

# INNOVATIONS IN ARCHITECTURE AND THE IMPACT OF ARCHITECTS' MOBILITY ON THEIR APPLICATION: THE CASE OF THE NEW BUILDING OF THE SLOVAK NATIONAL THEATRE IN BRATISLAVA<sup>1</sup>

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The study deals with the topic of initiation, development and implementation of the idea of constructing a new theater building in Bratislava. Although the idea to build a modern Slovak National Theater has its origin already in the interwar period, it was only realized in 2007, when the new theater building was opened. The long process of the preparation and construction of the theater was primarily determined by the complexity of this task, which could not be solved satisfactorily for decades. The competition for the design of the theater was preceded by an urban competition for its location, where a decision was made between seven variants spread across the city. Later, the conditions of the architectural competition for the building (1979) were formed, which made extremely high demands on the architects, because the main goal was to create an innovative architecture not only from the formal, but also a technological point of view. In addition, another important goal was to combine spaces for drama and opera in one building, which was a unique solution at that time. Using the example of the genesis of thinking about the new modern theater building as one of the national cultural institutions, the study identifies and describes the key moments of the post-war architectural discourse. The aim of the text is to expand urban and historical-architectural research with new topics, especially focused on the reflections of the foreign architectural scene in relation to innovations in the architecture. It is also so far the most detailed analysis of the crystallization of the designs of the new Slovak National Theater, closely linked to the wider context of post-war buildings intended for culture purposes in Slovakia, which are becoming national cultural heritage today.

Keywords: Theater-postwar architecture-city-architectural discourse-innovations.

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The New Building of the Slovak National Theatre (Slovenské národné divadlo – SND) is the most extensive and most complex Slovak building realised for cultural purposes from the second half of the 20th century – not only in the capitol of Bratislava, but in the entire nation. From the design competition to the theatre's opening, the building process took nearly thirty years (competition 1979-80, realisation 1986–2007), in other words with construction lasting across the turn of two centuries and its opening occurring under an entirely different political regime than the one in which it was designed. The authors of the design are the architects Martin Kusý, Pavol Paňák, and Peter Bauer. The building of a new national theatre was the natural outcome of efforts to create a modern space for one of the nation's flagship cultural institutions, starting from the very moment of the SND's founding in 1920, when it established itself in the former city theatre from the 19th century on the central square of Hviezdoslavovo námestie. And the theatre was not the only such institution to expand its spaces or commission a new building in the course of its existence: other national institutions, such as the Slovak National Museum (Slovenské národné múzeum - SNM), had to address repeatedly after their founding the need for modernisation of current premises or creation of a more modern building. However, from the very start the Museum, unlike the SND, had its own structure. The first SNM building in the town of Martin (now the Andrej Kmet' Museum) was built to the design of Michal Milan Harminc and completed in 1906; the second museum building, also in Martin, was likewise designed by Harminc (project 1929, realisation 1929–1932). The third realisation by Harminc for the museum, the current main building of the SNM in Bratislava (project 1924, realisation 1928), was originally intended as the Agricultural Museum – administratively a branch of the Czechoslovak Agricultural Museum in Prague. Nonetheless, the application of innovative approaches in the design of theatre architecture was, in contrast to the modernisation of the architecture of exhibition spaces such as museums, a far more demanding task both for architects and investors. One result, among others, was the long-drawn-out process of its completion, starting with the determination of the best location for the theatre through the competition for the building's design, up to its final realisation.

Our aim is to expand the urbanistic and historical (architectural-historical) investigation of the circumstances of the siting and design of the new theatre in Bratislava to include further themes and contexts for cultural buildings. In the present text, we use the example of the new building of the SND in Bratislava to focus on the significance of the reflection of the international architectural scene with respect to innovations in the design of cultural buildings, and more specifically of theatre architecture. We intend to map the possibilities for architects to draw upon theoretical insights and information regarding international architectural

currents via professional journals during the later 20th century. Similarly, the example of the authors of the design for the new SND building illustrates the possibilities of the mobility of architects outside of Czechoslovakia in the given period. Though travel to the West, or anywhere outside of the Soviet Bloc, during the socialist regime was only possible under highly restricted conditions, it was nonetheless crucial for architects in acquiring experience and inspiration in situ specifically for such complex tasks as the design of a major theatre building.

### **The Modern SND in Bratislava: Act One**

In 1920, the year that the SND was founded in Bratislava, the question of Slovak national identity had only recently entered an entirely new context: the cohabitation of the two nations within the joint Czechoslovak Republic. Unlike other national cultural institutions already in existence, created as early as the mid-19th century under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy as part of the the Slovak national-emancipation process,<sup>2</sup> the national theatre found itself in a different situation. Its seat in Bratislava (until 1918 alternately Pressburg, Pozsony, or Prešporok) became the city theatre on Hviezdoslavovo námeste, a building dating from 1886 and constructed from the design of Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann Hellmer, the authors of an extensive list of theatre buildings in cities throughout the Habsburg lands and elsewhere (Vienna, Budapest, Brno, Praha, Berlin, Zurich, Hamburg etc).<sup>3</sup> This building, though, was not the first theatre to stand on its site; in contrast to the earlier theatre from the 1770s designed by Matthäus Walch, it represented a notably innovative approach to theatre architecture. Fellner and Helmer's new, modernised approach lay primarily in the handling of the layout as well as the structural and material choices, intended among other advantages to increase the building's safety. In fact, the decision by the city council to demolish the original theatre and build a new one was made

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- 2 National self-awareness of the Slovak ethnicity first manifested itself in theatrical terms with the construction of a Slovak-language theatre in Martin (1890). Architectural theorist and historian Henrieta Moravčíková has termed the Martin theatre, intended for a Slovak choral society, a "national" one, but adds that its form, as designed by Blažej Bulla, was most strongly influenced by Bulla's training in Prague under Josef Zítek, author of that city's National Theatre building. In turn, Moravčíková draws attention to the Assembly House in Skalica by Dušan Jurkovič, where Slovak national motifs were architecturally invoked to a far greater extent. See: MORAVČÍKOVÁ and DLHÁŇOVÁ. *Divadelná architektúra na Slovensku*. Bratislava 2011, p. 20.
  - 3 The building became the exclusive seat of the SND only during World War II; previously, the company of the National Theatre was only one of several theatre companies active in the building. For more information: MORAVČÍKOVÁ and DLHÁŇOVÁ, *Divadelná architektúra na Slovensku*, p. 79.

at the start of the 1880s not long after the impact of the tragic fire in Vienna's Ringtheatre.

