A. A. Yefimov

The Ministry of the Imperial Court and construction of the Mariinsky theatre in Saint Petersburg

Construction of the Mariinsky theatre can be realistically regarded as a result of force-majeure, as far as its emergence has nothing to do with thorough planning. The Mariinsky theatre situated in the Theatrical square was designed and built instead of the «Theatre-Circus» (the Equestrian Circus Theatre), which had been erected in 1847–1849 according to the project of Alberto Cavo and burned down on 26 January 1859¹. Thus, the loss of one theatre led to creation of another one. In order to put it to practice Alexander II ordered to cancel earlier planned reconstructions of the Aleksandrinsky and the Mihailovsky theatres.

The emperor demanded Alberto Cavo, who at the time was the chief architect of the Directorate of Saint Petersburg Imperial Theatres, to compose a draft of a new theatre². The tsar insisted on taking into account all the alterations essential to turn the former Circus into drama theatre³.

The project of building compared in its size with the Bol'shoi theatre in Moscow was prepared at the beginning of February 1859⁴. It presumed reconstruction with preservation of the walls, ceilings, and staircases that escaped destruction in order to create an opera-house⁵. Interiors should have been altered drastically with a rear gateway for horses abolished, stage and auditorium overhauled and enlarged, one more circle installed and loges and baignoire amplified with anterooms. All this according to architect's intention could result in the formation of a theatre almost equal in hall roominess with the Moscow Bolshoi theatre. An increase of

auditorium size secured growth of fees from every play⁶ and raised investment appeal of the project.

The theatre should have obtained new outward appearance without former stone ledge on the front façade, replaced by a cast-iron shed, and with a new circle of the hall. The structure of support services also was modified. Box-offices had to be moved, storehouses of costumes, musical instruments, scenery, curtains, and properties had to be expanded. Two rehearsal rooms, artists' workshop and rooms, where musicians could have a rest and attune the instruments, were also included in this reconstruction project. Two staircases for the upper circle along with the tsar's and the minister's loges should have been transferred in order to secure comfort of the audience. With all these alterations done the main façade entrance would have been directly connected with galleries for ordinary people, what guaranteed fast and free entry and leaving⁷.

The alternative was to turn the former «Theatre-Circus» into a drama theatre. However, it demanded much more changes in building structure including narrowing of the auditorium and demolition of some walls, what totally excluded any possibility of an increase in capacity and decreased the payback of the project⁸.

The minister of the Imperial court V. F. Adlerberg when presenting this plan to Alexander II additionally suggested simultaneously start the reconstruction of the Mikhailovskii theatre⁹. The emperor having approved the project on the whole nevertheless made some amendments concerning the change of hall configuration which included beatification of big tsar loge in the middle. He also insisted on safekeeping of present roofed stone entrance with arcades facing Bolshoi theatre what in his opinion cut down expenses greatly¹⁰.

Reserve plan envisaging rebuilding of the remnants of burned «Theatre-Circus» into a drama theatre. However according to the architect, it demanded multiple works including walls demolition, stage and hall narrowing, what made this idea really non-value-added with lower capacity¹¹ and the marginal rate of return. Therefore, this plan served just for the record. Alberto Cavo's presumed the reconstruction to cost no less than 400 000 rubles and specified that the exact sum would be determined after final cost estimating¹².

Officials of the Building Bureau of the Ministry of the Imperial Court presenting their report to the minister mentioned that they approve architect's proposals¹³. V. F. Adlerberg having submitted dispatch based on the materials acquired from the Building Bureau including the plan of Alberto Cavo's to the emperor marked in his part that it was necessary to start reconstruction of the Mikhailovsky theatre simultaneously with the restoration of the perished building.

