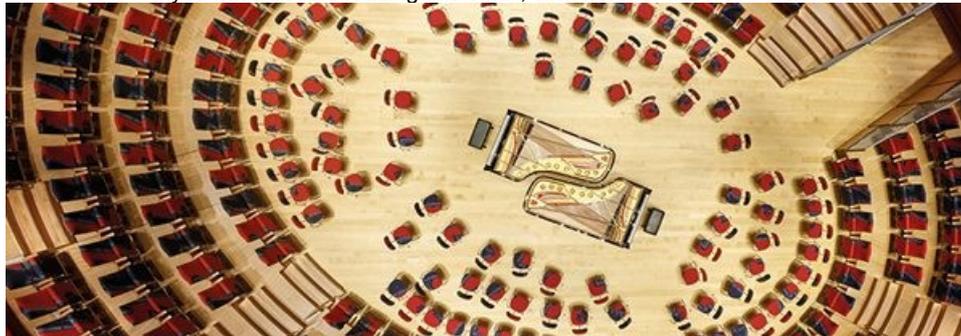


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Press Release | Berlin, October 8, 2020



Pierre Boulez Saal Launches Pilot Program for the Digitalization of Concert Halls

The Pierre Boulez Saal is launching a pilot program for the digitalization of concert halls and theaters in cooperation with the Beethovenfest Bonn and Ensemble Resonanz (Hamburg). The project's aim is to further develop and expand the online offerings of the Barenboim-Said Akademie's concert hall during the Corona crisis and beyond. Overseen scientifically by the Center for Digital Cultures (CDC) at Leuphana University Lüneburg, the project is intended to provide answers to the question of what role cultural institutions can play in a digital future—both on site and online. The German Federal Government is funding the project with two million euros from its NEUSTART KULTUR program.

NEUSTART KULTUR is an immediate-action program for corona-related investments in cultural venues such as museums, exhibition galleries, memorial sites, concert halls, and dance and theater companies, as well as socio-cultural centers. Venues receive support to create the conditions necessary to resume operations, to set up and expand new services such as digital formats, and to simultaneously take protective and preventive measures to reduce the further spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Minister of State Monika Grütters, Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, explains: "For concert halls and theaters severely affected by the Corona crisis, it is still hard to predict when performances for a full auditorium might resume. This is why new forms of performance and interaction in the digital space are even more important now. They help to secure, perhaps even to strengthen, the bond between ensembles and their audiences beyond the current crisis. Therefore, we are happy to support the Barenboim-Said Akademie in developing new formats in cooperation with other partners, and in communicating proven strategies to other institutions."

Ole Bækhøj, Director of the Pierre Boulez Saal, emphasizes the need to approach the unusual situation in a creative way: "The last few months have been an incredibly intense time for all of us. But we quickly realized that digital change also offers the opportunity to rethink concert institutions as socially relevant places. The Pierre Boulez Saal offers a special intimacy and closeness between listeners and performers. In this spirit, we look forward to developing online and hybrid formats to engage with audiences around the world."

The central aim of the project is to use technological possibilities for a direct exchange between artists and audience. Daniel Barenboim's founding vision of eliminating the separation between stage and auditorium in the Pierre Boulez Saal is also to be implemented online. The program will reflect the hall's flexibility and musical curiosity to include formats of classical music, music from the Arab world, and jazz. An e-learning platform for the playful exploration of Arabic music for young audiences and a multimedia format accompanying the annual Schubert Week are already being developed. Another format dedicated to Early Music, on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the death of Renaissance composer Josquin des Prez, is also part of the project. A special focus is on the development of paid options for digital content and membership offers for cultural events.

New digital formats will also help artists to secure their livelihoods in the future, even with concert activities remaining restricted. Events cancelled during the 2020–21 season due to the pandemic will be gradually replaced. The staged production of *The Queen Commanded Him to Forget*, which was specially developed for the Pierre Boulez Saal, will be pre-produced in Israel, with the world premiere presented as a screening in the hall in the presence of director Ofira Henig. Legendary jazz musician Charles Lloyd will perform directly from his studio for an audience at the Pierre Boulez Saal, inviting listeners to exchange ideas via chat.

This past July, the Pierre Boulez Saal attracted considerable international attention with its Festival of New Music, *Distance / Intimacy*: more than 140,000 viewers—75 % of them outside of Germany—watched and listened to ten pre-produced premieres of new pieces online, presented with live commentary by the curators Daniel Barenboim and Emmanuel Pahud. Viewers were also able to actively participate in the discussion via chat. The Guardian called the festival “a wonderful example of what can be done” in times of digital streaming. With a view to a creative approach to the pandemic, the Financial Times said: “(T)his festival of new music from Berlin is the most impressive offering so far.” The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung deemed it an “unusual project, as creative as it is innovative.” The Süddeutsche Zeitung praised the “lively interplay as part of a new artistic exercise, performed on the Web in a digital and analogue way. Some are already asking for a continuation of Berlin’s novel New Music Festival.”

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