

Architecture of Russian Provincial Theatres of the Second Half of the 19th Century in the Regional and Global Aspects of Culture*

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Abstract—The article is devoted to the history of the provincial theatres' architecture of the Russian Empire in the second half of the XIX century. Author shows that the development of urban culture and interest in theatrical art lead to the construction of theatre buildings in provincial and district towns. Theatres became a material expression of high economic status of the city and a symbol of the development of spiritual culture of the citizens. A comparative analysis of European and Russian theatre buildings allows us to conclude that the preference was given to similar volumetric, spatial and stylistic concepts in the theatre architecture of this period. Meanwhile, the birth of the national Russian theatre which coincided with the increased attention to the forms of national architecture determined Russian designers and customers to turn to the Russian style in theatre architecture.

Keywords—*theatre architecture; theatre culture; architecture of the second half of the XIX century; provincial cities; theatre buildings*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the XIX century city comfort conveniences of Russian cities is increased: there appeared parks, public gardens and theatre squares that changed the architectural and urban image of provincial Russia and contributed to a new perception of urban space. The development of the educational institution system determined the growth of spiritual needs and cultural level of citizens, formed a request for certain types of leisure. On the one hand, these processes reflected the increased attention to citizens and their needs, and on the other hand, set the line of theoretical thought and architecture. The increasing variety of buildings (theatres, museums, hospitals, libraries, commercial apartment houses) required searching for approaches and design principles,

elaboration of space-planning solutions and artistic images corresponding to their functions.

Architectural forms of theatres of modern times had been formed since the Renaissance and by the studied period they had decorated some of the cities of Europe. The construction of such buildings in the Russian Empire which began a bit later developed in line with Western European trends. Being a new architectural style for the province in the XIX century, the theatre building received an impulse for further development. At the same time, theatres in provincial and district towns were often designed by well-known talented architects, and unfortunately, some of these works are unheralded.

We regret to note that the history of provincial theatre architecture cannot be considered as fully written today, although there has been a turning point in this direction recently. The catalogue of the exhibition "World is the theatre" which was published in 2017 presents a significant number of spectacular projects of buildings and describes the development of their architecture. The section devoted to the spectacular buildings of the period of eclecticism and modernism contains informative material about the provincial buildings. Of course, the authors were not tasked with providing comprehensive information about all Russian theatres built outside the capital cities, so some of them remained forgiven. In addition, according to the works of C. Rossi, J. Quarenghi and other outstanding architects many provincial buildings are interesting to the authors "more as monuments of the era, monuments of the history of theatrical life, spiritual and social life than the monuments per se" [1].

The history of the theatres' architecture of provincial Russia did not become the subject of independent study, only sometimes the most remarkable buildings were mentioned in the works on the European history of theatre architecture. Most of these works appeared in the first half of the XX century when the USSR was actively looking for new forms of architecture for the dramatic arts and researchers were interested in the architecture of ancient and European theatres [2], [3]. In the second half of XX century the history

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of theatrical building outside the capitals was also covered fragmentarily: namely in works on the history of provincial architecture, in articles devoted to theatrical buildings of a certain area or in the work of any architect [4].

The historiographical analysis allows us to conclude that the architecture of not all the provincial theatres of the Russian Empire has been fully studied up to now. Local historians and architectural historians were interested in some of them, however, in most cases, they limited to the publication of design drawings and stylistic analysis of their architecture.

At the same time, all these publications have created the necessary basis for this study the purpose of which is to identify the place and importance of the architecture of provincial Russian theatres in global and regional culture. Our aim can be divided into two interrelated tasks. On the one hand, we are attempted to consider the architecture of provincial Russian theatres through the prism of the development of urban culture and the expansion of the theatre art. On the other hand, we intend to show through a comparative analysis of the architecture of European and Russian theatres that openness was peculiar not only in the art of theatre, but also with theatre architecture which became a material expression of high status of the city and a symbol of acquaintance to "civilization".

In order to solve these problems we will have to limit the range of analyzed objects only to stone theatre buildings of the XIX century without wooden theatre buildings, summer theatres and a wide range of entertainment facilities represented by folk houses, clubs, etc.

II. PRINCIPLES AND STYLES IN THEATRE ARCHITECTURE OF THE XIX CENTURY

In the XVII – XVIII centuries an architectural image of the European theatre of modern times was formed due to the creativity of Italian and French architects. Although there were some national features, but generally the principles of architecture of the European theatre can be described as follows: a tiered, semicircular spectators seating (with different variations – U-shape, oval, etc.), black box, the predominance of Baroque interiors and facades, as a rule, leaning towards the forms of academic styles. The researchers consider the construction of the Farnese theatre to be a key moment in the formation of the European theatre of modern architecture principles [5]. Among the most successful examples of theatrical architecture of modern times we can mark the theatre La Scala in Milan (D. Piermarini, 1778), Opera house in Bordeaux (V. Louis, 1780), Odeon Theatre in Paris (Charles de Wailly and M.-J. Parom), the Royal Opera in Berlin (G. W. von Knobelsdorf) and others.

