

PRESS INFORMATION

40 years of the new theatre building at Friedrichstraße 107: the Friedrichstadt-Palast Berlin celebrates its anniversary

Berlin, 25 April 2024



Symbolic handing over of the theatre's keys to the director of the time, Wolfgang E. Struck, on the morning of 27 April 1984 | Photo: Settnik

On 27 April 1984, the Friedrichstadt-Palast Berlin celebrated the opening of its new building at Friedrichstraße 107. Over the past four decades, 150 in-house productions have premiered and around 14,000 performances have taken place on the world's biggest theatre stage.

The Palast's stage history dates back to 1919, when Max Reinhardt opened the *Großes Schauspielhaus*. Renamed the *Theater des Volkes* during the Third Reich, the theatre has been known as the Friedrichstadt-Palast Berlin since 1 November 1947.

On 29 February 1980, the city's building inspectors have to close the old Palast located at Am Zirkus 1 for structural reasons. After a construction period that lasts 39 months, the new Palast officially opens in 1984 at its new location, Friedrichstraße 107 – on time and 5 million marks below the planned construction budget of 219 million East German marks. 22,500 glass blocks adorn the iconic façade of the GDR's last major representative building to this day.

The keys are symbolically handed over to the director of the new Palast at the time, Wolfgang E. Struck, on the morning of 27 April 1984. In the evening, the curtain goes up for the first time in the new building in the presence of the SED leaders, the Chairman of the State Council Erich Honecker, his wife Margot Honecker, who is the Minister of National Education, and the Minister of the Planned Economy Günter

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Friedrichstadt-Palast Berlin

Friedrichstraße 107
10117 Berlin-Mitte
Germany

General Director:
Dr. Berndt Schmidt

Chair of the Supervisory Board
Sarah Wedl-Wilson,
Permanent Secretary for Culture

  The Friedrichstadt-Palast is owned by the City of Berlin.

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Mittag. The four seats at the centre of the third row are still unofficially called the "Honecker seats" today, despite the fact that Erich Honecker was only a guest at the Palast on this one occasion.

The new building offers impressive technical possibilities that are extremely innovative at the time. A lifting platform allows an ice rink, a manage and the spectacular water basin to be moved. In 1987, a unique world record is set together with the Leningrad Music Hall: With the 64 dancers from the two ballet companies, the longest kickline in the world is brought to the stage in East Berlin.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the usual flow of guests initially dwindles. The Palast ends up on the Senate's 'liquidation list' and faces closure, as the entertainment theatre is not considered worthy of funding at the time.

In 1993, things start to look up again: The theatre's former dramaturgist, Alexander Iljinskij, becomes the new general director. He helps the theatre achieve a comeback and establishes it in Berlin. Two years later, the theatre becomes the state-owned limited company (GmbH) that still exists today.

In 1999, the theatre hall is given a makeover and gains its characteristic blue look as it is known today. The theatre faces another serious artistic crisis from 2006, which comes to a head in the 2007/08 season. On 1 November 2007, Berndt Schmidt is appointed general director and sole managing director by Klaus Wowereit, who is the governing mayor of Berlin at the time. Berndt Schmidt has now been at the new Palast for exactly 40 percent of the new Palast's 40 years (16 years).

His first major production at the Palast, 'Qi' (2008), is intended to dust off the revue genre and bring it into the twenty-first century. The Palast has outperformed the previous Grand Show with every new show ever since, generating ticket sales of €28 million in 2023. By way of comparison: in 2007, the ticket sales totalled €12 million.

Even in its fortieth year, there's no sign of any ugly blot on the balance sheet: The figures for the first seven months since the World Premiere show that the current FALLING | IN LOVE Grand Show is once again chasing records.

Dr. Berndt Schmidt: "Having been born in West Germany, it is a distinction and an honour for me to be able to work at this important East German institution. I'm relieved that this jewel has survived the fall of the Wall and is now an integral part of Berlin's cultural programme. We are by far the number one theatre in Berlin. As many guests visit us as they do the theatres ranked second and third combined. The magnificent building dating from 1984 is nothing more than a beige concrete giant with 195,000 cubic metres of space. Its wonderful multi-ethnic ensemble is what brings it to life and makes it dazzle and shine. It's as unique as this theatre."

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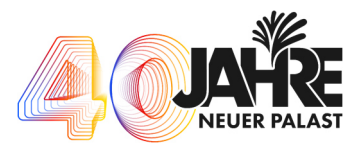
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Additional information:

Images to download: www.picdrop.com/friedrichstadt-palast/xgFqgi1kmc

Including the photo series 'Now & Then' comprising photographs from the new building at Friedrichstraße 107 in former times and what these places also look like today in 2024.

Website: www.palast.berlin

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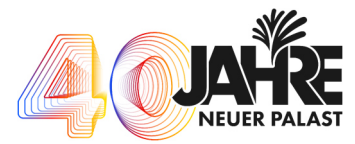
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