



PIERRE BOULEZ  
SAAL

# Press Conference September 12th 2016

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## About the Pierre Boulez Saal

### A multifaceted space

The Pierre Boulez Saal is a modular space that can be configured in a variety of ways by reconfiguring its tiers. The architecture blends perfectly with the artistic requirements of the venue, making every concert a completely unique spatial experience as well as a musical one. Spanning 850 square meters, the distance between the conductor and the farthest seat is never more than 14 meters. The concert hall can accommodate up to 682 spectators and creates an intimate atmosphere.

### Defying gravity

The spatial perspective of the hall is an astonishing feat of architecture. Two elliptical formations are set one above the other in such a way as to create an impression of weightlessness from the upper tier, which seems to hover in space.

### A building steeped in history

Both the Hall and the Academy are housed in a former storage building of the Staatsoper Unter den Linden (Berlin State Opera) on Französische Straße in the heart of Berlin, between the Staatsoper and the Federal Foreign Office building. Designed by architect Richard Paulick, the building was erected between 1951 and 1955 to store the sets of the Staatsoper, and is now a designated heritage building. It sits in the present-day district of Mitte, which formed the centre of the former East Berlin. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Mitte quickly became a culturally vibrant part of the city. The Humboldt University and the Museumsinsel (Museum Island) are also nearby.

### An exceptional gift

The Pierre Boulez Saal was designed by American architect Frank Gehry. The hall's impeccable acoustics are the work of globally acclaimed acoustician Yasuhisa Toyota. The two have generously donated their services to this project.

### The Barenboim-Said Akademie

The Pierre Boulez Saal is a place where creation and education meet. It is where the ideal of the Barenboim-Said Akademie, education through music, will find resonance. While providing a space for students and faculty to perform, the hall will also host conferences and academic events. The Pierre Boulez Saal is an essential part of the academy, serving the students as a space to develop themselves further under the guidance of professional artists and mentors and through performance and study. In the spirit of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, which forms a bridge between communities from the middle east, the academy is a vibrant house of learning and a vital investment in the future of music and our global community.

### Percent for Art

The artist Christine Meisner won the official tender with her work *Rivers and Rights*, a handwoven wool and silk tapestry which hangs in the foyer and shows the rivers Nile, Jordan, Euphrates and Tigris. You will find more information in the press release relating to the work.



## Facts and Figures

|   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Founder:  | Daniel Barenboim                 |
| Architect:  | Frank Gehry                      |
| Acoustician:  | Yasuhisa Toyota                  |
| Director:   | Ole Baekhoej                     |
| Laying of the foundation stone/Start of construction: | 6 <sup>th</sup> of Mai 2014      |
| Roof wetting ceremony:                                | 15 <sup>th</sup> of June 2015    |
| State accreditation as a university:                  | 10 <sup>th</sup> of August 2016  |
| Beginning of the winter semester 2016/2017:           | 17 <sup>th</sup> of October 2016 |
| Exhibition opening:                                   | 27 <sup>th</sup> of October 2016 |
| Opening concert:                                      | 4 <sup>th</sup> of March 2017    |
| End of the opening season:                            | 3 <sup>th</sup> of July 2017     |



## Quotes of the Protagonists

“This hall will have its own personality. This hall will be a home for contemporary music. It will be a home for chamber music of all the centuries. It will be – I hope – a home in Europe for Arab music and for Iranian music. And we will also have Jazz evenings.” Daniel Barenboim

“This will be the most wonderful hall that any school anywhere in the world has. But this will also be an independent concert hall. It will not only be the hall of the academy, that too, but I think in my view I’d like to look at the possibility that this hall will become one of the best chamber music halls anywhere.” Daniel Barenboim

“Pierre Boulez was not only a great composer and a great conductor. He was somebody who basically revolutionized music in the 50 years that he was active in it. His spirit is alive and will be alive at least as long as I have something to do with it.” Daniel Barenboim

“It feels like a connection to the city which is right because this is not an exterior concert hall like the Philharmonic or the Disney Hall. It’s a part of the city because the interior of this old building has history and has memories and there is something about that that appeals to me.” Frank Gehry

“I would like Pierre Boulez Saal to be a place where curiosity is rewarded with great music.” Ole Bækhøj

“Pierre Boulez Saal is a concert hall where music performed by one or two musicians – or smaller ensembles – has priority. The intimate experience is in focus.” Ole Bækhøj

„We must, after all, extend our horizons to include new and unknown worlds as well as those to which we are accustomed.” Pierre Boulez



## Biography Daniel Barenboim Founder of the Pierre Boulez Saal

Daniel Barenboim was born in Buenos Aires in 1942. He received his first piano lessons at age five, and was first taught by his mother. Later, he studied under his father, who would remain his only piano teacher. He gave his first public concert when he was seven. In 1952, he moved with his parents to Israel.

