Chapter 2

THEATRICAL LIFE AT POMPEII

'Life is a stage.'

'SKENE HO BIOS' IS INSCRIBED in Greek on a silver cup found at Boscoreale.[1] The idea was similarly, and deeply, inscribed in the culture of Pompeii's inhabitants, both in the suggestion that one performed one's own life as if a character in a drama, and that individuals were spectators observing the world around them as theatre. In addition to their extensive participation in a wide range of theatrical entertainments, the residents of Pompeii created and experienced an astonishingly rich array of art and objects directly inspired by or heavily drawing upon what we have termed in Chapter 1 the *lingua franca* of Roman theatricalism. Moreover, theatricality – the explicit evocation of the domain of the theatre itself – often figured in the domestic environments of Pompeii as well, a topic we explore in detail in Chapter 5. Everywhere they encountered paintings, mosaics, carved reliefs and statues containing representations of subjects recognisably evocative of the theatre. Moreover, these images and objects were frequently dispersed within the visual systems of the house in such a way that occupants perceived them in a manner that drew upon their knowledge and experience of spectatorship within the theatre itself.

Studies of the history of theatre at Pompeii have tended to concentrate upon detailing the physical elements of performance, insofar as these can be plausibly identified, and upon citing and evaluating evidence for the brokerage of power between patrons and audience, or both. Meanwhile, an increasing number of studies of the Roman house, particularly those at Pompeii and Herculaneum,

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Figure 9 Cup from Boscoreale, Louvre, Don Baron E. de Rothschild, 1895, In. No. BJ 1923. Photo: DeAgostini/Getty Images.

have recognised the importance of attending to patterns of movement, programmes of decor, bodily awareness, meaningful manipulation and juxtaposition of decor and vistas and the like.

Our objective is to carry each of these theatrical and domestic approaches over into its companion's domain, offering first in this chapter an interpretation of the spatial, kinaesthetic and aesthetic aspects of the Pompeian theatre-going experience inspired in part by studies of the Roman house and then, in Chapter 5, a theatrically inflected reading of aspects of the Roman domestic domain. There we consider in particular how the house encouraged the viewers, most of whom had significant theatre-going experience, to enter into a state of imaginative engagement analogous to and informed by that induced in the theatre. Complementing and enabling this, our discussion of the theatre here will focus upon the manner in which spectators encountered an array of modes and degrees of 'imaginative address'. As in other expressions of Roman spectatorship, including those taking place in the home, the pleasure of the occasion arose from the manner in which the viewer was dynamically drawn into a complicit sensual and cognitive involvement with the performance and its venue through the expressive media (actors, movement, sound, scenery, architectural embellishment) assembled, arrayed and activated before him.

In pursuit of the goal of exploring the relationship between modes of perception and experience in the theatrical and the domestic spheres, we need first to consider both the material conditions and activities characteristic of each. In the first section of this chapter we therefore wish to provide a detailed account and consequent interpretation of the surviving material evidence for the theatrical venues of the city, and for theatre practice within these. Our intention is to give the most complete account available of the architectural history of the Pompeian theatres in relation to the social and ideological significance of theatrical practice in the contexts of cultural and political changes at Pompeii, while also observing how the relationship of this Samnite town to both the Hellenistic culture of *Magna Graecia* and to Rome changed in response to evolving conditions.

Of course, the preservation of so much evidence at Pompeii is accidental. In using it to aid our understanding of Roman attitudes, it is important to bear in mind that, while Pompeii did participate in, and thus exemplifies to a significant degree, wider Roman practice, it was also a provincial community. Nevertheless, much invaluable, compelling and suggestive detail for the prevalence of theatricalism and theatricality in Roman life may be sifted from the legacy left at Pompeii. In order more fully to understand the nature of this abundant material, and by way of providing a larger context in which to assess it, we turn now to consider the nature of formal theatrical activity in Pompeii during the period relevant to our study.

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THEATRES AT POMPEII; ROMAN THEATRE ARCHITECTURE

Shortly after theatrical performances had become formally instituted at the City Dionysia in Athens, some cities in the areas of southern Italy and Sicily colonised by the Greeks are believed to have acquired – initially temporary – theatre buildings to accommodate performances by native or travelling companies.[2] In addition to the later evidence for Hellenistic performance provided by the architectural remains of the stone theatres, we have valuable information from a large number of vases, found in southern Italy and Sicily and dating from around 400 to 320 BC. These vases were earlier believed by scholars to depict a type of farce drama indigenous to southern Italy, the so-called *phlyakes*, but recent research has established that many of the vases are in fact directly influenced by Athenian drama and its staging; in several cases specific works can be reliably identified.[3] Theatrical activity appears to have been widespread, and by the mid to late second century BC, several stone theatres had been built in Campania, including examples found at Sarno, Calles, Pietrabbondante, Nuceria, Capua and probably at Teanum Sidicinum. To the north, in Latium, there were also theatres such as those at Alba Fucens, Tusculum and Gabii, and probably at Praeneste and Tibur as well.[4]

Both the origin and chronological evolution of the architecture of the Large Theatre at Pompeii are greatly disputed by scholars, and a clear consensus has yet to emerge.[5] Even the date of its construction is much debated, ranging from between the mid third to the early first century BC. Consequently, our discussion here must necessarily be speculative. It is possible to identify the theatre's constituent elements and to give a broad outline of their alteration over time, but the precise sequence and dating of many of these is uncertain.

On balance, it seems likely that the earliest structure was built in the mid-second century. Occupying a site near the Stabian gate to the south of the town, like a number of theatre-temple complexes erected in the region during the period it was situated near a temple precinct – known today as the Triangular Forum – with which it was connected by a prominent staircase. This earliest theatre structure is thought to have resembled those built elsewhere in *Magna Graecia* and Sicily. Like those at Syracuse, Segesta and Tyndaris, it was initially of the *paraskenia* type shown in Figure 10: a building characterised by wings flanking the stage and projecting outward into the *orchestra*. There may have been a raised stage, in this first phase, but it is equally possible that performances took place upon the ground between the two *paraskenia*.[6] The stage building itself was rectilinear, some twenty-five metres wide, probably having three doors facing the audience, as well as two small side doors providing access to the playing space from the *paraskenia*. Its façade may have been articulated with some structural enhancements and ornamentation such as columns, decorated doorways, engaged columns and pilasters.

The theatre at Pompeii had oblique *paraskenia*, angled into the *orchestra*, that both framed the place of performance and probably also enhanced the acoustics of the site. Between the seating and the *paraskenia* on either side were open-air entrances (*parodoi*)[7] providing access into the *orchestra* for performers and audience and, for the latter, from there into the sloping, horseshoe-shaped auditorium (*cavea*), which was some fifty metres in diameter, and built up in part upon the natural hillside.

Vitruvius (5.7) notes that two types of performers appeared in such theatres: actors on the stage (*scaenici*), and the chorus within the *orchestra* (*thymelici*). The architectural evidence strongly suggests that here and in those other Campanian and Samnite theatres that have

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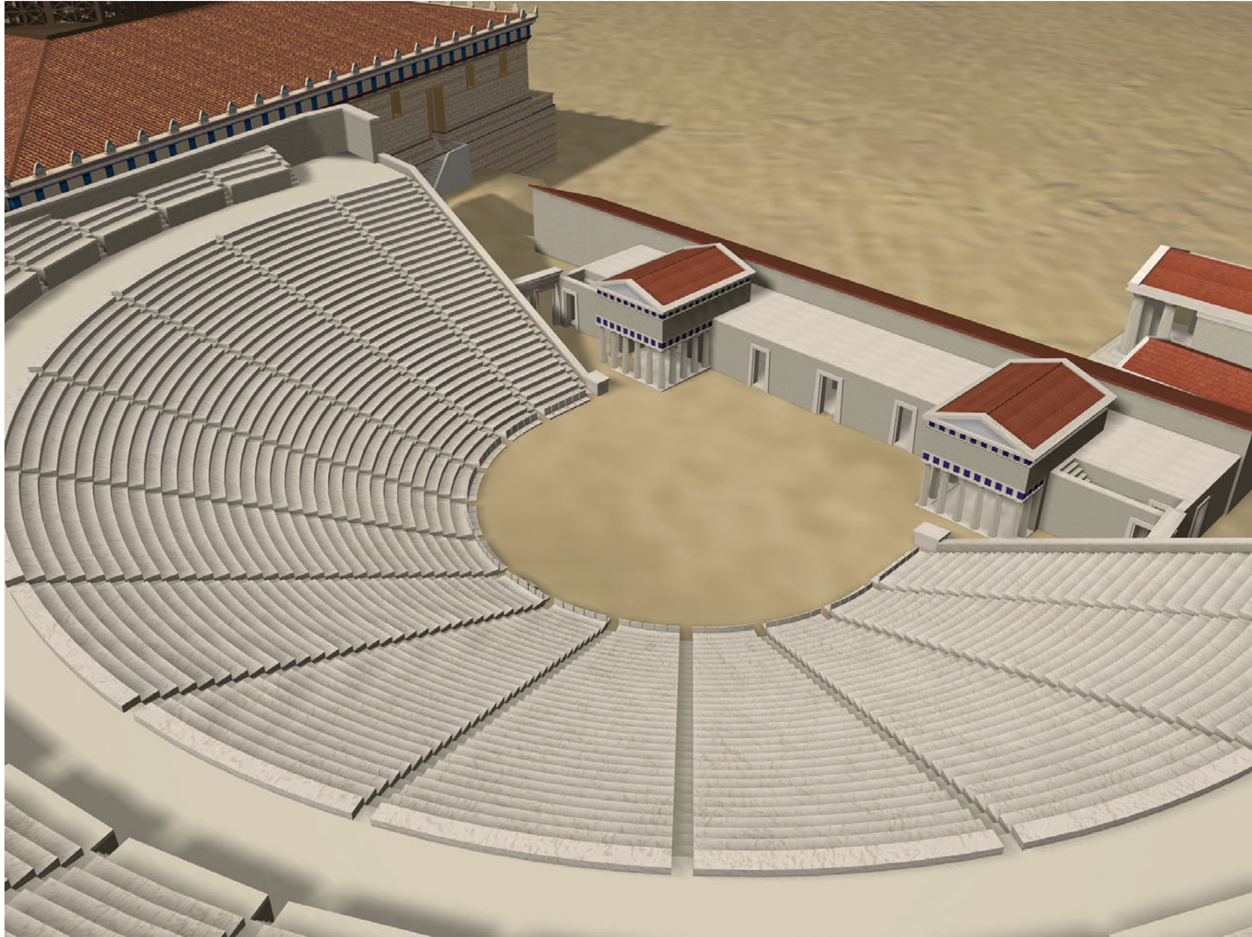

Figure 10 Hypothetical reconstruction of the Lycurgan *paraskenia* Theatre of Dionysus at Athens. Model by Baker.

been located and examined (Sarno and Pietrabbondante dating from the early second century, and Teanum Sidicinum, Capua, Cales and Alba Fucens from somewhat later)[8] performances were given in the Greek fashion: both upon the stage and in the *orchestra*. By contrast, in Latin sites only the stage was normally used for performance, while the *orchestra* was occupied by elite spectators (Vitruvius 5.6.2). This is an important point since the distinctive architecture of these Campanian and Samnite sites suggests a theatre culture subject primarily to Hellenistic rather than Italian influences.[9]

Instead of the high, narrow stage (*logeion*) and projecting wings that characterised the Greek-style *paraskenia* theatres of Campania and Samnium, the theatres in Latium, still evolving in the course of the first century BC, had a low, wide stage (*pulpitum*) with no projecting flanking structures. Their stages were closed in on either side by walls: *versurae*.[10] The *versurae* often formed the sides of buildings – *basilicae* – that hemmed in the stage on either side. Often several storeys high, and perhaps used as reception spaces, the *basilicae* did not project forward towards the *orchestra* or *cavea*.

