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As the Florence bell rings



BY MAGGIE OAKS

This piazza, alternating emblem of both republican government and of the grand dukes, tells glorious stories of Florence through its fascinating architecture and its exceptional works of art. It was the scene of important events and even executions, such as that of the Dominican brother Girolamo Savonarola, hanged and burned right here on May 23, 1498, as a granite slab in the pavement reminds us, almost in the middle of the piazza.

In the 1500s, feasts, shows and tournaments were organized here. At the ringing of the bell over Palazzo Vecchio, the Florentines would gather to listen and approve new laws or, perhaps to run, fully armed, ready to defend city institutions. Judges of the republic, as well as dukes and lords, have contributed over the centuries to the wealth of artwork in this place, transforming it into an exceptional open-air museum.

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