At age ten, Daniel Barenboim gave his international debut performance as a solo pianist in Vienna and Rome; Paris (1955), London (1956), and New York (1957) then followed, where he played with Leopold Stokowski. Since then, he has regularly toured Europe and the United States, but also South America, Australia, and the Far East. Ever since his conducting debut in 1967 in London with the Philharmonia Orchestra, Daniel Barenboim has been in great demand with leading orchestras around the world. Between 1975 and 1989, he was chief conductor of the Orchestre de Paris, where he often performed contemporary works by composers such as Lutosławski, Berio, Boulez, Henze, Dutilleux, and Takemitsu and others.

Daniel Barenboim gave his debut as an opera conductor at the Edinburgh Festival in 1973 with Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. From 1991 until June 2006, Daniel Barenboim was Music Director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The musicians of the orchestra have since named him Honorary Conductor for Life. In 1992, he became General Music Director of the State Opera Unter den Linden, where he was also artistic director from 1992 to August 2002. In 2000, the Staatskapelle Berlin voted him chief-conductor-for-life. Musicians of the Staatskapelle have been actively involved in setting up a music kindergarten in Berlin that was initiated and founded by Daniel Barenboim in September 2005.

In 1999, Daniel Barenboim founded together with the Palestinian literary scholar Edward Said the West-Eastern Divan Workshop, which brings together young musicians from Israel and the Arab countries every summer to play music together. The workshop seeks to enable dialogue between the various cultures of the Middle East and promote the experience of playing music together. In summer 2005, the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra presented a concert of historical significance in the Palestinian city of Ramallah, which was broadcast on television and recorded on DVD.

Musicians of the Staatskapelle Berlin have participated as teachers in this project since its foundation. Daniel Barenboim also initiated a project for music education in the Palestinian territories which includes the foundation of a music kindergarten as well as a Palestinian youth orchestra. Since 2015, talented young musicians mainly from the Middle East also study at the Barenboim-Said Akademie in Berlin, another initiative founded by Daniel Barenboim. In 2002, Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said were awarded the Príncipe de Asturias Prize in the Spanish town of Oviedo for their peace efforts. Daniel Barenboim was awarded the Tolerance Prize by the Evangelische Akademie Tutzing as well as Germany's Großes Verdienstkreuz mit Stern, the international Ernst von Siemens Musikpreis and Goethe-Medal. UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, named Daniel Barenboim UN messenger of peace in September 2007.



## Biography Frank Gehry Architect of the Pierre Boulez Saal

Raised in Toronto, Canada, Frank Gehry moved with his family to Los Angeles in 1947. He received a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Southern California in 1954, and studied City Planning at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. In subsequent years, Mr. Gehry built an architectural career that has spanned over five decades, producing public and private buildings across America, Europe and Asia. His work has earned him several of the most significant awards in the architectural field, including the Pritzker Prize

Notable projects include the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, California, the Eight Spruce Street Residential Tower located in New York City, the Opus Hong Kong Residential, the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris, the Biomuseo in Panama, the Dr. Chau Chak Wing Building for the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia and the West Campus of Facebook in Menlo Park, California. His current projects include the King Street Development in Toronto, Ontario, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Battersea Power Station Development in London, the Grand Avenue Development in Los Angeles, California, new Facebook campuses in New York City, Seattle, London and Dublin, the Guggenheim, Abu Dhabi, the Eisenhower Memorial in Washington, D.C., the Sunset Boulevard mixed-use project in Los Angeles, the Ocean Avenue project in Santa Monica and the Los Angeles River revitalization project. Projects currently under construction include the LUMA / Parc des Ateliers in Arles, France, the Pierre Boulez Saal in Berlin, and an extension of the Facebook West Campus in Menlo Park, California.



