arq (2019), **23.3**, 225–238. © Cambridge University Press 2019
doi: 10.1017/S1359135519000290

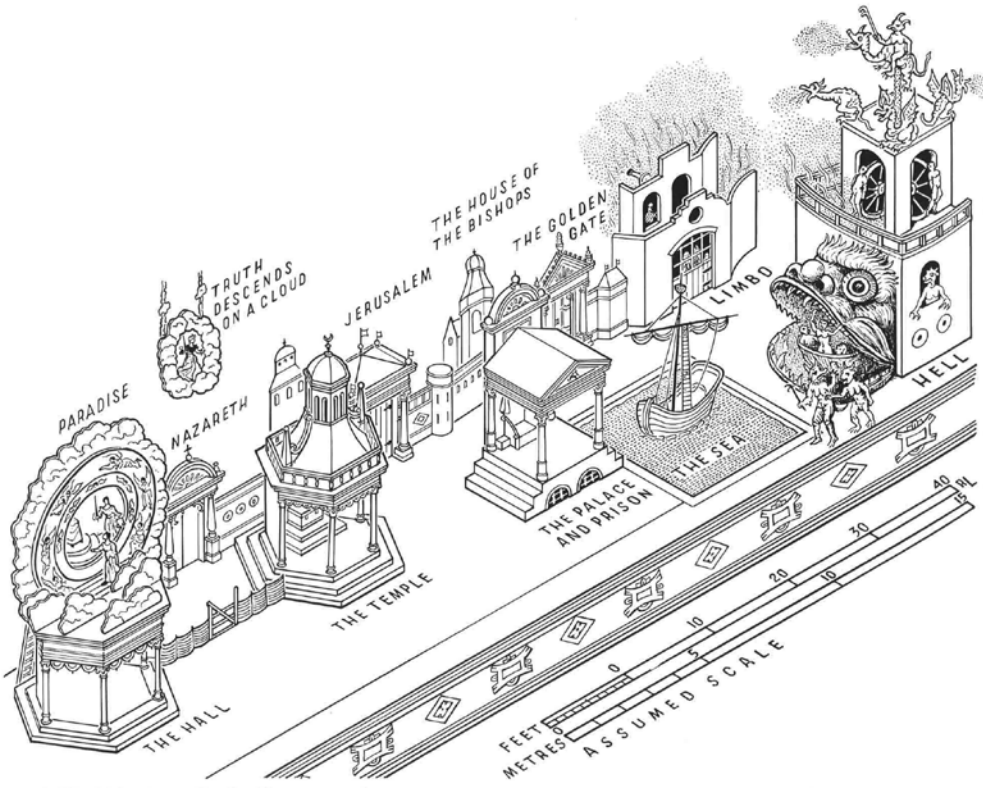
A debate about theatre architecture and its relation to the city in late twentieth-century Italy engages with questions of politics and the transformative potential of theatre as ritual.

Temple, machine, caravan

Fernando Quesada López

Between 1965 and 1975 there was an intense debate in Italy about theatrical culture, which encompassed theatre building and the urban, social, and political roles of theatre. It was articulated around three terms that imply three ways of relating the theatrical building and the city: the temple, the machine, and the caravan. This unusually rich debate has been largely ignored in the historiography of Italian and European architecture, despite its intensity and the importance of its protagonists for the architectural culture of the twentieth century.

Many of the most prominent architects, critics, and historians of the time intervened in this debate with unbuilt competition proposals, opinions, or rigorous analysis. One of the most active was Guido Canella, whose broad career included work as a theatre architect and a scholar of theatre culture. He organised a design studio at the Politecnico di Milano in 1965, accompanied by lectures, panel discussions, and group performances by international avant-garde artists. All of this material was gathered in a publication edited by Guido Canella in 1966 that inaugurated this debate, called *Il Sistema teatrale a Milano*, to which all protagonists referred at some point of their respective interventions. In addition to Guido Canella, other personalities such as Bruno Zevi, Maurizio Sacripanti, Constantino Dardi, Mario Manieri-Elia, and Manfredo Tafuri intervened, constituting a cultural reef that remains largely forgotten today. It is significant to revisit this debate, since it contributed to the transition from modernism to postmodernism in Italy. It did so, in



1 Richard and Helen Leacroft, 'The Mystery of Valenciennes', 1547.

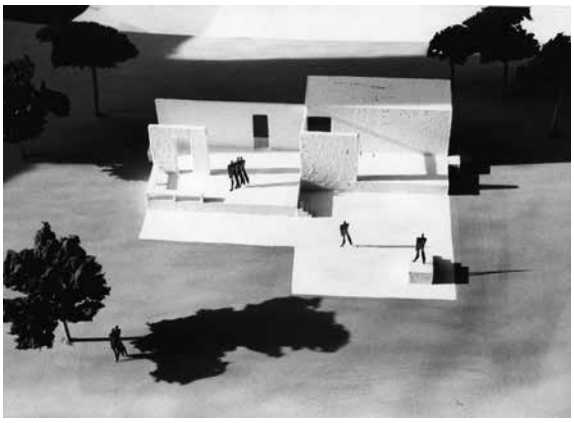
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135519000290 Published online by Cambridge University Press



2

2 'The Mystery of Valenciennes', 1547.

3 Le Corbusier, model for the Spontaneous Theatre of the Cultural Center of Fort Lamy, 1960.



3

Canella's terminology, through the theatrical metaphor.

Canella, who had been close to Ernesto Nathan Rogers in the journal *Casabella*, was very interested in the idea of type. It is not coincidental that his book was published side by side with Aldo Rossi's *L'Architettura della città*. Both Canella and Rossi were strongly influenced by Rogers and sought to surpass the old master and his theory of the *preesistenze ambientali*. However, departing from the same strategy of urban typological analysis, Canella and Rossi reached different conclusions. While Rossi researched the city as an urban artefact, paying particular attention to the architectural type and the relationship between the monument and the urban tissue, Canella reproposed the civic quality of the architectural functionality of the type, and thus, avoiding self-referentiality, opened the type – and architecture in general – to wider readings. For Canella, architecture must be dissolved in the city, while maintaining at the same time the representative civic values of modern society. The theatrical metaphor was extremely useful to him in researching the paradoxical phenomenon: how much dissolution is appropriate in forming an architecture of representation?

In *Il sistema teatrale a Milano*, Guido Canella analysed the historical development of what he called 'system', referring to the relationships between architectural type, urban form, and social use of theatrical spaces.[1] Canella made a sharp distinction between the architect's approach and that of the theatre director, stage designer, or playwright. The second group, the theatre artists, provide the internal vision of the show itself, the staging, the technical requirements, and the aesthetic specific to the art form. It is for the architect to provide a broader and more relational approach, established between the building, the city, and the social environment, testing this through the miniature model embodied in the specific architectural relation between the stage and the audience, but ultimately going beyond this model. Canella classified three types of theatrical space according to their relationship with the city, as he assumed the role not of man of the theatre but as its architect: the 'temple theatre', the 'theatre machine', and the 'mobile theatre'.

A diffuse social theatricality, not necessarily artistic or institutional, is always encapsulated and institutionalised within the walls of cities' theatres. This social theatricality is necessarily multiple and even elusive in a formal sense, as is the social environment, and that is why Canella speaks of a 'theatrical system' to refer to the urban environment that surrounds a theatre building in an efficient direct analogy *[1]*. In Canella's vocabulary, 'system' refers to a physical environment that exceeds the architectural type of the theatre building, comprising more factors to which an architect must pay attention beyond the understanding and ability to manage the specifications of the theatrical space available. This 'system' assumed other names in Canella's rich terminology, as his analysis became more theoretical and historiographical following his book about Milan. For example, Canella spoke of theatres and pseudo-theatres explaining the similitudes and differences between these two models of public space. The former are the buildings matching the concept of theatrical architectural type in the strict sense of the idea. The latter are urban spaces like squares, educational spaces, associative spaces, and civic or religious representative spaces *[2]*.[2]

This notion is very similar to the 'spontaneous theatre' used by Le Corbusier in 1948 – an extremely

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135519000290 Published online by Cambridge University Press

influential concept in both architectural and theatrical spheres at that time, due to his significance and its dissemination in widely distributed publications.[3] In the written transcription of the conference he delivered in La Sorbonne, Le Corbusier admiringly described scenes of his travels around Europe, North Africa, and Latin America, in which the urban space hosted non-programmed social gatherings to which he assigned a highly theatrical content, in continuity with popular, lay, or religious, celebrations of the old consolidated European city. In other words, Le Corbusier considered the streets of traditional cities – and not the theatre building – the ultimate example of spatial archetype of theatricality. To frame these social gatherings without physical or mental coercion, in 1960, Le Corbusier proposed some spontaneous theatres for Fort-Lamy Cultural Centre, Chad, including spaces constituting only fitted floors and vertical surfaces (small walls, parterres, or even projection screens), which would no longer frame or limit the scene once the action in progress finished, becoming mere architectural elements of the diffused organisation of the urban space *[3]*.

