

Urban Aspects of Theatre Architecture in Volyn Region

Abstract

The article highlights the impact of theatre architecture and performing spaces on the urban planning and environment. The study covers major cities of Volyn region, Ukraine, and demonstrates that theatre and performing spaces have always been a core around which the city was developing.

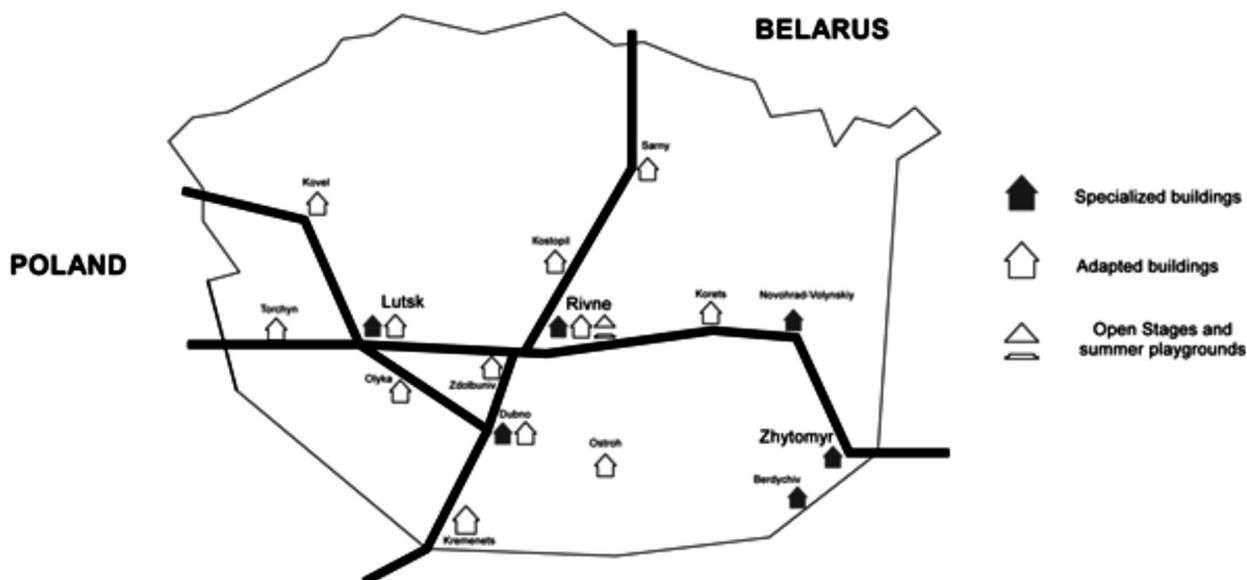
Keywords: theatre, town planning, exterior, theatre network, auditorium, location

Volhynia is a historical and geographical region of West Ukraine. It borders on Podolia in the south, north Polissya on the north, the Western Bug river on the west and the upper Teterev and Uzh rivers in the east. Cultural development in this region has been significantly influenced by the neighboring countries, to which Volhynia belonged in the course of history. A variety of political, social and cultural conditions had a great influence on the formation of architecture and the town-planning structure of cities in Volyn region. The tradition of integrating theater facilities into the structure of the city in Volyn region emerged in Kievan Rus [1]. We also know that the establishment of theatre in educational institutions reaches back to the end of the 16th century, when the Greek-Ruthenian Academy in Ostroh was founded. The Ostroh Academy was the first and the main centre of religious drama in Volhynia and Ukraine. Subsequently, religious drama spread to other regions – Lviv, Lutsk, Kyiv, where it existed at seminaries, colleges and schools as school drama. After closing the Ostroh Academy in 1636, the theatre did not decline, and began working at the Jesuit College [2]. One of the most important centres of Ukrainian school theatre in the first half of the 17th century was Lutsk. The establishment of a high school in Lutsk in 1614 led to the development of a theatre in this city [3]. A new stage in the development of theatre began due to its popularity among wealthy magnate families, who adored the art of acting. For many of them, theatre became a passion. They spent a lot of time and money on engaging foreign actors and directors who taught their servants the way of professional acting. According to the studies by O. Voronin, the Volyn region in comparison to other regions of West Ukraine had the highest number privately owned towns [4]. This, in turn, influenced the formation of a well-developed cultural network because almost every magnate owned a theatre troupe of actors and even an orchestra. Thus, a number of Volhynian towns became cultural centres – Rivne, Dubno, Koretz, Romanov, Vyshnevet, Berdichev, Zaslav, Holoby, Vorobyn [5].

