

MODERNIZATION AND REHABILITATION OF THE “VASILE ALECSANDRI” NATIONAL THEATER PUBLIC PARK IASI

MODERNIZAREA ȘI REABILITAREA PARCULUI PUBLIC AL TEATRULUI NAȚIONAL “VASILE ALECSANDRI” IAȘI

CIOBĂNAȘU C.¹

e-mail: sc_arcdesign@yahoo.com

Abstract. *This park is in the central area of Iasi Municipality, located inside the protection perimeter of urban architectural and historical values. This area located in the vicinity of National Theater of Iasi is currently unorganized as the result of some major interventions that had other priorities than the preservation and rehabilitation of green areas, the monuments were taken out of context and out of their natural dialogue, due to provisional urban arrangements or arrangements for traffic regulation and finding new parking lots. The proposed rehabilitation solution takes into account the physical features of the location, its urban evolution, the presence of historical monuments (of national value), as well as solving the current and future specific functional needs in the conditions of clearing the stylistic constraints, suggesting a unitary system with an important esthetical function of creating a harmonious urban landscape.*

Key words: park, National Theater, green areas, rehabilitation

Rezumat. *În zona centrală a municipiului Iași se află acest parc, situat în interiorul perimetrului de protecție a valorilor istorice și arhitectural urbanistice. Această zonă constituită în vecinătatea Teatrului Național Iași, este în prezent dezorganizată, rezultatul unor intervenții majore care au avut ca totul alte priorități decât conservare și reabilitarea spațiilor verzi, monumentele din ansamblu lor fiind scoase din context și din dialogul lor firesc, de amenajări urbane provizorii sau de amenajări pentru reglementarea circulației și găsirea unor spații de parcare. Soluția de reabilitare propusă are în vedere caracteristicile fizice ale amplasamentului, evoluția sa urbană, prezența monumentelor istorice, de valoare națională, precum și rezolvarea necesităților funcționale specifice, prezente și de perspectivă, în condițiile eliberării de constrângerile de ordin stilistic, propunând un sistem unitar, cu o importantă funcție estetică, de realizare a unui peisaj urban armonios.*

Cuvinte cheie: parc, Teatrul Național, spații verzi, reabilitare

INTRODUCTION

The park is located in the central area of Iasi Municipality, delimited by Cuza Vodă, I.C. Brătianu, str. Dancu, b-dul Ștefan cel Mare streets. In its vicinity, a series of buildings included in the List of Historical and Architectural Monuments are located.

¹ “Gheorghe Asachi” Technical University of Iași, Romania

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The site, with a surface of 22,081.0 m², is located in the central area, CP – the central area located inside the protection perimeter of urban architectural and historical values.

The current location has two sub-areas:

- The Assembly of National Theater of Iași, located in the northern part of the assembly, delimited by the Cuza Vodă street to north, Dancu street to east, I.C. Brătianu street to west and Agatha Bârsecu street to south;
- Theater Park Esplanade (towards the Metropolitan Cathedral), a square delimited by the street Agatha Bârsecu to north, sidewalk alley of the Metropolitan Cathedral Hotel and Roset Roznovanu Palace to east, Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt boulevard to south and I.C. Brătianu street to west. Although the two sub-areas were formed in various stages, they currently form a unitary assembly, valorizing a major urban axis, Metropolitan Cathedral – National Theater, perpendicular to the route of Union Square – Palace of Culture axis, extending the interest elements into the deep urban network.

The current configuration is the result of the urban evolution of the city, of transformation of last two centuries.

The northern front of Cuza Vodă street (former Golia) was finished at the beginning of the 19th century by erecting the Balș House and Notre Dame de Sion Institute. The crossroad between Cuza Voda street and Gh. I. Brătianu street, former Marzescu and previously Majilor, defined the City Hall Square, here, in 1888, the statue of Miron Costin being erected. On the other side of the location, towards east, it was located since 1541 the Dancu Monastery until its demolition in 1903 and the arrangement of a “fir garden”.²

After the completion of the National Theater in 1896, according to the project of architects Fellner and Helmer, the statue of Vasile Alecsandri was erected in front, in 1908, by replacing the statue of Gheorghe Asachi.

