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# Transforming churches into theaters in the Habsburg Monarchy: Economy versus Character in the Josephist architectural policy

Raluca Muresan

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Maximilian Hartmuth, Richard Kurdiovsky,  
Julia Rüdiger, Georg Vasold (eds.)

# THE GOVERNANCE OF STYLE

Public Buildings in Central Europe,  
1780–1920

*Façade.*

FAÇADENVARIANTE . . .

böhlau



Maximilian Hartmuth, Richard Kurdiovsky,  
Julia Rüdiger, Georg Vasold (eds.)

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Public buildings in Central Europe, 1780–1920

BÖHLAU



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## Transforming churches into theaters in the Habsburg Monarchy: Economy versus Character in Josephist architectural policy

This study draws attention to an unexplored, yet significant phenomenon among the Early Modern period's urban architectural practices: the reuse of a building, the act of transforming one architectural program into another. The precise type of reuse examined here – the conversion of churches into public theatres – is particularly intriguing for two reasons. First, reusing former monasteries already proved to be a central issue in the Habsburg Monarchy in the aftermath of the Jesuit orders' dissolution in 1773, and after all contemplative orders' abolishment in 1782. Second, this type of reconstruction implies the mixture of two architectural programs featuring different visual markers that express the character of each.

Character and economic efficiency are two concepts central to European architectural theory in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The terms “character” and “appropriateness”<sup>1</sup> refer to the suitability of all of a building's visual aspects for representing its function and the social status of its owner. Developed mainly in the French treatise of the former Jesuit monk Marc-Antoine Laugier, then by Jacques-François Blondel and Le Camus de Mézières,<sup>2</sup> the theory of character played a relevant role in some of the treatises published in the Holy Roman Empire and in the eastern Habsburg lands.<sup>3</sup> It is also found in the writings of Christian Rieger, a leading figure among the Habsburg Monarchy's building specialists. In 1747–60, he was mathematics teacher at the Viennese *Theresianum*, the most

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1 French *caractère*; German *Charakter*. French *convenance, bienséance*; German *Angemessenheit*. The two concepts are used with this common meaning by Jacques-François Blondel (1771), while Marc-Antoine Laugier uses mainly the term *bienséance* and Germain Boffrand (1745), Le Camus de Mézières (1780) and Quatremère de Quincy (1788) prefer the term *caractère*. I am therefore using them here as mere synonyms, even if slight variations of meaning differentiated these two concepts' significance in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century architectural theory. For a general presentation of these concepts see Werner Szambien, *Symétrie, goût, caractère: théorie et terminologie de l'architecture à l'âge classique 1550–1800* (Paris: Picard, 1986), pp. 167–199.

2 Aside from Marc-Antoine Laugier (*Essai sur l'architecture*, Paris, 1754), other architects also used the concept, especially Jacques-François Blondel (*Cours d'architecture*, II, Paris, 1771), Germain Boffrand (*Livre d'architecture*, Paris, 1745), and Le Camus de Mézières (*Le Génie de l'architecture ou l'analogie de cet art avec nos sensations*, 1780). See Werner Szambien, *Symétrie, goût, caractère*, pp. 174–179.

3 For the Holy Roman Empire, see the analysis of the anonymous *Untersuchungen über den Charakter der Gebäude* (1785). According to Jörg Biesler, the sensualist interpretation of the notion of character promoted by Boffrand and by Le Camus de Mézières had the largest echo in German architectural theory in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Jörg Biesler, *BauKunstKritik: Deutsche Architekturtheorie im 18. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Reimer, 2005), pp. 193–224.

prestigious noble academy in the Habsburg lands devoted to high bureaucrats' education.<sup>4</sup> As for economic efficiency, it is a concept often linked to French Empire architecture.<sup>5</sup> Here efficiency is, nonetheless, to be studied in the narrower sense of the reduction of those expenses accepted by the Holy Roman Empire's cameralist tradition.<sup>6</sup> Such an interest in finance had undergone an early and notable development in the Habsburg Monarchy since the establishment of the Court Board of Works (*Hofbauamt*) under the authority of the Court Chamber in 1772. Then, in 1780, Joseph II explicitly asked the new Superior Building Directorate (*k. k. Oberhofbaudirektion*) to cease new ambitious building projects, in order to "focus rather on preserving existing buildings and gardens [...] as economically as possible, by making only the most indispensable expenses".<sup>7</sup>

All relatively important construction works of the time had to observe the requirements of economy as well as of character or appropriateness. As a consequence of the quest for fiscal responsibility urged by Joseph II since 1780, transforming existing buildings appeared to be an appropriate option. But to what extent did such a reuse practice fit the character of the church buildings' newly transformed function? Moreover, the public theatre was an emerging architectural task in the Habsburg Monarchy's towns, and its formal characteristics were still the object of intense debates. According to the theory of character, theatre halls needed good acoustics and visibility, while their façade and inner decoration had to be joyful, open towards the city, and possess lavishly adorned rooms for the public. If reusing a former church is in itself an expression of the quest for thrift, does that mean that issues regarding character were necessarily neglected? In other words, is there a contradiction between the interest in character and economic considerations?

I will answer these questions through an analysis of the specific economic, functional, and aesthetic debates occurring during the churches' transformation into theatres. To what extent were former convents architecturally transformed in order to suit their new function? Were such adaptations necessarily seen as second-hand buildings? I will explore three complementary directions: First, I will survey the historiography of reuse. Second, I will explain the scale of this reuse practice, by analysing the profiles of the actors involved in the decision-making process, as well as those that managed the diffusion of the information on such

4 Laugier had an important impact on the Habsburg Monarchy, as evidenced in the treatise of Christian Rieger. See Christian Rieger, *Universae architecturae civilis elementa* (Vienna: Johann Thomas Trattner 1756). See also Adam Németh, "A városépítészet mint a kormányzati tudás eleme a 18. századi Bécsben: a Lipótváros Schilsson-féle tervének intézményi összefüggései," *Urbs* 12 (2018), pp. 229–256, here pp. 235–238.

5 Georges Teyssot, "Types, programmes et régularités: La diffusion des principes architecturaux au sein du Conseil des bâtiments civils sous le Consulat et l'Empire," *Villes et territoire pendant la période napoléonienne (France et Italie): Actes du colloque de Rome (3–4 mai 1984)* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1987), pp. 231–245, here pp. 238–239. Werner, Szambien, *Symétrie, goût, caractère*, p. 158.

6 On cameralist thinking's reception in German architectural theory, see Biesler, *BauKunstKritik*, pp. 79–83.

7 See also Mader-Kratky's contribution to this volume, as well as Anna Mader-Kratky, "Karrieremodelle im Wiener Hofbauamt des 18. Jahrhunderts," *Präzedenz, Netzwerke und Transfers: Kommunikationsstrukturen von Herrscherhöfen und Adelsresidenzen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Gerhard Ammerer, Ingonda Hanneschläger, Milan Hlavačka, and Martin Holý (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2016), pp. 149–168.



theatres installed in former churches. Finally, I will review the different formal solutions utilized in order to transform a church into a theatre, as well as the disputes that emerged during the rebuilding process.

### Transforming former convents into public spaces: a historiographical gap

After 1782, when Joseph II abolished contemplative orders, a huge number of unused buildings became available. Thus, during the 1780s and 1790s many former monasteries hosted public and military offices, schools, hospitals, and various commercial spaces. More than half of the former convent-churches became local parishes or were used by other monastic orders, yet many others were adapted for secular activities.<sup>8</sup> Entire urban districts received a new shape and a new institutional character thanks to the former convents' transformation into buildings used for other purposes.

Yet, architectural scholarship has previously mistreated such practices of reuse, suggesting that they were mere improvisations, and thus held a lesser quality by architectural standards. For instance, in Renate Wagner-Rieger's eyes, secularised convents' architectural transformation did not present any "importance from an artistic point of view" even if she acknowledged that they may be interesting from a cultural and historical point of view.<sup>9</sup> Architectural historians have focused mainly on original constructions conceived by well-known architects. Reuse is, however, not only extremely common in the field of urban development, but it can also be the object of complex aesthetical and technical considerations. In Central Europe, this phenomenon was explored in more detail only in the Kingdom of Hungary. In particular, István Nagy and György Kelényi have emphasized that the transformation of Buda's old cityscape into an administrative capital city was achieved thanks to the readaptation of former convents.<sup>10</sup> More recently, Márta Velladics has provided a more comprehensive study of the fate of property and movable assets belonging to the Kingdom of Hungary's abolished contemplative orders. Realized thanks to a thorough study of the *Religionsfonds* archives, Velladics's research presents a statistical analysis that reveals the ratio of each kind of reassignment of Hungary's former convents. However, this research does not deal with the ways in which readaptations worked, or were conducted and evaluated, from an architectural

8 Márta Velladics presents a precise statistical analysis revealing the ratio of each kind of reassignment in the Kingdom of Hungary, see Márta Velladics, *A II. József-beli szerzetesrendi abolíció művészettörténeti vonatkozásai* (PhD diss., Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, 2001), p. 107.