## Biography Ole Bækthøj, Director Pierre Boulez Saal

Born in Denmark in 1970, Ole Bækthøj first studied double-bass in Aarhus (Det Jyske Musikkonservatorium) and Amsterdam (Conservatorium van Amsterdam), and later studied Business Administration in Copenhagen (AVT Business School Copenhagen).

As a music student, Bækthøj toured throughout Europa and the Middle East with the European Union Youth Orchestra and the European Union Baroque Orchestra. After graduate studies, he lived in Holland and played, recorded and participated in international tours as a freelance bassist with orchestras such as the Koninklijk Concertgebouworkest Amsterdam and the Radio Kamer Orkest.

In 2001, Bækthøj became General Manager of the Gabrieli Consort & Players in London. During his engagement there until 2008, he secured numerous CD Recording agreements with Deutsche Grammophon for the Consort, Paul McCreeh and artists such as Rolando Villazón, Magdalena Kožená and Mark Padmore.

From 2008 to 2012, he worked as Artistic & Executive Director of the DR Symfoni Orkestret, and was jointly responsible for the opening and profiling of the new concert hall in Copenhagen (DR Koncerthuset). The hall was designed by architect Jean Nouvel, and Yasuhisa Toyota was responsible for the hall's acoustics. During his directorship there, Bækthøj engaged Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos as chief conductor, held the internationally acclaimed competition for conductors Malko Konkurrencen under the chairmanship of Lorin Maazel, and introduced many new performance formats for the venue.

Thereafter, he lead the internationally active Mahler Chamber Orchestra as Chief Executive until 2015. He worked closely with artists such as Claudio Abbado, Daniel Harding and Mitsuko Uchida. During his tenure, the orchestra celebrated international acclaim with projects such as the “Beethoven Journey” with Leif Ove Andsnes, and was especially distinguished for its educational project “Feel the Music” for deaf and hearing impaired children.

In 2015, Ole Bækthøj was the first appointed director to the Pierre Boulez Saal, and began his engagement there in October of that year.

In addition, Ole Bækthøj is active on numerous competition Juries (Malko Konkurrencen, String Quartet Competition of the Paris Philharmonic), and acts as podium speaker for diverse conferences (such as the IAMA International Conference, Deutsche Konzerthauskonferenz). Ole Bækthøj has lived in Berlin with his wife and two children since 2013.



## Biography Yasuhisa Toyota

### Acoustician of the Pierre Boulez Saal

Dr. Yasuhisa Toyota is President, and founder, of Nagata Acoustics America. With over 30 years of experience in designing some of the world's finest performance venues, Dr. Toyota is an established international authority in the field of concert hall design.

Dr. Toyota began his professional career in 1977, joining Nagata Acoustics immediately following his academic studies. Over the next two decades, he collaborated closely with Dr. Minoru Nagata, the company's founder, retired president and current executive advisor. In 2001 Dr. Toyota spearheaded the launch of an office in Los Angeles, and in 2008 Nagata Acoustics America, Inc. was formed. In the cause of his career, Dr. Toyota has been project leader for more than 50 concert hall and multipurpose hall projects. His expertise focus on hall configuration and the design of acoustic spaces for orchestral music, chamber music and other non-amplified musical genres. Some of Dr. Toyota's most prominent acoustic designs include Tokyo's Suntory Hall, Danish Radio Concert Hall in Copenhagen, and Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles; all of which enjoy stellar international reputations.

Dr. Toyota studied at Kyushu Institute of Design and graduated with a Bachelor of Design degree in Acoustical Design and Engineering in 1977. The Kyushu Institute's comprehensive Acoustic Design Department provided Dr. Toyota with training in acoustic engineering. Dr. Toyota's interest in music, however, started long before he began his undergraduate studies. Throughout his formative years Dr. Toyota played saxophone and oboe in orchestras, where he also gained experience as a conductor. Dr. Toyota continued his performance career in the Kyushu Institute's student orchestra, and later in amateur orchestras during the early years of his professional career with Nagata Acoustics.

In the summer of 2004, Dr. Toyota received honorary doctorates of science from Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY and the Art Center College of Design, Los Angeles, CA.



