

# WERK X-PETERSPLATZ

## VENUE

### Historical review

The theatre is located in the basement of a building from the Founder's era (Gründerzeit) close to the Petersplatz in Vienna's first district. These premises have been used for cultural purposes since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The use of the basement as a restaurant dates back to 1873.

In 1902, Franz Thurnher ran the restaurant under the name "Etablissement Casino de Paris".

In 1906, the premises were adapted, and the new owners Johann and Marie Prumüller ran it under the name "Nachtfalter" until 1937.

At the time of National Socialism, the Egyptian-born patron Achmed Beh operated the house as a nightclub, only superficially cosmopolitan: in the background it served the Gestapo for spying purposes. "In this sense, contrary to Nazi doctrine, the 'Achmed Beh' advertised 'exotic' dancing and 'foreign' jazz to lure gentlemen from allied states to Nazi and 'fabulously' frivolous Vienna" (Lydia Nsiah, Film Museum).

In October 1958, clarinetist Fatty George opened "Fatty's Saloon" here, and jazz musicians such as Louis Armstrong and Fats Waller were guests. Kurt Sandweg and Horst Geldmacher were in charge of the interior design until "Fatty's Saloon" is closed in 1963.

After that, the Art Center (with the interior of the saloon), a bohemian hangout, operated until 1966. The premises were revived in 1982, as a permanent stage by director Dieter Haspel's theatre group "Ensemble Theater". The new theatre premises were inaugurated by Helmut Zilk, the City Councilor for Culture by then, and opened with Bertolt Brecht's "Dreigroschenoper" directed by Dieter Haspel. Contemporary authors such as Wolfgang Bauer and Heinz Rudolf Unger, Heiner Müller, Botho Strauss and many others filled the program.

With the beginning of the 2009/2010 season, the era of Dieter Haspel and his "Ensemble Theater" ended after more than 30 years. They were succeeded by Harald Posch and Ali M. Abdullah, who henceforth ran the house under the name Garage X.

With the 2014/2015 season, Garage X was merged with the former "Stadtlabor Kabelwerk" in Vienna's 12<sup>th</sup> district. Henceforth, the venue at Petersplatz was called "WERK X-Eldorado".

Posch and Abdullah were responsible for the artistic direction of WERK X-Eldorado.

At the end of 2017, a separate artistic curation was recommended and appointed with Cornelia Anhaus.

WERK X-Petersplatz has thus been run as an independent house with its own artistic profile from season of 2018/19 onwards, although it has continued in association with WERK X.