



AUDITORIUM PARCO DELLA MUSICA

1996 – 2002 Rome, Italy

In 1993, the City of Rome launched an international competition by invitation only (involving 9 participants) for the construction of a multipurpose complex to host musical and cultural events. The site on which the complex would be built was a parking area that bordered on the Parioli district to the south, the Flaminio district to the west, the Olympic Village to the north and Villa Glori to the east. The Olympic Village, which was constructed for the 1960 Olympic Games, houses the Sports Hall and Flaminio Stadium, designed by Pier Luigi Nervi.

In order to guarantee maximum flexibility and ensure that nothing would be sacrificed in terms of acoustics, the Renzo Piano Building Workshop introduced a new concept to the project: rather than group the three halls into a single structure, why not construct three independent buildings?

The three halls are arranged symmetrically around an empty space. The result is a fourth hall known as la Cavea: an outdoor amphitheatre for concerts and performances capable of accommodating nearly 3,000 spectators. The three halls are designed like true musical instruments. Three enormous “sounding boards”, provide for differing capacities and characteristics and are structurally separated in order to improve sound insulation. Each is fully equipped for recording music.

The Petrassi hall has 750 seats. It’s an exceptionally versatile space that offers a mobile stage, an orchestra pit that can be lowered and a stage area that can be expanded by eliminating the four rows of seats in the front. The characteristics of the walls can also be altered in order to obtain the best possible acoustics for each occasion.

The Sinopoli hall has 1,200 seats. While the space has been designed in a traditional rectangular layout, its distributional flexibility has also been maintained with a mobile ceiling and an adjustable stage. This hall hosts a wide range of chamber music concerts and dance performances.

The Santa Cecilia hall has 2,800 seats. It’s reserved for symphonic concerts and has been outfitted to host the world’s most renowned orchestras and choirs. It offers the maximum possible dimensions for use with natural acoustics (without the use of amplification systems). The central stage area has a modular configuration. Like all of the largest concert halls, the Santa Cecilia is classified as a “vineyard” concert hall. The seating arrangement takes on the terraced form of a vineyard: the stage is set in a nearly central position and the seats are arranged in a graduated fashion all around the orchestra. The ceiling is covered by 26 wooden panels (of American cherry), each with an average surface area of 180 m².

The rehearsal rooms, one of which is reserved exclusively for choirs, while the other is reserved for choirs and large orchestras alike, have been designed to meet the requirements of every musical genre. They are therefore equipped with removable components and acoustic curtains that allow for the timing and reverberation of the sound to be modified as necessary. With its 350 seats, the Studio Theatre serves as a multipurpose environment. On special occasions, the foyer itself can even host simple musical performances.

The project's final touches include a musical instrument museum, the auditorium offices and even a specialized library.

The worksite was opened on September 25th 1995 and the foundations of a sixth century BC villa were unearthed during the initial excavations. While this discovery resulted in a delay of the construction work due to the subsequent archaeological excavations, it also led to the modification of the initial project, which would have the angle between the axes of the three concert halls increased to leave the ruins visible. They became an integral part of the project. A museum containing the artefacts recovered from the site was even set up within the complex. The villa's foundations, on the other hand, can be viewed from inside the underground foyer, from which all of the concert halls can be accessed.

The materials that have been used include: travertine for the "cavea", the foyer and the entrances, Roman brick for all of the vertical surfaces, and pre-oxidized lead for the roofs of the three halls.

Due to its excellent acoustic properties, wood was selected as a main material and was used to create a completely disassemblable structure which, even in terms of its construction technology, is reminiscent of an ark or a lute.

The auditorium was inaugurated on 21 April 2002 with the opening of the Sinopoli Concert Hall, while the rest of the multipurpose complex was opened to the public on December 21st of the same year.