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## EDWARD W. SAID DAYS 2021 CULTURE AND POWER

Press release | Berlin, September 21 2021



With the third edition of its annual **Edward W. Said Days** (September 30 – October 2, 2021), the Barenboim-Said Akademie once again takes its cue from the highly relevant work of the Palestinian intellectual and scholar. Over the course of three days, the festival will examine the relationship between culture and power through music, lectures, art, performance, and film. Curated by the academy's founding dean and General Director Designate of the Spoleto Festival USA, Mena Mark Hanna, the program takes a critical look at the role of authority, control, and domination in cultural life. A focus lies on the power dynamic of resistance and subjection in German, Soviet, and American music. The Pierre Boulez Saal hosts recitals and lectures with students and faculty members from the Barenboim-Said Akademie. Guest speakers and artists include Alex Ross, Laleh Khalili, Elizabeth Wilson, Elaine Mitchener, and Fadi Abdelnour. Abdo Shanan's photography exhibition "Dry" is on view in the academy's foyer.

Edward W. Said sought to understand the world through culture and its dynamic relationship with political and economic power. As often a culture is used by authority to suppress, control, and dominate, culture is also a tool of resistance and subversion. During the third Edward W. Said Days, students and faculty embark on an unflinching and critical discussion of, as Said put it, "the power of culture and the culture of power."

With his international bestseller "The Rest is Noise" **Alex Ross**, music critic of "The New Yorker," became known worldwide as an acclaimed music expert and exceptionally skilled writer. At the Said Days, he will speak about "Jewish, Black, Feminist, and Gay Wagnerians at the Fin-de-siècle"—and thus also provide insights into his most recent book on "Wagnerism," published last fall. Author and musician **Elizabeth Wilson** will explore subversion and power in the Soviet Union through Dmitri Shostakovich. Iranian-American author and political scientist **Laleh Khalili** analyses literature by and about the U.S. Navy Seals Special Forces. Drawing on an extensive collection of memoirs, novels, and military history publications, she elaborates on neo-Spartan mythmaking in narratives of heroic climaxes and hypermasculine combativeness.



© Abdo Shanan

With his works, photographer **Abdo Shanan** wants to provoke discomfort in the audience and initiate an examination of social constructions such as belonging and identity. His photo exhibition "Dry" is on view in the foyer of the Akademie during the festival.

In a lecture-performance, artist **Fadi Abdelnour** will shine a light on Eurocentric structures in cultural institutions in Germany and the ensuing mechanisms and habits of art consumption, which again reinforce these structures.

Daily screenings of the coming-of-age film "**À peine j'ouvre les yeux**" by Tunisian director Leyla Bouzid show the career of

the adolescent singer Farah, whose critical song texts attract the attention of the Tunisian secret service.

The musical program is presented by students and faculty of the Barenboim-Said Akademie in collaboration with guest artists such as the experimental vocalist and movement artist [Elaine Mitchener](#). The program includes works by Luciano Berio, Dmitri Shostakovich, György Kurtág, Richard Wagner, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and Julius Eastman.



Elaine Mitchener © Guido Mencari

Edward W. Said founded the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra in 1999 with Daniel Barenboim to bring together young Arab and Israeli musicians. The idea of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra shaped the Barenboim-Said Akademie in Berlin, where talented young musicians, primarily from the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, have been studying since 2015. The education at this conservatory combines musical study of classical orchestral instruments with an extensive Humanities program.

Mena Mark Hanna served as Founding Dean and Professor of Musicology and Composition at the Barenboim-Said Akademie. He received his D.Phil. from Merton College, Oxford. Prior to coming to Berlin, Hanna was assistant artistic director and dramaturg at Houston Grand Opera and visiting scholar in musicology at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music. Hanna joined the Barenboim-Said Akademie as one of its first employees in late 2014 and oversaw the strategic and operational organization of all artistic and pedagogic aims. As of October 2021, right after leading his last edition of the Edward W. Said Days, Hanna will take up new responsibilities as General Director of the Spoleto Festival USA. As one of the most important festivals in the U.S., Spoleto Festival USA showcases artistic genre-crossing performances.

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#### Downloads:

Portrait Edward W. Said | Photo: © Brigitte Lacombe  
Students of the Barenboim-Said Akademie | Photo: © Peter Adamik  
Portrait Mena Mark Hanna | Photo: © Peter Adamik  
Exhibition "Dry" 1 | Photo: © Abdo Shanan  
Exhibition "Dry" 2 | Photo: © Abdo Shanan

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Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time!

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