Hereafter, the architects followed the ways of improvement of the internal structure of the theatre - design of tiers and shape of the spectators seating, the layout of the scene was complicated, architects thought through the serving space, entrance halls, stairways, etc. Together with the complexity of the internal layout the volumetric design of buildings became more advanced and the principle of

designing from the inside was established – out and the external volume reflected the internal structure of the theatre building.

Until the second half of the XIX century the leading role in theatrical architecture belonged to the French architects and then German architects who introduced a new volumetric composition and improved planning concept. New trends were established due to the ideas of K. Schinkel and works of G. Zemper (the first building of the Zemper Opera and the second building of the Zemper Opera). One of the G. Zemper's merits was the repetition in the external volume of the semicircular spectators seating which created a complex planning drawing of the theatre building with a semicircular facade projection. The architects from different countries have reproduced this technique repeatedly both in exact form and in its various variations.

By the last quarter of the XIX century theatrical building boom covered the whole Europe; cities strived to have its own monumental theatre building and that required having architects specializing in theatre architecture. Thus, the Viennese architects F. Felner and G. Helmer became the authors of the projects of many city theatres in different European countries. In the Russian Empire the architect V. A. Schreter from St. Petersburg specialized in theatre architecture. He is the author of the projects of theatre buildings in Rybinsk, Nizhny Novgorod, Irkutsk, Tiflis and Kiev. His work is characterized by a variety of approaches to the concept of facades, laconicism and rationalism. The creative method of the architect is based on the rationalism of the volume-spatial concept of theatre buildings, the reflection in the external volume of the internal space planning, the division of the main volume of the building with the help of risalits, rarely loggias located around the perimeter.

The orientation to the principles, laid down in the theatre architecture by G. Zemper clearly manifested in the works of F. Felner and G. Helmer, V. A. Schreter and some other architects. Many of their architectural projects were carried out in the form of academic styles.

Generally speaking, the theatres' architecture of the XIX century had sustainable principles with some additions and variations up to the end of the XIX century. Although, of course, there were some exceptions and attempts to introduce other architectural forms, however, they hadn't a significant impact on the whole process of architectural creativity.

III. ARCHITECTURE OF PROVINCIAL THEATRES OF RUSSIA IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE XIX CENTURY

In the second half of the XIX century the theatrical building boom covered the whole Europe, the cities tended to build its own theatre. The provincial towns of Russia were not an exception. The architectural and urban history shows that many cities wanted to be like European and Russian capitals with their well-being. And the construction of the theatre building assumed importance for them –as one of the main attractions and became a symbol of economic and cultural status.

Along with the generally recognized methods of influence of the theatre on the public consciousness of citizens through the repertoire, reviews, etc., there was another one—the presence or absence of the theatre building. But as a rule, cities tended to have their own theatre. City authorities and representatives of private capital invested money in theatre construction, because the art of theatre which has broken into the life of the provincials rapidly captured their minds. Thanks to the memoirs of contemporaries, we can talk about the significant role of spectacular arts in the life of citizens. There were societies (or parties) of actors fans [6]. Here is only a small quote from the work of the Taganrog historian of the XIX century who perfectly illustrated the problem raised by us: “Since 1863 the Italian Opera has been invited to Taganrog which enchanted Taganrog theatre-goers and was the main motive for the construction of a new theatre” [7]. Thus, we can conclude that stage shows and buildings were closely connected in the citizens’ minds.

The perception of the theatre was supported by its architectural image, an important component of which was the idea of a significant urban role of the theatre building. Initially such premises were part of palaces and adjusted to their ensembles, and then these buildings became dominants and were built in the open area, subordinating the surrounding buildings and decorating the central urban space. Theatres were an important architectural dominant of the city.

In the second half of the XIX century in the province there had already been local architects, however, it was widespread to appeal to European and capital architects and this fact proves the value of theatre buildings in the cultural life of cities. The city authorities announced competitions in which the first places were taken by more experienced and talented architects who showed the best projects.

