



Architect Vasiliy Bazhenov
(1738–1799)

OPERA HOUSE Middle Palace of Catherine II

1776–1778

Restoration: 1987–1995, 2012–2014

About the project

<https://tsaritsyno-museum.ru/events/special/p/lyudi-i-fondy-eng/>





SELECTED BY

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I have always considered the buildings of Vasiliy Bazhenov to be the core value of Tsaritsyno, and therefore the main exhibits of the museum-reserve. I remember them still ruined among the gold of the autumn half-abandoned park. That was one of the memorable acquaintance with the architecture of the 18th century in my student days. During my short directorship, I always admired Bazhenov's bridges, gates and buildings. The Middle Palace and Small Palace were opening at that time after regular restoration work, and it seemed to me that it was crucially important for them to enjoy museum status and be the main objects to be displayed.

The Opera House is of particular value because its vaults have largely survived, despite the fact that trees have grown on them for decades. It is the only Bazhenov space that has its original proportions.

Only here, in the reception hall and in other interiors of the palace, one can now experience the delight of soaring to the vaults of heaven, which are offered by real architectural masterpieces.

An unfinished palace, devoid of interior decoration, speaks to us in the language of pure architectural forms. After the restoration of the Opera House was completed, I had the unique opportunity to enjoy the fantastic play of light and shadow in these 'Gothic' halls. Then, when chandeliers were installed, everything became different, less exciting and mysterious.

The Middle Palace again became part of the museum, and not a room intended exclusively for holding numerous weddings, thanks to the exhibition 'Palace Within a Palace: Ostankino's Sculpture in the Tsaritsyno Opera House', which opened 10 years ago. Genuine antiques and copies of ancient sculptures, works of Western European and Russian artists dating from the 18th and 19th centuries, together with surviving pedestals, moved for a time

to the halls of the Middle Palace. The designer of the exhibition project, Erik Belousov, created an exhibition display to take a fresh look at the sculpture gallery of Count N. Sheremetev. Mythological characters started a new life in the niches against the backdrop of white walls and became much more noticeable than in the multicoloured interiors of the Ostankino Palace. At the same time, the open storage and modern white pedestals or stands did not let us forget that the sculpture was only a guest in Bazhenov's spaces.

Thanks to the opening of the Opera House, the attitude towards the museum began to change, because for the enlightened public, the reconstructed Tsaritsyno was a place without authentic details for many years. The Bazhenov live space challenges this stereotype. I certainly took other museums' workers to the Opera House. The curators of the collections of large museums, having visited it, became our friends. It helped us when working on other exhibition projects covering the culture of the 18th and 19th centuries. I cannot forget the reaction of the employees of the Tsaritsyno Museum, who came up to me with words of gratitude for 'returning the Opera House to us'.