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Chapí Theatre

VILLENA



Chapí Theatre, its history

The success that the Villena-born composer **Ruperto Chapí (1851-1909) reaped nationwide** and the love of zarzuela in Villena, in addition to its already known love of theatre, resulted in the private initiative starting the construction, from 1882, of a theatre worthy of master Chapí which was named **'Teatro Circo Chapí' [Chapí Circus Theatre]**.

The project approved and supported by the Town Council was completed on June 20th, 1885, being inaugurated with the zarzuela **'The Tempest' under the direction of the composer himself**. Despite developing an ambitious programme throughout its 23 years of operation, the insufficient safety measures in the building eventually forced its demolition on July 14th, 1908.

The present-day Chapí Theatre

Thanks to the initiative of the Chapí Theatre Building Board —created in 1914— and after several years of works and with great difficulties, the notes of 'The Tempest' started sounding again in Villena on Saturday, December 5th, 1925, at 9pm.

This event meant the fulfilment of their efforts and hopes for a large number of theatre-loving Villena residents who, ever since the demolition of the Circus Theatre, had longed for Villena to have a great theatre named after Ruperto Chapí, its most distinguished son.

The Chapí Theatre is characterized by the diversity of architectural styles that the visitor can identify in it. Thus, the two side façades and the stage house area still keep the essence of the original project, authored by the Valencian architect **José María Manuel Cortina**, a representative of historicist Modernism. An architecture deeply influenced by neo-Arab and medieval features, horseshoe arches, **Nasrid columns and an unmistakable orientalist hallmark**.

In June 1916, the lack of funds and the excessive ambition of the project undertaken led Cortina to abandon the building works, which were resumed by the Valencian firm of architects **Garín Hermanos in 1922**. The current façade, built between 1922 and 1923, reflects the gradual change from architectural modernism towards the return to the classicist language, visible through its sober decoration. Once the works had finished, the Chapí Theatre became the town's cultural and festive activity centre with a total capacity of 1,454 seats.

After several decades under private business management during which the Chapí Theatre hosted artistic performances of all kinds, even cinema showings, it came back to the public domain —the Villena Town Council taking charge of its renovation through private firms— and opened its doors to the public again on April 24th, 1999.

To date, the Chapí Theatre hosts a wide variety of theatrical shows, musicals, ballet, opera, zarzuela, etc. during its two annual seasons.

Chapí Theatre, its interior.

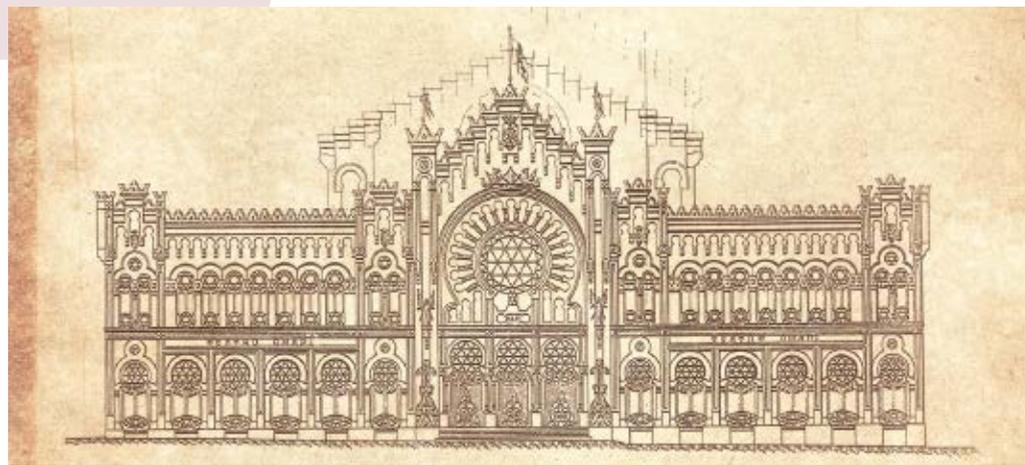
The Theatre also stands out for the architectural beauty of its interior, both in the foyers and in the actual hall. Looking at its interior allows us to check that its original structure has been preserved. Its last renovation actually served to highlight the ornamental wealth of the whole decoration, both in the boxes and in the stalls, central rose window, curtain, entrance, etc. that it had in its early times.

The Theatre currently seats 864 people, distributed between the ground floor, the first floor and the amphitheatre. It also has a café, a large orchestra pit, dressing rooms and rehearsal rooms.

The Chapí Theatre is regarded as one of the most outstanding theatres in the Valencian Autonomous Region, and even at a national level, because of its stage- and capacity-related characteristics which allow it to host first-rate shows. The Chapí Theatre belongs to the Spanish Network of State-Owned Theatres, Auditoriums and Festivals.



Circus Theatre (1885-1908)



José María Manuel Cortina's Project, 1914



Current Chapí Theatre's main façade, by Garín Brothers Architects, 1925



Present view of the theatre's auditorium