

Appendix

Roman Buildings for Spectacle

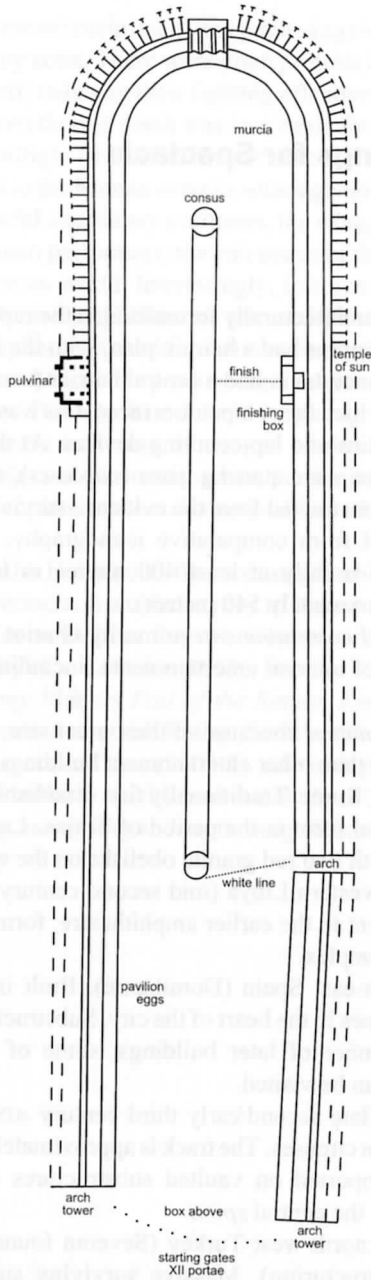
Circus

Typical plan: Less architecturally formalised in the republic, by the early imperial period the circus had a hairpin plan, with the seating on vaulted substructures. The race-track had a central barrier (usually referred to as the *spina*), around which the competitors raced; this was often ornamented with statues, fountains and lap-counting devices. At the opposite end to the curved end there were starting gates (*carceres*), the mechanism of which has been reconstructed from the evidence surviving in the circus at Lepcis Magna, and from comparative iconography. The track of the Roman circus was usually at least 400 metres in length (the Circus Maximus was approximately 540 metres).

Types of associated entertainment: primarily chariot and horse racing, with a wide range of interval entertainments (including *venationes*, athletics, dancing).

Good surviving examples: because of their great size, circuses are often less well-preserved than other entertainment buildings.

- Circus Maximus, Rome. Traditionally first established under the kings, it reached its final form in the period of Trajan. Largest circus of the Roman world with two red granite obelisks on the *spina* (Fig. 29).
- Lepcis Magna, western Libya (mid second century AD). Located immediately adjacent to the earlier amphitheatre, forming an impressive entertainment complex.
- Tarragona, north-east Spain (Domitianic). Built in association with imperial cult games in the heart of the city. Substructures survive in the cellars of a number of later buildings, some of which have been excavated and can be visited.
- Tyre, Lebanon (late second/early third century AD). One of the best preserved Roman circuses. The track is approximately 450 metres long. Seating was supported on vaulted substructures and a red granite obelisk stood on the central *spina*.
- Constantinople, north-west Turkey (Severan foundation, fourth/fifth century AD restructuring). Massive surviving substructures at the curved end. Several monuments remain standing on the *spina*.



29. Circus Maximus, Rome. Plan.

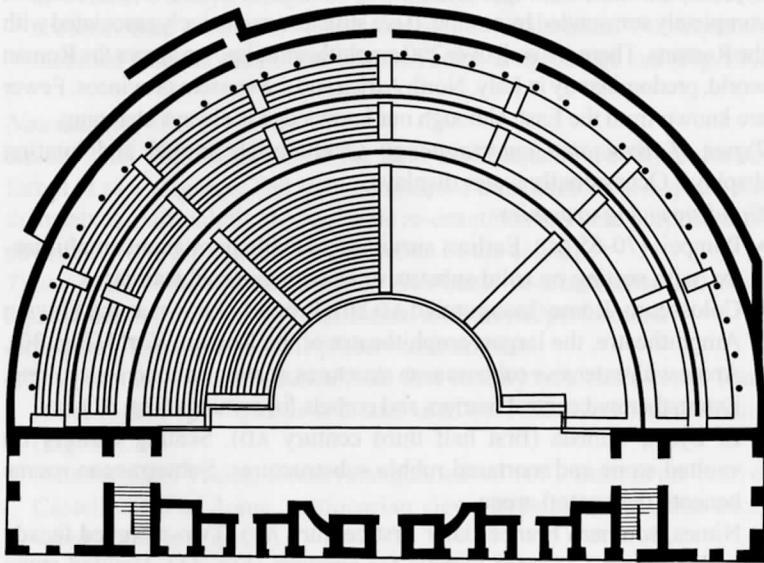
Theatre

Typical plan: Usually semi-circular or D-shaped in plan with an elaborate stage building. Advances in building technology allowed Roman theatres to be constructed on flat ground using vaulted substructures to support the seating. Found in cities across the empire and also associated with religious sanctuaries in the countryside.