9 Renate Wagner-Rieger, *Wiens Architektur im 19. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag für Unterricht, Wissenschaft und Kunst, 1970), p. 54.

10 Nagy István, "II József reformjai Budán," *Tanulmányok Budapest Multjából* 15 (1963), pp. 363–402. According to Nagy, esthetical considerations seldom came up during the rebuilding processes. In Buda, the architect Franz Anton Hillebrandt had been assigned to pay attention only to the creation of a new aesthetic for the parliament's façade (*Land-Haus*). György Kelényi, *A klasszicizáló későbarokk építészete Magyarországon* (Dr. Hab. Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2005), pp. 213–222.

point of view. In other countries of the former Habsburg Monarchy, this perspective has been largely neglected.<sup>11</sup>

On a European scale, the phenomenon of assigning former convents to new purposes has been seen above all as a consequence of the French Revolution.<sup>12</sup> However, French historiography still lacks a thorough study of secularised convents' architectural adaptation during the French First Empire. Recently, Pierre Pinon has addressed this issue in a short article, in which he also emphasizes the ambiguous link between the quest for "character" and the requirements for economy and efficiency imposed by the *Conseil des Bâtiments Civils* founded in 1796.<sup>13</sup> Only rare research, focussing on a few case studies or dealing with the economical building policies promoted by the *Conseil des Bâtiments Civils*, briefly mentions the architectural stakes of the reuse phenomenon.<sup>14</sup> The massive and large-scale consequences of the architectural reforms implemented under Joseph II are still largely neglected outside of Central Europe.

In the Austrian Duchies and in Galicia, several theatre-historians have briefly mentioned the frequent development of theatrical spaces installed in former churches from the 1780s up to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup> Controversies concerning this specific kind of reuse

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- 11 Only recently, Anna Mader-Kratky has pointed to some of the adaptations of former convents in her work on Johann Ferdinand Hetzendorf von Hohenberg. See Anna Mader-Kratky, *Der Wiener Hofarchitekt Johann Ferdinand Hetzendorf von Hohenberg (1733–1816)* (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 2017), pp. 152–154.
- 12 For instance, Giuliana Ricci, in her book on Italian theatre architecture, states that transformation of churches into theatres may have been the result of French influences, see Giuliana Ricci, *I teatri d'Italia: dalla Magna Grecia all'Ottocento* (Milan: Bramante Editrice, 1971), pp. 194–195. Ursula Quecke also sees the replacement of the churches by theatres as an influence of French Enlightenment, see Ursula Quecke, "Aspekte des Oberitalienischen Theaterbaus vom 16.-19. Jahrhundert," *Teatro: Eine Reise zu den oberitalienischen Theatern des 16.-19. Jahrhunderts*, exhib. cat. Österreichisches Theatermuseum, eds. Siegfried Albrecht, Ulrike Dembski, Susane Grötz, Erwin Herzberger, and Ursula Quecke (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2001), pp. 14–27, here p. 26. These authors present the examples of the theatres in Argenta (1802), Adria (1803), Ancona (1810), Vigevano (1800), the *Filodrammatico* theatre in Milan (1798), as well as those built in place of demolished churches in Radegonda and Carcano Lentasi, or the *la Scala* in Milan.
- 13 Pierre Pinon stresses the fact that even if reappropriation of former convents was theoretically possible as early as 1792, it is only during the Napoleonic period that such architectural projects were drawn. Pierre Pinon, "La grande mutation des couvents sous l'Empire," *L'Architecture de l'Empire entre France et Italie*, eds. Letizia Tedeschi, Daniel Rabreau (Mendrisio: Mendrisio Academy Press/ Silvana Editoriale, 2012), pp. 83–94, here pp. 83–84.
- 14 Lauren M. O'Connell, "Redefining the past: Revolutionary architecture and the Conseil des Bâtiments Civils," *The Art Bulletin* 77/2 (June 1995), pp. 207–224, here pp. 209–210; Georges Teyssot, "Type, program and regularity: The diffusion of architectural principles in the Conseil des Bâtiments Civils at the beginning of the nineteenth century in France," *Princeton Journal of Architecture* 3 (1989), pp. 119–137; D. Hermant, "Destructions et vandalisme pendant la Révolution française," *Annales: Économies, sociétés, civilisations* 33/4 (1978), pp. 703–719; Tatiana Bailleul, "Les enjeux de la reconversion des couvents nationalisés sous la Révolution française: le cas du Grand Couvent des Cordeliers de Paris (fin XVIII<sup>e</sup>–début XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle)," *Actes des congrès nationaux des sociétés historiques et scientifiques* 137/5 (2014), pp. 117–129.
- 15 Kazimierz Nowacki, *Dzieje teatru w Krakowie: Architektura krakowskich teatrów* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1982), pp. 32–40. Jerzy Got, *Das österreichische Theater in Krakau im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1984), p. 22. Jerzy Got, *Das österreichische Theater in Lemberg im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert: aus dem Theaterleben der Vielvölkermonarchie*, I (Vienna: Österreichische Akade-

were also mainly conducted from the perspective of Enlightenment studies in which theatre and church are outlined as rival institutions.<sup>16</sup> Even though these studies stress the reuse phenomenon's widescale character, as well as its importance for urban development, they rarely discuss its impact on the architectural level.

For all these reasons, the present research is also relevant from a historiographical point of view, as it draws attention to the large scale, complexity, and early character of such architectural transformations in the Habsburg Monarchy. Furthermore, it deepens our understanding of the ways in which concepts of architectural quality, as discussed in theoretical writings and in administrative reforms of building matters, were practically applied in ordinary building projects.

### Making a theatre out of a church: frequency, actors, reasons, and judgements

In his report from Vienna written on November 1, 1780, Jakob Friedrich von Stockmayer described "a century when churches are often transformed into theatres and ballrooms for the public."<sup>17</sup> This image has become a *topos* widely disseminated in Enlightenment studies. But what was the actual frequency of the transformations and what were the circumstances surrounding the practice in the Habsburg Monarchy?

Out of a total of approximately fifty theatre construction projects designed between 1770 and 1815, no less than fourteen concerned adaptations of former churches (table). Ten were actually executed, yet only three survive to this day: one in Steyr (Upper Austria – fig. 8), one in Wiener Neustadt, and another in Buda (Hungary – fig. 1). Along with ballroom halls, administrative buildings, and dwellings, churches were among the constructions frequently transformed into theatres.<sup>18</sup> Such theatres were often the first durable buildings entirely des-

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mic der Wissenschaften, 1997), p. 45. Franz Pfeffer, "150 Jahre Steyrer Stadttheater: Zur Theatergeschichte der Stadt Steyr," *Veröffentlichungen des Kulturamtes der Stadt Steyr* 19 (1959), pp. 37–42; Juliana Neuhuber, *Das alte Steyrer Stadttheater: Ein Abriss der Steyrer Kulturgeschichte* (master thesis, University of Vienna, 2004), p. 16.

16 Beside the already mentioned studies of Jerzy Got, see also Adam Németh, "The church of Saint James and Saint Philip in Nyitraszerdahely and the stakes of church building during the Josephine reforms." Paper presented at the Vienna conference *Baroque parish churches and their decoration: A new field of research*. The research group for Baroque Ceiling Painting in Central Europe (BCPCE), October 23 – October 25, 2017. Hans Lange, *Vom Tribunal zum Tempel: Zur Architektur und Geschichte deutscher Hoftheater zwischen Vormärz und Restauration* (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, n.d. [1985]), p. 28.

17 I owe this quotation to Gernot Mayer. Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, A 10, 2, Berichte von Stockmayer aus Wien 1780: "Le Prince d'Auersperg a dessein, dit-on, de convertir en chapelle le théâtre de [Franz Jakob] Scherzer. Cet exemple seroit bien étonnant dans un siècle accoutumé à voir changer les Eglises en Salles aux Spectacles, ou à [?] danser pour la comodité du Public."

