

Berlin, July 2007

## **The Cultural Metropolis of Berlin Presents Itself in 2007 with a New Campaign:**

### **Part 3: Opera and Classical Music**

Lifestyle and high culture, experiment and tradition: an unsurpassed offering of culture is Berlin's trademark. In upcoming years, Berlin – supported by the state Senate – will move this core potential to the center of its marketing strategy with a large-scale campaign.

### **Opera and Classical Music: Musical Variety with Tradition**

A lengthy, lively tradition of music and an unbelievably varied concert and opera calendar are one of Berlin's trademarks: world-famous orchestras, outstanding opera ensembles, powerful choruses, and a multitude of impressive theaters and concert halls in which sound and space are combined in a manner that is nothing short of unique. The musical life of the city is marked by legendary world premieres, the work of the greatest composers and conductors, and appearances by the world's most famous performers.

Classical music has a lengthy, time-honored tradition here. In 1821, Carl Maria von Weber's opera *Der Freischütz* received its world premiere in Berlin's Schauspielhaus, today the Konzerthaus am Gendarmenmarkt. And in 1849, Otto Nicolai's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* took the stage for the first time at the Lindenoper. That was also the venue in 1925 for the very first performance of Alban Berg's most famous work, *Wozzeck*. Berlin was the site where many of music's greats did their composing and conducting, such as Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Gaspare Spontini, Giacomo Meyerbeer, Richard Strauss, and Leo Blech.

And the tradition rings on into the present. The Staatskapelle of the Staatsoper Unter den Linden makes Berlin privileged to be home to one of the oldest orchestras in the world. And the world's oldest mixed choral organization, the Berliner Singakademie, is headquartered today in the Max Gorki Theater. For 125 years, the Berlin

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Philharmonic has stood for worldwide resonance that is “made in Berlin”, inextricably linked with the names of legendary conductors such as Wilhelm Furtwängler, Sergiu Celibidache, and Herbert von Karajan. Continuing to this day, tones and rhythms, melodies and harmonies, voices and vibrations fill the city on the Spree, making it the absolute El Dorado for aficionados of classical music.

### **772 Opera Performances Per Year**

Berlin is the only city in the world that can boast three opera houses. Day in, day out, a repertoire of several classic operas is presented here at the highest level. So it should come as no surprise that Berlin’s three opera companies advertise together with the slogan “772 opera performances per year – where else can you find that?”

[www.oper-in-berlin.de](http://www.oper-in-berlin.de)

The oldest one is the Staatsoper Unter den Linden. Initiated by the Prussian king Frederick the Great and realized by the famous architect Georg Wenzeslaus von Knobelsdorff, the classical construction was inaugurated in 1742 as the first freestanding theater building in Germany. Famous conductors such as Wilhelm Furtwängler, Erich Kleiber, and Bruno Walter made music in the house. Under the artistic direction of Daniel Barenboim, an all-around talent in the classical music world with absolutely unbelievable creativity, the Lindenoper today maintains a broad repertoire and is among the world’s leading opera houses. The main artistic focus lies in the pre-Classical era and in modern music. Stagings by visual artists, architects, and theater and film directors such as Jörg Immendorf or Jimmy Durham present well-known works with a new look.

[www.staatsoper-berlin.org](http://www.staatsoper-berlin.org)

At the Deutsche Oper Berlin in Charlottenburg, the great opera repertoire can be experienced, from *The Magic Flute* to *Semiramide* to the *Ring* to *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Founded in 1912 as an alternative counterpart to the Lindenoper, the Deutsche Oper glittered in the early decades of the century with potentially scandalous novelties like the world premiere of Kurt Weill’s *The Pledge*. Today, a top orchestra and world-famous stars come together under the musical direction of

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Renato Palumbo. The largest of Berlin's opera houses is appealing not only because of its outstanding acoustics, but also because of the excellent visibility from any of the 1,865 seats, thanks to a "democratic" seating plan.

[www.deutscheoperberlin.de](http://www.deutscheoperberlin.de)

Since its reestablishment after the Second World War by the Austrian director Walter Felsenstein, Berlin's third opera house has derived its name from the French *opéra comique*. The designation "comic opera" is a programmatic indication. It stands for modern musical theater in which music and scenic representation are understood as a symbiotic unit. In the opera house on Behrenstraße with its neo-Baroque hall from 1892 that is itself a work of art, all of the performances are presented in German. The main focuses of the repertoire are the works of Mozart and Handel as well as operettas and works from the twentieth century. [www.komische-oper-berlin.de](http://www.komische-oper-berlin.de)

### **Symphonic Berlin: With Resonant Variety throughout the Centuries**

Whether it is a sacred motet or a classical symphony, a Baroque opera or a minimalist dodecaphonic composition, works from all eras find interpreters in Berlin – soloists and ensembles of international renown. With regard just to large symphony orchestras alone, the city is home to eight of them.

