



## **INVESTIGATIONS IN THE COURTYARD OF ESTONIAN STATE PUPPET AND YOUTH THEATRE**

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From October 2008 to March 2009 archaeological monitoring was carried out in Tallinn Old Town, in the courtyard of Estonian State Puppet and Youth Theatre. The work was brought about by the construction of the tunnel connecting the buildings at Lai St 1 / Nunne St 4 and Nunne St 8 and rooms beneath the new stage. For that purpose an excavation with an area of about 150 m<sup>2</sup> was dug in the rear part of the courtyard (Fig. 1). Most of the excavated soil consisted of the debris from the demolition after the fire of 1902 in the Tallinn German Town Theatre, formerly located on the site. Although the excavation generally did not reach the depth of the cultural layer of archaeological interest, dozens of foundations' and walls' fragments dating from different periods came to light. The documentation and interpretation of these constituted the greater part of the fieldwork.

### **HISTORY OF THE SITE**

The site is important from the aspect of the history of theatre in Estonia: in 1807–1809 the first single-purpose theatre building in the town was erected here for the Tallinn German Town Theatre (Rosen 1910). The entrance was towards Lai street and the theatre behind it extended into the block. However, before the excavations the exact location of the theatre was not clear. The only source is the location plan belonging to the project of the present theatre building (EAA 33–3–2451, 106) where the foundations of the building burnt in 1902 as well as the new designed building are marked. According to this plan the theatre measured about 15 × 30 m, with the addition of a 5 m deep stage. We do not have any information whether and how the original architecture of the theatre was altered during the restoration after the fire of 1855.

In the course of archaeological monitoring a wall with a thickness of about 1.1–1.2 m was discovered, running parallel to the rear wall of the neighbouring premises at Lai street. This is quite certainly one of the side walls of the theatre (Fig. 1). In the upper part of the wall, preserved almost up to the present-day ground level, a step could be observed, probably marking the level of the theatre floor. Beneath the floor there was a small stokehole with a brick stove. The vaulted cellar, still preserved beside the house of Nunne St 8 was contemporaneous with the theatre, or at least continually used at that time. The stage was presumably located above it. Beneath the rest of the theatre there might have been an earlier limestone stove. However, it is possible that this stove, located beside the above-mentioned brick stove, dates from the earlier period of the theatre – it is probable that the heating system was enhanced in the course of the restoration of the theatre after the first fire. The remaining space beneath the floor of

