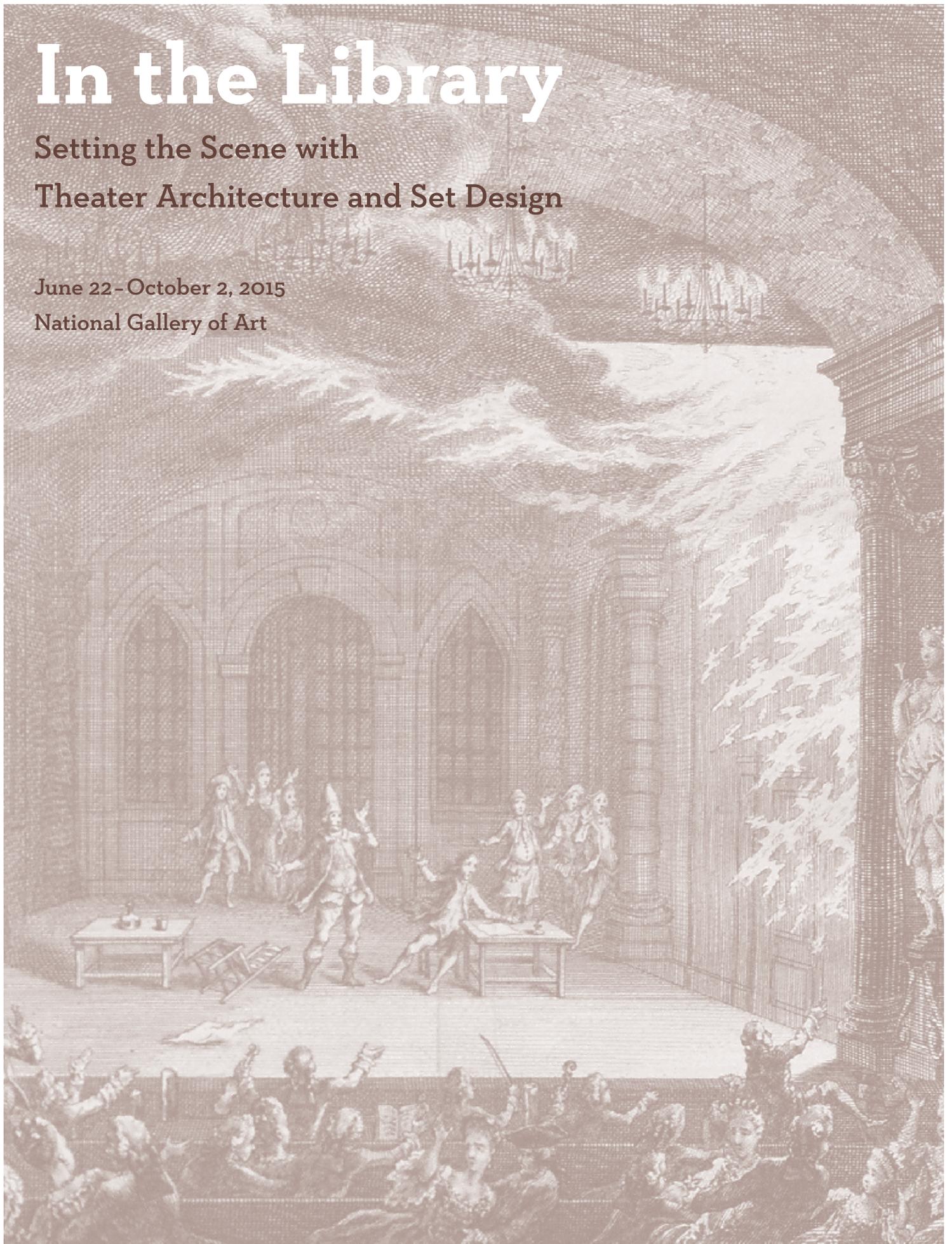


# In the Library

Setting the Scene with  
Theater Architecture and Set Design

June 22–October 2, 2015

National Gallery of Art



# In the Library

## Setting the Scene with Theater Architecture and Set Design

### Studying the Ancients

Beginning in the Renaissance, individuals in the performing arts — as in many fields — looked to ancient Greece and Rome as starting points for modern designs. Guidebooks and city histories, such as Saraina's book on Verona with its lengthy analysis of the city's Roman amphitheater, would have been important early sources. Eventually, new studies were published that focused on analyzing the theaters of antiquity and synthesizing them with the modern needs of the stage, as in the works by Arnaldi and Beccega.

