European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards (2026)
1748-Conservation and Adaptive Reuse 1. Conservation & Adaptive Reuse

Renovation of the Hungarian State Opera

eyVqwJnN

Entry details

General information

Main country of application	Hungary
Name of the building, site or work of art	Hungarian State Opera

Address of the building, site or work of art

> Hungary, 1061 Budapest, Andrassy ut 22.

Type (select one type only, as applicable):	✓ Building

Brief description of the project

> The comprehensive restoration of the Hungarian State Opera House was one of the most ambitious conservation projects in Hungary in recent decades. The guiding principle was to safeguard the artistic vision of Miklós Ybl while meeting the functional and technical standards of a twenty-first century opera house. Every design decision balanced authenticity with contemporary requirements, ensuring that both heritage values and modern performance needs were fully respected.

Start date of the project	2017-10-25
Completion date of the project	2022-11-10
Website(s) of the project/nominee	https://zda.hu/en/zda-project/hungarian-state-opera/
Does the site or heritage in question have national/regional/ local cultural heritage designation or protection status in its country?	Yes

If yes, please specify:

> The Hungarian State Opera House is a nationally protected monument, listed in the national register of protected cultural heritage sites under Act LXIV of 2001 on the Protection of Cultural Heritage. It is one of Hungary's most significant 19th-century historic public buildings and enjoys national-level protection.

Is the site or heritage in question included on the UNESCO World Heritage List, either as a single World Heritage Site or as part of one larger site? If so, please specify which one.

> Yes, the Hungarian State Opera lies within the area designated as "Budapest, including the Banks of the Danube, the Buda Castle Quarter and Andrássy Avenue", inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1987 with an extension in 2002.

Is the site or heritage in question designated as a European Heritage Label? If so, please specify which one.

> The Hungarian State Opera House is not designated as a European Heritage Label site. However, it is located on Andrássy Avenue, which is part of the UNESCO World Heritage List. This recognition highlights the Opera House's cultural and historical significance and its prominent role among Budapest's most important heritage sites.

Contact details

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Name of the project leader	DLA habil. Gabor Zoboki

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-Mónika - Simon - Stúdió Kvarc ltd. - interior design lead

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-Annabella - Hevesi - - furniture designer

-Federico - Cruz-Barney - STUDIO DAP - auditorium acoustics

-Csaba - Huszty - Entel ltd. - auditorium acoustics

-Éva - Aratóné Borsi - Arató ltd. - architectural acoustics

-Gusztáv - Józsa - Arató ltd. - auditorium acoustics

-Zsuzsa - Tompai - - stage technology

Dr. - Tamás - Mezős - - heritage consultancy

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-Nándor - Szebeni - - *heritage consultancy*

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-András - Seres - - painting restoration

-Dóra - Verebes - - painting restoration

-Alexandra - Tóth - - painting restoration

-Péter - Zágoni - - wooden restoration

Dr. - Sándor - Oláh - - goldsmithing

-Éva - Magyar - - goldsmithing

-Lőrinc - Tímár - - goldsmithing

-Melinda - Nagy - - goldsmithing

-Bálint - Rékasy - - goldsmithing

-Szabolcs - Csányi - - metal restoration

-Attila - Kovács - -stone restoration

-Károly - Payer - - terrazzo and mosaic restoration

-László - Czifrák - - architectural ceramics

-Eszter - Fellegi - -textile design

-Eszter - Révész - -textile design

-Katalin - Eck - -textile design

-Zoltán - Deák - Tripartium ltd. - facade reconstruction

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-Gábor - Földváry - - support structures

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-János - Darnay - Hungaroproject Mérnökiroda ltd. - electrical systems

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Concise summary

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The Hungarian State Opera House in Budapest, designed by Miklós Ybl and completed in 1884, is a unique monument of 19th-century musical culture and historicist architecture. Few opera houses of this era remain in their original form, which makes the building an exceptional masterpiece of European theatre architecture. Considered Ybl's most important work, it reflects the achievements of Europe's greatest opera houses, from Versailles' Royal Opera to Milan's La Scala and Bayreuth's Festspielhaus. At its inauguration, Emperor Franz Joseph is said to have remarked that Budapest's Opera surpassed Vienna's in splendour.

The Opera House embodies the combined talents of Hungary's finest 19th-century artists and craftsmen. Generations of legendary operatic and ballet performances have made it a cultural landmark of both national and international significance. Unlike many cultural treasures destroyed during wars and political upheavals, the Opera survived intact, which further enhances its historical value.

Between 2017 and 2022, the Opera underwent a large-scale renovation, one of the most ambitious cultural investments in Hungary in recent decades. Financed entirely through non-refundable state funding, the €143 million project (about 55 billion HUF) went far beyond physical restoration. Its goal was to safeguard the building's artistic and architectural integrity while adapting it to the technical and functional demands of modern opera production.