Europe's theatre culture at the end of the 19th century was exceptionally vibrant, and Prešporok hardly fell behind in this area. Not only did theatre construction exemplify the full implementation of Enlightenment ideas of erudition and a return to classical arts, but it also put into practice a range of technical innovations in the form of gas (or later electric) lighting and even more notably steel-frame construction, bringing a new building technique into theatre architecture. The original concept of a seating area with wood framing gave way to new reinforced-concrete columns with a wide span, enabling a significant increase in audience capacity as well as cantilevered balconies on the upper level, thus allowing an improved view of the stage. Such a spatial-structural solution appeared as well in the newly built city theatre of Prešporok. New anti-fire safety rules simultaneously increased audience comfort in the seating area, with the strict implementation of minimal dimensions for the seats and the rows, their mutual distances, and the maximum capacity of audience members per fire exit in the building. Yet if the theatres of this era represented progress in terms of their structural and spatial designs, their architectural-aesthetic rendering nonetheless adhered to the decorative. Desires for a return to the past or evocations of historic themes in art were no less reflected in the architecture of theatres than in other building categories. Through knowledge of history, the individual styles were deliberately set apart from one another, deployed toward the expression of specific political-ideological statements, as noted by historian Jana Laslavíková.<sup>4</sup>

After the founding of the SND and its placement in the city theatre, the main task primarily was ensuring a change in its organisation and administration, essentially the change of the institution's name, as well as the launching of a new program series in a stage previously hosting performances primarily in German and (to a lesser extent) Hungarian.<sup>5</sup> In parallel, though, plans were also made for construction a new and more modern theatre building that would be the exclusive home of the National Theatre and represent the company's importance through its architecture. This new building would thus also reflect the latest architectural trends, since in the first half of the 20th century European theatre design had once again made a re-evaluation of the relation between actor and audience in the form of new types of open stages and flexible multipurpose auditoriums. Other innovations that gradually emerged were a stepped auditorium in the shape of an amphitheatre, a deep-sunk orchestra pit, a modern unornamented

4 LASLAVÍKOVÁ. *Mestské divadlo v Prešporku na sklonku 19. storočia. Medzi provinciou a metropolou*. Bratislava 2021, p. 27 and following.

5 MORAVČÍKOVÁ and DLHÁŇOVÁ, *Divadelná architektúra na Slovensku*, p. 79.

stage area, and increasing emphasis on the acoustic qualities of the theatre space. These experiments with the form and the shape of theatre buildings all took place in reaction to the challenges of the cinema and later television, along with the influence of new technologies and nearly unlimited quantities of newly available construction materials. In these years, there ceased to be any unified answer to how a new theatre should appear.

Alois Balán and Jiří Grossmann, two Czech-born architects practicing in Slovakia after 1919, prepared an urbanistic study for Bratislava in the early 1920s in which they also proposed the construction of a new theatre building in the then-outlying suburb of Blumentál.<sup>6</sup> This idea for the siting of the new theatre was supported by the institution's governing board and company. There then followed an architectural competition for the form of the new building in 1928, yet not long after the theatre's response was to invest in the reconstruction of the historic building on Hviezdoslavovo námestie, mainly in terms of staging and set technology (1934). And though the competition for the new theatre formed part of the vision of a modern conception of city planning as well as the form of modern cultural institutions, the sketch for the theatre building provided in the urban planning study of Balán and Grossmann, as well as the competition entries from 1928, all clung to notably traditional forms, at most reflecting the era's "National" or "Czechoslovak" style. This conservatism explains why the modern-minded jury, including the chief local representative of the architectural avant-garde, Friedrich Weinwurm, declined to award either a first or second prize. At the same time, it is clear that another influence on the competition's lack of success was the generally lukewarm reception in theatrical circles towards the establishment of a Slovak national theatrical institution, which seemed unable to develop with the speed so desired by its founding representatives. Citing the magazine *Divadlo* [Theatre] in 1926:

*"It is not only a building – for our conditions in Slovakia, it is the creation of an entire national theatre culture. And if we are to build a national theatre, we need to have for it three essential conditions: a dramatic literature, actors, and – no less vitally – a generous, enthusiastic, and patriotic viewing public."*<sup>7</sup>

The next reconstruction, which took place in the historic building in 1949, consisted in repairs to its foundations damaged by the wartime bombardment, along with renewal of the seating, the foyer, and the salon on the upper level.

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6 MORAVČÍKOVÁ, ed. *Bratislava (ne)plánované mesto. Bratislava (Un)Planned City*. Bratislava 2020, p. 365.

7 Činohra Slovenského národného divadla, In *Divadlo. Časopis pre propagáciu Slovenského národného divadla*, 1926, Vol. 1, no. 1, p. 13.

As for the insufficient space for all the companies of the SND, the situation was partially alleviated by the opening of the Pavol Ország Hviezdoslav Theatre in Laurinská ulica, originally constructed as part of a bank headquarters (Eugen Kramár, Štefan Lukačovič, project 1942–1943, realisation 1943–1955), where the drama company relocated in the 1950s. Considering the long period of realisation, it is no surprise that the initially austere form of the theatre, with unadorned stone cladding and other traits recalling the models of Italian and German architecture of the wartime years, gained a few touches of Socialist Realism (“sorela”) in the form of the stained-glass work depicting workers and peasants.

### **Cultural Buildings and the Postwar Discourse**

The postwar shift away from modernism and Functionalism was felt as well in Czechoslovakia, now under direct Soviet influence. Primarily, it manifested itself in the formal elements of architecture with a return to more traditional elements of façade articulation and historicist (or alternately folkloric) ornamentation forming the key traits of the new orientation of the first half of the 1950s, informally known as “sorela”. During the years of postwar reconstruction and the subsequent efforts towards the “building of socialism”, several noteworthy buildings were created or completed in the cultural sphere, such as Bratislava’s Park of Culture and Recreation (originally designed for the Danube Trade Fairs by Ján Štefanec, Pavol Andrik and Kamil Gross, 1940–1949). Yet with the condemnation of Stalin’s cult of personality by Soviet president Nikita Khrushchev in 1956, the ideological pressure to confine artistic and architectural work to the Socialist Realist spirit began to relent. Interest in the construction of modern theatres, though, never faltered, since culture continued to hold its status as one of the key ideological tools and an area for shaping the social policy of the state. In Europe’s eastern half, the primary model in this regard was the USSR, where a strong push towards the construction of theatres had emerged already in the interwar era. When the British author H. G. Wells travelled through Russia shortly after World War I, he described in his book *Russia in the Shadows* the enormous economic and cultural decline in the country, yet also noted that the theatre had revealed itself as the most stable element of Russian cultural life. Among all other arts, Wells believed, the theatre held an exceptional position: in Petrograd, he found forty theatres with performances every evening, and in Moscow the situation was much the same.<sup>8</sup>

In Western Europe as well, many states provided cultural funding as part of post-conflict reconstruction and social welfare policies to a level previously

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8 WELLS. *Russia in the Shadows*. London 1920, p. 19 and following.

never experienced.<sup>9</sup> Here, alongside the construction of small-format theatres and other cultural buildings, projects also emerged for large-scale national theatres.<sup>10</sup> These institutions had, alongside their primary performance function, the aim of furthering public representation, social cohesion, or urban consolidation as part of modern public spaces and city landmarks. And not only in Europe, but in North America as well the transformative potential of the theatre involved not only the way that stage performances could highlight complex social problems, but also shift the ingrown values and stances of individual audience members.

One such project was the planned creation of a new National Theatre in Britain. Its origins can be dated to 1962, when the National Theatre Society was founded in London under the guidance of actor, director, and dramatist Sir Laurence Olivier (1907–1989). Aiming to construct the nation's most important performance venue, the society worked with the Royal Institute of British Architects to hold a design competition attracting over 300 entries. The first prize was awarded to architect Denys Lasdun (1914–2001), an exponent of the modernist movement in Britain, who designed the Royal National Theatre in the Brutalist style – the idiom that arose in the 1950s in reaction to the postwar rebuilding of war-damaged cities in Britain itself. The large, indeed imposing volume was planned in exposed concrete, with two main towers emerging from several levels of horizontal terraces wrapped around the main building and descending in a cascade down to the level of the Thames. Responding to the growing demands for the capacity of theatre halls as well as backstage facilities, the theatre offers three auditoriums of various sizes (the largest with a capacity of up to 1,160 seats), extensive areas for storage, cloakrooms, offices, or technical spaces, and equally a capacious area of public space with all necessary facilities. Work on the theatre design took Denys Lasdun 13 years, with construction starting in 1969 and ending in 1976.<sup>11</sup> At the time of its opening, the Royal National Theatre was the largest theatrical complex in the world. However, the long construction period resulted in a decidedly mixed public reception for the building. By the time of its opening, not only was Britain's economy already in recession, but a significant paradigm shift had begun in the perception of modernist architecture. Postmodernist urban rehabilitation, against modernist

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9 CALDER. The Limits of 1960s Radicalism: The Fun Palace Versus the National Theatre. In FAIR, ed. *Setting the Scene: Perspectives on Twentieth-Century Theatre Architecture*. London 2017, p. 163.

