

THE OEUVRE OF THE ARCHITECT THEODOR TRÄXLER IN RIJEKA (FIUME), CROATIA

Nana PALINIĆ, Iva MRAK, Cela MATAN¹

ABSTRACT

The paper addresses the oeuvre of a lesser-known Austrian architect Theodor Träxler in Rijeka (at that time called Fiume), which is thus far the only known city in Croatia in which this scholar of the Wagner School lived and worked. During the four-year period of his stay in Rijeka, from 1911 to 1914, Theodor Träxler participated in several residential and public building projects. He is linked with projects and their implementation in Port Warehouse 19, the Celligoi residential building, the Gubernia House, the Fenice Theatre, the Benedictine Monastery and the Marač residential building.

Key words: Theodor Träxler, the Wagner School, Rijeka - Fiume, Secession architecture

L' OPERA DELL'ARCHITETTO THEODOR TRÄXLER A RIJEKA (FIUME), CROAZIA

SINTESI

Nell'articolo si esplora l'opera del poco noto architetto austriaco Theodor Träxler a Rijeka (in quel momento chiamato Fiume), l'unica città in Croazia, per quanto è noto, dove ha vissuto e lavorato questo studente della Scuola di Wagner. Durante i quattro anni della sua vita a Rijeka, dal 1911. fino al 1914, Theodor Träxler ha partecipato alla creazione di vari progetti per palazzi pubblici e residenziali. Al suo nome sono legati anche i progetti e realizzazioni delle seguenti opere: Magazzino portuale 19, Palazzo residenziale Celligoi, Casa Gubernia, Teatro Fenice, Convento dei Benedettini e il Palazzo Marač.

Parole chiave: Theodor Träxler, Scuola di Wagner, Rijeka - Fiume, architettura della secessione

INTRODUCTION

There has been scarce information available to date about Theodor Träxler, an Austrian architect and a disciple of the Wagner School. Otto Antonia Graff in his work entitled *Die vergessene Wagnerschule* (Graff, 1969) and Marco Pozzetto in *Die Schule Otto Wagners* (Pozzetto, 1980) stated that after his schooling, there was no further information available about Träxler's work. However, recent findings about his work in Rijeka (at that time called *Fiume*),² at the beginning of the 20th century, the second-largest Austro-Hungarian port and city that underwent an economic upswing, where he designed and constructed several residential and public buildings, provide new information that needs to be presented to the scientific and cultural community.

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² *Fiume* is the Italian translation of *Rijeka* - the name of the city means "river". Through a significant part of history the official language in use was Italian.

Research into the building of the *Fenice Theatre* conducted in the 1990's, as well as research projects of the Rijeka-based Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art – *Secessional Architecture in Rijeka* and *Architecture of Historicism in Rijeka*, that were presented through exhibitions and catalogues several years later, resulted in the appearance of yet another name amongst the previously known disciples of Wagner School who operated in Croatia – that of Theodor Träxler. Whilst some of the projects which this architect was involved in are relatively well known (e.g. the Fenice Theatre), some are either unknown or have only been attributed to him. The paper aims to provide a systematic overview of the oeuvre of this architect, from his arrival in Rijeka to the end of his work in this city.

EARLY YOUTH AND SCHOOLING

Theodor (he used to sign his name as “Theo”) Träxler (Figure 1), was born in the town of Horn in Lower Austria (*Niederösterreich*) on the 7th October 1881, as the second born of the four children of the trader Josef Träxler and Leopoldine Träxler whose maiden name was Nichtawitz.³ He attended the School of Arts and Crafts (*Kunstgewerbeschule*) in Vienna,⁴ and subsequently (from 1905 to 1908) the Academy of Fine Arts (*Akademie der bildenden Kunst*) which was led by Otto Wagner. This prestigious school was one of the institutions that played a significant role in the creation of a unique cultural climate in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. During the existence of the Academy of Fine Arts, 191 architects from the Monarchy studied there. In Theodor Träxler's generation there were six students attending the Academy and hence, in addition to Träxler, there were also Johann Bohm (born in 1882), Anton Engel (1879), Anton Floderer (1884), Andreas Hofer (1881) and Ferdinand Kaindl (1883) (Graf, 1969, 39). The projects on which he worked during his studies – *A Modern Hotel Project* and a competition project of a *Monumental Clock at a Crossroads in Vienna*, for which he was awarded the *Fugeredaille*, were published in the XIV edition of the magazine *Der Architekt* (Der Architekt, 1908, 37; Pozzetto, 1980).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: RIJEKA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20th CENTURY AS A LARGE CONSTRUCTION SITE

Following the Ausgleich of 1867 and the Croatian-Hungarian Settlement (1868), Rijeka was excluded from the Croatian territory and directly incorporated into the Hungary. As the centre of the politically protected littoral of Hungarian Kingdom, it became the venue for large-scale government investment and the concentration of capital. The dynamic economy attracted the population from the

³ Baptismal certificates from the parish of Horn linked with the birth of Theodor Träxler, his mother and brothers, as well as his military certificate from Kriegsarchiv in Vienna were provided by Mr Gerhard R. Widor, Deputy Director of the Austrian Cultural Forum in Zagreb, during work on the research project about the *Fenice Theatre*.

⁴ During the period when Josef Hoffmann taught at the School.

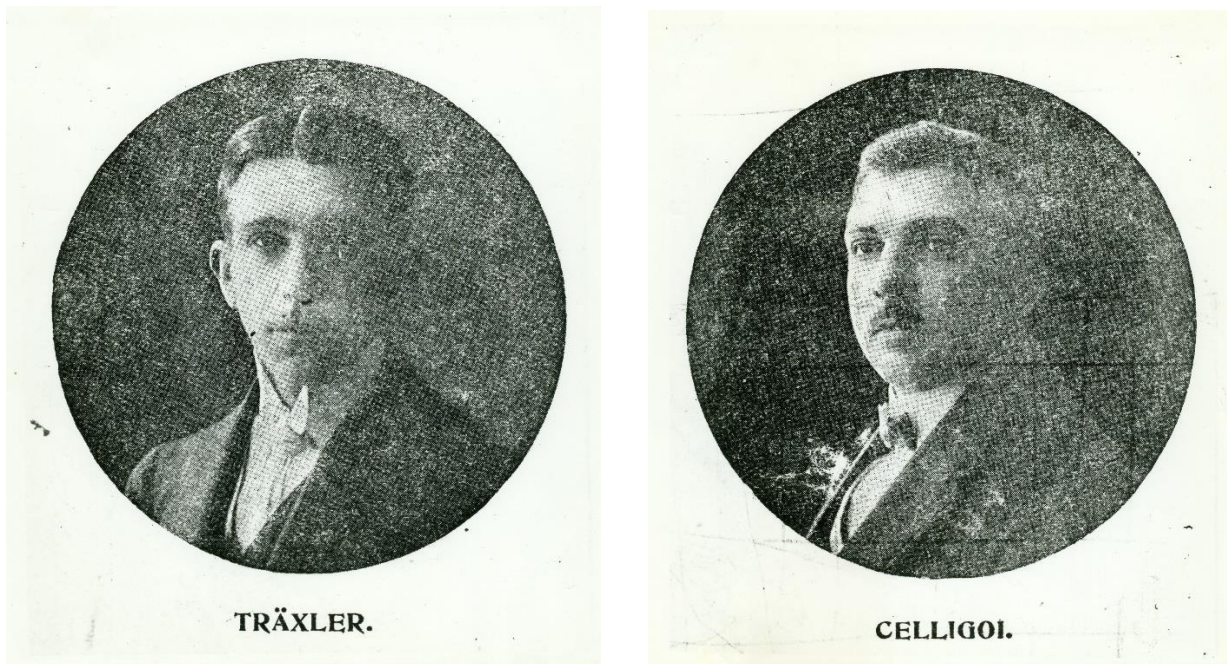


Fig.1. Theodor Träxler, 1914 (source: Inaugurazione del Teatro Fenice (Inauguration of the Fenice Theatre), brochure); **Fig. 2.** Eugenio Celligoi, 1914 (source: Inaugurazione del Teatro Fenice (Inauguration of the Fenice Theatre), brochure)

surroundings, as well as from further parts of the Austria-Hungary. In addition to manufacturing zones, infrastructure was constructed and enhanced (the port, railway, roads) and a large number of public and residential buildings were constructed. Many innovations were linked to Rijeka during that period, and all this positively affected architecture and all those involved in it. In addition to the local engineers and architects, those of international origin also operated at the time, such as Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann Gottlieb Helmer, Ferenc Pfaff, Giuseppe Bruni, Giacomo Zammattio, Sandor Baumgarten, Ignáz Alpár, Győzo Czigler, Samuel Pecz, Alajos Hauszmann, Vilmos Freund, Loránd Kismarty Lechner and many others. Their work resulted in a large number of buildings that have formed the fundamental identity of the city to date. The specific feature of the architecture that was incepted during the period of Historicism was that it was primarily sumptuous, whereas during the period of Secession it was primarily avant-garde.⁵

⁵ These stylistic and historical periods were comprehensively studied and presented in projects and publications *Arhitektura secesije u Rijeci / Secessional Architecture in Rijeka*, Moderna galerija Rijeka / Museum of Modern Art (ed. Daina Glavočić), Rijeka 1997 and *Arhitektura historicizma u Rijeci / Architecture of Historicism in Rijeka*, Moderna galerija Rijeka / Museum of Modern Art (ed. Daina Glavočić), Rijeka 2001.

