

Vicenza and Verona tailor-made tour by VeniceGroupServices

1st stop: Vicenza villa La Rotonda

Villa Capra "La Rotonda" is a Renaissance villa just outside Vicenza, northern Italy, designed by Andrea Palladio.

The correct name is **Villa Almerico-Capra**.

It is also known as *La Rotonda*, *Villa Rotonda*, *Villa La Rotonda*, and *Villa Almerico*. The name "Capra" derives from the Capra brothers, who completed the building after it was ceded to them in 1591. Like other works by Palladio in Vicenza and the surrounding area, the building is conserved as part of the World Heritage Site "City of Vicenza and the Palladian Villas of the Veneto".

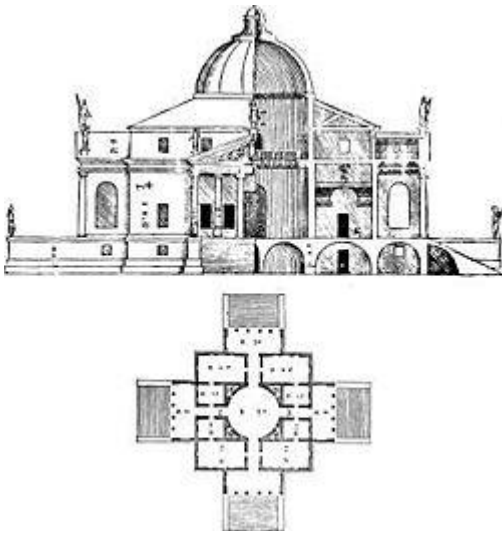


In 1565 a priest, Paolo Almerico, on his retirement from the Vatican (as referendario apostolico of Pope Pius IV and afterwards Pius V), decided to return to his home town of Vicenza in the Venetian countryside and build a country house. This house, later known as 'La Rotonda', was to be one of Palladio's best-known legacies to the architectural world. Villa Capra may have inspired a thousand subsequent buildings, but the villa was itself inspired by the Pantheon in Rome.



Design

The site selected was a hilltop just outside the city of Vicenza. Unlike some other Palladian villas, the building was not designed from the start to accommodate a working farm. This sophisticated building was designed for a site which was, in modern terminology, "suburban". Palladio classed the building as a "palazzo" rather than a villa.



Interior of the rotonda

The design is for a completely symmetrical building having a square plan with four facades, each of which has a projecting portico. The whole is contained within an imaginary circle which touches each corner of the building and centres of the porticos. (illustration, left). The name La Rotonda refers to the central circular hall with its dome. To describe the villa, as a whole, as a 'rotonda' is technically incorrect, as the building is not circular but rather the intersection of a square with a cross. Each portico has steps leading up, and opens via a small cabinet or corridor to the circular domed central hall. This and all other rooms were proportioned with mathematical precision according to Palladio's own rules of architecture which he published in the *Quattro Libri dell'Architettura*^[1].

The design reflected the humanist values of Renaissance architecture. In order for each room to have some sun, the design was rotated 45 degrees from each cardinal point of the compass. Each of the four porticos has pediments graced by statues of classical deities. The pediments were each supported by six Ionic columns. Each portico was flanked by a single window. All principal rooms were on the second floor or piano nobile.

Building began in 1567. Palladio, and the owner, Paolo Almerico, were not to see the completion of the villa. Palladio died in 1580 and a second architect, Vincenzo Scamozzi, was employed by the new owners to oversee the completion. One of the major changes he made to the original plan was to modify the two-storey centre hall.

Palladio had intended it to be covered by a high semi-circular dome but Scamozzi designed a lower dome with an oculus (intended to be open to the sky) inspired by the Pantheon in Rome. The dome was ultimately completed with a cupola.

Interior

The interior design of the Villa was to be as wonderful, if not more so, than the exterior. Alessandro and Giovanni Battista Maganza and Anselmo Canera were commissioned to paint frescoes in the principal salons.

