



### *The Historic Asolo Theater Fact Sheet*

- The Historic Asolo Theater was originally designed and built by architect Antonio Locatelli in 1798 as the first public theater in the Castle of Caterina Cornaro in the Italian town of Asolo near Venice.
- The theater was dedicated in honor of Queen Caterina Cornaro, the Venetian-born widow of the King of Cyprus. She had ruled over Asolo from 1489 until her death in 1510.
- The theater remained in its original setting until 1930, when it was dismantled and carefully removed from the castle. In its place, a movie theater was constructed and became the *Eleanor Duse Theater* named after the famous Italian actress who adopted Asolo and the theater. All of the ornamental panels and decorative elements of the antique theater became the property of Adolph Loewi (the German consul in Venice at the time), who ran a business as an art dealer. He kept the theater in storage in Venice for almost two decades).
- The first Director for the Ringling, A. Everett “Chick” Austin, Jr. purchased all of the decorative elements of the late 18th-century theater from Asolo Italy in 1950 when it was believed that it would be added in a new wing of the Museum.
- Plans were finally made in 1954 for a separate building to be constructed off the west end of the north wing. This building was constructed and the theater installed during 1955-1956 and completed in 1957.
- It was dedicated and formally opened on January 19, 1958 with Mozart’s *Abduction from the Seraglio*. The Historic Asolo Theater was thus installed in its entirety in the new freestanding building.
- The U-shaped Theater, with three tiers of boxes adorned by decorative panels, reveals an architectural plan and scale of construction common in eighteenth-century court theaters. It was a functioning, historic “period room” that was used by the Ringling Museum for plays, operas, concerts, lectures, films and other cultural programming and meetings.
- As a result of the Theater’s immense popularity in Sarasota it could not easily be closed for lengthy restoration. As a result of over use, long term deterioration was inevitable. It was finally closed to the public in the late 1990s and remained unused until complete restoration began in 2004.

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- A collaborative team of professionals including conservators, architects, curators, construction experts and senior leaders met the challenge of revitalizing the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Theater beginning in 2004.



- The Theater was reinstallation into the 21<sup>st</sup>-century John M. McKay Visitors Pavilion and reopened in 2006.
- The Historic Asolo Theater offers a diverse roster of performances and programs including theater, dance, opera, film, lecture and music.
- There are daily performances and tickets are available by calling the Historic Asolo Theater Box Office at 941.360.7399 or online at [www.ringling.org](http://www.ringling.org).

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