

Historical theatres and preservation of the ligneous stage machine. New trends in Italy

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The architecture of a theatre is composed of two great elements: the theatre hall, the place for spectators, and the stage tower, the place for the show. However, according to the common perception, the theater is identified in the architecture of the hall omitting what is beyond the curtain but that is, instead, the heart of the show.

The architecture that is behind the curtain is all that composes the stage tower and is defined by three great elements: under box, stage and fence, that is the perforated plane that allows, with winches and ropes, the movement of the scenes and of lightings, elements made mostly of wood.

The importance of the stage machine inside a theatrical architecture is as evident as the attention that the architecture essays have had to acoustic issues: historical treatises have focused attention on the components the organic stagecraft, on the forms to create machineries for special effects, so, on the choice of wood and on its peculiarities, in order to fix attention to the natural conservation problems that may present a wooden element over time and how to resolve them, too.

The wood is still the preferred material for the realization of stagecraft structures for being particularly flexible to accommodate the movements, thought the risk of xylophagous attacks, of rotting phenomenon or structural failure; these phenomena are even more evident when the architectures are neglected or they are in state of disuse, as is emerged from the reality knowledge in Campania territory.

The preservation of ligneous stage machine presents problems that are linked to the natural deterioration of wood, to the changing use of the same machine and to the need to adapt it to the regulations requirements or to modernize it with the new stagecraft. The paper focuses its attention on how the current planning deals with the topic, through the analysis of some Italian case-studies, with reference to great national theatre as the *San Carlo Theatre* in Naples and the *La Scala Theatre* in Milan, that have been recently object of a modernizing project on the ligneous stage machine, too.

The current trend is often to replace existing machines' spaces with a new building, even if some planning experience, deepened in the text, show how it is possible the preservation of the historical scenic system providing for the contemporaneous need together with the use of new materials and technologies.

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