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 Mantova città d'arte e di cultura

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## Comune di Mantova

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## BIBIENA SCIENTIFIC THEATRE

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### Opening hours:

From 15 March to 15 November  
Tuesday to Friday 10.00 - 13.00 / 15.00 - 18.00  
Saturday, Sunday and public holidays 10.00 - 18.00

From 16 November to 14 March

Tuesday to Sunday 10.00 - 13.00 / 15.00 - 18.00

### Closed:

Monday, 25 December, 1 January

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# BIBIENA SCIENTIFIC THEATRE



MANTOVA CITTÀ D'ARTE E DI CULTURA

Built between 1767 and 1769, the theatre was designed by, Antonio Galli Bibiena, a great architect from Parma, having been commissioned by the rector of the Accademia dei Timidi, Count Carlo Ottavio di Colloredo. Its purpose was mainly to host scientific meetings, but also recitals and concerts. Part of the larger complex of the Palazzo Accademico, the theatre has a bell-shaped plan and is furnished with several tiers of wooden box seats, based on a style invented in the 17th century and dominant at the time.

Bibiena not only designed the theatre, but directed its construction and even painted the interiors of the numerous box seats with monochrome frescoes, demonstrating his skill as a painter as well as an architect, and creating another precious testimony of his artistic activity. The fixed stage is formed by a gallery with two tiers of serliana orders (structures composed of an arch supported by two pairs of columns), while the ceiling is painted with trompe-l'œil fretwork and balustrades. The niches contain life-size statues of four famous Mantuan intellectuals: The poet Virgil, the philosopher Pietro Pomponazzi, Baldassarre Castiglioni, author of the 'The Book of the Courtier', and Gabriele Bertazzolo, the engineer, architect and cartographer.

The classical façade was designed by Giuseppe Piermarini, after whom the adjoining hall on the first floor is named. As well as housing the theatre, the building is also home to the Accademia Nazionale Virgiliana di Scienze Lettere e Arti, the oldest and most prestigious cultural institution in the city.

The Teatro Scientifico was ready for its inauguration on December 3, 1769: an exquisite



architectural jewel, with its balance between movement and elegance, it was one of the most important contributions to European architecture of the late 18th century.

Just over a month later on 16 January 1770, the 14-year-old Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, in Mantua on his first Italian tour, gave a memorable concert there with his father Leopold.

In a letter to his wife dated 26 January 1770, Leopold Mozart described the theatre and his son's concert as follows:

'...I wish you had seen the place where the recital was held: to be precise, the so-called Theatrino della Accademia Philharmonica. It is the most beautiful of its kind that I have ever seen, and since I hope you will carefully keep all these letters, I will describe it to you in due course. It

is not a theatre, but a hall with rows of box seats, built like an opera house. Where the stage should be, there is a raised platform for the music, behind which is a gallery of box seats for the audience.

*"...Bibiena's last great masterpiece, the Teatro Scientifico: the most beautiful conference venue in the world"*

*Philippe Daverio*