From early festivals honoring Dionysus staged on a stamped earthen orchestra space surrounded with improvised wooden bleachers, the Greek theatre evolved into one of the most significant architectural forms and civic works in the ancient Greek city. Often crafted into a sloping site to form a natural auditorium or theatron (“viewing place”) which allowed the audience to connect with the surrounding landscape, the theatre provided a true “stage” for numerous public engagements: Dramatic performances, festivals and spectacles, political and public assemblies, and more. No Greek city could be considered a true city without a theatre.

The Architecture of the Ancient Greek Theatre publishes twenty-six research papers presented at a two day international conference held in January 2012, which focused specifically on the architecture of the Greek theatre. The intent of the conference, and the resulting papers published here, was to present new material and researches about the history of Greek theatre architecture, particularly “. . . its form and function, from the earliest theatrical arrangements through the Classical period and the architectural development in Hellenistic times.” It also includes the impact of Roman theatre traditions and interventions on Greek works during the Imperial period. The papers included in the volume are specifically focused on the architecture of the Greek theatre and its evolution, and “. . . less on its role within the community or the production of plays.”

The scholarship presented is rigorous, extensive and deep, ranging from overviews of Greek theatre architecture of various periods, to examination of the development and evolution of specific spatial and building elements of the theatre (e.g., cavea, ikria, koilon, orchestra, parados, proskenion, and skene), to building and construction methods and processes, and to detailed inspection of specific theatres throughout the Greek world. A number of the theatres under discussion have been recently excavated or undergone a more current re-examination. The editors “Introduction” outlines the content of the papers while weaving together the current issues and directions in Greek theatre architecture research. In addition, several essays propose relevant directions and topics for future research.

First Excavation.”


Each of the essays is soundly written, well-illustrated, thoroughly documented, and includes a bibliography referencing all works cited in the piece. The volume concludes with an impressive “Thematic Bibliography” that reshuffles all the referenced works into themes that include general and regional studies, specific places and sites, architectural topics and
building elements, and specific theatre complexes.

Without question, *The Architecture of the Ancient Greek Theatre* is an essential, significant and substantial work updating the scholarship and investigations that have recently occurred in the field. As a volume its assists in our understanding the current state of scholarship and excavation, while informing and clarifying our knowledge of the development and evolution of Greek theatre architecture. While illuminating issues concerning a number of Greek theatres, yet, as a number of essays allude to, there is still more work to be done.

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