ARRIVAL IN RIJEKA AND WORK IN THE COMPANY OWNED BY VJENCESLAV CELLIGOI

Theodor Träxler arrived in Rijeka, which at the time was an advanced cosmopolitan milieu, at the end of 1910 from the capital of the Monarchy, having received the best possible education. He was employed in the reputable company of the acclaimed Rijeka-based architect, builder and entrepreneur Vjenceslav Bonaventura Celligoi. Celligoi (1851-1916) was an engineer educated at the Polytechnic in Graz. He arrived in Rijeka from Dobrota in Boka Kotorska (today part of Montenegro) in 1884, whereas in 1885, jointly with the architect Giuseppe Leard, he founded a company intended for design and construction.⁶ During the period of twelve years of its activity the company was one of the largest and the most thriving, well-known beyond the local borders and through a large number of Historicism buildings it significantly contributed to the appearance of the city as we know it today. After Leard's death, Celligoi worked on his own for several years and then he worked with his son Eugenio. Eugenio Celligoi (Figure 2) was educated at the Technical College in Trieste. After he completed his studies he went to Vienna where he spent two years (1902-1903) working in the company *Antal Gurlich*.⁷

Upon joining the company, Träxler became involved in ongoing design and construction work. The first information about his work in Rijeka was linked to the construction of Port Warehouse 19, whilst the first building he worked on as an architect was the Celligoi residential building in Belvedere.

Port Warehouse 19

Port Warehouse 19 (Figure 3) is a section of a warehouse complex that consists of five warehouses (18–22, currently known as *Metropolis*), constructed from 1909-1914 in the westernmost part of the port (*Punto franco*, currently Prague pier). The designers of the complex were engineers of MÁV (Hungarian state railways) Wehler and Rolberitz, whilst the company owned by Celligoi won the public tender and was granted the implementation, including the preparation of the construction projects in which Träxler participated. (Palinić, 2009, 441-442; DARI, JU 51, No. 26/8/1910).

It was a challenging task, since Warehouse 19 was built first and it was in a reinforced-concrete frame structure with an external shell of bricks. Irrespective of the fact that it had already been used in

⁶ The work of this architecture office, one of the largest in Rijeka during that period was well-known and it included buildings such as: the railway station and residential buildings for railway clerks (1891), the Hungarian general grammar school (1897), Maria Orphanage (1902), port warehouses, as well as private rental residential buildings, villas and family houses. (Palinić, 1997a, 522-524.)

⁷ Nevertheless, there is no information available about his stay there, his contacts or acquaintances. His acquaintance with Träxler, who at the time was being educated in Vienna at the School of Arts and Crafts, perhaps dates back to those years. (Palinić, 1997a, 522-524.)



Fig. 3. Port Warehouse 19, a view to the western and the northern façade (photo by Damir Krizmanić)

Rijeka, reinforced concrete was during that period still considered as a new material used only by a very few engineers.⁸

The traditional moulding of the external walls in plaster with details in brick diminished the impression of actual technical innovativeness. From the current perspective, treating the external brick infill walls as load-bearing walls⁹ in combination with a reinforced-concrete frame structure, is not typical. Simultaneously a decrease in the cross-section strength of the columns in reinforced-concrete load-bearing structure can be identified.¹⁰ Since only thin partition walls were used in the interior of the building, the external brick wall evidently was intended as a horizontal stiffener. Primary beams with haunches were placed transversally, whilst longitudinally they were connected with smaller secondary framing beams - ribs and reinforced concrete slabs.

The dimensions of the building are 20m x 120m and its structural spacing is 5.94 m x 4.54 m, placed longitudinally. There is no basement, only a high ground floor (elevated for the functional purpose of loading) and 3 floors. The height of the storeys is 4.20 m on the ground floor, 3.15 m on the 1st and the

⁸ The author of the statics was Dr. Bela Enyedi from Budapest (Palinić, 2009, 441-442; DARI, JU 51, No. 26/8/1910).

⁹ Which was suggested by the change of wall dimensions, from 65 cm in lower to 45 cm in higher storeys (this was typical in the construction of load-bearing walls).

¹⁰ From 60cm to 30cm.

2nd floor and up to 6.35 m on the 3rd floor, which is simultaneously also a loft with gabled reinforced-concrete roof. The layout is mostly of an open-plan type and it is only partially divided by light partitions and sets of stairs. Longitudinal solid platforms are placed from the north side of the building for the purpose of transshipment of the load units from a train.

The characteristic features of this building, as well as of the entire complex, are the decorations of external walls of brick, windows with a segmental arch placed centrally within the grid, with emphasised space of the entrance zone, Secession canopies and balconies for lifting loads. All the buildings of the Metropolis complex on the 1st floor are interconnected with characteristic closed bridges - passages.

As a representative of the contractor, in 1911 Träxler supervised the testing of the reinforced-concrete structure and after being subjected to heavy loads (1500 kg/m²) no deformations appeared.¹¹ The project and the construction of the warehouse proved successful, which certainly contributed to the conviction with which Träxler and Celligoi subsequently used reinforced concrete in their constructions.

The Celligoi residential building

The first major project in which Träxler was involved as an architect was probably the Celligoi residential building constructed on Belvedere (today Tizianova 9), on the location of a never implemented project of the second Celligoi villa designed in 1908.¹² The building was probably designed at the end of 1911, since the building permit was applied for in January 1912, and the project was submitted to the Technical Office in February 1912. Notwithstanding the fact that the project was signed by Vjenceslav Celligoi, similarities with the subsequent projects provided by the Office suggest that both Träxler and Eugenio Celligoi were involved in the project. The building is characterized by its large comfortable flats of atypical orientation – the ancillary rooms are oriented towards the street, as opposed to the main rooms, which face the courtyard to the south. A simple geometric ornament, characteristic cut angles and framing of the blind parts of the façades are the features that would subsequently be present on all the buildings they designed and constructed.¹³

¹¹ Deformations in the form of cracks, tilting or sinkage did not appear, despite exposure to high loads and minimum maintenance even after more than a hundred years of use.

¹² Constructed on the plot of land that on the western side bordered with a Celligoi family villa constructed in 1889 and upgraded between 1904 and 1905. Implementation was abandoned due to the fact that the Technical Office of the city (Civico Ufficio Tecnico) required large-scale amendments to the project (DARI, JU-2, I-193/ 1912)

¹³ The project was approved by the City Magistrate (Magistrato Civico Fiume) in January 1913 with minor amendments, and the construction was completed in June 1914.

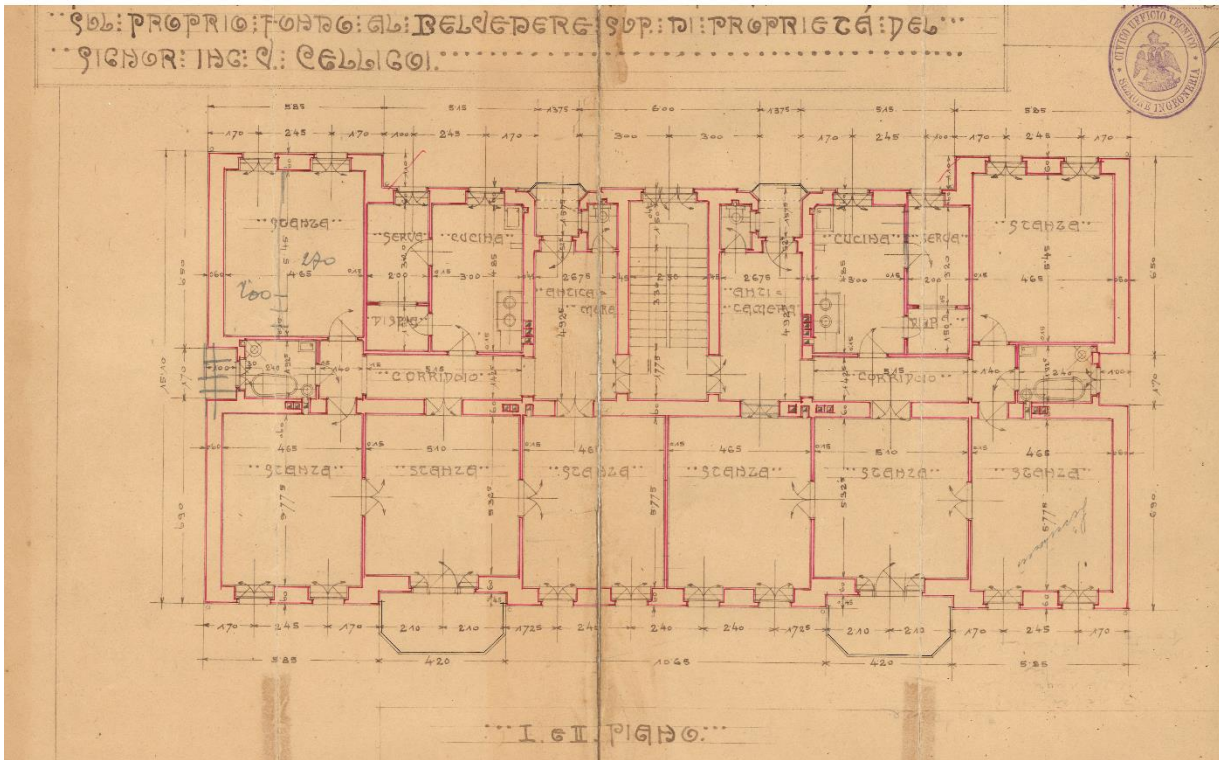


Fig. 4. *Vjenceslav Celligoi, Eugenio Celligoi, Theodor Träxler: Celligoi residential building, floor plan of the first and the second floor (source: State Archives in Rijeka)*

The building has a basement and 5 storeys connected by a central staircase. The basement consists of ancillary rooms and a carpenter's workshop,¹⁴ the upper storeys include flats, whereas the attic is without partitions and it takes up the entire floor space.

The entrance to the building is from the north, at the mezzanine level.¹⁵ Each floor includes two symmetrically organised flats (Figure 4). The main landing of a simple half turn staircase provides access to the spacious entrance hall from which one can access sanitary facilities and a small loggia on the northern façade, and the main rooms located on the southern façade part – with an entrance into the first centrally located room – or into a corridor which leads to a utility room and bedroom blocks. The rooms along the southern façade are interconnected through a centrally placed door, which enables the flexibility of use. The corner rooms of the southern and the northern façade are connected by a small corridor with a bathroom and they make up a block that functions well as a separate night-time area. The utility block, located along the northern façade, consists of a kitchen, a closet and a maid's room. The central room of the three southern rooms of each flat has access to a large balcony.