The renewal involved comprehensive improvements: refurbishment of the stage and auditorium, modernisation of sound and lighting systems, and reorganisation of public areas. The surroundings were also upgraded with new paving, lighting, and street furniture, as well as improved pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. Accessibility was enhanced with solutions for visitors with reduced mobility.

Inside, the Opera House was equipped with state-of-the-art stage technologies, energy-efficient systems, and intelligent lighting, while preserving its neo-Renaissance character and world-class acoustics. A key challenge of the project was balancing historical authenticity with modern functionality, restoring the original artistic unity that had been compromised by earlier modifications.

Today, the Hungarian State Opera House once again radiates the splendour of its golden age. Restored "to be more 19th-century than the 19th century itself," this 138-year-old cultural palace stands as a symbol of continuity and renewal, and as a beacon of Hungary's musical and architectural heritage.

Historical background

Historical background with dates

The Hungarian State Opera House, designed by Miklós Ybl, opened on 24 September 1884 and quickly became one of the finest monuments of European historicism. Over the following decades, several alterations were made while preserving its artistic character. In 1895, electric lighting was installed, and in 1912 a major renovation by István Medgyasszay introduced new cloakrooms, reopened staircases, attic conversions, and updated seating. Later, in 1950, under director Gusztáv Oláh, the auditorium was regilded and the stage's tin drape replaced with velvet.

In 1951, the Erkel Theatre was brought under the Opera's control, doubling its responsibilities. Although urgent partial works were undertaken, comprehensive modernisation only came with the centenary in 1984, when technical systems were upgraded.

The restoration of Ybl's masterpiece was an especially complex challenge: the aim was not only to remove unsympathetic alterations but also to return the Opera House as closely as possible to its 19th-century splendour.

Value and significance in its local/regional/national context

> The Hungarian State Opera House is one of the most emblematic cultural landmarks of Budapest and Hungary as a whole. Designed by Miklós Ybl and inaugurated in 1884, it represents the architectural and artistic ambitions of the Dual Monarchy era, when Budapest was emerging as a modern European capital. Locally, the Opera House has long been a focal point of urban identity on Andrássy Avenue, itself a UNESCO World Heritage site. Regionally, it serves as a cultural hub of Central Europe, attracting artists and audiences from neighbouring countries and fostering cross-border exchange in the performing arts. On a national level, the Opera House embodies Hungary's operatic and musical traditions, providing a stage for world-class productions and nurturing generations of Hungarian performers. Its recent comprehensive restoration reinforces this significance, preserving heritage while ensuring the building continues to serve as a premier cultural institution for the twenty-first century.

Former and new use of the building/site, if applicable

> After five years of reconstruction, the Hungarian State Opera House has been revitalised. The concept, based on thorough research, sought to "think with Miklós Ybl's mind," respecting his 19th-century design while meeting the demands of today's audiences and stage technology. ZDA collaborated with experts, artists, and restorers on one of Hungary's most complex reconstructions of the decade. As Ybl's foremost masterpiece, the Opera House stands among Europe's finest musical theatres and historicist buildings. The central challenge was deciding which historical state to restore, ensuring the building can serve the next 25–30 years of Hungarian operatic performance.

State of conservation of the building/site/work of art before the project commenced

> Before reconstruction, the Opera House's structure was stable, but functional, aesthetic, and technical deficiencies required intervention. Weather had severely damaged the façade's stone and ceramic decorations, roofing, and tin elements, while windows and doors were worn out. Interior colours and materials had lost authenticity due to repainting and partial renovations. The auditorium's acoustic integrity was impaired by altered seating, disrupted resonant spaces, and inappropriate coverings. Outdated stage technology, along with inadequate public and service areas, no longer met 21st-century standards. Renovation became essential to safeguard the building's cultural value and ensure it could function for future generations.

Conservation work undertaken

Aims and objectives of the project.

> A historically authentic reconstruction
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> The interior spaces of the Ybl Opera building, which are accessible to the public, can be seen as an organic continuum in terms of architecture – there is no separate "exterior and interior" architecture here. What we can see in the building is a Gesamtkunstwerk (literally, "total work of art"), where architecture is not separated from interior design, painting and applied arts, but all the artistic disciplines are linked together according to a specific organising principle. This unity is a combination of theoretical thought and ingenious instinct. This is how the building is able to present a coherent image while at the same time offering something new in every space.
>
> There is something new on every surface. Ybl also took care to use a story-telling system of motifs that is understandable to all subgroups of the audience.
>
> The primary architectural and interior design criterion was to reconstruct the historical state of the building based on the plans of Miklós Ybl as far as possible in terms of spatial structure, use of materials, surfaces and colours, and in spirit. The reconstruction was based on research of the historical sources, some of which were available (archive photos, archival research, text analysis, restoration excavations, etc.), but these research materials had to be supplemented in the course of the planning process! In places where no authentic source could be found, or where

the change of function has altered a detail in the historic spaces, we used the prefigurations known and used by Ybl – Semperoper, Burgtheater – and his related works as a guide to ideas and a historical foreshadowing of inspiration.