**1** Torello Saraina, *De origine et amplitudine ciuitatis Veronae* (Verona, 1540), Grega and Leo A. Daly III Fund for Architectural Books

**2** Enea Arnaldi, 1716–1794, *Idea di un teatro nelle principali sue parti simile a' teatri antichi all' uso moderno accomodato* (Vicenza, 1762), A.W. Mellon Foundation New Century Fund

**3** Tommaso Carlo Beccega, *Sull' architettura Greco-Romana applicata alla costruzione del teatro moderno Italiano e sulle macchine teatrali* (Venice, 1817), David K. E. Bruce Fund



### Festival Books

Most new plays, operas, ballets, and other performances were funded through commissions; often, these were made for occasions such as weddings, birthdays, and state visits. Also called fete books, the volumes published for these events often became the record of new works. Examples here include Salvadori's *La Flora* — an opera with ballet composed for the marriage of Duke Odoardo Farnese and Margherita de' Medici, recorded as libretto with illustrations of the stage sets in the Uffizi Theater — and Metastasio's *Clemenza di Tito*, staged as part of the birthday celebration for King José I. An account of the two-week celebration in Naples for the birth of

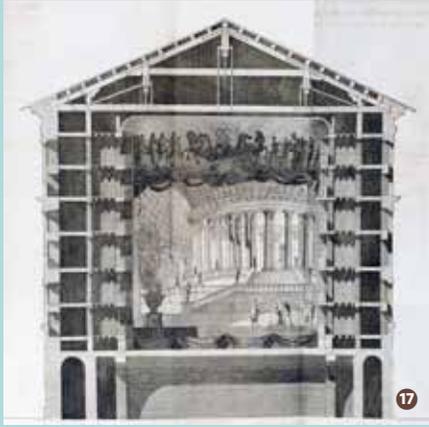
Prince Philip of Sicily (**cat. 7**) includes work by Vincenzo Re, who was the stage designer at the Teatro San Carlo, temporarily transformed to host concerts, banquets, balls, and a fireworks display.

**4** Andrea Salvadori, 1591–1634, *La Flora, o vero, Il natal de' fiori* (Florence, 1628), David K. E. Bruce Fund

**5** Pietro Metastasio, 1698–1782, *Clemenza di Tito* (Lisbon, 1755), David K. E. Bruce Fund

**6** Pietro Ottoboni, 1667–1740, *Carlo Magno* (Rome, 1729), J. Paul Getty Fund in honor of Franklin Murphy

**7** *Narrazione delle solenni reali feste* (Naples, 1749), David K. E. Bruce Fund

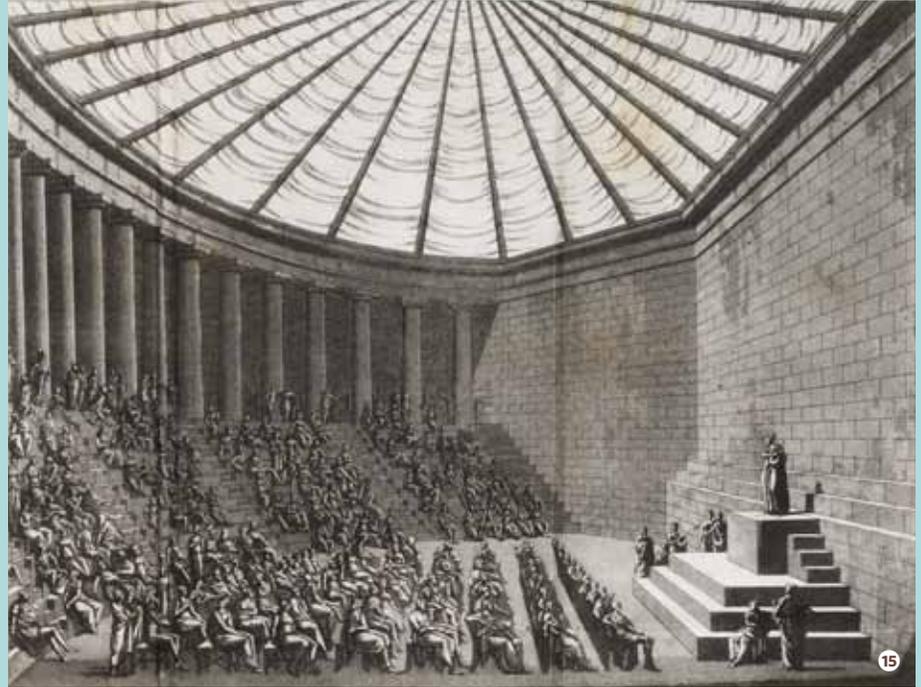


## Borrowing from Other Arts

Beyond books devoted exclusively to theater, works from other fields could be applied to the stage as well. Troili's book on perspective includes a chapter on theater design and the creation of realistic illusions in scenery and stage dressing. Architectural model books may also include theaters, among other designs—such as Furttenschach's work, which also describes several innovations in scene-changing that he incorporated into his design of the theater in Ulm (built the same year this book was published). Although theater was never an official part of the Bauhaus curriculum, the discipline merited its own dedicated volume of the *Bauhaus-bücher* series (**cat. 11**), as innovations in modern theater drew freely from other practices at the school.