Dealing with financial issues of planned construction works the minister made several remarks. Firstly, primary disbursement estimate concerning former «Theatre-Circus» was carried out keeping in mind extraordinary expenses and payments to the architect, his assistants, and other administrative staff and came to 500 000 rubles. Secondly, the sum charged by the contractor for reconstruction of the Mi-

hailovsky theatre was set as 368 500 rubles and with the inclusion of additional expenditures it went up to 400 000 rubles. So that, simultaneous realization of these projects, according to a preliminary estimate, could require around 900 000 rubles, which should have been obtained from two loans. The first one of 590 000 rubles might have been received from the spare funds of the Ministry of the Imperial Court and refunded in 33 years with annual payments of 29 350 rubles from the sums of the Directorate of the Imperial Theatres. The second part of borrowings of 310 000 rubles was planned to be supplied by the Building Bureau of the Ministry with repayment also from the Directorate either by annual payments or by deposits to estimates of the former. Nevertheless, the report contained substantial remark that the real price of the reconstruction could become evident only during the works¹⁴.

Honorary freeman N. S. Tarasov advanced a proposal to finance these works. His plan presented to the emperor consisted in the following clauses. The money was given as a 26-year loan with 4 % interest rate, and according to a calculation of the minister of the Imperial court annual payment would be 57 400 rubles with a total sum of overpayments not less than 544 000 rubles. N. S. Tarasov also laid down two terms. The first one was to make certificates of indebtedness issued by the Directorate of the Imperial Theatres equal with stock certificates of different companies with a possibility of its usage as a pledge for contractors and loan institutions. The second condition was to give him an opportunity to buy abroad and duty-free bring to Russia everything needed in his opinion both to speed up construction works and to secure their high quality¹⁵.

Having analyzed these clauses the minister of the Imperial court pointed out that while the first one can be fulfilled with no difficulties, the second demands agreement with the Ministry of Finance. In another case financial provision according to N. S. Tarasov should be supported by a scheme when one-fifth of par value of the certificates of indebtedness was kept back till the end of works. According to the ministerial officials, it could provide almost no benefit of 5400 rubles compared with a total interest payment of 538 729 rubles.

Having expounded the plan suggested by N. S. Tarasov, count V. F. Adlerberg marked that it would be better to find another financing source than the loan from contractor what could make it possible to carry out the public auction and to secure depreciation of the project of theatres' reconstruction¹⁶.

Alternative idea was to get the necessary sum of 900 000 rubles from several institutions of the Ministry. First of all, V. F. Adlerberg marked that the Chapter of Russian Imperial and Tsar's Orders in two years had collected 195 000 rubles which could be borrowed for 33 years with an annual rate of 1,4 % and an annual payment of 7350 rubles. Secondly, the Department of Appanages could lend 400 000 rubles with an annual rate of 4 % and an annual payment of 22 000 rubles. These two loans could give 590 000 rubles with total annual payment of 29 350 rubles for 33 years. Remaining 310 000 rubles would be received from the sums annually granted to the Building Bureau with no need to pay any interest¹⁷.

Finally, the minister of the Imperial court presented a comparative calculation of total expenses of both schemes. In case of acceptance of N. S. Tarasov's suggestion the Directorate of the Imperial Theatres had to pay 57 400 rubles for 26 years with total sum around 1 439 000 rubles with interest included. According to the plan composed by the Court Department¹⁸ and introduced by V. F. Adlerberg in 33 years one should pay 29 350 rubles annually, what in total equaled 971 000 rubles and with an addition of interest-free loan from the Building Bureau aggregate amount could be 1 281 000 rubles¹⁹. The minister's proposal on sources of money needed for reconstruction and restoration of the former «Theatre-Circus» and the Mihailovsky theatre was accepted by Alexander II.

However, the cost estimation of reconstruction of the former «Theatre-Circus» prepared by Alberto Cavo greatly surpassed preliminary estimate. Instead of 500 000 rubles including all the possible expenses and wages, only construction works demanded 80 000 rubles more, while with the inclusion of expenditures on different equipment, scenery, furniture and decoration it reached 197 000 rubles over initial supposition with no contingency fund considered. Besides the most saving offer for an installment of theatrical machinery was selected²⁰.

The Building Bureau in its report to V. F. Adlerberg outlined that there was no source for additional sums exceeding preliminary assigned 500 000 rubles. The initiative of Alberto Cavo to postpone payments until the end of construction works was assessed as insufficient due to the fact that the Directorate of the Imperial Theatres possessed funds merely to clear off its debt to the Building Bureau even with revenues from performances at the future theatre²¹.

