

PRESS RELEASE

"Prize of Peace of Westphalia" 2010

A portrait of the award winners

Daniel Barenboim

The pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim is a true cosmopolitan. He was born in Argentina on November 15, 1942 and holds Argentinian, Israeli and Spanish citizenship as well as a passport from the Palestinian Authority. He first came to public attention as an acclaimed pianist, but Barenboim achieved worldwide fame as a conductor. His performances and recordings have made a significant contribution to making classical music accessible to a broad public.

Daniel Barenboim is a political artist who also uses his art to actively promote rapprochement and reconciliation between the populations of Israel and Palestine. In doing so, he also breaks various taboos: for example, he conducted the first Wagner concert to be performed on an Israeli stage after the war, which triggered a major debate among the Israeli public. On April 16, 2009, Daniel Barenboim performed in Egypt for the first time. He conducted the Cairo Symphony Orchestra at the Cairo Opera House, with Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 on the program. His performance was highly controversial beforehand for political reasons. With these provocations, Barenboim wanted to show that music unites people across borders, religions and nations. Between February and April 2006, Barenboim also gave lectures at various locations (London, Chicago, Berlin, East Jerusalem and West Jerusalem) for the BBC series of "Reith Lectures", which were intended to show "that music is at the heart of what we call human".

West-Eastern Divan Orchestra

The West-Eastern Divan Orchestra is an orchestra based in Seville made up of Arab and Jewish musicians from various countries in the Middle East. Daniel Barenboim and the late literary scholar Edward Said founded the orchestra in 1999 and named it after an anthology of poems by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

The aim of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra is to promote understanding between Israelis and Palestinians. The musicians want to pave the way towards a peaceful and just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One of the young artists described the extraordinary orchestra as follows: "Barenboim always says that this project is not political. But this orchestra is a political statement from both sides and that's great. The orchestra is a human laboratory that can show the whole world how to get along."

The first working meeting of the musicians took place in Weimar in August 1999. In 2000, the musicians met again in Weimar, in 2001 in Chicago and since 2002 in Seville in the Spanish autonomous region of Andalusia. Centuries ago, Jews, Muslims and Christians lived together peacefully and mutually enriched each other in the province of Granada. Summer tours regularly take the orchestra across several continents. In August 2005, a highly acclaimed concert took place in Ramallah, which was broadcast live on television in many countries.