

PRESS RELEASE

2021 GOETHE MEDALS HONOUR PRINCESS MARILYN DOUALA MANGA BELL, TOSHIO HOSOKAWA AND WEN HUI

The 2021 Goethe Medals go to the social economist and president of the cultural organisation doual'art Princess Marilyn Douala Manga Bell of Cameroon, to the composer Toshio Hosokawa of Japan and to the dancer and choreographer Wen Hui of China. The Goethe-Institut confers the official decoration of the Federal Republic of Germany to honour individuals who have performed outstanding service for international cultural dialogue. The ceremony celebrating the awardees of the 2021 Goethe Medal will take place as a digital live stream on 28 August, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's birthday.

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Carola Lentz, president of the Goethe-Institut, noted, "In pandemic times, the international cultural exchange faces particular challenges. Digital communication offers new opportunities, yet at the same time existing inequalities are growing, for example with regard to access to cultural activities and education or gender equality. The legacy of colonial power relations and restrictions on freedom in illiberal post-colonial regimes are becoming even more palpable. This year's awardees don't shy away from these challenges. With their cultural and civil society commitment in three very different countries, they courageously lead the way and stand up with their art for an open, democratic and equal society – also across national borders."

The theme of this year's awarding is "Culture is a very special juice – in the network of the global community." **Christina von Braun**, vice president of the Goethe-Institut and chair of the Goethe Medal Conferment Commission, says, "For Goethe, blood and ink were indistinguishable substances. The flow of these two 'fluids' makes life and community possible. This year's awardees of the Goethe Medal are outstanding representatives of this imagery. Their art connects cultures, home and abroad. It bridges genders, and links past and future."

Due to pandemic restrictions, the 2021 Goethe Medal awardees will not be able to travel to Germany together. Therefore, the awarding will be broadcast live as a digital ceremony on 28 August from 11 am on the Goethe-Institut channels. The programme will include three film portraits created in collaboration with Deutsche Welle to honour the work of this year's awardees. In addition, the digital ceremony will be shown at the Kunstfest Weimar and supplemented by a supporting programme. In order to enable personal contacts with the awardees, the Goethe-Institut is offering digital press talks, the dates of which will be announced.

Statements on the conferrals

Princess Marilyn Douala Manga Bell is strongly committed to the reappraisal of German colonial history in Cameroon and to a constructive dialogue about the effects of colonialism up to the present day. She sees the particular potential of the visual arts to initiate social change and strengthen the freedom of expression, and thus advocates a broad encouragement of artistic activity. This is also the aim of the contemporary cultural centre doual'art in Cameroon's port city of Douala, which she co-founded. The jury wrote,

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“Marilyn Douala Manga Bell combines civil society commitment with international cultural work in an outstanding way and takes a reconciliatory and forward-looking position on social conflicts and historic problems. She develops highly regarded ideas for coming to terms with colonial injustice as well as for consolidating Cameroon’s own identity.”

Toshio Hosokawa is one of the best-known living composers from Japan and an outstanding representative of German-Japanese cultural relations. His oeuvre includes operas, orchestral and solo works, chamber and film music as well as works for traditional Japanese instruments. His musical language takes up the Zen Buddhist symbolic interpretation of nature as well as the tension between Western avant-garde and traditional Japanese culture. For example, his opera *Erdbeben. Träume* (Earthquake. Dreams), which premiered in Stuttgart in 2018, was based on a libretto by the writer Marcel Beyer and on Heinrich von Kleist’s *The Earthquake in Chile*. “With his compositions, Hosokawa opens up spaces and connects people all over the world. The unique sound of his music transcends and turns the concert hall into a place of global encounter,” wrote the jury. “In doing so, he succeeds in combining culturally specific ways of listening to music into an extraordinary work of sound art, while preserving his own traditions.”

Wen Hui belongs to the avant-garde of dance theatre in China and is co-founder of the Living Dance Studio, the country’s first independent dance theatre company. In her choreographies, she incorporates elements of documentary film and themes from everyday life in China. She is particularly interested in the traces that history leaves on human bodies, turning them into “reflective archives.” In her works *Report on Giving Birth* and *Red*, personal body memory was used as an archive that spans time and bears witness to history. The origins of her works are mostly local, the forms of dance are inspired by ideas from all over the world. “Wen Hui stands for the independent and highly creative independent art scene in China, embodying cultural diversity and the broad spectrum of everyday stories beyond official narratives,” wrote the jury. “She tells ‘her’ stories of China through her sensitive, closely observed dance theatre pieces, which congenially combine different media, documentary elements and poetic power.”

About the awardees

Princess Marilyn Douala Manga Bell was born in Cameroon in 1957. One of the aims of her work is to honour the historical role of her great-grandfather Rudolf Manga Bell (1873-1914), the leader of an important resistance movement against the German colonial power. In doing so, she aims at contributing to ongoing debates on the politics of memory in Cameroon and beyond. She studied development economics in Paris and has been working as a development expert since 1994, among others for the World Bank and the European Commission. She is co-founder of the doual’art Contemporary Art Center in Douala, which opened in 1991, and is committed to the future of African museums and the restitution of cultural artefacts from colonial contexts. In 2016, she took part, as African expert, in the conference held by the Goethe-Institut Johannesburg on the conception of the Humboldt Forum. In 2019, she co-curated the project *Burden of Memory* at the Goethe-Institut Yaoundé, which brought together artistic explorations of German colonial rule in Africa from various African countries. Her most recent initiatives include the exhibition project *Kamerunstaat*, which tours schools in Cameroon with an accompanying educational programme. She also curated the exhibition *Hey Hamburg! Do you know Douala Manga Bell?* (running until 31 December 2022) at

the Hamburg Museum am Rothenbaum Kulturen und Künste der Welt (MARKK), which opened in April. Princess Marilyn Douala Manga Bell lives in Douala.