– Semperoper, Burgtheater – and his related works as a guide to ideas and a historical foreshadowing of inspiration.

Historical and technical research undertaken for the project.

As part of the project, several types of research were conducted to create a historical value inventory. Examinations with a focus on art history aspects explored the artistic context, while research into inspiration analysed contemporary operas. A detailed analysis of the reconstruction phases was made, and archival sources were also included. The architectural history research examined the development of the building, which was supplemented by structural history analyses. In addition, research with a focus on opera history and performing arts explored the institution's artistic past and performing traditions.

In the case of the stonework, material testing and condition assessment were first carried out, which revealed damage to the facade decorations, sculptures and structural elements.

As part of the restoration of wooden parts, microscopic and moisture tests were performed on the exterior and interior doors and windows before the commencement of any work. After cleaning the oak and pine structures, preservative impregnation, structural reinforcement and colour reconstruction were performed. The missing elements on the coverings of the boxes, as well as the wooden ceilings of the Bertalan Székely Parlour and the smoking hall, were replaced and the surfaces were retouched using modern but reversible technologies.

During the restoration of textile surfaces, fabric structure tests and dye analysis were first performed, followed by cleaning, disinfection and colour enhancement.

In the case of painted surfaces in the interior, stratigraphic tests were used to identify the layering, and then the decoration of the gallery, the boxes, the foyer, and the grand staircase was restored through gentle cleaning and paint layer conservation. During the restoration of the decorative paintings and sgraffito surfaces on the external facades, condition assessment, surface consolidation and partial reconstruction were carried out.

During metal restoration, corrosion removing methods were selected based on metallographic tests.

Stages of implementation of the project.

The project began with a government resolution that established its financing, strategic objectives and institutional background. A dedicated project organisation was set up to coordinate the process and manage communication between the client, designers and consultants. In the programme creation phase, the overall goals, functional requirements and timeframe were defined.

Subsequently, research and on-site explorations were conducted to provide the technical and historical data necessary for decision-making, including condition assessments and archaeological or structural surveys. Parallel to this, the detailed design programme was prepared, outlining the functional framework of the project and serving as the basis for the approval plan.

The approval plan summarised the architectural, technical and budgetary elements, later forming the foundation of implementation. After client approval, the regulatory permits were obtained and the public procurement procedure was prepared, including preliminary design documentation, the bill of quantities and the project schedule.

Following the tender, the contractor was selected and the contract signed. Construction began on the basis of the procurement documentation, but on-site investigations soon revealed deficiencies in the technical content. This required additional work beyond the originally planned framework. The contract was therefore amended, with expanded technical requirements defined to address unforeseen circumstances.

This iterative process demonstrated the adaptive character of the project: while rooted in clear strategic foundations, it responded flexibly to challenges uncovered during implementation. The final stage consisted of realising the complete, revised technical content.

> The project concluded with the full delivery of its objectives, integrating the strategic goals set out in the government resolution, the functional framework of the programme, and the contractor's performance. The result was a comprehensive development that combined planning rigour with the ability to adapt to evolving technical and contextual conditions.

Description of the design and conservation work undertaken, including the rationale behind key decisions made during the process.

