

* the work of Seneca, the major Roman tragic playwright, was very influential on Renaissance writers like Shakespeare via things like the standard 5 act format, the use of violence and horror, the monologues which replaced choral odes, the use of asides and the fascination with magic, superstition, death, and the intertwined destinies of people

* As Rome declined/became more violent and corrupt, so did the theatre, and as Christianity increased its power over emperors, by c. 400 AD, festivals for pagan gods and the more bloody entertainments began to be censored and even abolished. The church saw theatre as too pagan in origin, too violent and obscene, and too fond of ridiculing the Christian religion; by 398 AD Christians were forbidden to attend the theatre

* this would not have doomed theatre by itself, but the decay of the Roman Empire from within and the pressures of Barbarian tribes from the north did; in 410 AD the Visigoths sacked Rome, and after 476 Rome was ruled by foreigners; by the 6th century its outlying colonies had been lost too; at first the barbarians used the theatre to keep Romans from grumbling, but as the state crumbled so did the theatre; the last definite record of a performance in Rome was in 549 AD.

* after the barbarian invasions, the Christian pressures and the decay of the empire, many actors/dramatists found it politically safer to flee to the east, to Constantinople and the Byzantine world where theatre as they had known it continued; the unpopularity of Roman entertainment to the barbarians whose ancestors had been dragged off to Rome to be slaves/die in the arenas and theatres made being a performer a precarious job in much of the rest of the former empire

* theatre flourished in the Byzantine world until c. 700 AD, when the armies of Islam conquered Constantinople, all of North Africa, and up into Spain; its belief that creating images of living things was against Allah stifled theatrical forms, although storytelling and sometimes non-representational shadow puppets remained in the east

* from c. 500 AD to c. 900 AD, there was no theatre and there were no actors in the western world; but there were travelling storytellers and musicians, who also served as carriers of news/trade in a world no longer urban or safe to travel in, where forests swallowed cities and roads the Romans had built, and war, famine and disease flourished

* classical Greek & Roman theatre had enormous influence on Western theatre during the Renaissance ONLY because the Christian church used Latin as its language across Europe through the middle ages, and thus copies of Greek / Roman dramas were passed down after the fall of Rome by illiterate medieval Catholic monks writing down and illuminating carefully what they could not read, but assumed were 'sacred Christian texts' in Latin--but which were really dramas, poetry, philosophy, scientific & mathematical theories, histories, mythologies--and sometimes Roman brothel customers & army laundry lists! When the 15th century educated and Greek/Latin-trained European world first became interested in the ruins of the classical world, they found/ translated these texts and read about, and tried to re-create thru their arts, 'the glory that was Greece' and 'the power that was Rome'-- and the Renaissance was born.

* during the 4th cen. BC Greece became more secular/less religious, so festivals became less important as religious events; this was the great age of Greek philosophy--Plato and Aristotle; Plato was a fan of censorship for the theatre and strict state control, as he feared its power to sway an audience; Aristotle wrote *The Poetics*, which set forth dramatic theory for the first time, and included a now lost list of every play produced at the City Dionysia, with dramatists' names and winners

* at the same time as theatre was becoming less important in Athens, it swept through the rest of the Greek world, and Athenian dramatists/actors were in great demand in other countries around the Mediterranean Sea, especially during time of Alexander the Great, whose wide empire (336-323 BC) included theatres in every city he conquered/ built; one of his victory festivals involved more than 3000 performers from across the Greek world

* one result of this demand for actors was the formation of the 1st professional actors union, in 277 BC--the Artists of Dionysus; it continued to be recognized by the government into the Christian era and by Rome, where its headquarters was eventually moved

* after the death of Alexander the Great, Greece gradually lost control of the Mediterranean area, and it became a Roman province in 146 BC. Roman standards gradually altered Greek theatrical practices, and theatres were rebuilt on a Roman pattern which allowed them to be used for other purposes too; the Theatre of Dionysus continued to be used for theatre until about 400 AD., when Rome fell, but it was no longer home to the great classical dramas of its early years.

