

## PRESS INFORMATION

**The most extensive renovation work at Friedrichstadt-Palast since the new building was built in 1984: Berlin's Mayor Klaus Wowereit inspects the progress of the renovation work – and is surprised to already get money back**

**Paying its loan back ahead of schedule: the presentation of the more than €1 million check /// The show temple gets a new image /// The foyer is renovated to reflect the aesthetics of 1984**

Berlin, August 11, 2011

With the opening of the 2011/2012 season last Friday, the remodeled building at 107 Friedrichstrasse also opened its doors. During the theater break, as many as 150 construction workers were busy renovating the outside areas, the foyer and the rear building – some even worked round the clock. This is the most extensive renovation work that has been done since the new building opened on April 27, 1984. This very Thursday, Klaus Wowereit, Berlin's mayor, visited the state-owned building to get an overview of the renovation work.

At the end of his tour, the theater's managing director, Dr. Berndt Schmidt, also symbolically handed him a check for more than €1.088 million – a partial repayment of the €3.5 million loan, which Friedrichstadt-Palast had received from the Berlin Senate at the height of its fall 2008 economic crisis. Dr. Berndt Schmidt comments: "Without Berlin's farsighted governing senator of culture, we would not have survived the critical phase of artistic reorientation we went through. Over the past two and a half years, things have taken a very positive turn, making it possible for us to partially pay back the loan now. So I am pleased to be able to say this upon occasion of his visit today." Schmidt commented on one of the reasons for the early repayment: "Art is an eternal up and down. So it makes sense to repay loans as quickly as possible during successful times." The €1.088 million that was paid back this year consists of the regular annual rate of €448,000 and a special voluntary repayment of €660,000.

On the whole, Klaus Wowereit looked pleased with Friedrichstadt-Palast's progress: "Friedrichstadt-Palast belongs to reunified Berlin like the Radio Tower and the TV Tower do. Financially helping Europe's biggest show stage through a difficult period of transition was the right thing for the Senate to do. It's money well invested, because artistic success and economic consolidation go hand in hand, as one would expect. After the construction work is finished, Friedrichstadt-Palast will look even more attractive on the outside and will hopefully attract even more visitors from Berlin and the rest of the world."

The changes can clearly be seen in the building's front area, which now features an elegant, spacious winding staircase made of dark stone. Dr. Berndt Schmidt comments: "Some people think we should hide this gigantic prefabricated building – this special structure. But we are doing the opposite. We are using the renovation work to draw attention to the actual building. As the last major GDR building, the palace represents a special architectural contemporary witness to the inner German division in the past." A new lighting concept is being used which now illuminates the glass stones in the building's facade from the inside. Together with the floodlights that light up the facade on the outside, the building almost looks like a cathedral in the evening. Schmidt says: "We have what it takes to be a national entertainment temple, and now we also radiate that."

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The shows presented on the biggest theater stage in the world are meanwhile state-of-the-art 21st century shows. Apart from the stage, the renovation work aimed to retain the building's unique qualities. So the foyer was elaborately reconstructed to reflect the aesthetics of 1984 and modernized very carefully. While things are back to normal in the foyer, construction work continues in the rear building, which is not visible to guests. For improved fire safety, more than 300 fire doors are, for example, being built and the hall ceilings of the 100-by-80-meter-long building complex are being equipped with fire-protection panels. Due to their scope, a variety of miscellaneous refurbishments (replacing pipelines and modernizing restrooms, cloakrooms, etc.) will first be completed in 2012.

The elegant design for the outside grounds was conceived by the architectural firm Levin Monsigny Landschaftsarchitekten, and the company ALPINA executed the work. The innovative lighting concept was designed by Andreas Boehlke Lichtdesign. The foyer was carefully updated by Reuter Schoger Architekten/Innenarchitekten.

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