The area between Stefan cel Mare street, I. C. Brătianu (Mârzescu) street, Roznovanu Palace and Agatha Bârsecu street (former May 9th street, previously Capitan Paun street), after the Second World War, had a stable configuration with dwellings developed on two, three floors, with public spaces at ground floor. On the northern side, towards Agatha Bârsecu street, to the extension of Roznovanu Palace outhouses, it is located the Pomul Verde garden, the first theater of Yiddish language, organized by the poet Avram Golfaden (Sutu, 1923).

The ample works of urban systematization in the 70s made possible the dream of Mayor Vasile Pogor and its counselors, in 1892, when they approved the location of the National Theater with its main façade towards the Metropolitan Cathedral, imagining one of the major axis of the central area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The historical site of the National Theater. This site was formed in two stages. The first stage starts in 1888 and ends in 1908 – by decommissioning the constructions of Cuza Voda, Dancu, Agatha Bârsecu and I.C. Brătianu streets and by erecting the statue of Miron Costin, followed by the construction of the Theater and of the Power Plant, the creation of the small square in front of the Theater and finalizing by replacing, in this small square, the statue of Gheorghe Asachi, in 1908, with the one of Vasile Alecsandri.

The second stage can be considered the period between 1955 and 1967 when, towards north, in the former garden of the Theater, extensions of the building were made with necessary spaces for the good operation of the Opera who had its offices here (Mitican, 2002). Beginning with 1997, together with the building site for the restoration works of the Theater building, the north-east side of the park was decommissioned from the public circuit. In 2003, on the north-west side, a provisional construction is carried out, “The Cube”, designated as a hall for experimental shows, necessary as restoration works were carried out for the main hall. A controversial architectural presence, this Cube completely alters what was left of the Theater Park, organized in classical style, with alignments of trees and shrubs, alleys with benches, green lawns, flower borders (Ciobanasu, 2011).

The esplanade location is delimited by the Agatha Barseanu street to north-east, access alley to the Hotel of Metropolitan Cathedral and the Roset-Roznovanu Palace to south-east, by I.C. Bratianu street to north-west, and by the Stefan cel Mare si Sfanta street to south-west, the site being arranged between 1971-1985 by arh. Gh. Cheptea.

The park is defined by a central area supporting the urban axis between the Metropolitan Cathedral and the National Theater. On the right and left of this compositional axis, there are placed fountains, alleys, vegetal masses.

The presence of the I.C. Bratianu street and of the access alley to the Hotel of Metropolitan Cathedral, in its extension being located the lateral façade of the Roznovanu Palace – Iasi Municipality City Hall, parallel to this axis, has led to the placement of some belt type vegetal masses on the two long sides mainly consisting of sycamores delimiting the territory and separating it from adjacent areas. Compared to this high floor, the size of the trees decreases towards the center, contributing to a good visibility between the two monuments. By placing these two vegetal masses, the view is directed towards the two architectural presences, shielding the less important directions.

The time passing and the action of climate but also human factors determined the state of this park as not being at the expected quality level as we may notice significant damage to pavements, stone panels of fountains, supporting walls, statue pedestals, stairs or to urban furniture made up of lighting units, benches, trash cans, as well as the improper exhibition ways of the works of plastic artists.

Description of the investment. The major compositional principle remains the urban axis formed by the National Theater and the Metropolitan Cathedral which all other elements are subordinated to. Moreover, in order to fully value the presence of many historical and architectural monuments, a second significant urban axis was proposed formed by the Bals House – the office of “George Enescu” University of Arts together with the Philharmonic building on one hand and the Old Metropolitan Cathedral – Saint George Church on the other end of the axis, as an expression of the existing urban continuum.