* by 250 BC, the growing Roman civilization began producing theatre, but it was very different from Greek theatre, because its basic premise was entertainment, not religious/mythological festivals--think of it as American tv programming of the lowest kind--trained animals, flame and sword swallows, jugglers, athletic events, short farces, lions vs. slaves, gladiators vs. slaves, chariot races, marathon to the death wrestling contests and mock nautical battles--basically, variety show fare with lavish spectacle, fireworks, costumes, parades, and plenty of thrills including nudity, sex, and violence, and mega bloodshed

* 'regular' drama tended to be plays borrowed directly from the Greek or adapted/plagiarized into Latin, as for example Seneca's version of the Oedipus story--but the Romans didn't have the same philosophical/poetical nature as the later Greeks; they were more practical architects, military men, roadbuilders and administrators--so their art was escapist, sentimental, or entertainment, not serious, tragic or thoughtful; playwrights whose names have survived who wrote original plays include Andronicus, Plautus, Terence, Menander; although we don't see Roman drama as very good today, its own critics liked it a lot

* the number of festivals/entertainment days increased as Rome became an empire and a dictatorship to c. 175 days a year, as emperors used 'bread and circuses' to keep people from thinking about their lives (think government support for the Olympics while the homeless fill the streets)

* the work of Roman comic dramatists influenced the later commedia del arte through the creation of stock characters and situations involving greed, lust, cheating and fighting, as well as mask/mime

b) was admission free/paid? circumstances?

* although theatres were open to all, Athens had about 200,000 citizens and another 110,000 slaves and perhaps 30,000 resident foreigners, and obviously a theatre seating c. 15,000 people didn't have room for all; so by c. 450 admission fees were charged, although the government set the price and provided a subsidy fund for tickets for the poor; the money seems to have gone for upkeep of the theatre/payment to its workers; tickets admitted someone to a section, not a seat, and many stood

c) what background did they bring to the theatre/plays seen?

* they all knew the stories already, since they were based on myths, religious tales and Athenian history, and thus they also knew the endings--they were a critical, knowledgeable audience who knew enough to evaluate the dramatist's version of a myth, the characters, and the beauty of the poetry, as well as the acting/chorus quality

d) what kinds of reactions to the plays presented was typical?

* since the plays lasted all day, there was much coming/going/eating and drinking as well as socializing among friends; occasionally violence happened in the audience, but it was punishable by death and there were many officials around to check tickets/keep people in the right seats/ keep the lid on behaviour/turf out drunks

* audiences expressed opinions noisily, and sometimes actors were hissed off the stage; tradition says that once Aeschylus had to take refuge on the altar to escape the wrath of the audience

e) what effect did audience response have on actors, plays, playwrights, sponsors?

* some dramatists praised the audience as tasteful--probably when they won--and other blamed it as debased and perverse--probably when they lost; the approval of the audience clearly influenced the judges.

* each of 10 tribes nominated a list of potential judges and the names were placed in 10 sealed urns--1 for each tribe- and placed under guard until the beginning of the contest, at which time one name was drawn from each urn; these were the judges for the contest. After they saw the plays, each judge placed his vote in a ceremonial urn, from which the archon (state official) drew five, and on the basis of this, the winner was declared--if there was a tie, additional votes would be counted until a winner was chosen. This method made bribery difficult- kind of like the Oscar night secrecy!

* audiences had favorite actors, flute players, choruses, and dramatists, and would attend on the days those people were performing; they might also follow fave performers to lesser festivals outside Athens, sort of like summer stock /touring theatre; their approval certainly influenced who got hired again and may have influenced which 3 dramatists were selected to compete in the next City Dionysia

And how/why did Greek theatre end and Roman theatre take over?

* dramatists chose their own actors for their plays to begin with, but after c. 450, the leading actors were assigned by lot to the dramatists so that no writer had an unfair advantage because of his fame/his choregus' \$\$; all of the actors were paid by the state, and after 450, there was a prize for the leading actor in all of that City Dionysia's productions, whether the dramatist won or not--kind of like Best Actor in a non-best picture Oscar!