According to the architect, this increase was caused by installment of middle Tsar's loge, the addition of one more circle of loges, rehearsal hall, dressing rooms, storehouses of costumes, musical instruments, scenery, curtains and properties, and wardrobe²². All these reports were presented by the emperor. Four projects were offered to Alexander II. The first one envisaged creation of six-circled hall, sumptuous decoration and superstructure on annexes for 686 260 rubles; the second was the same with moderate decoration and without superstructures for 608 240 rubles; the third included five-circled hall with moderate decoration and additional story for 613 685 rubles; the last one was the same as the third but without additional story on annexes for 552 390 rubles. Thus, even the most unpretentious plan with no extra costs included called for an additional allotment of 52 390 rubles compared with initial estimate²³.

According to the emperor's resolution, the project of construction of the moderately decorated building with the five-circle hall and without yard additions has been selected. The main condition was to compose cost sheet the way its sum was no more than 500 000 rubles²⁴.

After the emperor's general approval of the project, officials of the Court Department demanded Alberto Cavo justified the need to demolish old entrance with an enclosure of estimate of expenditures for doorway alteration²⁵. The final cost sheet

excluding curtains, scenery, and lamps totaled 435 565 rubles. It was the initial price for the tender at which eight contractors participated. The winner became a certain landowner from Warsaw Koniar, who offered to fulfill construction works for 348 452 rubles and finish them by December 1, 1859. This proposal seemed to be a real bargain with a discount of 87 113 rubles or nearly 20 %. The agreement was signed on 5 June 1859²⁶.

Before the start of construction works one had to carry out some measures to prepare the construction site, including garbage disposal and mounting of temporary roof over the part of the former «Theatre-Circus» that survived the fire. Then Alberto Cavo reported to the Building Bureau for permission to demolish some walls, to enclose a site to store materials and to sell removed roofing steel as waste metal²⁷.

Having received this dispatch, the Building Bureau in the middle of March 1859 sent its official engineer colonel A. K. Krasovskii for on-site review. After this inspection, the officials made sure that preparation of the future building yard went properly with debris removed, agreed that semi-collapsed walls must be demolished and to store new materials one had to fence in the special area. Roofing steel mentioned in the architect's report proved to be unfit and could be sold as scrap, with the money received to be added to the sum for reconstruction, while another old metal-roll was seen as utilizable.

The Building Bureau on March 16, 1859, addressed the minister of the court for permission to start the works immediately by the installation of temporary barrier coordinated with military governor-general of Saint Petersburg²⁸.

Additionally to main contract in the amount of 348 452 rubles there were a few complementary expenses. They included the acquisition of different lamps, purchase, and installment of machinery and expenses for servicing of the construction site. All this needed 70 500 rubles²⁹. Besides according to provisions of «The Rules on architects' reward for construction works carried out for the Ministry of the Imperial Court»³⁰ for Alberto Cavo and his employees should have been paid 14 208 rubles³¹.

The signing of an advantageous contract gave an opportunity to return to the project of court annexes' erection. The minister of the Imperial court V. F. Adlerberg appealed to the emperor for permission for these works announcing contractor's readiness to carry them out for 41 200 rubles³². This suggestion was approved; on 14 August 1859 it was ordered to start the works and the additional reward of 1482 rubles for Alberto Cavo was extra charged³³.

During construction works contractor Koniar faced a lot of different obstacles. All these issues he presented to the architect in order to get from the Building Bureau permission to postpone the completion date. The submitted report contained such reasons as lack of free workmen, shoaling of the Neva preventing from timely delivery of materials and necessity of foreign roofing steel absentee in Saint Petersburg. Thereby the architect asked the officials of the Ministry to put off the end of the reconstruction of both the theatre and its annexes till July 1, 1860. This could bring even some benefits because by this date both civil and erection works would be

finished and scenery assemblage along with gas lighting system would be done, what made it possible to open theatre for productions immediately. Subcontractors in the person of scene-shifter Waltz and Society for the lightning of the capital also had no objection to the postponement of the theatre acceptance date³⁴.

The Building bureau accepted this explanation and on 23 October 1859 inquired about the possibility of postponement of the end of construction works until the beginning of July 1860 to the minister of the Imperial court. The next day count V. F. Adlerberg approved this request and set July 1, 1860, as the finish date³⁵.

