

## Theatrical Architecture in Bologna at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century: The Renaissance of Modernissimo Cinema

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**Abstract :** The paper describes the history and the stylistic choices adopted in the construction of Palazzo Ronzani in Bologna, which was the first building to rise after the heavy demolitions carried out in the historical center of the city at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1910, the local administration adopted a detailed plan to change the aspect of the city, as it was already happening in the main European capitals. In this context, starting from 1911, the architect and scenographer Gualtiero Pontoni designed for Alessandro Ronzani -the owner of a well-known Bolognese beer company- his Palazzo, which is listed among the first multifunctional buildings in Bologna, containing offices, commercial activities, and entertainment spaces. In an area of about 2000 m<sup>2</sup>, the architect was able to propose a theatre with a capacity of 2000 seats at the basement, shops, a café-chantant and a restaurant on the ground floor, clubs, studios and commercial stores on the mezzanine and the first plan, and a hotel on the upper floors. The whole core of the building, at the underground levels, consisted of a reinforced concrete frame (one of the first examples of this type of construction in the city), which allowed the hall to have a free span of 11 x 12 meters, and a height of about 9 meters. Used until 2007 as a cinema, the hall has remained then in disuse for almost 10 years, but now an important functional restoration project with a strong architectural and scenographic value is taking place. It will bring the spaces back to the original geometries, in a historical and artistic condition inspired by the styles of the early Twentieth century.

**Keywords :** Modernissimo, Palazzo Ronzani, liberty, Bologna

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