Among the four principal salons on the piano nobile are the West Salon (also called the Holy Room, because of the religious nature of its frescoes and ceiling), and the East Salon, which contains an allegorical life story of the first owner Paolo Almerico, his many admirable qualities portrayed in fresco.

The highlight of the interior is the central, circular hall, surrounded by a balcony and covered by the domed ceiling; it soars the full height of the main house up to the cupola, with walls decorated in trompe l'oeil. Abundant frescoes create an atmosphere that is more reminiscent of a cathedral than the principal salon of a country house.



Landscape

< One of the porticos

From the porticos wonderful views of the surrounding countryside can be seen; this is no coincidence as the Villa was designed to be in perfect harmony with the landscape. This was in complete contrast to such buildings as Villa Farnese of just 16 years earlier. Thus, while the house appears to be completely symmetrical, it actually has certain deviations, designed to allow each facade to complement the surrounding landscape and topography. Hence there are variations in the facades, in the width of steps, retaining walls, etc. In this way, the symmetry of the architecture allows for the asymmetry of the landscape, and creates a seemingly symmetrical whole. The landscape is a panoramic vision of trees and meadows and woods, with the distant Vicenza on the horizon.

The northwest portico is set onto the hill as the termination of a straight carriage drive from the principal gates. This carriageway is an avenue between the service blocks, built by the Capra brothers who acquired the villa in 1591; they commissioned Vincenzo Scamozzi to complete the villa and construct the range of staff and agricultural buildings. As one approaches the villa from this angle one is deliberately made to feel one is ascending from some less worthy place to a temple on high. This same view in reverse, from the villa, highlights a classical chapel on the edge of Vicenza, thus villa and town are united.

Current conditions

In 1994 UNESCO designated the building as part of a World Heritage Site.

The current owner is Mario di Valmarana, a former professor of architecture at the University of Virginia.

2nd stop: Villa Valmarana



The **Villa Valmarana** (also known as **Valmarana Scagnolari Zen**) is a Renaissance villa situated in Lisiera, a locality of Bolzano Vicentino, Province of Vicenza, northern Italy. The villa was nearly totally destroyed during World War II, but has been rebuilt.

Inside you can see some frescoes of Tiepolo Giambattista and his son.

Even before the war damage, the building did not closely resemble the plan which Palladio published

in his *I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura* (*The Four Books of Architecture*) of 1570, possibly because Gianfrancesco Valmarana, the architect's client, died while his house was being built

3rd stop: Olimpico Theatre



The **Teatro Olimpico** ("Olympic Theatre") is a theatre in Vicenza, northern Italy: constructed in 1580-1585, it is the oldest surviving enclosed theatre in the world. The theatre was the final design by the Italian

Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio, Renaissance, and was not completed until after his death. The trompe-l'œil onstage scenery, designed by Vincenzo Scamozzi, to give the appearance of long streets receding to a distant horizon, was installed in 1585 for the very first performance held in the theatre, and is the oldest surviving stage set still in existence.



The Teatro Olimpico is, along with the Teatro all'antica in Sabbioneta and the Teatro Farnese in Parma, one of only three Renaissance theatres remaining in existence. Both these theatres were based, in large measure, on the Teatro Olimpico.

Since 1994, the Teatro Olimpico, together with other Palladian buildings in and around Vicenza, has been part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site

Design and Construction of the Theatre

The "cavea", or seating area. The "loggia" or columned portico at the top conceals a staircase (visible in Scamozzi's floorplan) which originally served as the entrance to the cavea.



Detail of the wood-and-plaster stage scenery designed by Vincenzo Scamozzi, as viewed through the porta reggia of the scaenae frons.

The entrance to the Teatro Olimpico courtyard from Piazza Matteotti. The medieval wall predates the theatre, but the rusticated entrance arch was designed by Scamozzi, and clearly mimics the style and size of the porta reggia inside the theatre.

These oil lamps, designed by Scamozzi, were used to create interior lighting for the "houses" along the imaginary streets, for the very first production.