18 According to the statistical analysis made by Marta Velladics, based on a study of the *Religionsfond* of the Kingdom of Hungary, reassignments of former churches for theatrical purposes seem an isolated phenomenon. In her study, only 14.81 % of the monastic buildings were repurposed for cultural or social activities. In contrast,



Fig. 1. Main façade of the former theatre and casino, installed in the former Carmelite Convent in Buda. Photograph by the author, 2010.

ignated for theatrical performances in their towns. Previous stages were usually erected either in wooden huts, or in halls belonging to a diverse range of buildings.

Buda and Lviv were two administrative metropolises that had such theatres installed in a former church, in 1786 and 1789 respectively. In both cases, the decision to transform the church was made by the central administration leaders of each land – that is count Kristóf Niczky, president of the Hungarian Lieutenancy Council in Buda, and Galicia's governor, Count Joseph Brigido, in Lviv. The theatrical impresario Franz Heinrich Bulla also played an important role in both the Hungarian and Galician capitals. He proposed to temporarily reuse the Buda church as early as 1785, and, after moving to Lviv in 1789, he became the patron of its new theatre.<sup>19</sup> Reconstruction works were conducted by provincial public building

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the survey from my PhD dissertation, based on the archives of several offices of public works, points to several other examples and suggests the frequent nature of functional conversions for theatrical purposes. Raluca Muresan, *Bâtir un temple des muses: une histoire sociale, culturelle et politique de l'architecture des théâtres publics dans la partie orientale de la Monarchie des Habsbourg (vers 1770–1812)* (PhD diss., Sorbonne-Université, 2020), pp. 388–390. See also Velladics, *A II. Józsefbeli szerzetesrendi*, p. 79.

<sup>19</sup> Even if Franz Heinrich Bulla is sometimes described as the patron of both theatres, it is important to note that his demand submitted to the Buda Lieutenancy Council was refused, and the church was transformed according to the plans drawn up by Wolfgang von Kempelen in response to the order given by Joseph II to count Kristóf Niczky. Alice Reiningger, *Wolfgang von Kempelen: Eine Biographie* (Vienna: Praesens Verlag, 2009), p. 222. In Lviv, even if the impresario was the patron, the governor already intended to install a theatre near the former

authorities (*Landesbaudirektionen*), and in Buda they were paid through a loan provided by the Royal Chamber, while the theatre became the municipality's property.<sup>20</sup> In Lviv, Franz Heinrich Bulla paid the construction expenses, while the Chamber provided a financial support of 4,000 florins. Notably, none of the engineers working for the two *Landesbaudirektionen* seemed to have been involved in the theatres' construction, even if their influence had grown since the reforms implemented in 1788.<sup>21</sup> All plans and reports were instead signed by chief architects or chief directors. In Hungary, the *Landesbaudirektion* was presided over by the famous inventor Wolfgang von Kempelen, whereas in Galicia the Cameral Building Direction of the *Gubernium* was led by Gottfried Mörz.

In smaller towns, such as Steyr (1796) and Wiener Neustadt (1792–94), projects for former churches' reuse were mainly presented as an opportunity for the municipality to possess its own theatre, and to reject projects from private investors.<sup>22</sup> In this regard, reusing practices served to promote the viability of a city-owned public theatre. According to a conception widely diffused at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a publicly-owned theatre was supposed to better serve the urban community's global progress, unlike one owned by a private investor.<sup>23</sup>

In Maribor, local citizens founded a theatrical committee in 1785. They acquired the *Freihaus* structure, belonging to a former Cistercian convent, and redesigned it in order to organize amateur performances as well as host itinerant theatrical troops.<sup>24</sup> As this first theatrical space was not considered suitable enough, the same committee of local citizens in 1806 requested permission to reuse the former Celestin church, and in 1810, the Holy Spirit Church next to the municipal hospital.<sup>25</sup> The first two theatrical halls converted from former churches had only a brief existence, but the latter was in use until 1851. Also in Chrudim, several local citizens financed a theatre following the initiative of the regional *Haupt-*

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church before the arrival of Franz Heinrich Bulla. See a plan of the former Franciscan convent's quarter dating from 1787, in which a location for a theatre is already provided next to the church. CSHAUL [Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Lviv], F 726, Opis n° 1/ Sprava 1359, fol. 3. I thank Ulyana Uska for helping me during my research stay in Lviv.

20 Muresan, *Bâtir un temple des muses*, pp. 673–674.

21 In the aftermath of the unification of the water and civil works offices, the former hydraulic offices' (*Wasserbaudirektion*) chief engineers were designated chiefs of the newly created *Landesbaudirektionen*. It was the case of engineer Stanislas Heppé in Buda since 1788, and also of engineer Liesganiq in Lviv in 1792. Liesganiq thus became the chief of Gottfried Mörz. OeStA, NHK, OeKaale, Fasz 11, N° 689/928 ex mars 1792 (Liesganiq's appointment as the head of the office); László Bendefy, "A magyar kamarai mérnöki intézmény kialakulása, 1650–1850," *Levéltári Szemle*, 20/3 (1970), pp. 548–571, here pp. 562–564.

22 Neuhuber, *Steyrer Stadttheater*, pp. 20–22; Peter Zumpf, *Chronik eines Theaters: Wiener Neustadt 1794–1994* (Wiener Neustadt: Merbod, 1994), p. 18.

23 For the debate concerning the utility of a public theatre, see Elisabeth Großegger, *Das Burgtheater und sein Publikum*, II/1: *Pächter und Publikum* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1989), pp. 70–73.

24 Bruno Hartman, "Das deutsche und das slowenische Theater in Maribor," *Kulturelle Wechselseitigkeit in Mitteleuropa: Deutsche und slowenische Kultur im slowenischen Raum vom Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zum zweiten Weltkrieg*, ed. Feliks J. Bister and Peter Vodopivec (Ljubljana: Oddelek za zgodovino Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani, 1995), p. 208.

25 Hartmann, *Theater*, p. 209.

*mann* Markvart Josef Koc, who bought the former chapel of St John the Baptist for that purpose.<sup>26</sup> Finally, the impresario Franz Weilhammer in Zagreb (1788) and Ludwig Wothe from Krakow (1797) also applied for the right to reuse a former church, just as the theatrical impresario Franz Heinrich Bulla had done in Buda and Lviv.

As shown above, the actual patrons' and promoters' profile was relatively diverse. One may, thus, only rarely draw a direct link between the patron's profile and the choice for a specific type of reuse. The former churches' location was also an important criterion when it came to their desirability and their patrons' status. While centrally based churches, such as those in Buda and Lviv, attracted several important promoters, those located toward the periphery of urban areas could remain empty for several years, as in Zagreb.<sup>27</sup>

The economic factor was without any doubt the main reason for the former churches' reuse in all cases. This is evidenced by the fact that several of these transformations followed the rejection of more ambitious theatre building projects in which a new construction or a complete reconstruction was required. In Buda, Franz Anton Hillebrandt had drawn up a project estimated in 1786 to 105,000 Florins. The plans are now lost, but we know that the design was supposed to follow the model of the theatre erected in 1774–76 in Bratislava.<sup>28</sup> In Lviv, the printer Thomas Johann von Trattner intended in 1783–84 to construct an ambitious building, at his own expense, in return for a long list of privileges guaranteed by the central authorities. As a consequence of his list of privileges, his project was declared financially untenable for the city.<sup>29</sup>

Varying from around 1,014 florins 80 ½ kreuzer, as in Steyr,<sup>30</sup> up to cca. 40,000 florins,<sup>31</sup> as in Lviv, the complete transformation of a church for theatrical purposes was indeed around two times cheaper than an entirely new theatre building. This is not only because the structures were reused, but also because building materials were extracted from partially demol-

26 Jan Puckert, "Chrudim Theatre", online Database *Theatre Architecture in Central Europe* grounded by the Arts and Theatre Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, <https://www.theatre-architecture.eu/en/db/?filter=%5Bcity%5D=Chrudim&theatreId=1337> (accessed April 8, 2021).

27 The Minorite Church in Lviv was initially meant to serve as a library for the *Normalschule* installed in the former convent (see CSHAUL, F742, Opis 1, Sprava 1,514). In Steyr, the Ursulines attempted to create a school in the convent in 1782 (see Neuhuber, *Steyrer Stadttheater*, p. 17). The convent in Buda was initially meant to be entirely transformed into lodgings for statesmen (see Reiningger, *Wolfgang von Kempelen*, pp. 220–221; MNL-OL, A39, 1786, n° 3,850, fol. 9–20). In exchange, the convent in Zagreb, located next to the city walls, was left empty for several years (see MNL-OL, E 44, book 2 (1784), microfilm X 20,981, doc. n° 2/12).

