

Sam Harrington

Space 1: Martha Wren Briggs Amphitheatre

Space 2: Sunken Garden

What type of theater architecture is present? The Amphitheater is an open-air arena stage, where the audience is close with the actors and open backdrop gives a sense of intimacy. Whereas the Sunken Garden would be a more experimental theater as Lauri Wolf would categorize it. When visiting there are no chairs obvious place for a stage, so I imagine a performance happening almost spontaneously where people would gather around the performance.

2. What is the relationship between the audience and the performance area? Does the shape of the space create a sense of distance or connection? For the Sunken Garden the intimacy is high, there is no infrastructure for projecting over a long distance so the audience must be close, and without set seats they will gravitate closer; the lack of shape creates this intimacy. This is the more extreme version of the Amphitheater. While the audience does feel intimate with performance, being surrounded by the woods and Lake Matoaka, the stacked seats is lacking in intimacy especially the people in the back rows. But I will have to say it was very peaceful and calming sitting in that space.

3. What is the approximate number of seats present- how large of a crowd could attend? For the amphitheater I guessed approximately 200 people, which was apparently way off when I checked the William and Mary website it said, "There are 575 fixed seats with 1,100 festival style seating capacity." This is opposed to Sunken, where the lack of levels limits the amount of people who can see, as they need to avoid the people in front of them. I estimate about 20-40 people could watch a performance, assuming the performance is not artificially raised.

4. What is the approximate size of the performance area? Is it larger than, for instance, a bedroom? Is there space for scenic elements? For the amphitheater, the performing space is large, about the size of large living room, and with that plenty of space for scenic elements. Sunken is cool, because it has no set performing area, the area can be super small or as large as Sunken. However, because the audience is not elevated the scenic elements must be smaller as too not disrupt the audience's view.

5. What is the available lighting? So, for Sunken it is easy, the lighting is dictated by the sun unless outside equipment is brought in. The amphitheater on the other hand, although greatly influenced by the sun, does have the availability of overhead artificial lighting.

6. What type of performance do you envision happening in the space? I imagine for the Amphitheater large music concerts, where the sun and outdoors help bring good energy to the audience where they are looking to be happy. Although I could see plays here, simply not dramas or tragedies. For Sunken Garden, the intense intimacy is perfect for small quiet theater, where it can feel almost spontaneous with passersby stopping in and watching.