

L'architettura esterna dell'Anfiteatro

L'Anfiteatro Flavio era un imponente edificio pubblico per spettacoli, costruito per volontà degli imperatori Flavi (Vespasiano 69–79 d.C., Tito 79–81 d.C., Domiziano 81–96 d.C.) e inaugurato nell'80 d.C. La struttura, che poggia su una fondazione anulare profonda ca. 14 m, fu realizzata in blocchi di travertino (strutture portanti e parete dell'attico), blocchi di tufo (setti radiali e sotterranei) e mattoni.

Il prospetto esterno si conserva interamente solo sul lato settentrionale, verso il colle Oppio, dove il monumento raggiunge un'altezza di circa 50 m. Il lato meridionale, invece, danneggiato dai terremoti nei secoli V e VI d.C., fu smantellato a partire dal VI per recuperare i materiali: il suo ingombro è percepibile attraverso lastre di travertino moderne, inserite nella pavimentazione attuale della piazza a suggerire la presenza dei pilastri scomparsi e l'originario limite del monumento.

Quattro ordini architettonici sovrapposti scandivano l'esterno: i primi tre articolati in 80 arcate con semicolonne, a partire dal basso, tuscaniche, ioniche e corinzie; il quarto costituito da un muro in blocchi, suddiviso da lesene in riquadri alternativamente pieni e con finestre. Sono ancora ben visibili, nell'attico, le mensole a sostegno delle travi di legno inserite in aperture corrispondenti nella cornice sovrastante. Le travi erano funzionali all'ancoraggio di una struttura mobile in legno e tessuto detta *velum*, utile per riparare il pubblico dal sole.

L'edificio ha pianta ovale. Al I ordine sono 80 arcate di accesso, di cui 76 numerate, destinate agli spettatori e 4, poste alle estremità degli assi principali, riservate all'Imperatore, alle autorità politiche e religiose e ai protagonisti degli spettacoli.

L'Anfiteatro conteneva fra i 40.000 e i 70.000 spettatori muniti di una tessera sulla quale erano indicati il numero dell'ingresso e il posto assegnato sulle gradinate interne: 29 numeri sono ancora visibili, incisi sulle arcate del lato Nord. Gli spettacoli erano gratuiti, ma il pubblico prendeva posto secondo una rigorosa divisione basata sul ceto sociale. Per questo ogni spettatore accedeva al proprio settore attraverso percorsi obbligati.

the external architecture of the Amphitheatre

The Flavian Amphitheatre was an imposing public building for spectacles, built at the will of the Flavian emperors (Vespasian 69–79 AD, Titus 79–81 AD, Domitian 81–96 AD) and inaugurated in 80 AD. The structure, which rests on circular foundations about 14 m deep, was built in blocks of travertine (supporting structures and walls of the attic), blocks of tufa (radial and subterranean structures) and bricks.

The external façade is only preserved intact on the north side, towards the Oppian hill, where the monument reaches a height of c. 50 m. By contrast, the south side, damaged by earthquakes in the 5th and 6th centuries AD was dismantled from the 6th century onwards, in order to recoup its materials: its bulk is perceptible through the modern slabs of travertine, inserted into the modern-day paving of the square to suggest the presence of the lost pilasters and the original edge of the monument.

The exterior is distinguished by four orders of architecture, one on top of another; the first three divided into 80 arches with half-columns, Tuscan, Ionic and Corinthian in ascending order; the fourth was made up of wall of blocks, subdivided by pilasters on solid stretches alternating with windows. In the attic, the consoles used to support the wooden beams inserted into corresponding openings in the cornice above are still very visible. The beams served to fasten a movable structure of wood and fabric called the *velum*, useful for protecting the public from the sun.

The building has an oval plan. On the ground floor there are 80 entrance arches, of which 76 are numbered and intended for the spectators, and 4, situated at the ends of the main axes, were reserved for the emperor, the political and religious authorities and for the protagonists of the shows.

The Amphitheatre contained between 40,000 and 70,000 spectators, who had tickets indicating the number of the entrance and the place assigned on the inner steps inside: 29 numbers can still be seen, carved on the arches on the north side. Shows were free of charge, but the public took its places according to a rigorous division based on social rank. For this reason each spectator reached his own section along a fixed route.



Prospetto settentrionale dell'Anfiteatro: mensola di sostegno della struttura di copertura mobile della cavea (*velum*)

Northern view of the Amphitheatre: console supporting the movable structure for covering the cavea (*velum*)



Numerazione originale (LIII) su una arcata di accesso all'edificio

Original numbering (LIII) on one of the entrance arches of the building

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