

# THE MUSIKINSTRUMENTEN-MUSEUM



View into the northern end of the Musikinstrumenten-Museum © MIM, photo: Anne-Katrin Breitenborn

The history of the Berlin Musikinstrumenten-Museum (Museum of Musical Instruments) dates back to 1888 when Philipp Spitta and Joseph Joachim founded the »Sammlung alter Musikinstrumente« (Collection of Old Musical Instruments) at the *Königliche Akademische Hochschule* (Royal Academy) in Berlin. Thirty-four instruments from the *Kunstgewerbemuseum* (Museum of Decorative Arts), of which the greater part had once belonged to the holdings of the *Preußische Kunstammer* (Prussian Art Chamber), formed the basis for the collection. Moreover, a further 240 instruments, acquired from the Leipzig publisher and music dealer Paul de Wit, were added to this. As early as 1890 an extensive collection of old musical instruments was bought from the holdings of Paul de Wit for the second time for Berlin. Included among these instruments was also the famous »Bach-harpsichord«. Oskar Fleischer, the first director of the collection at the *Königliche Akademische Hochschule*, succeeded in making the most substantial acquisition for the Berlin *Musikinstrumenten-Museum* in 1902, when he was able to purchase the private collection of the Ghent lawyer César Snoeck, consisting of 1145 instruments, with financial assistance from the Prussian Royal family. The four Ruckers-harpsichords, built in the world-renowned workshop of the Ruckers family in Antwerp in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as well as one of the few existing original transverse flutes by Jean Hotterre, are shining examples of this collection.

Under the direction of Curt Sachs (Director of the *Musikinstrumenten-Museum* from 1919 to 1933) the first complete organological catalogue of the Berlin collection was published in 1922, which still forms the basis for numerous organological publications up to the present day. Curt Sachs was essentially responsible for giving our collection its scientific alignment and helped to provide it with international significance. After Curt Sachs had been forced to emigrate by the National Socialists, the collection of musical instruments was removed from the *Staatliche Hochschule für Musik* (National Academy of Music) in 1935 and integrated into the *Staatliches Institut für deutsche Musikforschung* (National Institute for Music Research), whose other predecessor was the *Fürstliche Institut für musikwissenschaftliche Forschung* (Royal Institute for Musicological research) in Bückeburg. Up to the beginning of the Second World War the holdings of the Musikinstrumenten-Museum comprised around 4000 instruments.

After the end of the war only around 900 of these had survived. Alfred Berner (Director of the museum 1945–1975), who had also revived the Institut für Musikforschung in 1945 at the same time, was successful in building up the collection again, despite meagre financial resources, to become one of the most important international collections again and, at the same time, he established an extensive musicological library in which the main focus was on organology.





Sound installation *The Idea of Rainforest* von Ronald Kuivila, 2000  
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Vom Baum zum Klang, Thomas Schiegnitz, 2017, interactive exhibition for violin making © MIM, Foto: Anne-Katrin Breitenborn

Since 1962 the *Staatliches Institut für Musikforschung* with the *Musikinstrumenten-Museum* has been one of the five institutions of the *Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz* (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation). In 1984 the institute and the museum were able to move to the Kemperplatz, next to the Philharmonie, into their own building, constructed as part of the *Kulturforum* by Edgar Wisniewski according to the designs of Hans Scharoun. Around 900 of the approx. 3500 instruments of the unique collection are presented to the public here in a spacious exhibition room flooded with light. The wind instruments from St. Wenzel, Naumburg from the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century are really outstanding. Early harpsichords and spinets from Italy, the southern Netherlands (the Ruckers-harpsichords), and from France and Germany, bowed string instruments by famous Italian, French, Alemannic and German masters (Antonio Stradivari, Januarius Gagliano, Jacobus Stainer, Hans Krouchdaler, Frantz Straub and Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume), as well as woodwind instruments by Jean Hotteterre, Jean Hyacinth, Joseph Rottenburgh, Jacob and Johann Christoph Denner, Johann Eichentopf, Johann Wilhelm Oberlender and Johann Joachim Quantz also uniquely illustrate the

development of the instruments in today's symphony orchestra. Furthermore, instruments from the former *Preußische Kunstkammer* and from the holdings of Frederick the Great (such as the travelling harpsichord or several transverse flutes), also Carl Maria von Weber's fortepiano from the workshop of the Vienna piano maker Joseph Brodmann, one of Johann Gottfried Moritz's first bass tubas, an English church organ from the workshop of John Gray and the largest theatre organ of the European continent, the four-manual Mighty Wurlitzer from the holdings of the Siemens family, are some of the museum's highlights.

Special attention is devoted to professional conservation, restoration and the replication of valuable historical musical instruments. Thus, for example, two replicas of the famous »Bach-harpsichord«, illustrating the different stages of construction of this instrument, can be viewed.

The museum can also draw on an extensive archive of audio documents of its own instruments, as well as those of comparable instruments from other collections. Besides special exhibitions and lectures, numerous music events take place and transform the building into an »audio museum«.

#### **Musikinstrumenten-Museum des Staatlichen Instituts für Musikforschung Preußischer Kulturbesitz**

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#### **Opening times:**

Tues 9 am–13 pm | Wed–Fri 9 am–17 pm | Thurs 9 am–20 pm | Sat–Sun 10 am–17 pm | closed Mondays

Prices: € 6,- | special reductions € 3,-

Free for children and young persons up to and including the age of 18

The Musikinstrumenten-Museum is accessible for disabled visitors.

#### **Guided tours**

Every Thursday at 6.00 pm and every Saturday at 11 am: guided tour with audio examples

Every Saturday at 12 noon: demonstration of the Wurlitzer theatre organ

Further guided tours on application under +49 (30).254 81-139

Guided tours also in French and English | Audio guides are available from the museum's ticket desk.