

## Press release

December 8, 2016, 3:00 pm

At the start of the academic year 2016/17 in October, 37 young students from the Middle East have started their studies at the Barenboim-Said Akademie in Berlin in the spirit of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. With approximately 90 students, the academy will reach its maximum size in 2018/19. This summer, the Barenboim-Said Akademie obtained its state recognition as a university. Construction of its physical building began in May 2014 and is nearing completion after two and a half years, meaning that the renovation was realized within the originally intended timeframe. Total construction costs are EUR 35,1 million. EUR 21,4 million were granted from the budget of the Federal Commission for Culture and Media. The remaining costs were contributed by private donors. Operating costs will be financed by the Federal Cultural Commission under Monika Grütters. The German Foreign Office will provide grants for all students. The Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Foundation endows a chair that will be named after the West-Eastern Divan Orchestras co-founder Edward Said. The Stiftung Deutsche Klassenlotterie Berlin closed several financing gaps for equipment with a grant of EUR 500.000.

The Pierre Boulez Hall, designed by US architect Frank Gehry is a highlight of the academy. The hall's architecture provides extraordinary perspectives. It is based on two ovals whose axes are offset against one another, creating an appearance of weightlessness in the hanging balcony that seems to float in space. About 2.200 m<sup>3</sup> and 700 tons of steel were used in the transformation of the historic, landmark-protected building, the former stage depot of the Berlin State Opera. The building houses rehearsal and seminar rooms, a lecture hall, a library, offices and coat checks. hg merz architekten designed the academy wing and the atrium; rw+ provided the detailed design as well as implementation planning and oversight. Project management was handled by teamproject.

The academy's concept is a reflection of the history of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. The pianist, conductor and General Music Director of the Berlin State Opera Daniel Barenboim and the Palestinian-American academic Edward W. Said founded this ensemble in Weimar in 1999. It consists of young Israeli and Arab musicians in equal numbers and thanks to its numerous concerts all over the world has earned an excellent recognition. The successful foundation of the Barenboim-Said Akademie in 2012 has raised this successful project to a new level.

President of the Akademie is Daniel Barenboim. Its Founding Director is the former State Minister for Culture and Media Michael Naumann, its Founding Chancellor Carsten Siebert. Its Dean is the Oxford-educated musicologist and composer Mena Mark Hanna; the Humanities program is led by the Harvard-educated philosopher of law Roni Mann. All classes are taught in English.

The Pierre Boulez Hall is a new chamber music venue for the city of Berlin and forms part of the academy. The vision of the Pierre Boulez Hall is permeated by the humanist concept of education



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through music. Its concert program juxtaposes tradition and renewal, the familiar and the strange. Besides the great chamber music works of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, a special place will be given to central works of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and contemporary music. Neben den großen Kammermusikwerken der Tradition des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts werden auch zentrale Werke des 20. Jahrhunderts sowie zeitgenössische Musik zu hören sein. The hall is managed by Ole Bækhøj, former CEO of the Mahler Chamber Orchestra and Managing Director of the Danish National Symphony Orchestra.

In addition, the hall will realize musical commissions and world premieres. Leading international soloists and ensembles will regularly be guests at the Pierre Boulez Hall. It is also the musical home of the newly established Boulez Ensemble, recruited mostly from members of the Berlin Staatskapelle and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. The first season of the Pierre Boulez Hall begins on March 4, 2017. Pre-sale of tickets has already started.

For more information, please see [www.boulezsaal.de](http://www.boulezsaal.de) oder [www.barenboimsaid.de](http://www.barenboimsaid.de).

Press contact: Robert Jahrish  
E-Mail: [info@barenboim-said.com](mailto:info@barenboim-said.com)  
Tel: +49 (0)30 206 0799 - 23

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