Once the format had fully evolved, Latin theatres had a scene building – the *postscaenium* – behind the stage whose façade, the *scaenae frons*, rose two or more storeys to match the level of the uppermost rim of the *cavea* opposite.[11] The several structures (stage, *basilicae*, scene building and auditorium) tended to form an architecturally unified entity (Figure 11), with the stage

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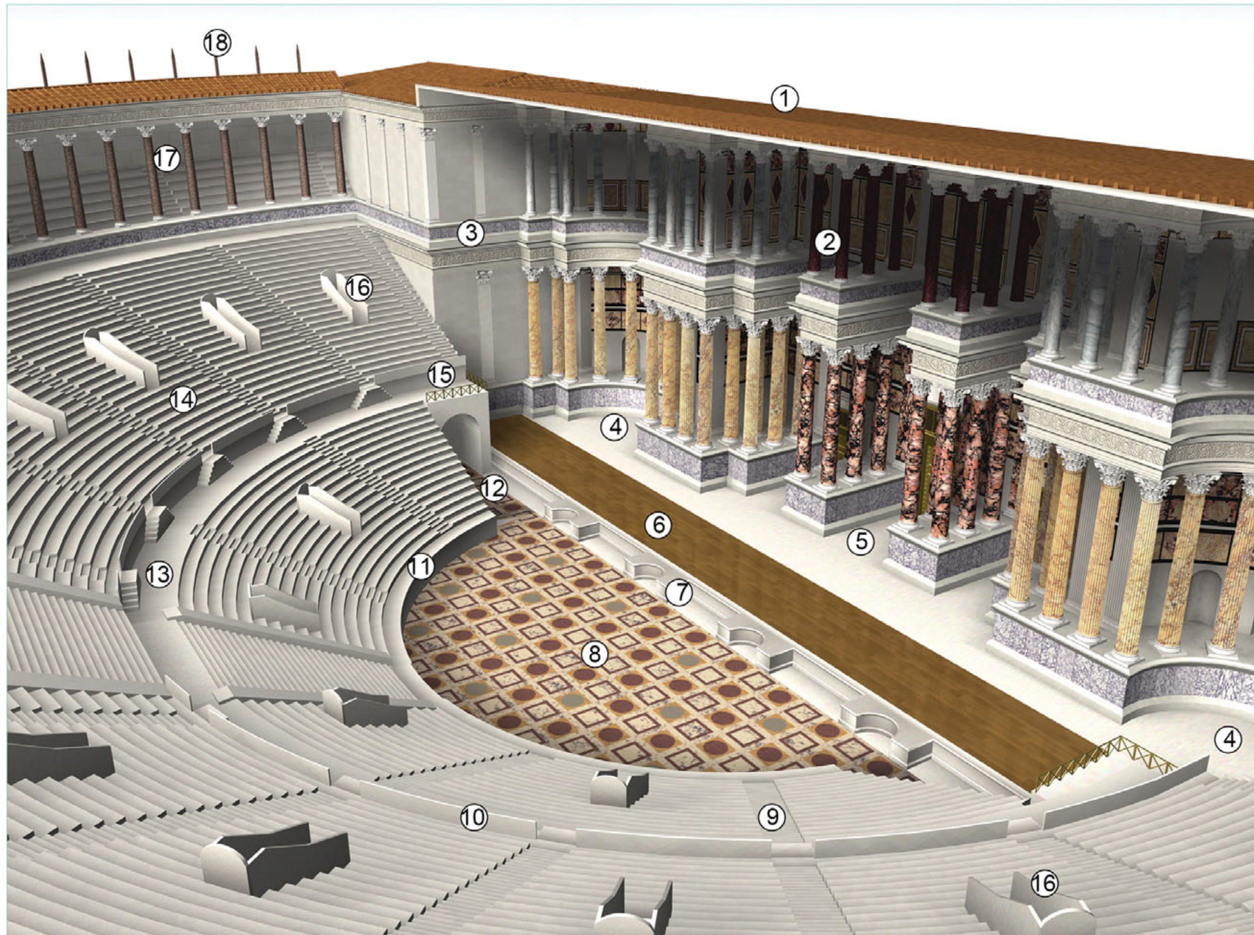

Figure 11 Roman theatre model with diagrammed components. *1 Postscaenium, 2 Scaenae frons, 3 Versura, 4 Portae hospitales, 5 Porta regia, 6 Pulpitum, 7 Frons Pulpitum. 8 Orchestra, 9 Scalaria, 10 Balteus, 11 Proedria, 12 Aditus Maximus, 13 Praecinctio, 14 Cuneus, 15 Tribunal, 16 Vomitoria, 17 Porticus in summa cavea,* 18 Supports of the *Velum*. Photo: Blazeby.

linked to the *cavea* by vaulting (*confornicationes*) over the entrance passageways, *aditus maximi*, which afforded access to the *orchestra* and *cavea*. These vaults eventually had viewing platforms, *tribunalia,* placed upon them for the games' patrons and possibly other particularly honoured guests. The creation of a partly or entirely free-standing, architecturally integrated structure may have arisen from (or at least been encouraged by) the concern that temporary wooden theatres, known to have been constructed at Rome for centuries, be made as weatherproof as possible. The format thus achieved was then carried forward into permanent structures when they were built.[12]

In the city of Rome (and undoubtedly at provincial cities as well, including Pompeii), these wooden structures were put up for particular, usually established, annual holidays (*ludi*) and then dismantled. From at least the late fourth or early third century the theatre as an institution had become ever more firmly fixed and prominent in Roman society. Despite the increasing number of established occasions during which scenic games were customarily presented; however, the structures on which plays were staged continued for centuries to be temporary. The annual series of formal established games (*ludi sollemnes*) at Rome in which temporary stages figured were organised and sponsored

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by Roman state officials: primarily the *aediles*, although other officials – and eventually the emperors themselves – were also responsible for giving public entertainments from time to time; and the same provision by public officials, as we discuss later, persisted at Pompeii during the Imperial period.

Vitruvius (10. *Praef.* 4) noted that 'every year the *praetors* and *aediles* must prepare the machinery for the spectacles'. In the Republican period, because the office of *aedile* was a relatively junior one, and the future electoral success of its holder in obtaining higher office depended in part upon the impression made upon the electorate by his one-year tenure of the post, there developed a profoundly competitive dynamic which placed a premium upon entertainment and spectacle, and could greatly reward *euergetism* – the generous expenditure of private wealth for public benefit which was expected of prominent individuals.[13] Indeed, it is likely that the resistance the Roman Senate displayed over many decades to the construction of a permanent stone theatre structure was based quite as much upon their desire to reserve for themselves the option for such beneficial 'showcasing' of their largesse as it was upon moral or cultural reservations.[14]

Certainly prominent members of the Roman elite wished as far as possible to exercise broad control over taste and culture; in particular they tended (at least officially) to regard many of the defining elements of Hellenistic civilisation, amongst which the theatre, of course, was prominently included, with a degree of suspicion and unease, and wished to monitor and modulate their dissemination to the inhabitants of Rome.[15] Despite this prudence, the yearly cycle of theatre-building was deliberately and conspicuously extravagant and wasteful. Consequently, the means through which such display could take place, including the right of elites to provide enduring and monumental public buildings to glorify their name and achievements, were subject to continuing negotiation and regulation.

More than any other element of the theatre, it was the highly decorated façade of the *scaenae frons* that most reflected the competitive ethos of elite behaviour. In the course of the first century BC, the tendency towards the presentation of ever more sumptuous games was accompanied by the erection of increasingly elaborate temporary stages, with particular emphasis placed upon the embellishment of the stage façade. What emerged as the canonical format for the Roman *scaenae frons* was an articulated and highly decorated façade, populated by statues – a feature, Klar points out, 'entirely absent from the Hellenistic *skene*'. She argues that the Roman *scaenae frons* was closely associated with the triumphs of successful generals who, in giving their votive games, erected theatres where some of the spoils of conquest could be displayed, and decorated their façades with impressive display architecture and statuary. The evolution of the *scaenae frons* at Rome, Klar concludes, was 'driven by social and political forces unique to the Roman Republican period [and]. . . developed to display plundered statuary as a demonstration of military prowess'.[16]

For Klar, the culmination of this tradition was the theatre built in 58 BC by Marcus Aemilius Scaurus. This most extravagant stage façade – also representing the first ancient record of the architecture of the *scaenae frons* – was described by Pliny (*Nat. Hist.*, 36.113–115) as having a façade of three storeys, decorated with some 360 columns and 3,000 statues. Pliny also mentions other sumptuous scenic elements, including gold cloth, scene paintings and other decor, subsequently taken from the theatre (which lasted only a month) and reused in Scaurus' villa at Tusculum.

At Rome, and probably at other Latin towns as well, theatre took place formally as part of games

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given to honour the gods, both at fixed annual occasions and on various extraordinary occasions such as triumphs, funerals and celebrations. Although religious observance provided the occasion for theatre, political patronage underwrote it, and both plays and performances could at times convey sharply pointed and highly emotive political commentary.[17] However, it is also the case at Rome that the central focus of theatrical activity seems to have been upon providing popular festive pleasures for citizens.[18]

In the Hellenistic world, in whose theatrical culture Pompeii and other communities in Campania were deeply immersed, theatre was a long-established, deeply respected and revered tradition. Up until the early years of the first century BC, Pompeian attitudes towards theatre may have owed less to Roman than to Hellenistic influences. Lauter proposes that Samnite towns such as Pompeii 'adopted, as a whole, the theatre of *Magna Graecia* . . . because with them the inner process of Hellenisation had progressed further than it had in the case of the Latin communities who for a long period had been in a more culturally circumscribed condition'.[19]

THEATRE AT POMPEII AFTER SULLA

Following its support of the rebellion against Rome in the Social War, Pompeii was besieged in 89 BC, taken in 87 by Sulla and subsequently garrisoned. Although its indigenous inhabitants were granted Roman citizenship, a large number – probably 4–5,000 – of Sulla's veterans were settled there,[20] and in roughly 80 BC the town was established as a Roman colony: the *Colonia Cornelia Veneria Pompeianorum*. Under Sulla's nephew Publius Cornelius, it acquired a new constitution. This instituted a ruling assembly, the *Ordo Decurionum*. Latin became the official language, gradually replacing the native Oscan as the normal language of daily life, although Greek was still widely used.

The Romanisation of Pompeii in the course of the first century BC can clearly be observed in the changes made to its theatre architecture. Shortly after the colony was established, the stage building of the Large Theatre was remodelled, acquiring the layout characteristic of theatre structures in Latium. In fact, Pompeii is probably the earliest surviving example of the iconic 'Roman' theatre design that would later be widely distributed in the Imperial age. The changes made to it at the time of Sulla are evidence of a revolutionary change in theatre typology, predating the construction of a permanent theatre at Rome itself, which did not occur until 55 BC. The diameter of the *cavea* was increased by approximately ten metres to some sixty-two metres. The width of the scene building was commensurately increased, by removing the *paraskenia*, to thirty-five metres. A stage, some three quarters of a metre high, was backed by a rectilinear stage building, with its façade, the *scaenae frons*, articulated with a design of rectilinear and curved niches, probably decorated with columns and pedestals (*columnatio*), and framing three doors. In addition, at each end of the stage where the *paraskenia* had been, there were doors into the stage building, enabling performers to exit from one side of the stage and cross, unseen by the audience, behind the scene building to enter from the other side. The five doors that had previously been located at the rear of this building (the *postscaenium*) were reduced to a single, central doorway.