The aims of Le Corbusier and Guido Canella were significantly similar. Both sought to overcome the privilege historically assigned to a strictly technicist or typological and professional vision of the relationship between stage and audience, substituting instead a wider social and urban approach that conceptually disintegrates the architectural type of theatre and disseminates it throughout the city, resulting in interchangeable theatres and pseudo-theatres without any kind of hierarchy among them. In order to do so, both architects proposed two simultaneous enterprises in their respective discourses. Firstly, the overcoming of the project understood as a design activity serving the dramatic scene, that is, the abandonment of the set design as the field of activity specific to the architect. Secondly, its analogous system in an urban context, the overcoming of the theatrical architectonic type as the mere design of the vessel of a pre-existing social drama, previously written by the hegemonic commonly accepted social urban behaviours. From the project's point of view, it is about strategies for transposing stage-specific values or parameters into the urban architectural sphere, which also possess potential capacities to transgress the prevailing social order.

According to Canella, the architect of theatres must reveal or at least facilitate the diffuse spontaneous multiple social theatricality of the urban environment, and also must shape more complex typological and programmatic systems, beyond both the stage itself and the theatre building. Thus, the architect will be able to guarantee a certain continuity between the most spontaneous forms of social theatricality (which tend to be ephemeral and at times unrepeatable) and the most institutionalised forms of the theatre building itself (which always have a strong tendency towards ritual repetition).

Three models for theatrical space in the city

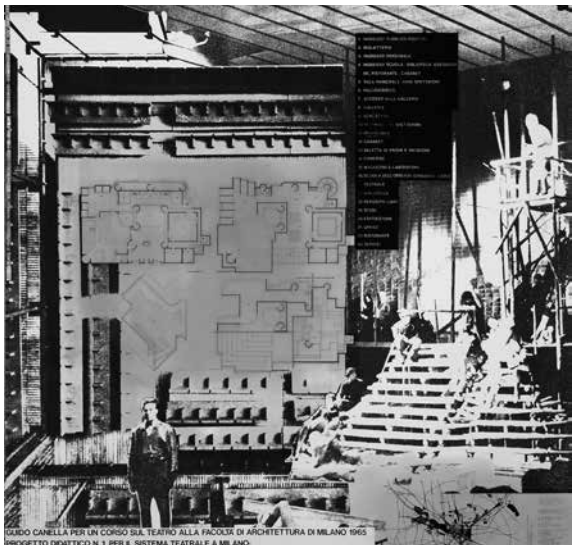
The concept of the temple theatre refers to the historical period starting with the establishment of the first theatres during the Renaissance, the climax of which would be Richard Wagner's Bayreuth theatre, built in 1876 and, according to Canella, the greatest exponent of this type of theatre. Historically it overlaps with the next one, the theatre machine, which derived from Baroque staging experiments, but which reached its climax with Walter Gropius's 'Totaltheatre' for Erwin Piscator in 1927. The third type, the mobile theatre, has a parallel genealogy equally extended in time and also rooted in the same classic origins, but with an irregular historical progress. This third type, as well as being less prominent and barely documented, is difficult to characterise, but always maintained links with the other two types.

Following Bayreuth – which marks the end of the European-style theatre established in the Renaissance with a new critical vision we might refer to as the culture of romantic-enlightened theatre – the avant-garde theatre focused on three main areas of work. The first placed emphasis on the temple theatre, experimenting with the representation of the theatre building as an urban monument, and as a symbol of a certain political form, underscoring its role as a lay civic temple. The second, the machine, consisted in rehearsing new space models inside the theatre auditorium, experimenting with the relationship between stage and audience depending on the development of the dramatic writing and the theatrical forms, with particular emphasis on technology, in accelerated permanent renewal. The third one, the caravan, was the proposal of a new social role model for the theatre after the emergence of a new mass cultural form, characteristic of big cities and until then unknown, which experienced its emergence along with the historical avant-garde and its fascination with the metropolitan phenomenon. This classification of the theatrical space with regard to the urban environment established by Canella has been discussed by another Italian author, the architect and historian Mario Manieri-Elia, who offers even more clues for a better interpretation of any proposal of theatrical space with regard to its possible urban, politic and civic role *[4–7]*.

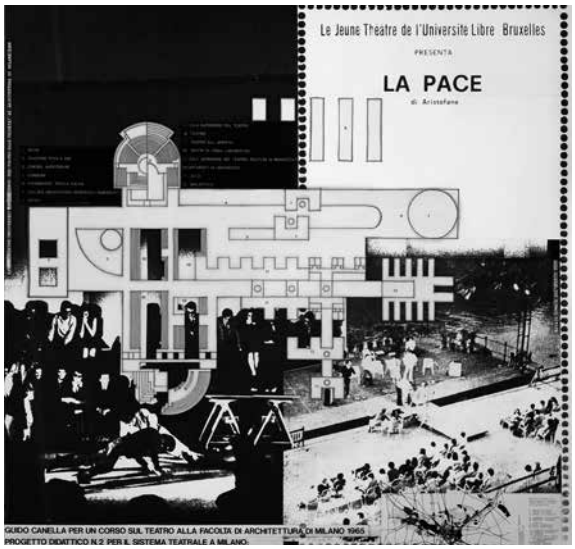
In the summer of 1975, Manieri-Elia took part in a seminar organised by the Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio in Vicenza together with a series of experts, among whom was Manfredo Tafuri. They were the only two speakers in that forum that focused their contributions on the twentieth century.[4] At that meeting, Manieri-Elia gave a lecture called 'Il teatro moderno', which continued Canella's open debate. Given that Manieri-Elia was a Marxist historian, this line of thought was enriched by his ideological perspective.

Running parallel to the temple-machine-caravan triad established by Canella, Manieri-Elia speaks of three moments in contemporary theatrical culture: the recreational, the productive, and the ritual, in addressing the possible relationship between theatre

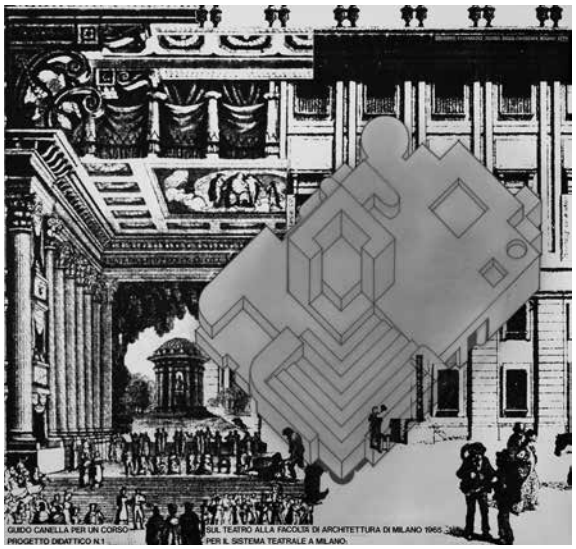
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135519000290 Published online by Cambridge University Press



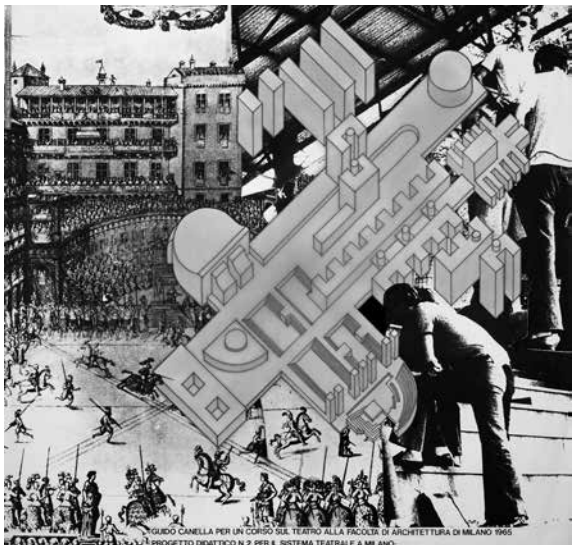
4



6



5



7

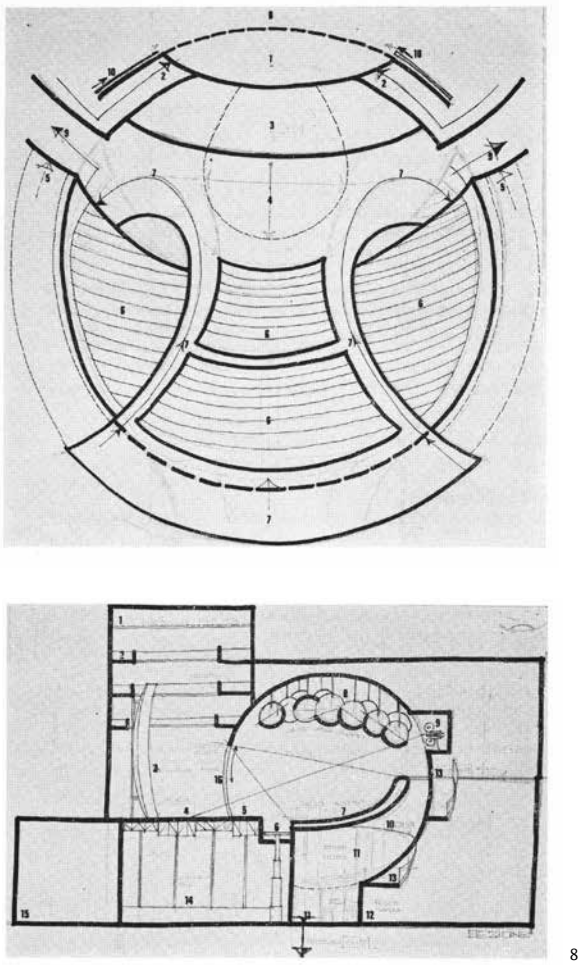
4, 5 Guido Canella, Progetto didattico no. 1 for Il sistema teatrale a Milano, 1965, New Public Theatre at via Larga, connected with Canobiana Theatre.