Palladio's vision: A perfect Roman theatre in a converted medieval building

The Teatro Olimpico is the last work by Palladio, and ranks amongst his highest masterworks. The Vicentine architect had returned to his native city in 1579, bringing with him a lifetime of detailed study into all aspects of Roman architecture, and a more detailed understanding of the architecture of classical theatre

than any other living person. Palladio had illustrated Daniele Barbaro's Italian translation of Vitruvius' *De architectura*; the prints for this edition include floorplans for Roman theatres and an elevation for the scaenae frons of Vicenza's ruined Roman theatre, the Teatro Berga.^[1] As well, Palladio's papers include plans for the imagined reconstruction of the ruined Roman theatres in Pola^[2] and Verona.^[3]

Palladio, a founder of the Olympic Academy (created in 1555), had already designed temporary theatre structures at various locations the city. The most notable of these had been erected some seventeen years previously in the great hall of the Basilica Palladiana.^[4]

In 1579 the Academy obtained the rights to build a permanent theatre in an old fortress, the Castello del Territorio, which had been turned into a prison and powder magazine before falling into disuse. Palladio was asked to produce a design, and despite the awkward shape of the old fortress, he decided to use the space to recreate an academic reconstruction of the Roman theatres that he had so closely studied. In order to fit a stage and seating area into the wide, narrow space, it was necessary for Palladio to flatten the semicircular seating area of the Roman theatre into an ellipse.

Palladio dies, Scamozzi takes over

Palladio died in August 1580, only six months after construction had started on the theatre. Despite this setback, construction continued, with Palladio's sketches and drawings serving as a guide, and Palladio's son, Silla, taking charge of the project. Soon, the other prominent Vicentine architect, Vincenzo Scamozzi was called upon to complete the project.

Scamozzi had already stepped in to complete Palladio's other great unfinished project, the villa just east of Vicenza that is today known as La Rotonda. It is a mark of Scamozzi's genius that both these projects are today regarded as being among Palladio's most successfully executed works.

Scamozzi's contributions include the Odèò and Antiodèò rooms, as well as the entrance archway which leads from the street, through an old medieval wall into the courtyard of the old fortress.

In order to make the archway fit with its surroundings, and to prepare visitors to the theatre for the transformation from medieval to classical surroundings, Scamozzi built the archway to be the same size and shape as the porta reggia or triumphal arch at the center of the scaenae frons or rear wall of the stage. However, the entrance archway was rusticated to make it fit with the rough and well-worn wall into which it was being inserted.

However, Scamozzi's most famous and most original contribution to the theatre was his elaborate stage set, with its remarkable trompe l'œil street views. He not only designed the sets, but also put considerable effort into designing the lighting that permitted the make-believe houses of the stage scenery to be lit from within, completing the illusion that these were real streets.

4th stop: Piazza dei Signori (Gentlemen's Square)



Gentlemen's Square is the principal square of the historical centre of Vicenza. Originally Roman court and place of the market, the square constitutes traditionally the crossroad of the affairs and of the free time of the city. The square has shape rectangularly and long a greater side rises the Palladian Basilica and the Bissara tower, while in the opposite side you can see the Loggia

of the Capitano (also this Palladian work) and the Palace of Monte di Pietà and they find outlet to you numerous paths.

History and description

The wide area of the Square of the Gentlemen, site of the court of the *Vicetia* Roman (Vicenza), corresponded in the Middle Ages to the "Middle Ages" I hit the centre of the political and social life of the city, composed of the small squares of the markets (Square of the Wine, of the fish minute, Forages, the Old Fish shops) as well as the present communal palaces XIII century: Palace of the Power, *Palatium Vetus*, *Palatium Communis*.