The ceiling height of the flats is 3.3 m, which is common for buildings of a higher standard constructed during this period and was matched also by their size of 160 m².

¹⁴ Due to which a covering in fire-resistant material was required.

¹⁵ Between the basement/ ground floor and the 1st floor.



Fig. 5. *The Celligoi residential building, a view of the northern and the western façade (photo by Cela Matan)*

All the main rooms have two large windows, with the exception of the central room, in which the window has been replaced by a balcony door with two symmetrical windows. The apertures from the exterior appear larger due to the decorative and protective frames around them, as well as the decorations that continue the line of the apertures.

The façades have simple, yet rich, decorations of geometric patterns – primarily with linear features and rectangles.¹⁶ The strong horizontal elevations of the front faces are in counterbalance with 10 window axes in which high openings alternate with parapet zones decorated with horizontal linear elements and concentric rectangles.¹⁷ The roof has a larger overhang than the eaves with visible wooden rafters.

¹⁶ The southern façade has been divided into a base (basement/ground floor and the first floor) defined by a horizontal ribbon relief, a transient part (2nd floor) with an emphasised cornice of 3 horizontal strips, whose main part consists of 3 equal storeys of shallow ribbon relief and the final frieze that starts at the top of the windows of the top storey and is also defined by horizontal linear decorations.

¹⁷ A conclusion can be reached from the project that all the decoration was planned in the same material. Balconies are partly loggias, since balcony zones are slightly indented compared with the façade level. They are placed centrally in the flats, define zones on the façade at around one third of the façade (rhythm a, b, c, b, a).



Fig. 6. *The Celligoi residential building, a detail above the entrance (photo by Cela Matan)*

As opposed to the southern façade, the northern has a slightly bleaker appearance, although it is characterised by identical features (Figure 5).¹⁸ The stone plinth continues as the base in rustic plaster¹⁹ with small apertures with a variant of tympanum. On the other storeys there is an identical use of fine plaster as is the case on the southern façade.

The main bathrooms, on the western and the eastern façades, are indented into the block of the building in order to divide the façades into two mutually symmetrical parts.²⁰ These façades are also permeated with horizontal decorations that integrate the treatment of different façades, whilst the concentric frames characterise façades on the higher storeys.²¹

Compared with the project, the building has been constructed in a simpler manner and the most evident difference is in the wealth of decorations. The frames of doors and windows have been made from stone (in the basement with rounded lintels), yet this did not contribute to a richer impression of the building. The entrance is the most prominent feature, highlighted with a double portal – an internal classicistic stone frame around which a larger stone portal was developed consisting of two lesenes and

¹⁸ This façade is also divided into several parts, precisely into seven vertical zones (rhythm a, b, c, d, c, b, a), where the end segments are more prominent in relation to the central ones. The zones of the loggias (partly balconies) divide the central part of the façade into three segments – the lateral segments that belong to the flats and the central segment behind which there is a staircase and sanitary facilities, whose windows are discreetly hidden towards the loggia of the flat.

¹⁹ The current rustic base of the northern and the lateral façades is probably a subsequent intervention. The original base on the northern side was probably completed identically as in the southern side, which must have contributed to a considerably more luxurious impression of the building.

²⁰ On the eastern façade there is an indented central segment where bathrooms are located and the façade is not decorated. This was due to the fact that a building permit had already been obtained for the construction of another building that had been planned, thereafter, under a 90° angle, oriented towards the public staircase. (DARI, JU 51, No. 214/3/1912).

²¹ During the phase of obtaining the permit, the main Technical Office changed this detail on the western façade, which does not have an indented bathroom zone, thus ensuring a larger surface both of the bathrooms and the flat.

a stepped lintel. In the centre of the lintel there is a relief with two groups of birds - little eagles (Figure 6). A pattern inspired by nature can also be found on the southern façade, an interesting relief of a lizard on the balcony consoles. A spacious garden with palm trees significantly contributes to the rich open impression and the quality of the residence.

The design of this building shows specific similarities with the *Project of a Modern Hotel*, which was published in 1908 as Träxler's student work. This primarily refers to the composition of the façade: the division, the emphasised central zone, the horizontal ribbon relief, the highlighted verticals comprising of windows and balconies. These similarities, from the aesthetic aspect, as well as in the approach and the definition of the volume and the façade, show that Theodor Träxler was the architect or that he exerted significant influence on the design.

WORK IN THE EUGENIO CELLIGOI & Co COMPANY

At the end of 1911 Vjenceslav Celligoi closed down his company, whilst at the beginning of 1912 his son Eugenio, jointly with Träxler founded the company Eugenio Celligoi and a Colleague – Entrepreneurship in Construction (*E. Celligoi e Compagno – Imprese edili*).²²

During a short period before the start of the war, Träxler and Celligoi, who at the time were thirty-years old²³ received orders for significant urban constructions: the upgrade of *the Gubernia House, the Fenice Theatre, the Benedictine Monastery* and *the Marač residential building* and all these projects were developed almost simultaneously. The social status and political influence enjoyed by Eugenio's father Vjenceslav was probably crucial for the allocation of these projects.²⁴

The Gubernia House

In 1912 Träxler and Eugenio Celligoi were commissioned for the preparation of the design for the extension of the eastern wing of the former *Villa Corossacz* in *Via della Salute* by Count Wickenburg, Rijeka Governor.²⁵ The building had been purchased from the Governorate in order to provide room for the official premises and connect them with the Governor's Palace.²⁶ Adopting an almost

²² The application for the registration of the company was submitted on 22nd January, whereas the Commercial Court published the entry of the company in the Register on 7th February 1912. The company headquarters were located at the address of A. Petőfi No. 2.

²³ Eugenio Celligoi was born in Rijeka in 1883. He finished elementary school and four lower grades of the secondary school in Rijeka. (Palinić, 1997a, 522-524).

²⁴ After the closure of his company, Vjenceslav became more intensively involved in political affairs and hence he was Vice-President of the City Council and the President of the City Savings Bank, a member of the committee for the construction of the new Benedictine Monastery and one of the major shareholders of the joint stock company Teatro Fenice.

²⁵ Villa Corossacz (Korošac), currently the Music School in Laginjina Street, was designed in 1902 by the architect Emilio Ambrosini. (DARI, JU 51, No. 62/1902).

²⁶ A year earlier, whilst he was still working in his father's company, Eugenio successfully completed the extension of the Governor's villa in the same street, which certainly earned his trust.

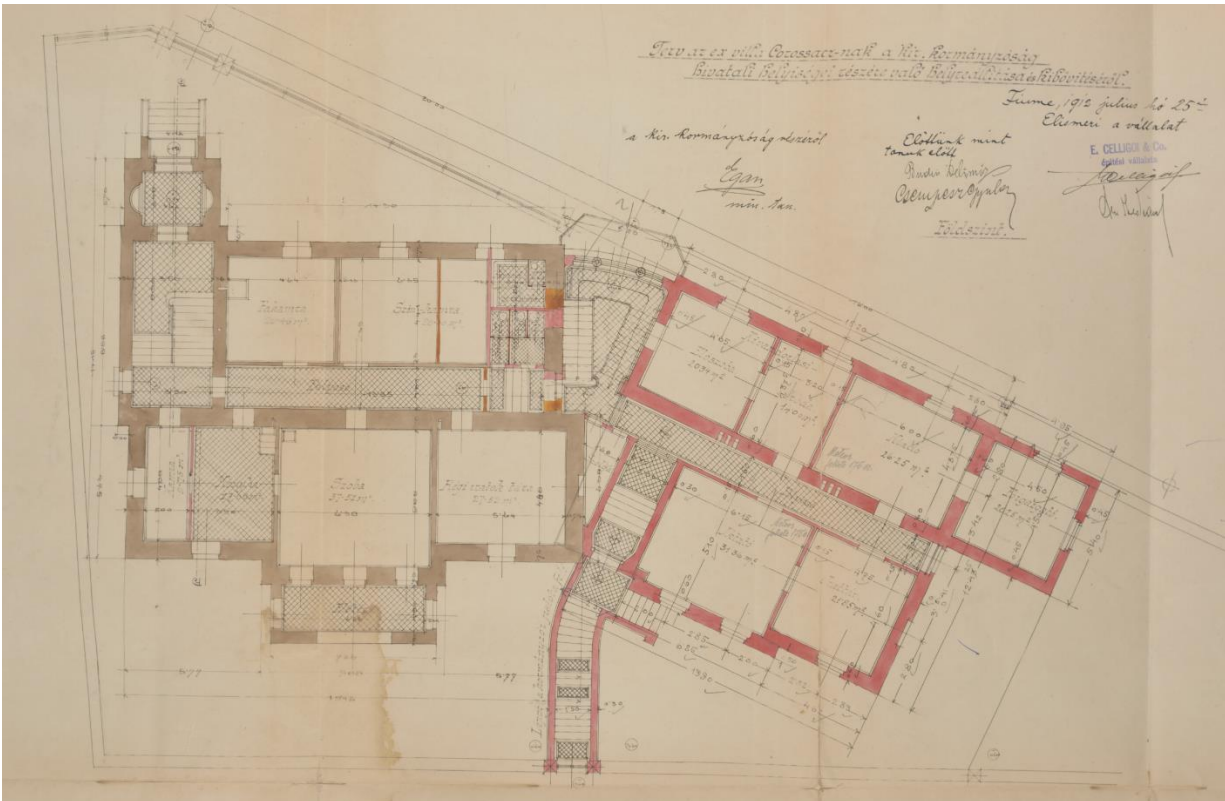


Fig. 7. Theodor Traxler, Eugenio Celligoi, *The Gubernia Palace, floor plan of the ground floor* (source: State Archives in Rijeka)

conservator's approach, and applying the existing details on the façade, Traxler and Celligoi managed to provide a stylistic unity in the external appearance of the building. In contrast with the exterior, the interior was constructed more modernly and originally, in the spirit of the late Secession.²⁷

The design retained the basic levels of the building, yet due to the differences in the elevation of the terrain, the new ground floor is actually located at the basement level of the existing building. Huge differences in elevation were solved in a highly satisfactory way and integrated into the spatial and functional organisation of the new complex, which has a basement, the ground floor, two upper floors and a loft.