6, 7 Guido Canella, Progetto didattico no. 2 for Il sistema teatrale a Milano, 1965, School of Theatre, School of Pedagogy, Department of Social Sciences at Sesto S. Giovanni.

and architecture in the new framework of mass culture and consumption, already outlined by the historic avant-garde and very much in focus when the Vicenza conference took place. Manieri-Elia strongly disapproves of the recreational moment, considering that it dispenses with architecture completely, because architecture always fulfils a social role, denied by the absolute gratuitousness of the recreational moment. For him, the recreational act is anti-architectural, and strictly speaking even anti-theatrical because 'it has lost its cathartic role', that is, to say the role of the ritual. Recreational theatre and its related architecture, have a form of temporality that excludes the ritual dimension, and has thereby lost its social role.[5] Thus, Manieri-Elia clearly and rather bluntly distinguishes what is recreational from the ritual because the latter is inevitably linked to 'a functional intention, it seeks to solve a specific situation that is critical of the collective'.[6] This distinguishes the ritual from a recreational upheaval in its purest form, which has a purely dismissive and critical role. Therefore, Manieri-Elia finds in the ritual the fundamental link between theatre and architecture and its political potential.

What he denominates as the productive moment, or core, is the performative work itself, where the discourse moves from the realm of theory or ideas to the realm of practice as it engages with conditions given by the cycle of production, organisation, and consumption. With regard to recreational theatre, this core entails the total dissolution of the mechanism, the 'disappearance of theatre' (and of architecture), and an emotional explosion in an unproductive task with no ritual social role at all. This is the symbolic recreational economy that Manieri-Elia describes from his Marxist point of view. The productive core, in its state of maximum theatrical intensity, on the other hand, leads to the absolute reformulation of the social fabric through what Manieri-Elia calls the 'theatre of complete conditioning'. For the first case (an unbridled playfulness) he gives the example of Yves Klein and

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135519000290 Published online by Cambridge University Press



8 Piero Berengo Gardin, proposal for a Spherical Theatre.

his theatre empty of actors or audience, with a perfectly lit open box office – a theatre in which:

> *actors will be paid to disappear among the people; the audience will pay their tickets to have an empty seat which bears their name. The theatre therefore becomes an empty box accomplishing, until the end and through payment, its own unproductive task.*[7]

For the second case (complete productivity), he gives the example of the spherical stage space proposed by Piero Berengo Gardin, paradoxically derived from the space proposed by Antonin Artaud, which psychologically prepares the audience by means of an implacable technological device *[8],* as described in the accompanying text:

> *The spherical envelope redirects the spectator during his 'spectacular nutrition' (the stage equals the placenta) to a hypothetical 'uterine' state, where this envelope 'protects' the spectator.*[8]

In both cases (Klein and Berengo Gardin), the result of the supposed dissolution is the performance intensified by two opposing forces, which ultimately converge purely in that which is spectacle. In the first case, the old bourgeois temple completely emptied of sense, we find a panicked perpetuation of its own survival as a sterile institution that does not allow the emergence of new rituals, but only the perpetuation of the existing ones. In the second case, the renovated shock-producing machine, we find an incubator of new types of subjects that must permanently adapt their own physiology and emotional apparatus to new technologies. For Manieri-Elia, 'in these stances we must appreciate the purging attempt to indicate new paths to theatre, and when an attempt to prefigure its form is made, we arrive to the opposite extreme: that of the unusual conditioning of the audience'.[9]

For Manieri-Elia, theatrical architecture must oscillate between one extreme and the other, but without ever arriving at either, for in arrival it would disappear. He proposes instead the mobile theatre of Canella's caravan, as a possible model to link theatre and architecture in mutual relation with the ritual:

> *Against such a determining relationship between staging and performance, the aforementioned third type of theatre appears: the moving theatre in its different versions. But in this instance it is more difficult to speak of architecture.*[10]

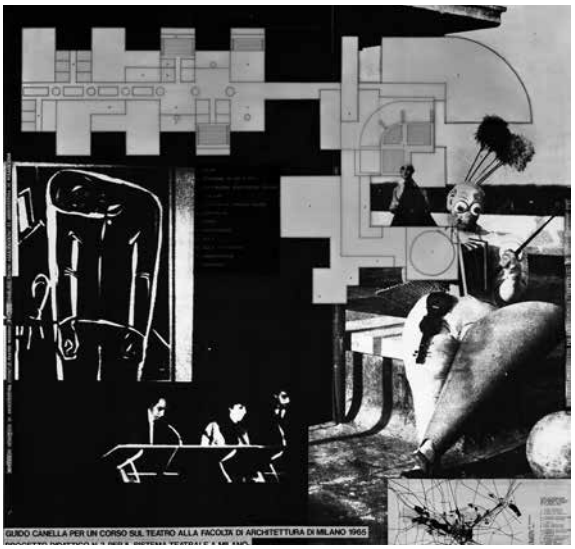
Temple theatre

Guido Canella attempted to resolve the thorny issue of how much architecture is necessary for a theatre that is neither a temple nor a machine, with some designs presented in his design studio at the Politecnico di Milano in 1965 and published in his book about Milan the following year. His answer was 'a lot'. However, mobility in relation to the city was crucial to provide diametrically different solutions regarding the architectural language used, though extraordinarily similar on a conceptual level and in its social and urban consequences.

In his study of Milan, Canella proves that the social development that occurred in the interwar period due to the large-scale implementation of the automobile, led to a transformation of both central bourgeois theatres and small theatrical spaces in the outskirts of the centre of Milan. Working-class people frequented the latter, and their programmes included classic theatre, popular theatre, variety shows, circus, and political theatre. During that time, and following the postwar period, central theatres acquired, with some exceptions, a trend towards the strictly commercial, and the small peripheral 'cinema-theatres' became cinemas with important architectural transformations, like the complete disappearance of staging equipment and the excavation of underground spaces to add commercial spaces to these buildings.[11]

Canella answered that loss of typological variety and the subsequent isolation of the building regarding the urban context with some proposals of large architectural pieces that combined theatre with pseudo-theatre, the built with the unbuilt, the architectural object with the urban texture only minimally evident. They were large-scale developments with a lineal structure that connected the train stations of the public transport system with private parking facilities. Educational facilities such as elementary schools or university buildings, commercial premises, areas of craft production and theatre auditoriums, all of them combined with plenty of open-air grandstands, plazas, and all kinds

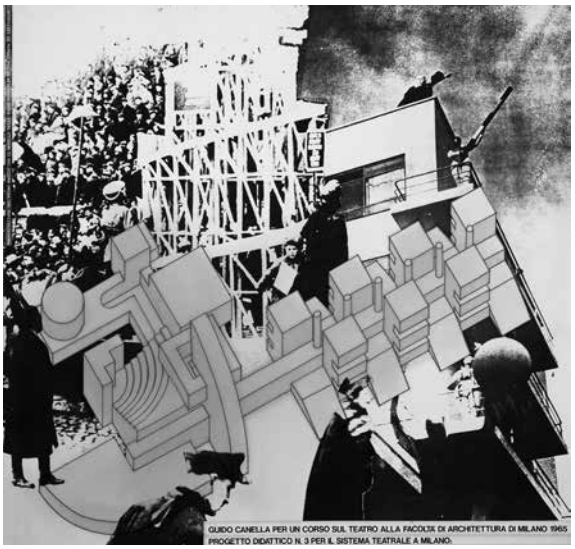
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135519000290 Published online by Cambridge University Press



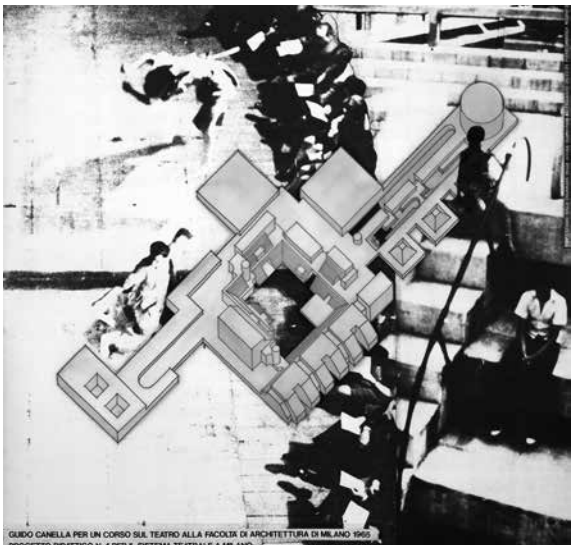
9



11



10



12

9, 10 Guido Canella, Progetto didattico no. 3 for Il sistema teatrale a Milano, 1965, High School, Exhibition of furniture at Lissone.