Along the perimeter of the square there are still placed numerous commercial activities, heirs of the shops of a time. On the side opposite to the Basilica there rises, with his great loggia, the palace of the Capitano original and ripe work of Andrew Palladio, planned in 1565 and built from 1571 until 1572; with his stuccoes it evokes the victory in the Battle of Lepanto (1571). Going on on the same side towards the centre of the square there is met the palace of pawnshop, with his long front quite 72 metres, which there incorporates in the centre the Church of San Vincenzo (whose origin goes up again in 1387), whose plant, deriving from a preexistent building, is in fact offset and oblique compared to the front on the square. Square of the Gentlemen holds during the year numerous events and shows and is distinguished to be a place often used like point of harvesting by manifestations. To Tuesday and Thursday morning there it is the civic market.



Two columns (on the left the winged lion symbol of Holy Mark and of the Serene Highness one).



The Palace of the Capitano and, undergone on the right, the beginning of the front of the wing West of the palace of the pawnshop.



The front of the church of San Vincenzo with the loggia of the Palace of the pawnshop.



The Bissara Tower to side of the Palladian Basilica with the ornament of the lion of Holy Mark.

Verona

5th stop: S. Zeno Church

St. Zeno died in 380. According to legend, over his tomb, along the Via Gallica, the first small church was erected by Theodoric the Great, king of the Ostrogoths. The history of the present basilican and the associated Benedictine monastery begins in the 9th century, when Bishop Ratoldus and King Pepin of Italy attended the translation of the saint's relics into the new church. This edifice was damaged or destroyed by a Magyar invasion in the early 10th century, at which time Zeno's body was moved to the Cathedral of Santa Maria Matricolare: it was soon moved back to its original site in what is now the crypt of the present church (May 21, 921).

In 967, a new Romanesque edifice was built by Bishop Raterius, with the financial assistance of the Holy Roman Emperor, Otto I.

On January 3, 1117 the church was damaged by an earthquake, and as a result was restored and enlarged in 1138. The work was completed in 1398 with the reconstruction of the roof and of the Gothic-style apse.

Façade

The church of San Zeno constituted the model for all subsequent Romanesque edifices in Verona. Built of cream-coloured tuff, the facade is divided into three vertical components, the central nave surmounted by a pediment and the two aisle with sloping rooflines, all supported upon small pendent blind arcades. The intersections of the three parts are marked by angled pilasters ending in foliate capitals below the pediment.



Lions of the porch.

Across the facade, at the level of the door lintel, runs a shallow arcade of paired arches, divided by thin paired colonettes identical to those found above in the wheel window. The arcade is in pink marble and must once have contrasted in colour with the stone of the facade, but this is now hardly noticeable. The facade is further divided vertically by shallow pilasters, passing visually through the colonettes and into the pediment.

The triangular pediment defines the nave and creates a striking contrast with the tuff stone of the rest of the church's facade, being of white marble divided by seven pink marble pilasters. In 1905 graffiti of a large *Last Judgement* were discovered on the pediment.

Central to the upper facade is a rose window, in the shape of a Wheel of Fortune, the work of one Brioloto, and one of the earliest examples in the Romanesque architecture of such a structure that was to become a particular feature of Gothic architecture. The outer rim of the window is decorated by six figures representing the vacillations of human life.

The porch is from the 12th century with lions at the base of its columns which are symbols of law and faith. The spandrels of the exterior arch each have a bas-relief portraying St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist while above the arch are the Lamb and the blessing hand of God.

Above the door is a lunette with scenes of the Veronese history of the time, including *the Consecration of the Veronese Commune*, *St. Zeno stamping on the Devil*, (symbol of imperial power) and *St. Zeno delivering a banner to the Veronese people*. Under the lunette are bas-reliefs with the *Miracles of St. Zeno*. The internal and external mensulae around the arch of the porch show the cycle of the months, which relate to the Wheel of Fortune of the window above.

The portal is flanked by 18 bas-reliefs dating from the 12th century. They portray scenes from the New and Old Testament, together with episodes of the life of Theoderic: the duel with Odoacer and the King hunting a deer, a symbol of the devil in Theoderic's Legend.