In Greek theatre practice, the *orchestra* had traditionally been reserved for the chorus, an aesthetic entity functioning within the dramatic performance, and which was broadly associated with the citizen population, and by extension with the idea of the city state (*polis*) itself. In the post-Sullan theatre at Pompeii, by contrast,

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the *orchestra* came to be used primarily as a place for seating and displaying members of the governmental and religious elites of the colony, giving them a good view of the low stage, which perhaps now became the exclusive site of dramatic performances.

At about this time, a circular basin, with a diameter of over seven metres and three quarters of a metre in depth, was constructed beneath the *orchestra*. It was but the first of some six basins to be constructed in the *orchestra* over the life of the theatre.[21] The function of these is greatly disputed: they may have been used as a source of perfumed water to be sprayed out over the audience, such as that described by Seneca (*Epist. Mor*. 95.15; *Nat. Quaest*. 2.9.2), or for fountains or various types of aquatic display.[22] If so, it suggests that seating patterns in the theatre must have altered from occasion to occasion depending on the nature of the display to be mounted. The *orchestra* had a semicircular rim of four broad, low steps, used for special reserved seating – *subsellia*.

The open-air *parodoi* (characteristic of the Hellenistic theatres) were now vaulted over, joining the stage and scene building with the *cavea*. Access into *orchestra*, *subsellia* and, via narrow steps, lower areas of the auditorium, was now through these covered entrance corridors, the *aditus maximi*. These corridors giving access to the lower *cavea* could also be reached by a large staircase from the Triangular Forum, located to the west above and behind the Large Theatre, descending along the southern side of the Theatre between it and the adjacent *quadriporticus*.

Because the idea and practice of Hellenistic theatre were so profoundly embedded in the town, the alteration of the structure into one of the earliest known examples of what scholars have argued would become an iconic Latin format – in effect creating a Latin theatre where previously a Hellenistic one had been – represents a highly public and deeply symbolic transformation of one of the fundamental institutions of Pompeian life. Further significant changes were to follow.

Around 80 BC, or a little later, an amphitheatre was erected (the earliest example of its type) near the Sarno gate at the east edge of the city walls, with a seating capacity of around 24,000.

At about the same time, a small, roofed theatre, an *odeion*, was also constructed adjacent to the Large Theatre.

An inscription (*CIL* X 844) records that the *Odeion* was built by the *duumviri* Gaius Quinctius Valgus and Marcus Porcius in execution of a decree by the *Ordo Decurionum* awarding them the contract. Although the provision was thus clearly a political act by the magistrates of the new colony, it may in fact have been entirely financed by the two individuals as conspicuous acts of patronage. They were also responsible for the construction of the amphitheatre, which a reference in a second inscription (*CIL* X 852) explicitly notes they did at their own expense 'for the honour of the colony'.[23] Both of these new structures are likely to have reflected the priorities of the town's new government and new Roman inhabitants, and as such constitute a political statement of sorts. Zanker considers that 'more than any other of the colonists' innovations, the amphitheatre altered the cultural climate in the town'.[24]

The *Odeion* seated approximately 1,300 spectators. This is based upon the survey and computer modelling research sponsored by the British Academy and undertaken in 2008–9 by Martin Blazeby for King's Visualisation Lab. It represented a significant adaptation of a type of Hellenistic building, a *bouleuterion*, which had long been used in Greek communities for pubic meetings and assemblies. However, now it was possibly co-opted by Sulla's veterans for their own use, while at the same time (and in contrast to the traditional use of *bouleuteria*) intended as a place of public entertainment. Such dual-purpose

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Figure 12 The Amphitheatre at Pompeii. Photo: Denard. Su concessione del Ministero della Cultura – Parco Archeologico di Pompei.

use of the *Odeion* may have characterised the early decades of its existence; later, after a remodelling and redecoration in the Augustan era, it may have been reserved entirely for theatrical entertainments.[25]

Its scenic elements included a raised stage probably a little over a metre high; a flat stage façade (*scaenae frons*) broken by five doors;[26] two flanking *paraskenia* each having a door opening onto the stage from the side; and a rectilinear stage building (*postscaenium*). When first excavated, traces of Second Style painting were discovered as part of the decorative scheme of the flat stage façade (and indeed a few of these could still be seen in the survey undertaken by Blazeby in 2008), an intriguing fact which we return to later.[27] In Chapter 7 we discuss the possible relationship between the large skenographic painting that adorns the *atrium* at the Villa of Oplontis (which we have deployed here on the stage façade of the *Odeion)* and stage architecture.

As in the Large Theatre, four low, broad, semicircular steps bordered the circumference of the *Odeion*'s *orchestra.*[28] The honorary seats, known as *bisellia*, that were placed upon them were considered 'indispensable as a symbol of power' for public officials in Roman-type administrations.[29] At Pompeii, members of the governing senate, the *Ordo Decurionum*, were each allocated a double-sized, cushioned *bisellium* for use in the Large Theatre or *Odeion*, as is attested by the discovery of several of these in the area of the theatre in the excavations of 1769.[30]

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Figure 13a *Odeion* at Pompeii, hypothetical reconstruction by Niccolini, Vol. 4. Photo: Ortolan.

b

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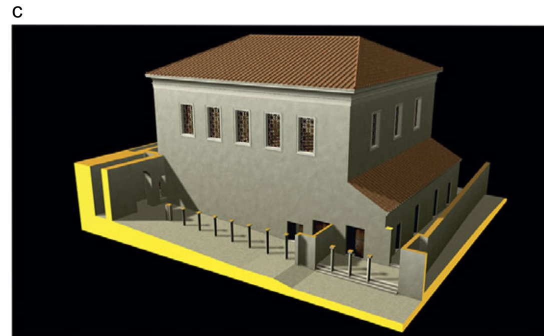

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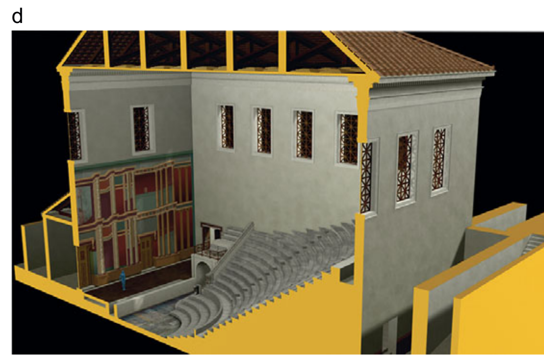

Figure 13b, c, d. Reconstruction of the *Odeion*. Photo: Blazeby.

In addition, by special decree the *Ordo* could honour with a *bisellium* other prominent members of the community, such as wealthy freedmen serving as *augustales* – members of the prestigious cult responsible for maintaining worship of the deified emperors.[31] The award of a *bisellium* was considered such a distinction that it could be numbered amongst the lifetime achievements recorded upon an individual's funerary monument.[32] Indeed, Zanker[33] notes that the loss of such privileges could drive a man to suicide while, at the other extreme, M. Nonius Balbus – the most prominent citizen of Herculaneum – continued to be honoured with a seat in the theatre even after his death.

It is important to note that despite the traditional reservations and ambivalence routinely voiced by Roman moralists about the potentially dangerous influence of the theatre, official (and popular) culture clearly placed enormous importance on the prestige of being visibly honoured before the community in its theatrical venues. This context and attitude help to explain the frequency with which Roman houses and villas contained the kind of highly theatricalised decor that we consider in subsequent chapters. Importing such references into the domestic sphere, often with the connection to theatre practice explicitly stressed, was evidently a practice that members of the Roman elite readily embraced as appropriate to their social and political standing.

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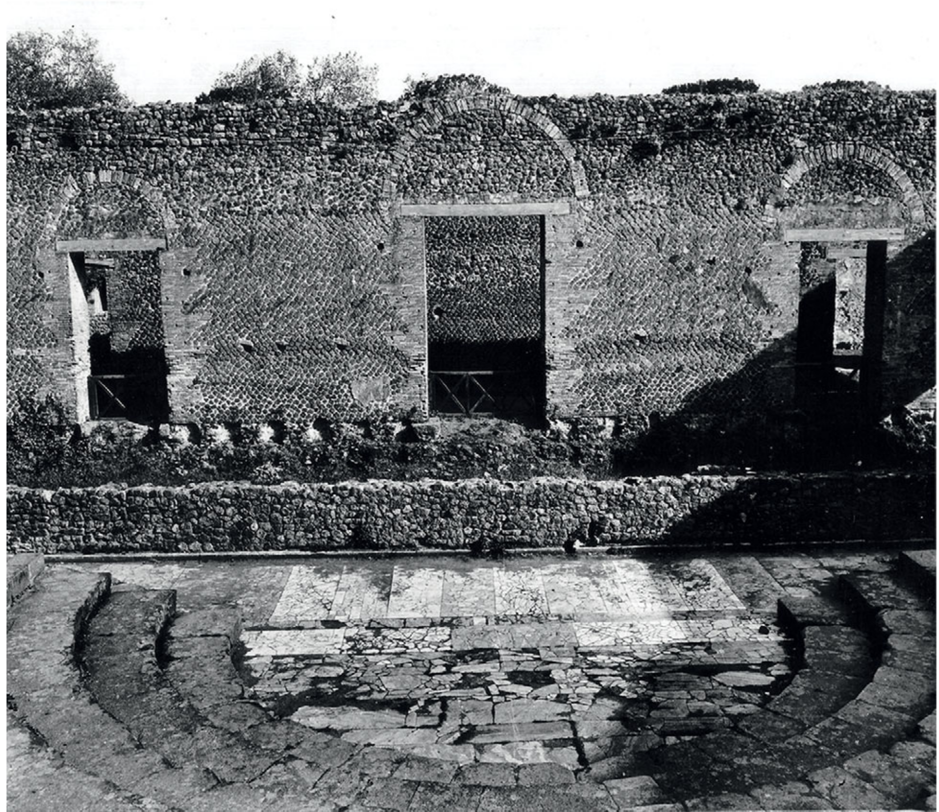

Figure 14a Pompeii *Odeion*, existing state. Photo: American Academy in Rome, Photographic Archive 11667.

b

Figure 14b Pompeii *Odeion*, reconstruction (audience view). Photo: Blazeby.

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For decades following Pompeii's ill-fated support for the uprising against Rome, the colony's leadership must have been dominated by the leaders of the new settlers who would have brought with them cultural – including theatrical – customs and expectations markedly different from those to which over several centuries Pompeii's natives had become accustomed. As late as 62 BC,[34] legal distinctions appear to have been in place between 'townsfolk' (*municipes*) and 'colonists' (*colonei*). In the granting of Roman citizenship, the confiscation and redistribution of land to veterans, the displacement of the Oscan language by Latin, the building of the amphitheatre and the fundamental refashioning of the Large Theatre, we can perceive a far-ranging – and perhaps at times turbulent – process of cultural reorientation through coercion, persuasion and self-interested adaptation.