The starting point of erecting buildings for performances in Volhynia should be considered the beginning of the nineteenth centu-

ry, namely the city Zhitomir that in 1796 became the centre of the Volyn province of the Russian Empire. We know that a theatre in Zhitomir was founded in 1809. The performances were given mainly by Polish troupes. The theatre became a significant part of the heart of the city. It was situated at the intersection of main transit routes leading to a number of cities not only in Volhynia, but the whole Western Ukraine [4].

Since the building of a theatre gained specialized features and developed as a public utility institution, it has become a tradition to locate theatres exactly in the central part of the city, with the most comfortable visual perception [1]. It should be noted that the basic principle of urban planning was placing the theatre building along main streets and transit routes, connecting the east with the west. According to this town planning principle, theatres in Zhitomir, Berdichev, Novograd-Volynskiy, and Rivne were built. Unlike municipal theatres, private theatres that operated in palaces and estates of magnates were located directly in the palace complexes. Such theatres held performances even in the early 20th century in Rivne and Dubno at the Palace of Lubomirski and Ostrohsy. In both cases, they were located on the outskirts of the city. In the late 19th century the Ukrainian amateur theatre become widespread. Amateur collectives emerged in Ostroh, Korets, Kremetsi, Lutsk, Dubno, Rivne and other towns. The end of the 19th and the early 20th century is characterized by the renewal of theatrical life and the increasing number of stages in the whole Volhynia. In cities such as Kovel and Rivne there were 5 theatre stages, and in Polonne, Lubar, Shepetovke there were separate theatre halls



il. 1. Theatre in Volyn region in the first part of the 20th century 9il. aut.)

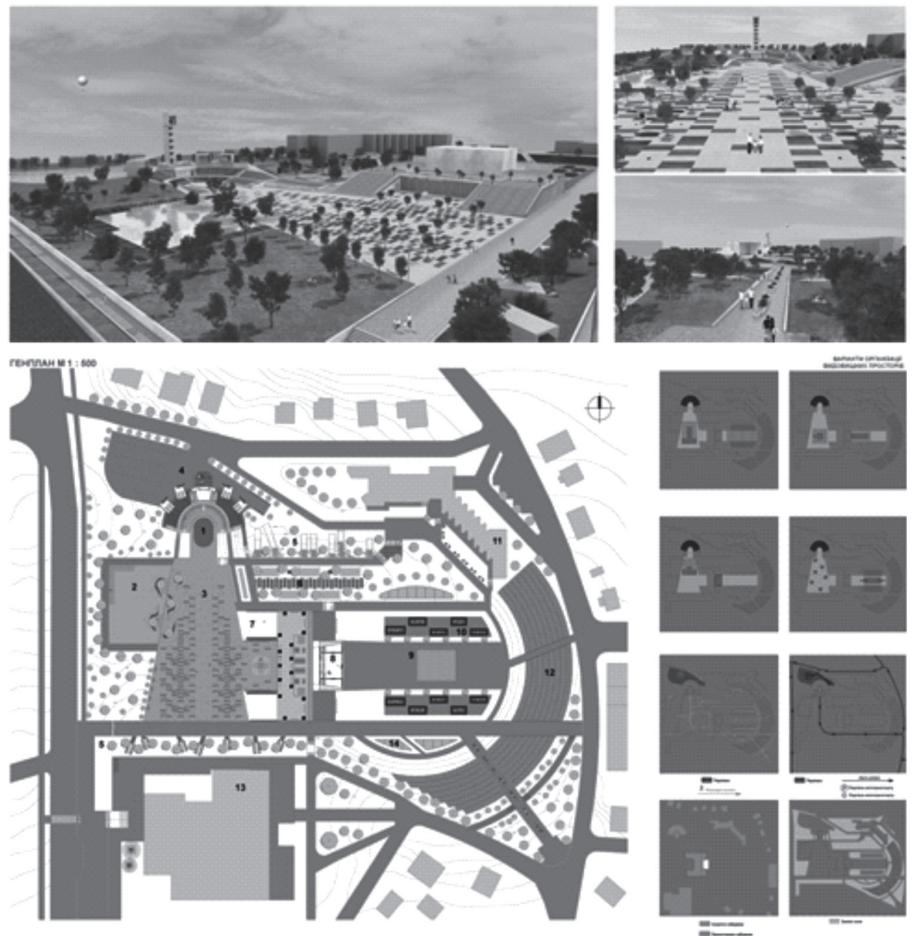
[4]. The theatre network spread after the construction of the railway Zhitomir-Berdichev. In the theatrical seasons, bigger cities could simultaneously conduct several performances. For this purpose spaces in private gardens and various public buildings were adapted. Theatres that were built in this period in Lutsk, Rivne, Novohrad were compact, located in blocks, adjacent to the territory of the city centre. Most of these buildings were standing apart at corners of streets. The facades were distinguished by simplicity, without any extra architectural decorations. Theatre buildings were not dominant. For example, the Zafran Theatre in Rivne was a one-storey building, the auditorium was located on the underground level to increase general space [6]. The building rules prohibited to erect houses that would be more than two-stories tall [7]. The elements of the exterior decor in these conditions were not particularly