The sculptures associated with the porch, the portal itself, and those set into the wall to the right depicting scenes from the Old Testament and the Flight of Theoderic are the work of the sculptor Nicholas and anonymous members of his workshop. Those depicting the New Testament scenes and other historical subjects to the left of the porch are by a member of Nicholas's workshop named Gugliemus. Their signature inscriptions are located over the lunette, in the background of "The Creation of Man" and on the cornice above the sculptures on the left.

The bronze door is decorated with 48 square panels. The identities of all the figures portrayed is not known: they include St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Zeno, St. Helena, Matilda of Canossa, who had made a donation to the church's abbey, and her husband Godfrey, as well as the unknown sculptor of the work. Other panels show the three Theologic Virtues and, in the eight smallest ones, themes connected to music. As for the dating, some of the panels were made by Saxon masters of Hildesheim in the 11th century, while others are from Veronese masters (according to some scholars, including Benedetto Antelami himself).

Bell tower

The bell tower stands as a separate building. It is 72 m-high and was begun in 1045, restored in 1120 and added onto in 1178. It is stylistically Romanesque like the church, having a central vertical belt of alternating tuff and brickwork bands. It is divided in floors by cornices and small tuff arches, and rises to a double-storied bell chamber with triple mullioned windows. It is surmounted by a small

conical spire with small pinnacles at each angle. The exterior is decorated by Roman sculptures. The older bells were from 1149, although only one of them remains now.

Crypt

The crypt dates to the 10th century, and since 921 has housed the body of St. Zeno in a sarcophagus, the face covered by a silver mask. The crypt has a nave with eight aisles the arches of which are supported by 49 columns, each having a different capital. On the entrance arches, the local sculptor Adamino da San Giorgio sculpted decoration with fanciful and monstrous animals. The crypt was restored in the 13th and 16th centuries.



Central church

The central church, known as *Chiesa plebana*, is of the Latin Cross shape with a nave, two aisles and transept. The aisles are divided by cruciform pilasters with alternating capitals with zoomorphic motifs and of Corinthian style. The walls above the colonnade are polychrome. The trefoil-arched wooden ceiling dates from the 14th century.

Artworks in the central church include a *Crucifix* by Lorenzo Veneziano, a porphyry cup taken from a Roman bath-house, the octagonal baptismal

font of the 13th century, an altarpiece by Francesco Torbido and a 13th century fresco of *St. Christopher*.

Presbytery

The presbytery is raised on an arcade above the crypt which thus remains visible from the nave. The presbytery is accessible by stairs in the aisles.

The High Altar houses the sarcophagus of Sts. Lupicinus, Lucillus and Crescentianus, all Veronese bishops. On the left of the apse, over the sacristy's entrance, is a *Crucifixion* scene from the School of Altichiero, while in the small left apse is a red marble statue of St. Zeno of the 12th century, which is the most venerated image in Verona.

The most important artwork of the basilica is the polyptych by Andrea Mantegna, known as *San Zeno Altarpiece*. Only the upper paintings are original, however, since the predellas were stripped by the French in 1797 and never returned.

6 stop: Castelvechio

Castelvechio, originally called Castello di San Martino in Aquarius, a house of Verona is currently used to house the town museum, is the most important monument of military Scaligera.



The castle was located between the head of the city right of Tyrol, at the Upper Chain, and the head of the wall to the left of the Adige, near the Porta San Giorgio. The functional and architectural essence of his position is to be an element of urban defense inseparable from the river, and at the same time prepared to cast his actions over the river itself. The bridge, for the exclusive use of the castle was used as an escape or access for aid from the valley, thus preventing the river became an insurmountable barrier. But within the urban complex defensive system could be used to organize sorties in order to operate tactically on the opposite river banks. The castle was designed as a fulcrum of the entire defensive system, and its main tower as the center of the visual control of the city, left and right side of the Adige, and the surrounding landscape.