10 On the other hand, the process implied the intensive destruction of cultural buildings from the 19th century, which were then regarded as valueless and outdated. In Britain alone, by the mid-1960s nearly 85% of the older theatre buildings were demolished or extensively rebuilt. See: MACKINTOSH. *Actor, Architecture and Audience*. London 1993, p. 40.

11 ROSENTHAL. *Architectural History of the National Theatre*. London 2014, p. 551.



urban renewal, sparked a gradual return to old theatres, or a rising trend of adapting old buildings with differing original functions as performance spaces. All the same, for the era's architectural discourse, the Royal National Theatre provided a powerful source of inspiration with international renown, discussed in the most prestigious periodicals and publications on the topic of theatre architecture.<sup>12</sup> And it needs to be stressed that its spatial composition, layout, and functional plan were taken up by the authors of the winning design for the new Slovak National Theatre in Bratislava, as will be discussed below.

Figure 1:

Royal National Theater today. Source: Flickr, photo by Garry Knight



### Reflections in the Slovak Architectural Scene and the People's Theatre in Prešov

The platform for critical reflection of architectural work in postwar Czechoslovakia was provided by the professional journals. Several of them dated from the interwar

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12 Discussion of the theatre in London, whether through reviews or more detailed analyses, appeared in many journals and publications, e.g.: The Architects' Journal, December 1967; LASDUN. Architectural Aspects of the National Theatre. In *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 1977, Vol. 125, no. 5256, p. 780-792; IZENOUR. *Theater Design*. New York 1977, and MACKINTOSH. *Actor, Architecture and Audience*. London 1993.



years, such as the journal *Architekt*, though its ceased publication in 1950. In parallel, another architectural journal with a long tradition, *Architektura ČSR*, began after the Communist seizure of power in 1948 to print texts attacking both Western architecture and the domestic Modernist lineage.<sup>13</sup> Its editor-in-chief, architect Oldřich Starý, drew upon Stalin's pamphlet "Marxism in Linguistics" to outline an instruction program for architects. Using selected examples of buildings or unrealised sketches by the founders of Czech modernism, he set forth a critique of interwar modern architecture, terming it "bourgeois" and contrasting it unfavourably to Soviet works in the Socialist Realist style. The achievements of Czech Modernism were dismissed with such appellations as "*weak-spirited derivatives of functionalism*" and "*examples of petit-bourgeois bad taste*".<sup>14</sup>

Slovakia's architectural profession lacked its own professional journal addressing local activities already after 1946, with the closing of *Technický obzor slovenský* [Slovak Technical Horizon], which from 1943 to 1946 published as its supplement *Slovenský staviteľ* [Slovak Builder], which had appeared as an independent journal in the period 1930–1942. While it is true that several Slovak architects (Martin Kusý, Kamil Gross) held editorial posts at *Architektura ČSR*, the journal itself in the postwar era discussed Slovak building activity far less than its Czech counterpart. As such, all the more surprising is the publication, under these conditions, of the design by Antonín Černý for the "Slovak Theatre" in Prešov in 1950.<sup>15</sup> A Prague architect, trained under Josef Fanta, Jan Koula, and a Antonín Engel, Černý produced Functionalist works in the interwar years. After 1945, his creative work became secondary to his main activities as a pedagogue, making his Prešov design even more unusual in this respect.

Černý's designs for the Prešov theatre were praised by the journal's editors as the first plans for a "people's theatre" in a state where, since the war, the entire social and economic structure had changed. Its importance lay primarily in the initiating of discussions on the concept of the theatre space and unquestionably resonated across Czechoslovakia. Included in the project was a detailed analysis of the usability and variability of the stage area for a wide list of cultural programs,

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13 Livia Gažová, in her examination of discussions of Western urban planning in Czechoslovakia's architectural journals, notes that in 1951–1952, the journal *Architektura ČSR* published almost no articles on international topics, even critical ones. See: GAŽOVÁ. Zaobchádzanie s obsahom o západnom plánovaní v československých architektonických časopisoch 1945–1970. Treatment of Content on Western Planning in Czechoslovak Architectural Journals 1945–1970. In *Sociální studia/Social Studies*, 2019, Vol. 16, no. 1, p. 130.

14 STARÝ. Poučení architektů ze článku J.V. Stalina "Marxismus v jazykovědě". In *Architektura ČSR*, 1950, Vol. 10, no. 11–12, p. 301.

15 Poznámky redakce k návrhu slovenského divadla Prešov. In *Architektura ČSR*, 1950, Vol. 9, no. 5–6, p. 158–159.

from solo concerts up to an entire orchestra with choir or theatre performances. The design was also the first attempt at combining the theatre areas with ancillary functional services, for example carpentry and painting workshops for producing stage scenery. This latter instance, though, also attracted criticism, mostly for the danger of fire or increased noise in the building.

Though the essential concept of the Prešov theatre was treated using largely traditional methods, the layout of the seating displayed, according to the journal, a significant innovation through the use of an amphitheatre shape. As the article states, the amphitheatre-auditorium was long the goal of progressive Soviet architects<sup>16</sup> even in the interwar years, yet in the Prešov design the architect planned the stage as exceptionally wide, with an almost excessively large proscenium arch. From the commentaries on Černý's project, it can be inferred that already by this point (around 1950), a process of standardisation and typification was already underway in the area of theatre construction, including a rejection of the stage-forms of "avant-garde" theatre as outdated. Now, the favoured design used a stage extended further along the axis of depth, with a narrower proscenium opening.<sup>17</sup> Such a method met the requirements of the preferred "realistic theatre", where the viewer would be given a full view of the entire stage, with no part remaining hidden. Additionally, the auditorium shaped like a broad amphitheatre would, at that time, have also failed to meet the demands of acoustics – the lengthwise form would have been bordered by convex walls in place of the previously employed concave ones. Increased requirements for fire protection stressed separation of the auditorium, the stage, the workshop areas, yet these spaces were all planned in close proximity to each other. Other aspects of Černý's design were also marked as safety risks – for instance, the enclosed side stages without separate escape exits. Critiques linked to the new concept increasingly deployed in the postwar years of a "people's theatre" even noted the confined entrance space of the Prešov theatre, where the visitor immediately upon entrance "collides" with the cloakroom. And no less, objections were made to the insufficiently Socialist Realist appearance of the theatre's formal aspects, since Černý merely adorned an otherwise Functionalist cubic volume with a peristyle of slender columns and eight statues placed above the entrance: here, the critics demanded a traditional robust plinth and greater emphasis on the ideological message in theatre architecture.

16 While professional architectural journals in Czechoslovakia in the period around 1950 adhered to official ideology in attributing progressive thought primarily to Soviet architects, the same innovative principles were of course being tested and applied outside of the USSR, often with better results.

17 Experiments continued with different forms and sizes of the stage area involving an open or protruding stage, though there were also returns to a traditional proscenium model.

