

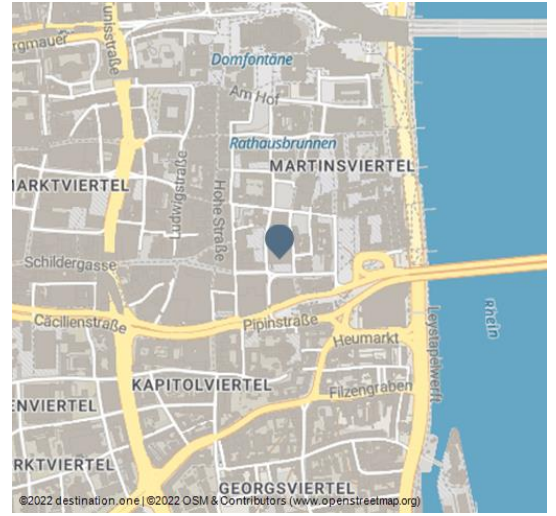


Gürzenich

historical building



KölnTourismus, Foto: Jesse von Laufenberg



The Gürzenich is Cologne's festival and event hall and is also known as the "parlour" of the city of Cologne. Operated by Koelncongress GmbH, cultural, congress and carnival events are held in this traditional building. The building still fulfils the purpose that was the original intention when it was built.

The late Gothic festival hall building was constructed on the former property of the von Gürzenich family between 1441 and 1447 to host large, prestigious city celebrations. The Gürzenich was also made available to aristocrats and upper-class citizens for celebrations. The prestigious building also served the Roman-German kings as a place to hold receptions and imperial diets and thus enjoyed far-reaching significance. However, the Electors' Day of 1531 was the last magnificent event to be held here before the building lost its relevance. This development went hand in hand with that of Cologne, which was less at the centre of international and national events at the beginning of the early modern period. The building was subsequently used as a department store until it experienced a revival in the 19th century.

Cologne was no longer a free imperial city, but the largest city in the Prussian Rhine province on its way to modernity. Celebrating large public festivities and banquets became socially acceptable again and the Gürzenich regained its original function. Even then, carnival events were among the most popular events, such as the masked ball, which was celebrated there in 1822. But political events were also part of the programme, such as the general assembly of the Cologne Workers' Association in 1848 or the largest revolutionary event in Cologne in 1849. Music also played a major role in the programme. The Cölner Concert-Gesellschaft performed its concerts in the ballroom from 1857. The resulting Gürzenich concerts by the Gürzenich Choir and Gürzenich Orchestra are still a mainstay of the Cologne Philharmonic's programme today.

In the course of the late 19th century, further expansion and conversion measures were carried out to accommodate the increasing use by various events and corporations (including the Cologne Stock Exchange).

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The Second World War and the resulting destruction represented a glaring break for the Gürzenich, as it did for the city itself. However, like the Romanesque churches and the historic town hall, the Gürzenich was rebuilt as it was considered a building that was relevant to the history and identity of the city. In keeping with the spirit of the times, the façade was rebuilt in its original, late Gothic style, while the interior was designed in the elegant, simple style of post-war modernism of the 1950s. Architects Karl Brand and Rudolf Schwarz thus succeeded in building a bridge between the past and the future. Since then, the Gürzenich has once again become one of the top addresses for events in the cathedral city, whether for private or public occasions. Of course, the carnival sessions broadcast by WDR are the most famous image of the Gürzenich in Germany.



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