

The Theater at Pompeii

1. How often were plays put on at Pompeii?

Several times a year, only during festivals when stores and businesses and the forum were closed for the day.

2. How many theaters were there in Pompeii?

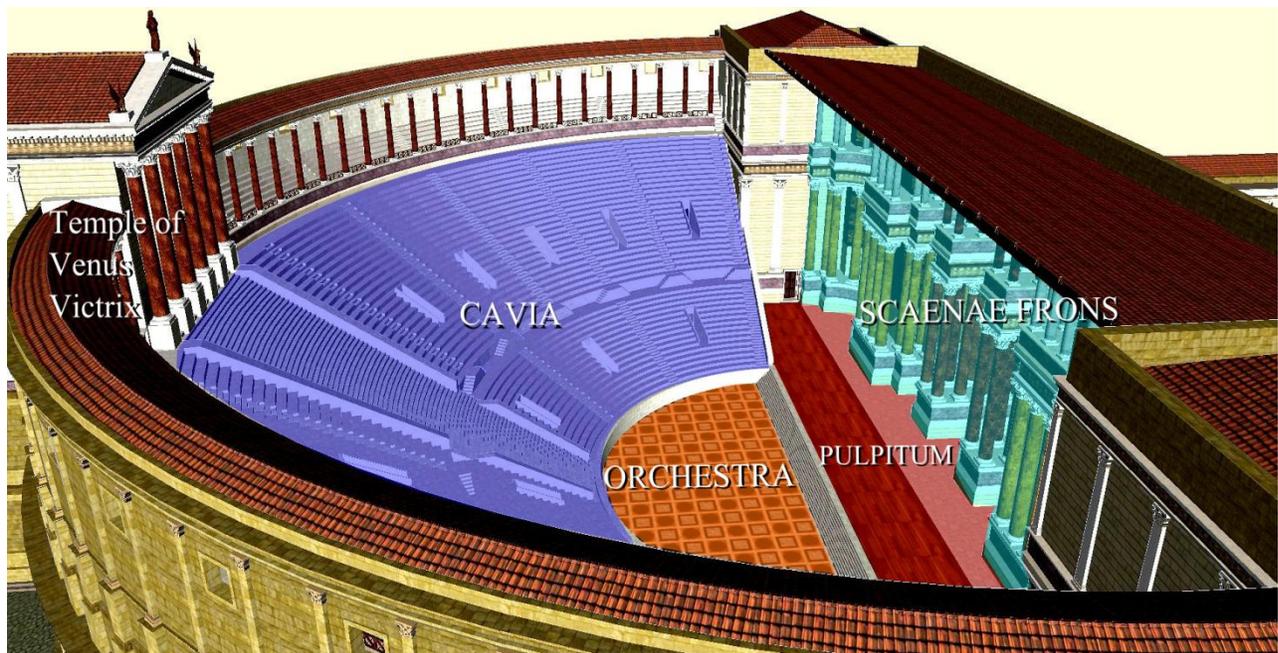
Two. A large open air theater which could hold 5,000 people and a smaller roofed theater called the "Odeon".

3. What determined the seating at the theater?

It was first come first serve seating, except for very important citizens who had tickets for reserved seating down in front and entered through a special gate.

4. What was the "cavea"?

A sloping semicircular seating area which rose in tiers and constituted the general seating for common citizens



5. What was the "orchestra"?

A horse-shoe shaped seating area in front for important citizens.

6. What was the "scaena"?

The stage.

7. What was the "scaenae frons" ?

A building behind the stage as high as the auditorium which had three to five doorways and was decorated with columns and niches.



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8. What did it cost to attend a play?

It was free to everyone and considered a religious event. It was paid for by wealthy citizens who hoped to win public favor, popularity and support in local elections.

9. How long did the performance last?

All day long.



10. How were citizens get cool during the heat of the day?

An awning could be put up by trained sailors on hot days as long as it was not too windy. Scented mist was sprayed on the audience to keep them cool.

11. What was a "pantomime"?

A serious play based on Greek myth put on by one actor playing many parts by wearing different masks. The actor incorporated dancing set to music played by an orchestra and lyrics were sung by a chorus. Pantomimes were very popular.

12. What were comic plays like?

They were short one-act plays similar to farce or slapstick put on by actors wearing very recognizable masks portraying a very few stock characters. They were usually vulgar containing rude jokes about Italian country life. Popular characters were "Pappus", an old fool, or "Manducus", greedy clown. These plays were often put on between the longer more serious plays.

13. What other types of plays might be put on?

Plays by the famous playwrights Terence and Plautus which were longer, more complicated and more witty than the farces.

14. What were some of the common elements in one of Plautus' plays?

A young man in debt, leading a wild life and in love with a pretty slave girl who is unattainable and a cunning slave who helps him trick his father so he can get the girl.



*****This is not all you need to know. Re-read the reading.*****