



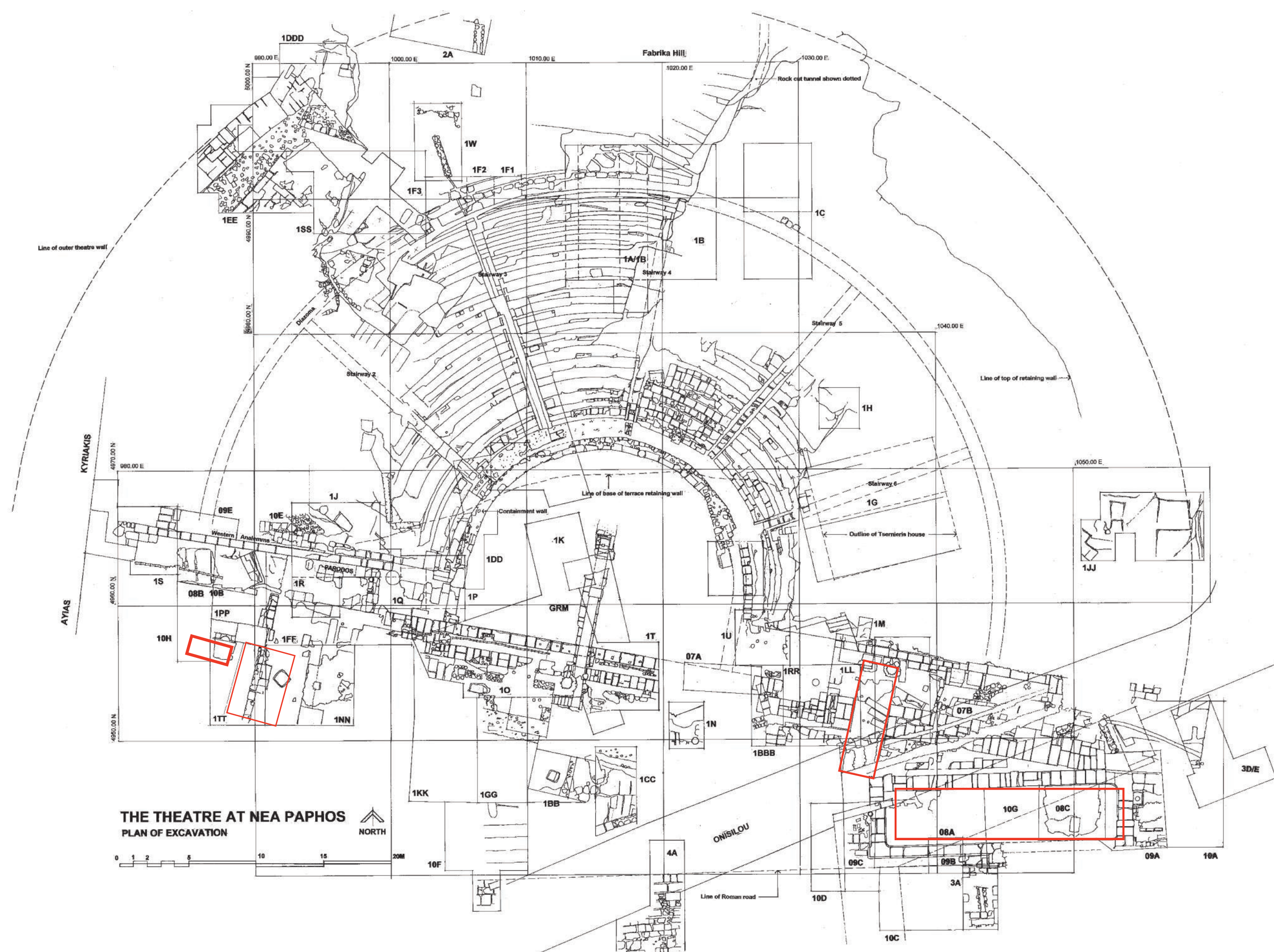
The Paphos Theatre

The World Heritage Site of the ancient city of Nea Paphos is within the modern city of Pafos, a popular tourist destination, on the south-west coast of Cyprus. Since 1995 the University of Sydney has been excavating the theatre adjacent to the ancient north-west gate, which has become one of the city's many archaeological and cultural attractions. The Pafos Municipality has indicated an interest in using the theatre as the venue for future cultural events. The partially reconstructed Roman theatre at Kourion, along the coast to the east of Paphos, provides a venue for theatrical events. Currently, the area of Pafos harbour adjacent to the Mediaeval Fort is the venue for such events: the theatre offers the advantage of a larger venue.

