



Greek and Roman Theatres in Mediterranean area International Seminar

Tuesday 11th June | Wednesday 12th June 2019
Palazzo Badoer, Aula Tafuri

Cristina Bicego The Concordia roman theatre

In the ortophoto you can see where the theatre is located: in the bottom of the image you see Venice and the red dot is Concordia.

At the current status, the Concordia roman theatre site can be seen as a piece of field, tied between two private properties. Just a part of the theatre sediment is on public land: indeed the west part of the cavea and all the scenic and postscenic portions are on private plots of land.

The site is completely buried. The portion on the public land has been set up with the implantation of short boxwood bushes to mime the ima cavea emicycle, the central enclosure and part of the summa cavea emicycle. A walkway goes across the area, connecting the graveyard car park with the park. This path becomes a half moon open space in the orchestra area. The cavea has a 80 meters diameter.

From the scene survived some marble slabs with an acanthus decoration. Column and capital fragments testify that the scene must had a rich decorative setup. There were also statues. A column base with the beginning of a young man's leg was found in the cavea area; a head fragment, maybe Eros, was found in the iposcenio ruins area. Both these fragments survived from the miners that from the IV century A.D. started to dismantle the building.

All the sculptural and decorative evidences are now conserved at the Museo Nazionale Concordiese of Portogruaro.

It is important to underline that not all the sculptural elements are exposed to the public and moreover they are placed in different points of the museum: this confuses a potential visitor.

In 1873 the sepolcreto dei Militi was discovered (east necropolis of the roman city). The great resonance brought back the scientists' attention in the ancient roman colony. Because of this Giacomo Stringhetta, boss of the Concordia miners, drew a quite detailed plan of the city on behalf of the lawyer Dario Bertolini.

In 1880 the plan was redrawn by the engineer Antonio Bon and published on Notizie degli Scavi.

From 1976 an archaeological restriction was applied on the part of the city included into the ancient city boundaries; this allows uninterrupted, but not systematic, researches.

The Concordia theatre's location induce to think it was included in the urban plan tied to the colony addition to the Empire. The theatre is indeed perfectly inserted in the street grid. The back façade is aligned with one of the urban streets.

Augusto, Tiberio and Vespariano coins were found in various spots: this induce to think that the theatre date back to the first half of the century; the theatre position could date it back to the colony foundation period.

The Stringhetta plan presents a median path as wide as a street, suggesting a direct access to the orchestra. All this induce to think a theatre type equipped with a high proscenium and a iposcenium linked to the orchestra. This fact is still not very clear because this typology was non in use anymore in the occidental theatres, where the orchestra had lost its ancient purpose, but was still used in the oriental theatres.

The discovery of a wide foundation induce to think that this slab was the ima cavea substructure. Against this substructure there were radial walls that formed the median cavea's substructure. These radial walls were connected between each other to form 24 narrow cells.

At the centre of the semicircle shaped by the cavea there was a path running in a east-west direction with a width of 1,50 m. This passage corresponded to the central staircase (scalaria), that was linked with a mortar strip that surrounded the orchestra like a crown.

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The back scene wall was rich of architectural fragments, forming a scene with multiple orders.

Some architectural fragments and inscriptions found in Concordia are the memory of some citizens that intervened in favour of the theatre.

From the Marcus Acutius Noetus inscription we know about his financial intervention in favour of the games that were performed in the orchestra, transformed in an arena.

Cicrius Severus, in an inscription found under the paleochristian trichora pavement, restored the scamna, the theatre seats.

Lucius Minicius restored the scene.

All these interventions by the Concordian citizens testify a late phase of the theatre, that already from the end of the I century A.D. needed the restoration of some of its parts.

The discovery of some coins allows us to date at the end of the IV century A.D. a violent blaze that caused the collapse of the scene. The discovery of a burned wooden plane, attributable to the wooden floor of the stage, is another confirmation.

From that moment on, the theatre was used as a stone quarry: the systematic depredation of the building unfortunately led to an almost total loss of this theatre.

As I already said the site is completely underground. A driveway crosses the area, connecting the cemetery car park with the park; in correspondence with the orchestra it widens into a half-moon space. In the edge of this space is placed one of the information panels of the “archaeological paths” of Concordia in which the site of the theatre is presented. The quality of the set-up is rather poor, as the suburban context imposes itself forcefully on the few and discontinuous signs that attempt to recall the features of the theatre. Moreover the set-up do not allow an immediate reading, nor are the dimensions (hypothesized) of the building.

To conclude I put the scientific bulletin: it is not complete in all its parts because it is hard to find information about it, probably because it is not well conserved and there are not a lot of evidences of his existence.