In a great many aspects of Pompeian life, including, as we will consider, the architecture, decor and customs that characterised domestic practice, the theatre was one of the major areas in which relationships between Roman, Italian and Hellenistic cultures were negotiated and displayed. Theatre had for centuries been a defining component of Greek culture. But, as we detail below, during the late Republic, and at a quickening pace under the Augustan Principate, the idea of theatre had also become deeply incorporated into the ideological and cultural expressions of Roman political and social life. Acquiring a Latin-style theatre – and preferably an amphitheatre as well – was a major expression of participation in the new world order of Roman domination.[35] Theatres and amphitheatres were compelling symbols of the prestige and power of Rome, and in time came to function as impressive manifestations of the official ideology that justified, gave meaning to, and secured public support for the operation of the Principate. In light of this, it is not surprising that the evocation of theatricality is so prevalent in Roman domestic decor. Demonstrating that both patrons and guests were knowledgeable about theatre was a sign of their erudition and culture; but, more than this, it showed that they were complicit in the increased espousal and exploitation of theatre in the culture and ideology of the Augustan Principate.

Theatre provided Augustus and his successors with a means of mass communication, able to advance within remote regions and diverse communities the ideas and programmes of the new regime. It was one of the major media through which Augustus 'filled the hearts and eyes of the Roman people with most magnificent spectacles'.[36] At the same time, theatre gave both the general population and the town's leading citizens a vital means of expressing the imperial

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Figure 15a Pompeii *Odeion*, existing state. Photo: American Academy in Rome, Photographic Archive 11683.

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Figure 15b Pompeii *Odeion*, reconstruction (side view). Photo: Blazeby.

project in terms of local values and opinions. The theatre building itself – its monumental quality and the nature and sumptuousness of its decor – became an iconic structure signalling the community's espousal of imperial values. Augustus' own example, 'surpassing all his predecessors in the frequency, variety and magnificence of his spectacle entertainments' (Suet. *Aug.* 43.1), offered strong encouragement to the regions to use their theatres to showcase the glories of the Empire, augmented in many cases by direct and indirect material support. This in turn reflected, underscored and also extended the increased cultural importance that theatre and official entertainments acquired under the early Principate. Throughout the Roman world many hundreds of theatres were built or, as at Pompeii, renovated.

The often-close association of games and entertainments with the emperor and his cult was dramatically extended as statues or paintings of Augustus and his family (and in due course their successors) were dedicated at provincial theatres before the assembled citizenry and installed permanently upon the *scaenae frons*.[37] This would represent a logical extension and appropriation by the Principate of the Republican practice of employing the façade to showcase the military prowess and achievements of particular individuals. From the moment the first imperial portrait was mounted over the stage, to see a play at Pompeii was also to watch, and become part of, the pageantry of imperial power. Under imperial patronage and encouragement, theatre, which earlier Roman traditionalists had viewed with suspicion or even disdain, became culturally naturalised.

Increasingly, aspects of Roman theatrical practice helped to erode the lines demarcating Greek and Roman culture, becoming less morally problematic for conservative members of the Roman

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elite in the process. The issue by no means ceased to exist. As we discuss later, the example of Nero's fate as a 'stage-playing emperor' (Pliny *Paneg*. 46.4), condemned by traditionalists for 'prostituting himself by vile singing upon an alien stage' (Juvenal 8.224–25), demonstrated that earlier resentments and moral constraints, though latent, could still be potent. But even these could not reverse the long process of cultural synthesis and integration.

The case of Norbanus Sorex, a mime actor who played 'the second role', may illustrate something of the complexity of social and cultural assimilation in Pompeii in the post-Sullan era. A bronze portrait survives of Sorex, from the south wall of the portico of the Temple of Isis, bearing a Latin inscription that translates as: 'C Norbanus Sorex, Second [Mime] Actor, Magistrate of the Suburban District of Augustus Felix, given this place by decree of the Decurionate'.[38] Sorex was probably a descendant (possibly the grandson) of a man by the same name whom Plutarch lists, together with the actors Roscius and Metrobius, as Sulla's closest intimates. The inscription indicates that Sorex was appointed *Vicomagister* – one of a number of locally selected officials responsible within their neighbourhood for making sacrifices and organising local entertainments at the *Compitalia* festival – an honour that allowed him to wear, by concession, the *toga praetexta*, normally the prerogative of leading magistrates.[39] A second herm was located in the rich and exquisite Eumachia building in the Forum, with its statues of Concordia and Pietas,[40] and a third in a shrine to Isis at the sanctuary of Diana at Nemi.

These biographical traces suggest how the popularity of a comic theatre entertainer could be converted into the currency of political office and commemorated by monuments at prestigious, public cult sites. It also hints that the successful, conspicuous display of oneself in the theatre, if exploited astutely, could encourage the enhancement of one's social and political standing. Finally, the achievements of Sorex reveal that an actor with ties to Rome might benefit from Pompeii's more Hellenistic attitude towards stage performers, accruing social status and political influence rather than, as would normally have been the case in Rome, incurring the stigma of *infamia*.

In Pompeii and its environs, because of the area's extensive assimilation of Hellenistic culture, which long pre-dated the advent of Roman power and influence, the situation and issues were indeed different than at Rome. On the one hand, as in the example of the changes to the design and deployment of the Large Theatre, the process evidently involved the exchange of Greek staging and scenic conventions for those that were characteristic of Roman practice. This was a highly visible – indeed monumental – expression of Pompeii's incorporation into the Roman cultural and political sphere. However, the Hellenistic legacy and influence remained pervasive and must certainly have been evident in local theatrical practice. Certainly, as we note below, the Greek-inspired sacred *Agon* established at Naples by Augustus – the *Sebasta* – which lasted for centuries, and the prominence of the touring companies under the auspices of the international guild of the 'Artists of Dionysus' (and probably contracted from local *collegia*), make this likely.

While noting these different cultural conditions attaining in the Naples region, it is also important to emphasise that at Rome itself, aspects of Roman theatrical practice increasingly helped to erode the lines demarcating Greek and Roman culture. Rome drew into itself influences from throughout its far-flung empire, including most immediately the absorption into the concept of 'Roman' of elements of the established culture of the inhabitants and civic societies of the Italian peninsula (as well as from the 'Greek' east). Consequently, for us to seek or suggest strict lines of demarcation would be misguided.

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For Pompeii to become Romanised under such circumstances was also to remain, to a significant degree, Hellenistic: what is involved is likely to have been a marked shift of emphasis, rather than a wholesale change. Certainly, in the specific case of theatrical art, Greek comedy and tragedy continued to enjoy high regard and official esteem at Rome, and figured prominently in such 'prestige' events as the inauguration of Pompey's theatre in 55 BC, and Augustus' Sacred Games of 17 BC.[41]

It seems altogether likely that theatrical activity at Pompeii, like that at Rome itself, was culturally hybrid or, to put it somewhat differently, the theatre was a venue and institution in which the confluence of the 'three cultures' – Hellenistic, Samnite and Roman – would have been constantly evident both in theatrical practice and in the audiences' perception and evaluation. As we discuss later, certain forms of Oscan drama, as well as Greek works, continued to be performed at Rome for centuries; their persistence at Pompeii seems certain.

THEATRE AT POMPEII IN THE AUGUSTAN AGE

We turn again to the architectural development of the Large Theatre at Pompeii, to explore further the manner in which modifications in the Augustan period and later may be seen to reflect evolving cultural and political influences. Later, in Chapters 5 and 9, we discuss in detail the manner in which evocations of actual theatrical architecture may be discerned in a variety of surviving domestic paintings. The physical theatres at Pompeii were themselves both a prominent focal point within the urban landscape itself, while also serving as the most obvious and concrete emblem and expression of a culture permeated and significantly shaped by theatricality and theatricalism.

Following the substantial remodelling after the establishment of the Sullan colony, the Theatre was again modified in 2/1 BC during another period of major cultural change and Romanisation following the establishment of the Augustan Principate. This occurred in the context of new families settling at Pompeii, possibly[42] pro-Augustan immigrants drawn from elsewhere in Campania, deliberately introduced to help ensure the town was 'on-message' with the ideals and ideology of the new regime.

At this time large inscriptions, each over six metres long, were prominently placed at both entrances to the Large Theatre and upon the façade of its stage building. From the two that survive, we learn that 'Marcus Holconius Rufus and Marcus Holconius Celer built, at their own expense, the *crypta*, *tribunalia* and *cavea*'.[43] In another inscription, we may even have the name of the architect responsible for the work: 'Marcus Artorius Primus, freedman of Marcus, architect' (*CIL* X 841).

The *crypta* was a covered passageway running along the upper circumference of the *cavea*, with doorways opening into a wide aisle (*praecinctio*) from which citizens could filter down into the six stairways that gave access to the main body of the *cavea*.

The *cavea* was divided, by these stairways, into five wedge-shaped sections (*cunei*), each having eighteen rows of seats. The *crypta* was entered either by means of an external staircase rising from ground level at the front of the Theatre to the east, or from several entrances accessed from the higher ground above the Theatre, including an entrance near the Temple of Isis, and two from the Triangular Forum.

The vaulting of the *crypta* supported a further uppermost section of seats (*summa cavea*) possibly reserved for slaves, women and non-citizens.[44] There were probably four rows of seating created for this purpose, bringing the total seating capacity of the Theatre up to

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around 5,000. The *crypta* and *praecinctio* together produced an emphatic visual and physical barrier separating these high-perched seats from those of the citizens, below. Roman authors occasionally refer to the perceived difference in taste and refinement between those occupying the upper and lower divisions of the *cavea*.[45]

