performed under the baton of Oliver Leo Schmidt: among others, the Duisburg Philharmonic Orchestra, the Bochum Symphony Orchestra, the New Philharmonic Orchestra of Westphalia, the New Philharmonia Hungarica, the North West German Philharmonic Orchestra in Herford, the Bonn Classical Philharmonic, the Essen Folkwang Chamber Orchestra, the New Rhine Chamber Orchestra, the Festival Orchestra of the European Classical Music Festival Ruhr, the Budapest Strings and the EurOrchestra, the Philharmonic Orchestra Arnhem Het Gelders Orkest (Arnhem/the Netherlands), the Lorraine Philharmonic Orchestra (Metz/France), the Orchestra Teatro Bellini Catania (Sicily/Italy), the Sønderjyllands Symfoniorkester (Sønderborg/Denmark), the Albanian Radio Television Orchestra (Tirana/Albania) and the Vietnam National Symphony Orchestra/Hanoi.

He is acclaimed by critics as being "inspiring and stirring", "uncompromisingly meticulous about details" and "with an enthusiasm for music-making that is infectious". "His clear and differentiated conducting bears an analytical signature".

Oliver Leo Schmidt was awarded the 'Herbert von Karajan Conductor Prize' in 2008.

The outstanding artistic achievements of Oliver Leo Schmidt were honoured at the awards ceremony of the 'Herbert von Karajan Foundation' in February 2009 at the Essen Philharmonic Concert Hall. His keen efforts to foster exceptional young talent in Germany and devise new concert forms and concert programmes were lauded.