The Berlin Philharmonic is regarded as one of the greatest orchestras in the world and an emblem of the city. This year, the ensemble can look back on 125 years of tradition. Berlin's most precious body of sound has performed on the great stages of the world. The orchestra's sound was shaped by famed musical personalities such as [Wilhelm Furtwängler](#), [Herbert von Karajan](#), or [Claudio Abbado](#). With Sir Simon Rattle, the orchestra found a popular chief conductor in 2002 with a new style who fascinates his public with a unique musical combination of the classic and the modern. The 2007-08 concert season will include works by Beethoven, Berlioz, and Mahler. As something new, the world-famous orchestra will be serving up a free lunch-time concert every Tuesday at 1:00 P.M. [www.berliner-philharmoniker.de](http://www.berliner-philharmoniker.de)

One of the oldest orchestras in the world is the Staatskapelle Berlin, whose roots can be traced back to the fifteenth century. The greatest conductors of their time shaped the instrumental and interpretational culture of the ensemble. The predecessors of current music director Daniel Barenboim include such familiar names as Giacomo Meyerbeer or Richard Strauss. It is this tradition that is the origin of the warm, dark sound of the orchestra that draws special praise from connoisseurs. Today, the Staatskapelle is an essential component of the artistic profile of the Staatsoper Unter den Linden. It accompanies opera productions, but as a concert orchestra, it also inspires in the Konzerthaus and the Philharmonic Hall, for example, with the symphonies of Gustav Mahler during festivals under the direction of Pierre Boulez and Daniel Barenboim. [www.staatsoper-berlin.org](http://www.staatsoper-berlin.org)

The Konzerthausorchester Berlin is the new name for the former Berlin Symphony Orchestra and is especially popular with Berliners. With nearly 16,000 subscribers, it has one of the largest listenerships of all German orchestras. It gained international recognition in the 1960s and 1970s with interpretations of the works of Gustav Mahler and the German premieres of the Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich. In addition to masterpieces of the Classical-Romantic tradition, its repertoire also comprises lesser-performed compositions of other stylistic periods. The orchestra has also ventured into new artistic territory this year with the appointment of Lothar Zagrosek as chief conductor. [www.konzerthaus.de/konzerthausorchester](http://www.konzerthaus.de/konzerthausorchester)

For more than eighty years, the Rundfunksinfonie-Orchester Berlin (Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra) has been "on the air". The greatest composers of the twentieth century have ascended the podium of this, the oldest radio orchestra in Germany, or else have performed their own works as soloists. These have included Paul Hindemith, Sergei Prokofiev, Arnold Schönberg, and Igor Stravinsky as well as Krzysztof Penderecki, Friedrich Goldmann, and Siegfried Matthus. With this heritage, the orchestra feels particularly committed to music of the twentieth century, but it is in any case completely at home with the great symphonic repertoire. Since 2002, the ensemble has been under the artistic direction of Marek Janowski.

[www.rsb-online.de](http://www.rsb-online.de)

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Just like the Rundfunksinfonie-Orchester Berlin, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester belongs to the organization Rundfunk Orchester und Chöre GmbH Berlin (roc berlin) which was founded in 1994. Since its very beginning, this orchestra has distinguished itself through the enormous breadth and variety of its work. It was founded in 1946 as the RIAS-Symphonie-Orchester by the broadcaster in the American sector of Berlin. It was musically shaped by such conducting legends as Ferenc Fricsay, Lorin Maazel, Riccardo Chailly, Vladimir Ashkenazy, and especially Kent Nagano, who continues his connection with the orchestra today as honorary conductor. Beginning in August 2007, Ingo Metzmacher will take over the artistic direction of the ensemble. [www.dso-berlin.de](http://www.dso-berlin.de)

### **Voices Unite at the World Class Level: The Professional Choruses**

In addition to the immeasurable pool of creativity among Berlin's countless instrumentalists, sonorous voices also belong to the city's classical repertoire. The German capital is currently home to more than eight hundred choirs, ranging from large to tiny. But it is the professionals who stand out as beacons in choral music. They include three opera choruses and two broadcast choruses which operate under the umbrella of the Rundfunk-Orchester und Chöre GmbH.

The sixty-four singers of the Rundfunkchor Berlin under the direction of Simon Halsey give around fifty concerts each year. Its broadly diversified repertoire ranges from the Renaissance to the present, and choral symphonic works are of particular importance. The chorus collaborates with all of the major orchestras and conductors in the world. Particularly intense partnerships connect it with the Berlin Philharmonic under Sir Simon Rattle, the Deutsches Symphonie Orchestra under Kent Nagano, and the Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester Berlin under Marek Janowski. [www.rundfunkchor-berlin.de](http://www.rundfunkchor-berlin.de)

The RIAS Kammerchor is regarded as one of the world's most renowned choral ensembles of its kind. All of the musicians in this exceptional chorus have been trained as soloists. Works are performed from a broad spectrum that ranges from

Gregorian chant to the present. The RIAS Kammerchor has developed its specific artistic profile from its independent existence as a chamber ensemble.