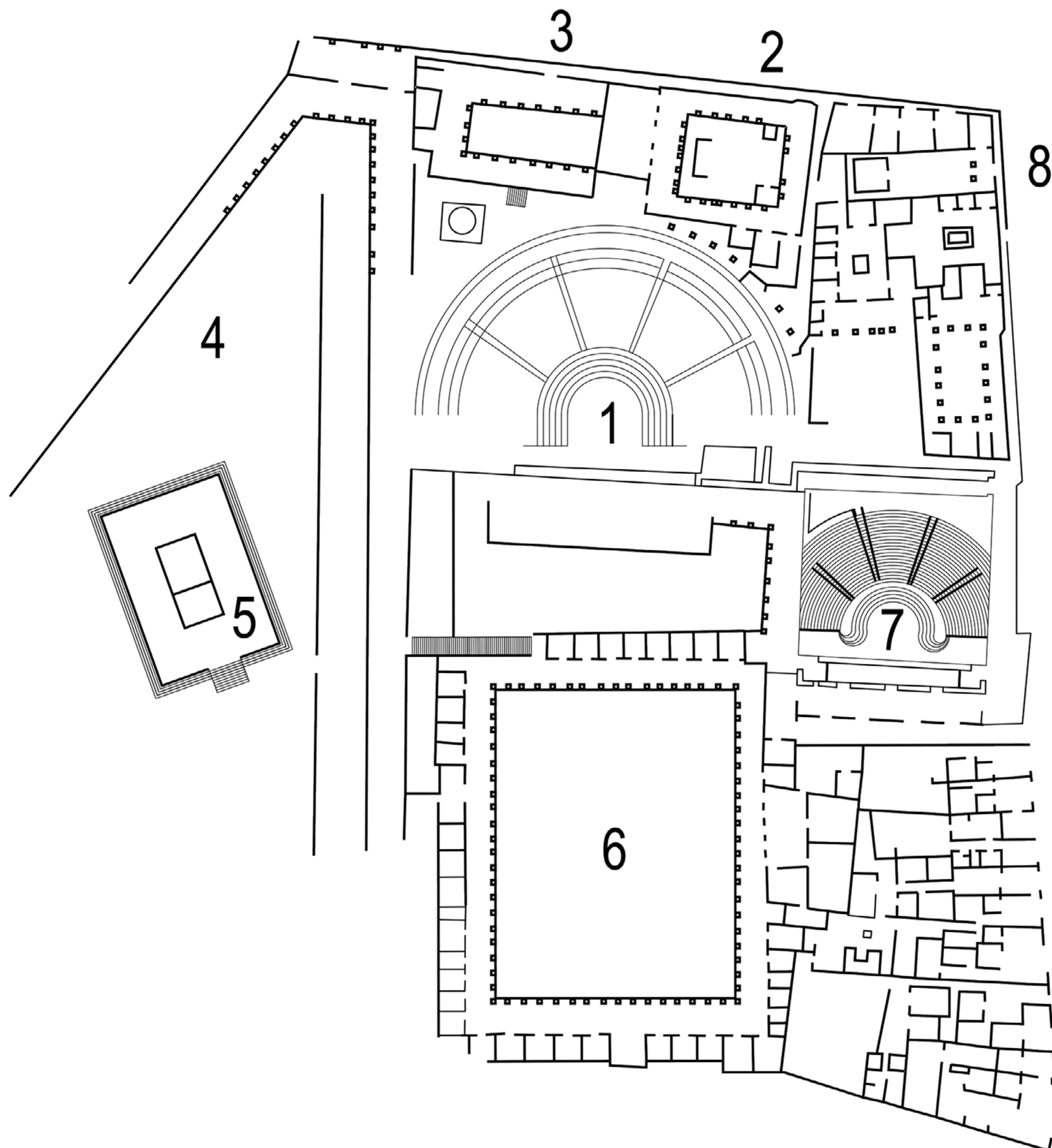

Figure 16 Plan of the 'Theatre District' of Pompeii. 1 The Large Theatre, 2 The Temple of Isis, 3 The Samnite Palaestra, 4 The Triangular Forum, 5 The Doric Temple, 6 The *Porticus Post Scaenam*, 7 The *Odeion*, 8 The Temple of Jupiter Meilichios. Photo: Atelbauers.

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a

Figure 17a Large Theatre, Pompeii, showing *subsellia* (foreground), the *cavea*, the *crypta* and the area for seating at the top of the theatre, the *summa cavea* (top left). Photo: American Academy in Rome, Photographic Archive 11685.

b

Figure 17b Entrance to the Large Theatre's *crypta* (left) and seating in the *summa cavea* (centre) from the Triangular Forum (right). Photo: American Academy in Rome, Photographic Archive 23702.

With the introduction of the *crypta*, the *orchestra*-level entrances through which spectators had previously entered could now be reserved for the elite members of the audience seated within the *orchestra* or on the four broad rows of the *subsellia* bordering its circumference. These changes even more strongly demarcated social distinctions that, under the *lex Iulia theatralis* instituted by Augustus c. 20–17 BC, must already have been visible in the theatre. The law laid out in minute detail the seating arrangements to be enforced at the presentation of theatrical entertainments, including the requirement that citizens don togas for the occasion.[46] In fact, like other provincial towns, Pompeii may already have specified by local statute the allocation of seats to various social groups at public games.[47] Prior to the more comprehensive regulations of the new law, Augustus had been moved to introduce legislation in 26 BC, which according to Suetonius (*Aug.* 44.1) required that every public show, in any city or town, must reserve the first row of seats for senators, in part because he was shocked by an incident at Puteoli, across the Bay of Naples from Pompeii, in which a visiting Roman senator had not been offered a seat when attending the local games. Tokens found at Pompeii may indicate how these seating regulations were administered in practice, as they are believed to indicate the particular seat the holder should occupy.[48] By placing themselves within the compass of the *cavea,* spectators were required to view their own position in relation to the whole social and political hierarchy of Pompeian – as well as Roman – society visibly laid out around them.

The structural addition of the *crypta* facilitated the provision of a protective awning or system of awnings, the *vela*, stretched out over the *cavea.* This offered both shelter from the sun, as well as additional scenic splendour through the colourful designs painted or embroidered upon it, which created a pleasing effect as the sunlight played through its red, yellow and purple colours (Lucretius *De. Re. Nat.* 4.75–83). The *vela* were such a crowd-pleaser that, as surviving

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Figure 18a Large Theatre, Pompeii, eastern *aditus maximus*, showing stairs to the *tribunalium* (left), main access to the *orchestra* (centre) and a secondary passage to seats in the lower *cavea* (right). Photo: American Academy in Rome, Photographic Archive 23656.

b

Figure 18b Large Theatre, Pompeii, western *aditus maximus* and *tribunalium,* above. Photo: American Academy in Rome, Photographic Archive 10720.

announcements for games written upon walls at Pompeii attest, when a performance was to employ one, the news featured prominently in advance publicity.[49]

The two Holconii's renovation of the theatre included replacing portions of the limestone seating with marble, the probable decoration of the *scaenae frons* in marble facing and the provision of a variety of ornamentation.[50] They were themselves honoured with statues, probably placed in the stage façade, suggestively juxtaposing the iconography of local political and economic power with that of the imperial cult.

The reorganisation of the theatre's seating provided members of the *Ordo Decurionum* a platform for displaying their prominence. As earlier within the *Odeion*, henceforth in the Large Theatre they also enjoyed prestigious places on four new, broad, shallow steps around the perimeter of the *orchestra* reserved for priests, officials and other notables. As the inscriptions attest, the architects working under the direction of the Holconii made a further important architectural innovation in the structure of the Large Theatre in this period. As we noted, shortly after the veterans of Sulla had settled at Pompeii, the *aditus maximi* entrances affording access into the theatre by way of the *orchestra* had vaults erected over them. Now two platforms for seating, *tribunalia*, were placed upon these, accessed by separate staircases leading away and up from the passageways (*aditus maximi*) before these opened into the *orchestra*. These platforms, reserved for the patrons and sponsors of individual games and visiting dignitaries, provided prominent positions for viewing, and, more importantly, being viewed, almost as if displayed upon a triumphal arch. *Tribunalia* were also provided in the *Odeion* at about the same time, accessed by stairs positioned so that officials ascending to the *tribunalia* first entered upon the stage itself.[51]

The Augustan innovations significantly enhanced the visual impact of the Large Theatre. It became more opulent, acquiring statues, dedications and an ornamental façade as a piece of performative display architecture; while the spectators themselves, through the spatial organisation of the structure, became in effect part of the *mise-en-scène*, self-consciously participating in and celebrating imperial and social power at Pompeii.

This remodelling of the theatre reflected the architectural format of the three recently

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constructed permanent theatres at Rome, and in particular was probably intended to evoke the one honouring Augustus' nephew Marcellus, which was dedicated by the Emperor, probably in 13 BC – a decade after his death. A statue commemorating Marcellus, inscribed to him as 'Patron',[52] stood in Pompeii's Triangular Forum, adjacent to the Large Theatre.

The theatre's own patron M. Holconius Rufus (Figure 19), at the time of his comprehensive restructuring and decoration of the theatre, had been elected *duumvir* four times, and highest office of quinquennial *duumvir* once.[53] He also served, probably by election at a public assembly, as priest of Augustus. In February of 2 BC, the *Princeps* had been proclaimed *Pater Patriae* by popular demand as he entered the Theatre of Marcellus or of Pompey in Rome. Augustus regarded this as the supreme achievement of his life, and the enactment of the event probably owed as much to skilful stage management as to a spontaneous effusion of public sentiment.[54] It occurred barely a month before Rufus was himself elected to his fourth term as *duumvir* at Pompeii, and an acknowledgement of Augustus' new and greatest honour was inscribed, probably shortly thereafter, upon the refurbished theatre: 'To the imperator Caesar Augustus, father of the country, imperator for the fourteenth time, consul for the thirteenth time, *pontifex maximus*, with the tribunician power for the twenty-second time' (*CIL* X 842).

At the same time (2 BC), a second monument was placed in the theatre: a statue erected and 'dedicated in accordance with a decree of the *Ordo Decurionum* to M. Holconius Rufus, son of Marcus, four times *duumvir*, quinquennial *duumvir*, military tribune by the choice of the people, priest of Augustus' (*CIL* X 837). As D'Arms observed,[55] 'the simultaneous honouring of Augustus and Holconius cannot be fortuitous, for the two texts are purposely, and suggestively, parallel: they link Augustus – commander, benefactor, and father of all Italy – with his local analogue: M. Holconius Rufus, chief magistrate, benefactor, and protector of Pompeii'. Holconius' contributions towards the Romanisation of the symbolically charged Large Theatre may have given his contemporaries visible confirmation, in monumental form, that after the long period of conflict and compromise following Pompeii's participation in the Social Wars, a degree of cultural and political harmony and stability had been achieved.

After his benefaction, Rufus received a further honour, the highest that Pompeii, or any Roman town, could bestow: the title of 'patron of the colony'.[56] The role, which enabled a town's most distinguished citizen to represent it in its relations with Rome and to secure imperial support for the town, was a fitting one for Rufus, whose theatrical patronage seems deliberately fashioned to suggest imperial analogies likely to please the Princeps, while enhancing his own dignity and prestige.

At some point following his refurbishment of the Large Theatre, and after he had been elected to a fifth term as *duumvir* and a second one as *quinquennalis*, Holconius Rufus was given a second monument, possibly a curule chair, marked by a dedicatory inscription in bronze,[57] at the very bottom of the lower (*ima*) *cavea* directly opposite the stage. Such an honorific chair will have evoked the curule chair of Augustus placed in the Theatre of Marcellus (Suet. *Aug.* 43.5). Its position immediately above the four wide rows bordering the *orchestra* where Pompeii's elite normally sat may have somewhat 'upstaged' them, while, situated at the base of the *cavea,* it may have conveyed the idea that Rufus was a 'man of the people'. It recorded his additional terms of office and his new role as patron of the colony.

Rufus was indisputably the leading citizen of Pompeii in the middle and late Augustan era, and arguably the single most successful and distinguished politician in the town's history. He was

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Figure 19 Statue of Holconius Rufus, Naples Museum, Inv. No. 6233. Photo: Archive Foglia.

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also honoured by the Emperor, with the title of *tribunus militum a populo* – a rank awarded under the Augustan regime to particularly distinguished provincial citizens, nominated by their local populace. The rank, despite its title, does not appear to have required actual military service; rather it was another example of Augustus' concern to co-opt 'a proper supply of men of respectable standing' (Suet. *Aug*. 46) from provincial Italy to encourage and consolidate support for the Principate.[58] Augustus' *lex Iulia theatralis* ensured that those holding it had the coveted right when visiting Rome to occupy privileged seats in the theatre alongside those reserved for members of the equestrian order.