### **The Modern SND in Bratislava: Act Two**

More concrete discussions concerning the construction of a new SND building began to appear only at the end of the 1950s. It was also at this time that the first Slovak Architects' Union (Slovenský sväz architektov) was founded, which in 1959 began to publish the Slovak-language professional journal *Projekt*. By 1960, the Central Committee of the Slovak Communist Party approved the construction of the theatre, after which a search competition was launched intended to find the most suitable site for situating the new building. The size and complexity of this problem are revealed in an article published in *Projekt* by architect Emil Belluš. In his words:

*“in Bratislava and all of Slovakia, it is a question of the most significant realisation of a cultural facility of first-rate social importance and impact, which of all objects now under construction should form, over the longest possible term, the main focal point of the cultural life of our society.”*<sup>18</sup>

In total, five locations were proposed, among them the interwar variant that would have situated the theatre in the outer district of Blumentál. Attention, though, slowly began to coalesce on the Danube embankment: the foot of the Castle Hill (Podhradie) and the vicinity of the winter port (around Pribinova ulica). Though the search competition for the theatre site in 1960 made a valuable contribution to the discussion on the placement of the theatre within the city and its architectural form, even Belluš admitted in his evaluation that if it had only been a clarification to the already-set stipulations of the urban masterplan, it would have been a good result, yet at this point no such masterplan existed, meaning that the competition to a notable extent missed its target.<sup>19</sup> The result, however, was that the site for the National Theatre had been chosen in a former industrial area near the winter port, in contact with the historic urban core but with sufficient land available for large-scale construction. In turn, the competition for the actual architectural-urbanistic plan of the new theatre was only launched nearly two decades after, in 1979.<sup>20</sup>

Understandably, the existence of the journal *Projekt* furthered the increasingly active involvement of architects in professional discussions and improved their awareness of wider events in architecture. Heading the journal's editorship was architect Dušan Kuzma, while the first editorial team included architects Kamil

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18 BELLUŠ. K otázke umiestnenia SND v Bratislave. In *Projekt*, 1961, vol. 3, no. 12, p. 233.

19 Ibid.

20 HABERLANDOVÁ and KRIŠTEKOVÁ. Theatre Architecture in Bratislava in the Context of Cultural-Social Changes, Urban-Planning Concepts and Architectural Innovations over Three Centuries. In *Cultural and Artistic Transfers in Theatre and Music: Past, Present, and Perspectives*. Bratislava 2021, p. 129.

Gross, Ernest Krampl, Jozef Lacko, Ivan Matušík, Stanislav Talaš and Ľubomír Titl – all significant figures in active design practice. A clear ideological line enforced by the Communist regime could be felt in the journal's texts, especially the ones for specific anniversaries that the regime held as important, yet beneath the verbiage in the articles' headlines and slogans in the spirit of the "*grandiose building of socialism*" and "*creation on a Marxist-Leninist basis*" lay clear-eyed analyses of current architecture in Slovakia or even presentations of new international projects from Britain, France, or Scandinavia. At the same time, these architects paid close attention to journals from abroad, searching the international discussions for inspiration and models for their own work.<sup>21</sup>

Regarding theatre architecture, there occurred among various other competitions for theatres in Czechoslovakia (Ostrava, České Budějovice etc.) once more, nine years after the first, a competition for the theatre in Prešov (now the Jonáš Záborský Theatre). Held in 1959, this competition was now extensively discussed in *Architektura ČSR*, but also commented in Slovakia's *Projekt*. Not entirely accurately, Miloš Chorvát described the competition as unique and the first chance in Slovakia to find a solution to ensure active contact between the actors and the spectators; in other words, to create not only the classic "picture-frame" theatre but further achieve variability in the use of both stage and auditorium, since these elements had been the subject of debate already in 1950. Chorvát asserted that this aim was the actual goal of the competition, since "*many participants simplified the problem by simply focusing on the design of a classic picture-frame theatre and failed to address the explicitly requested conditions for variable stage arrangements.*"<sup>22</sup> Even the mere attempt at democratisation for the spectators through an amphitheatre arrangement of the seats in the auditorium was often absent from the submitted designs: to a surprising extent, the traditional upper balconies continued to appear, as noted by art historian Viera Dlháňová.<sup>23</sup> This conservatism likely had its own effect on the competition's subsequent evaluation. No first prize was awarded, with the highest honour granted to two designs – one by Karol Revický and František Grobauer from the design institute Stavoprojekt Prešov and the one by Bratislava architect

21 Research on the reception of international journals by Slovak architects active in the 1960s was undertaken by Peter Szalay. Among the most frequently read journals, according to Szalay, were the French *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, the British *Architectural Record* and the German *Baumeister*, along with other German, Japanese, or Scandinavian publications. See: SZALAY. *Prijímanie zahraničných vplyvov v architektúre šesťdesiatych rokov na Slovensku*. PhD dissertation, advisor: Henrieta Moravčíková. Bratislava 2009.

22 CHORVÁT. K súťaži na divadlo J. Záborského v Prešove. In *Projekt*, 1959, Vol. 1, no. 11-12, p. 158.

23 DLHÁŇOVÁ. *Divadlo Jonáša Záborského – novostavba*. [online].

Vladimír Dedeček. After the sudden death of Revický, the implementation project was drawn up in 1972–1974 by architects František Zbuško and Ladislav Domen, under the supervision of František Jesenko.

The decade of the Seventies, though understandably overshadowed by the political repression following the Soviet invasion of 1968, nonetheless witnessed one paradoxical outcome: the creation of a federal Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in the same year allowed Slovakia a certain leeway to continue the trajectory of the 1960s, marked by an awareness of international trends and technological innovations, surprisingly unopposed by official cultural policies. At the same time, many major construction projects that had begun construction under the more favourable situation of the previous decade were finally brought to completion in these years. As such, several major cultural buildings and projects date from this era. The Slovak National Gallery, which since 1948 had occupied the former Water Barracks on the Danube embankment, did not commission an entirely new building, but replaced the street wing of the barracks, demolished in the early 1940s, with a highly modern addition (“bridging”) designed by Vladimír Dedeček (competition 1963, realisation 1969–1977): now viewed as one of the most progressive architectural works of the later half of the 20th century in Slovakia, it recently underwent restoration completed in 2022. Nor should we forget the equally daring realisation of the Ľudovít Fulla Gallery (Martin Kusý, Štefan Hattala, 1966–1969) in Ružomberok, designed as two rectangular volumes, one positioned perpendicularly above the other, with a striking fifteen-metre overhang giving the building a captivating appearance.<sup>24</sup> Another such important architectural achievement of a similar type is the Museum and Memorial to the Slovak National Uprising in Banská Bystrica (Dušan Kuzma, 1965–1970).

Modern “houses of culture” or trade-union centres, as part of the postwar socialist project that bore a clear relation to theatre architecture, also appeared in a range of innovative realisations, including several exceptional works of Brutalist architecture: the House of Arts in Piešťany (Ferdinand Milučký, project 1969–1974, realisation 1979–1984), or the House of Trade Unions, Technology, and Culture in Bratislava (Ferdinand Konček, Il’ja Skoček, Ľubomír Titl, competition 1959, realisation 1968–1981). In the wider context of constructing key social-cultural institutions, a significant role was held by the realisations of the Slovak National Archive in Bratislava, designed by Vladimír Dedeček (originally the State Central Archive, 1983), or the new building of the Matica Slovenská cultural association in Martin (Dušan Kuzma, Anton Cimmermann,

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24 DULLA and MORAVČÍKOVÁ. *Architektúra Slovenska v 20. storočí*. Bratislava 2002, p. 429.

project 1962–1964, realisation 1963–1975). Many of these buildings are now acknowledged as a major part of Slovakia’s cultural heritage, several of them even enjoying official heritage protection, such as the recent listed status for Piešťany’s House of Arts. However, others that left state ownership for private hands are at significant risk, illustrated by the recent demolition of the Trade Union House (Istropolis) in Bratislava.<sup>25</sup> It is interesting to note, by contrast, that twenty years ago the “bridge” wing of the SNG was itself threatened with demolition for its poor technical condition, yet eventually the professional community, above all the gallery management, decided in favour of a complex renovation of the building, including not only the historic building of the former barracks but also Dedeček’s addition, a process completed in 2022.