28 MNL-OL, C51, 1785/6, Fasc. 15/14, n° 10,871, fol. 3.

29 The plans for the theatre project of Johann Thomas von Trattner were published by Hristina Kovalčuk, and the entrepreneurial particularities were analysed by Jerzy Got. CSHAUL, F.146, Opis 88, Sprava 1,333, fol. 20–21 (doc. October 31, 1783); Got, *Theater in Lemberg*, p. 25; Hristina Kovalčuk, *Osoblyvosti architektury Lvova XVIII–peršoyi polovyny XIX st.*, (Lviv: Liha Press, 2005), table 2.9.

30 Neuhuber, *Steyrer Stadttheater*, p. 24–25.

31 Estimation of all building expenses from 1792, when a brand-new wing for a redoute (*Redoutenhaus*) was added to the initial theatre built in 1789. The building process's first phase, dating from 1789, was estimated at 12,113 florins and 39 kreuzer. Another 13,116 florins were engaged for further works during the next two years. Finally, the redoubte's construction costs were ca. 40,000 florins in 1792–94. Got, *Theater in Lemberg*, pp. 47–69.

ished structures. For instance, in Buda, where the expenses reached 28,362 florins 45 kreuzer, bricks from the church's former entrance were reused for the theatre façade's decoration. Stones were reused for the walls of the three garden *gloriettes*, as well as for the *casino* terrace's lateral walls. Even the theatre stage's weights were made of recovered stones. Fragments from the old roof were also reused for the newly created one.<sup>32</sup>

In order to better understand how the interest for the reuse of former churches increased relatively suddenly and on a large scale within a space of only twenty years, one should, above all, take a closer look at the actors involved in these architectural projects' evaluation. An overview of the administrative procedures concerning a former church's reassignment to another purpose shows that central authorities had an important role to play in the entire process. The reason is that former convents' property belonged to the so-called *Religionsfond*, a fund under the Imperial Court Chancellery's legislation. Such projects were usually discussed in the assemblies of each country's central administrations, and three were even recorded in the minutes of the Courtly State Council (*k. k. Staatsrat*) in Vienna.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, news about theatres installed in former churches may have been spread via the administration thanks to the relatively broad echo given to such practices amongst bureaucrats. Statesmen belonging to central administrations supported all of the initiatives that this study addresses: besides the already mentioned Counts Niczky and Brigido, it was also the case of the Ban of Croatia, count Ferenc Balassa, and of the Prince Johann Nepomuk Friedrich Lamberg in Steyr.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, news about a transformation from a church to a theatre was also diffused in the press, and thus became familiar to theatrical impresarios and all sorts of theatre lovers. The theatre in Lviv is described only in the *Neuer Kurier aus Ungarn von Kriegs- und Staatssachen* and in the *Annalen des Theaters* in Berlin in 1789.<sup>35</sup> News of the theatre installed in Buda's former Carmelite church received the most widespread transmission, with no less than five descriptions circulating all over the Habsburg Monarchy and the Holy Roman Empire. The first description appeared in 1788 in a local publication. The same year, a long description of the theatre built in the Hungarian capital appeared in the section designated "Artworks – New Theatres" in Gotha's *Theater-Kalender*. An abstract of that article was published the same year in Hannover's *Dramaturgische Blätter*, another description appeared in 1789 in Buda's *Ungarische Staats- und Gelehrte Nachrichten*, and a final article was in Frankfurt's *Allgemeine Theater-Journal* in 1792.<sup>36</sup> In the aftermath of the theatre's inauguration, the parish priest

32 FVL, IV, 1002 [Buda] hh [Acta Theatralia], fol. 455–457. Quittance n° 137 on the repartition of the construction materials for the theatre and casino. For the building expenses estimate, see MNL-OL, A 39, 1786, n° 12,220.

33 OeStA, HHStA, SRP, RP, 1786: n° n° 3,142, n° 3,351; 1787: n° 1,152; 1788: 3,873 (on the theatre in Buda); 1789: n° 2,628; 1792: 2,765, 3,154 (on the theatre in Lviv); 1797: 3,409 (about the theatre in Krakow).

34 Neuhuber, *Steyrer Stadttheater*, p. 24.

35 *Der Neue Kurier aus Ungarn von Kriegs- und Staatssachen* 69 (1789), ed. Christian Hieronymus Moll, pp. 567–568; *Annalen des Theaters* (Berlin) (1790), ed. Christian August Bertram, p. 102.

36 *Etwas zum neuen Jahr den hoben Gönnern und Freunden beider königl. Städtischen Theater von Ofen und Pest gewidmet im Jahr 1788* (Pest: Mathias Trattner, 1788), p. 4. *Theater Kalender auf das Jahr 1788*, ed. Heinrich Au-

János Dianovszki and the canon József Erdélyi dealt with the topic of converting churches into theatres in two published sermons. If Dianovszki called for comprehension towards the adaptation of “redundant churches [...] to other uses, even if that means that they become taverns or playhouses”, the second insisted on the sacrality and inviolability of church buildings.<sup>37</sup>

Overall, at least four churches that were transformed into theatres were described in the press during the last two decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>38</sup> One could rightly suppose that the wide distribution of the news about the Buda theatre encouraged other theatre lovers to apply for the reuse of secularized churches. It is, nonetheless, impossible to measure to what extent these theatres’ descriptions inspired the transformation of other churches for theatrical purposes, as the newly inaugurated theatres’ building processes were rarely described in the theatrical press. The fact remains that several theatrical impresarios defended similar projects in the years following the opening of the Hungarian capital’s well-known theatre. The Buda theatre was also highly praised in contemporary press articles. In the description published in the Gotha’s famous journal *Theater Kalender*, the reassignment process is depicted as follows: “The formless machine of the former church was transformed into one of the nicest theatres thanks to the best redistribution of its clump-like parts.”<sup>39</sup> Similar terms are employed in the descriptions of other theatres. For instance, the Lviv building is described as “regular [and] spacious”, while the one in Maribor is characterized as “the first pretty theatre” of the town.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the large and positive response given to some of these theatres suggests that the reuse of churches was not perceived as a low-quality work, even if it was obviously a second choice motivated by the lack of funds for a brand-new building.

Due to their dimensions, which were usually quite large, and because of their advantageous location, theatres installed in former churches were quite ambitious projects and interest in these transformed buildings’ character was often explicit. The emperor Joseph II himself studied the project in Buda, the Hungarian capital, and insisted that the former church had to “lose the aspect of a church, inside as well as outside, in order to become a theatre”.<sup>41</sup> In a letter from

gust Ottokar Reichard (Gotha: Ettinger, 1788), p. 82–88. Adolph Franz Friedrich Ludwig von Knigge, *Dramaturgie Blätter* (Hannover) 1 (1788), p. 15. Heinrich Gottlieb Schmieder, *Allgemeines Theaterjournal* (Frankfurt am Main) 2 (1792), pp. 117–118.

37 János Dianovszki, *Prédikáció, melyet mondott [...]* (Bratislava: Landerer, 1787), p. 7–11. József Erdélyi, *Tanúság a templomok tiszteletéről, melyet a nyitra zerdabelyi új templomban [...]* (Vác: Ambró Ny., 1788). Quoted after Németh, “The church of Saint James” (Paper presented at the Vienna conference *Baroque parish churches and their decoration: A new field of research* by Research Group BCPCE, October 23–25, 2017).

38 Besides the theatres analysed here, one should also mention the description of the theatre in Elbląg published in 1794 in *Rheinische Museen* (Mannheim), 2 (1794), pp. 88–89.

39 *Theater Kalender auf das Jahr 1788*, ed. Heinrich August Ottokar Reichard, p. 82: “[D]ie ganz unförmliche Maschine jener ehemaligen Kirche durch die genaueste Eintheilung ihrer klumpenartigen-Theile zu einem der niedrigsten Theater umgestaltet wurde.“

40 *Annalen des Theaters* (Berlin) (1790), ed. Christian August Bertram, p. 102 („ein ordentliches, geräumiges Gebäude“). Rudolf Gustav Puff, *Marburg in Steiermark, seine Umgebung, Bewohner und Geschichte* (Graz: Andr. Leykam’sche Erben, 1847), I, p. 37 (“[das] erste hübsche Theater“).

41 MNL-OL, A 39, 1786, n° 10, 107, fol. 4v (“die Kirche, welche sowohl von äußeren, als von inwendig die Gestalt



the Galician *Gubernium* based in Lviv, we read that one of Gottfried Mörz's major qualities was his capacity to "transform the exterior of the church" into a theatre building.<sup>42</sup>

## Formal solutions and technical achievements

Did former churches have special formal features that made their reuse as a theatre more appropriate than for other purposes? According to Marta Velladics' survey for Hungary, only half of the churches belonging to abolished convents were actually secularized, while the others were transformed into parish churches or adopted by other monastic orders.<sup>43</sup> This may lead us to conclude that these churches' architecture was difficult to transform for other purposes. One may also expect these churches to possess certain acoustical qualities. However, what do actual practices of reuse tell us about such assumptions? An analysis of several previously unpublished visual and written archival sources will exhibit these theatres' formal and technical achievements.