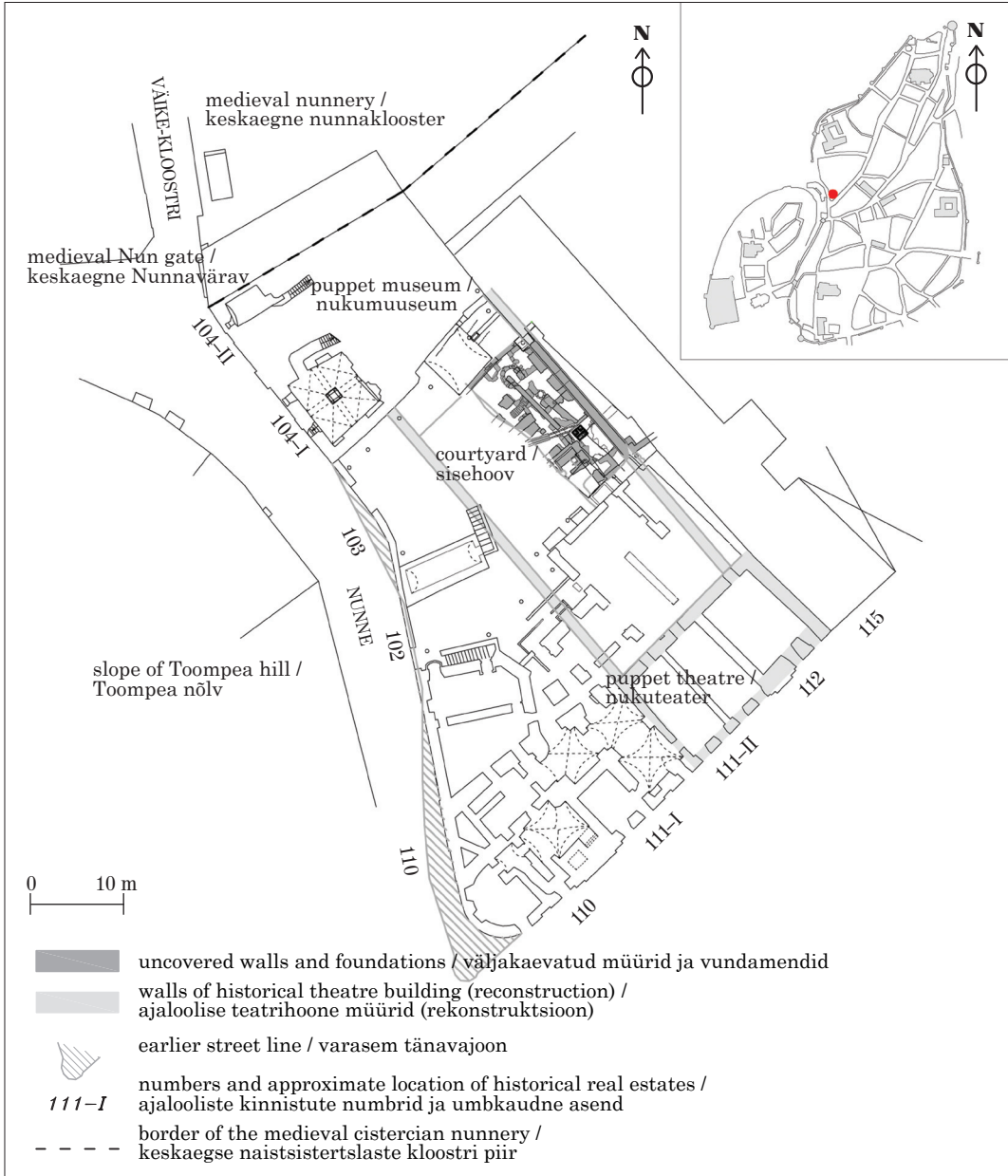


Fig. 1. Location plan of the excavation and the reconstruction of the historic theatre building. Cellars of the present-day theatre and museum building as well as the cellars of former buildings located in the courtyard between them are marked.

Jn 1. Kaevandi asendiplaan ja ajaloolise teatrihoone rekonstruktsioon. Näidatud on ka praeguse teatri- ja muuseumihoone keldrid ning nende vahelises sisehoovis varasemast hoonestusest säilinud keldrid.

Drawing / Joonis: Ragnar Nurk, Ekke Lepp



Fig. 2. On-site situation: in the forefront the well together with the curb stones found in it. View from north-west.

Jn 2. Esiplaanil kaev koos sellest leitud ääris-kividega. Vaade loodest.

Photo / Foto: Ragnar Nurk

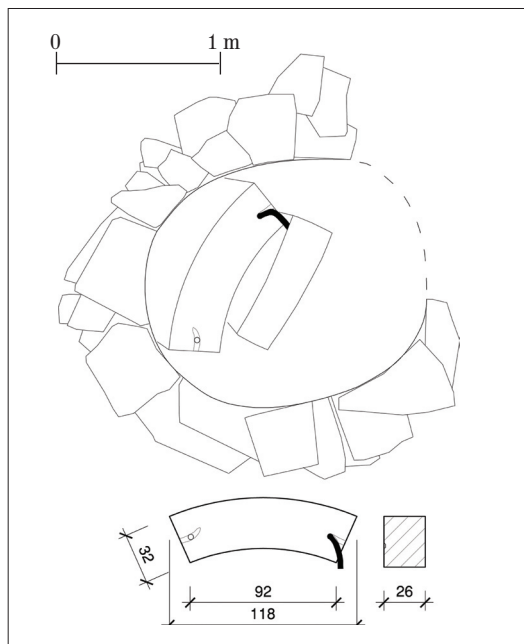


Fig. 3. Plan of the well with the hewn cornice stones, and the top view and cross-section of the larger stone.