The same decade of the 1970s also saw the construction of the largest number of theatre buildings at any single time in Slovakia. Following state cultural policy on making the dramatic arts accessible to all layers of the working populace, the Ministry of Culture prepared at the decade’s start a conception for the construction of an entire network of theatres for Slovakia,<sup>26</sup> including the construction of new (and expansion of extant) spaces for the SND. In the mid-Seventies, the addition to the historic SND building on Hviezdoslavovo námestie (Rajmund Hirth, 1969–1972) was completed, while in parallel the idea for a new building was developed further. Its location had already been largely set as Pribinova ulica. It was a historic industrial zone beside the Danube, though already since the midpoint of the century seeing a decline in manufacturing and had long been proposed as one of the possibilities for the theatre within the wider discussions on a new city centre. Though the same period saw the completion of other new buildings for local theatres (e.g. the town theatre in Nitra by Juraj Hlavica, Márius Žitňanský and Štefánia Rosincová, 1981–1992),<sup>27</sup> the new SND building is unique in its size and its combination of all three companies – drama, ballet, opera – under a single roof. And, of course, the enormous complexity thus implied in working with both mass and space, which spurred the implementation of technical solutions then unprecedented in the entire state. Another definitive factor toward the resolution finally to take concrete steps toward construction of Bratislava’s new theatre was certainly the completion of the New Stage of the National Theatre in Prague (Karel Prager, 1983), where a similar preparatory

25 The genesis of the process that led to the destruction of Istropolis, within the context of the current social devaluation of the worth of such architecture, is analysed in detail in MORAVČÍKOVÁ and SZALAY. *Istropolis. Dom odborov*. Bratislava 2022.

26 MORAVČÍKOVÁ and DLHÁŇOVÁ, *Divadelná architektúra na Slovensku*, p. 26.

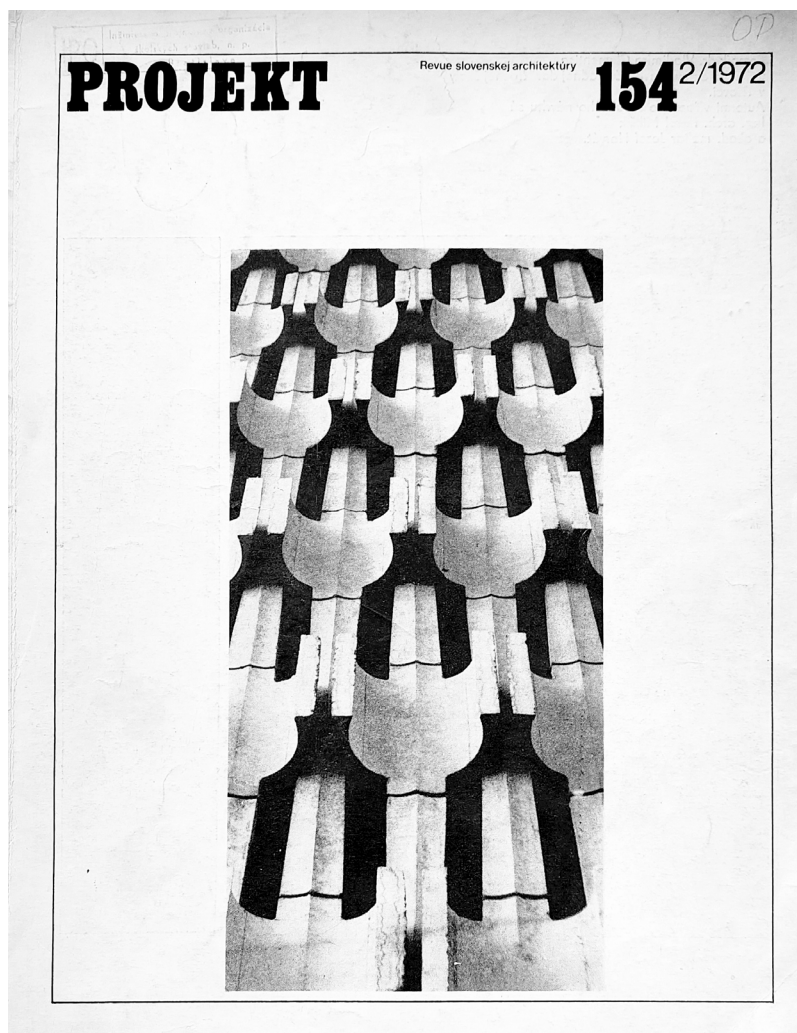
27 The competition for the Andrej Bagar Theatre in Nitra in 1972 was also entered by the architects Martin Kusý and Pavol Paňák, later the winners in the competition for the new SND building.



process had dragged on from the end of the 1950s, if not even from the interwar years – though in the case of Prague, a central reason was the death of architect Bohuslav Fuchs, the winner in both rounds of the competition for the building in 1962 and 1964. At present, the New Stage building in Prague is itself a protected landmark.

Image 2:

Cover of the thematic issue of the magazine Projekt from 1972, focused on the latest realizations of cultural buildings in Slovakia and abroad. Source: Archives of the Department of Architecture IH SAS



Yet underlying the preparatory process for the construction of the new theatre in Bratislava was an ongoing reflection of international architectural achievements and theoretical discourses, transmitted through professional publications and architectural journals. The February 1972 issue of *Projekt* was devoted to cultural buildings, both in Slovakia and abroad, realised in the most recent previous years.<sup>28</sup> Individual texts discussed the Tatra National Park Museum in Tatranská Lomnica (Pavol Merjavý, 1967–1969), the House of Arts in Piešťany (Ferdinand Milučký, 1969–1972), the competition for the House of Culture in Trnava (winner Jozef Danák, realisation 1976–1988), and the recently completed House of Culture in the small town of Sládkovičovo (Jozef Slíž, Eva Grébertová). Additionally, the journal discussed the final stage of the reconstruction and enlargement of the historic SND building on Hviezdoslavovo námestie and presented a broad selection of new buildings from Europe and America (the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the then-completed sections of the Royal National Theatre in London, yet also the theatre in the Russian city of Tula or the opera house in Stara Zagora, Bulgaria). Even more, the journal also published the results of the competition for the Beaubourg cultural centre in Paris (now the Centre Pompidou, Renzo Piano, Richard Rogers, 1971–1977). Of the 681 designs submitted, a full 13 were sent from Czechoslovakia, with the youngest generation of Slovak architects assuming a major role. In short, Slovak architects were clearly not merely passive observers of what was going on elsewhere, but even entered into it themselves. And even the book reviews in Czechoslovak architectural journals took note of current international publications; e.g., *Architektúra ČSR* published in 1972 its review of the second edition of a book on theatre design by the German architect Gerhard Graubner (1899–1970), author of many theatres from the 1950s and 1960s (Munich, Trefeld, Trier, Bochum, Karlsruhe).<sup>29</sup>

### The New SND Building: The Grand Finale

In the nationwide public competition for the design of the Slovak National Theatre building, announced on 1 May 1979, the winning design from the 57 designs submitted was that of three young architects: Pavol Paňák, Martin Kusý jr. and Peter Bauer. As per the jury evaluation, the highest-ranked design “*best fulfilled the idea of a non-traditional, progressive solution.*” In addition, no other design beside the winner treated the Slovak National Theatre in such a broad urban context, presenting the SND building not as an autonomous object but as an

28 *Projekt. Revue slovenskej architektúry. Časopis zväzu slovenských architektov*, 1972, Vol. 14, no. 2.