A new volume of identical size was added to the existing volume of the building, yet it was rotated in relation to the direction of the street along which the façade of the building was developed. At the point in which the two volumes meet, in the space that was obtained through the axis rotation and centrally to the new complex, a new entrance and a new staircase were placed. The existing entrance to the villa and the staircase, emphasised with a tower, have been preserved and are still being used.²⁸

²⁷ Project documentation has not been fully preserved and amongst the drawings submitted for approval in July 1912 only the ground floor plan (Figure 7), the first floor plan, as well as the plan of the northern façade have been preserved (DARI, JU 5, box 614).

²⁸ Currently once more as the main entrance.



Fig. 8. *The Gubernia Palace, a view of the northern and the eastern façade (photo by Cela Matan)*

The existing building has a floor plan with a central corridor, with the load-bearing external walls and one longitudinal central wall of the corridor (Figure 7). An identical structure, as well as spatial and organisation system was also applied in the new volume, yet the orientation of the rooms is reversed and hence the central load-bearing wall was placed closer to the northern façade. Moreover, in the new volume the rooms are inter-connected, which is the feature that also appears in other projects by these architects.²⁹

The basement of the existing building includes the entrance with a staircase, a space for the storage of firewood and coal, sanitary room and a boiler room, a kitchen with a staff room, the main room and archives. Hereafter, in the new volume, there is the main entrance with a staircase, a large antechamber, a print room, the office of the manager, ancillary rooms, the entrance and exit with a staircase towards the garden, offices and archives.

On the floor of the existing building there is a living room for the director, an office with archives, a staff room and sanitary room, the antechamber, the Governor's office with a terrace and a library. The

²⁹ This scheme enables the flexibility of use and a simple conversion of the use of the spaces, which has been confirmed by a long-term use of this building for a purpose that significantly differs from the original purpose for which it was designed.



Fig. 9. *The Gubernia Palace, a detail of the staircase* (photo by Cela Matan)

new volume includes a staircase, an antechamber, two offices, an ancillary room, and the offices of public administration and the prosecutor.

The façades of the old and the new section of the complex were solved in accordance with the same principle, vertically articulated in 3 zones: the existing building with a small tower, the central entrance with a staircase and a new part that repeats the features on the façade of the existing building. The central section, which in the design significantly diverges from the style of the existing building,³⁰ was not constructed in accordance with the design, but was also decorated as the remainder of the façade. It differs from the other parts of the façade by its greater height, through an indentation in relation to the line of the façade, as well as with the design of the entrance and a Secessionist canopy. Window frames throughout the building are uniform and are characterised by lesenes with a geometric circle pattern and linear vertical decorations, emphasised lintels and the sills on the consoles. The constructed windows retained only the lesenes and the motif of a circle and vertical lines, whereas the lintels and the sills were constructed in the spirit of the Classicism and they mostly lost the Secession features that were planned in the project (Figure 8).

³⁰ And which is the closest to the style shown in other work by Träxler.

The façade is horizontally divided into the base, the central part and the final part with the cornice. The base was also divided into two parts, the plinth was made from stone, whereas the zone above has a horizontal Historicist ribbon relief. The central part has been characterised by windows with highlighted frames, yet there are no typical vertical bands or any other decorative features. A larger roof overhang with a visible wooden structure was taken over from the solution of the existing building. The motif of simple linear geometric ornaments was also used in the interior, e.g. on light poles and the stair railing (Figure 9). The floor is characteristically covered in ceramic tiles with a tiny black and white pattern and a frame in a Secession stylised Mediterranean round interlace pattern in the same colours.

The Fenice Theatre

The construction of a new Fenice Theatre in the location of the old Historicist theatre Ricotti-Fenice³¹ was launched by theatre owners who with a group of business people formed a joint stock company named *Teatro Fenice*. The work on the project commenced probably at the end of 1910,³² and the drawings were submitted for the application for a licence in June 1911.³³ Due to the required amendments, new drawings were submitted in December 1912 (Palinić, 2016, 299; DARI, JU 51, sign.3.1.9.2.).³⁴

In both versions two buildings were planned in the project. In one building there was a theatre and a variety theatre, whereas in the other the construction of a club (*Casino*) was planned, including business and residential premises and public spaces like a concert hall (in the bridge connecting the two buildings) (Figure 10). This type of combination of contents was introduced into the Rijeka setting for the first time with this project.

In the second block the public spaces were planned to the east and the south and the residential ones to the west. The public section was organised by placing shops and a restaurant on the ground floor, on the 1st floor there was a library, a socialising space and a restaurant, on the 2nd floor there were gaming areas and on the 3rd floor there were halls and offices. The residential part on the ground floor included three smaller-sized flats, whereas on the upper storeys there was one four-room, one five-room and one six-room flat respectively. The façades formed a unified style with the theatre.

Due to unsolved property-legal issues and the imminent outbreak of the First World War, the *Casino* and the residential building project were not implemented, whilst the theatre project was

³¹ The Ricotti-Fenice theatre was constructed in 1880 and reconstructed in 1883 and 1888.

³² Since the initial project dating back to 1911 already included the basic concepts of the subsequent versions, hence it can be concluded that at that time Träxler was in Rijeka.

³³ The drawings were signed by Träxler, with the exception of the site plan that was signed by Vjenceslav Celligoi.

³⁴ New drawings were signed jointly by Träxler and Eugenio Celligoi.

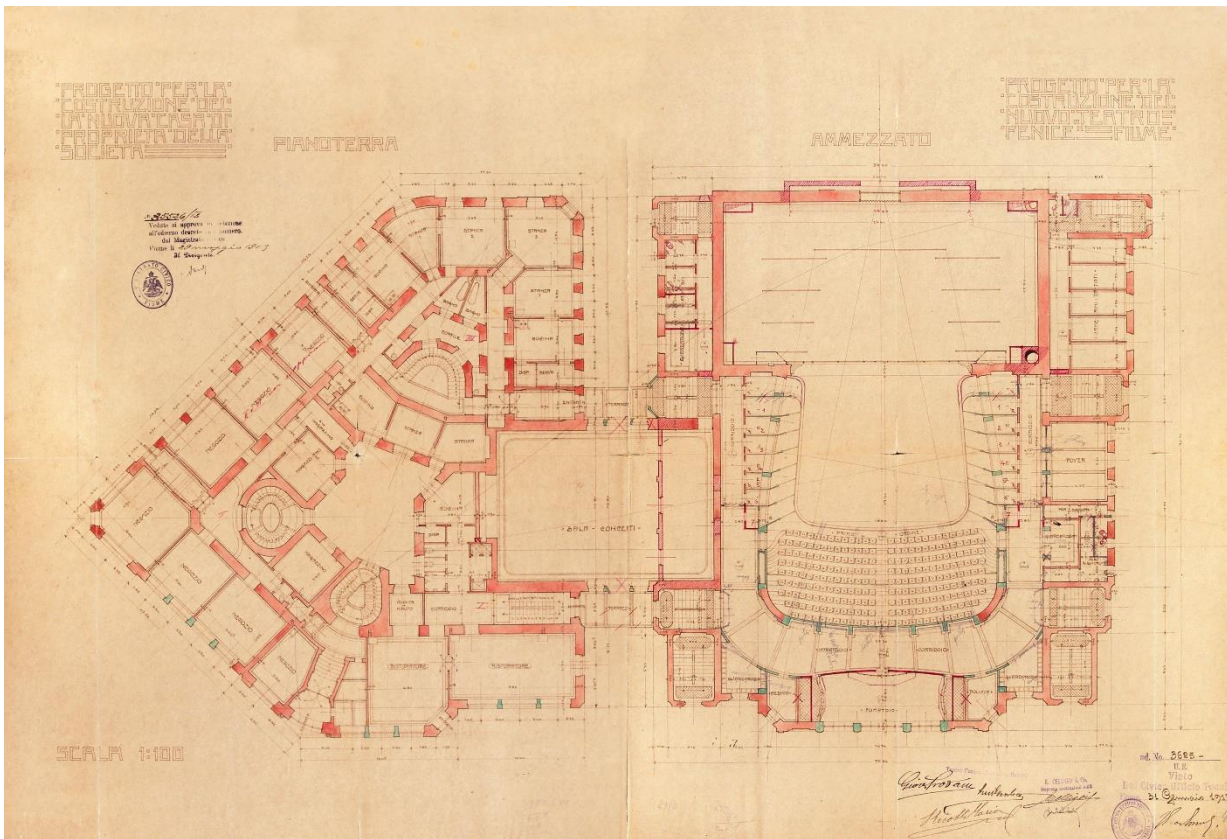


Fig. 10. *Theodor Traxler, Eugenio Celligoi, the Fenice Theatre, ground floor plan (source: State Archives in Rijeka)*

amended. From the first, fully Secession-style project dating back to 1911 (Figure 11) to the implementation in 1914 there were many amendments in the form of the reduction of ornaments and decorations and partly also the content.³⁵ A special simplification is visible on the façades – from the first versions where the façades abound in glass and are decorated with lunettes and verticals of balconies with Secession-style railings, in the end there were mainly plastered surfaces and simple windows. The final appearance is the result of various influences that were dominant in the Wagner School during those years and hence in the design of the volume, the façades and the interiors, there are prominent Proto-Cubist, Futurist and Classicist tendencies and they can also be noticed in the ratio between the wall brackets and the apertures, the applied minimalist geometric ornament and the emphasised verticality.

