

PRESS INFORMATION

2017 business year at the Friedrichstadt-Palast: new record narrowly missed due to Air Berlin bankruptcy

Berlin, 8 January 2018

Despite the challenging times for tourism, the Friedrichstadt-Palast Berlin generated ticket revenue totalling 25.3 million euros in the 2017 business year. Half a million people visited the theatre, making 2017 the second best year in the theatre's 98-year history.

The Palast generated 25.3 million euros in ticket revenue in the past business year, exceeding the 25 million euros mark for the second time since 1919. That's 3.1 million euros more than in 2016 when the ticket revenue totalled 22.2 million euros (+14%) and 600,000 euros less than in 2013 when a record 25.9 million euros was generated.

In 2017, 513,731 paying guests visited the theatre (free tickets excluded). In 2013, the Palast welcomed just 4,939 more – 518,670 in total. Prior to this, the half a million visitors mark was last exceeded in 2001. In terms of the number of guests, the Palast therefore remains the #1 theatre in Berlin by a long way. A further approx. 200,000 people attended external events at the Palast, such as the Berlinale and guest performances.

In 2017, the attendance rate lay at 89% – compared to 87% in the 2016 premiere year. At the depths of the economic crisis in 2008, the attendance rate was 64% (with 153,030 fewer guests; 360,701 in total). The extremely high attendance rate is also due to the new children's show 'Spiel mit der Zeit' ['Play with Time'], which has proven very popular both with the media and with our younger guests. It will run until 31 January and return again in the 2018/19 season.

Air Berlin's bankruptcy began affecting visitor numbers from September, with the full force being felt when all flight operations ceased at the end of October: according to internal comparative calculations, the bankruptcy cost the Palast at least 15,000 visitors and 1 million euros in ticket revenue. Alone in November, around 350,000 fewer passengers were recorded at Tegel Airport than in November 2016. Other tourism providers and hotels have reported a similar decline in demand owing to the reduced flight capacities and increased flights prices to Berlin. "The Palast makes 60% of its revenue from city tourism – and even more during the peak season. The fact that the theatre has generated ticket revenue exceeding 25 million euros for the second time in such difficult conditions is an indication of the tremendous appeal of

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the current GAULTIER show,” says General Director Dr. Berndt Schmidt. When he was first appointed ten years ago, the ticket revenue lay at 12.7 million euros.

Although the transport situation is expected to normalise by the summer, the Palast anticipates a further tangible decline in revenue of between 0.5 and 1 million euros in the first half of 2018. Despite these setbacks, THE ONE Grand Show is well on its way to becoming the theatre’s most successful production yet and to surpassing its predecessor (THE WYLD), which was seen by 765,000 people. THE ONE Grand Show featuring spectacular costumes by Jean Paul GAULTIER will run at the Palast for another six months until 5 July. A total of 700,000 tickets have already been sold for the show.

As a theatre owned by the State of Berlin, the Palast not only strives to optimise sales, but also pursues the vision of being a theatre for all. Hence the offers for guests with disabilities are to be expanded and special tickets enable people with a low income or experiencing difficult life situations to also see the show. The starting price for tickets will remain unchanged at an affordable 19.80 euros. In 2017, more than 6,000 socially-disadvantaged people had the opportunity to visit the Palast for just 3 euros thanks to the ‘berlinpass’ offered by the Berlin Senate. An additional 25,000 discounted charity tickets were allocated to social establishments, hospitals and hospices for 5 euros per ticket. The #PalastFürAlle initiative launched in June 2017 enabled a further 3,700 people to see the show for 5 euros. Issued on a trust basis, the #PalastFürAlle tickets are intended for people unable to afford the regular admission prices (see www.palast.berlin/fueralle for details). Although a record number of social tickets were issued in 2017 (35,000 in total), the average ticket price increased by just 4% – from 47.35 euros in 2016 to 49.20 euros in 2017. General Director Dr. Berndt Schmidt says of this increase: “Culture is important to a person’s well-being and participation is the social glue of our society. The increase in ticket revenue shows that economic and social considerations need not be mutually exclusive.”

In 2017, the theatre 100% owned by the State of Berlin received grants totalling €10.6 million (of which €1.6 million were immediately paid back to the state for lease of the theatre building). In the comparison with other public theatres, it should be noted that the Palast covers approximately 15% of its costs with grants and must generate up to 85% of funds for itself.

Note: we would like to take this opportunity to already mention now, at the very start of the year, that the figures for the 2018 business year will be lower than those for 2017. This is because the theatre closes for almost three months every other year (as it last did in 2016) to prepare for the new Grand Show (world premiere in autumn 2018!).

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