### *Distribution*

The auditorium was always located in the church's former nave, as this area was high enough to accommodate three or even four rows of boxes. These rows were always entirely overlapping, even in the case of later theatres. The stage replaced either the apse as in Buda (fig. 2), Lviv (fig. 3–4), and Steyr (fig. 6–7), or the narthex, such as in Zagreb (fig. 9) and Chrudim, or the presbytery as in Maribor.<sup>44</sup> The roof-space and sometimes the crypt were used for stage-machines. The former narthex often served as an entrance hall or staircase. In Maribor the bell-tower was preserved and its first floor assigned to the ticket office.<sup>45</sup> New and broader staircases were always created, and thus a large narthex was ideal, as it allowed for larger staircases.

Churches with one single and broad nave were obviously more suitable for theatres such as the Clarisses' church in Zagreb (fig. 9), the church in Wiener Neustadt, and in Steyr

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einer Kirche verlieren muß, zu einem Theater [...] zuzurichten, und auszunutzen" – Letter sent by the Courtly Chancellery to the Hungarian Lieutenancy Council).

42 CSHAUL, F. 146, Opis 77, Sprava 16, fol. 31 ("Und weil sich von der Wirksamkeit des Baudirektors Mörz alles erwarten läßt, so ist auch nicht zu zweifeln daß Er [...] dieses Redouten Hauß nebst Veränderung der äußerlichen Kirchen Gestalt, in welche gegenwärtig das Theater eingehüllet ist, [...] vollkommen zu Stande bringen [...] [wird].") – report of the *k.k. Cameral und Provinzial Buchhalterey* addressed to the *Gubernium*, February 6, 1792, n° 21, 856).

43 Velladics, *A II. Józsefbeli szerzetesrendi*, p. 107.

44 In Maribor, the entrance was located in the former apse. Igor Sapač, "The Slovene National Theatre Maribor," online Database *Theatre architecture in Central Europe* grounded by the Arts and Theatre Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, <https://www.theatre-architecture.eu/db/?theatreId=248&detail=history&page=2> (accessed June 20, 2021). The plan of the Buda theatre was published in Anna Józsa, "The beginnings of public theatre architecture in Hungary in the age of enlightenment," *Pollack Periodica*, 8/1 (2013), pp. 109–122.

45 Puff, *Marburg*, p. 87.

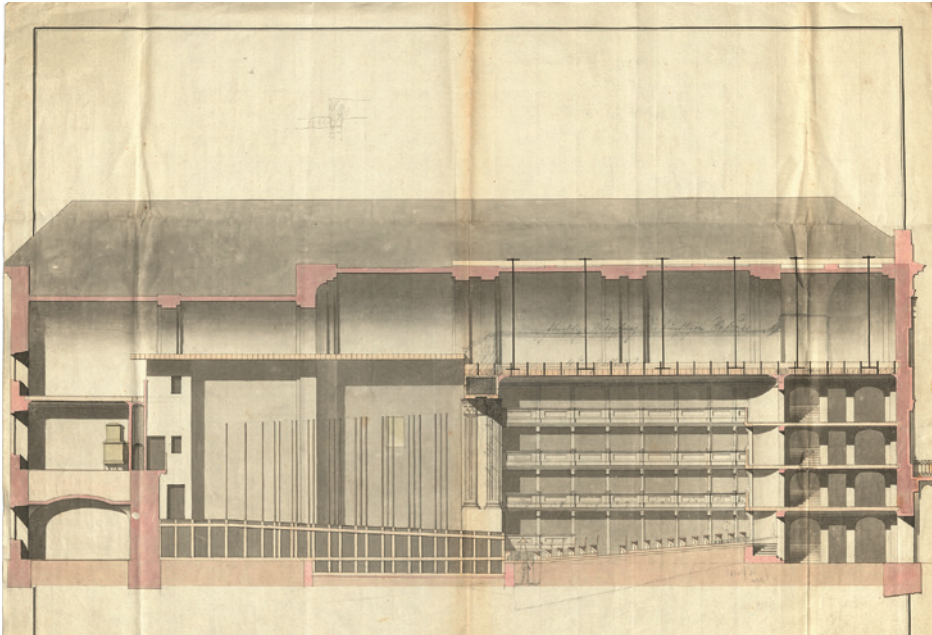


Fig. 2. Longitudinal section of the theatre, Buda, 1787. National Archives of Hungary, MNL-OL, T73, n° 44/1-4, 1853. The year 1787 is inscribed on the rear of the plan. We see here the initial state of the theatre. Alterations of the height and of the inclination of the auditorium were added by pencil in 1853.

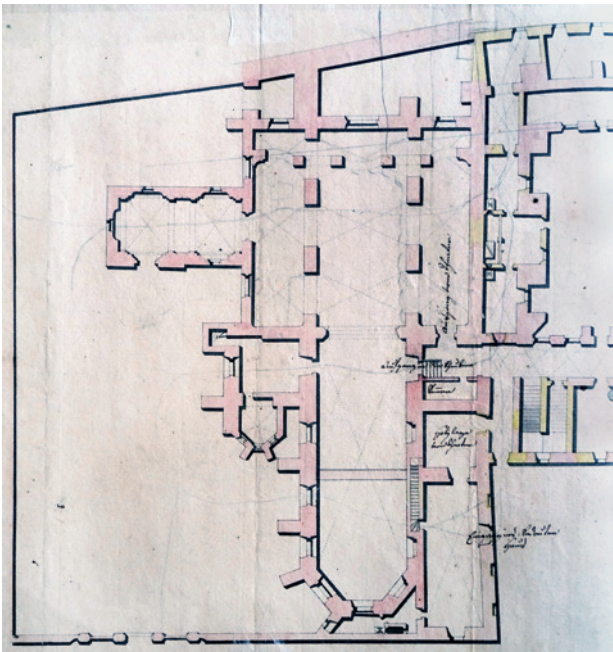


Fig. 3. Plan of the Franciscan convent made for its adaption in a school, detail, L'viv, 1787. CSHAU (Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in L'viv), F742, n° 1541. The plan shows the structure of the old church. The main lines of the theatre-auditorium's shape, as well as some indications for the exits, were sketched on the surface of the main nave with pencil.

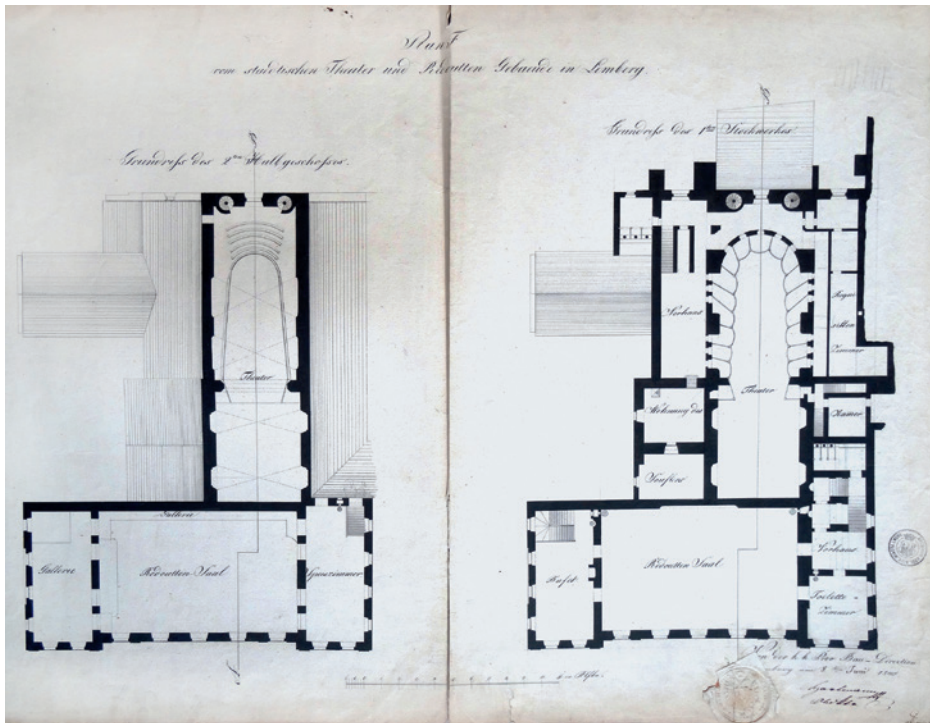


Fig. 4. Plan of the theatre and redoute, Lviv, first and second floors, 1840, CSHAUL, F742, n° 1473. The plan shows an auditorium identical in terms of proportions with the one sketched on the plan of the church from 1787. One may also recognize the proportions of the former side naves of the church transformed into a “Vorhaus” and a “Requisiten Zimmer”, as well as the ones of former two chapels adapted into an apartment for the souffleur. The apse of the church was demolished. A new building for the redoute, perpendicular to the length of the church, recovers the surface of the former choir and the one of the courtyard.