The whole castle is dominated by the bulk of the keep, which stands on the western front, near the Adige, at the fortified bridge. His figure is impressive even for the appearance of the walls of brick, compact and free of chipping or

risarciture. Even in the eighteenth century, on the eastern side stands the big picture, fresco, the lion of St. Mark, symbol of Venetian rule. During the Hapsburg tower housed the military optical telegraph station, in communication with the signaling network established between the fortresses of the Quadrilateral. The machine signals, day and night, located on the roof terrace, were in connection with the corresponding equipment located on the Tower of the Cage, in Mantua, and with those of the telegraph Pastrengo tower on the hill of San Martino. Tangent to the base of the keep, the bridge with three large arches over the river unequal, with the momentum of the arch more daring, on the basis of 48.69 meters. Even today, the bridge requires the viewer as a work of art.

7 stop: Romeo&Juliet balcony

Balcony (from Italian: *balcone*, scaffold; cf. Old High German *balcho*, beam, balk; probably cognate with Persian term *bālkāneh* or its older variant *pālkāneh*^[1]), a platform projecting from the wall of a building, supported by columns or console brackets, and enclosed with a balustrade.



Types

The traditional Maltese balcony is a wooden closed balcony projecting from a wall.

By contrast, a 'Juliet balcony' (named after Shakespeare's Juliet, who courted Romeo from her balcony in the play *Romeo and Juliet*) does not protrude out of the building. It is usually part of an upper floor, with a balustrade only at the front, like a small Loggia. Various types of balcony have been used in depicting this famous scene; however the 'balcony of Juliet' at Villa Capuleti in Verona is not in fact a 'Juliet balcony', as it does indeed protrude from the wall of the villa (see photograph below)^[citation needed]

Functions

Sometimes balconies are adapted for ceremonial purposes, e.g. that of St. Peter's Basilica at Rome, when the newly elected pope gives his blessing *urbi et orbi* after the conclave. Inside churches, balconies are sometimes provided for the singers, and in banqueting halls and the like for the musicians.

A unit with a regular balcony will have doors that open up onto a small patio with railings, a small Patio

garden or Skyrise greenery. A French balcony is actually a false balcony, with doors that open to a railing with a view of the courtyard or the surrounding scenery below.

In theatres, the *balcony* was formerly a stage-box, but the name is now usually confined to the part of the auditorium above the dress circle and below the gallery.

8th stop: Erb's square

Piazza delle Erbe (Piazza Erbe or just) is the oldest square in Verona, and lies above the area of the Roman forum. In the Roman was the center of political and economic life, and in time the Roman buildings have given way to the Middle Ages.



The north side is taken up by the town hall, the Lamberti Tower, the House of judges and from the houses of Mazzanti. The side of the west, the smaller one, is closed from the baroque Palazzo Maffei, adorned with several statues of Greek gods: Zeus, Hercules, Minerva, Venus, Mercury and Apollo. The northwest side of the square based on the Roman Capitol, which faced the Court. Many houses the remains of frescoes. It rises on the south side of the House Merchant (or

Domus Mercatorum), which now houses the Banca Popolare di Verona. The other houses, more anonymous, remember the aspect ratio of the tower-houses of local origin.



The oldest monument in the square is a fountain topped by a statue called "Madonna Verona". This is actually a Roman statue, dated 380.

Another historical monument is the capital, told the Tribune. It is dated around the thirteenth century, when it was used for various ceremonies, in particular the mayor sat under it for the oath ceremony, and there are boards.

Towards Via Cappello is an ancient column topped by a newsstand to fourteenth century, in which niches are carved in relief figures of the Virgin and the saints Zeno,

Christopher and Peter Martyr.

In front of Palazzo Maffei stands a superb column of white marble, on whose top is the lion of St. Mark, symbol of the Venetian Republic.

The Arche Scaligere, located in the historical center of Verona, is a monumental funerary complex in the Gothic style of the Scala family, intended to hold the arches (or tombs) of some distinguished representatives of the family, including one of the biggest Lord of Verona, Cangrande, to which Dante dedicates the Paradiso: they are located next to the church of Santa Maria Antica, near the Piazza dei Signori.



The French historian Georges Duby in his medieval Europe has defined the arches one of the most prominent and significant monuments of Gothic art.

