

PRESS INFORMATION

Friedrichstadt-Palast celebrates 100 years of its iconic  
hallmark – the world’s longest kickline!

Berlin, 18 October 2024



Kickline collage (2024 FALLING | IN LOVE and 1957 Palast Revue 57) | Photos: Nady El-Tounsy (left), Walter Weitzer (right)

Tomorrow, on 18 October 2024, the Palast’s iconic hallmark will celebrate its 100th anniversary. The kickline was first performed in 1924, in a revue show by Erik Charell. In the early twentieth century, 15 women performed on stage. They initiated a dance tradition, which is still the highlight of every Grand Show 100 years later and has become the hallmark of the Palast – albeit in a reinterpreted, more progressive format. Today, 32 dancers of all genders move in complete synchronicity in one long line.



The first kickline on our stage: the ‘Tiller Girls’ | 1924 programme for ‘An Alle!’ (‘For All’), photographer unknown.

Erik Charell took over as artistic director at the Großes Schauspielhaus, the predecessor to the Palast, in 1924. A former assistant to Max Reinhardt and himself a dancer and choreographer, Charell created revues that featured impressive show acts inspired by the American style. Charell enlisted world-famous crowd pullers as part of

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these revues, including the British 'Tiller Girls' – one of the most celebrated dance troupes of the early 1900s. His first revue 'An Alle!' ('For All!') premiered on Saturday, 18 October 1924 and laid the foundations for a 100-year revue and dance tradition.

Being both of Jewish descent and openly homosexual, Erik Charell emigrated before the Nazis came to power. Kicklines were rarely performed during the Nazi era. After the war ended, and particularly from 1947, they once again became a regular fixture of shows at what was now officially called the Friedrichstadt-Palast. Since the new Palast opened on Friedrichstraße in 1984, the kickline has featured in every Grand Show, without fail.

Producer and General Director Dr. Berndt Schmidt: "The kickline is an integral, iconic highlight of our productions. Even today, it still gets the audience on their feet because we interweave tradition and modernity perfectly. Since 2023, all genders have been able to dance in the traditionally all-female kickline. Anyone who thinks that our kickline promotes an outdated image of women mistakes its origins. This type of dance would have been unthinkable during the Imperial Era and was also frowned upon by the militaristic Nazis, as the military officers saw the kickline as a caricature of their Prussian goose step and uniformity. And rightly so – in 1924, this dance formation was a symbol of freedom and modernity, so certainly nothing that the Nazis would have wanted to be associated with."

The longest kickline in the history of the Palast was brought to the stage in 1987 as part of the co-production 'Zu Zweit' ('As A Pair') with the Leningrad Music Hall to mark the 750th anniversary of the city of Berlin. A total of 64 dancers from the two ballet companies formed the world's longest kickline in the east of Berlin, which was the capital of the German Democratic Republic at the time.

The kickline performed the most in the Palast's history is 'Lady, Be Good', which was danced in black-and-white costumes designed by Wolf Leder (see photo collage). First performed in 1957 as part of the 'Palast Revue 57', it featured in a further seven shows up until 2008.

These days, the iconic hallmark dance number comprises 32 dancers, who all move in perfect synchronicity – the world's longest kickline all year round. The dancers raise their legs to angles of up to 180 degrees as they perform what are known in dance terms as 'battements'. These are fundamental to the kickline. What makes the kickline so mesmerising is its absolute synchronicity. The way the dancers are lined up creates the perfect optical illusion of a single, uniform whole.

Not only the difficulty, speed and costumes have changed over the decades though, but also the kickline's diversity and inclusivity. Since 2023, the kickline has been open to all genders, in keeping with the theme of the scene 'WE ARE ONE' in the current hit production, FALLING | IN LOVE. The most important prerequisite is that dancers can get their legs high enough! Three male or gender-fluid dancers are currently

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involved in the dance number. The impressive choreography is by ballet director Alexandra Georgieva and French choreographer Sadeck Waff.

For Alexandra Georgieva, the kickline also has personal significance: "As a former dancer and member of the kickline myself, this anniversary is very special for me. As a dancer, there is an indescribable sense of accomplishment to have danced in something so unique. It was balm for the soul. I will never forget my first kickline here at the Palast in 1991: 'Ein Vogel Schwerelos' ('A Bird, Weightless'). As a choreographer, I am above all fascinated by the graphic aspects of the kickline. I draw my inspiration from nature and architecture, for instance."

### Additional information:

Image and video to download: [www.picdrop.com/friedrichstadt-palast/Wv8Jeck55k](http://www.picdrop.com/friedrichstadt-palast/Wv8Jeck55k)

Website: [www.palast.berlin](http://www.palast.berlin)

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