The town erected a statue of Rufus, possibly at first placed in the Forum; if so, after the earthquake of AD 62, it was moved to a location at one of the main intersections of the town, adjacent to the Stabian baths. Its inscription was virtually identical to that marking his seat of honour in the theatre.[59] Rufus poses in the full regalia of a military commander, holding a spear in an appropriately imperious stance. Because there is no evidence that Rufus ever undertook military service, the statue may comprise a conflation of actual and emblematic elements; evoking the man wrought up into his role by means of symbolic, fictive imagery. The statue's elaborately figured breastplate extended the association to both imperial and divine imagery, since as Zanker[60] points out, it was probably inspired by the famous statue of Mars *Ultor* located in the god's temple in the Forum of Augustus, which had been dedicated and celebrated with magnificent games in 2 BC – the same period when Rufus completed his work on the Large Theatre at Pompeii.[61]

THE THEATRE AT HERCULANEUM

At neighbouring Herculaneum, the theatre was constructed during the Augustan period, and substantially redecorated in the time of Claudius. It remains unexcavated, but as far as can be determined from studies – the first of which were made shortly after its discovery in the eighteenth century, when it was comprehensively plundered – its configuration closely conformed to the orthodox format of the Latin theatre-type.[62]

The structure, which accommodated between 2,000 and 2,500 spectators, was architecturally unified; the *cavea* joined to the *scaenae* by large rectangular structures – the *versurae* – located at either side of and framing the stage. The façade of the *scaenae frons* was faced with patterned slabs of coloured marble and columns of *giallo antico*, *cipollino* and *africano*. Running around the circumference of the *orchestra* were three wide steps: *subsellia* reserved for members of the *Ordo Decurionum*. *Tribunalia* to either side of the *cavea* overlooked the stage and *orchestra* areas, and adjacent to them were statues honouring Appius Claudius Pulcher, Roman Consul of 38 BC,[63] and the praetor and proconsul M. Nonius Balbus, Herculaneum's most distinguished citizen, patron, and public official.[64]

The upper rim of the *cavea* was embellished with six paired, gilded bronze equestrian statues, each pair flanking one of three shrines (*sacella*), as well as several oversized bronze standing statues. These included Claudius, with others honouring Tiberius, Antonia *Minor*, Claudius' mother and two citizens: the freedmen Marcus Calatorius and L. Mammius Maximus who had served as an *Augustalis* at the time of Claudius and built a covered market for the town. There was a bronze statue of Maximus' relative, L. Annius Mammianus Rufus, a quinquennial *duumvir* who built or restored the theatre. The structure's exterior comprised two orders each with nineteen arches, decorated with plaster and Fourth Style painting. A *porticus post scaenam* extended behind the stage building.[65]

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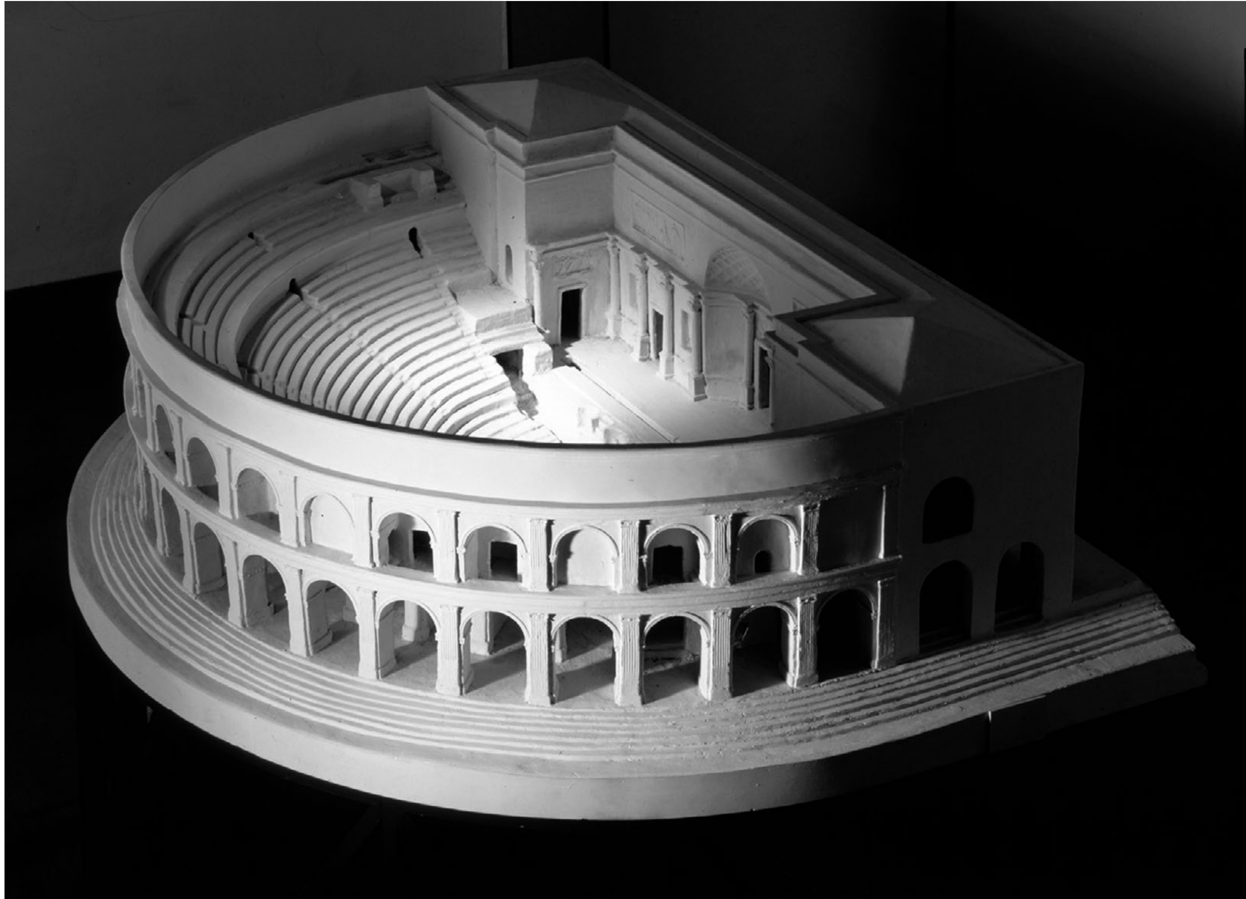

Figure 20 Theatre at Herculaneum, physical model omitting statuary. Photo: Archive Foglia.

THE POST-AUGUSTAN THEATRE

At Pompeii, the evidence indicates that the *scaenae frons* of the Large Theatre may have undergone further, post-Augustan remodelling.

Its final form was clad in marble and the central door set within a hemicycle flanked by two rectilinear doors.[66] Whether this occurred after or, as new research undertaken by our colleague Drew Baker suggested, before the earthquake of 62 AD is not yet certain. The evidence suggests that the façade had at least two types of marble attached by clamps – the plugs and holes clearly visible – to the brickwork; and at places the concrete bedding retains the image of these slabs, having been pressed against it, consistent in size with the extant remains. Although it has been argued that the brickwork itself suggests a date after 62, in fact there are other brick-based monuments at Pompeii predating the earthquake.

The façade is now almost entirely bereft of its presumably sumptuous marble decoration; only a very few fragments remain. In addition, the floor of the orchestra (which was probably expensive and prestigious polychromatic marble) has been removed, as well as most of the travertine seats in the *cavea*. This suggests either that the site was comprehensively looted in modern times; in antiquity after the eruption; or possibly had been denuded before the eruption. The plan published in 1782 by Jean-Claude Richard, the Abbé of Saint-Non – based upon his earlier visit's study of the site – shows the area of the *scaenae frons*, stage, orchestra and *cavea* still almost entirely buried.[67]

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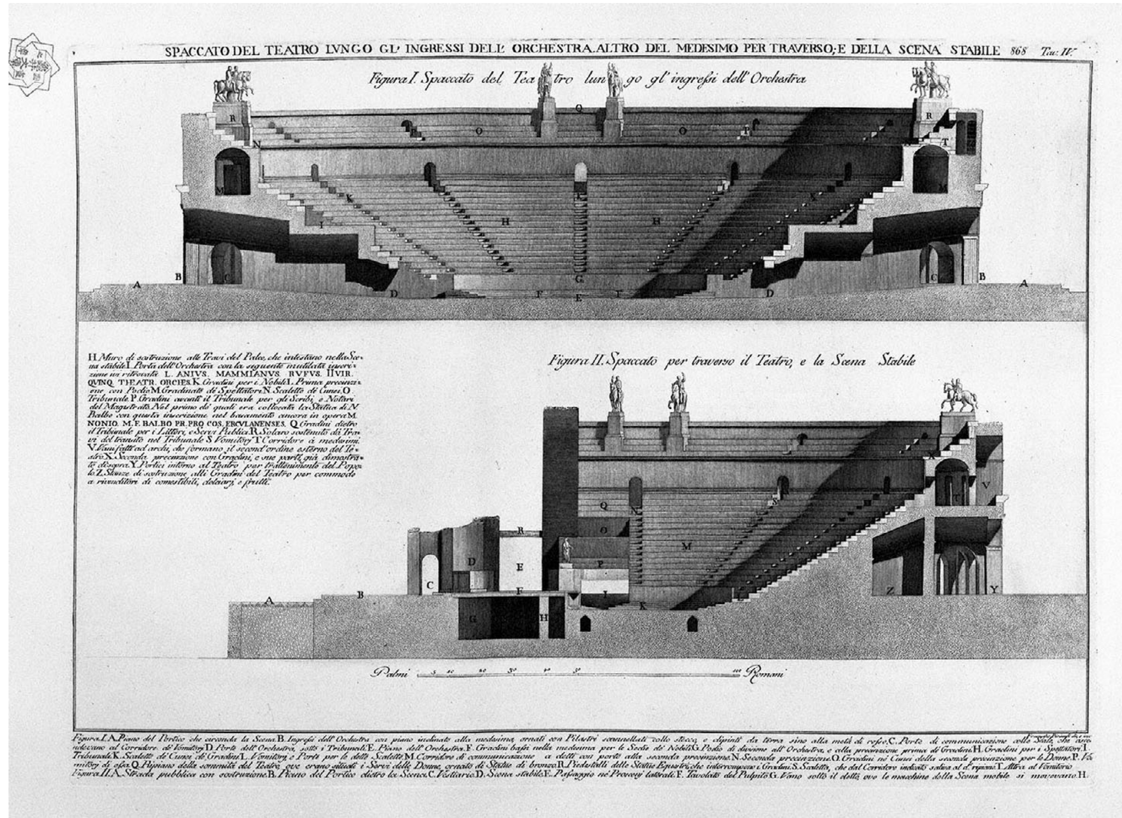

Figure 21 Engraving of the Theatre at Herculaneum section and elevation by Francesco Piranesi, 1783, pl. 4. Photo: Ortolan.

Figure 22 Large Theatre, Pompeii. Photo: Robert Rive, 1868.

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Figure 23 Large Theatre, Pompeii, detail of hypothetical reconstruction of the final format of the stage and *scaenae frons* superimposed onto site photograph. Photo: Baker.

The excavation had commenced in the 1760s.[68] Subsequently no mention in any records or accounts suggests that substantial remains of marble slabs or other decorative elements were found or removed. There are only scant fragments of the marble entablature, pediments and cornice that would have adorned the façade, and no remains of columns. This is remarkable. To have stripped the site so completely and 'cleanly' in antiquity following the eruption would have been extraordinarily difficult given the depth of the volcanic deposit that accumulated in the large void of the theatre. It would in effect have had to become an opencast mine of considerable depth, and the Saint-Non plan, suggesting an undisturbed site, strongly argues against this. It shows only some exposure of the *crypta* and a small portion of the *scaenae frons* itself, which would not have enabled sufficient space to strip the site of all its marble cladding, decorative elements, seating and the orchestral pavement.