The constructed building is of a diversified trapezoidal form,³⁶ and is comprised of two basic volumes. The main lower volume included the auditorium and facilities primarily intended for visitors, as well as public facilities and the entrance to the subterranean theatre. The vertical volume included the stage and the facilities primarily linked with the preparation of theatre performances. The main

³⁵ The building was completed and there was a grand opening on 2nd May 1914, when Giacomo Puccini's *Tosca* was performed on stage.

³⁶ Its dimensions are around 43m x 38- 39.5m.

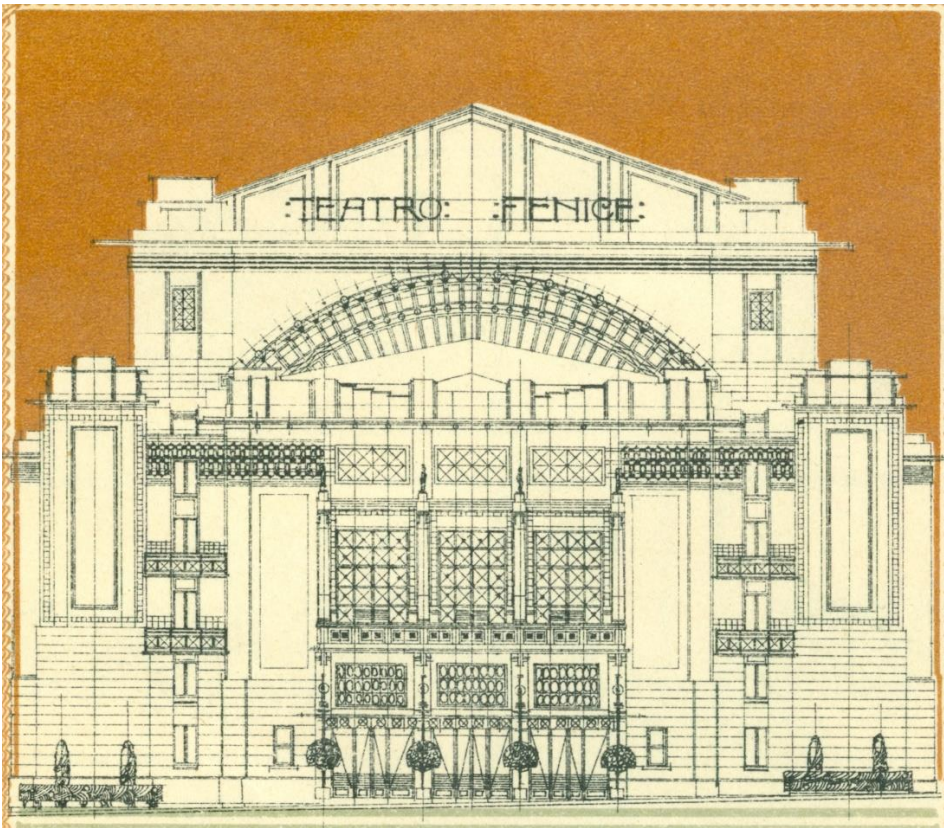


Fig. 11. *The Fenice Theatre, the main façade, detail from a Share of a joint stock Teatro Fenice* (source: private collection)

entrance to the building is from the eastern side where the foyer – vestibule - is located, whilst to the south there is the entrance to the variety theatre.

The variety theatre covers the area of two subterranean floors. The central part has twice the height.³⁷ The spaces are greatly defined by the structure – the central radially placed curved frames, the lateral galleries located from the southern and the northern side and a particularly prominent gallery in the eastern section where it was moved away from the walls and it almost floats in the space. Bar counters, tables and chairs of different styles are placed around the main area in the variety theatre, as well as the restaurant, the kitchen, sanitary facilities, dressing rooms and technical spaces.³⁸

The large auditorium was realised on the account of other areas, what is particularly visible at the entrance vestibule and the stage, which do not have enough depth. These deficiencies are compensated by the auditorium itself. In the auditorium, as well as in some details, such as the deeply placed orchestra pit, the influence of German reformed theatres, like Wagner's Festspielhaus in Bayreuth, can be detected. The experience of a unique 16 m high space, accomplished by three galleries and ancillary

³⁷ It is a storey of an average height of 5.2 m that is spatially divided into two parts by the gallery.

³⁸ These spaces also include pumps due to the issues with the flow of groundwater. In the section of vertical volume, at the -2 level there are a boiler room, technical facilities, a sprinkler system and pumps. On the -1 floor there are technical spaces and the space under the stage with an interesting wooden construction (posts with saddles and beams). The underground floors were ventilated mechanically and naturally through ventilated apertures.

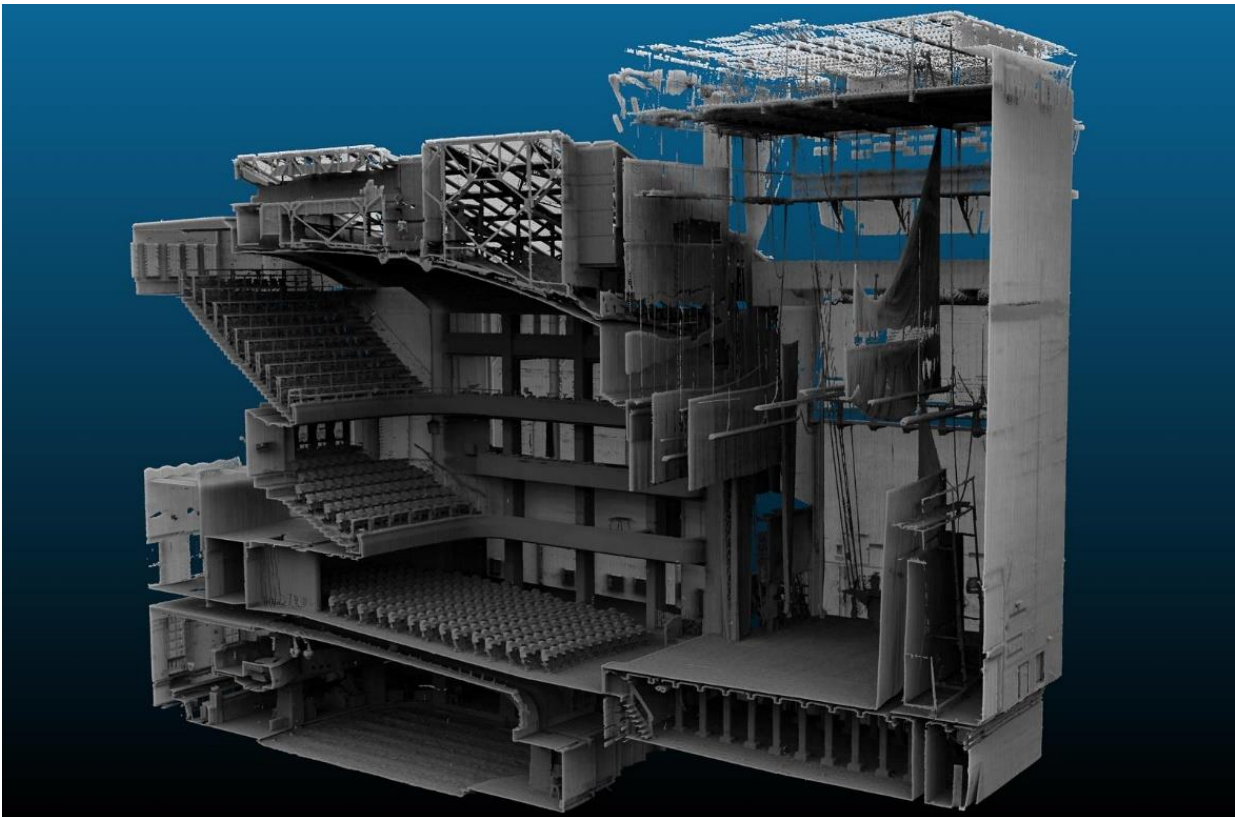


Fig. 12. *The Fenice Theatre, 3D Model, authors: Nana Palinić, Duje Kalajžić, Ivo Jovica*

loggias, represents a new, modern solution. The galleries allow visual contact between the audience, while the large portal dimensions provide a good view of the 20 m high stage. (Palinić, 2016, 335-340, 463).

On the ground floor there are also ancillary rooms and the performers' dressing rooms, on the 1st floor there are offices, sanitary facilities and corridors, on the 2nd floor a room for intervals between the performances,³⁹ ancillary rooms, sanitary facilities, offices and corridors, as well as a double-height smoking room, on the 3rd floor a terrace in the south, a duplex room for smoking in the north, sanitary facilities and corridors. On the 4th floor there are additional ancillary rooms and communications, whilst on the 5th floor there is the attic with access to the gallery. In the higher volume, concerning the aspect of height, the volume of the stage passes through all the storeys. On both sides of the stage there are rooms associated with performance preparations: actors' chamber, the choir hall, a carpentry, scenery and costume workshop.⁴⁰ Due to its intended use and in case of an emergency and escape from fire in the lower volume there are six sets of stairs and in the higher volume there are two more.⁴¹

³⁹ In this place there is currently a projection booth constructed in 1952, when these premises were closed for the public. (Palinić, 2016, 329).

⁴⁰ On the southern side from 1st to 6th floor and on the 3rd and 6th floor on the northern segment by the stage in 1960 there were flats. These were small area flats, 37 m² on the south and 60 m² on the north.

⁴¹ The building was originally covered with Eternit, which was subsequently replaced with sheet metal. It had a partly flat roof with a final bitumen coating.



Fig. 13. *The Fenice Theatre, the view from the stage towards the audience* (photo by Duje Kalajžić)

The basic structure is a reinforced concrete frame with infill brick walls.⁴² The design engineers had already had experience with constructions of high load-bearing capacity, yet such a demanding construction had not been performed in these areas at the time.⁴³ It is also important to highlight the daring solutions of the previously mentioned vault of the variety theatre with radial rounded frames of over 14 m and transverse beams of over 18 m, the cantilever gallery freely placed in space (with which design engineers intended to show that they recognised the specific features of the new material and the logic of its use), the skeletal structure of the load-bearing structure, the cantilevered galleries for the audiences... Notwithstanding the fact that the visitors may find the round decorative ceiling the most impressive feature of the entire building, from the structural aspect it is important to emphasise the roof structure onto which this ceiling was suspended. The roof above the audience and above the stage is comprised of steel truss girders with sliding bearings. This structure is partially visible in archive drawings, yet not sufficiently to be fully reconstructed from them. Since this is the only portion of the

⁴² The statistical data was signed by the engineer Weiss from Trieste. (DARI, JU 51, No. 48/11/1913).