**8** Joseph Furttenschach, 1591–1667, *Architectura recreationis* (Augsburg, 1640), David K. E. Bruce Fund

**9** Giulio Troili, 1613–1685, *Paradossi per praticare la prospettiva senza saperla, fiori, per facilitare l'intelligenza, frutti, per non operare alla cieca* (Bologna, 1683), David K. E. Bruce Fund



**10** Antonio Lovatti, *Progetto di un teatro municipal* (Rome, c. 1853), Grega and Leo A. Daly III Fund for Architectural Books

**11** Oskar Schlemmer, 1888–1943; Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, 1895–1946; and Farkas Molnár, 1897–1945, *Bühne im Bauhaus* (Munich, 1924), David K. E. Bruce Fund

## Surveying the Field

Some books provide a practical comparison of the features of many different theaters. Morelli's amateur prospectus for a small theater in Imola, shown in both its published version (**cat. 12**) and an elaborate, extra-illustrated reworking with ten original drawings (**cat. 13**), includes the plans of several existing Italian theaters that he used as models for aspects of his own design. Patte's treatise describes important theaters throughout Europe and analyzes prominent works on theater architecture, as well as suggesting several new innovations (especially in the realms of lighting and acoustics).

**12** Cosimo Morelli, 1732–1812, *Pianta e spaccato del nuova teatro d'Imola* (Rome, 1780), J. Paul Getty Fund in honor of Franklin Murphy

**13** Cosimo Morelli, 1732–1812, *Dissegno della rinovazione di tutti li pubblici teatri di Roma: che illustrano il libro del teatro d'Imola particolarmente* (1781), J. Paul Getty Fund in honor of Franklin Murphy

**14** Pierre Patte, 1723–1814, *Essai sur l'architecture théâtrale, ou, De l'ordonnance la plus avantageuse à une salle de spectacles, relativement aux principes de l'optique & de l'acoustique* (Paris, 1782), A.W. Mellon Foundation New Century Fund

**15** Giulio Ferrario, 1767–1847, *Storia e descrizione de' principali teatri antichi e moderni* (Milan, 1820), David K. E. Bruce Fund

**16** Edward Wedlake Brayley, 1773–1854, *Historical and descriptive accounts of the theatres of London* (London, 1826), David K. E. Bruce Fund



## Specific Works

Most books about theater design focus on a particular building. Some, like those of Giorgi and Fokke, are concerned with the history of an important theater and were often published after a tragedy, such as a fire, which made renovation or rebuilding necessary and created interest in the subject. New venues would appear in print, as well — either as a prospectus, like the work by Ramis shown here — or, similar to the works by Piermarini and Wyatt, books published to commemorate the completion of the construction.

**17** Felice Giorgi, *Descrizione istorica del Teatro di Tor di Nona* (Rome, 1795), David K. E. Bruce Fund

**18** Jan Fokke, 1745–1812, *Historie van den Amsterdamschen Schouwburg* (Amsterdam, 1772), David K. E. Bruce Fund

**19** Reinier Vinkeles, 1741–1816, and Hermanus Vinkeles, b. 1745, *Afbeeldingen van den Schouwburg te Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, 1774), David K. E. Bruce Fund

**20** Giovanni Ramis, *Disegni del nuovo teatro de quattro cavalieri* (possibly Pavia, 1773), J. Paul Getty Fund in honor of Franklin Murphy

**21** *Beschreibung des Hochfürstlichen Schlosses Esterháss im Königreiche Ungern* (Pressburg, 1784), A.W. Mellon Foundation New Century Fund

**22** Giuseppe Piermarini, 1734–1808, *Teatro della Scala in Milano* (Milan, 1789), Grega and Leo A. Daly III Fund for Architectural Books

**23** Benjamin Dean Wyatt, 1775–1855, *Observations on the design for the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, as executed in the year 1812* (London, 1813), Grega and Leo A. Daly III Fund for Architectural Books

**24** *Monographie du nouveau Théâtre du vaudeville érigé par la ville de Paris, sous la direction de M. A. Magne* (Paris, 1873), Grega and Leo A. Daly III Fund for Architectural Books

Checklist of the exhibition *Setting the Scene with Theater Architecture and Set Design*, June 22–October 2, 2015. All works listed belong to the National Gallery of Art Library.

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