> The auditorium, the symbolic heart of the building, posed the greatest challenges. Since many ornamental details had not existed in Ybl's original design, decisions on materials and aesthetics required interpretation "with Ybl's head." Historical research revealed the original colour scheme beneath later layers of paint, enabling its faithful reconstruction. Ybl's unique concept of colour gradation was reinstated: the proportion of gold increases towards the auditorium, now realised with genuine 24-carat gold leaf, while blue and green tones intensify upwards toward the Lotz ceiling fresco. These ethereal hues counterbalance the dominant red upholstery, further refined by turquoise threads woven into custom brocades. Such discreet details, invisible at first sight, ensure visual harmony and demonstrate the precision of the restoration process.
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> Lighting was another decisive element. Originally provided by candles and later gas, the introduction of electricity in the early twentieth century altered the ambience. To recover Ybl's intended atmosphere, chandeliers and wall sconces were reconstructed and refitted with special wolfram filament bulbs, producing a warm glow reminiscent of candlelight. The new seating design represents a further key intervention: although contemporary in ergonomics, it was stylistically adapted to blend seamlessly into the historic interior.
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> Beyond the auditorium, the building was renewed inside and out. On the façade, worn stone and ceramic decorations were restored, windows remade where necessary, and the natural slate roof reinstated. A darker, historically accurate stone tone was selected to reflect the building's nineteenth-century appearance. The new exterior lighting scheme avoided theatrical overstatement, instead highlighting the loggias, arcades and composer statues with refined elegance.
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> Public areas such as the foyer, grand staircase, buffet and patisserie were restored to their original splendour. Stucco lustro finishes, frescoes, gilding and the 1882 Depol Luigi mosaic tiles were conserved, reinstating the rich historic fabric. The gallery staircases were rebuilt and discreet lifts introduced to ensure accessibility, while new sanitary facilities were inserted beneath the stalls to improve audience comfort.
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> Equally critical was the integration of new theatre technology. The orchestra pit was reconstructed with tuneable acoustics, ventilation upgraded without altering the historic air-flow concept, and stage machinery replaced with state-of-the-art equipment allowing unlimited artistic possibilities. The iron curtain was recreated from an Ybl drawing, linking safety requirements with architectural authenticity.
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> In parallel, the artists' areas were modernised to a standard befitting the heritage building, with rehearsal rooms, dressing rooms and a buffet redesigned. Relocation of ancillary functions to the Eiffel Workshop liberated space for these upgrades.
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> The result is a revitalised Opera House that preserves Ybl's vision while securing its role as a modern performing arts venue for generations to come.

Problems encountered and justification for the decisions taken to overcome these problems, both before and during the project.

During the implementation, we faced several significant problems requiring serious consideration from both a design and a construction perspective. A key challenge was the design & build approach: while the contractor was striving to start the work, the designer was still preparing the construction plans. To resolve this, we developed scheduled construction plans, so construction could begin in certain parts, while planning continued in other areas.

During the exploration of the building, several unforeseen circumstances came to light. An examination of the steel structure supporting the Lotz fresco in the auditorium revealed a potential risk to life. To solve this, a load-bearing steel structure had to be installed to take over the additional load from the fresco's supporting structure. After consideration, the designer ultimately chose the least intrusive option: the additional tensioning structure was placed in the attic.

Another challenge was the replacement of the steel structure of the ground floor auditorium. It was replaced with wooden beams that offer more benefits in terms of acoustics. This was a technical advancement, but the demolition of the existing steel structure and the installation of new beams in the narrow interior space was an extremely complex task for the contractor.

The process was complicated by the fact that the designer worked for the contractor, so the client's interests were not always sufficiently prioritised. Also, it caused serious organisational difficulties that the stage technology was located in two separate parts of the building, making coordination and integration of the technical solutions difficult.

Description of the building and conservation techniques and principles applied, materials employed and any traditional crafts and skills used.

The program sought not only to preserve historical values but also to restore architectural unity and acoustic quality, both of which had been compromised by earlier interventions, particularly the 1984 renovation.

Stone restoration addressed both decorative and structural elements. The façade, sculptures, and ornamental carvings had suffered significant damage due to unprofessional cleaning methods applied in the 1980s, compounded by air pollution and weathering. The statues of Erkel and Liszt by Alajos Strobl, as well as the sphinxes and balustrades, exhibited irreversible surface decay. The guiding principle was to conserve the original material wherever possible, but to create replicas where necessary to safeguard the most valuable pieces.

Wood restoration focused on reinstating the original patina of oak doors, windows, and wall paneling, which had been damaged by earlier bleaching processes. The valuable wooden windows and doors were fully dismantled and restored using moisture- and airtight treatments alongside traditional surface finishing techniques. Special attention was given to the Bertalan Székely Room, one of the few interiors where the original atmosphere had survived. The harmony of patinated oak, uncovered historic paint layers, and decorative elements was key to reestablishing the dignity of the representative spaces.

Textile restoration involved the complete replacement of earlier, poor-quality and inauthentic fabrics. Based on archival research, damasks, velvets, and draperies were reconstructed with historically accurate patterns, woven from silk-cotton blends and supplemented with modern flame-retardant treatments. These decisions reflected a dual intention: restoring the original visual and acoustic effects while ensuring compliance with contemporary fire safety and functional requirements.

Painting restoration revealed that Ybl's original color scheme followed a deliberate dramaturgical order, designed to create a progressive spatial experience. Repainting in the 1980s had obscured this system with muted mid-tones. The decision was therefore made to reinstate the uncovered original vibrant palette, thereby recovering the theatrical impact of the interiors.

Metal restoration focused on structural iron and bronze components as well as decorative elements in the auditorium. The combination of modern corrosion protection and traditional surface treatments ensured a balance between durability and authenticity.

