

## Greece: The Birth of Theatre

### I. Origins of Theatre

#### A. 7<sup>th</sup> Century

##### 1.. Worship of Dionysus

##### a. God of Wine and Fertility

##### 1. Born out of Zeus' thigh

##### b. Dithyrambs-Hymns sung in honor of Dionysus.

#### B. 6<sup>th</sup> Century

##### 1. Thespis steps out of the Chorus to act out dithyrambs

##### a. Creates the "first actor"

##### b. Travels around demonstrating this new form of "worship"

### II. Festival of Dionysus

#### A. A festival held in honor of Dionysus (Also called City of Dionysia)

#### B. First held in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century

##### 1. First winner was Thespis.

##### a. Prize was a goat and fame.

##### i. Tragedy translate to "goat song"

#### C. Festival evolved in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century

##### 1.Competition among 3 playwrights over 5 days.

##### a. 3 tragedies each (Trilogy) plus a Satyr play

### III. Writers of Tragedy

#### A. Only 3 known famous playwrights are known from the 5<sup>th</sup> Century. (33 works survived)

##### 1. Aeschylus

##### a. Introduced the 2<sup>nd</sup> Actor

##### b. Cut down chorus to 12 men

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c. Famous for Agamemnon.

### 2. Sophocles

a. Introduced the 3<sup>rd</sup> Actor

b. Famous for Oedipus Rex & Antigone

### 3. Euripides

a. Known for writing about the Psychology of women

b. Famous for Medea & Bacchae

## IV. Writer of Comedy

A. Most works and information of Comedy have been lost but 2 are known.

### 1. Aristophanes

a. Writer of "old comedy"

b. Works were political & mocked audiences

c. Famous for Lysistrata

### 2. Menander

a. Writer of "new comedy"

b. Created "stock characters"

## V. Greek Cast

### A. Chorus

1. 12 Members

2. Only Men

3. Skilled in singing, dancing, and music

a. Trained for 6 months-1 year

### B. Actors

1. 3 maximum in a play

2. Only Men.

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3. Paid professionals who were known for their great vocal skills and stylistic movement.

### C. Costumes/Masks

1. Costumes- brightly colored chitons (both long and short tunics) and cloaks called himation's.

- a. To add height, a thick-soled, soft shoe called a cothurnis was worn

2. Masks- used to represent characters and emotions

- a. carved out of wood, soft linen, or cork.

- b. Had a large mouth with a megaphone-like piece that would amplify the voice.

### VI. Parts of a Greek Theatre

A. Theatron- Where the audience sits.

B. Orchestra- flat area where chorus stood, sang, and danced.

C. Parados- entrance to the orchestra and stage

D. Thymele- Altar in the center of the orchestra

E. Skene- backdrop of the stage. A building/tent for actors to change costumes but later a more permanent structure which also acted as scenery for the performance.

F. Proskenion- a raised platform in front of the skene where the actors performed. (Stage)

G. Paraskenia- wings at the end of each side of the skene.

H. Pinakes- Painted cloth hung as scenery

I. Eccyclema- Platform on wheels. (Used to roll in scenery and "dead bodies")

J. Deus ex machine- "God in the machine" A pulley system used to fly the "gods" from the top of the skene (Heavens) to the Proskenion (Earth) to save the day.