

Press Release

Date of Issue: Friday 13 April 2018

## TAIWAN OPENS WORLD'S LARGEST PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE UNDER ONE ROOF

Taiwan announced today the opening in October 2018 of the National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts (Weiwuying).

In a single sweeping building designed by Dutch architects Mecanoo, Weiwuying incorporates five separate state of the art performance spaces, covering a surface area of 35 acres (141,000 sqm) and is set in the spectacular 116-acre (470,000 sqm) subtropical park in the heart of Kaohsiung, making it the world's largest performing arts centre under one roof.

Taiwan's most significant cultural investment in a generation, the new Center will incorporate:

- A 2,260 seat Opera House, with a proscenium design, orchestra pit and equipped with the latest stage technology for performances on a large scale
- A 2,000 seat Concert Hall in vineyard style and equipped with a 9,085 pipe organ built by Orgelbau Klais, the largest pipe organ ever built in Asia
- A flexible Playhouse, seating between 1,094 and 1,254 depending on its varying configuration between proscenium and thrust stage, suitable for theatre, dance, and Chinese Opera
- A 470 seat Recital Hall, ideal for chamber music and solo recitals
- An outdoor performance space, seamlessly linking the building with the park, and open to audiences of up to 20,000

Kaohsiung, with a population of around 3 million, located in the south of Taiwan, once a major international harbour, is now a modern, diverse city with a rich cultural offer. The new National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts, occupying a site that was formerly a military training base, symbolises a new outlook for the city of Kaohsiung and Taiwan – with a mission to connect local and global talent through arts and culture.

Weiwuying will host performances by the world's top artists as well as work created specially for the Center's unique spaces, developed within the local community. The Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra under Gustavo Dudamel, who conducts in Taiwan for the first time, will be among the first artists to perform at the Center. International collaborative partners have so far included New York's Lincoln Center, the Spoleto Festival, Singapore

International Festival of Arts, Deutsche Oper am Rhein, Esplanade Theatres on the Bay Singapore and Aerowaves Spring Forward contemporary dance festival.

The Executive and Artistic Director Chien Wen-Pin, current Kapellmeister of Deutsche Oper am Rhein and former Music Director of Taiwan Philharmonic, said, 'Weiwuying is one of the most beautiful, iconic and best-equipped performing arts centres in the world. The creative industries are extraordinarily lively in Taiwan. Once our doors are officially open, the Center will become an exciting springboard from which talent can soar.'

Francine Houben, Founding Architect of Mecanoo Architects, said, 'Weiwuying is one of Mecanoo's most ambitious buildings and embodies all the key elements of our philosophy. Inspired by the beauty of the local Banyan trees with their iconic canopies of leaves, the vast, undulating structure is composed of a unique skin and roof under which generous free spaces can flow. We have aimed to deliver a flagship cultural destination for Taiwan, a beacon to attract performers and audiences from around the world.'

The October 2018 opening of the National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts will complete Taiwan's national umbrella organisation National Performing Arts Center, incorporating Taipei's National Theater and Concert Hall and the National Taichung Theater. The three flagship institutions will be home to Taiwan's internationally renowned contemporary dance and theatre companies, orchestras of Western and Chinese music, Peking, Taiwanese and Western opera troupes, hand puppet companies, Oscar and Golden Lion-winning filmmakers, Booker-nominated authors, Mando-pop stars and beyond.

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#### **Notes to Editors**

#### **Chien Wen-Pin**

The newly established National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts (Weiwuying) is led by conductor Chien Wen-Pin. Born in 1967 in Taipei, he graduated from the National Taiwan University of Arts as a pianist, and went on to Vienna to study conducting. From 1998 to 2004, he was Resident Conductor at Japan's Pacific Music Festival, founded by Leonard Bernstein, and he became Music Director of the National Symphony Orchestra in Taiwan in 2001, where he remained until 2007. Since 1996 he has also been "Kapellmeister" (Resident Conductor) at the Deutsche Oper am Rhein in Düsseldorf/Duisburg. His work as a guest conductor has taken him to many international opera houses, including the Dutch National Opera, the State Opera of Hamburg, the Komische Oper Berlin, the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra, and the NHK Symphony Orchestra. In 1998 he was the first Taiwanese conductor to appear at the Vienna Festival, with the Deutsche Oper am Rhein. Chien Wen-Pin is highly regarded both for his musicianship and for the brilliance of his

programming. In 2006, in Taipei he was responsible for mounting the first ever production of Wagner's Ring cycle in the Chinese-speaking world, using predominantly Taiwanese singers. He has conducted first performances of a wide Western classical repertoire in Taiwan. Since Chien Wen-Pin and his team began working at Weiwuying two years ago, he has continued with his conducting work, both at home and internationally.

### **Mecanoo Architecten**

Mecanoo Architecten, officially founded in Delft in 1984, is made up of a highly multidisciplinary staff of creative professionals from 25 countries. The team includes architects, engineers, interior designers, urban planners, landscape architects and architectural technicians. The company is led by creative director/founding partner, Francine Houben, design and research director/partner Dick van Gameren, technical director Friso van der Steen, and financial director Peter Haasbroek. The extensive collective experience, gained over three decades, results in designs that are realised with technical expertise and great attention to detail. Mecanoo's projects range from single houses to complete neighbourhoods and skyscrapers, cities and polders, schools, theatres and libraries, hotels, museums, and even a chapel. Discovering unexpected solutions for the specifics of programme and context is the foremost challenge in all of our assignments. Each design is considered in terms of its cultural setting, place and time. As such, Mecanoo treats each project as a unique design statement embedded within its context and orchestrated specifically for the people who use it. Within the practice are knowledge centres which enable us to stay current on technological and design innovations in sustainability, eco-engineering, technology, education and learning, high-rise and mobility. Preoccupied not by a focus on form, but on process, consultation, context, urban scale and integrated sustainable design strategies, the practice creates culturally significant buildings with a human touch.