Lighting restoration and reconstruction aimed to reinstate luminaires that had undergone multiple alterations and repairs with minimal intervention.

Overall, the restoration program was guided by the dual objective of historical fidelity and functional renewal. Under the motto “Back to Ybl’s traditions,” it simultaneously served the restoration of monument authenticity and the fulfillment of the future needs of Hungarian opera.

European significance

European significance of the project/initiative/nominee.

The Hungarian State Opera House holds outstanding European significance as both an architectural and cultural landmark. Designed by Miklós Ybl, Hungary’s greatest 19th-century architect, the building opened in 1884 and quickly became one of the finest opera houses in Europe, praised for its harmonious proportions, lavish interiors, and exceptional acoustics. It embodies the height of European historicist architecture while integrating Italian and French operatic traditions into the cultural life of Central Europe. As the foremost stage for Hungarian opera, ballet, and classical music, it has hosted world-class performances and artists for nearly a century and a half. Its restoration in the 21st century ensured the preservation of Ybl’s masterpiece while modernising it for contemporary audiences and stage technology. Today, the Opera House not only safeguards European cultural heritage but also reinforces Budapest’s role as a vital centre of the continent’s operatic and musical life.

Results and impact

Summary of the main results achieved and knowledge that has been gained. List the ways that the project/initiative contributes to the preservation and/or enhancement of the historical, cultural, environmental, educational and/or social values of the heritage in question. Mention the project's impact on conservation policy and practice, if any.

The renovation of the Opera House brought benefits to the local community in many areas. From a cultural perspective, it made the preservation and development of cultural heritage possible, and the modernised building provides excellent opportunities for quality artistic and cultural experiences. In economic terms, it increased the tourist appeal of the Opera House, attracting additional visitors to the area, which contributed to the income of local businesses. On a social level, it has enriched the local community, hosting numerous cultural and social events. In the field of education, it created new opportunities for young people who could participate in artistic and educational programmes. Overall, the renovation has improved the cultural, economic, social and educational environment for the local community on a wide scale.

The renovation not only served to renew the historic building, it also has significant positive effects on the cultural scene, the community and the economy. The renovation helped preserve cultural heritage by ensuring that the building’s original style and historical significance were preserved.

The renovation has also brought positive changes to the community infrastructure, as the Opera House became the centre of the district or region. It has become an important venue not only from a cultural but also from a social perspective, as it hosts a number of prestigious events, galas and cultural programmes for the community in addition to theatrical performances.

The renovated Opera House contributes to the efforts to make the city even more attractive to tourists. The spectacularly renovated building has become an attractive destination in its own right, strengthening the city’s tourist appeal through its offering of multilingual tours of the building, cultural experiences and performances.

> The renovation of the Opera House has also created new opportunities for inviting world-renowned artists and for Hungarian artists to perform in a magnificent setting.

Aspects of the project that can be considered innovative within its area or field.

> One of the project's innovative elements was the rethinking of social and spatial hierarchies that were deeply embedded in the original building's design. In the past, different audience groups moved through the building separately: visitors with cheaper tickets could only reach the gallery via a separate entrance from the street, meaning that the physical structure itself reinforced social divisions. The renovation resolved this issue by aligning the staircases to a uniform level and creating a new internal circulation system. As a result, all visitors – regardless of ticket category – can now use the same continuous public space. This not only enhances accessibility and comfort but also symbolically transforms the building into a more democratic cultural venue. By dismantling historical barriers, the project demonstrates how architectural interventions can embody contemporary values such as inclusivity and the strengthening of communal experience within the field of heritage renovation.

Steps taken to reach people who have not previously interacted with the site/project. This might include youth, local communities, non-traditional audiences, people with disabilities, etc.

> In the place of the former escape staircases, we have created two accessible stairwells with a lift in the middle. The stall level has become accessible from Dalszínház street via ramps and lifts. 3 boxes have also been made accessible – their doors have been widened to allow wheelchair access.
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> For the benefit of hearing-impaired audience members, an induction loop was built across the entire floor area of the chamber hall.
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> To help visually impaired visitors, the designers have taken care to shape the space in such a way that members of the audience cannot enter any part where they could hit their head or shoulder on the building structures. In addition, the numbering of the rows of seats and seats in the stalls and in the galleries is to be displayed on the furniture with raised numbers with a height of at least 30 mm.

Project's interaction with the surrounding community and landscape.

> The comprehensive renovation of the Hungarian State Opera House interacted with its surrounding community and landscape in multiple, interrelated ways. Situated on Andrássy Avenue, part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, the project responded sensitively to its urban and cultural environment, reinforcing the avenue's role as a cultural axis. The works preserved historical authenticity while expanding public accessibility through barrier-free solutions and improved visitor services, thereby securing the Opera's role as both a heritage landmark and a functioning cultural institution.
>
> From a community perspective, the renewal generated enrichment at the social level by positioning the Opera as a venue for diverse cultural and social events, including guided tours and opera-related programs, which fostered wider engagement with local and international audiences. In the educational field, the project created new opportunities for young people to participate in artistic and educational programmes, strengthening cultural education and promoting community involvement.