## Christine Meisner – Rivers and Rights

2014-2016

Hand-knotted tapestry, wool and silk, 585 cm x 1215 cm

"But let justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like a never-failing stream."  
Amos 5, 24

Rivers and streams are a recurring motif in the works of the German artist Christine Meisner: Rivers as places of seemingly natural frontiers and their transgression, of routes of trade and escape; rivers as ontological markers between property and non-property, people and territories. In Meisner's multi-layered drawing and video projects, history is made present as a stream that incorporates incidents, carries them onwards and washes them ashore perseveratively. Based on a long-standing enquiry on colonial power and forms of resistance, the artist's works recount of a freedom that has to be seized again and again.

For Rivers and Rights, Meisner developed the idea of a "Garden of Rights". Her concept is inspired by the outlines of the Persian Tschahār Bāgh (chahār „four“, bāgh „garden“), a complex divided into four sections and crossed by water channels. Early Persian garden architecture expresses the earthly notion of paradise as a space that has to be painstakingly wrung from a hostile nature and that is governed by strict and specific rules. (The ancient Iranian word for paradise pairi-daēza signified "walled enclosure" or "fenced-in land"). This perfect, indeed perfected space is part of the world and yet distinct from it. With its four cardinal points this "other space" depicts the world and allows to contemplate it.

The Islamic and Judeo-Christian iconographies of paradise share similar characteristics: four streams watering a sacred garden strictly separated from an inhospitable surrounding. In Islamic gardens water courses and canals represent the order of a yearned-for paradise, where the holy rivers Kautha and Salsabil flow. European and Arab cartographers localized the Garden of Eden in Mesopotamia, present-day Iraq, where they found geographical equivalents to the holy rivers Gihon, Euphrates, Pishon and Tigris. According to other interpretations, the biblical descriptions of "Eden" and "Kanaan" coincide with the "Promised Land". A single river springs from Mount Lebanon and after crossing paradise, branches out into four streams to water the world.

Meisner's tapestry connects the topoi of paradise with the political topography of the present and its disputed resources. In her work the four streams Nile, Jordan, Euphrates and Tigris supply the contemporary paradise of an agricultural landscape through a complex irrigation system. In doing so, they become objects of manipulation generating dearth or abundance of water. For many millennia, water has been traded as a precious good in the Middle East. Over the last decades, it has become ever more scarce and hence has turned into an instrument of power. The fight for water aggravates existing political and social conflicts, within the states of the region as well as between them. Natural river courses are diverted, interrupted; dams regulate tributaries, manifest national borders where water is supposed to stop and dries out aquifers. The salt waters of separate seas are mixed, military actions destroy water plants, and utopian greening projects deprive existential agriculture of water.

For the Barenboim-Said Academy, Meisner developed an extensive textile work that takes on the centuries-old tradition and motifs of hand-knotted rugs. “Oriental rugs” as called by Westerners, have been traded across times and cultures depicting stylized paradise landscapes in manifold variations. Depending on regional origin, images of Persian-Islamic gardens has been carried into the interior space. There, the two-dimensional vision of a place within a place could unfold – a place for encounter and contemplation. For Rivers and Rights the artist translated a complex pencil drawing into the language of a knotting graph. Through an intricate transformation process hundreds of thousands of fine lines on paper formed the template for a new textile landscape. The dizzying texture of the work becomes an allegory of aporetic justice: The fundamental right to create and destroy a living environment.

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A publication about the project will be released in October 2016

Christine Meisner (★1970 in Nuremberg, Germany) lives and works in Berlin and Brussels. She currently holds a professorship at Erg – École Supérieure des Arts in Brussels, Belgium. Her works are exhibited internationally and are present in several private and public collections.

Recent exhibitions: 10th Taipei Biennial, La Maison Rouge, Paris; Tranzit, Bratislava; The Walther Collection, New York and Ulm; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Koldo Mitxelena, San Sebastian; MOMUK, Vienna; Salzburger Kunstverein; Extra City Kunsthall, Antwerp, MUSEION, Bolzano; Bucarest Biennial, Musée des Beaux Arts Nantes, Pinacoteca São Paulo and Victoria & Albert Museum London. Video Screenings at Berlin Documentary Forum, Festival International de Cinéma Marseille and International Film Festival Rotterdam.

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