29 GRAUBNER. *Theaterbau Aufgabe und Planung*. München 1970, 124 pp.

integral component of the entire city.<sup>30</sup> The unusually detailed and comprehensive competition conditions themselves reflected the changes occurring in the ideas of theatre spaces not only in Slovakia but indeed all of Europe. The local program for the new SND building, intended to become the “*urban-architectural landmark of the new cultural and social centre of Bratislava, capitol of the Slovak Socialist Republic*”<sup>31</sup>, demanded adherence to a range of criteria for layout and functional relations, including maximum variability of the performance space. If the official rhetoric claimed the theatre to “*correspond to the demanding criteria of a developed socialist society, the national character of architectural creation and the most progressive contemporary principles of technical scenography*”<sup>32</sup>, in practical terms it mirrored worldwide tendencies toward the transformation of the theatre space, resulting from technical innovations and the following increase in staging demands. Among other influences, the authors of the winning design drew upon the findings of the prominent American theatre designer George Izenour (1912–2007),<sup>33</sup> whose massive 600-page publication *Theatre Design* (1977) summarised both architectonic historiography and the latest architectural, structural, and technical findings in the field. Thanks to this knowledge, along with prior experience in designing theatres from the previously discussed competition for the regional theatre in Nitra, the authorial team managed to harmonise all necessary aspects of this highly complex task.

The architectural form of the theatre is the result of its unique conjunction: the compositional linking of the masses of the theatre and opera sections (in other words, more than the integration of several halls of various sizes under a single roof), which was then unique in the world. This connection allowed the unification of the extensive backstage facilities along with the social areas into a single structure. The main theatrical spaces of the two halls are canted respectively at a 45-degree angle, so that the axis of the spaces in both stages is composed diagonally into two cubes with differing height, intended to “*express truthfully the relation and proportion of the public operations to the professional ones.*”<sup>34</sup>

30 KUSÝ. Poznámky k 28 rokov trvajúcej výstavbe SND v Bratislave. In *Divadlo v umení / Umenie v divadle. Zborník z konferencie Dni európskeho kultúrneho dedičstva 2019*. Banská Štiavnica 2019, p. 43.

31 HORŇÁK and KUZMOVÁ. *Zborník súťažných návrhov na riešenie novostavby Slovenského národného divadla v Bratislave*. Bratislava 1979, p. 7.

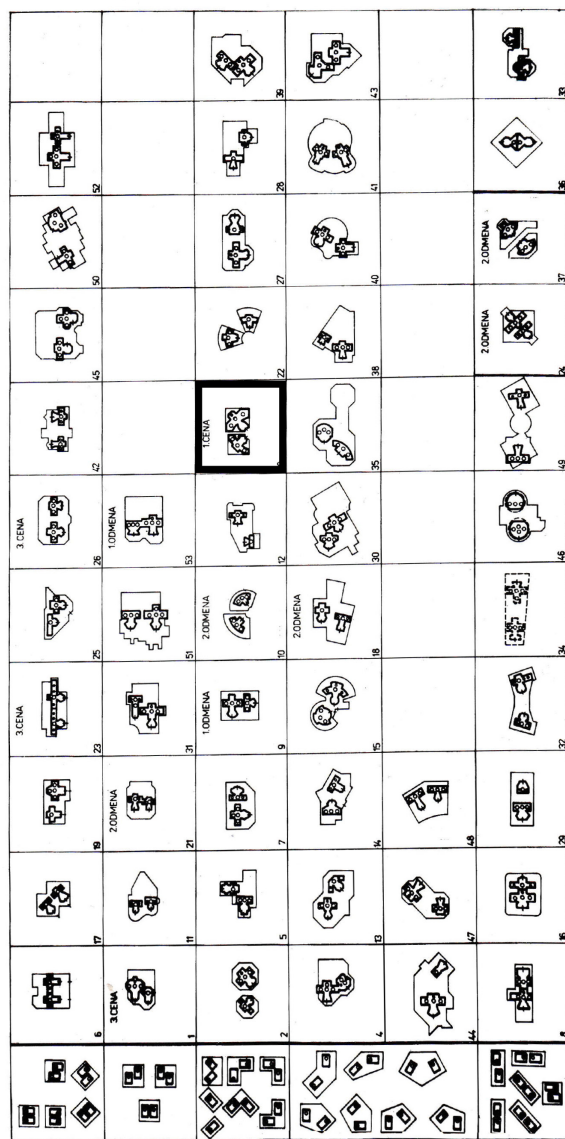
32 Ibid.

33 Information on the course of the architectural competition, preparation of project documentation, and construction of the SND was also acquired from an interview by the authors of the present study with the architects Pavol Paňák and Martin Kusý, on 22 June 2021 in the studio B.K.P.Š.

34 FAŠANG. Novostavba Slovenského národného divadla. Výsledky súťaže. In *Projekt*, 1980,

Figure 3:

Comparison of the compositional arrangement of the opera and drama scenes in the individual competition proposals for the new building of the Slovak National Theatre from 1979, with the winning solution marked. Source: Project, 1981, vol. 23, no. 1-2, p. 244.