Jn 3. Kaevu plaan koos kahe tahatud karniisikiviga ning suurema kivi pealtvaade ja lõige.

Drawing / Joonis: Ekke Lepp

the theatre was evidently unexploited. Several pieces of indefinite masonry near the wall of the theatre may have supported the constructions of the floor or the balcony of the theatre.

### STRUCTURES

One of the basic aims of the archaeological excavations was to try and investigate the situation prior to the construction of the Tallinn German Town Theatre. We know from the written sources that in the Middle Ages and the early post-medieval period the present-day site was divided into six premises with stone granaries and dwellings (see Tiik 1970; Kangropool 1995). But the plans are so few, so general and so late that it is impossible to specify the borders of these premises without extensive fieldwork. Apparently the more impressive buildings were located nearer to the street. Our excavation plot was presumably located in the yards behind these buildings, but it is not clear whether these backyards belonged to the premises along the Lai or the Nunne street. The two circular limestone wells, the limestone cesspit near the wall of a vaulted cellar and a box made of boards and filled with dung discovered in the excavations evidently date from the period of the backyard. Limestone corbels chopped off the bordering wall of the neighbouring premise along the Lai street,



Fig. 4. Finds from the larger well. The left one depicts Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin Adolf Friedrich I (r. 1592–1628).

Jn 4. Ahjukeraamikat suuremast kaevust. Vasakpoolsel on Mecklenburg-Schwerini hertsog Adolf Friedrich I (valitsusaeg 1592–1628).

(AI 6919: 42–43.)

Photo / Foto: Ragnar Nurk

some foundations and remains of stoves discovered in the excavations indicate that various outhouses have been located on the site of the excavation already before the theatre was built. All earlier structures had been demolished in the area of the theatre, approximately to the level of the bottom of the excavation. Since the possibilities to study the relative chronology of these constructions were very limited, it was impossible to establish any clear building phases for the whole excavation plot. The future archaeological investigations in the present courtyard, in the part along the Nunne street and particularly in the area that remained beyond the theatre, would help to interpret the finds from these excavations. The two buildings beside the theatre along the Nunne street were demolished only after the fire of 1902. In the foundations of these buildings some medieval structure details have probably been preserved.

## FINDS

The most remarkable structure discovered in the course of monitoring was the large circular limestone well with the inner diameter of about 150–180 cm (Figs. 2–3). Finds from the filling of the well included several hewn stones, which had formerly covered the top edge of the well. This is the first known medieval hewn well curb in Tallinn, and therefore it is really surprising that it was found from quite an ordinary property, at least as much as we know, not from a more impressive place (e.g. town square, monastery). The neatly hewn curved stones with plain quadrangular cross-section were

32 cm wide, 26 cm thick and up to 118 cm long. Two stones, which were obviously the last that were pushed into the well, lay upon the filling of the well, still united by an iron clamp that had held them together in the curb. The curb stones were exposed on the edge of the restored well. The finds recovered from the well date the filling to the 17th century. Among them special mention should be made of some stove tiles. One of them, preserved almost intact, depicts Adolf Friedrich I, Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin (reigned in 1592–1628). The finds also included some unglazed stove tiles or ceramic details of the decorated fire place (?) with traces of polychromy, two of them with mascarón-like lion heads (Fig. 4). A few metres south-east a smaller well was discovered, with the inner diameter of about 60 cm. The material from the wells is incomplete, because neither of the wells was excavated to the bottom.

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## UURINGUD EESTI NUKU- JA NOORSOOTEATRI SISEHOOVIS

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2008. a oktoobrist 2009. a märtsini teostati arheoloogilist järelevalvet Tallinna vanalinnas Eesti Nuku- ja Noorsooteatri sisehoovis toimunud kaevetöödel. Tööde ajendiks oli Lai 1 / Nunne 4 ja Nunne 8 hooneid ühendava tunneli ja uute lavaaluste ruumide ehitamine, mille käigus rajati hoovi tagumisse ossa u 150 m<sup>2</sup> pindalaga ja keskmiselt u 2 m sügavune kaevand (jn 1). Kuigi arheoloogiliselt huvipakkuva kultuurkihini üldiselt kaevandi sügavuses ei jõutud, paljandus kaevandis kümneid eri aegadest vundamente ja müüre, mille dokumenteerimine ja interpreteerimine moodustaski suurema osa välitöödest.