11, 12 Guido Canella, Progetto didattico no. 4 for Il sistema teatrale a Milano, 1965, Open Air Theatre, Primary School at Novegro di Segrate.

of urban pseudo-theatres were plugged into this axis of mobility *[9–12]*.

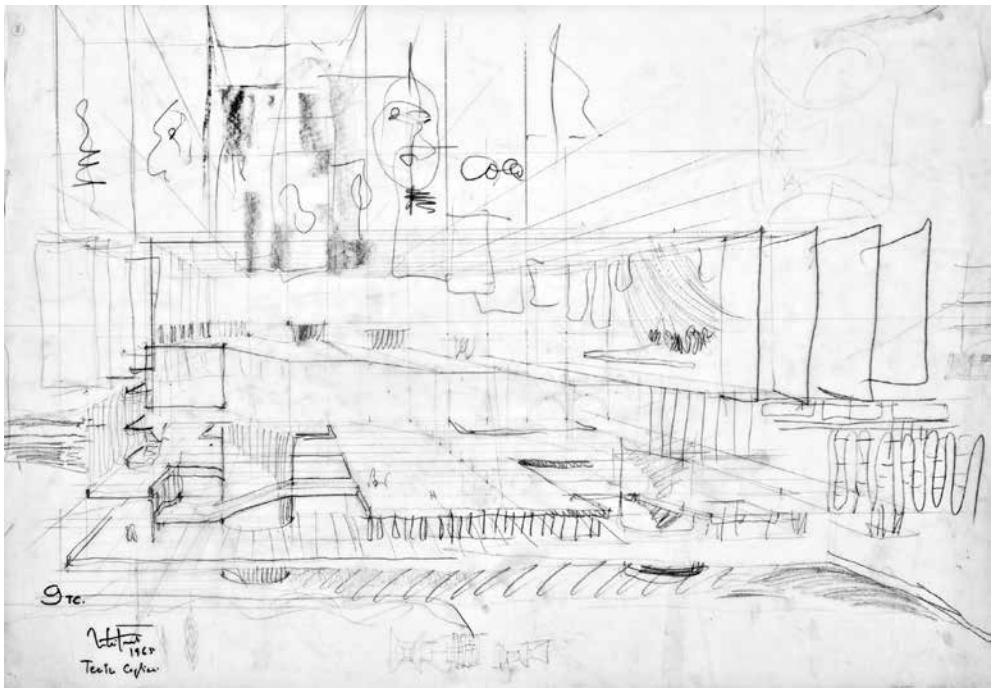
Canella's response, therefore, was not the absence of architecture or its literal dissolution, but the complete opposite. Neither was it a mobile or dynamic theatre, but an architectural organism on a metropolitan scale partially retaining some aspects of the temple theatre, such as its monumentality, its formal stability and its capacity for civic representativeness. It was architecture motivated by the desire for theatre to become a mass social activity as a product of the city. Thus, Canella used mobility as the conceptual driving force of his urban project, where the mobile element was not the theatre, but the audience, society itself, and the class identity, and so he defied the old theatrical model as something incapable of representing what was new.

Canella's proposals, devised with his students in 1965, would belong therefore – and with all the nuances involved – to the tradition of temple theatre as revisions literally erupted from the bourgeois architectural style and from the capacity of theatrical architecture to represent the polycentric democratic modern lay society that, according to Canella, one single permanent building could not encompass in all its complexity. But the archetype of the theatre machine, not so much centred on social mobility, but literally on its own inner spatial mobility, gave rise to a similar revisionist project on the same exact date in 1965, with the submission of Maurizio Sacripanti's competition entry for Cagliari's new lyrical theatre.

Theatre machine

This project, for Cagliari's new lyrical theatre, was of a formal and technical virtuosity seldom achieved in Italian architecture at that time. It proposed a great space for events – a space where floor and roof were made out of squared telescopic modules, thanks to some simple hydraulic mechanisms, with a perimeter corridor for transport and services *[13]*. There were three successive versions, in which the inner space and the structural outline did not exhibit excessive variations. The enclosures changed

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135519000290 Published online by Cambridge University Press



13 Maurizio Sacripanti, design sketch for Cagliari Theatre. Interior space.

14 Maurizio Sacripanti, model for Cagliari Theatre. First solution.

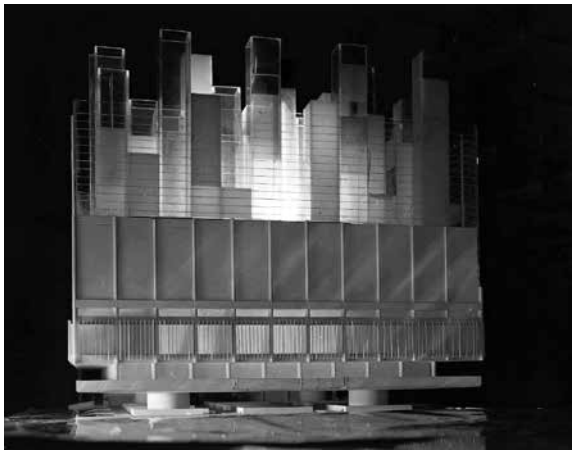
15 Maurizio Sacripanti, model for Cagliari Theatre. Second solution.

only in the second and third versions, to make the highly complex, mobile interior spatial system relatively visible to the outside. The evolution of the three proposals for the enclosure takes into account the desire to generate a façade able to transmit the idea of formal uncertainty to its final image *[14, 15]*. The progress of these various versions shows that the conception of the inner space – which barely changed during the project – experienced certain difficulties in making its presence felt in the plan for a conventional façade, that is, to take the form of a temple theatre with a coherent communicative value. This highlighted the contradiction between the uncertainty of the open spatiality of the inner space and the civic need to offer a stable façade that is eloquent and relevant to that new labile spatiality. In other words, what was sought was a formal expression of the uncertainty of the space, a direct union of environment and representation *[16]*.

The project report refers to the possibility of turning the interludes between events into events themselves – made possible by the intervention of the automated movement of parts of the floor and ceiling, precision-controlled by perforated cards via computer software. Information technology offers a suitable mechanism of control of mass entertainment with the optimisation of time and space: nothing should be beyond the capacity of the spectacular and self-demonstrative element of this impressive fully computerised device *[17]*, so much so that the project not only serves for a wide variety of possible uses – theatre, congresses, exhibitions, markets, fairs, or political rallies – but also a twenty-four-hour operation without interruption caused by schedules, seasons, or the social habits of mass leisure consumption. Even at the times when the space is being changed thanks to the movement of the prismatic pieces of the floor and ceiling, it would be possible for the audience to experience the event in a state of shocked admiration.



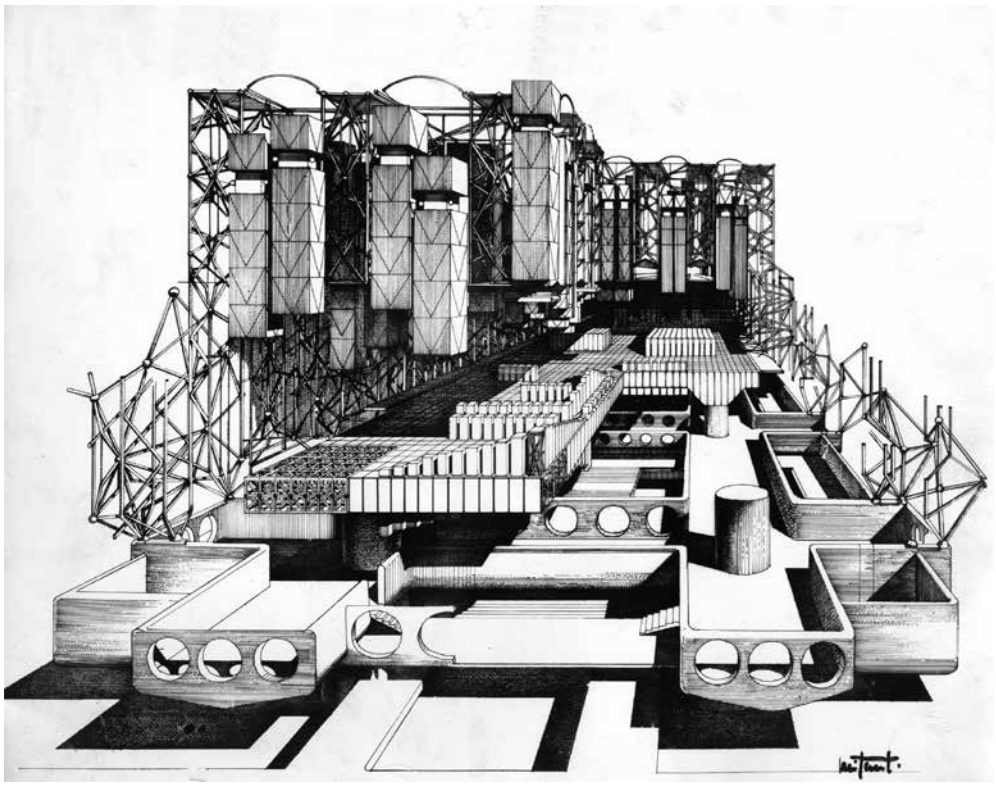
14



15

A two-metre-high metal net holds up the components of the stalls, with hydraulic pistons supporting the net, above which there are two seats adjustable in any direction. Therefore, the seats in principle have almost infinite possibilities of adjustable height and swivel. In addition, the seats can be removed, thus converting the floor support into stage or all-purpose surface. An analogous system of reconfigurable prisms is offered for the larger-scale ceiling, which can be used as an acoustic corrector, lighting-support, or display screen. Sacripanti called it

