

## DOCTORAL DISSERTATION THESIS BOOKLET

Enikő Tóth

### **The Life and Work of the Architect Győző Czigler (1850–1905)**

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## BACKGROUND

The architect and architecture professor Győző Czigler (1850–1905) was one of the most important architects of the dualist era. His work was characterized by the architectural aspirations of historicism, in particular by the neo-Renaissance style. As well as being a prolific artist, whose work still defines the image of our various cities, he was also a teacher at the University of Technology in Budapest, guiding younger generations. As a two-time president of the Hungarian Society of Engineers and Architects, he significantly influenced the development of Hungarian architecture through his role as a judge in architectural competitions. His work has received considerable attention not only in the professional press but also in the daily press. Despite his fame and recognition in his life, Czigler was for a long time marginalised in art history research. His name has been largely mentioned in the basic works on architecture of the period, but no attempt has been made to examine his oeuvre in depth beyond a master's thesis in 2010.

The rediscovery of his oeuvre finally gained new momentum around 2021, when Holnap Publishing published a mid-length monograph. Furthermore, the Hungarian Museum of Architecture and Monument Protection Documentation Centre and the Archives of the Capital of Budapest organised an exhibition in his memory entitled *Consistency in Form and Spirit – Architecture of Győző Czigler*. I was the author of the former and one of the curators of the latter.

## OBJECTIVES

The primary aim of the dissertation is to present and analyse Czigler's architecture and to place it in its proper place in the history of Hungarian architecture.

Czigler's exclusion from the field of research is explained by the perception of historicism and the architect's divisive personality. Research on historicism only gained momentum after the 1980s, and art historians have only been dealing with artists like Czigler for a few decades. It is therefore timely that Czigler, alongside other prominent architects such as Ignác Alpár, Alajos Hauszmann, and Imre Steindl, should also be given due attention and his architecture reassessed. At the end of his life, Czigler's personality and work were the subject of several negative criticisms, partly for political, partly for professional reasons, so to examine his oeuvre objectively, it is essential to study the available source material and to clarify the virtues and the downsides of his building stock.

Another important aim of the dissertation is, therefore, to examine the quality of Czigler's buildings in the period and his approach to the design of certain types of buildings. His oeuvre, moreover, reflects almost the whole of life in Hungary during the Dualism period, as he created a wide range of genres, from residential buildings, schools, hospitals, churches, official, commercial, and industrial buildings.

## SOURCES

In writing this thesis, I have drawn on a number of secondary sources in the literature. Generally speaking, previous studies on Czigler<sup>1</sup> have been based mainly on the biographies by Virgil Nagy<sup>2</sup> and Gáspár Fábián.<sup>3</sup> Katalin Takács's thesis was the most in-depth study on the topic, but her work has not been published.<sup>4</sup> In the literature on historicism, Czigler's name can be found only at the level of mention, so the research for the thesis was based on the mapping and analysis of primary sources.

The legacy of Győző Czigler is fragmentary, scattered in various public and private collections. The most important parts of the legacy have been left to Ede Dvořák and Gyula Bauer, both of whom worked in the office. A good part of the former is held by the Museum Collection of the Hungarian Museum of Architecture and Monument Protection Documentation Centre, while the latter is owned by descendants. It is worth highlighting the surviving documents from

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<sup>1</sup> KALMÁR Miklós: Czigler Győző élete és munkássága. In: *Műegyetem – A történeti campus*. Budapest, 2013. 226–243; VIZY László: A Zsolnay építészeti kerámia mesterei 10. Czigler Győző építész-professzor munkássága. In: *Magyar Építőművészet*, 2009. 59. évf. 2. sz. 79–80.

<sup>2</sup> NAGY Virgil: Czigler Győző emlékezete. In: *A Magyar Mérnök- és Építész-Egylet Közlönye*, 1911. 45. évf. 19. sz. 250–252.

<sup>3</sup> FÁBIÁN Gáspár: A városligeti Széchenyi-fürdő és tervezője: Czigler Győző (1850–1905). In: *Nagy Magyar Építőművészek I.* Budapest, 1936. 38–40.

<sup>4</sup> TAKÁCS Katalin: Czigler Győző építész. Szakdolgozat, PPKE, 2010.

the office correspondence, which are published in the appendix of the dissertation.

The research was also aided by contemporary press sources, which are partly searchable thanks to the digitisation projects of Arcanum Newspapers, Hungaricana, the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek ANNO Historische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften, and partly available in the libraries.

## APPLIED METHODS

The dissertation is divided into two main parts, the first dealing with the biography, the second with the oeuvre.

First, I will try to describe the architect's personality and examine how the son of the chief architect of Arad, a promising student at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, an aspiring young artist, became an influential architect who was caught in the crossfire of artistic and political battles towards the end of his life. Instead of the traditional chronological system, however, I have taken as my point of view an article published in *Népszava* in 1905, which defines Czigler as a man, a concept, and a system. I found these three aspects to be suitable for illustrating the architect's personality development, influence, and network of relationships as vividly as possible.

This will be followed by a presentation of the oeuvre, which will focus first on its influence on the contemporary development of Budapest and the Royal Hungary, its architectural approach, the use of style, the circle of craftsmen, builders, and partners who contributed to the creation of the buildings, and finally, the works. The latter will

be grouped according to building types, which will allow the synthesis of the works of a given type of building, thus shedding light on the connections that can be discovered in the oeuvre. Not only buildings, but also sculpture and applied art are the subject of this dissertation to give a more complete picture of Czigler's work.

Compared to the mid-length monograph, the dissertation contextualises the oeuvre more strongly, highlighting its historical significance, with greater emphasis on the architect's network of relationships and his political and artistic embeddedness.