Enne sisehooviks muutmist asus sellel kohal osaliselt Tallinna Saksa Linnateatri hoone (ehitatud 1807–1809 ja taastatud põlemise järel 1859–1860). Teatri sissepääs oli Laia tänava ääres ja teatrisaal selle taga ulatus kvartali sügavusse. Enne kaevamisi puudus teave, kuidas saal täpsemalt paiknes. Paralleelselt Laia tänava äärse naaberkiinnistu tagaseinaga kulgenud u 1,1–1,2 m paksuse müüri näol on üsna kindlalt tegu teatrisaali ühe külgeinaga. Müüri ülalosas, mis oli säilinud peaaegu kuni praeguse maapinna tasandini, oli nähtav arvatavasti saali põranda tasandit markeriv aste. Selgus, et teatrisaali põranda all oli väike tellistest ahjuga kütteruum. Teatriaegne või jätkuvalt kasutatav oli ka Nunne 8 maja kõrval tänaseni säilinud võlvkelder, mille peal paiknes eeldatavalt lava. Ülejäänud saali põrandaaluses osas võidi edasi kasutada ka ühte varasemat paekivist seintega ahju. Samas pole välistatud, et eelmainitud tellisahju kõrval paiknenud ahi pärineb teatri varasemast perioodist. Mõningate teatrisaali seinade läheduses leidunud ebamääraste müüritiste kohta võib oletada, et tegu oli põranda- või rõdukonstruksiooni alustagedega.

Teatricalise perioodi kohta on kirjalikest allikatest teada, et praegune kiinnistu jagunes kesk- ja

varausajal kuni kuueks kiviaitade ja -elamutega valduseks. Samas on plaanimaterjal napp ning kinnistute omavahelisi piire pole võimalik ulatuslikumate väliuuringuteta määratleda. Kaevandi kohal oli arvatavasti tegu kas Laia või Nunne tänava kinnistute kvartali sisemusse jäänud tagaosadega, samas kui kapitaalsemad hooned paiknesid tänavate ääres. Kaevandist leitud kaks ümarat paekivist kaevu, paekivist seintega käimlakast olemasoleva võlvkeldri seinaga ääres ja sõnnikuga täidetud laudadest kast pärinevad ilmselt perioodist, kui tegu oli hoovialaga. Laia tänava äärse naaberkiinnistu piirimüürlt maha raiutud konsoolid, mõned kaevandist leitud vundamendid ja ahjude jäänused viitavad, et juba enne teatri ehitamist on kaevandi kohal asunud ka mitmesuguseid kõrvalhooneid. Kuna kõik teatrihoonest varasemad konstruktsioonid olid saali kohalt kuni umbes kaevandi põhja tasandini lammutatud, siis sai nende suhtelist kronoloogiat selgitada ainult väga piiratud määral.

Kõige tähelepanuväärsemaks järelevalve käigus leitud üksikkonstruksiooniks oli suur ümmargune paekivist kaev sisemise läbimõõduga u 150–180 cm (jn 2–3). Kaevu täitekihist saadi mitu varem kaevu serva katnud tahutud kivi. Puhtalt välja tahutud kaarja kujuga lihtsa nelinurkse löikega kivid olid 32 cm laiused, 26 cm paksused ja kuni 118 cm pikkused. Kaks ilmselt kõige viimasena kaevu lõkatud kivi lebasid kaevu täitepinnaal, olles jätkuvalt ühendatud neid koos hoidnud raudklambriga. See on Tallinna teadaolevalt esimene keskaegne tahutud kividest servaga kaev, mistõttu on ootamatu, et see leiti täiesti tavaliselt kinnistult, mitte mõnest esinduslikumast kohast. Kaevu täitest kogutud leiud (jn 4) dateerivad selle kinniajamise 17. sajandisse.