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135519000290 Published online by Cambridge University Press

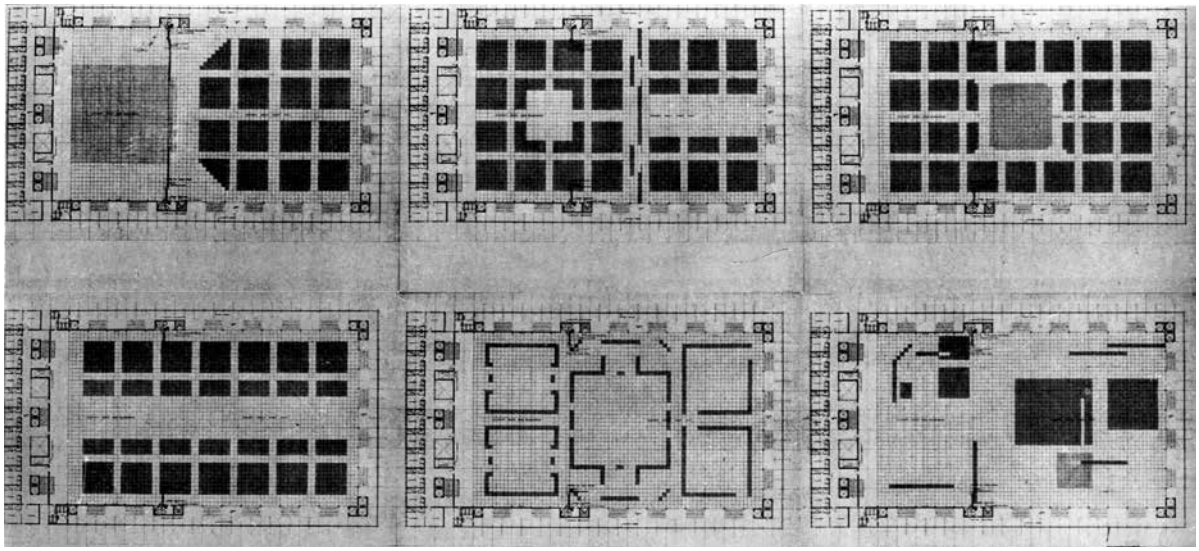


16 Maurizio Sacripanti, perspective drawing for Cagliari Theatre. Final scheme.

17 Maurizio Sacripanti, plans and schemes for Cagliari Theatre auditorium space.

18, 19 Maurizio Sacripanti, model for Cagliari Theatre. Interior space.

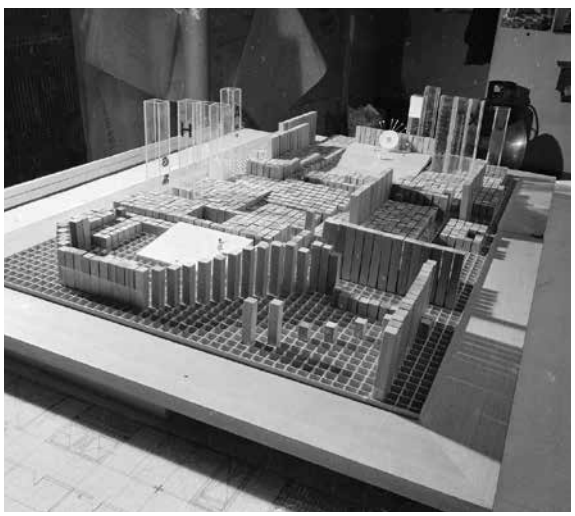
16



17

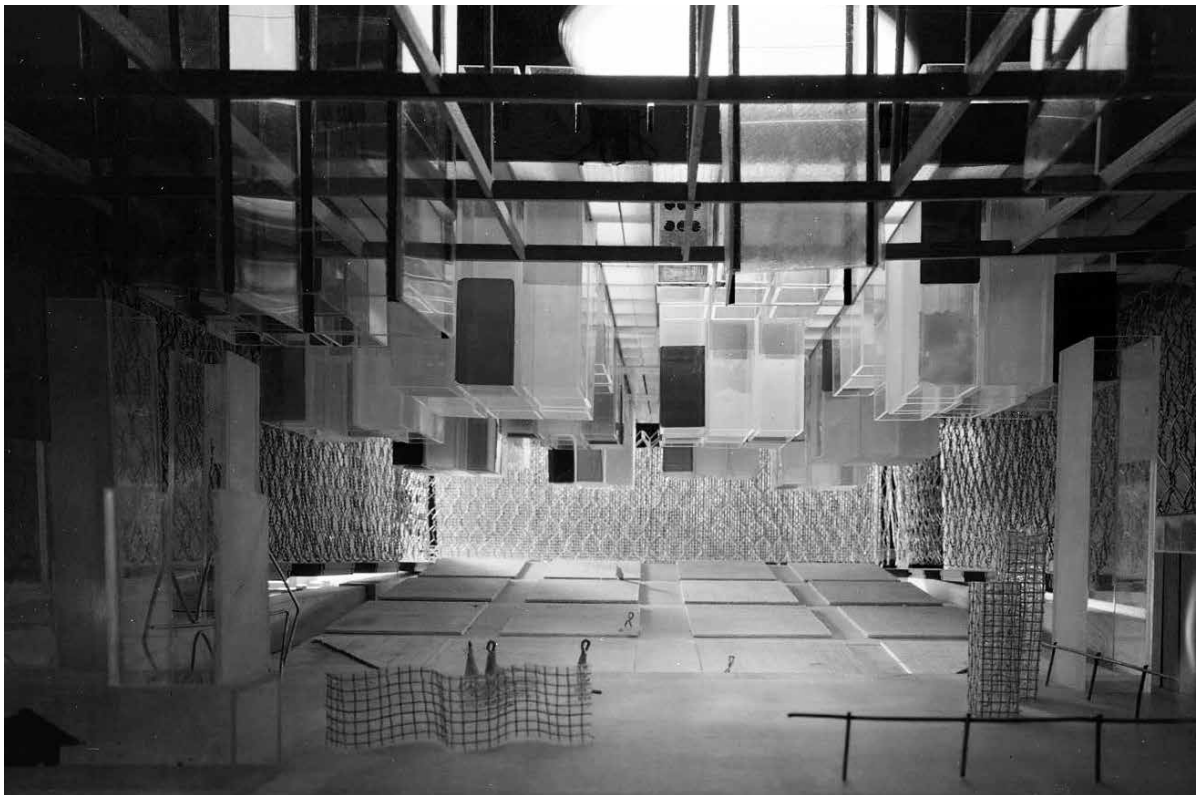
'bumper space' due to its adaptability.[12] The roof structure consists of a five-metre stereo system all around the edge in all directions right through the space. The gaps between the elements of this structure house the ceiling prisms when folded upwards, and the latticework of the roof stereo structure surrounds the building enclosure in a practically continuous envelope. Thus, it brings back the shock and surprise of the Baroque theatrical machine, now generated through the computer perforated card technology. Here we find an absolute architectural leitmotif, which the general space composition of the building alludes to: it was a huge cybernetic machine that produced light, colour, and sound effects, and dynamic rhythms of all kinds [18].