## RESULTS

### *Newly Identified Buildings*

Since the writing of the monograph and the exhibition texts, the research has also produced a number of results, the processing of which will lead to a more detailed understanding of the oeuvre.

At the Czigler exhibition, we presented an infographic showing the 159 buildings identified so far, grouped by function and builder. In comparison, a number of new identifications have been made in recent years, partly on the basis of the press of the time and partly on the basis of letters and notes from collaborators. The list of works, which I publish in the appendix to the dissertation, stands at 220 at the time of submission, but is probably still far from complete. Further study of press sources will lead to further identifications, and it is also worth examining the buildings from a stylistic-critical point of view, since there are many features of the oeuvre which suggest

that Czigler's work or influence may be of some significance. The building descriptions in this thesis attempt to capture these characteristics.

### ***Newly Discovered Sources***

After picking up the thread of the research in 2018, I explored a number of sources that had not been found in previous research. The most important of these finds were the Gyula Czigler and Gyula Bauer bequests. The former added material memorabilia and photographs of family members, the latter mainly plans and letters related to the material collected. The diaries and notes of friends, colleagues, and other acquaintances are also little-known sources, among which I would like to highlight the writings of the economist Jenő Gávai Gaál, the mechanical engineer László Bánó, the spa director of Balatonfüred, László Écsy, and the architect Ernő Gerey, which provided a lot of valuable information for the research. I also found previously latent material from public collections, which I found mainly with the help of my colleagues, and was thus able to incorporate it into the research preceding the dissertation.

### ***Network of Contacts***

Correspondence preserved in architecture drawers' estate and contemporary press sources has revealed a remarkable network of contacts for Czigler, which included not only important figures of the contemporary art world but also well-known public figures, political

and ecclesiastical dignitaries. It is worth highlighting the Archbishop Kolos Vaszary, Prime Ministers Kálmán Tisza and István Tisza, the professor of internal medicine Frigyes Korányi, the newspaper publisher Jenő Rákosi, the First National Savings Bank of Pest and its employees, the wealthy bitter water merchant András Saxlehner, the major industrialist Pál Luczenbacher, and the noble families Károlyi, Szapáry, and Wenckheim. The latter was already in contact with the older members of the Czigler dynasty of architects, since the grandfather of the architect presented in this dissertation settled in Gyula in connection with the reconstruction of their castle.

In the artistic field, too, a stable network of contacts can be outlined, as Czigler regularly worked with the same craftsmen, such as the constructors Gyula Kauser, Antal Klenovits, and Henrik Mitterdorfer, the sculptor Antal Szécsi, the painter Károly Lotz, the carpenters Endre Thék and János Csepreghy, the decorative painter Róbert Scholtz, and the locksmiths Gyula Jungfer and Kálmán Berkes.

Among the architects, the names of Kálmán Gerster and István Kiss, former students of Theophil Hansen, are worth mentioning, with whom his joint works are known. Of particular importance is also Czigler's office manager and successor, Ede Dvořák, who brought the works abandoned after the architect's premature death to fruition. Without his extensive network of contacts, the oeuvre would not have been able to reach such a scale, and the familiarity of the recognised craftsmen had a positive impact on the quality of the buildings.

## ***Tradition and Innovation in Czigler's Oeuvre***

As Czigler followed a conservative architectural trend of his time, the neo-renaissance, his oeuvre is more difficult to capture the attention of art historical research, which is looking for uniqueness and innovation. From the 1880s onwards, neo-baroque became increasingly popular, and towards the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, Ödön Lechner and many of his followers experimented with a national style, in parallel with other innovative movements in Europe. Although there was also a change in Czigler's oeuvre with the emergence of new trends, the architect remained consistent with the style he had already mastered as a student of Theophil Hansen at the Vienna Academy. As a teacher of ancient architecture at the University of Technology, he provided his students with a practical workplace, where Neo-Renaissance, using ancient models, proved to be the appropriate language. The involvement of students in the design work also significantly increased office capacity.

However, the oeuvre is not only quantitative, but also includes several high-quality, sophisticated buildings. These include the Saxlehner Palace in Budapest, the Academy of Commerce, the Hold Street and Hunyadi Square market halls, the headquarters of the Central Statistical Office, and even the Gozsdu Courtyard. The latter, with its six-part courtyard, is unique in the capital with its scale and layout. Several of the architect's plans for apartment buildings aimed to provide alternatives to the circular corridors, thereby making Budapest's living spaces more livable. He was bold in his use of new structures, incorporating early reinforced concrete slabs in his

courthouse and jail buildings, as well as iron and glass structures in his market halls.

## PUBLICATIONS

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Adrián Szilárd szerk. *Tavaszi Szél 2022 / Spring Wind 2022*  
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- Czigler Győző építész kútja nyomában Kiskunfélegyházán. In: *Múltbanéző*, 2019. okt. 30. 15. sz. [https://mnl.gov.hu/bkml/multbanezo\\_15\\_02](https://mnl.gov.hu/bkml/multbanezo_15_02). Megtekintés: 2025. jún. 30.

## ***Further Publications***

- The Historicist Architecture of the Grand Boulevard in Budapest and Its Urbanistic Significance. In: *Architektura and Urbanizmus*, 2024. Vol. 58. Nr. 3–4. 152–173.
- Dragan Damjanović – Aleksander Łupienko (eds): Forging Architectural Tradition – National Narratives, Monument Preservation and Architectural Work in the Nineteenth Century. Recenzió. In: *Acta Historiae Artium Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 2022. 63. évf. 1. sz. 383–387.
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- Sztárépítész a századfordulón. Recenzió. In: *Országút: Művészeti Tudomány Közélet*, 2020. 1. évf. 1. sz. 35–36.
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