



POLITECNICO
DI TORINO

Honors thesis

COURSE OF DEGREE IN ARCHITECTURE
CONSTRUCTION CITY

Abstract

**A CONTEMPORARY SETTING IN AN ANCIENT THEATRE.
Electra by Sophocles as part of the 52nd Festival of Classic
Theatre of Syracuse**

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by

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Nowadays is unlikely for Greek and Roman architectural remnants to have maintained their original function, nevertheless theaters always represented a lucky exception, becoming symbols of continuity between past and present.

Between the 19th and 20th century theaters are reconsidered as such, not just archaeological remains but real spaces for representation, ideal facilities to host shows and events of different nature, but always preferring stagings with roots that sink in the ancient drama tradition.

What are the reasons that lie behind this new rise and diffusion of the ancient theatrical buildings? What role does the classical drama and its interpretations have in this context? Is the connection between “container” and “content” still so strong to ensure that, thanks to ancient plays, people still gather in the those places that more than 2000 years ago were designed for the same function they have today?

This thesis was born to study and give answer to those questions.

In order to enhance and preserve theatrical structures is necessary to bring them back to their original function: rescuing an ancient structure, restoring its original value, recognizing its deepest meaning and role, allows us to preserve the soul of these architectures.

This study therefore seeks to contribute to the enhancement and re-use of the ancient theater. In this particular case through a re-enactment of the classic drama in the form of a scenographic design that will be part of the *Festival di Rappresentazioni Classiche di Siracusa* that, in addition to respect the opera’s dramaturgical purposes, will meet the needs and requirements of an *en plein air* performance within that ancient architecture.

This thesis is made of three parts: the first part is a reconstruction of the theatrical space’s history in ancient Greece, the second part analyzes the bringing back and re-use of ancient theater in the contemporary era and the third part concerns a project for the staging of Sophocles’ *Electra*, on the bill of play for the 52nd Festival di Siracusa. It originally developed from an internship in Siracusa, held at the Istituto Nazionale Dramma Antico and at the Teatro Greco’s scenography and costumes ateliers, during the production period of the plays for the Festival. It was also included into the context of the international project *Agorà Mediterraneo*.

The design idea focuses on the identification of a single symbolic element, that represent in a unified way the central themes of the work.

During the representation all the scene changes are carried out through this structure, and all this happens in plain view and on the stage floor.

The staging is in contrast with the context: identification of formal choices and the use of material that constitute a dystopian and evocative setting, cause a net separation between the scene and the archaeological frame. This conveys the recognition of the historical, archaeological and cultural value of the Theater of Siracusa.

During the design phase, account was taken of the stowage of stage elements, which consist of modular structures and are characterized by simplicity and rapidity of assembly and disassembly.

They were also taken into account the problems related to transport, since the theater building is part of an archaeological site and therefore not easily accessible.

It would be interesting to pursue this work with the final goal of bringing this exhibition on tour in all the ancient Italian theaters, in order to do so we still need to make the structure able to adapt to different situations and settings, other than the Theater of Siracusa, for which this project was originally conceived.



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