⁴³ In addition to theatres of small dimensions constructed in Hungary by the architect Istvan Benko Medgyaszay (the theatre in Veszprem in 1908 and in Sopron in 1909) this was one of the earliest large theatres in Europe whose load-bearing structure was made from reinforced concrete. It was designed and constructed simultaneously as the reputable Parisian Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, by Auguste Perret, which has 1,250 seating capacity (Palinić, 1997d, 375-381).



Fig. 14. *The Fenice Theatre, 1914, a view of the northern façade* (source: Rijeka kino)

building that can be approached only partially, a reconstruction provided by a 3D model is very valuable (Figure 12).⁴⁴

The combination of the main reinforced concrete girders, full reinforced steel profiles and thin elements that comprise the trusses, is yet another characteristic due to which this complex is extremely significant from a structural aspect. Besides some theatre buildings which are somewhat smaller in size,⁴⁵ the Fenice Theatre is one of the first European theatres constructed in reinforced concrete. The project and the construction were simultaneous with that of Parisian *Théâtre des Champs-Élysées*, the work of Auguste Perret (Palinić, 1997b, 229).

In addition to its structure, the building is also innovative with regards to its air-conditioning system and mechanical ventilation, its sprinkler system ("a device for artificial rain") and electrical installations. The installation of the sprinkler system is the oldest in Croatia and is still functional. (Palinić, 2016, 335-340, 463).

⁴⁴ 3D point cloud model of the Theatre Fenice was provided in 2015, as a pilot-project at the Faculty of Civil Engineering in Rijeka (authors: Nana Palinić, Ph.D, Duje Kalajžić and Ivo Jovica).

⁴⁵ The Veszprem theatre (1908) and the Sopron theatre (1909), both created by Istvan Benko Medyasaszay (Moravanszky, 1984, 12-20).

Rectangular concentric decorations and linear belt decorations are frequent motifs in the building. It is important to highlight the auditorium ceiling with a motif of an eye and a central oculus (in the shape of a crystal ring around the ventilation aperture) and the decoration of the portals whose load-bearing frame is divided in linear profiles (as a specific reminiscence of complex gothic columns), whilst above the portals, towards the ceiling, Secession-style linear profiling is continued. The load-bearing structure was highlighted with colour and the design of clean shapes, with geometric decorations on the larger planes, whilst the head joints were constructed in a simple way and with structural logic (Figure 13).

In addition to the main volumes of the auditorium and the stage, the building was additionally divided by avant-corps overhangs, rooftop terraces and staircase towers, whilst the verticality is accentuated with decoration and the crow-stepped gable of the stage, that provide the building with a gloomy gothic and futuristic ambience (Figure 14). On the other hand, the southern façade and especially the eastern façade have a prevailing horizontal effect, emphasised by the base and horizontal stripes. The upper part of the façade is characterised by simple apertures located in a geometric structural pattern of the load-bearing structure. This neutral processing of the façade is a precursor to the modernist functional style. The fillings - linear features and glass walls with tiny divisions and diagonally placed inclined struts are more similar to the other gothic-futuristic sections of the building. Sections of the façade without apertures were decorated with relief concentric rectangles, a detail that has also been identified on other buildings constructed by these designers.

The Fenice Theatre is the only theatre constructed during the Secession period in Croatia. It has a seating capacity of 2,650 seats, of which 2,150 were in the theatre (1,440 seats and 710 standing positions) and 500 in the variety theatre, due to which it ranked amongst the largest theatre buildings in Europe in that period.⁴⁶

The Benedictine Monastery

The Benedictine Monastery with the first school for girls had existed in Rijeka since the 17th century, however, at the beginning of the 20th century the decision was made to abandon it, due to the poor condition of the building. Moreover, it was decided that a new building would be constructed in the city district of Podmurvice.⁴⁷ The design project of the new monastery, which also included a women's educational institute, a school and a church, was commissioned for Vjenceslav Celligoi, who during that time stopped working and hence the project preparation was taken over by Theodor Träxler and

⁴⁶ The first information about the theatre was provided at the end of the 1980's, since its architects have become known (Matejčić, 1989, 334), whilst several years later it was presented to the international community (Jerčinović-Palinić, 1992; Palinić, 1997b, 212-229; Pozzetto, 2002).

⁴⁷ Currently Franje Čandeka Street.

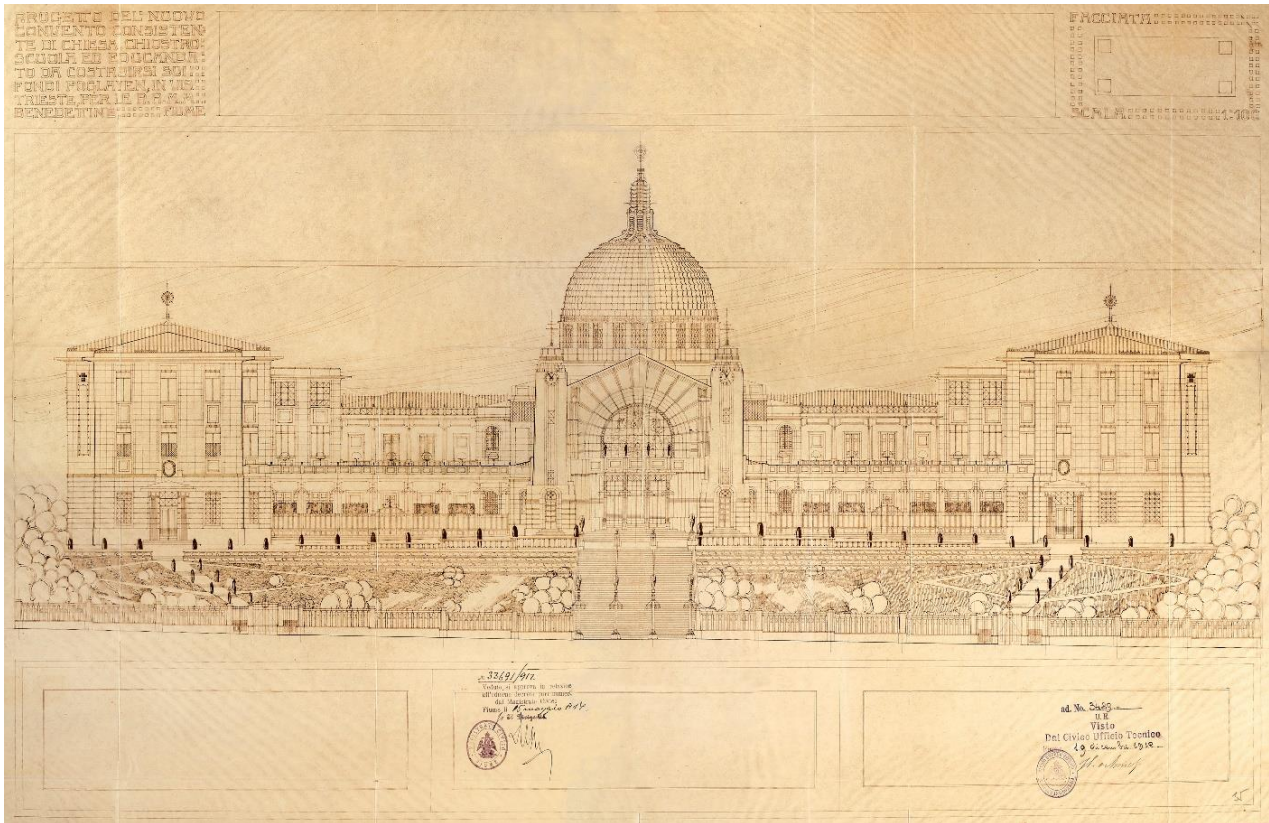


Fig. 15. *Theodor Träxler, Eugenio Celligoi, the Benedictine Monastery, southern façade* (source: State Archives in Rijeka)

Eugenio Celligoi, simultaneously with the project of the Fenice Theatre. The design project of the monastery was completed in July 1912, when the building licence was applied for.⁴⁸ The roofing of the building was completed in September 1913, whilst in July 1914 it was certified for use. The building was the only Secessionist sacral complex constructed in Rijeka (Palinić, 1997c, 274-283).⁴⁹

The designed complex was located on a large plot of land, which during that period was not part of the city centre. It has a highly elegant classical organisation of volume with two spacious internal yards (cloisters), forming the E-shaped floor plan.⁵⁰ The western and the eastern wings have separate entrances and the entrance to the church was particularly emphasised through a central monumental staircase. On the southern side the complex was supposed to be closed off by communication passages

⁴⁸ Of the original project documentation, which consisted of 16 drawings, only 3 have been preserved: the plan of the foundations and the basement, the plan of the main façade (Figure 15) and the cross-section (DARI, JU 51, No.213/3/1912). The preserved files also included drawings of the site plan (DARI, JU 2, D 13/a/1914; D 13/1914).

⁴⁹ During that period, in addition to the Benedictine Monastery, 1903 saw the construction of the Synagogue according to the project by Lipót Baumhorn, however, it was constructed in the historicistic style (Matejčić, 1989, 318-322).