There is scholarly consensus that the theatre had been severely damaged by the earthquake of 62, and was at least in part still ruinous at the time of the eruption. This was true of other major buildings at Pompeii; the Temple of Isis, for example, was rebuilt 'from the foundations' (*CIL* X 846), and other temples and civic structures were awaiting repairs some sixteen years after the earthquake. Baker's hypothesis is that following the earthquake the marble was deliberately and methodically removed, most plausibly

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Figure 24a Large Theatre, Pompeii, hypothetical reconstruction of the final format of the stage and *scaenae frons* (frontal). Photo: Baker.

b

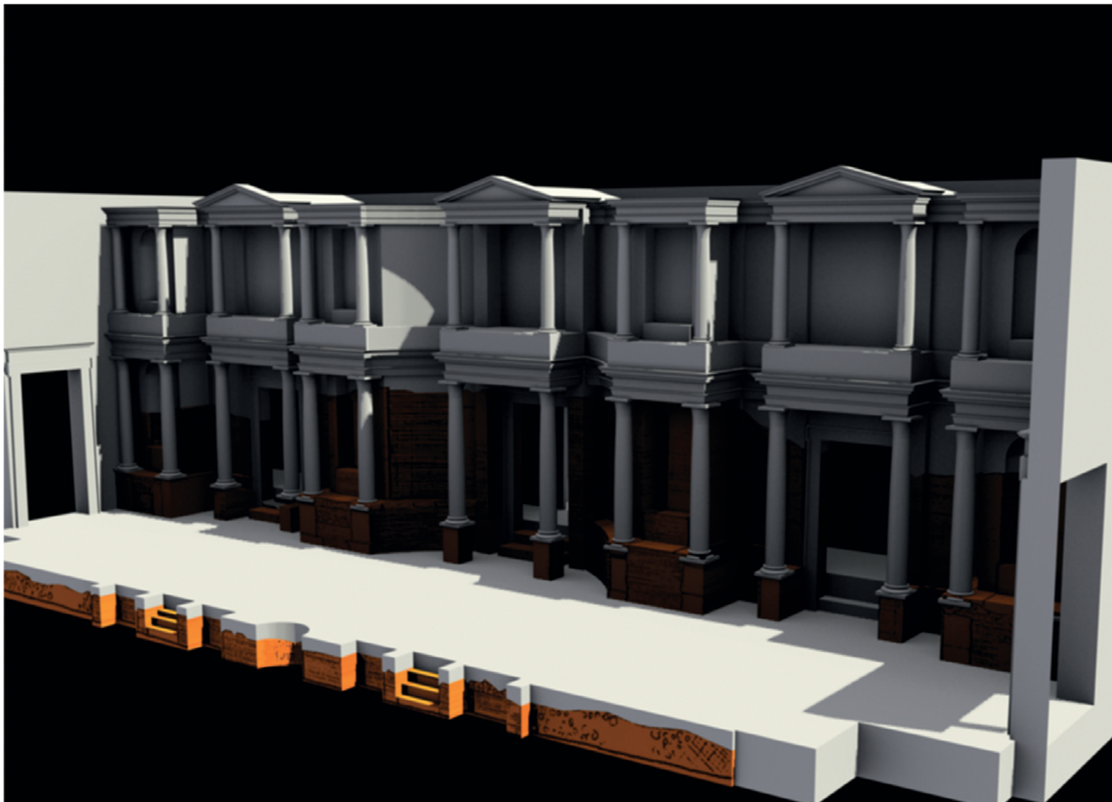

Figure 24b Large Theatre, Pompeii, hypothetical reconstruction of the final format of the stage and *scaenae frons* (side). Photo: Baker.

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for use elsewhere in the city, and at the time of the eruption the – now semi-derelict – theatre was still awaiting a new and comprehensive refurbishment. In the meantime, both the amphitheatre and the *Odeion* were functional, as well as the theatre at neighbouring Herculaneum. The focus at Pompeii on post-earthquake reconstruction and renovation would have been upon the restoration of major commercial and civil buildings, including those located around the Forum. Even the Temple of Venus, the town's patron goddess, had not yet been repaired by AD 79.

NOTES

1 The cup is in the Louvre. The phrase indicates how the term for the architectural entity of the stage structure was used metonymically for the phenomenon of theatre. Cf. Suetonius (*Calig.*15.1) '*nec minore scaena*' – 'no less theatrical' to characterise Caligula's conveyance of the ashes of Agrippina to Rome. Quintilian similarly used the adjective *scaenicus* to mean 'staginess' (1.11.3). The cup also has representations of Sophocles, the tragic writer Moschion, the mask of a bald, bearded old man with an ivy wreath, and the depiction of a skeleton holding a lyre inscribed in Greek, 'So long as you live, enjoy life. Tomorrow is uncertain' Giganti (1981: 10–11). Perhaps apocryphally, Dio (66.23.3) says that, at Pompeii's destruction, the people were seated in the theatre.

2 The theatre at Syracuse, dating from the fifth century BC, is usually cited as the first such example. Aeschylus' play *Aitnaioi* ('Women of Etna') was possibly performed in Sicily around 476, when Aeschylus may have been a guest of Hieron of Syracuse. The account (Plutarch, *Life of Nikias* 29.2) of Athenian prisoners in the Peloponnesian war, who knew Euripidean choruses, and were released by the victorious Syracusans, suggests local familiarity with Athenian tragedy. See too Webster (1948). The vase evidence for performances of Greek tragedy in southern Italy is compiled by Green (1994: 49–67). Of comic performance, he writes (65): 'There can nowadays be no doubt that most of [the vases] show Athenian comedy'.

3 The evidence is usefully summarised and evaluated by Hughes (1996).

4 See the full discussion in Lauter (1976). The several early southern Italian sites are documented in Rossetto and Sartorio (1996). The dates suggested there are: Gabii, mid second century BC; Praeneste and Pietrabbondante, second century BC; Nuceria, second half of the second century BC; Teanum Sidicinum, late second or early first century BC; Capua, Tusculum, Sarno, and Calles, all early first century BC; Tibur first century BC; Alba Fucens, mid first century BC. In addition, the more recent studies by Courtois (1989) and Tosi (2003) provide comprehensive details and discussions of the relevant documentation. The most recent and very detailed discussion of early Italian theatres in Sicily and Campania is provided by Isler (2017).

5 Surprisingly, there had never been a modern, comprehensive scientific survey and analysis of the site. Interpretations and discussion are still to a significant degree dependent upon the early studies of e.g., Mau and Maiuri. In the summers of 2007–8, Drew Baker and Martin Blazeby of King's Visualisation Lab, King's College London, with funds from a British Academy grant awarded to Beacham, undertook a new collaborative study and survey of the site with Prof. Frank Sear of the University of Melbourne and colleagues.

6 Mau *Röm. Mit.* (1906: 1ff.) believed it had at most a low stage. Lauter (1976: 416–17) argued it had a stage (*logeion*) some three metres in height like that at neighbouring Sarno. Sarno had a scene building with a rectilinear façade broken by five doors; its details and bibliography are given in Tosi (2003: 181–82), and its elements compared with those at Pompeii by Courtois (1989: 51–53).

7 The term is used conventionally to designate Greek theatre entrances, but as Sear (2006) notes in his detailed analysis of terminology, its meaning is problematic.

8 Gros (1996: 275–76).

9 'We perceive in Campania and in inner Samnium a deeply embedded Hellenisation of theatre culture', Lauter (1976: 418). Authors' translation. It is prudent, in the absence of adequate data, not to attempt to impose too rigid typologies or chronologies upon the evolution of theatre practice or architecture. Local customs may have differed, with various forms of 'hybrid' Hellenistic-Latin performance taking place from time to time, and the *orchestra* must always have remained a possible performance area. Architectural changes are also likely to reflect fashion and local conditions. In Greece some theatres in the Hellenistic format persisted into Imperial times, as did, elsewhere, examples of hybrid Hellenistic and Roman structures.

10 Sear (2006) provides a detailed analysis of the relevant terminology for Roman theatre architecture. His monumental study documents some 850 of the several thousand theatres that existed in the Greco-Roman world. See review by Beacham (2007). More recently Isler (2017), in a comprehensive account drawing upon both archaeological and textual evidence, identifies and lists some 1,006 theatrical buildings. He discusses at great length the development of the Greek, Hellenistic and Roman theatre structures and details their constituent architectural elements and evolution. For the transition from Hellenistic to Roman formats, see Napoli (2015).

11 Early examples (second and first century BC) of the emerging Latin theatre structure have been found at Alba Fucens, Cales, and Tusculum.

12 See H. Drerup's remarks in Lauter (1976: 422). The subject is discussed extensively by Tosi s(2003: 687–703) within

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her analysis of the evolution and influence of temporary theatrical structures at Rome.

13 The astonishing expenditure and sumptuous embellishment of the temporary stages is evaluated and discussed by Tosi (2003: 690–96). Sulla blamed his defeat for a praetorship on the fact that by bypassing the office of *aedile* on his political ascent, he had deprived the populace of shows (Plutarch *Sull.* 5). Subsequently his bid for praetor was successful, in 97 BC, partly on the promise of spectacular celebrations following a period of relative neglect (Appian *Bell Civ.* 1.99.464). Although elsewhere disparaging them, Cicero acknowledges the importance of games to political success in *De Off.* 2.57, where he gives a brief history of memorable aedileships. Gruen (1992: 189), while suggesting that game-giving may not be as decisive an element in political careers as others have asserted, nevertheless notes that 'in the late Republic one could assume a connection between sponsorship of handsome spectacles as *aedile* and subsequent attainment of the highest offices'.

14 For attempts to construct a theatre, and the opposition to it, see Beacham (1999: 28–33; 51–63). Cf. Gruen (1992: 206–10) and Leach (2004: 102–03).

15 Gruen (1992: 209): 'The ritual of erecting and then dismantling temporary structures gave annual notice that the ruling class held decisive authority in the artistic sphere. A permanent theatre, whatever its advantages in cost and convenience, would represent a symbolic relaxation of that authority'.

16 Klar (2006: 162–63).

17 For Cicero and the theatre see Wright (1931) especially 1–10. The mime made great (and sometimes notorious) use of political satire. See Beacham (1991: 129–39). Boyle (2006: 65–66, 87, 252 note 73) discusses the role of Roman drama as a factor in political and social discourses, and discusses the presence, in play texts and performances, of elements immediately relevant to contemporaneous events.

18 Beacham (1999: 2–3) lists the number of days and the dates set aside at Rome for annual stage games. See too Wiseman (1985: 46). There were probably some fifty days in the late Republic for formal games explicitly incorporating theatre. The *Compitalia*, a festival celebrated by local neighbourhoods, probably involved numerous informal performances throughout the city, which may have made use of temporary stage structures, and possibly so too did the *Liberalia* and the *Quinquatrus* festivals.

19 Lauter (1976: 421), authors' translation.

20 Cicero, in his *Pro Sulla* (60–62), defending Publius against the accusation of involvement in the Catilinian conspiracy, refers to some long-standing tensions and 'dissension' relating to disputes arising from the differing interests and fortunes of the inhabitants and settlers, and mentions specifically an issue over voting rights and an argument involving a promenade (*ambulatio*), possibly the *quadriporticus* behind the theatre. Cf. Leach (2004: 68), Cooley and Cooley (2004: 22–24), and Zevi (1996).

21 See Tosi (2003: 164, 168–69).

22 See Traversari (1960) and D'Ippolito (1962). We discuss further examples of aquatic displays in theatres in our chapter on *triclinium* entertainments.

23 The tomb of Porcius has been plausibly identified in the Necropolis of the Herculaneum Gate. Coarelli, ed. (2002: 384).

24 Zanker (1998: 72).

25 Lauter (1976: 423). For a full review of the arguments and interpretations relating to the *Odeion*, see Tosi (2003: 166–67; 169–70).

26 The door at the extreme left and that at the extreme right of the façade were walled up at the time of the Augustan remodelling.