(fig. 6). The Carmelite Church in Buda had a similar configuration, with a nave bordered by side chapels. Unlike polygonal apses, these three churches’ square-shaped choirs also provided more stage space and was suitable for storage purposes. On the other hand, the former Franciscan Basilica in Lviv was more complicated to adapt, because of the main and side naves’ unequal height (fig. 3). The theatre’s auditorium and stage were installed in the central nave and in the first bay of the choir, while offices, wardrobes, and stores were installed in the side naves. The choir was left unused until 1792, when it was demolished in order to build the redoute. Halls for socialising were usually quite narrow when they were inserted in the church’s former structure. A wider range of socialising rooms could be achieved only when adjacent rooms of the convent were assigned to the theatre – as in Buda or in Steyr – or when a new wing was built for a redoute (*Redouten-Haus*) – as in Lviv (fig. 4).

In the majority of these theatres, the auditorium formed either a conservative U shape or a rectangle, just like the major part of the Central European theatre buildings erected from



Fig. 5. Façade of the redoute, Lviv, fragment of a poster for the reopening of the redoute on October 6, 1796. Got, *Das Österreichische Theater in Lemberg* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997), p. 86. One may identify on this drawing the main façade of the redoute by comparing the number of windows and the proportions of its side avant-corps with the ones visible on the plan from 1840.

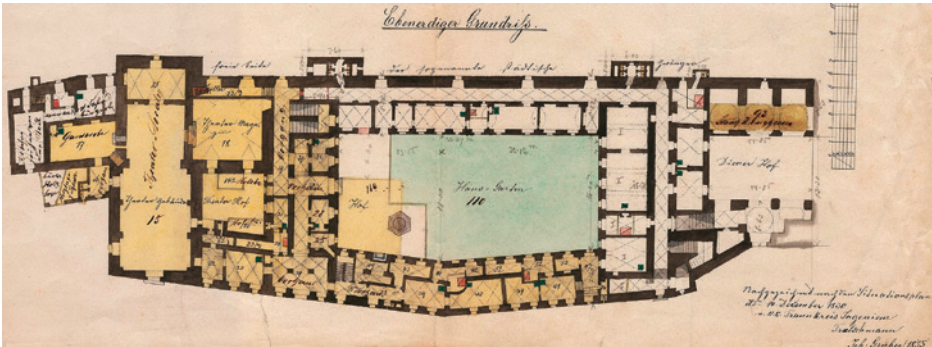


Fig. 6. Plan of the former theatre and redoute installed in the former Celestin convent in Steyr, 1855, Abteilung für Altstadtterhaltung und Denkmalpflege der Stadt Steyr.

the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The Lviv theatre's deep and narrow auditorium suggests that its builder was more interested in the auditorium's large capacity than in visibility or acoustics. Nonetheless, one alternative plan for the theatre would be to use the church's consistent size, repurposing some of its bays to create a more central auditorium, which would have had in turn enabled greater visibility and better acoustics. Such a solution was not adopted, as a longer auditorium was preferred in order to create an increased number of boxes, ensuring the enterprise's higher profitability. The architect Gottfried Mörz tried to solve the visibility problem by introducing a series of curves, similar to the stepped boxes in several Italian theatres.<sup>46</sup> The multiple links between Lviv and northern Italy promoted by the governor Joseph Brigido may explain this resemblance.

Similarly, Wolfgang von Kempelen, the Hungarian Building Authorities Director, declared that he had studied the theatres in Vienna when he drew up the plans for the Buda auditorium. This assertion is confirmed by the similarities between the theatre-hall in Buda

<sup>46</sup> Michael Forsyth, *Buildings for music: The architect, the musician, and the listener from the seventeenth century to the present day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 83.

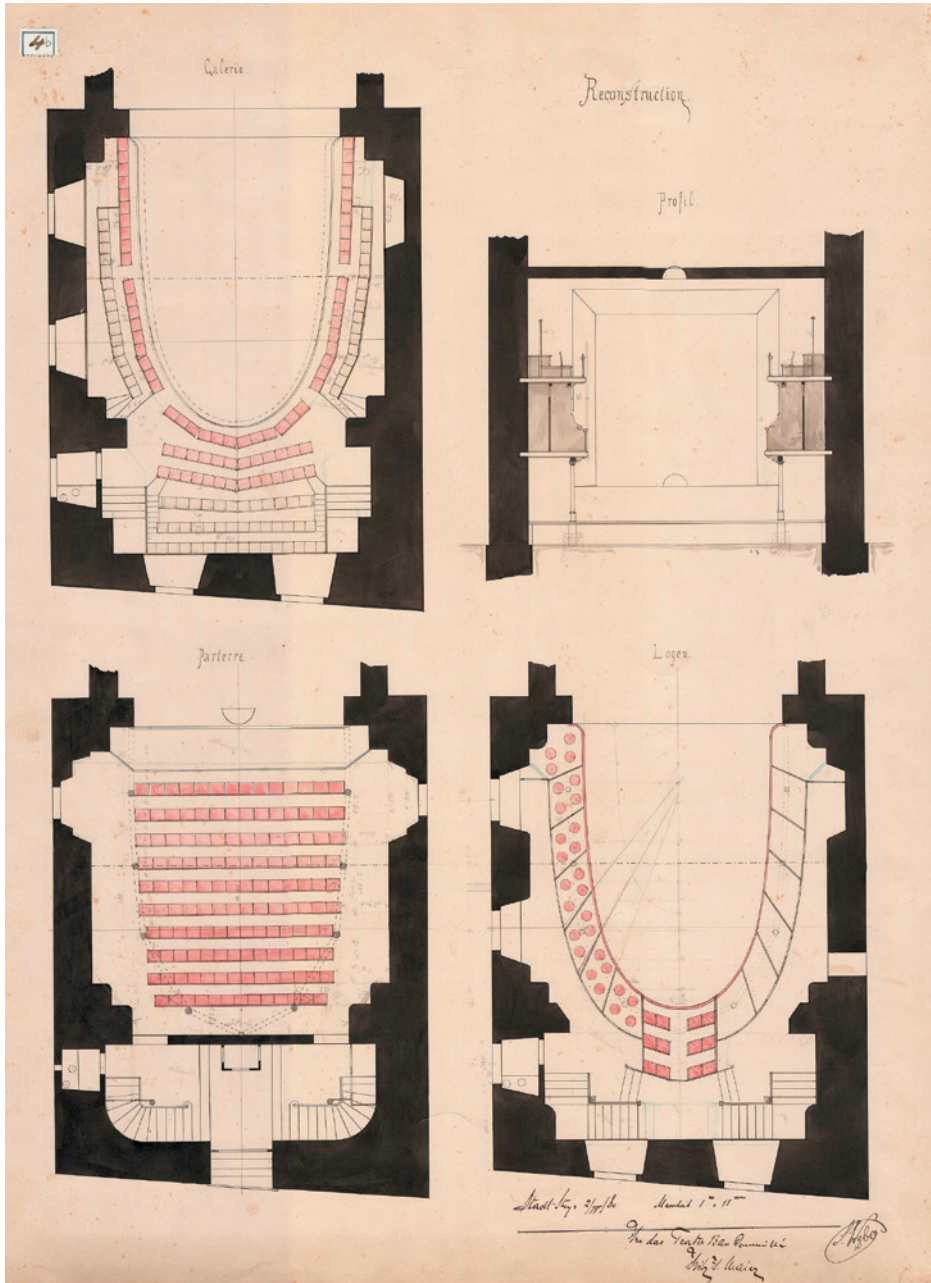


Fig. 7. Plan of the theatre auditorium in Steyr, 1855, Abteilung für Altstadterhaltung und Denkmalpflege der Stadt Steyr. The auditorium was installed in the former nave. Staircases were installed in the first span. The former triumphal arch was converted into a proscenium.

