

## **Gery Keszler creates powerful end with 26th Life Ball**

After more than 26 years, the AIDS charity event will be held for the last time this year

Vienna. Under the slogan “United in Diversity” (“Vereint in Vielfalt”), Gery Keszler is bringing the annual event to a conclusion with the 26th Life Ball on 8 Jun 2019: “They were incredible, fantastic and intense years. We achieved more than we ever dared hope. I am so eternally grateful. It is now time to bring this project to a fitting conclusion,” says Life Ball founder and organiser Gery Keszler. According to Keszler, the LIFE+ association, which was responsible for arranging the ball each year, will continue its work. “We will continue to take a passionate stand against stigma and exclusion and fly the flag.” After 26 years, the Life Ball’s balance sheet shows almost €30 million in donations for national and international AIDS charity projects.

Recalling the beginnings of the Life Ball, Keszler above all thanks the City of Vienna and the then Mayor of Vienna, Helmut Zilk. Directly addressing the mayor, who died in 2008, Keszler said: “It was your strength and imagination that gave us the courage to tackle this project. You were an untiring ambassador for an open and tolerant Vienna, and the Life Ball is a globally visible beacon of this.

Now, more than 26 years later, it is time to break new ground. Keszler: “The underlying conditions and circumstances have changed greatly over the last few years. We have achieved a lot in the fight against AIDS. AIDS has changed from a death sentence to being a chronic disease. The paradox of this success is that the number of allies for AIDS charity projects is decreasing both at home and abroad.”

As a consequence of this, it has recently become increasingly difficult to secure sponsors and donors for the ball. Keszler: “Awareness is simply different nowadays. We are now also taking this into account.” However, there are still great challenges out there – especially in Africa: “With the net profit of the 26th Life Ball, we will devote our energy to those regions where the problem is still acute and where we can save lives. In Austria, excellent work is being done by organisations and the public sector. People with therefore understand our decision to focus our support on international projects this year.”

Numerous international personalities in the fight against HIV/AIDS will support probably the most emotional Life Ball in history on 8 June, including Hollywood star and amfAR ambassador Katie Holmes, Golden Globe winner and Oscar® nominee Keala Settle, and burlesque artist Dita Von Teese. Andy Warhol muse Dianne Brill and Conchita will host the finale. After almost 20 years, Missoni will once again present the fashion show on City Hall Square – at the personal request of Gery Keszler, given the strong commitment of the famous fashion dynasty. The Life Ball team is expecting increased interest from their loyal community for this final act and has therefore announced that an additional contingent of tickets will go on sale from Monday, 13 May.

As the largest private donor to domestic organisations, LIFE+ is the world's 16th most important fundraiser for HIV/AIDS : In the past 27 years, the private funding organisation LIFE+ has been able to generate almost €30 million through the Life Ball for 170 AIDS aid projects in Austria and abroad. The ball has also been an economic success story for the City of Vienna: According to an IHS study, the ball generated gross value added of €106 million for Vienna and paid around €28 million in taxes and social insurance in the last 10 years alone. These effects were offset by annual support from the City of Vienna in the amount of around €800,000.

**For further question please contact:**

Press & Public Affairs  
LIFE+ | LIFE BALL  
Verein LIFE+  
Tel: +43 1 5955600 – 27  
Email: [kommunikation@lifeball.org](mailto:kommunikation@lifeball.org)