Firstly, the building under reconstruction kept its old title the «Theatre-Circus». But on September 14, 1859, by the emperor's decree sent to the director of the Imperial theatres A. I. Saburov and architect Alberto Cavo it was named the Mariinsky theatre³⁶.

Instead of the planned period of six months construction works took more than a year, having started in June 1859 they were generally finished in June 1860, while acceptance took place in August 1860³⁷. The theatre was opened on October 2, 1860, with the staging of the opera by M. I. Glinka «A Life for the Tsar» (also known as «Ivan Susanin»)³⁸.

Having studied the history of the Mariinsky theatre construction in the context of research on the building activities of the Ministry of the Imperial Court in Saint Petersburg in the 19th century one should conclude that this building became the last «temple of Melpomene» erected under supervision of this government department in the capital of the Russian Empire. Its unplanned creation both made it possible for the Directorate of the Imperial Theatres to get a new space for performances and gave the architectural complex of the Theatrical square a new dominant.

Realization of this project also had displayed distinctive feature of the activities of the Ministry of the Imperial Court under Alexander II, when one had to carry out construction works keeping in mind necessity of budget sums economy. It was the aim at which the officials directed their efforts, struggling to minimize expenses by all means from the limitation of maximum estimate size to the selling of used materials.

¹ Konnov A. P., Stupnikov I. V. Leningradskii teatr opery i baleta im. S.M. Kirova. [Leningrad S. M. Kirov Opera and Ballet Theatre]. Leningrad, 1976. P. 14; Nikolaeva T. I. Teatral'naya ploshchad. [Theatre Square]. Leningrad, 1984. P. 114; Petrovskaya I. F., Somina V. V. Teatral'nyi Peterburg: Nachalo 18 veka — oktyabr' 1917 goda. [Theatrical Saint Petersburg: Beginning of the 18th century — October of the year 1917]. St. Petersburg, 1994. P. 156; Zuev G. I. 1) Peterburgskaya Kolonna [Kolonna of Saint Petersburg]. Moscow; St. Petersburg, 2007. P. 212; 2) Tam, gde Kryukov kanal [Where the Kryukov Channel is]. St. Petersburg, 2012. P. 156.

² Rossiiskii gosudarstvennii istoricheskii arkhiv (RGIA). F. 497 (Direktsiya Imperatorskikh teatrov MIDv). Op. 1. D. 6775. L. 183, 186.

³ Ibid. Op. 14. D. 436. L. 17.

⁴ Ibid. L. 17 ob.; Op. 2. D. 17146. L. 1 ob.

- ⁵ RGIA. F. 480 (Stroitel'naya kontora MIDv). Op. 1. D. 28. L. 55 — 55 ob., 104.
- ⁶ Ibid. L. 55 ob. — 56, 104 ob.
- ⁷ Ibid. L. 56.
- ⁸ Ibid. L. 18.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ RGIA. F. 497. Op. 14. D. 436. L. 18–19.
- ¹¹ Ibid. L. 56 — 56 ob., 105.
- ¹² Ibid. L. 56 ob.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Ibid. L. 18 ob.
- ¹⁵ RGIA. F. 480. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 106.
- ¹⁶ Ibid. L. 106 ob. — 107.
- ¹⁷ Ibid. L. 107–108.
- ¹⁸ The Court Department is another name for the Ministry of the Imperial Court.
- ¹⁹ RGIA. F. 480. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 108–109.
- ²⁰ Ibid. L. 190–191.
- ²¹ Ibid. L. 191 — 191 ob.
- ²² Ibid. L. 191 ob.
- ²³ Ibid. L. 214, 215–216.
- ²⁴ Ibid. L. 220.
- ²⁵ Ibid. L. 116.
- ²⁶ RGIA. F. 480. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 220 ob.; D. 127. L. 10.
- ²⁷ Ibid. D. 28. L. 159.
- ²⁸ RGIA. F. 480. Op. 1. D. 28.
- ²⁹ Ibid. L. 224 ob.
- ³⁰ This document issued in 1859 was a remade variant of the earlier one published in 1857 and set new standards of payment to architect and his staff as a percentage payment from the total cost of building estimate.
- ³¹ RGIA. F. 480. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 224 ob.
- ³² Ibid. D. 29. L. 3.
- ³³ Ibid. L. 54.
- ³⁴ Ibid. L. 150–151.
- ³⁵ Ibid. L. 151 ob.
- ³⁶ Ibid. L. 109 — 109 ob.; F. 497. Op. 14. D. 436. L. 19 ob.
- ³⁷ RGIA. F. 497. Op. 14. D. 436. L. 19.
- ³⁸ Punin A. L. Arkhitektura Peterburga serediny XIX veka. [Architecture of Saint Petersburg of the middle of the 19th century]. Leningrad, 1990. P. 179; Taranovskaya M. Z. Arkhitektura teatrov Leningrada. [Architecture of Leningrad Theatres]. Leningrad, 1988. P. 136.