Environmental, social, and economic sustainability of the project (e.g. contribution to climate action and environmental protection; measures to ensure long-term financial sustainability or future viability; benefits for people and communities, where relevant).

> In order to mitigate the effects of global warming during the planning and execution, energy-efficient technologies were prioritized alongside heritage considerations. In heating the building, new, efficient boilers were introduced, while the cooling system optimized the inflow of fresh air in the auditorium through computer simulations. Energy-efficient bulbs were also used in the lighting system. Due to the thickness of the building's walls and the preservation of its heritage character, there was no need to improve insulation. However, the insulation of the external windows was enhanced with insulating glass.

> During the project, the promotion of public transportation links was unnecessary, thanks to the city's infrastructure. Bus stops in front of the building were already established. The municipality created bicycle lanes, and entry into pedestrian zones around the Opera House required permission, restricting car traffic. Parking challenges were prevalent in the district; however, eco-friendly vehicles enjoyed free parking. The establishment of a bus lane on Andrássy Avenue specifically encouraged prioritizing public transportation.

Measures adopted to ensure the longer term maintenance of the site.

> One of the fundamental objectives of the renovation was to ensure long-term sustainability and operability. During the project, we applied solutions that serve both the preservation of heritage values, achieving an authentic effect, and energy efficiency. During the modernisation of the lighting system, we installed energy-saving LED light sources in the public and technical spaces, while in the imposing, heritage-protected rooms, we decided to use traditional light sources to preserve the historical atmosphere.
>
> The complete reconstruction of the external windows and doors also reflects a long-term approach: while preserving the historical forms, we installed thermally insulating glazing, significantly reducing the energy consumption of the heating and cooling system, lowering operating costs. With the complete replacement of stage and scenic technologies and the lighting systems, we installed modern, reliable and lower-maintenance equipment.
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> To reduce the load on the building, workshop functions requiring large spaces and generating dust and noise (carpentry, metal and painting workshops) were moved to external locations. This freed the interior spaces of the building from unnecessary use, which contributes to its preservation.
>
> This complex package of measures ensures the sustainable operation of the Opera House, while preserving the building’s historic values and cultural functions in the long term.

Dissemination of the project’s results and knowledge gained and any outreach or educational activities.

> The project results were disseminated through the media and educational channels. The Hungarian public television channel M5 launched a nearly 40-part documentary series titled *Operaláz (Opera Fever)* during the renovation. In the episodes, Gábor Zoboki, head of ZDA – Zoboki Design & Architecture, presented the details of the design process, while restorers and artists shared their experiences with their own work and the building’s renewed role, allowing the public to follow every step of the Opera House’s rebirth.
>
> In higher education, the reconstruction served as a case study in Hungarian architecture programmes, where courses on heritage protection, renovation, and acoustics frequently referred to it. Guest lectures and design studies presented its complex challenges related to heritage protection, acoustics and stage technology.
>
> The Opera House itself regularly organised building tours for members of the professional community and the general public, to widely share the acquired knowledge and experience in an institutionalised form.

Transferability of the initiative to other contexts and its scalability potential.

> The Opera House approach proves scalable: integrating heritage preservation with contemporary functions through adaptable, consultative methods, offering a replicable framework for future renovations of historic cultural institutions.
>
> At the same time, we explored the building’s historical layers, reconstructions and original plans, which we organised in conjunction with functional aspects. Thus, a design documentation was created that respects the requirements of heritage protection, while it can also accommodate the solutions necessary for modern operation. The involvement of various areas of restoration was crucial even in the design phase, as restoration experts ensured the authentic renovation of the building during implementation.
>
> This structured, collaborative process can be applied to other historic buildings, too. The scalability of the method lies in the fact that in every situation the continuous dialogue between those involved ensures that the result of the renovation simultaneously meets professional, cultural and usage expectations.

Any related work that still needs to be completed, if applicable.

> The remaining tasks mainly involve warranty repairs, regular maintenance works, and operational activities. In addition, certain elements of the project were not completed during the implementation phase and may be added later to complement the original concept. Continuous maintenance serves not only to preserve the technical condition of the built structures and systems but also to ensure their functionality and efficiency.
>
> Altogether, these measures help guarantee that the project remains sustainable, operational, and aligned with its original objectives in the long term, while also creating opportunities for gradual expansion and further development.