Sacripanti spoke of the famous story about modern theatre and its crisis, felt especially in the



18

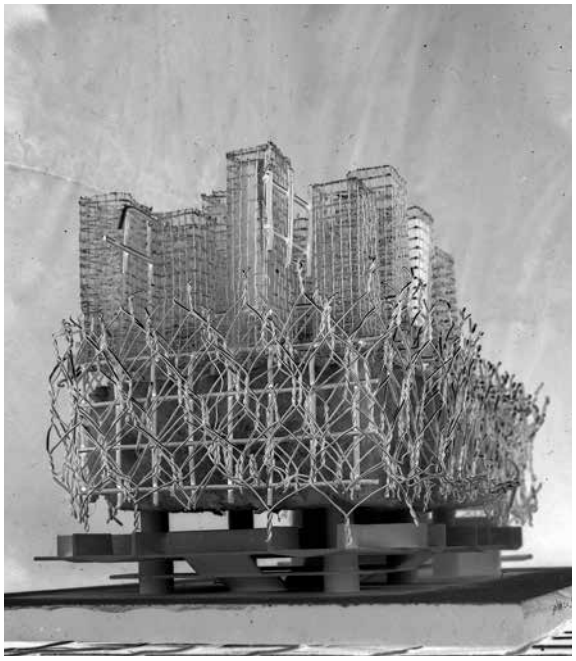
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135519000290 Published online by Cambridge University Press



19

1960s.[13] At that moment, historiographical research shed enough light to offer a complete systematic empiric critique of modern theatre, making it possible to propose parallel alternatives to the models studied by historians. Sacripanti's critical review emphasised statements that, by that time, were already recurrent. For example, he said that the humanist Renaissance theatre abandoned, culturally speaking, sacred choral spaces found in churches, in favour of a new relationship between stage and audience, one that was direct and univocal. Along these lines, he proposes his project as an attempt – one more in the avant-garde chain of machine-theatres – to overcome that 'crystallised opposition between space and stage'. His design tool is the expansion of the technical principles of the stage towards the stalls, and by extension (although in a completely unintentional way) to the audience, who would be similarly affected by the complex process of automation of the building *[19]*.

Sacripanti insists on synthesising the stage-auditorium relationship characteristic of the theatrical avant-garde, highlighting the breakdown that the Renaissance brought with it on two levels: the specifically architectural level, with the invention of the fourth wall implicit in the division between stage and audience; and the sociopolitical level, with the emergence of professional theatre artists and specialisation, a thing that, as we well know, deeply affected architecture practice equally after the cultural breakdown of the Renaissance. For Sacripanti, that cultural revolution didn't follow the logical path of development, parallel and united in both domains (stage and auditorium), because, according to his brief but eloquent partisan narration, while the stage was naturally



20

20 Maurizio Sacripanti, model for Cagliari Theatre. Final scheme.

incorporating all the repertoire of sociocultural technical innovations and languages, the stalls only experienced formal improvements in its physical configuration, maintaining and even specialising the audience role in the ritual. The whole evolution of theatre from the Renaissance would have increased the distance between the two spaces. From the eagerness for spatial synthesis, Sacripanti proposes the extension of the stage's own principles

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135519000290 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(mutability, temporality, and mobility), to the auditorium space, with the characteristic avant-garde manoeuvre of the overflowing active space (the stage), towards the passive space (the auditorium). So, he defines his building as an absolute 'staging', opening the space both to classic Italian-style productions and to central, multifocal, or dissolving scenes within the entire space. He even proposes to transform the space during the intermissions, in a complete spectacle of movement and dynamism, as we have just seen. It is a question of introducing, declares Sacripanti, a 'social and therefore typically modern functionality' with no limits in its profitability of use: everything can and must happen inside that huge social scenic machine during an undetermined and *a priori* infinite time *[20]*.[14]

Sacripanti's project means a radical extension of theatre technologies, so that the constitutive elements of the architecture of the whole building must be ready for every possible manoeuvre, which turns the whole building into a working and transformative object of the staging, regardless of who has the capability to implement the manoeuvre – something the project does not indicate and which is extremely problematic. The intervention of cybernetics in this project, thanks to the collaboration of the IT expert Giovanni Pellegrineschi, opens the door to an interpretation that would bring the project significantly closer to Cedric Price's 'Fun Palace', and not only similar in the more than evident terms of architectural language, but also ideologically, socially, and politically.[15]

Despite Sacripanti's declaration of intent – or maybe due to the ambivalence and even contradiction that exists between the possibility of a 'social functionality' and the space of uncertainty – Manieri-Elia qualified this project as pure theatre machine, saying:

> *architecture responds to the concept of* permanence *peculiar to the temple theatre, and becomes an available mechanism* [...] *And the audience is considered the purely absorbent part of that mechanism: immobile and astonished, the audience will be at the centre of the unexpected, surprising spectacle, beyond their control and with no possibility of defending themselves.*[16]

Less categorical in his assessment, Manfredo Tafuri interpreted the project in a more nuanced appreciation, with a clear intent to produce an Umberto Eco-style *opera aperta*, an author Sacripanti closely followed.[17] For Tafuri, the project used a principle he called 'figural organisation of the structure', that transmuted the informational spatial structures coming from the theory of information and cybernetics into an architectural feature. As a consequence of this, the building aimed for the: 'shape as a destruction of the traditional concept of place', so 'making necessary a new semantic organisation of the dialectic between the availability of the structure and concretion of physical-expressive limits programmed in the act of designing'.[18]

In the early sixties, Italy was one of the centres of debate around advances in linguistics and the systems theory, largely thanks to Umberto Eco. Sacripanti experimented in several projects with random structures of a certain scale and with the idea of what he called 'programmed events'. But it cannot be forgotten that in 1964 the Milan Triennial of Architecture was devoted to '*tempo libero*', the new ideology of mass leisure activities devised in governmental policies.[19] At that date and in the following years, Italian theatre culture flourished from two widely differing fronts that sparked debates: Milan's Piccolo Teatro and other public management experimental theatres (Canella's reformist cultural milieu), and Roma's underground theatre (Sacripanti's groundbreaking cultural milieu). In the first case, there was a problem of management, subject to competition laws or protectionist policies that made left-wing critics embodied in Tafuri speak of a 'democratic policy of free time'. For Roman independent theatre, from Carmelo Bene to Lucca Ronconi or Giuliano Vasilicò, it was a very different issue: that of the continuance of the international avant-gardes of Antonin Artaud, Jerzy Grotowsky, the Living Theatre, or the Bread and Puppet.

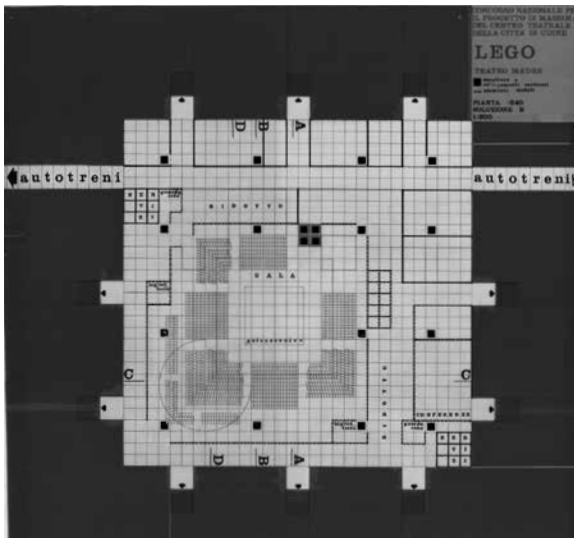
Tafuri polarised these two tendencies linking them with two historical traditions. The culmination of Francesco Milizia's project in the case of Milan – a moral pedagogical public theatre – and the dissolution of the urban avant-garde theatre in the case of Rome, housed in small premises, peripheral spaces, and on the streets or in temporary circuses, and mainly following the Surrealist, Dadaist, and Cubo-Futuristic historical avant-gardes.[20] As the ritual of theatre became polarised, so too did the audience, which was divided into areas of social interaction increasingly isolated from each other. On one hand, there was a reformist inclusive cultivated bourgeoisie tending to incorporate working classes into their particular tastes and consumption habits; on the other hand, a new urban social class defined by a blurred, flexible, and nomadic identity, which experienced a much more singularised form of cultural consumption, but which was progressively dissociating from traditional class consciousness.

Mobile theatre

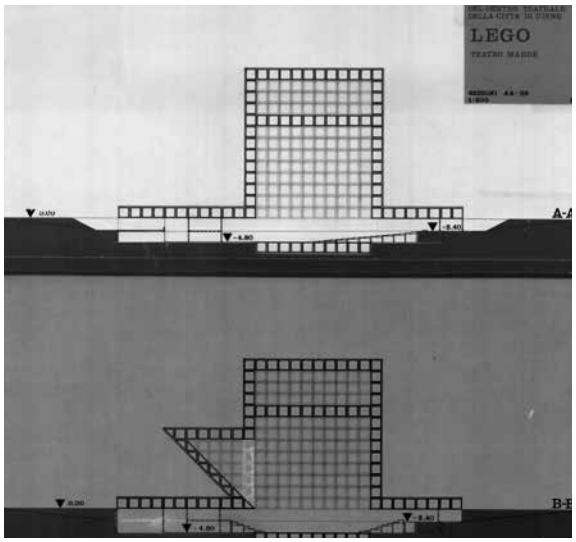
The solution to this dilemma – the third way – was, in the words of Manieri-Elia, mobile theatre as a hybrid between the temple and the machine. He provided an outstanding example in his account, that is the project submitted by Costantino (Nino) Dardi and Mario Ricci in 1974 for the competition for the new theatre of Udine, a project that was never published in any architectural journal, but shown and commented on in Vicenza's conference by Manieri-Elia in 1975 and, just one year later, in 1976, in an obscure text of Tafuri's about the history of Italian theatre architecture.[21]