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А. А. Ефимов. Министерство императорского двора и строительство Мариинского театра в Санкт-Петербурге

В статье на основе документов из фондов Российского государственного исторического архива автором была исследована история строительства Мариинского театра в Санкт-Петербурге. Автор отмечает, что само возникновение этого здания стало следствием чрезвычайной ситуации, пожара Театра-цирка, уничтожившего постройку почти полностью. Вследствие этого перед Министерством императорского двора встала проблема необходимости профинансировать как строительство нового театра на месте сгоревшего, так и запланированный ранее капитальный ремонт Александринского и Михайловского театров. В статье отмечается, что на первый план вышла именно идея нового строительства, тогда как реконструкция была первоначально отложена в долгий ящик. Автор прослеживает ход подготовки к возведению будущего Мариинского театра, уделяя особое внимание вопросам организации финансирования и подготовки архитектором А. К. Кавосом проекта, составлявшегося в условиях ограниченного бюджета. При этом большое внимание уделяется роли императора Александра II как высшей инстанции, принимавшей решения по вопросу определения облика нового здания. Значительное место в статье занимает проблема организации торгов и выбора подрядчиков. При этом автор отмечает, что победителем сумел стать малоизвестный помещик из Варшавы Кониар, предложивший наименьшую цену за работы. В статье прослеживается как решение вопроса с финансированием работ и выгодный контракт позволили чиновникам Министерства императорского двора инициировать ранее отложенный проект реконструкции Михайловского театра и дополнить план строительства нового здания возведением служебных пристроек. При этом автор не обходит вниманием и проблемы, возникавшие в ходе возведения Мариинского театра и повлекшие перенос первоначально установленного срока сдачи, часть из которых, по его мнению, проистекает из выбора, сделанного в пользу малоизвестного подрядчика.

Ключевые слова: Министерство императорского двора, Мариинский театр, Александр II, В. Ф. Адлерберг, Строительная контора, А. К. Кавос (Альберто Кавос), Кониар.

A. A. Yefimov. The Ministry of the Imperial Court and construction of the Mariinsky theatre in Saint Petersburg

The article deals with the problem of the activity of the Ministry of the Imperial Court with reference to the construction of the Mariinsky theatre. The author examines pre-history of this building and circumstances under which it became possible to create a new theatrical edifice. He outlines that after the building of «Theatre-Circus» burnt down, the Court Department faced both a problem with the refurbishment of other theatres and an opportunity to create new up-to-date theatre in the capital of the Russian Empire. Special attention is paid to the process of preparation, including the search for the sources of money, project drafting and its co-ordination with Emperor Alexander II. The author examines how the Court Minister V. F. Adlerberg along with his subordinates struggled to evade financial bondage from private entrepreneur and to find internal sources of money. The article briefly inquiries into the tender procedure, when the winner was the lowest bidder, and then takes under consideration the course of construction works, outlining problems the contractor faced and their influence on acceptance date, inclining to the idea that cheap contract has its pitfalls. The

author concludes that unplanned erection of the Mariinsky theatre being a good example of the policy of the Ministry of the Imperial Court in construction sphere made it possible for the Directorate of the Imperial Theatres to obtain a new space for performances and granted the architectural complex of the Theatrical square a new dominant.

Key words: Ministry of the Imperial Court, the Mariinsky theatre, Alexander II, V. F. Adlerberg, the Building bureau, Alberto Kavos, Koniar.

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