Although considered as a unitary system, with elements of compositional continuity, for an easier presentation, we shall independently present the two sub-areas.

The historical site of the National Theater. The arrangement of this area with a surface of 12,045 sq. m. comprises the free land or the land to be cleared by decommissioning the provisional building, e.g. The Cube, the former park around the National Theater and the small square in front of this monument.

In the area towards north-east, between the Theater, Bals – Notre Dame de Sion House, the following are proposed:

- transformation in pedestrian space of the current Cuza Voda street and removal of visual barriers such as kiosks, advertising panels that hinder the northern façade of the Theater. We are suggesting to build a pedestrian square around the statue of Miron Costin and taking this statue out of the auto vehicle traffic context, connecting this objective to the pedestrian surfaces of Theater and surrounding green area.

- It is provided the delimitation of the neighboring area of the National Theater by remaking the époque grating. The grating should be doubled by a hedge made of *Buxus sempervirens*. In the same alignment, groups of *Betula verucosa* and *Acer platanoides* were placed, trees with a certain transparency favorable for perceiving the vis-à-vis built front;

- remaking the green area after the model of Notre Dame de Sion garden of the old photographs. Within this garden, the busts of General Berthelot, composer Alexandru Flechtenmacher, actress Aglae Pruteanu are to be reinstated. The access to the garden should be made from Cuza Voda street and from the small square created around the state of Miron Costin. Besides the oak of Berthelot, groups of *Ulmus pendula*, *Salix matsudana* and *Prunus pissardii* should be planted that, by size, texture and color of foliage should create harmonious compositional elements. The shrubs complementing the green mass should be groups of *Spireea vanhouttei*, *Hibiscus syriacus*, *Philadelphus coronarius*, *Piracanta coccinea* and *Chaenomelles japonica*;

- carrying out a parking lot for the theater's personnel with 18 place out of which two for disabled persons. The access in this parking lot should be carried out from Dancu street and should be monitored;

In the eastern part of the Theatr, towards Dancu street, we are having in view the following:

- continuation of the époque enclosure of Theater Garden. This garden should be remade over the public underground arrangements which are currently in the area, so that these should not be visible anymore (water tanks for fire prevention, generator room, fire pump room). The area of the northern façade of the "Power Plant" should be reconsidered by remaking the pedestrian lanes and adding green areas. In this area, a second parking lot for the theater's personnel should be also provided with a capacity of 16 places out of which two for disabled persons. In the near vicinity of the Theater, parallel with the south-east facades, similar to the alignment to the small square from the main entrance,

bordered arrangements of *Buxus sempervirens* should be installed in concordance with the eclectic decorative elements of the building. The space between these areas and the parking areas should be freely arranged with tree groups of various sizes creating a green background which hides the service area. The valuable species were kept adding groups of *Robinia pseudocacia*, *Fraxinus pendula*, *Sophora japonica*, *Prunus hisakura*, *Tilia tomentosa*, hedges of *Carpinus betulus*, near the parking lots, as well as groups of shrubs such as *Juniperus horizontalis*, *Syringa vulgaris* and *Yucca filamentosa*.

In the western part of the theater, the following are proposed:

- decommissioning of the “Cube” building and in its location an unconventional playground should be installed in open space, under the elevation of the National Theater pedestal, so that its façade to be visible both from I.C. Bratianu street and from the Cuza Voda street. A major, pedestrian alley should mark an urban axis towards Bals House. Along this alley, an area with the busts of writers could be remade. This area should be public, not delimited by an enclosure or limitative plantations to I.C. Bratianu street and should allow access to the unconventional playground and to the National Theater (side entrances). At the limit of street sidewalk, towards the park, an alignment of *Tilia tomentosa* should be created, the axis-alley being flanked by a row of *Taxus baccata* that is mowed in a pyramid shape, giving rhythm to the route. Similar to the south-east and north-east façade, it should have bordered alignments of *Buxus sempervirens* and *Mahonia aquifolia*, in classical inspired compositions.