Canella's concern about the dissolution of the theatrical space and its effect on architecture was fully shared by Manieri-Elia, who also advocated a 'theatre that disappears completely' maintaining an architectural physical support, well adapted to the fabric of the urban environment and, accordingly, to

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135519000290 Published online by Cambridge University Press

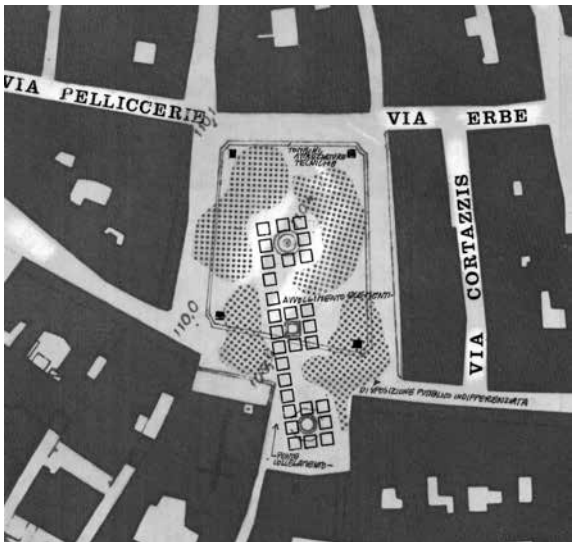


21



22

the social milieu. It is here where the Nino Dardi and Mario Ricci project fits perfectly, because it consists of a building called 'mother theatre' located on the land destined for the competition, but built as a mobile modular structure of 2.4-metre-long bars which can be assembled and dissembled in streets, squares, and parks transferring the modular elements by B-trains or '*autotreni*'. Dardi called the bar structure 'module of theatrical circulation' *[21]*. The assembly, transportation, relocation, and dismantling works were part of the theatrical ritual itself, done for each staging in full public view, and therefore the audience participated as spectators in the ritual assembly that would welcome them immediately after as the audience. The spectre of the ritual, the environment surrounding it and its relation to architecture, was clearly enriched by this design of mobile theatrical space.



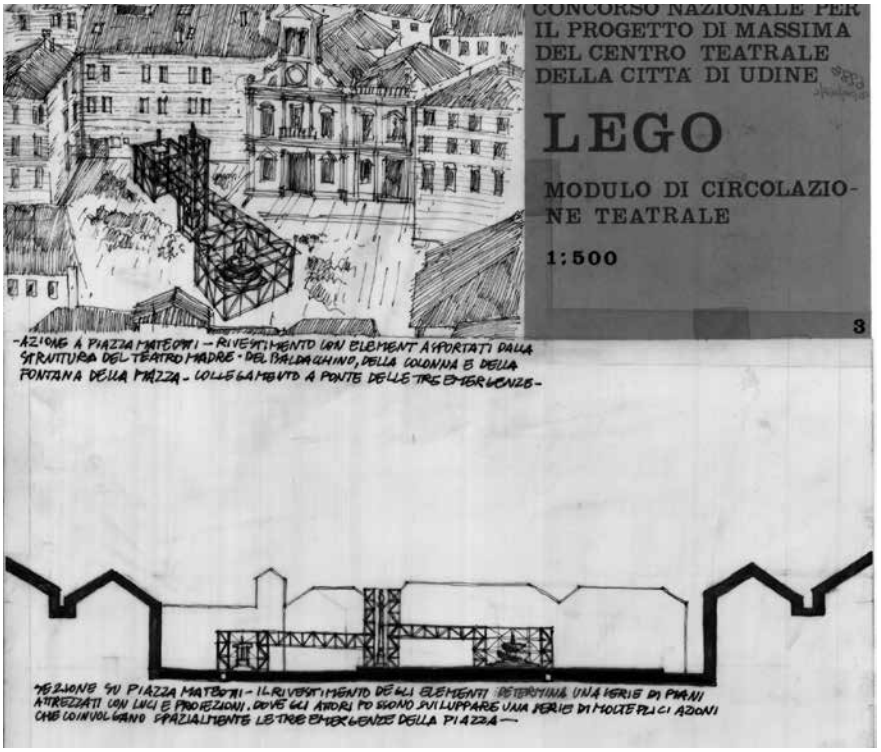
23

21 Nino Dardi and Mario Ricci, design for the new Udine Theatre, plan of Teatro Madre, height -2.40, solution B, scale 1/200.

22 Udine Theatre, sections of Teatro Madre, scale 1/200.

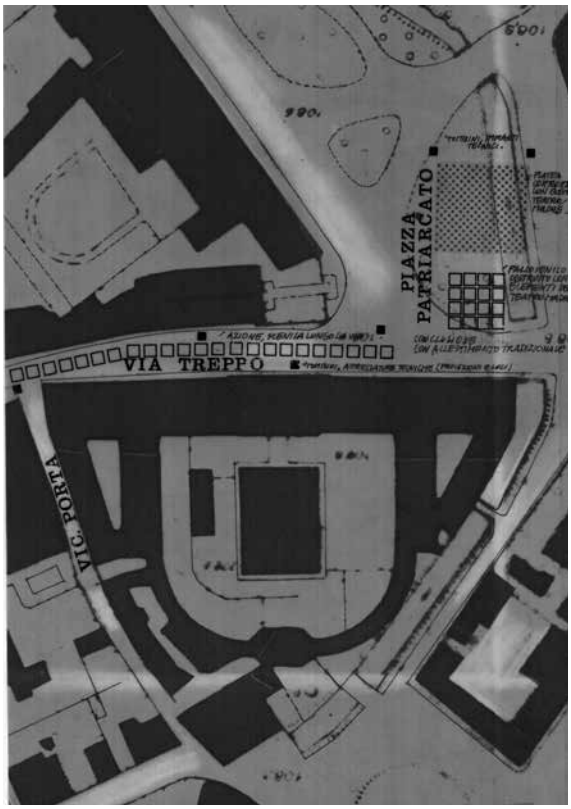
23 Udine Theatre, plan of Piazza Mateotti area, scale 1/500.

24 Udine Theatre, sketch for Piazza Mateotti.



24

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135519000290 Published online by Cambridge University Press



25



26

25 Udine Theatre, plan of Piazza Patriarcato area, scale 1/500.

26 Udine Theatre, sketch of Piazza Patriarcato.

With the motto 'Lego', the project of Nino Dardi and Mario Ricci proposed this 'mother theatre' made out of a 28.8-metre-long cubic structure (that is, twelve modules), with an overall height of 38.4 metres (that is, sixteen modules, three of which were placed below zero level providing the space for fixed graded stalls surrounding a square central stage). The entry and exit points for the modules were located on two of its sides and at level zero, with the '*autotreni*' invading the streets in procession while exiting the 'mother theatre' to take the shape of temporary stages. A perfect cube was the visible volume, with some immense, visually impressive wedge-shaped or hemi-sphere-shaped elements attached, adding an expressive air to an ideal platonic space, built from the 2.4-metre module *[22]*. Dardi was an architect fascinated by platonic shapes, modulation, and lineal structure, and he worked intensively on the reconciliation of the abstract atavistic form with the industry.[22]

However, beyond the building itself, it is the numerous ephemeral stages that truly turn this project into a singular design that carries out the transition from the theatre machine to the mobile theatre in a surprisingly natural manner and with a minimum deployment of technical resources. A very significant part of the space contained in the base of the building is dismantled and transported to open air spaces of the city, setting numerous scenes in the tradition of medieval *luoghi deputati*.

Some drawings submitted to the competition show various possibilities. For example, for the Piazza I Maggio, an Italian-style frontal conventional stage is proposed, taking up the southeast area of the landscaped Udine plaza. For the Piazza Mateotti they propose an elongated bridged structure made out of three interconnected centres, each one encircling a pre-existing object: a baldachin covering a well at one end, a tall free-standing column in the centre and a fountain at the other end, so there would be a simultaneous and/or alternate stage made up of three areas *[23, 24]*. Finally, for the Piazza Patriarcato they conceive (as in the Piazza I Maggio) an elevated traditional stage opened to the square, leaving the imposing façade of San Antonio's church on one side to seal off the urban space *[25, 26]*. In this setting a theatre action initiated with the transportation and lineal assembly all along the Via Treppo should reach its culmination, coming from the 'mother theatre', above and below which the stage action was taking place following the movement of the public until they took their seats in front of the main stage. These ways to occupy the city submitted for the competition showed the total flexibility and variability of the assembly process and of the kinds of scenes and the relationship between stage and audience, always motivated by the mobility of the public and of the elements of the buildings themselves. This project breaks down the theatre machine (a strictly technical architectural product that produces effects) in the urban space with stages that provoke, as Tafuri said: 'a labile relationship without any defined limits, between urban morphology and architectural features'.[23]

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135519000290 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Conclusion

In the triad of spatial and architectural archetypes we have just examined in detail, theatricality plays different roles, but in all of them architecture is the fundamental threshold needed for all of the rituals. In the bourgeois temple theatre, architecture assumes a cathartic role focused on the reaffirmation of a social fabric that is compact and well defined, and that architecture itself helps to build and extol; a lay social fabric (although secularised from a religious origin) that acquires cohesion and community identity through identification processes with the stage. These architectures perpetuate the rituals accepted by the majority and their main aim is to legitimise and give historical continuity to them. The theatre machine works in a similar way in that it legitimises and extols rituals, but introduces the shock in the ritual to renovate it, producing new social rituals that modify the subject substantially. A very significant part of the theatrical vanguard worked this way, ensuring profound renewal inside the theatre itself, introducing alterations in the roles of the theatrical ritual and challenging previous roles. With the reversal of roles, the ritual acquired new forms, but the theatrical mechanism remained more or less intact as a device that legitimated a determined moral pedagogical ideal.