distinguished. Nevertheless, in most cases the buildings had good locations, they were provided by convenient entrances and efficient pedestrian connections.

The concepts of building theatres have undergone significant changes as a result of the Soviet town-planning techniques. In particular, the trend consisting in the dominance of theatre buildings is confirmed in the structure of the city and its silhouette [5]. In the second half of the 20th century in the largest cities of Volhynia, the process of theatre building was conducted. Theatres were designed as monuments of “the new socialist reality”. These projects were the result of a typical design and have similar co-

Table 1. Characteristics of the theatre network development in Volyn region (il. aut.)

Chronological period	Principle of location	Characteristics of the town-planning arrangement	Examples of towns
17 th c.	In educational institutions	Educational complexes academies, colleges, high schools	Ostroh, Lutsk, Rivne, Kremenets
17 th –19 th c.	In magnates' estates	Private estates, the suburbs, outside cities	Rivne, Dubno, Vyshnevet, Romaniv, Holoby
19 th c.	In the specialized and adapted buildings	In city centres, along highways	Dubno, Zhytomyr, Berdychiv, Lutsk, Novgrad-Volynskiy, Korets, Rivne, Kremenets
20 th c.	In adapted buildings	In downtown areas, in apartment blocks	Dubno, Zhytomyr, Berdychiv, Lutsk, Rivne
1939–1991	In specialized buildings	Concentration and dominance of theatre buildings in downtown areas	Rivne, Lutsk, Zhytomyr
1991–2014	In specialized buildings	In previously specialized buildings of the previous periods	Rivne, Lutsk, Zhytomyr
	In adapted buildings	Dispersed locations within the territory of the city	Rivne, Lutsk, Zhytomyr, Berdychiv, Novgrad-Volynskiy, Dubno
	In urban environment	Outside specialized buildings. In streets, in parks, in abandoned areas in the landscape environment	Volyn region



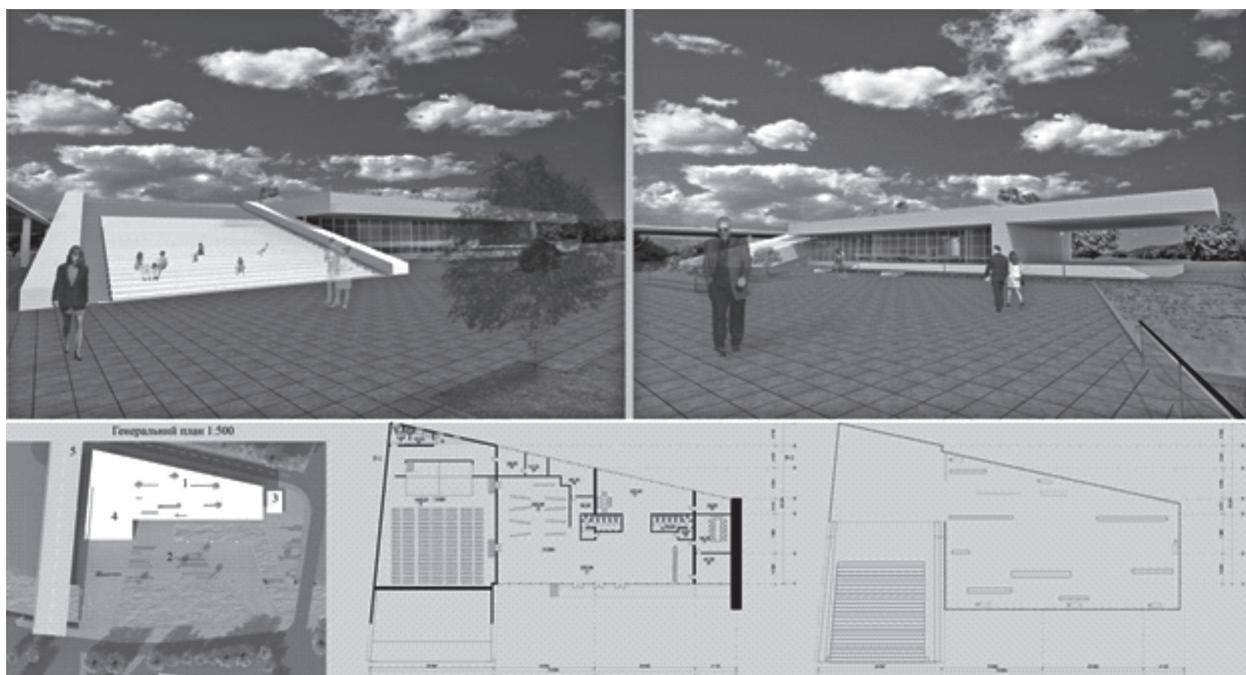
il. 2. Fragment of a bachelor project "Design of Space-Effective Organization, Arrangement and Staging of a Theatre and Entertainment Complex for Music and Rock Concerts and Performances in Rivne" (il. aut.)