⁵⁰ The northern wing is the longest (90m) and two symmetrical external wings are attached to it vertically – the eastern and the western wing (50m long) and a central wing (that includes the church). The width of the wings is on average 12m.

that would connect the lateral wings with the central wing, however, these volumes at the end were not constructed.⁵¹

According to a design project dating back to 1912, the central complex was dominated by the church dome with a lantern and a cross on a glass permeated tambour and the main façade of the church with stained glass and clock towers on both sides. The entrance was elevated to a podium which could be accessed by an additional staircase and it was slightly more elevated than the entrance to the monastery. The portal was radially decorated and spatial moulding would contribute to the rich impression of the church. The verticals of the towers were emphasised through their placement on the base with vertical lighting apertures and linear decorative moulding, additionally enhanced with rectangular ornaments, a clock and a cross. The sacral purpose of the building was also highlighted by the placement of sculptures of saints and angels above the church portal and along the access staircase.

According to the project dating back to 1913, the northern, western and eastern wings that were built included the monastery, school and an educational institute covering an area of three storeys (ground floor and two floors and, partially, due to a difference in the terrain elevation, a basement as well). Common rooms and working spaces were located on the lower storeys, whereas rooms and classrooms were located on the upper floors (Palinić, Crnjak, 2012, 249-276). The corridor that connects the rooms was placed throughout the length of the façade facing the inner courtyards that hence became the focus of their coexistence. This was especially highlighted on the ground floor where the interior and the exterior were connected through large glass-wall areas. In this way the harmony between the interior and the exterior spaces was achieved and the interior space was enhanced by external contents.⁵² All the main rooms are oriented outwards, in other words, they have a view of the park that belongs to the complex.⁵³

The project design of the church was defined according to the rules of the Benedictine Order and hence the area was graded into zones: the entrance part with a choir upstairs,⁵⁴ the central part and the sanctuary with the altar and the ambulatory.⁵⁵

⁵¹ These horizontal volumes connected the volume of the church with the two wings of the monastery at two levels and provided the main façade of the complex with an additionally rich expression.

⁵² An olive orchard on the west and a herb garden on the east.

⁵³ It is interesting that above the ceilings in the main rooms a shallow double-pitched roof was designed with a slight slope and the kingpost with a span of 9.5 m and above the corridor there was a passable flat roof. The ceilings between the floors had a construction made from precast reinforced concrete elements.

⁵⁴ Which at the 1st floor level was connected with the monastery through an external passage, the rear part of the hall which was connected with the school.

⁵⁵ Behind the ambulatory was placed a covered passage - connection with the northern wing of the complex, and is characterised by a glass roof on a steel triangular truss.



Fig. 16. *The Benedictine Monastery, a detail from the northern façade* (photo by Cela Matan)

According to the original drawing, the main façade is comprised of three main volumes: the western and the eastern wings and the centrally placed church that were connected with low horizontal wings which closed off the inner courtyards towards the south (Figure 15). The volume of the church, on whose façade the tower verticals are highlighted, was designed so that it provides the front of the façade, whilst the volumes of the wings are slightly less emphasised in relation to the horizontal wings. During the construction the overall dimensions of the church were reduced and hence its main façade is in the same plane as the eastern and the western wing of the complex.⁵⁶

The façades were designed in a simple way and they followed the structural pattern.⁵⁷ The basic division of the façade of the western and the eastern wings includes the base and the upper part, where the lower part was decorated with horizontal strip line ornaments, whilst the upper part is decorated with a slight square relief ornament on the plaster. The entrance portals have an access platform elevated by a smaller lavish staircase and they are vaulted by a small three-pitched roof and a decorative oval. The entrances are framed by portals of straight lines and the capitals of the columns of the portal are characterised by rectangular meanders and sculptures of human faces (nuns and pupils). The square

⁵⁶ The southern façade of the northern wing is visible, yet it is of secondary importance on the main façade. It is organised in 5 sections – the emphasised and higher finishing (angular) and the central section and the sections between the highlighted volumes that are one storey lower (and have a total of 2 above-ground storeys). Even nowadays the volumes are more pronounced at the corners of the wings, yet the difference in volume is mostly lost on the northern façade due to the subsequent extension of the second floor in the northern wing.

⁵⁷ Most frequently 2.6 m (Palinić, Crnjak, 2012, 249-276).

pattern of the transom window of the door, as well as the basic lines, follow the idea behind the project.⁵⁸ The horizontal counterbalance was achieved by the vertical lines of the windows and the highlighted parapets, which is a motif that is also present on other buildings by the same architects. A low-sloped roof with a highlighted circumferential cornice overhang was constructed in accordance with the project plan.

In the volumes in the secondary plan, i.e. the northern wing, the same decoration was partially repeated.⁵⁹ The central, lower sections of the northern wing, with a view of the inner courtyard, in the design have a highlighted load-bearing skeletal structure, whilst the apertures are smaller and hence infill planes appear. The decoration of the façade of the constructed complex was harmonised with the façades on the western and eastern wings.

On the ground floor of the wings there are apertures along the entire span of the load-bearing structure. The load-bearing pillars are specific due to their tops with relief horizontal linear ornaments. The pillars continue on the beams that are strengthened in the contact area and are emphasised by a continuous horizontal line and a granular wall surface.⁶⁰ These horizontal volumes were rhythmically arranged through a system of columns and apertures, whereas a similar spacing appears also on the constructed circumferential wall, which closes off the complex to the south.

According to archival documentation, it is visible that some aspects the church's design were influenced by the design of Wagner's Church of St Leopold in the Viennese-based hospital Steinhof (Palinić, 1997c, 282; Horvat-Pintarić, 1989, 140-149). This is evident in the shape of the dome and the lantern, the rhythmically defined tambour, rectangular tower clocks, geometric patterns and the stained glass on the main façade. Moreover, it is important to point out the cross-section which shows that, as was the case with Wagner's church proposed double dome, the lower one most probably was a reinforced concrete dome shell, and the upper one was the steel grid structured dome, which, if it had been implemented, would have been an exceptional structural solution for Rijeka during that period (Palinić, Crnjak, 2012, 249-276).

Technological innovations were also used in other parts of the complex: the flat roof intended to be used, the skeletal reinforced concrete structure and a precast reinforced concrete ceiling, due to which this building ranks amongst the innovative and early reinforced concrete constructions in Rijeka.

⁵⁸ The decoration on the windows on the ground floor, protection from burglars and window parapets on the floor have a square pattern. The constructed zones between windows emphasise the load-bearing skeletal structure and have been designed so that the horizontal strip line ornaments refract and leave the impression of a square pattern which is less emphasised compared with the project design.

⁵⁹ The square pattern on the window ornaments was repeated in the highlighted angular volumes (on higher-level floors, whereas this ornament is present on the ground floor of the volumes in the primary plan) square frames on window parapets, whilst the windows on the 1st floor were divided by vertical lines.

⁶⁰ In the base the span was closed by parapets with sills, with the exception of the area where the doors are located.



Fig. 17. *The Benedictine Monastery, currently the Podmurvice student dormitory* (photo by Cela Matan)

The design project presents a complex with considerably highlighted ornaments on the surfaces, whilst the actual impression of the reliefs on the surfaces is on a significantly smaller-scale. The decorated entrance portals are the most emphasised with their specific features in which a rectangular meander and a human figure were combined. Furthermore, the names of the architects and the year of the opening were written on the northern façade (Figure 16).

Unfortunately, the most impressive part of the project, the sumptuous church, was completed later, in a reduced form.⁶¹ The influence of the previous design is evident in the basic dimensions of the plan, in the retaining of the towers to the sides of the façade, as well in a barely visible radial decoration in the plaster which takes over the highlighted motif of the façade decoration of the original design (Figure 17).⁶²

⁶¹ The currently existing Church of St. Joseph was constructed in 1931, based on the project by the Rijeka-based architect Eduardo Stipanovich and it is smaller compared with what was originally designed. This church has double-pitched roof, whilst the impressive planned dome was replaced by a conventional roof. Moreover, at the join between the church and the monastery a classical bell tower was constructed with a four-pitched roof (DARI, JU 51, No. 52/1929).

⁶² In 1937 an addition floor was built in the northern wing based on the project by Luigi Parmeggiani throughout the full width of the block and hence the original flat roof and original gable roof structure of a significant span were lost (DARI, JU 51, No. 57/1937). In 1944 the basement was refurbished into an air raid shelter, whereas in 1950 the western wing was renovated, having been damaged during the Second World War. Since 1947 the monastery complex has been used as a student dormitory and it has retained this purpose to this day.

The Marač residential building

Träxler and Celligoi completed the project of a residential building for the Sušak landowner Pietro (Petar) Marač in April 1913, and the building permit was obtained the same year in May. The building is located in Dolac (currently Barčić street), on the part of the plot of land where the construction of a block beside the Fenice Theatre was planned but had not been built.⁶³

According to the projects submitted to the main Technical Office in Rijeka whilst applying for the building permit, it is evident that the building had been designed as a part of a block and hence its main external façades were oriented towards south-west and south-east,⁶⁴ whilst the northern part was of an irregular form with a view of the inner courtyard, since there are plans for the continuation of the block with other buildings. The designed building has 7 above-ground storeys (ground floor, 5 storeys and the loft) connected with a three-flight staircase, located in the part facing the courtyard.⁶⁵ The building has the L-shaped floor plan, rotated in relation to the cardinal points by 45°.

Public facilities were planned on the ground floor – a coffee shop with a billiards room and ancillary rooms, which were accessed from the southern corner of the building, cut below 45°. In the central part of the south-western façade there is an entrance to the basements and the storage spaces located on the ground floor and a staircase that leads to the upper storeys. This part of the building, due to the terrain elevation difference, is located at a higher elevation compared to the coffee shop with which it is also connected through a central corridor used for commercial purposes (Figure 18).

The residential parts in the building were arranged in the form of two flats on each storey, constructed according to the standard two-tract scheme. The northern flat, covering an area of 126 m², consists of three large rooms and one smaller, a bathroom, a toilet facility, a kitchen, a pantry and a corridor. The main rooms are oriented in order to face the street, whilst the commercial rooms have a view of the courtyard. The southern flat, covering an area of 220 m², consists of a small entrance hall, a large antechamber with a view of the inner courtyard, as well as four large rooms and one smaller room, a bathroom, a kitchen, a pantry, a maid's room and a toilet facility. All the main rooms are accessed through a large antechamber and the corner room is also accessed through a small *dégagement*. As is

⁶³ Marač did not start the construction and in 1914 he applied for a one year-extension of the building permit, stressing that he had replaced the engineer responsible for the construction and that it was no longer Eugenio Celligoi, as he had opted for Milan Čalogović. The construction managed by the newly-appointed engineer had not yet commenced and the following year Marač applied yet again for a one year-extension of the building permit, due to the war. The extensions of the building permit would also be continued during the following years, until 1921 when Marač conclusively renounced on the construction project.