27 Courtois (1989: 77, 101); the earliest account is by Mazois (1838: Vol. 4, 57).

28 An inscription (recorded, but now lost) in bronze letters on the marble flagstones forming the pavement of the *Odeion*'s *orchestra* records that the *duumvir* M. Oculatius Verus donated it, '*pro ludis*', meaning 'instead of games' which would have otherwise been his responsibility. Lauter (1976: 423).

29 Johannowsky (1976: 272).

30 Cooley and Cooley (2004: 199). That all members of the *Ordo Decurionum* were entitled to a *bisellium* is the view long taken by commentators, e.g., Mommsen (1887: I, 404); Bieber (1960: 173, 177, 202). Schäfer (1990: 307–46) argues that, on the contrary, such an automatic and continuing right was 'highly unlikely', and was awarded by the *Ordo* only under exceptional circumstances (usually because the recipient had been particularly generous in his public benefactions). However, it can also be argued that since most inscriptions referring to a deceased person having been awarded a *bisellium* are in regard to freedmen who were not entitled to hold office, it may be that in the case of former office holders the right of the *bisellium* was not mentioned because it was customary.

31 See Duthoy (1974) and D'Arms (1981: 121ff.). One of the owners of the famous house of the Vettii, A. Vettius Conviva, was a member of the *Ordo Augustalium*, an honour also enjoyed (fictionally) by Petronius' famous vulgarian and parvenu, Trimalchio. Members were known as *seviri Augustales* or *Augustales*. The disputed terminology is discussed in Duthoy (1978).

32 Franklin (2001: 10) gives details of such inscriptions for C. Calventius Quietus and C. Munatius Faustus, *Augustales*, thus honoured. Both the cenotaph of Quietus and a second monument to Faustus (erected by his wife Naevoleia Tyche, as her own tomb, and to honour him) display in relief a *bisellium*. The two monuments are adjacent to each other, suggesting that for socially ascendant freedmen, competition continued after death. See Ling (2005: 82) and Mouritsen (2005: 49). Petronius (*Sat.* 71) satirised the tendency; Trimalchio represented pictures of gladiators on his funeral monument, saying that it was wrong to decorate one's house while alive, and not care for the tomb: both are, as it were, commemorative monuments.

33 Zanker (1988: 120).

34 Zanker (1998: 70).

35 See note 11 above.

36 Vell. Pater. 2.100.2 '*magnificentissimis . . . spectaculis . . . animos oculosque populi Romani repleverat*'.

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37 'During the Augustan period the *scaenae frons* was transformed from the columnar backdrop of the scene building to an important imperial portrait gallery, which stressed the position of the emperor and his successors and family', Sear, F., in Rossetto and Sartorio (1996: 190). Rossetto and Sartorio cite such figures found at e.g., the theatres of Trieste (vol. 3, 79–81) and Verona (vol. 3, 100). Maiuri (1942: 79) noted that the only public building at Pompeii with an architectonic façade composed of elements structurally and decoratively similar to that of the last phase of the Large Theatre was the Temple of the Lares (*Lararium*) in the forum, which Zanker (1998: 90) suggests was itself designed to display a gallery of statues of the imperial family.

38 *MNN*, 4991, authors' translation. Now in the Naples Museum, Inv. 4991, this portrait herm is also illustrated in De Caro (1996: 134). Pagano (2003: 128) suggests that the *pagus Felix Augustus Suburbanus* may have comprised the port area of Pompeii in the Murecine area.

39 See Jongman (1988: 296–97).

40 See Mau (1904: 178) and Leach (2004: 245).

41 Although Roman, Oscan and Greek culture suffused one another, they were far from identical. An excellent description of what occurred is given by Gordon Williams (1978), Chapter 3 'The Dominance of Greek Culture', 102–52. For a comprehensive survey of Roman adaptations of Hellenistic culture, see Gruen (1992). For a wide-ranging discussion of the issues, and analyses of multiculturalism at Rome, see Edwards and Woolf, eds. (2004) especially Chapters 1, 'Cosmopolis: Rome as World City' and 2, 'Incorporating the Alien: The Art of Conquest'. For the games dedicating Pompey's theatre and the *Ludi Saeculares*, see Beacham (1999: 63–65; 114–18).

42 Castrén (1975: 93).

43 *CIL* X 833 and *CIL* X 834. Franklin (2001: 20) believes that the two were father and son, not, as has been suggested, brothers. Details of the structural alterations made to the theatre in the Augustan period are given in Tosi (2003: 164–65).

44 Edmondson (2002: 8): 'Women of all social ranks were required to sit in their own section of seats in the covered portico that ran around the very back of many theatres. The only exception were the Vestal Virgins, who were given a special enclosure directly opposite the praetor's tribunal, where the president of the *ludi* sat' (Suet. *Aug.* 44.2–3). Later some female members of the imperial family were granted the privilege of sitting with the Vestals at the theatre: Livia, for example, in AD 23 (Tac. *Ann.* 4.16). An inscription from Cumae (AE 1927) 157, 158 records that during the reign of Tiberius, Cupienius Satrius Marcianus and his mother were given the right to use a '*lectus*', presumably a couch in the *orchestra*.

45 E.g., Seneca (*De Tranquil. Animi.* 11.8) who refers favourably to the quality of wise expression of the mime performer Publilius Syrus 'whenever he abandoned the absurdities of mimicry and language directed to the audience in the *summa cavea*'. Trimalchio (*Sat.* 55) offers literary criticism comparing Cicero and Syrus, whom he then quotes or, possibly, parodies.

46 See Beacham (1999: 122–24).

47 Edmondson (2002) discusses examples of local regulations at Heraclea dating from 45 BC, which refer to seats for senators and members of the *Ordo Decurionum*, and of the *Lex Ursonensis* from the same period for the town of Urso in Spain, specifically citing seats reserved for Roman magistrates, senators and their sons, as well as local magistrates, members of the *Ordo*, and members of the colleges of priests.

48 Cooley and Cooley (2004: 68–70).

49 According to Valerius Maximus (2.4.6), the provision in the theatre of the *vela* was something particularly associated with 'Campanian luxury', and had first been used at Rome for the games given by the Consul Quintus Lutatius Catulus in 69 BC. For a study of the evidence and operation of the *vela/velarium*, see R. Graefe (1979). This is an example of how Rome did not simply borrow from Hellenism, but also modelled its process of cultural appropriation and assimilation on previous Italian-Hellenistic-Latin cultural syntheses seen in towns in the peninsula.

50 Tosi (2003: 169) notes 'according to the view expressed by Maiuri and prevalent today, the scene building kept the late Republican form and only after AD 62 was it reconstructed in brick'. Cortois (1989: 223) similarly concludes from the brickwork that 'after the earthquake of 62 the theatre at Pompeii underwent a total transformation'. More recent fieldwork by our colleague Drew Baker, however, detailed below, suggests that the last phase of modifications may have pre-dated 62.

51 These were entirely closed off from seating in the *cavea* by an inclined wall, and configured so that access to them was directly from the stage by means of a narrow stairway, which may have been 'masked' from view by the audience when the curtain was up.

52 *CIL* X 832. D'Arms (1989: 54–58, 64) disputes the usual view that Marcellus was Patron of Pompeii itself, suggesting instead he was *Patronus Iuventutis.* Marcellus, as *aedile*, had given lavish games at Rome in 23 BC, the last such to be given there by an *aedile*. For the theatre of Marcellus and its seating, see Beacham (1999: 120–26).

53 See Zanker (1998: 109ff.) for a description of his career, and the important article by D'Arms (1989).

54 Aug. *Res Gest.* 35.1; Suetonius (*Aug.* 58.2). See Beacham (1999: 133–34).

55 D'Arms (1989: 58).

56 Cooley and Cooley (2004: 128) say it was held by Publius Sulla the Dictator's nephew, by Marcellus, and one Sallustius.

57 *CIL* X 838: '[dedicated] in accordance with a decree of the *Ordo Decurionum* to M. Holconius Rufus, son of Marcus, five times *duumvir*, twice quinquennial *duumvir*, military tribune by the choice of the people, priest of Augustus and patron of the colony'. An almost identical inscription (*CIL* X 830) was placed upon his statue (Naples Museum, inv. 6233) outside the Stabian baths, discussed below.

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D'Arms (1989: 58); Franklin (2001). 19. For the significance of such chairs in the theatre, see Beacham (1999: 125–26).

58 D'Arms (1989: 56–58); cf. Nicolet (1967: 68).

59 *CIL* X 830. D'Arms (1989: 60) argues for its earlier placement in the Forum, and suggests the statue was moved by a later member of the family to the site where it was discovered. The statue is illustrated in De Caro (1996: 121).

60 Zanker (1998: 112).

61 For the dedication and games, see Zanker (1981: 349–50). For the Augustan temple and forum, see Steinby (1995: 289–95); Beacham (1999: 133ff.). For its effect as a vast 'public' theatricalised *atrium* see Flower (1996: 224–36).

62 Francesco Piranesi (1783); F. Mazois (1812: 35–41, 71–78); F. Wieseler (1851:14); J. Hanson (1959: 74–75); M. Bieber (1961: 186); T. Schäfer (1979: 143–51). Harris (2007: Chapters 1 and 2) details the discovery and plundering of the theatre. It is discussed by Tosi (2003: 141–45), who considers it an early example of a fully integrated Latin theatre structure close to the typology described by Vitruvius in its free-standing structure, its substructure providing a system of access, its semi-circular *orchestra* and *cavea*, and in its architectural unity as a closed structure.

63 He was the adopted nephew of Appius Claudius Pulcher, Roman statesman, Consul in 54 BC, Censor in 50, and elder brother of Cicero's adversary, Clodius.

64 He and his son were honoured with statues elsewhere in the town as well. See Deiss (1985: 139ff., 158ff.); Pappalardo (1997); and Pagano (1998). Some fifteen dedications to this senatorial family have been identified at Herculaneum and other provincial communities. He had sponsored games, erected a statue honouring Vespasian, erected (or restored) the basilica, and repaired other structures after the earthquake of 62 AD, and probably provided the Suburban baths. Francesco Piranesi (1783: pls. 4, 6, 7 and 8) in his engravings of the interior of the theatre locates the statues of Balbus and Claudius Pulcher at the extreme left and right of the *scaenae frons*, on steps immediately beneath the *tribunalia*, and also shows the location of the six bronze equestrian statues (pls. 3, 4 and 8).

65 The discoveries from the theatre are discussed in Harris (2007: Chapter 2). The 1716 bill of sale for finds in the theatre shows that D'Elboeuf carried away 177 statues and artefacts. For the bronze statues found in the theatre (five of which are in the Naples Museum), see De Caro (1996: 117–18). Trimble (2000) discusses in detail the 'Herculaneum Women'; statue types, named after the examples found in the niches of the stage façade. Most of the bronze equestrian statues were melted down to produce medals honouring Charles III. See too the account in Harris (2007: 27ff. and 58ff.). Nielsen (2002: 202) considers this structure the earliest example of a new type of 'secular' theatre in which the religious and cultic quality previously prominent in the Italic theatre-temple type was de-emphasised by Augustus and his successors to create a new Roman prototype, reflected in 'a reduction in the size of the temple in relation to the theatre, which in its turn was increasingly used for secular entertainment in the city, while its *scaenae frons* kept growing larger'.

66 Courtois (1989: 225–26).

67 Saint-Non, J. Richard de (1782: tav. 084). See Harris (2007: 81–83).

68 Cooley (2003: 64, 73).

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