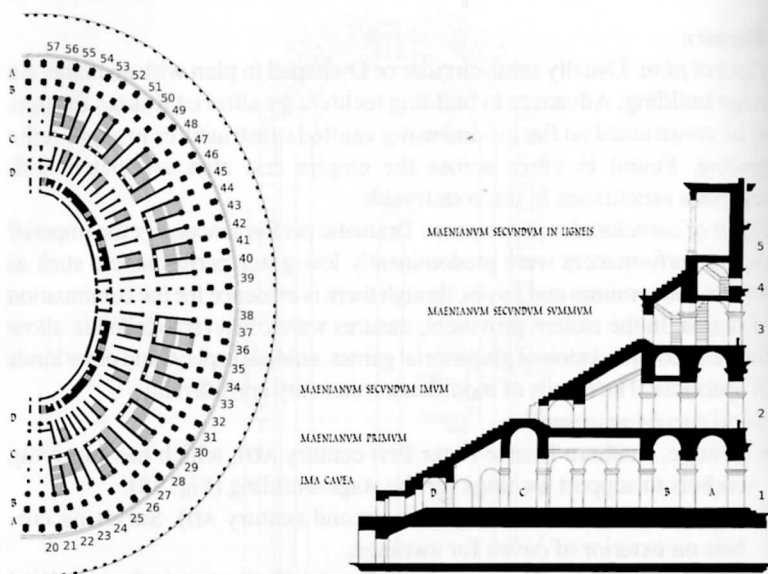
Types of associated entertainment: Dramatic performances. By the imperial period performances were predominantly low-grade performances such as mimes, pantomimes and farces, though there is evidence for the continuation of drama. In the eastern provinces, theatres were often remodelled to allow for the accommodation of gladiatorial games, animal displays and other kinds of spectacle. The details of modification can vary considerably.

Good surviving examples:

- Orange, southern France (late first century AD), which has surviving corbels to support awnings for the stage-building (Fig. 30).
- Aspendos, southern Turkey (mid-second century AD). Surviving corbels on exterior of *cavea* for awnings.
- Bostra, southern Syria (second century AD). Built up entirely on vaulted substructures and survives to its full original height.
- Lepcis Magna, Libya (AD 1-2). Built up on vaulted substructures. Epigraphic dedications survive *in situ*.



30. Theatre, Orange (France), late first century AD. Plan.



31. Colosseum, Rome. Plan and cross-section of the *cavea*.

Amphitheatre

Typical plan: Usually elliptical rather than circular in plan with an oval arena, completely surrounded by seating. It is a structure exclusively associated with the Romans. There are well over 200 amphitheatres known across the Roman world, predominantly in Italy, North Africa and the western provinces. Fewer are known from the East, although our knowledge is always changing.

Types of associated entertainment: Gladiatorial, animal and hunting displays. Occasionally water displays.

Good surviving examples:

- Pompeii (70-65 BC). Earliest surviving, datable permanent amphitheatre, with seating on solid substructures with external staircases.
- Colosseum, Rome (inaugurated AD 80). Properly known as the Flavian Amphitheatre, the largest amphitheatre of the Roman World (Fig. 30). Arena with extensive subterranean structures, seating on concrete vaulting. External crowd control barriers and corbels for awnings (Fig. 31).
- El Djem, Tunisia (first half third century AD). Seating entirely on vaulted stone and mortared rubble substructures. Subterranean rooms beneath the central arena.
- Nimes, southern France (later first century AD). Two-storeyed façade with surviving exterior corbels for awnings (Fig. 11). Vaulted stone substructures for seating.

- Pergamum, north-western Turkey (second/third century AD). Built in a narrow stream valley which partly supports the structure, supplemented by mortared rubble vaulting (Fig. 12).

Stadium

Typical plan: usually hairpin shaped in plan, overall 200-230 metres in length. Rare in the Roman West, but common in the eastern provinces.

Types of associated entertainment: primarily athletics, but in the East stadia were often modified to accommodate gladiatorial and animal displays.

Good surviving examples:

- Stadium of Domitian, Rome (dedicated AD 86). Located on the Campus Martius, with an overall length of 275 metres. Seating supported on vaulted substructures with the track dictating the shape and size of the modern Piazza Navona. Paired with Domitian's *odeum*.
- Perge, southern Turkey (second century AD). A well-preserved example built throughout of stone ashlar masonry. Subsequently modified with the insertion of a walled arena at the curved end.
- Aphrodisias, western Turkey (later first century AD). One of three known examples in Greece and Asia Minor which are curved at both ends (with Nicopolis in north-western Greece, and Laodiceia ad Lycum in western Turkey). Length of 270 metres, and built from the outset to accommodate a range of spectacles and entertainments. Subsequently modified with the insertion of a walled arena at the curved end (Fig. 25).

Naumachia

An artificial basin constructed for large-scale aquatic displays, also referred to as a *stagnum*. The term *naumachia* transferred to the spectacles themselves, particularly the sea battle re-enactments. These purpose-built structures were a particular phenomenon of the capital.

Types of associated entertainment: Sea-battle re-enactments and other aquatic displays involving both human and animal performers.

Examples: There are no well-preserved examples.

- Stagnum of Augustus, Rome (late first century BC). Built in the Transtiber region by Augustus and later used by Titus. No visible remains (Fig. 19).
- Naumachia of Trajan, Rome (inaugurated AD 109). Built in the Prati di Castello area of Rome. Antiquarian views and plans, and some excavated remains (Fig. 20).

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