The small square in front of the Theater should be remade as follows:

- remaking the shape and the platform finishing after the époque photographs and drawings;
- the two ground floors, divided by ellipse, near the statue of the poet Vasile Alecsandri should include flower arabesques while the prolonged ground floors near the access platforms should be marked by alignments of *Buxus sempervirens*;
- The Theater’s small square should be only for people underlining the pedestrian character of the area between this small square and the Theater Park Esplanade. The pedestrian feature should be carried out by decommissioning the parking lots and the road traffic and building an underground parking lot under the Theater’s Square (Ciobanasu, 2011).

National Theater Park Esplanade. This area has a ground surface of 10,036 square meters. The major axis is to be kept, increasing its size by installing in the middle area of two longitudinal developed fountains and in the center of gravity of the composition, this axis should intersect with a transversal platform on which a large fountain was erected, crossed by two footbridges. This composition is within the limits of a spirally developed alley intersecting all other secondary alleys. The land configurations observes the existence of the three platforms at decreasing elevations from the Theater Small Square towards the Stefan cel Mare boulevard, the connection between different elevations carrying out by ramps and stairs. The rehabilitation works

suggest a composition freeing the central axis of any disturbing vegetal presence, allowing at the same time good visibility along the newly proposed axis between the Bals House and the Old Metropolitan Cathedral. It was also suggested freeing the side façade of Roznovanu Palace – City Hall, so that to be easily viewed from the park entrance as well as from walking along the boulevard. The idea of placing the two vegetal masses to the side limits, I.C. Bratianu street, respectively the access alley of the Hotel of Metropolitan Cathedral, is still valid by preserving the sycamore alignments towards the street and installing another one on the south-east side towards the hotel. Regarding the plantation assembly, a special attention was given to the homogenous groups with species of similar characteristics such as size, foliage, aspect, so that to prevail on the contrasting groups since great variety alters the idea unity. Another concern was that of integrating the parking lots arranged at park level, proposing associations of shrubs and lianas decreasing the impact of constructions compared to the vegetation. For the alignments near the streets, *Platanus hybrida* was planted together with *Acer platanoides*, *Tilia tomentosa* or accents of *Catalpa bignonioides*. Among the category of second and third size species, we may mention *Betula verucosa*, *Prunus pissardii*, *Prunus cerasifera*, *Malus floribunda*, *Albizzia julibrissima*. Among the conifers we can find species of *Abies concolor*, *Larix decidua*, *Picea pungens*, *Taxus baccata* and *Thuja occidentalis*. The used shrubs are both of the fallen leaves groups as well as of the perennial leaves group such as *Berberis tundbergi*, *Buxus sempervirens*, *Juniperus horizontalis*, *Forsythia suspensa*, *Hibiscus syriacus*, *Spirea vanhouttei*, *Chaenomelles japonica*, *Piracanta coccinea*, *Philadelphius coronarius*, *Mahonia aquifolium*, *Yucca filamentosa*, *Tamarix tetandra*, *Cotinus coggygria*. An important surface of the proposed arrangements represents the grassed lawns that allow free sight, underlining both the trees and shrubs framing them as well as the isolated silhouettes. The grass carpets have figurative valences enhancing the varied coloring of the wood vegetation, varied by season, and intensify by contrast the chromatics of the floral arrangements. This green background is another unifier element of the park (Ciobanasu, 2011).

CONCLUSIONS

The modernisation and rehabilitation of the National Theater public park is a prerequisite for the development of Iasi's historical centre. The proposed rehabilitation solution try to solve the current and future specific functional needs in the conditions of clearing the stylistic constraints, suggesting a unitary system with an important esthetical function of creating a harmonious urban landscape.

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