⁶⁴ The building where the telephone switchboard Telve that was subsequently located in the same place was built in an identical way.

⁶⁵ The original idea apparently envisaged one more floor, since, according to the Decision provided by the Provincial Technical Office, dating back to 1913, a decrease in the height of the building by 1 floor was requested, which resulted in the preserved project.

the case with the northern flat, all the main rooms are oriented towards the street and interconnected. The higher level floors are organised in the same way.

The loft includes ancillary rooms – a room for drying and ironing laundry, as well as two sanitary facilities and 10 rooms, probably intended as storage for the flats on the lower level storeys.

In the building we find the structure of longitudinal load-bearing partitions, with the exception of a part of the ground floor where a reinforced concrete skeleton was planned. In addition to circumferential walls, the adjacent internal walls, parallel with the main façades, are also load-bearing. With regard to the floor plan, the walls act mutually both as load-bearing and stiff walls.⁶⁶

The ground floor in the southern and in the northern parts of the floor plan has a different height due to the terrain elevation difference of the terrain (from 5.4 m in the coffee shop to 3 m in the storage space). The other storeys do not have differences in the elevation of the terrain, however, they have different clear heights of the storeys (ranging from 3.5 m to 3.2 m). The loft has an interesting roof structure with double king post truss stretching more than 11.5 m.

As had been the case in previous projects, this façade is also divided into the base, a central part and the frieze zone. The base is divided into three parts – the glass wall at the ground floor with two-block inter-zones, probably plastered, and two zones of differently treated horizontal linear moulding at the first floor height level. The central part (from 2nd to 4th floor) is characterised by the alternation of the axes with windows and parapets and those with balconies and balcony doors. The zone of frieze and cornice (5th floor) shows rectangular concentric ornaments (like those on the Celligoi residential building and the Fenice Theatre), as well as a simple horizontal ornamental band. The structure and the façade of the building have been organised mostly in accordance with a regular pattern of 2.4 m, determined by the reinforced concrete structure of the ground floor.

On all the storeys, and particularly on the central storey, the façades are characterised by highlighted verticality. Façade ceramics in the form of a chess board, applied by the balcony door, are the designer's favourite motif, yet they are a rarity of Secession style in Rijeka. Closed planes prevail on the upper floors (notwithstanding large, densely positioned windows and balcony doors), whilst the glass-walled ground floor is almost entirely open towards the street and the public space (a detail that had also been previously noticed in the Benedictine Monastery complex) and was amongst the first instances of this in Rijeka (Figure 19). The courtyard façades show the usual simple planes and apertures without frames, carved into the wall.

This design project also shows great similarity with the *Project of a modern hotel*, primarily in the open glass-walled ground floor where the structure was reduced to a minimum (as is the case in the

⁶⁶ Load-bearing walls decrease in height and range from around 90 cm on the ground floor to 45 cm in the loft.

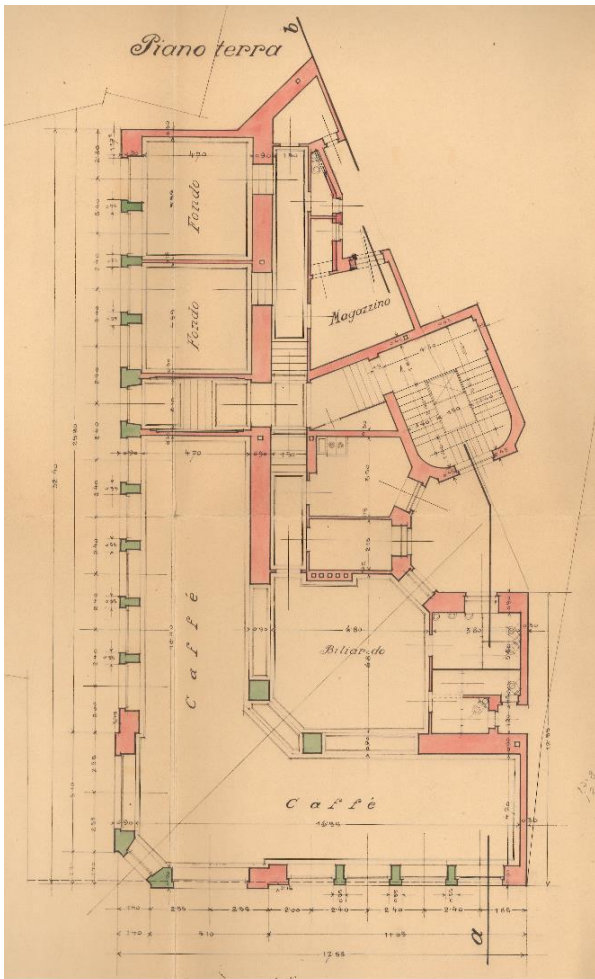


Fig. 18. Theodor Träxler, Eugenio Celligoi, the Marač residential building, the ground floor plan (source: State Archives in Rijeka); **Fig. 19.** Theodor Träxler, Eugenio Celligoi, the Marač residential building, the eastern facade (source: State Archives in Rijeka)

central and lateral zones of the hotel). The similarity also exists in the horizontal linear moulding in the lower parts of the building and the highlighted vertical axes of the windows, parapets and decorative features in the zones between the windows. Had the building been constructed, it would have certainly been one of the most imposing buildings in Rijeka (DARI, JU 51, No. 29/6/1913).

THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND END OF ACTIVITY IN RIJEKA

The completion of the Fenice Theatre and the Benedictine Monastery just before the start of World War I marked the end of activity of Theodor Träxler in Rijeka. His last work was the Marač residential building. The war prevented the implementation of this project, as well as the complete implementation of two previously mentioned projects. Träxler's partner Eugenio Celligoi was drafted for service in the war after 1915. His father died in December of the following year and in 1919, after Eugenio had returned from the war, where he had been appointed as Captain of First Class, the entire family emigrated to Brazil. Eugenio settled in the city of Santos, where he became a Public Works Director

(*dirigente della Provveditoria ai lavori pubblici*) and implemented a large number of projects and performed substantial construction work. He died in Santos in 1974, at the age of 91.⁶⁷

Unlike Celligoi, all trace of Theodor Träxler has been lost. There is no information about him after 1914, even in the Austrian State Archives (Kriegsarchiv, 1881), and the same applies for the archives of his home town and the city in which he was educated.⁶⁸ It is currently impossible to ascertain what happened with Theodor, who at the time was a thirty-four-year old man, did he, like many others, look for a better future in one of the countries of the New World or did his destiny remain linked with Europe which had entirely changed against the backdrop of the turbulent times that ensued.

The buildings that he designed and constructed still exist in Rijeka. During the post-war period the Fenice Theatre operated as the largest cinema in the city and as a hall for occasional music performances. It has been closed since 2007, its condition is becoming increasingly derelict and its sustainability has been threatened. The Benedictine Monastery has been converted into a student dormitory, the Gubernia House is currently a music school, whereas the Celligoi residential building is still used for residential purposes. The Fenice Theatre, the Celligoi residential building and Warehouse 19 (as a part of the Metropolis complex), have thus far been protected as cultural monuments. Irrespective of the fact that the valorisation of these buildings has occurred rather late, the city in which he made an indelible mark through his work, is starting to recognise their actual value and significance. The recognition process has expanded beyond Rijeka and its outskirts, which has been confirmed by a publication entitled *La scuola di Wagner 1894-1912* which was signed in Trieste by Marco Pozzetto, (Pozzetto, 2002) one of the best connoisseurs of Secession and the Wagner School, which used the motif of the façade of the Fenice Theatre on its front cover. The presentation of his oeuvre in the wider regional and European environment is intended to contribute to the permanent valorisation of his work. It aims to be a part of the process whose objective was defined a century ago by the Wagner School and it consists of the affirmation of the architecture and architects of both European and global importance.

SUMMARY

The architect Theodor Träxler was born in the town of Horn in Lower Austria in 1881. In Vienna he attended the School of Arts and Crafts and the Academy of Fine Arts which was led by Otto Wagner and was one of the lesser known students from this school. From 1911 to 1914 he stayed and worked in Rijeka, initially in the company owned by architect Vjenceslav Celligoi and subsequently in a joint undertaking with his son Eugenio. During his stay there he developed, both independently and jointly

⁶⁷ He left behind a wife Helena, who died in 1982 at the age of 95 and two sons: a doctor, Voino and an engineer, George, in Curitiba and Sao Paulo. Information has been kindly provided by Mr Iginio Celligoi from Trieste, a son of Eugenio's brother Alessandro and the professor Fulvio Ongaro, also from Trieste.

⁶⁸ His immediate family was buried in Horn. His mother Leopoldina died on 22/02/1942, his brother Josef (born in 1883) 7/10/1947 and his sister Helene (born in 1885) 30/11/1954. However, there is no available information about his father Josef and his elder sister Aloisina. (*Pfarrarchiv Horn*).

with Eugenio, several projects for residential and public buildings. He supervised the construction of Warehouse 19 in the Port of Rijeka. He was the architect of the Marač residential building, the Gubernia House and can also be considered as the designer of the Celligoi residential building. The most significant projects that he implemented were those of the Fenice Theatre and the Benedictine Monastery, which were not fully realised. The characteristic features of his projects were daring, innovative structures in reinforced concrete and a specific, restrained style typical of late Secession, which preceded Modern Architecture.

Key words: Theodor Träxler, the Wagner School, Rijeka - Fiume, Secession architecture

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