

## History

### *The Beginnings*

Vienna's English Theatre is the oldest and most established English-language theatre in continental Europe. It was founded in 1963 by the Austrian director Franz Schafranek and his American wife, Ruth Brinkmann, an actress and graduate of the Yale University School of Drama. Originally intended as a summer theatre for English-speaking tourists, it won immediate acceptance by the Viennese public and extended its initial season to offer a year-round programme. After opening in a 99-seat playhouse in the Erzherzog Karl Palace in central Vienna, the theatre moved several times over the next ten years to accommodate its growing audience. During this time, most of the productions were directed by Franz Schafranek while Ruth Brinkmann demonstrated her acting talent and versatility in numerous roles. By 1974 the theatre had established itself as a valued cultural institution, and gained the support of the City of Vienna in finding its permanent home in the Josefs-gasse.

### *National and International Recognition*

The Schafraneks' rare theatrical sensibility and high standard of professionalism, brought them international as well as local recognition. In 1976 they presented the World premiere of Tennessee Williams' *The Red Devil Battery Sign* under the playwright's direction with Ruth Brinkmann in the leading female role. Other World and European premieres brought distinction to the theatre and enhanced the city's image as a centre of innovative theatre. A highlight was the 1991 World premiere of Edward Albee's Pulitzer Prize winning *Three Tall Women*, directed by the author, which he dedicated to the memory of Franz Schafranek after his sudden death earlier that year.

### *International Stars*

Through its international recognition, the theatre has attracted a distinguished roster of well-known stage and screen personalities to the Josefs-gasse, among them Joan Fontaine, Anthony Quinn, Horst Buchholz, Linda Gray, Larry Hagman, Princess Grace of Monaco, Dame Anna Neagle, Siobhan McKenna and Judi Dench as well as Jean-Louis Barrault, Jeanne Moreau and Jean-Paul Belmondo who appeared for the Théâtre Français de Vienne. French productions were added by Dr. Schafranek beginning in 1978, and the Teatro Italiano di Vienna was established in 1985 offering original works in Italian with stars such as Vittorio Gassman and Andrea Jonasson. With its 5000 subscribers, Vienna's English Theatre has become an integral part of Vienna's theatrical life, offering year-round productions of English and American classics, thrillers, comedies and farces as well as contemporary works.

The commitment and achievement of its founders was honoured by many official awards, including an O.B.E. to Franz Schafranek and an M.B.E. to Ruth Brinkmann granted by Queen Elizabeth II - awards that are only given to non-British subjects in exceptional cases.

### *The show must go on*

When Ruth Brinkmann lost her 6 year long battle against cancer, Julia Schafranek assumed the mantle and responsibilities of Artistic Executive Director of Vienna's English Theatre in 1997 where she continues to follow the objective of vital and captivating theatre established by her parents.

Highlights of these recent years were Leslie Nielsen's highly acclaimed guest appearance as Clarence Darrow, the European premiere of the 2000 Pulitzer Prize winning play *Proof* by David Auburn, the South-African Musical *Kat and the Kings*, winner of the Olivier Award for Best New Musical 1999, Marie Jones' *Stones in His Pockets*, Olivier Award 2001 for Best New Comedy, the return of the great French actress Annie Girardot as Madame Marguerite, which won her the Molière for Best Actress, the European premiere of the latest play by the great American dramatist Edward Albee *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia*, as well as the Pulitzer Prize winners *Doubt* by John Patrick Shanley and *God of Carnage* by Yasmina Reza.

VIENNA'S *English* THEATRE

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FOUNDED IN 1963

Since 1992 The Second City Comedy Club, Chicago has returned annually for a guest appearance, introducing their famous tradition of American comedy and improvised theatre to Viennese audiences.

In 2004 Vienna's English Theatre was awarded the prestigious Nestroy Prize for forty years of distinguished achievement.

Additionally, Vienna's English Theatre offers a programme of School Tours which travel all over Austria providing fully professional performances for nearly 300.000 students between the ages of 10 and 18.