[www.rias-kammerchor.de](http://www.rias-kammerchor.de).

Newly founded this year is the Kammerchor der Staatsoper. The seventeen professionals of “Apollini et Musis” were presented in their first concert with a work by Rossini, and they are planning additional performances. The new chorus is directed from the piano by Julien Salemkour. [www.staatsoper-berlin.de](http://www.staatsoper-berlin.de)

The Singakademie and the Philharmonische Chor Berlin are two large semi-professional choral ensembles that enrich Berlin’s concert landscape at the highest level. [www.berliner-singakademie.de](http://www.berliner-singakademie.de), [www.philharmonischer-chor.de](http://www.philharmonischer-chor.de)

### **Sound and Space: The Concert Halls**

Architectural masterpieces with unique acoustics and sound spaces of a very special type are to be found in Schinkel’s classical building at the Gendarmenmarkt and Scharoun’s tent-like, gleaming gold Philharmonic Hall, which has over time become an icon of classic modernism.

In the Konzerthaus at the Gendarmenmarkt, the new concertos of Paganini and Liszt were lauded. This is where Wagner directed his *Flying Dutchman*. And Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony received its Berlin premiere here. The theater that was erected here by Karl Friedrich Schinkel from 1818 to 1821 is one of the masterpieces of classicist architecture in Germany. After its destruction in the Second World War, the edifice was rebuilt and opened in 1984 as a concert hall. Around 550 events are held every year in the four performance spaces of the Large Hall, the Small Hall, the Werner Otto Hall, and the Music Club. With more than one hundred concerts every season, the Konzerthausorchester Berlin, as the resident orchestra, contributes substantially to the artistic profile of the hall.

[www.konzerthaus.de](http://www.konzerthaus.de)

The Berlin Philharmonic Hall presents itself in modern asymmetry in the Tiergarten. It is the home of the Berlin Philharmonic. The Philharmonic Hall was built from 1960 to 1963 by Hans Scharoun and today, along with the Kammermusiksaal, it is a part of the Kulturforum Berlin on the Potsdamer Platz. The tent-like structure surrounds a large, pentagonal concert hall. Seats situated in surrounding irregularly ascending loge terraces from all sides offer equally good visibility to the concert stage that is located in the center. A special wall construction makes unique, outstanding acoustics possible at every seat. The Large Hall has room for 2,440 listeners, while the Chamber Music Hall seats 1,180. [www.berliner-philharmoniker.de](http://www.berliner-philharmoniker.de)

A lively musical life may also be found at numerous other locations throughout the city. Examples include the French Cathedral at the Gendarmenmarkt, the imposing Berlin Cathedral on Museum Island, and Radialsystem V, one of the most innovative event locations in Berlin. Located in the former pumping station on the banks of the Spree River, it combines early music and contemporary dance scenes in an artistically fruitful and successful collaboration. [www.radialsystem.de](http://www.radialsystem.de)

### **The Four Seasons: Festivals Throughout the Year**

The concert season in Berlin lasts the entire year, and numerous music festivals mark programmatic highpoints. The Deutsche Oper will usher in 2008 with the performance of all four productions of Richard Wagner's operatic cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen* in January. February and March will follow with the Verdi Festival, the highpoint of which will be a new production of *Aida* under artistic director Christopher Alden and conductor Renato Palumbo. [www.deutscheoperberlin.de](http://www.deutscheoperberlin.de)

The Staatsoper will give a glittering presentation at the Festtage during Eastertime. It has developed into a top-class musical event, enchanting an international public with two opera productions and symphonic performances with world-renowned musicians. The Festtage tradition will continue next year under the direction of Daniel Barenboim with a performance of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Highpoints of the 2008 instrumental concerts include appearances by Daniel Barenboim both at the piano and on the podium conductor with the Chinese piano virtuoso Lang Lang.

With “Classic Open Air”, summer will transform the Gendarmenmarkt, one of the city’s most beautiful squares, into a classic synthesis of the arts. Since 1992, this unique concert series has offered a celebration for the senses every year. In 2007, performances could be experienced such as “Wagner Night with Fireworks”, “American Night”, or the “Vienna Strauss Gala”. [www.classicopenair.de](http://www.classicopenair.de)

Around a month later at the same location in the Konzerthaus at the Gendarmenmarkt. the young.euro.classic takes place. One of the most successful summer festivals in Berlin. The program consists of fifteen grand concerts performed by fifteen youth orchestras from every part of the world. [www.young-euro-classic.de](http://www.young-euro-classic.de)

At the annual “musikfest berlin”, top international orchestras will rendezvous and turn Berlin into the musical capital of the world. Within the framework of “musikfest berlin 07”, a total of eighteen orchestras, instrumental ensembles, and choruses from the international music world along with top conductors and soloists will present a grand tour through orchestral music of the first half of the twentieth century. The main focus of the festival will be on three composers: Claude Debussy, Charles Ives, and Edgard Varèse. [www.berlinerfestspiele.de](http://www.berlinerfestspiele.de)

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