

— and now back to a series of eight ‘Maria Theresa’ chandeliers. The only difference from the originals being that they can all be drawn up above the sightline as the house dims for the start of the performance. The mid-eighteenth-century audience expected them to remain alight and impair the sightline throughout the performance. That the modern lighting is much brighter than the original seems to matter less in this theatre than in other historic theatres: there is so much well executed relief detail in Cuvilliés’ theatre that one almost feels that he was looking forward to a time when it would be seen in a fuller light.

For this is not an auditorium using painting techniques developed for low levels of trembling ambient light. All the decorations are three dimensional relief work, including the drapes whose folds are hard construction. The background painting is off-white marbling shot with brown so that the overwhelming impression is of gold-brown with red from the carved ‘drapes’ and the purplish red lining to the boxes.

The auditorium is a horseshoe with four tiers of boxes, the royal box occupying two storeys in the middle of the entrance wall facing the stage. Boxes on the first tier are decorated on themes from the four seasons, while those on the second tier are based on the four continents and mythological concepts of day, night, earth, air, fire and water.

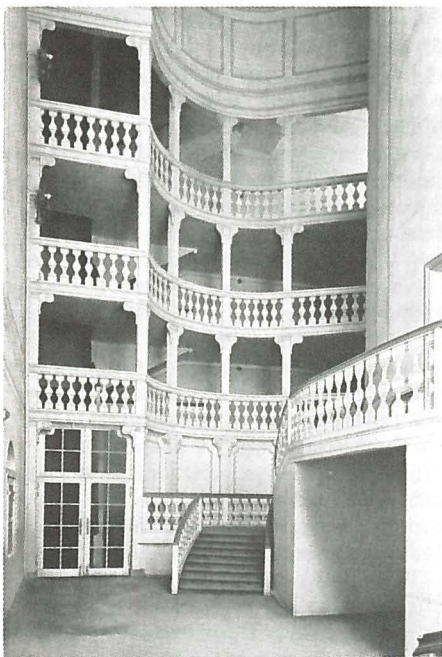
In 1943 the panelling from the boxes and all other wooden parts of the theatre were removed from Munich for safety. Only those parts of the theatre which were made of artificial marble or stone remained. Early in 1944 the auditorium was provided with makeshift fittings so that performances could continue. But this provisional theatre lasted only six weeks before a bomb exploded on the stage, hurling the safety curtain against the royal box by the force of the explosion. An hour later the destruction



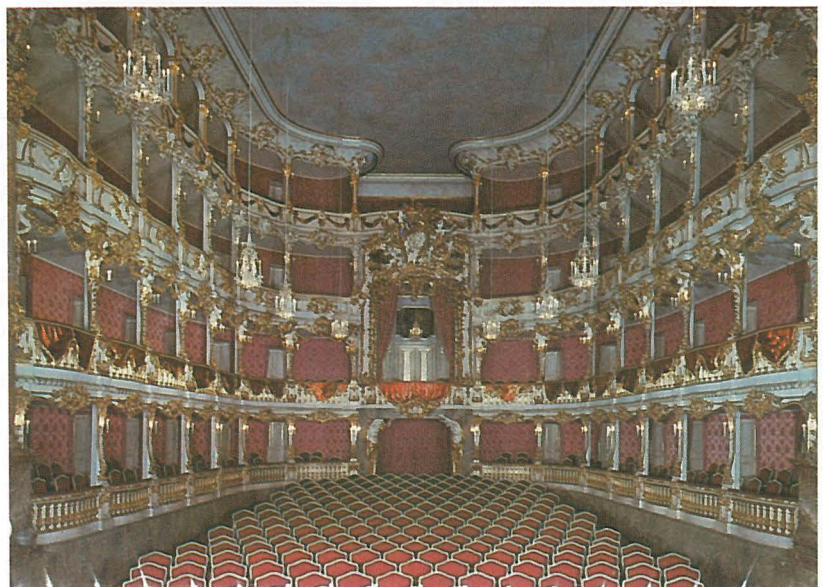
Bibiena's *Markgrafliches Opernhaus* in Bayreuth



Looking from the stage of Bibiena's Bayreuth Opera House towards the Margrave's central box.



Two dimensional unadorned balustrading in the foyer at Bayreuth. The simple foyers of baroque theatres emphasised the theatricality of the auditorium decorations.



The auditorium of Munich's *Cuvilliés Theater* with the Elector's Box centre.