and the *Kärntnertortheater* designed in 1763 by Nikolaus Pacassi. For the stage, Kempelen claimed to have taken the *Leopoldstadttheater* as model.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the former church's geometrical structure was attentively transformed by taking inspiration from contemporary theatre buildings in the capital. Viennese architects were also involved in the Buda plan's conception. Gottlieb Nigelli claimed to have created a plan for this theatre.<sup>48</sup> These joint efforts in the Carmelite church's transformation into a theatre seem to have achieved their goal, and several newspapers praised the theatre's acoustic qualities.<sup>49</sup>

Still, there is no proof that the structures of former churches had much to do with theatres' visual and acoustic qualities, even if in some cases, such as in Buda, special attention was paid to these qualities. For instance, the vaults – a central element of church acoustics – were generally concealed behind wooden ceilings (fig. 2). Transmission of a clear voice necessitated a shorter reverberation time. Thus, a theatre required a different kind of structure made out of materials different from those used in churches.<sup>50</sup> As early as 1769, Francesco Algarotti insisted on the benefits of plane surfaces and invited theatre architects to choose plain decorations and ceilings rather than vaults.<sup>51</sup> Wood was considered more appropriate for clear sound transmission. Therefore, it seems that former churches were considered easy to adapt into theatres not because of their supposed acoustical qualities, but due to their large dimensions, oblong shape, significant height beneath the vaults, and their location, often close to the city centre. Convent churches possessed, moreover, a garden, which could easily be transformed into a public garden accessed from the theatre and the ball rooms. In Buda, the convent garden, which opened onto the former *Zwinger*, was redesigned for the public attending the theatre.<sup>52</sup>

### Façades

The exterior appearance of theatre buildings installed in former churches, their main façade, was a controversial issue because the façade had a primary representational function. Financial considerations above all suggested reducing expenditure on purely aesthetical interven-

47 FVL, IV, 1002 [Buda] hh [Acta Theatralia / Színházügyi iratok], fol. 301–302: “26. [December] 1786/ In Wien den Theaterleuten, die mir zur verschiedenen malen beyde Theater zeigten in mir solche ausmessen halfen, Discretion gegeben. / Den 26 Febr. [1787] in das Leopoldstädter=Theater gefahren, um dessen Bau und Decoration zu besehen” (Quotation signed by Wolfgang von Kempelen, Buda, 13 October 1788).

48 UAAbKW, VA, Karton 6, Fasz. 1786/2, Fol. 240–3, Nigelli, Wien 6.11.1786 fol. 241. I am thankful to Gernot Mayer for sharing this document.

49 *Etwas zum neuen Jahr*, p. 4. *Theaterkalender auf das Jahr 1788*, p. 83: “Diese Methamorphose ist für die hiesige Gegend um so merkwürdiger, als sie bisher in den Kayserlich-Königlichen Staate ihrer Art die einzige ist.”

50 On optimal reverberation times for speech and music, see Forsyth, *Buildings for music*, p. 178.

51 Jochen Meyer, *Theaterbautheorien zwischen Kunst und Wissenschaft: Die Diskussion über Theaterbau im deutschsprachigen Raum in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Zurich/Berlin: GTA/Gebr. Mann, 1998), pp. 151–153. Patrizio Barbieri and Lamberto Tronchin, “L'Acustica teatrale nel neoclassicismo italiano: con una ricostruzione virtuale del 'teatro ideale' di Francesco Milizia (1773).” *Giordano Riccati, Illuminista Veneto ed Europeo*, ed. Davide Bonsi (Florence: L. S. olschi, 2012), pp. 133–163, here pp. 140–141.

52 Reininger, *Wolfgang von Kempelen*, p. 223.

tions. Yet, the façades are a key element of the theory of character, as they represent the theatre building's face to the city. Information regarding the transformation of former churches' façades is, however, in most cases incomplete. In Steyr, no important transformations seem to have been realized: the two large bays are inherited from the former church (fig. 8). According to the archival sources, by contrast, brand new façades were built in front of the former church façades in Buda (1787)<sup>53</sup> (fig. 1) and Wiener Neustadt (1793),<sup>54</sup> as well as in Maribor in 1810–11, where a portico and a wooden entrance adorned the composition.<sup>55</sup> The rows of rectangular and arched windows one above the other, characteristic of civil architecture, serve as further proof of those reconstruction works. One can also assume that the façade in Chrudim was transformed, as the frontispiece was turned down.<sup>56</sup> In Lviv, it was only during the redoute's construction, in 1792, that the building got an entirely new façade (fig. 5).

When present, architectural ornaments were quite similar on all of this period's theatre façades: pilaster strips, as in Maribor, or giant pilasters as in Buda, Lviv and Steyr,<sup>57</sup> topped by an attic, sometimes adorned with vases as in Lviv, or surmounted by a coat of arms as in Buda. Detailed descriptions are rare and, therefore, it is not easy to retrieve the contemporary viewers' opinions. Because the façade from Lviv raised the biggest controversy among all projects related to churches transformed into theatres, the arguments used in this context deserve to be analyzed in detail.

Among all building projects, the drawings of 1791–92 for the façades of the Lviv theatre were judged too expensive by the Court Chamber in Vienna and the *Oberhofbaudirektion* (Superior Building Directorate). Therefore, a commission formed by Franz Anton Hillebrandt, Mathias Lechner, Wenzel Lechner, and Winzenz Edler von Platzer rejected the project drawn up by Gottfried Mörz and proposed, among other limitations, a new façade for the rear.<sup>58</sup> The drawing is described as “simple and appropriate for its object, while the one which was submitted would have been too expensive and would not have had a good effect.”<sup>59</sup> The first project is lost, but we know that the Galician *Gubernium* appreciated it and praised Gottfried Mörz for creating not only “a solid and resistant” building, but also a “lavish and decorated” one, in line with “the most recent trends”. It was said to belong “not to the common way of

53 FVL, IV, 1002 [Buda] hh [Acta Theatralia / Színházüggyi iratok], fol. 455. Quittance n° 137 on the repartition of the theatre and casino's construction materials. A quotation from 1788 indicates that the decoration elements, such as the pilasters and the capitals, were created at that time.

54 Zumpf, *Chronik eines Theaters*, p. 18.

55 Sapač, “The Slovene National Theatre Maribor.”

56 See images published by Puckert, “Chrudim Theatre,” fig. 1–7.

57 The architectural order varies from one theatre to another: Composite in Buda, Ionic in Lviv, Doric in Steyr.

58 OeStA, FHKA, KP, Rb 593. Drawing published in Got, *Theater in Lemberg*, plate 4. It is the only façade drawing still preserved, and was misinterpreted as a project for the main façade.

59 OeStA, FHKA, NHK, OeKaale, Fasz. 25, n° 1671/1576 ex Mai 1792, without page number: “Die Aufriß der Hauptansicht hingegen habe sie, Hofbaubuchh[alterey] ganz neu, jedoch einfach und dem Gegenstande entsprechend entworfen, weil die eingeschikte Hauptansicht viel gekostet, in der Natur aber keine gute Wirkung gemacht haben würde.” See also Got, *Theater in Lemberg*, p. 62.



Fig. 8. Rear facade of the theatre in Steyr (former main façade of the theatre and of the church). Photograph by the author, 2019.

building, but [was] architecturally created with expensive ornaments”.<sup>60</sup> Mörz’s project was without doubt unorthodox in relation to the Josephist reforms implemented since 1783.

Controversies concerning the reduction of ornamentation were still common at the beginning of Francis II/I’s reign. In order to understand the weight of these statements, one should consider that in 1794 the newly appointed Hungarian chief *Baudirektor*, the engineer Stanislas Heppe, criticized the double-sided, tent-like roofs, as well as the vases and the balustrade drawn by Franz Anton Hillebrandt in a façade-project for a new theatre in Pest.<sup>61</sup> These components were judged by the chief engineer as causes for the high construction fees and for future expensive repair and maintenance costs. The preference was for simple buildings of one block rather than multiple pavilion structures. Nevertheless, it is significant that the *Gubernium* in Lviv and other agencies, including the Cameral *Landesbaudirection* in Galicia, were not following this economically conservative tendency. Even in the case of a church transformed into a theatre, they praised ornamentation and lavishness, insisting on the importance of the building’s character. Admittedly, the final principal façade of the Lviv

60 CSHAUL, Fond 146, Opis 77, Sprava 16, fol. 272 (1798).

61 MNL-OL, A39, 1795, n° 86434 (*copia* 1046), fol. 4–5: “die angetragene 2. PavillonsDächer an der äusseren Fronte sammt den Waaßen und Palustraden, wie auch die [...] zweyte Altane [...], als Theil die nur, zu Vermehrung der itzigen Bau Auslagen, und zu Vergrößerung der künftigen Reparations Kosten, dienen [...]”. Former head of the Hungarian *Directio in hydraulicis*, Stanislas Heppe, replaced Wolfgang von Kempelen at the head of the newly unified Direction for Civil and Hydraulic Constructions. László Bendefy, “A magyar kamarai mérnöki intézmény kialakulása, 1650–1850,” *Levéltári Szemle* 20/3 (1970), pp. 548–571, here p. 560–564.