Costs of the project/initiative

Costs of the project (in euro), financial and management arrangements, funding partners and/or the type of funding.

> The project was financed by a non-repayable grant from the central budget of the Hungarian State. This was disbursed between 2017 and 2022, based on annual grant contracts. The total cost of the project was approximately 143 million euros (approximately 55 billion forints).

Funding provided by the European Union or the EEA/Norway Grants (including programme, year and amount of the Grant), if any.

> The implementation of the project was not supported by international grant programmes or external financial sources. The renovation of the Hungarian State Opera was carried out entirely with Hungarian public funds, strengthening national priorities and cultural identity, without any contribution from the European Union or the EEA/Norway Grants.
>
> The large-scale reconstruction, which took place over several years, included the complete architectural renovation of the building, the modernisation of the stage technology, the improvement of acoustic conditions, and the modernisation of the public areas. The project required a significant budgetary commitment, reflecting the Opera House's prominent cultural and symbolic role in preserving national heritage. Financing was based on domestic sources, which ensured flexibility in planning and implementation, and allowed the project to be adapted to the specific needs of the institution and to Hungarian cultural strategy.

Additional information

How would winning the European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Award benefit you, your project and/or your organisation?

> Winning the European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Award would significantly increase the visibility and credibility of our organisation in the international cultural and architectural community. It would strengthen our capacity to implement major heritage protection projects and facilitate the establishment of new European collaborations.

In case this submission is the winner of the Grand Prix, what will the monetary award be used for?

> We would use the monetary award for the professional development of our company. We would support the ongoing training, research, and international collaborations of our staff, and strengthen our office's capacity to implement major architectural and cultural projects serving both our professional advancement and the growth of the broader community.

In case this submission is the winner of the Grand Prix, who will be the recipient of the monetary award?

> The monetary award would not be used for individual purposes but dedicated to collective professional development. It would primarily finance our colleagues' further training, participation in international workshops, and the acquisition of new professional tools, ensuring that the prize strengthens our office's knowledge base and competitiveness in the long term.

How did you find out about the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards?	Europa Nostra website
Is this the first time that this entry has been submitted to the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards?	Yes
On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with this online submission form?	✓ 10

Do you have any comments on the application form or suggestions that you would like to share with us?

> There was no such comment.

By submitting your data, photographs and other material to the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards you agree to the processing and sharing of your data in accordance with Europa Nostra's Privacy Policy. Please check the box to indicate you agree with the Privacy Policy.	✓

Log in to european-heritage.awardsplatform.com to see complete entry attachments.



12_BuffetAfter.j... 2.0 MiB



13_EntranceHal... 4.5 MiB



14_EntranceHal... 4.3 MiB



15_Auditorium... 2.0 MiB



16_KingsBoxAft... 4.4 MiB



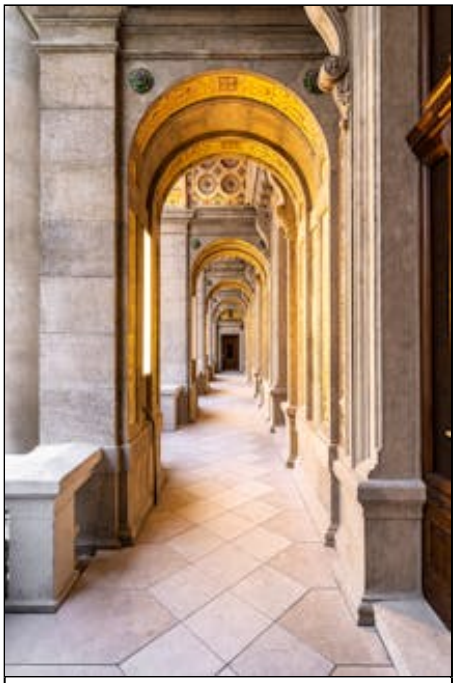
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18_BoxDetailsA... 4.2 MiB



19_Auditorium... 1.1 MiB



20_TerraceAfter... 4.8 MiB



21_EntranceBy... 4.9 MiB



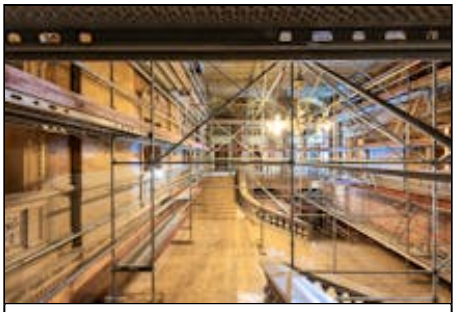
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23_Auditoriuml... 4.7 MiB