counterparts in other cities of Ukraine [5]. Theatre architecture embodied different ideological concepts. For example, we can observe the transition from the Soviet Stalinist baroque to modernism in architecture of the Rivne Drama Theatre. In contrast, the drama theatre in Lutsk and Zhytomyr demonstrates features of pure Soviet modernism which refuses decor, looking for economical solutions. The obvious principle governing the location of theatres in the Soviet period is to continue the tradition of locating theatres along highways connecting the major regional centres and the capital. These decisions were not always successful. For example, the Drama Theatre in Zhytomyr, faces a complex traffic intersection and the square in front of the theatre is virtually absent. In Lutsk the theatre is located along highways of national importance, which allows to arrange the square and the pedestrian zone. The drama theatre in Rivne is located on the same highway as the theatre in Lutsk, but it faces the highway directly. It resulted in placing small square-niches in front of the theatre. It should be noted that the theatre square in this case hasn't become the main square in the city, due to inconvenient links and insufficiently elaborated public zones.

The results of this research were applied in the educational projects in the National University "Lviv Polytechnic" that deal with the study of theatre architecture. The Department of Design of Architectural Environment in "Lviv Polytechnic" has been acti-

vely engaged in the research into the Ukrainian theatre architecture for 10 years. Each year there are diploma projects devoted to this topic. For example, a bachelor project in 2013 by student N. Rudak led by prof. V.I.Proskuryakov and asp. O.V.Sinkevych on "Design of Space-Effective Organization, Arrangement and Staging of a Theatre and Entertainment Complex for Music and Rock Concerts and Performances in Rivne" (il. 1). A bachelor project "Design of Architectural and Spatial Organization of a Playhouse on Kikvidze St. in Rivne" (il. 2) by Y.Palamar proposes a concept of a new type of a spectacular building – Playhouse – in the place that is historically associated with performances.

In 2014 a bachelor project "Design of Architecture of Mass Action Theatre in Lutsk with the Development of the Elements of the Scene" was developed by V. Palaguta, led by V.Proskuryakova and asp. O.Sinkevych. In the project the area of Lutsk castle is adapted to massive theatrical performances. The aim of these projects is to return the theatre activity into the spaces where it originated from and evolved until the process of its concentration in one place began. On the



il. 3. "Design of Architectural and Spatial Organization of a Playhouse on Kikvidze St. in Rivne" (il. aut.)

other hand, it will improve the quality of space and organize the existing public activity.

Summary

Examining the impact of a theatre building on the development of the urban fabric, we can conclude that the theatre held a significant, though not a dominant position. The tradition of dominance of theatre buildings in the city structure was established only in the Soviet period. Unlike other neighbouring regions – Galicia, Podolia – Volhynia theatre buildings weren't the final element of boulevards and avenues and weren't involved in the creation of visual axes. Examining the historical process of the formation of the theatre network in Volyn one should pay attention to two opposing cultural trends: the location of the theatre building in the city centre and on the outskirts. On the one hand, there are ideological motives, trying to control the cultural life and the general process of centralization, which were peculiar for the

Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. On the other hand, there are decentralized small-scale cultural centres, sometimes of an amateur nature, but which provide an advanced network within a region.

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