Toshio Hosokawa, who was born in Hiroshima in 1955, came to Germany in 1976, where he studied composition with Isang Yun and Klaus Huber. His reputation in the international contemporary music scene grew rapidly and he received numerous commissions. He achieved resounding success in 2001 with the premiere of the oratorio *Voicelless Voice in Hiroshima*. A series of large orchestral works followed, including *Circulating Ocean* (Vienna Philharmonic, Salzburg Festival 2005) and *Woven Dreams* (Cleveland Orchestra, Lucerne Festival 2010). In 2013, Toshio Hosokawa was a guest in Salzburg with the world premiere of *Klage* for soprano and orchestra based on a poem by Georg Trakl. He has also been successively composing the series *Voyages* for solo instrument and ensemble. *Voyage X* remarkably combines the Japanese shakuhachi bamboo flute and western instruments. Toshio Hosokawa has been artistic director of the Takefu International Music Festival in Fukui since 2001 and visiting professor at the Tokyo College of Music since 2004. His most recent works include the violin concerto *Genesis*, which was premiered by the Hamburg Philharmonic State Orchestra under Kent Nagano in the Elbphilharmonie in May this year. Toshio Hosokawa has received numerous awards, including first prize in the composition competition for the centenary of the Berlin Philharmonic, the Young Generation Composition Prize in Europe, the Kyoto Music Prize and the Rheingau Music Prize. Toshio Hosokawa lives in Yokohama.

Wen Hui, born in Yunnan in 1960, is a dancer, choreographer, documentary filmmaker and installation artist from China. Originally trained as a folk dancer, she attended the Choreography Department of the Beijing Dance Academy from 1985 to 1989 and was then a choreographer in the Oriental Song and Dance Ensemble of China (Dongfang gewutuan). In the 1990s, she studied modern dance in the United States and Europe, including at the Folkwang University in Essen and with Pina Bausch's dance company in Wuppertal. In 1994, Wen Hui founded China's first independent dance theatre group, the Living Dance Studio, together with filmmaker Wu Wenguang. Dance theatre is her means of intervening in society. In *Report on Giving Birth* (1999), the body is used as a strategy of resistance to portray the complexity of being a woman in the cultural and everyday context of our time. With *Report on Body* (2004) she and her team won the ZKB Prize of the Zürcher Theater Spektakel. With the support of the Goethe-Institut, the Living Dance Studio produced the piece *Red* in 2013, a reflection on the model opera as a political cultural symbol and part of the collective consciousness during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Wen Hui has participated in numerous independent Chinese and international festivals. Her works are shown at theatres, museums and art centres. She is presently working on *I am Sixty*, which will premiere in autumn 2021. Wen Hui lives in Beijing.

The digital ceremony for the awarding of the 2021 Goethe Medal will be held in cooperation with Deutsche Welle. The supporting programme for the Goethe Medal in Weimar was developed in cooperation with Kunstfest Weimar. With kind support from the Klassik Stiftung Weimar.

Press photos of the 2021 awardees can be found at:
www.goethe.de/bilderservice

Information about the Goethe Medal and an overview of previous awardees:
[www.goethe.de/goethe Medal](http://www.goethe.de/goethe%20Medal)

About the Goethe Medal

The Goethe Medal was established by the executive board of the Goethe-Institut in 1954 and acknowledged as an official decoration by the Federal Republic of Germany in 1975. The conferment is held on 28 August, Goethe's birthday. Since it was first awarded in 1955, 357 persons from 70 countries have been honoured, including Daniel Barenboim, Pierre Bourdieu, David Cornwell AKA John le Carré, Sir Ernst Gombrich, Lars Gustafsson, Ágnes Heller, Petros Markaris, Shirin Neshat, Sir Karl Raimund Popper, Jorge Semprún, Robert Wilson, Neil MacGregor, Helen Wolff, Yurii Andrukhovych, Irina Shcherbakova and Ian McEwan.

The Goethe Medal Jury

Dr. Franziska Augstein (journalist, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*), Prof. Dr. Christina von Braun (chair and representative of the executive committee, cultural scientist, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), Dr. Meret Forster (editorial director, music, BR-Klassik), Olga Grjasnowa (writer), Matthias Lilienthal (dramaturge and theatre director), Moritz Müller-Wirth (journalist, *Die Zeit*), Cristina Nord (Berlinale Forum, head of Berlin section), Insa Wilke (literary critic); representing the Federal Foreign Office: Dr. Andreas Görden (head of the department of culture and communication at the Foreign Office); representing the Goethe-Institut: Prof. Dr. Carola Lentz (president of the Goethe-Institut), Johannes Ebert (secretary-general of the Goethe-Institut)