



Staats- und Domchor Berlin *Berlin State and Cathedral Choir*

Knabenchor an der Universität der Künste Berlin
Boys' choir at the Berlin University of the Arts

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Photos: Glockner, Jaschschies, Müllers, Zenna, Zörnig

Staats- und Domchor Berlin

The Staats- und Domchor Berlin is one of Europe's most renowned boys' choirs and Berlin's oldest musical institution. In 1465, Elector Frederick II of Brandenburg recruited five *Singeknaben* to provide music in the *Dhumkerke*. Around a century later, the establishment of a court orchestra, later also under the direction of Johannes Eccard, led to one of the first golden ages of choral singing.

The ensemble first achieved international acclaim in the 19th century under the direction of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Otto Nicolai and August Neithardt.

With the end of the monarchy after World War I, the Königlicher Hof- und Domchor lost its political and financial foundation. In 1923, it was renamed the Staats- und Domchor Berlin and affiliated with the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik, today the Universität der Künste. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the choir once again began performing in the Berliner Dom. Concert tours have led them to many countries in Europe, the USA, Japan, Russia and Israel.

In addition to its numerous awards, e.g. in the Deutscher Chorwettbewerb, the choir was honoured in 2002 with the European Jugendchorkulturpreis and nominated for a Grammy Award in 2006. Members of the choir enrich Berlin's musical life by performing in opera productions and appearing in concerts at the Berliner Philharmonie.



Director

Since 2002, **Kai-Uwe Jirka** has been a professor of choral conducting and director of the Staats- und Domchor at the Universität der Künste Berlin. Since 2006, he has also served as artistic director of the Sing-Akademie zu Berlin. He completed his studies in sacred music, orchestra conducting and German language and literature at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hanover.

From 1999 to 2001, Jirka served as chorus master of the Niedersächsische Staatsoper. He has worked with the Rundfunkchor Berlin, the Hilliard Ensemble, the Niedersächsisches Staatsorchester, the Kammer-symphonie Berlin and the Lautten Compagnie Berlin. Since 2006, he has led the premieres of many lesser-known 18th century works from the archive of the Sing-Akademie.

Another focus of his work lies in the field of contemporary music. In recent years, he has conducted premieres of works by composers like Luke Bedford, Jörg Birkenkötter and Katia Tchemberdji.



Universität der Künste Berlin



Berlin boys sing with joy!

And in the Staats- und Domchor, they even get to sing with friends. The Universität der Künste Berlin offers talented boys the opportunity to obtain a free musical education. In individual and group lessons, aspiring singers receive professional voice training over a period of several years. While the beginners start out by gaining some experience in small performances, advanced singers perform musical programmes in Berlin's concert halls and religious services in some of the city's most famous churches. On top of that, they produce CD recordings and participate in tours at home and abroad. These young singers also regularly make music with famous artists and ensembles, like the Berliner Philharmoniker and the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester, under conductors like Claudio Abbado and Sir Simon Rattle.



Strong voices!

Singing strengthens character and both fairness and team spirit prove to be valuable social skills in the choir. Voice training is also about nobleness of heart – our

singers learn this in a very unique way. In rehearsals and singing retreats, the boys work together to meet the musical challenges of demanding works from the Renaissance to the present day. And it doesn't take them long to realise how much fun it can be to master them!



Singing through the voice change... and beyond!

Today, around 200 boys and over 60 young male voices receive training in 11 different choral groups in the Staats- und Domchor Berlin. The groups have different responsibilities and age profiles depending on the skills and ability of the singers.

DoMinis (4–6 years): Early musical education begins at the pre-school age. We playfully introduce our youngest members to sounds, tones, timbre and rhythms.

Choir school (6–8 years): Over the next year and a half, the singers receive additional voice training and learn the basics of music theory.

Carollers (7–10 years): The children learn more about their vocal range. Once they are divided into sopranos and altos, they practice polyphonic singing.

Choirboys (8 years and up): The children sing alongside men's voices for the first time. The choirboys begin to perform in religious services and take small concert tours.

Concert choir (9 years and up): This group features 40 boys and 20 male voices. The concert choir performs concerts at home and abroad and provides music for religious services in the Berliner Dom.

Voces in Spe (13–16 years): The boys are exposed to more theoretical knowledge while they are going through their voice changes. Their voices are carefully cultivated and they're given a chance to test out those first tones in their new vocal ranges.



Young, talented singers wanted!

The Staats- und Domchor regularly invites boys aged five to seven and older boys with a musical background to audition. It acquaints visitors with its youth development programme through a concert presentation. With the right talent, singers can obtain a free, high-quality musical education with the Staats- und Domchor.



For upcoming events and additional information about the choir's admission process, visit:
www.staats-und-domchor-berlin.de