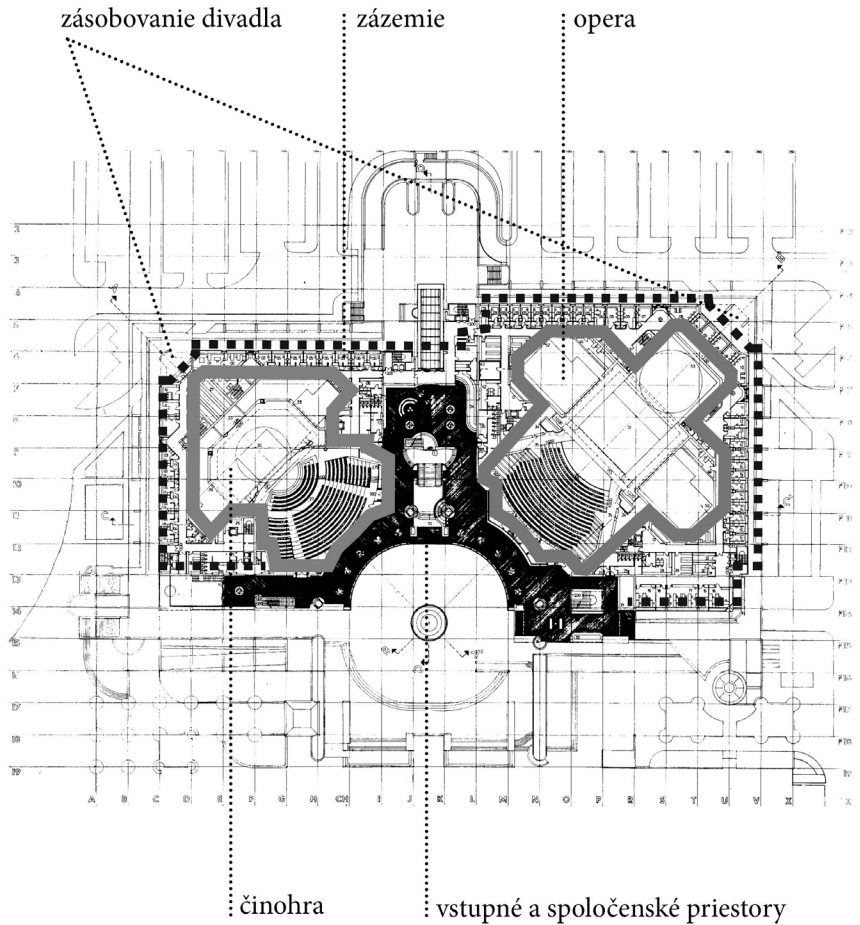
The semicircular arrangement of the frontages of both halls and their public areas forms an open assembly square, while also preserving the lines of sight to Bratislava's key landmarks: the river and the castle. In urbanistic terms, the winning design was one of the very few that did not conceive the new building as an isolated volume (in the sense of postwar Modernism) but one following the principle of the street, matching the scale of the nearby historic urban fabric. In the authors' words, the square thus acquired the typical scale of the urban interior, yet all the same the conical mass of the theatre appears, at a distance, monumental and imposing.<sup>35</sup> Among the major international realisation of now-iconic postwar theatres (e.g., the Kalita Humphreys Theatre in Dallas by Frank Lloyd Wright or the Essen Opera House by Alvar Aalto), the architects selected as the main influence of the Bratislava design the previously discussed Royal National Theatre. It was not only the qualities of the architectural concept and the technical arrangements: the London theatre provided a notably similar urbanistic situation with its riverside location close to the city centre, as well as the application of the principle of using the extensive common spaces for the public even outside of actual performances. As for the theatre space itself, they also took up the latest findings in theatre design, most of all the desire to create a flexible space between auditorium and stage. Precisely the technical-technological requirements for planning a theatre hall, demanding alongside the greatest possible spectator capacity the harmonisation of optimal visibility, variable lighting, acoustic qualities, fire safety, and equally the architectonic nature of the space, provided (and still provide) one of the greatest challenges in realising theatre buildings. In fact, as a reward for their victory in the design competition, the architects were allowed (at their own choice of a locality) to travel to London and observe the theatre in real space and time shortly after its opening – though to prevent any possible complications in the event that they all decided to defect to the West, the regime had them travel individually in two stages. As noted in the introduction, it was not common for Slovak architects to travel abroad, yet in spite of all unfavourable political circumstances it was also not impossible, particularly when the trip involved a project of state importance like that of the national theatre. Such mobility likewise reinforced the prevalent tendencies in Slovak architecture in both the 1960s and 1970s, when the era of imitating Soviet models in the form of historicist Socialist Realism gave way to a search for new forms and reflection of activities on a global scale.

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35 Ibid.



Figure 4:  
Schematic illustration of the main plan outline of the new Slovak National Theatre building. Source: authors' archive.



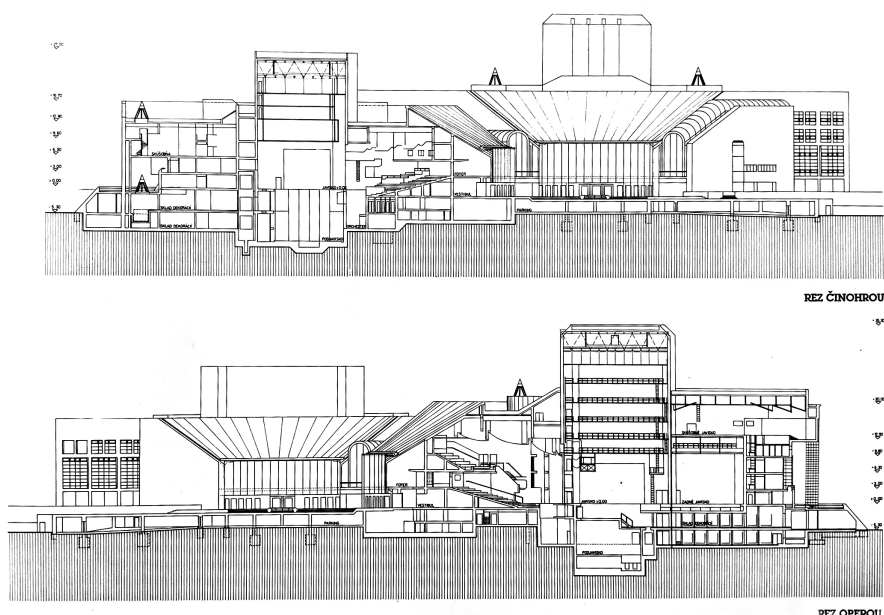
Preceding the actual construction was the preparation of an enormous quantity of preliminary documentation, such as the masterplan for the urban zone and the construction plan for the masterplan of the nearby Martanovičova zone, approved studies for the separate parts of the SND complex and project tasks for the first and



second stages of construction, studies for the reduction of built-up area, vehicle traffic, stage lighting; energy studies, or model verifications of the theatre spaces for acoustics or ventilation equipment. Only once all these documents had been approved could the architects start with preparing the introductory construction project, which upon completion contained up to 26 operational and 69 partially operational ensembles (technologies). Work on the long-awaited construction of the National Theatre began in 1986. This step, however, only implied for the architects the start of a prolonged process full of continual alterations and updates to their design.

Figure 5:

Cross-section of the opera and drama objects in the new Slovak National Theatre building. Source: Studio B.K.P.Š.



The original space for stage performances, which originally was planned to offer a series of variations in terms of a classical proscenium stage, an arena, or an amphitheatre with movable walls<sup>36</sup> was, for financial reasons, only realised in the last-mentioned form. Nonetheless, the theatre managed to realise the full

36 For example, the rear wall of the theatre hall was planned to continue downward, so that the auditorium would be connected from above with the foyer.

extent of the backstage facilities, providing a high level of comfort not only for the audience but equally for the actors themselves in preparing the performances. In terms of energy efficiency, the building offered what at the time formed an unusual innovation: heat recuperation through a heat exchanger in the central machine room for the cooling system. At the same time, the building's energy efficiency was further improved by its architectural plan. Both performance companies, the opera and the theatre, had their own rehearsal areas with a size matching the main stage, supplemented by ballet and orchestral rehearsal halls, chamber rooms, or individual practice rooms. As a result, performances could be prepared and rehearsed in full but without the need to heat, ventilate, or light the space of a large auditorium. Indeed, the rehearsal spaces for the theatre were realised, as planned, as a single area that could be separated into several separate sections.<sup>37</sup>

Alongside the other technical challenges and specific theatre requirements, one of the greatest difficulties in construction was the acoustic quality of the auditoriums. Quite probably, it was this factor that formed the essential deciding point in the impossibility of realising a variable theatre space, with the danger that its changeability could mean that it failed to meet any of the specific tasks well. As it happened, one hall was acoustically adapted for music and the other for the spoken word. During the over twenty years of construction, many international experts worked on the building's acoustics, arriving from Prague, Berlin, or even Switzerland and Japan. The result was the use of the architects' intended stone cladding supplemented with resonators hidden in the substructure, along with independent, variously positioned and angled acoustical panels. In the theatre auditorium, the surface of the stone cladding was left smooth, but for the opera it was given relief work for the appropriate "breaking" of the sound.