Nevertheless, every story has an origin, and any temple theatre was – at some seminal point of sociopolitical upheaval – a theatre machine, renewing human behaviour, and this links them in an unbreakable relationship. The mobile theatre or caravan archetype that Nico Dardi brings into play, investigates, on the other hand, an even earlier, more remote origin in an attempt to escape from the tragic end to this story that we always knew. It is about that origin where the roles are still developing and are fully reversible, the *situation in progress* itself as a potential ritual, the exterior space to the theatre itself, the streets, and everyday life, producing tests that are less stable and less enduring, but more attentive to authentic behaviours, experiencing an endless number of transformations that other architectures are not able to capture with such precision and delicacy. The caravan, or mobile theatre, seems to suggest that the evolutionary sequence that ties up the theatre machine and the temple theatre cannot develop further in postmodern society. The avant-garde rupture of the theatre machine has been captured *inside* the walls of the building, thereby losing a significant percentage of critical power *in the city*. By reconquering the streets, the mobile theatre, which was a complete anachronism since it looked back to the foundational times, became a crucial concept during the 1960s, and a key metaphor to understand both those transitional times, and the current insistence on the performative power of architecture.

Notes

1. Guido Canella, *Il sistema teatrale a Milano* [*The Theatrical System in Milan*] (Bari: Dedalo Libri, 1966). There are significant texts throughout the whole book, but it is in the first chapter, 'Il teatro e i compiti della architettura [Theatre and the Tasks of Architecture]', where we can find the main ideas, pp. 7–17. There are also similar ideas in Guido Canella, 'Il nuovo teatro cerca la città [The New Theatre in Search for the City]', *I Problemi di Ulisse* [*Ulysses's Troubles*], XXII: 1 (1969), 9–19.
2. Guido Canella, 'Teatri e pseudoteatri [Theatres and Pseudotheatres]', *Zodiac*, 2 (1989), 70–93.
3. Le Corbusier, 'Le théâtre spontané [The Spontaneous Theatre]', in *Architecture et dramaturgie* [*Architecture and Dramaturgy*], ed. by André Villiers and André Barsacq (Bibliothèque d'Esthétique, Paris: Flammarion, 1950). The text achieved its maximum dissemination in the architectural circles with its abbreviated edition in the publication in different languages of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne CIAM VIII held in Hoddesdon in 1951, three years after the conference Le Corbusier gave in La Sorbonne. In 1955, the English edition, *The Heart of the City*, was published by Lund Humphries & Co. Ltd in London, and the Spanish edition, *El corazón de la ciudad*, published by Hoepli S. L. in Barcelona with editors Ernesto Nathan Rogers, Josep Lluis Sert, and Jacqueline Tyrwhitt.
4. The seminar, titled *L'Architettura teatrale dal Palladio ad oggi* ['Theatrical Architecture from Palladio Onwards]', hosted twenty-two international speakers, and all of them, except Manieri-Elia and Tafuri, focused on the history of theatre from the Renaissance to the end of the nineteenth century. The historians' disproportionate attention to different historical periods is remarkable and evident.
5. Mario Manieri-Elia, 'Il teatro moderno [Modern Theatre]', *Bollettinno del Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio*, XVII (Vicenza 1975), 379.
6. Ibid.
7. Manieri-Elia was referring to Yves Klein's famous piece 'Specialization of Sensibility in Raw Material State of Stabilized Pictorial Sensibility'. Klein presented his exhibition at Iris Clert Gallery in Paris on 28 April 1958. It is also more often known as *Le Vide* ['The Void'], since nothing was exhibited. Ibid., 380–1.
8. Piero Berengo Gardin, 'Teatro? [Theatre?]', *I Problemmi di Ulisse*, XXII: 10 (1969), 25–31. Berengo Gardin was described in the magazine credits as a publicist and defends a shock mass media theatre in line with Gropius and Piscator, confronting audio-visual mass media with a spherical building that derives from Artaud's theatrical space.
9. Manieri-Elia, 'Il teatro moderno', 380.
10. Ibid., 386.
11. Canella, *Il sistema teatrale a Milano*, pp. 125–36, where he analyses the actual state of the theatrical system in Milan in 1965.
12. Maurizio Sacripanti, 'Il total teatro di Maurizio Sacripanti [Maurizio Sacripanti's Totaltheatre]', *Domus*, 437 (April 1966), 1–11. This project was widely published in Italy and France. In Italy, apart from *Domus*'s long review, it appeared in Bruno Zevi, 'Un concorso concluso con sei voti contro cinque: Nasce in Sardegna il teatro

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135519000290 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in condominio [A Competition with Six Votes against Five: The Condominium Theatre is Born in Sardinia]' in the newspaper *l'Espresso*, 16 October 1965; and as 'Concorso nazionale per il teatro di Cagliari [National Competition for Cagliari Theatre]', in *L'Architettura: Cronache e Storia*, 123 (1966). In France it was published as 'Théâtre total [Totaltheatre]', in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 128 (1966). In Spain it was mentioned in the mythic number 28 of magazine *Nueva Forma* [*New Form*] (May 1968), where editor-in-chief Juan Daniel Fullaondo laid out his vision of the architecture of the time in his long ambitious text 'Agonía. Utopía. Renacimiento [Agony. Utopia. Renaissance]'.

13. Sacripanti, 'Il total teatro di Maurizio Sacripanti', 1.
14. Ibid., 1 et seq.
15. Cedric Price's collaboration with Gordon Pask, a cybernetics expert, was around the same time as that of Maurizio Sacripanti with Giovanni Pellegrineschi, between 1963 and 1965.
16. Manieri-Elia, 'Il teatro moderno', 384–5.
17. Sacripanti was also very close to Bruno Zevi, who published some writings of the Roman architect related to Umberto Eco's semiotics. See Maurizio Sacripanti, 'Città di frontiera [Frontier City]', *L'Architettra Cronache e Storia*, 187 (May 1971), 56–60; and 'Maurizio Sacripanti sulla linguística architettonica [Maurizio Sacripanti on Architectural Linguistics]', *L'Architettra Cronache e Storia*, 23 (December 1974), 531–3.
18. Manfredo Tafuri, 'Opera aperta e spazio polivalente [Open Work and Polyvalent Space]', *Grammatica-Teatro*, 2 (1966).
19. Manfredo Tafuri, 'Architettura italiana 1944–1981 [Italian Architecture 1944–1981]', in *Storia dell'Arte Italiana VII: Il Novecento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1982), p. 102.
20. Mafredo Tafuri, 'Il luogo teatrale dall'Umanesimo ad oggi [The Theatrical Place from the Humanism Onwards]', in *Teatri e Scenografie* [*Theatre and Scenography*] (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1976), pp. 38–9.
21. Together with Dardi and Ricci, they collaborated in the project of Udine Giovanni Morabito, Franz Prati, and Ariella Zattera. Mario Manieri-Elia also occasionally collaborated with Dardi in his studio. For Tafuri see note 19.
22. There is an exceptional monograph about Nino Dardi edited by Franceso Moschini, *Costantino Dardi: Semplice, lineare, complesso* [Constantino Dardi: *Simple, Lineal, Complex*] (Rome: Editrice Magma, 1976).
23. Tafuri, 'Il luogo teatrale dall'Umanesimo ad oggi'.

Illustration credits

arq gratefully acknowledges:
Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, Roma. Fondo Maurizio Sacripanti, 13–20
Archivio Progetti, IUAV, 21–6
Collezione Francesco Moschini e Gabriel Vaduva A.A.M. Architettura Arte Moderna, 4–7, 9–12
Fondation Le Corbusier, © F.L.C. / Vegap, Madrid, 2019, 3
Gallica/Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2
Piero Berengo Gardin, 8
Richard and Helen Leacroft, 1
Victoria and Albert Museum, 1

Author's biography

Fernando Quesada López is Associate Professor of Architecture at the School of Architecture, Universidad de Alcalá, Madrid. His research is focused on the history and theory of modern architecture and urban culture. His forthcoming book is *Mobile Theatre: Architectural Counterculture on Stage* (Actar Publishers, 2020).

Author's address

Fernando Quesada López
fernando.quesada@uah.es

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135519000290 Published online by Cambridge University Press