

Rodolphe Salis (1851 - 1897) is the “inventor” of modern cabaret, the founder, director, and master of ceremonies of the Parisian Chat Noir (Black Cat), which opened in November 1881. This first “cabaret artistique” played in the artists’ quarter Montmartre until 1897, and during this time it evolved from a bohemian gathering place into a tourist attraction. Salis himself excelled as an eccentric but savvy entrepreneur, whose groundbreaking blend of painting, poetry, music and theater as presented here provided a model for the German stages that were founded twenty years later. Decorated with medals, wearing a pompous imaginary uniform, and blustering wildly, this self-ordained “Seigneur de Chatnoirville” combined in one person the bohemian and the bourgeois, and similarly, his monologues united satirical mockery and opportunistic subservience.

Rodolphe Salis

“A prophet with a thundering voice, like a preacher of vengeance... a carefree trickster who knows how to laugh—the most difficult and yet the most humanitarian art. A philosopher who detests the world and mankind, but who loves the ridiculous spectacle of “life.” (Hermann Bahr)

