

BIOGRAPHY

Tobias Lea

The violist Tobias Lea was born in Adelaide (Australia). His parents, avid music lovers, encouraged him, his twin brother Benedict and their sister Elinor to take up the violin. Tobias began his violin studies at the age of 5. At the age of 12 he commenced studies at the Adelaide Conservatorium with Prof. Ronald Woodcock. Before he received his University Degree “Bachelor of Music (Performance)” in 1986 he became Principal Viola of the South Australian Opera Orchestra.

In 1987 he travelled to Vienna along with his twin brother Benedict (a violinist). He continued his studies in the viola class of Prof. Siegfried Fühlringer at the “Hochschule für Musik” in Vienna, where he remained until 1990.

Tobias Lea started his professional career in Europe 1989 as Principal Viola of the “Gustav Mahler Jugendorchester” under the direction of Claudio Abbado. From 1991 to 1994 he had the same position in the “Orchestra del Teatro alla Scala” and in the “Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala” under Riccardo Muti. From 1991 to 1994 he was also Violist of “Quartetto della Scala”.

In 1993 his brother Benedict became the first Australian ever to win a full time position in the “Wiener Staatsopernorchester” (the Vienna State Opera Orchestra) and later with the “Wiener Philharmoniker” (the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra). Tobias Lea took on the position of Principal Viola of the Vienna State Opera Orchestra in 1994 and in 1997 became Principal Viola of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.

From 1994 until 2000 he was assistant to the viola class of Prof. Fühlringer at the Vienna Hochschule für Musik.

In 2005 he became a member of the “Wiener Hofmusikkapelle”.

His career as a soloist brought him in 2005 and 2006 to Japan, Canada and the USA, where he interpreted Mozart’s “Sinfonia Concertante” KV 364 together with Rainer Honeck and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra under Riccardo Muti. He also played this masterpiece in the Golden Hall of the Vienna Musikverein, where he returned in 2008 together with Maestro Muti and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra for Bartok’s Viola Concerto.

Besides his activity in the orchestra Tobias Lea plays in several established chamber music ensembles. Since 1996 he is a member of the “Wiener Philharmonia Trio” and in 1999 he joined the “Wiener Kammerensemble”. He is a regular guest of other ensembles both in Austria and abroad.

Tobias Lea plays regularly with his wife Arabella Cortesi Lea, an Italian pianist. In November 2011 they played the two sonatas op.120 of Johannes Brahms in the Teatro Alighieri in Ravenna, Italy during the “Concerti della Domenica” series. In April 2012 they recorded both sonatas.

In 2011 Tobias Lea was a guest of the “Attergauer Kultursommer”, where he played with other members of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and the renowned violinist Nikolaj Znaider.

Tobias Lea dedicates a lot of time to working with young musicians. Since 1996 he is tutor of the “Gustav Mahler Jugendorchester” and the “Wiener Jeunesse Orchester”. He regularly gives masterclasses in Japan and participates in concerts for schools played by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. On visits to Australia, he has given masterclasses in Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. Since 2007 he also gives masterclasses for the „Angelika Prokopp Sommerakademie der Wiener Philharmoniker“ and for Music camps of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra for children and teenagers.

His repertoire covers pieces for viola and orchestra of the classic and romantic period as well as chamber music by Bach, Haydn, Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, Brahms, Weber, Schumann, Berlioz, Dvorak, Bartok, Strauss, Walton, Milhaud, Bloch, Ravel, Debussy and many others.

His artistic activity includes numerous recordings of music by Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Bruckner, Brahms, Debussy, Dvorak and Strauss.