

Purpose of the theater



Name: Course: Lecturer: Date: The Theater of Pompey: The Different

Structure Purpose of the Theater The Theater of Pompey was the first theater made of stone in Rome and thus was the first permanent theater (Grange 50). Pompey the great was powerful, and he used the power and influence that he had, to build a permanent theater.

This was contrary to the rules and expectations of the senate, which had often opposed the construction of any permanent structure, near its meeting place (Ewald, Norena, and Yale University Department of Classics 141). The theater was a huge structure that could accommodate approximately 25,000 people, although there are differing figures. The theater had a big performance area, a shopping center, and a sacred grove and temple dedicated to Venus. The theater's main purpose was to stage different theatrical acts including comedies and dramas that were based on Greek or roman subjects and characters from different mythologies (Grange 51). The theater served the educated and those who were not educated, and was therefore popular with the people. Musical contests and gymnastic contests were held there to the pleasure of the educated. The uneducated people, who formed the bulk of the population, were pleased with the lion hunts and the spectacle of the fighting elephants that were held in the theater.

The garden areas in the theater area were popular, as people used them as meeting venues with friends and lovers. Others just came to the theater to pass time, as they watched what others were doing there (Ewald, Norena, and Yale University Department of Classics 157). Shape and Structure of the Theater The theater resembled a crater and it was high, thus many people referred to it as one of the hills in Rome (Checa 245). The theater had a big

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court that was colonnaded and was used for promenading. The circular structure for the auditorium was circular in form, and it dominated the theater.

The form of the orchestra was a semi circle, which was small, showing that it was not the main feature of the theater. The walls of the auditorium were high and reached the height of the seats. The structure of the theater, though largely inspired by the Greek theaters, emphasized a close relationship in structure formation of the seats and the auditorium. The builders decorated the facade with arches and columns, using the scheme of tabularium (Kimball and Edgell125). There were three portals on the west side where the stage separated the theater and the gardens. Pompey ensured that the theater had a meeting venue for the senate. The senate had two secondary rooms and was located on the east end of the royal entrance or the central regia. The two secondary rooms would later become niches which had public toilets behind them.

The theater was semicircular in shape. Its diameter was 162 meters. The circular steps could sit approximately 12, 000 people (Stamper 85). It was 165m long and 44. 3m high (Checa 245). The theater was the largest at the time, and the stage was 300 feet high and the auditorium held about 25 000 spectators (Beacham and Denard 129).

There were different shrines dedicated to different deities including Venus Victrix, Felicitas, Virtus, Homos and Victoria. Religion was an important part of the society then, and Pompey had said that his intention was not to build a theater, but rather a temple whose steps could be used as seats. However,

he did not restrict the purposes of the theater to religious observation only. The temple of Venus was located at the top of the auditorium. It was at the main axis of the theater, and it was important to Pompey, as Pompey considered Venus as the main contributor to his victories. The center seats at the center formed a staircase that led to the temple. The outer facade was curved and had a pier and arch structure.

It had half columns arranged in ascending order. The angled concrete vaults acted as supports for the auditorium (Stamper 85-87). The blocks in the outside facade were made of travertine, while those on the inside facade were made of peperino. The walls made of the heavy peperino blocks acted as support for the heavier structural weights.

The foundation was made of concrete, which composed of tufa fragments and pozzolana (Ewald Carlos and Yale University Department of Classics 141-143). The gardens were surrounded by a colonnade. Lavish fountains beautified the garden and the trees enhanced its beauty. The fountains had statuary, and one of the statues was a sleeping Maro. Some of the statues stood on pedestals on the sides of the fountains. Some of the statues located at different places in the theater included the statues of Thalia, the Hercules Righetti, Apollo, and Muse, The central court had a big quadriportico surrounding it. The quadriportico was made of four different structures and its columnar facades acted as frames for the garden. The four buildings acted as security, as there was limited access through them, to and from the gardens and theater.

The security was necessary since lavish ornaments such as the curtains brocaded with gold, the paintings from Greece that were hung on the walls, and the sculptures in the garden, adorned the porticos. There was a portico of a hundred columns on the north side of the garden, and it was next to a grove of plane trees. There were statues of different beasts around the area (Gleason 8-10). Differences between the Theater and other Roman Theaters

The main difference between The Theater of Pompey and other theaters was because of the materials used during construction. The Theater of Pompey was made of stone, unlike other theaters which were made of wood. The builders combined stone with foreign marble and concrete (Ewald, Norena, and Yale University Department of Classics 158). The theaters were temporary in nature, and were dismantled as soon as the performance was over. The materials used in the construction of the theater made it possible for the architects to position it on the flat area instead of the commonly used sloping hill.

The sloping hill acted as a natural support. Location of the theater on a flat area was made possible by the application of vaulting, where the seats were supported high above the ground (Kimball and Edgell 125). Although inspired by Greek architecture, the Pompey theater differed from other similar structures, in that it was fully enclosed, whereas others had a seating area that resembled a horse shoe (Klar), Pompey theater differed from other theaters of the time, as it featured different adornments. The permanent nature of the theater, its size and structure, as well as the attention to detail during construction, which made it possible for the builders to include different security measures made it possible to have different adornments

such as statues and other works of art available in the theater. This made it one of the most expensive theaters in the history of Rome. Pompey had built the theater as a show of his victories, and he had used the wealth he had got from different places when he had gone to war. The theater was therefore a sign of prestige to him, and he used it to show his great power and influence.

Graphic Section Image showing the exterior of the theater of Pompey from the southeastern side Image retrieved from http://www.pompey.cch.kcl.ac.uk/The%20Theatre%20of%20Pompey_files/history01.jpg

The different temples incorporated in the theater Image retrieved from http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/7/71/Largo_torre_argentina_PIANTA.jpg/250px-Largo_torre_argentina_PIANTA.jpg

The theater with different parts highlighted Image retrieved from http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/85/Theatre_of_Pompey_highlighted_diagram.png/1024px-Theatre_of_Pompey_highlighted_diagram.png

General exterior of the theater http://t2.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcSXI_BoKSIY2_Hq_3LzGfaGxtSUKYtrxd-pJIWleSelqmCt7aNyig Image showing the plan of the theater Retrieved from http://www.pompey.cch.kcl.ac.uk/early_research_files/new04s.jpg

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