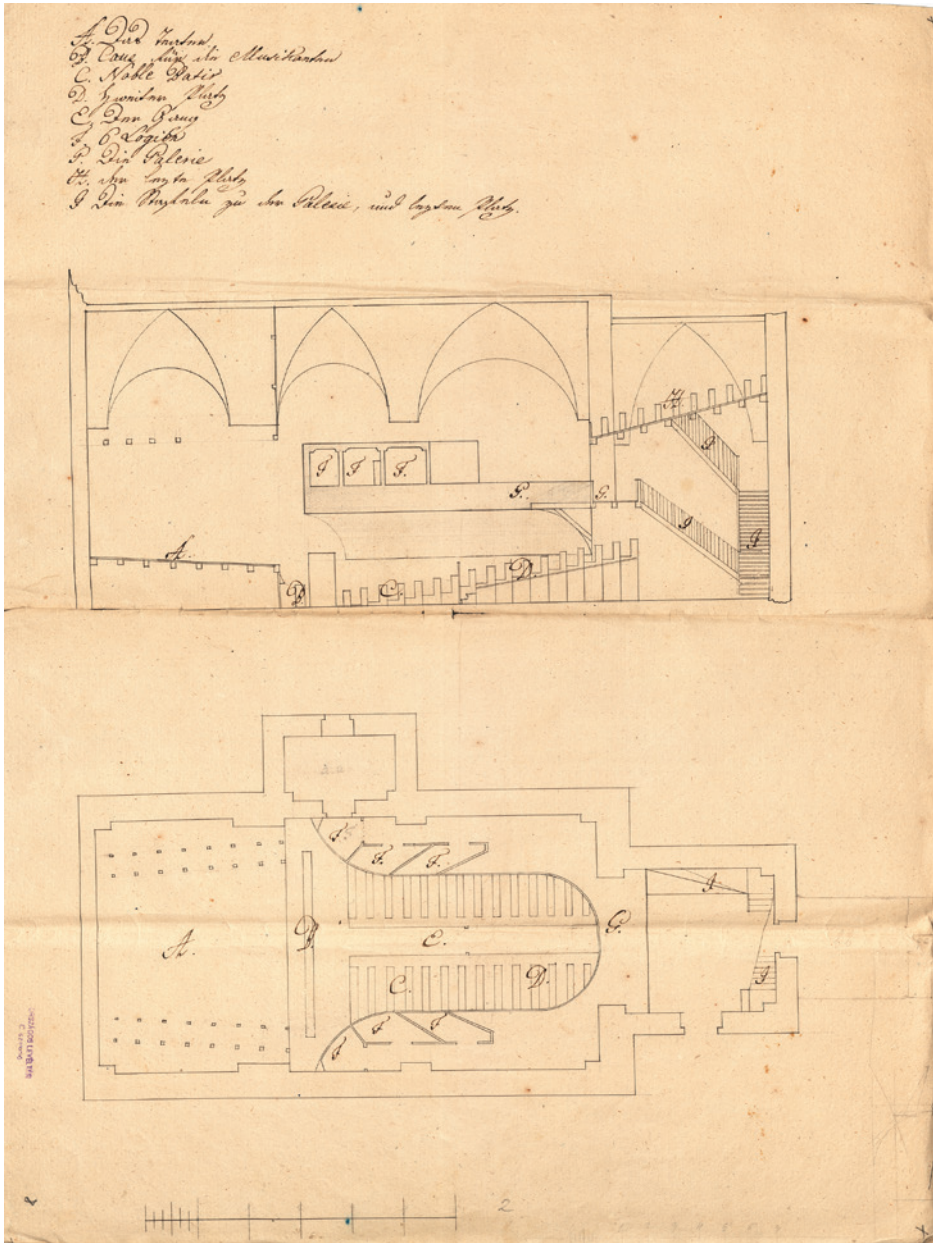


Fig. 9. Plan and section for a theatre to be installed in the former Clarisses' convent in Zagreb, 1788. National Archives of Hungary, MNL-OL, C49, n°246. The entrance, staircase, as well as an upper gallery were installed in the former choir, whilst the auditorium occupies two spans of the former nave and the stage occupies the last span of the nave.

theatre was made from only one block, yet it still had a significant portal, flanked by two Ionic columns, and crowned by a pediment and an attic with vases.

Although in itself an economical solution, the remodeling of former churches, as shown above, was not automatically judged to be entirely satisfactory in terms of cost reduction. In some cases, the responsible local authorities' architectural ideas also did not match Vienna's ideas.

## Conclusion

The elaborate theatre projects studied here testify that the transformation of former churches grew into a widely diffused and appreciated practice among Habsburg public building authorities during the 1780s and 1790s. Some of the monarchy's first public theatres, which found accommodation in various types of buildings until the 1760s and 1770s, had a simple architecture; during the following decades, however, the practices of reuse reached a high degree of complexity. As proof of the complex nature of this kind of reuse, one may recall, for instance, the refusal of the original project created for the Zagreb theatre (fig. 9), which was motivated by the fact that it did "not fit the norms of the art".<sup>62</sup> Reuse became, hence, compatible with an artwork's creation, as certified by the building authorities' representatives, as well as by the press. After all, the description of the Buda theatre was published in the "Artworks" section of the Gotha *Theater-Kalender*.

Projects which convert churches into theatres show that interest in an architectural program's character, including its lavishness, can coexist with a general demand for economy. Moreover, as Hillebrandt's critique of Mörz's drawing for the theatre in Lviv shows, economy appears here not only as a compromise but as an actual part of the qualities expected from a building. Thus, financial considerations were implemented in relation to issues of character, creating a new kind of appropriateness (*bienséance*) that met the need for economic efficiency. Indeed, one could argue, as Ulrich Schütte did three decades ago, that ornamentation is always a question of character.<sup>63</sup> In the case of these theatres, the ornamentation's absence becomes a matter of character, just like the adaptation of one architectural program to another.

62. MNL-OL, C49, 1788, F246, n° 5, fol. 18. Report signed by the engineers Stanislas Heppe and Ignaz Pongracz. The wide use of wooden structures and the limited number of stairs in this project was no longer acceptable.

63. Ulrich Schütte, "Die Lehre von den Gebäudetypen," *Architekt und Ingenieur: Baumeister in Krieg und Frieden*, ed. Ulrich Schütte (Wolfenbüttel: Herzog August Bibliothek, 1984), p. 160.

Table: Overview of projects to install theatres in former churches.

Project's date	Town	Religious congregation / church dedication	Patrons and sponsons			Execution status	Costs
			Central administration	Private investor	Local elites		
1784	Schärding (Upper Austria)	St Sebastian's Church	?	?	?	Executed	?
1785	Maribor (Styria)	Cistercians	-	U. Hartnagel, shoemaker	Committee made up of local citizens	Executed	?
1786/7	Buda (Hungary)	Carmelites	Lieutenancy Council	F.-H. Bulla, impresario		Executed	33 962 fl.
1788	Rattenberg (Tyrol)	?	?	?	?	?	?
1788	Zagreb (Croatia)	Clarisses	Governor Balaasa	J. Weillhammer, impresario		Not executed	1500 fl.
1789/ 1792	L'viv (Galicia-Lodomeria)	Franciscans (Minorites)		F.-H.Bulla, impresario		Executed	Theatre 13,116 fl. Ball-Hall 40,000 fl.
1790	Ried (Tyrol)	?	?	?	?	?	?
1792/ 1794	Wiener Neustadt (Lower Austria)	Order of St. Paul's Church			Municipality	Executed	?
1796	Steyr (Upper Austria)	Celestines		Prince J. N. F. Lamberg	Municipality	Executed	1,014 fl. 80 ½ kr.
1797	Krakow (Galicia-Lodomeria)	?		Impresario L. Wothe		Not executed	?
1801	Chrudim (Bohemia)	St. John the Baptist's Church	Governor Markvart Josef Koc of Dobrš			Executed	?
1806	Maribor (Styria)	Celestines			Group of local citizens	Executed	?
1810/ 1811	Maribor (Styria)	Holy Spirit Church, adjacent to the hospital			Group of local citizens	Executed	?
1815	Pécs (Hungary)	Order of St. Paul's Church	?	?	?	Not executed	?



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