24_StageInProg... 4.7 MiB



25_MainStairca... 4.9 MiB



26_MainStairca... 1.8 MiB



27_EntranceAft... 1.7 MiB



28_FacadeDetai... 1.9 MiB



29_TerraceByNi... 1.2 MiB



30_MainFacade... 1.0 MiB



1_MainFacadeB... 384 KiB



2_MainFacadeA... 4.3 MiB



3_AuditoriumB... 473 KiB



4_AuditoriumAf... 2.0 MiB



5_LotzFrescoBe... 256 KiB



6_LotzFrescoAft... 2.0 MiB



7_GalleryStairs... 3.7 MiB



8_GalleryStairs... 1.7 MiB



9_MainStaircas... 4.3 MiB



10_MainStairca... 1.6 MiB



11_BuffetBefor... 4.6 MiB

DOCX

photocaptions.... 14 KiB

PDF

ZDAOperaPlanF... 1.3 MiB

PDF

ZDAOperaPlan... 1.9 MiB

PDF

ZDAOperaPlanP... 1.3 MiB

PDF

ZDAOperaPlanS... 1.2 MiB

PDF

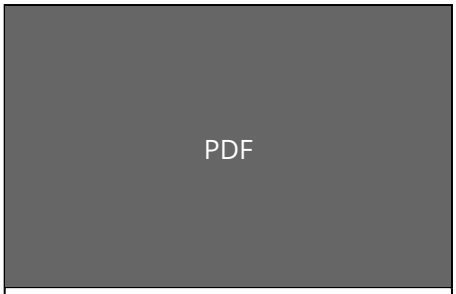
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ZDAOperaSecti... 1.4 MiB



ZDAOperaSecti... 1.6 MiB



ZDAOperaPlanF... 1.6 MiB



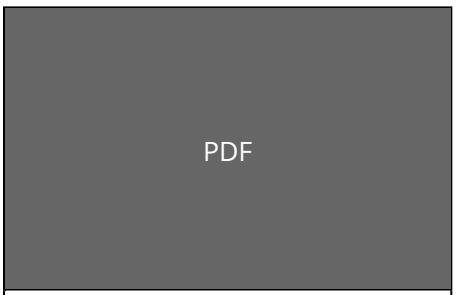
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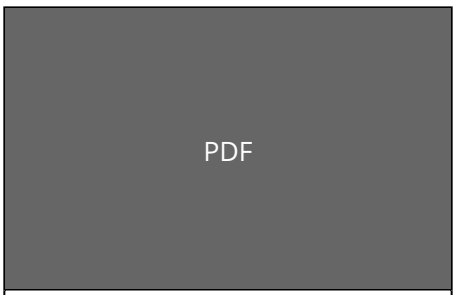
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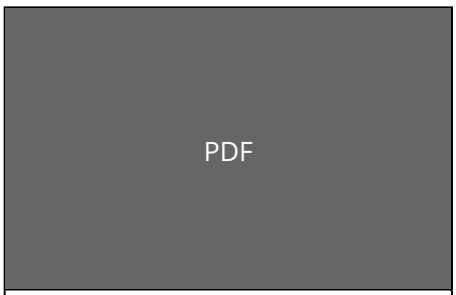
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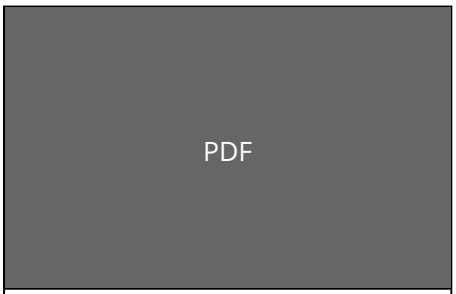
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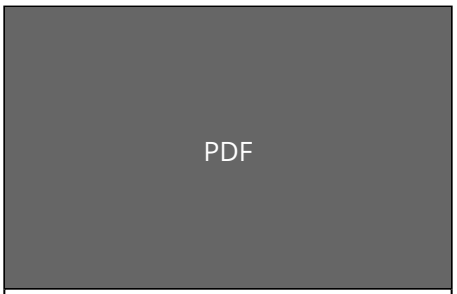
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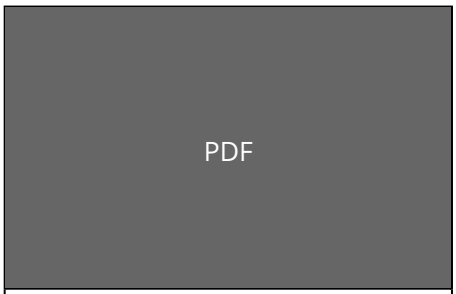
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HA2026 Entrant... 263 KiB



Europa Nostra -... 78 KiB



Hp2025101015... 67 KiB



Attachment name

A video showcasing the ...

https://www.youtube.co...



Attachment name

The Hungarian public te...

https://youtube.com/pl...