In the length of time necessary for construction, the new Slovak National Theatre even outstripped its British counterpart and inspiration. Moreover, during the work of nearly 21 years, Czechoslovakia changed its system of government and Slovakia gained independence, many different political movements came to power, and over 10 ministers of culture, several National Theatre general directors, and hundreds of employees all succeeded each other. Initially, what was lacking for construction was materials, then money, eventually even political will. Critical voices began to emerge mostly in the final construction stage, when the building survived various forms of rejection – plans to demolish it, rebuilt it for a different function, or sell it.<sup>38</sup> These plans emerged after culture

37 *Slovenské národné divadlo – novostavba*. Brochure published by the Slovak National Theatre on the state of documentation as of September 1993, 27 pp.

38 In 2004, the Slovak government voted to sell the unfished theatre building, after the finance

minister Milan Kňažko set aside in 1999 the largest ever sum of money since the revolution for completing the theatre, yet even this proved insufficient. In the end, it was decided that the theatre would, after all, become a theatre. Once plans were ready for the performers to move into the new theatre spaces, various comments were heard from the theatrical community not only on the building's appearance ("nuclear reactor" and the like) but more seriously its spatial design and technical equipment. It was the head of the SND drama company, Roman Polák, who at the press conference for the opening of the new building in 2007 quoted the idea of director Miloš Pietor that the first director in the theatre is the building's own architect.<sup>39</sup>

The new theatre building was perceived as a spatial rebus, but one that could be resolved. The chief dramaturge of the theatre company, Darina Abrahámová, found the problem to lie mostly in the non-traditional width of the large hall. In turn, the actors praised the chamber studio in the below-ground level, which paradoxically had originally been intended as a rehearsal room. However, the most severe deficiency of the theatre, a result of the long construction period, was the outdated stage technology – even worse, assembled during various differing construction stages, so that the individual parts turned out not to be compatible once the theatre was in operation. Other points of criticism were the excessively small orchestra pit, or the generally less-than-ideal acoustics of the large hall. Addressing the acoustics of the hall was, in fact, a demanding and time-consuming task for the architects, who worked with a wide range of experts from both Slovakia and abroad.<sup>40</sup>

Yet the doubts most frequently voiced, as to whether viewers would even come to the newly completed theatre, eventually turned out to be unjustified. These fears were largely based on the specific figures arising from the original competition conditions, requiring a total usable area of nearly 33 000 square metres and halls for 650, 900, and 190 spectators. The reasoning behind these conditions was the prediction that by 2000, the Slovak capitol would have 550,000 inhabitants and the wider urban area 880,000, which turned out to be far from the case. Moreover, the initial poor attendance figures occurred only for ballet performances, a genre usually with the smallest viewing public, and one

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minister stated that the building had already cost 3.3 billion crowns and required an addition 800 million. After an attempt at rebuilding the structure as a cultural-social-sports-congress centre, the theatre was eventually completed as planned, though the final investment reached the sum of 4.5 billion crowns. See: KUSÝ, Poznámky k 28 rokov trvajúcej výstavbe SND v Bratislave, p. 50.

39 *SND: viac ako rok po*. [online].

40 Architects Pavol Paňák and Martin Kusý, interview with the authors of the present study, 22 June 2021.

where the artists themselves were accustomed, primarily for more experimental projects, to the smaller hall in the historic building. Over time, the visitor figures stabilised, and the public grew accustomed to attending the theatre, even though the surrounding landscaping was incomplete and the construction of an entirely new commercial and social centre was still underway. Quite telling is that a distrust among intellectuals in the nation and its patriotic sentiments sufficing to attend and support a national theatre appeared repeatedly. The call for a “*generous, enthusiastic, and patriotic viewing public*”, as quoted earlier from the magazine *Divadlo* from 1926, was repeated in a sense even after the selection of the winner in the competition for the new building in 1979. Celebrating their victory, the architects paid a visit to a friend, the author Dominik Tatarka, who responded to their rejoicing tersely: “*All right, boys. We have a theatre, and where is the nation?*”<sup>41</sup> Though attendance figures for the National Theatre, particularly in certain periods, were significantly improved by coach parties of pensioners from Vienna, the Slovak nation did not allow itself to be shamed, welcoming its National Theatre as its own and coming back repeatedly.

Picture 6:

The new Slovak National Theatre building on Pribinová Street. Source: Archive of the Slovak National Theatre, photo by Martin Črep



The architectonic-historical trajectory of theatre architecture from the end of the 19th century to the present is a narrative of innovation: on one hand

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41 KUSÝ. Poznámky k 28 rokov trvajúcej výstavbe SND v Bratislave, p. 48.

spurred by the emergence of modern architecture and construction determined by several waves of the Industrial Revolution, yet on the other modulated by continuity in the sense of working from earlier practices through inspiration, in which artistic, cultural, and social factors coexist with each era's architectural principles. The current research has confirmed that theatres, within the framework of the typology of cultural buildings, a truly special status in the context of their potential for innovation. The theatre is one of the oldest and most stable typological categories in the history of Western culture, a central element since Hellenic times and over the centuries adapted to various urbanistic functions. Furthering this exceptional status is the historical situation in which, during the 18th and 19th centuries, most Western European nations viewed the theatre as a means of public representation for a state or empire, while in Eastern Europe the realisation of national theatres provided a symbol of unification of the nation and national identity. In urban contexts, theatre buildings held the role of public landmarks with vital cultural, political, and no less city-forming significance, through which they still influence the urbanistic character of their surroundings. Hence, in consequence of this representative function, significant financial sums were invested into theatre construction.

As such, it was possible repeatedly to test and implement the latest design knowledge not only in terms of architectonic treatment of form and function, but equally technical innovations in terms of structural engineering, acoustics, lighting, or various theatrical machinery systems. Specific breakthroughs include the Bayreuth Festspielhaus, designed with Richard Wagner's personal involvement, as one of the first instances of a darkened auditorium using an amphitheatre layout (recalling the projection screen of a cinema, first appearing half a century later), or Walter Gropius's idea of a fully variable theatre, up to the modernist theatres of the second half of the 20th century that managed, despite continually increasing interior volumes, to provide an exceptional experience of sound, lighting, and visuality. No other built typology required (or requires) the harmonisation of so many vital elements, hence the spatial changes in theatre architecture of the 20th century emerged primarily through the development of technical and technological means. No less important, though, is the social aspect of theatre architecture.

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, theatres began to stress, as part of increasing the cultural awareness of society, the accessibility of their productions for all strata of society. And in turn, the transformation of the theatre into a public service contributed to the widespread and ongoing process of their reform and modernisation. If the multipurpose theatre complexes of the later 20th century gradually lost their symbolic importance, they nonetheless grew as crucial

accelerators of civic life and urban development.<sup>42</sup> Much the same innovative potential in the designing of theatre architecture, culminating in the completion of the new building of the Slovak National Theatre, is visible in Slovakia. The authors of the new SND showed their skill, in the design and construction, in reflecting international trends while also providing original and innovative solutions. All the same, the many architectural qualities of the building have been overshadowed by its over-long construction period, starting with the deficiencies of the command-economy construction industry and then complicated after 1989 by the nation's economic transformation, leading the public to view the building as a problem, while in turn the theatre community focused on the outdated technical aspects rather than the ingenious spatial concept. Hence it is important to examine this architecture in its widest contexts, allowing us a new way of grasping its central values, much the same as for the values of late 20th-century architecture in general.

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42 MORAVČÍKOVÁ and DLHÁŇOVÁ. Divadelná architektúra na Slovensku. Bratislava 2011, p. 33.



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