The earliest provincial and district stone buildings of the theatres had strict classical forms. They bore the impress of the architecture of the previous period with its attraction to the ordering architecture. It is obviously that the Russian capital or European theatres served as models for their construction. For example, the theatre in Taganrog (1866, K. Londeron and N. Trusov) or the Kazan Theatre (1848, I. Bessonov) have retained image with some changes to the present day [1]. Another example of such building which can’t be ignored is the Saratov City Theatre which is not survived to this day (1865, K. V. Tieden, A. M. Salko). Its architectural expressiveness is comparable with the capital’s buildings. A complex composition of the external volume, symmetry and plastic integrity of the forms made a small building monumental and a large dome accented a pivot of the inner volume of the semi – a circular spectators seating.

Provincial and district stone theatre buildings highly began to be built in the last decades of the XIX century when eclecticism was established in the architecture. Just the eclecticism that gave freedom in the choice of forms had a decisive influence on their volume and artistic concepts. Two branches can be distinguished in the theatre architecture of this period which preserved continuity with the previous era on the one hand, and on the other hand, were put in different

stylistic forms. One branch was formed under the influence of German and Austrian architects and tended towards the academic style and the other branch was represented by the historicism which first of all focused on the forms of the Russian style, established in the construction of public buildings in the 1880s. Having the stylistic diversity, the buildings were united by such common features as tiered spectators seating, the desire for a rational and functional expression and careful study of the interior layout.

The project of the theatre building in Rybinsk which is not survived to this day (1875 – 1877) is one of the early examples of V. A. Schreter’s work and demonstrates the rationalism of the space-planning concept. The semicircular spectators seating in the outer volume of the building repeats the half-round house. Brick facades, rusticate lower tier, pilasters, risalits, large semicircular windows of the middle tier form a complex configuration of the plan. Of course, the project is carried out under the influence of German theatre architecture G. Zemper and that is not surprising if we take into account that V.A Schreter got a professional education in Germany.

A similar compositional concept can be seen in the later Kiev Opera (1898) designed by V. A. Schreter in the forms of eclecticism with the features of Renaissance. The building is characterized by a rich interior and exterior decoration, numerous sculptural compositions and a complex configuration of the plan. As in other theatrical buildings, the author organized the interior space rationally.

The Nizhny Novgorod theatre was built in 1894 by V. A. Schreter and has the features of the Renaissance. The main façade is decorated with arcades of the first and second tiers. Horizontal and vertical divisions, the upper tier of the main façade pushed to the background are tended to achieve a visual sense of the scale of the building and harmonization with the surrounding buildings. The volumetric concept is dictated by the internal layout. The spectators seating is located in the center of the building.

The Irkutsk Theatre (1897, V. A. Schreter) has a relatively small size and the author achieves its monumental perception due to the simplicity and integrity of the forms, the main façade is decorated with a portico raised above the rusticated lower tier.

V. A. Schreter’s theatrical architecture was mostly based on the ideas of G. Zemper which were very popular in the theatrical architecture of the last decades of the XIX century, and the Odessa Opera is another striking example built in the Baroque style in 1884. The plan was developed by the Viennese architects F. Felner and G. Helmer in accordance with the latest trends in theatrical construction. The rational organization of the internal space and the planning concept of the building are reflected in its external outlines. The prototype was the Dresden Opera (the second Zemper’s Opera) in which G. Zemper used his technique – a semicircular main façade, following the shape of the spectators seating and foyer. Architectural and artistic concepts of the facades of the Odessa and Dresden operas are similar.

Thus, both in European and Russian theatre architecture of the late XIX century the orientation to the principles laid down by G. Zemper is clearly shown. As a rule, such buildings were constructed in the forms of academic styles. However, we have studied the most significant examples of the theatre architecture of the era we are interested in and we can confirm that the authors of most of them were architects of the capital or European level. It's clear that along with the studied buildings there were less remarkable ones. Unfortunately, we have to agree with the opinion of L. Saigina: "The simplicity of the image ... of numerous provincial theatres was due to lack of funds, so that it was necessary to rely on the local architectural resources which could always cope with neither monumental forms of public buildings nor urban planning" [8]. Although, here you can find some exceptions.

Let us see just one example of those which are worth noticing and reflects general trends prevailing in the provincial theatre architecture. This is the theatre of the small town of Nakhichevan-on-Don (1896-1899) built by the city architect N. N. Durbah. The design technique was applied from inside to outside: the main façade of the building follows the shape of the auditorium and the lobby and foyer surrounding it. Located in the other half of the building serving space is also volumetric.

N. N. Durbah focused on the type of theatres which is represented by the works of Austrian architects F. Fellner and G. Helmer. It was noted above that they took G. Zemper's ideas as a basis and even sometimes reproduced his plans close enough to the original. Such design methods were also used by V. A. Schreter and G. Zemper's ideas were also basic. Space planning and architectural and decorative concepts, the very image of a theatre building of Nakhichevan leads us not to Zemper's architecture, but namely to the theatres of F. Fellner and H. Helmer. N. N. Durbah took their constructions of the late 1870s-early 1890s – Renaissance and Baroque period as a basis. In these years they designed theatres in many cities in Europe. However N. N. Durbah did not copy the projects of the Austrians, he creatively comprehended their ideas perceiving them as trends in advanced architecture.

