

Frankfurter Allgemeine

ZEITUNG FÜR DEUTSCHLAND

The Rebirth of the English Theatre

After two years, the English Theatre has returned to its home venue on Gallusanlage. However, some renovations are still pending. By Josephine Bewerunge

The evening begins with a rebirth in a double sense. “Welcome to the Renaissance,” sings the bard on the stage of the English Theatre. He is referring to Shakespeare’s lifetime, but they too must feel reborn: the ensemble, the people behind the scenes, and artistic director Daniel Nicolai. He personally welcomes the guests in the sold-out auditorium for the occasion and thanks everyone involved for their support and patience.

It has been exactly two years and two weeks since the run of the musical *Something Rotten!* had to be interrupted because the new owner of the building—the Singapore-based real estate company Capitaland—planned extensive renovations. The theatre, which has been performing in the basement of the Gallileo high-rise since 2003, found refuge in temporary venues such as the former Fritz Rémond Theatre at the Zoo and the Volksbühne on Großer Hirschgraben.

The return to the home venue had been scheduled for mid-November of last year but was delayed several times. On February 1, it finally happened. The revival of the musical was “only possible through a joint effort on many different levels and the goodwill of everyone involved,” says Frankfurt’s head of cultural affairs, Ina Hartwig. It “cost a lot of nerves,” but she hopes that “this period of uncertainty is now over.” She wishes the theatre “much joy in its restart.”

The back and forth of the past two years had been difficult, Nicolai says. After all, the set design and the ensemble are tailored to the auditorium on Gallusanlage. At the reopening, it does not shine in new splendor, as only the upper floors of the building were renovated. However, the theatre’s sound and lighting systems have been renewed.

Indeed, the musical performers are particularly clear to hear that evening, which should be a boon especially for non-native speakers in the audience. The mood among everyone involved is relaxed. Nicolai has already inquired about extending the run of *Something Rotten!*, but the actors wanted to wait for the first performance after the return before deciding. They are sent off with thunderous applause and standing ovations.

Still, not everything goes as planned. All four toilets are temporarily out of order, though the problem is eventually fixed. According to Nicolai, a renovation is planned for the summer break. They are to be redesigned to create more women’s restrooms to counter long queues. Other cosmetic repairs are also still outstanding. “But it’s more important that we perform,” says Nicolai. “We were invisible for so long.” He hopes that from now on the drama will once again move to where it belongs: on the stage.