In-situ mosaics in theatres are relatively uncommon and it was not anticipated that a mosaic would be discovered in the theatre. From the late fourth or early fifth century, the theatre was modified for water spectacles and during the sixth century it was extensively quarried. From the Mediaeval period, the site was occupied by an extensive rural complex and by the eighteenth century a road traversed the southern edge of the site. Modern twentieth century services adjacent to the road have also cut into the fabric of the theatre and the mosaics.



South-west corner of the poorly preserved nymphaeum floor. Edges are chamfered and there are patches of burning



Working Plan of the Theatre. The locations and currently known extent of each area of floor mosaic is outlined in red



The room to the south-west of the western parodos patterned with intersecting circles and octagons. The damage was caused by smashing columns for the lime kilns

Mosaic Floors in Theatres

Mosaic flooring in Roman theatres is not unique; 23 examples of theatres and odea, with mosaic floors within theatre contexts are identified by Sear in his *Roman Theatres. An Architectural Study* (2006). The theatres of Beneventum, Bulla Reggia, Cyrrhus and Delos have mosaic floors in the *parodoi* and adjacent rooms, the orchestras of the theatres at Argos, Arycanda, Byblos, Epidauros, Kirklareli, Nora and Symythi are paved with mosaic. There are mosaics, predominantly on stage floors or ceilings at Argos, Cos, Hierapolis, Leptis Magna, Lugdinum, Sufetla, Thessalonica, Thugga, Arausio and Corinth.

Questions of Conservation and Interpretation

The unexpectedness of the discovery of floor mosaics was such that no management strategy was in place for the appropriate treatment of the mosaics. The Department of Antiquities preliminary advice to cover with textile and bury the mosaics in clean fill has been followed. Prior to reburial the mosaics were planned and photographed in detail, and when re-exposed in 2010, there was no apparent deterioration of the tesserae. However, when exposed, the mosaic floor of the nymphaeum was in a generally poor condition with evidence of efflorescence, delamination and a loss of integrity in the cement setting. Should the theatre site become a modern theatrical space, how and by what means are the mosaics to be conserved and how are they to be interpreted, remains problematic. The University of Sydney team has a clear understanding of the significance of the mosaics as an important element of the heritage value of the theatre site and is currently exploring avenues of preserving the fabric and conservation of the mosaics in consultation with the Department of Antiquities.

The objective of the *Verona Charter on the Use of Ancient Places of Performance* is to preserve a store of scientific information, manage the monuments in the perspective of development and, where circumstances permit, infuse ancient sites once more with their full role of places of artistic creation, shared enjoyment and emotion. The survival of a suite of geometric carpet mosaics within the theatre adds to our understanding of the importance of the theatre to the ancient city, and contributes to the significance of Nea Paphos as the capital of Roman Cyprus. The conservation and interpretation of the theatre site need to be an integral part of the future refurbishment of the theatre. The mosaics represent two particular periods in the history of the theatre and are integral contributory aspects its heritage value, and as such should be conserved in situ. The Mediaeval occupation of the theatre site is also important to the history of the town and warrants inclusion in interpretation of the theatre site. Reconstruction of the theatre will have a significant impact on the original fabric of the theatre site and its local environment. Future development of the theatre will need to balance the requirements of a modern performance space with the conservation and preservation of its heritage values.

The Theatre Floor Mosaics

It was not until 2004 that the first mosaics were exposed. We now have mosaics in four discrete areas associated with the theatre; the eastern parodos, the southern entries to the eastern and western parodoi, a nymphaeum to the south of the eastern parodos and a possible room to the west of the southern entry to the western parodos. The mosaics likely represent two phases in the life of the theatre. The floor of the eastern parodos and its southern entry is covered in a fragmentary black/grey and white geometric mosaic. The largest extent is within the parodos and comprises large white lozenges with infill chequerboard on a black ground, and the floor of the nymphaeum is carpeted in white tesserae with a scatter of small black semis. The floor of the western parodos is covered in a fine plaster, scored to imitate large pavers, while the floor of its southern entry had been covered in an expanse of predominantly black tesserae, the only discernible pattern being one white crosslet. These mosaics have been dated to the second century and the Aurelian refurbishment. The simplicity of design and lack of colour in the mosaics associated with the parodoi was likely offset by the colourful paintings decorating the vaulted walls and ceilings, of which evidence survives for the western parodos. Dating to the late fourth or early fifth century is the mosaic on the floor of what seems to be a small room to the south of the western parodos; a polychrome geometric carpet. Too little of the immediate environment of this mosaic has been excavated to be certain of the function of the room.

The theatre at Paphos appears to be particularly well endowed with extant mosaic floors



The fragmentary floor of the eastern parodos and its southern entry. The damage caused by later activities is clearly demonstrated