Also, the theatrical art was the part of the European culture in the popular mind. The walls of the foyer were decorated with sculptural portraits of Shakespeare, Gogol, Ostrovsky, Glinka, Tchaikovsky, Verdi and at the opening of the theatre a specially written prologue was showed in which the actors were Hamlet, Chatsky, Gorodnichy, etc.

As it was noted above, different concepts of historicism had a significant influence on the shape and composition of theatrical buildings in the last decades of the XIX century in Russia. V. A. Shreter has taken one of the earliest attempts not to follow the academic styles in theatrical architecture in the design of the theatre in Tiflis (1880 – 1896). The spectators seating was located in the center, not semicircular in plan as was peculiar in the XVIII-XIX centuries, but has the shape of a trapezia. This solution contributed to a good overview of the scene from all places and spacious spectators seating occupied a small area. The facades of the building

were in the forms of Moorish architecture, but besides, their composition is typical for Zemper's architecture (for example, the Opera in Dresden, the festival theatre in Bayreuth). A large U-shaped arch and two side keeled arches of the central risalit, keeled window openings, façade ornament and some other elements of architectural and decorative design give the theatre features of oriental architecture.

Russian style became more popular in Russian theatre architecture. It showed that between the capital and the provincial theatre architecture was no time gap, even sometimes "novelty" appeared in the province with little advance. In the last quarter of the XIX century theatre buildings in forms of Russian "brick style" were constructed in Moscow (the Paradise Theatre, 1885; F. A. Korsh Theatre, 1885) in the last quarter of the XIX century [8] and in province Rostov-on-Don (V. O. Sherwood, 1883), Samara (M. N. Chichagov, 1888).

The Asmolov Theatre (not survived to this day) was opened in 1883 in Rostov-on-Don and built of brick in the forms of Russian style designed by V. O. Sherwood. The architectural and town-planning feature of the building is that it was not constructed in the open area and wasn't the dominant of the theatre square. It was located on Taganrog Avenue – one of the central streets of the city. Here buildings were constructed on the red line, closely adherent to each other and formed a corridor of solid facades. The theatre had one artistic façade and the composition of its external volumes did not reflect the internal structure of the building. By the end of the XIX century such techniques were not usually used, but in this sense, the Asmolov Theatre can be compared with the Moscow theatre "Paradise" the main façade of which was also in the forms of Russian architecture.

Works of V. O. Sherwood enriched Rostov architecture with remarkable building. Rich plastic arts of its three-tier façade were formed by intricate façade and a combination of window openings of various shapes. The central part of the façade was ornamented by side risalits of a small ledge ending with tent-roofed towers. The tier-like spectators seating had a semicircular outline in the plan and corresponded to the principles of the European theatrical architecture of this period.

By the beginning of the XX century theatre building built in the art Nouveau style appeared in Europe and Russia. Many architects created plans of such theatres built in the art Nouveau style including F. Fellner and G. Helmer (The Chernovitsky Theatre (1905), the City Theatre of Kecskemet (1986), etc.), F. O. Shechtel (the building of the Winter Theatre in Ekaterinodar (1909) the restructuring of the building for the Moscow Art Theatre, etc.).

IV. CONCLUSION

In general, the architecture of the provincial theatres of Russia did not go beyond the European principles of theatrical architecture of modern times. A comparative analysis of European and Russian construction shows that, as a rule, the spectacular buildings combined such features that were considered by contemporaries as an integral part of the

theatre architecture. In most cases there were such similar things as the stylistic solutions, the exceptions were those Russian buildings the facades of which were made in the forms of Russian style. Both Russian and European architects appealed to modernism at the turn of XIX – XX centuries.

In the second half of the XIX century the town planning ideas and the aesthetic attractiveness of large cities became targets for the provinces. Among the different practical results of this process was the need for functionally-diverse and architecturally expressive public buildings. And, of course, buildings for the performing arts were of particular importance, because unlike, for example, hospitals or administrative buildings, they were deprived of a purely utilitarian function and reflected high level of spiritual culture. On the other hand, the value of the theatre building was increased by the love of the population to the theatre art.

Thus, theatres became important parts of cities, being a part of the global theatre space which was reflected by the architecture. The European architects' ideas dominated in theatrical construction of Russia and the birth of national Russian theatre which coincided on time with the increased attention to national architecture defined the desire to address to the Russian style in theatrical architecture.

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