The tombs were built in the fourteenth century by various sculptors. Coming from Piazza dei Signori is located, along the wall of the church of Santa Maria, the tomb of Mastino I della Scala, with a simple sarcophagus commemorating the Roman use.

A little further is the tomb of isolated Alberto I della Scala, which richly decorated, architecturally repeats of Mastino I. Near the outer wall are then three simple graves, probably belonging, in order, Bartholomew I, II and Cangrande Bartolomeo II della Scala (the latter perhaps Bailardo Nogarola).

On the side door of Santa Maria Antica there is the magnificent tomb of Cangrande, the biggest Lord Scala. The sarcophagus is supported by four dogs Cangrande regents crest Scala: on the front you can see three statues on the back you see instead Verona. Above the sarcophagus is a statue of Cangrande expanse. Four



Corinthian columns support the canopy, which is thrown upwards, culminating in the great equestrian statue of Can Grande della Scala. Then there is the tomb of Mastino II della Scala: his sarcophagus resting on four pillars, and above it lies stretched out his statue. At the top of the ark is the equestrian statue of the Lord, locked in solid armor. Finally the last ark, to Cansignorio della Scala, the most rich and lively.

The tomb of Giovanni della Scala was instead moved here in 1831 from the Church of Saints Fermo and Rustico Ships the bridge, and is now in the back of the cemetery, on the outer wall of a house. The original statues of Cangrande The Mastiff and were transferred to the Museum of Castel Vecchio, for which there are copies in the cemetery.

Last stop: ARENA

The **Verona Arena (Arena di Verona)** is a Roman amphitheatre in Verona, Italy, which is internationally famous for the large-scale opera performances given there. It is one of the best preserved ancient structures of its kind.

The building itself was built in AD 30 on a site which was then beyond the city walls. The ludi (shows and games) staged there were so famous that spectators came from many other places, often far away, to witness them. The amphitheatre could host more than 30,000 spectators in ancient times.

The round façade of the building was originally composed of white and pink limestone from Valpolicella; but after a major earthquake in 1117, which almost completely destroyed the structure's outer ring, except for the so-called "ala", the stone was quarried for re-use in other buildings.

The first interventions to recover the arena's function as a theatre began during the Renaissance. Some operatic performances were later mounted in the building during the 1850s, owing to its outstanding acoustics.

In 1913, operatic performances in the arena commenced in earnest due to the zeal and initiative of the great Italian opera tenor Giovanni Zenatello and the impresario Ottone Rovato. The first 20th-century operatic production at the arena, a staging of Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida*, took place on 10 August of that year, to mark the birth of Verdi a 100 years before in 1813. Musical luminaries such as Puccini and Mascagni were in attendance. Since then, summer seasons of opera have been mounted continually at the arena, except in 1915-18 and 1940–45, when Europe was convulsed in war.

Nowadays, four productions are mounted each year between June and August. During the winter months, the local opera and ballet companies perform at the L'Accademia Filarmonica.



Modern-day travellers are advised that admission tickets to sit on the arena's stone steps are much cheaper to buy than tickets giving access to the padded chairs available on lower levels. Candles are distributed to the audience and lit after sunset around the arena.

Every year over 500,000 people see spectacular productions of the popular operas in this arena.^[1] Once capable of housing 20,000 patrons per performance (now limited to 15,000

because of safety reasons), the arena has featured many of world's most notable opera singers. In the post-World War Two era, they have included Giuseppe Di Stefano, Maria Callas, Tito Gobbi and Renata Tebaldi among other celebrated names. A number of famous conductors have appeared there, too. The official arena shop has historical recordings made by some of them available for sale.

In recent times, the arena has also hosted concerts of popular artists such as Anastasia, Björk, Whitney Houston, Elton John, Alicia Keys, KISS, George Michael, Kylie Minogue, Ennio Morricone, Muse, Pearl Jam, Pink Floyd, Simple Minds, Simply Red, Sting, Tina Turner and The Who, among others.

End of tour