*actors were trained like opera singers today--lots of vocal work, since only their voices mattered--and the masks/costumes/ lack of physical action didn't require other skills actors today would have. The appropriate emotional tone, strong volume, and the ability to do 3 kinds of delivery--speech, recitative (poetry) and song--were needed, along with a repertory of stylized dramatic gestures--like mime/dance

*the 12-15 chorus members were experienced amateurs who underwent 11 months of training for a City Dionysia production, since each one, with its cast, was announced in April after that year's City Dionysia--and they were trained like professional athletes of the period, with diet, exercise, and disciplined practise under their director, who at first would have been the dramatist, but later a professional hired just for this job; their unison speaking would also involve stylized symbolic gestures which went with particular phrases or words, and it is thought that beginning actors did dance work, then moved up to the chorus, from which a particularly good memorizer/with great vocal clarity and beautiful tone might become an actor, and then eventually a lead actor--not unlike the stage or movies/tv today

* the flute player, who was often also the music's composer, was so important to the production that he was assigned by lot to the choregoi as was the lead actor; he found and trained his own musicians and often hired the dancers as well; they were easier to find since virtually everyone learned some dance as part of rituals; the dance might have looked like military /marching band formations, or may have just been gestures, mime, and expressive rhythmical movement, rather than what we would think of as dance, and musicians and dancers rehearsed together and were directed by experienced chorus members/actors

c) did they operate independently or in set companies?

* we don't know that, but since the dramatist could hire the second & third actors himself, probably each dramatist had his favorites--men who had performed for him already--much as directors do now, and musicians and dancers who had worked with a dramatist/director before were probably hired again

6. Who were the audiences?

a) what genders/ages/social classes came, and why?

*each of the 10 tribes of Athens had its own section; not clear whether women/slaves were also allowed--although it is probable that noblewomen, who had considerable power within the family and were often wealthy in their own right, did attend and brought slaves to care for them--and since noblewomen often were the hostesses of post- production social events.

• key front row seats were reserved for state officials, priests, ambassadors, VIPS, people being honoured. Every social class attended, depending on ticket availability and fave dramatists/performers, as well as tribal membership/family connection

-Extant plays were written 438-408: *Alcestis, Hippolytus, The Children of Heracles, Hecuba, Heracles, Iphigenia in Tauris, Helen, The Phoenician Women*; most famous/performed today are *The Bacchae, Medea, Andromache, The Trojan Women, Electra, Orestes*.

* Aristophanes (448-330 BC) is the author of all the extant comedies of the 5th century; he is thought to have written 40 plays, of which 11 survive.

-All of his works are commentaries on contemporary society, politics, theatre, and the Peloponnesian War; each has a ruling theme, usually pretty farfetched (using a sex strike to stop a war); the events wouldn't really happen but the parallels are clear, with the exaggeration of characters and actions pointing up real absurdities;

-farce is also used, with lots of emphasis on joys of eating, drinking, sex, wealth, lesiure; lyrics are beautiful and often very obscene.

-his work is known as Old Comedy, but since no other comic work is extant, it is hard to know how it was different from what came before or after.

-Surviving plays (written 425-388) are: *Acharnians, Knights, Wasps, Peace, Birds, Women at the Thesmophoria, Frogs, Assembly Women, Plutus* ; most famous/performed today are *Clouds* and *Lysistrata*,

5. Who were the actors/dancers/musicians?

a) what gender/age/social class; info re income/prizes?

* Originally the dramatist was also the actor; when Aeschylus introduced a 2nd actor this continued; when Sophocles introduced a third actor, he stopped acting himself-- c. 468--but this didn't mean there was a demand for full time actors, and most would have been semi-pros, with other full time jobs; all the performers were men, and none were slaves or foreigners; most would have been members of good families/with good educations so that they already had the ability to read poetry/memorize/declaim w/ a good accent

* by about 350 BC, after the peak of Athen's fame but when it was still the centre for theatre, most actors/singers/dancers were professionals, being rehearsed by professional directors; this led to a star system as acting became more important than playwriting--partly because they stopped requiring new plays for the City Dionysia, and repeated old faves; in the off-season, these actors toured 'the provinces' and were treated like royalty.

* the chorus often had as much as one half of the lines, and much time would have been spent on vocal training and choral, unison speech, since at the start there may have been up to 50 men in the chorus--reflecting the # of priests in a temple, perhaps--but by the time of Sophocles it stood at 15; both singing and dance training were also required for the chorus. Choruses were pampered and given special treatment since their job was difficult and their rehearsal period very long/arduous.

* flutes, lyres, trumpets, and percussion were used to accompany dancers/chorus; the music was composed by the flute player, who led the procession of the chorus into the orchestra, and was very well paid

b) how were they chosen/trained; what skills were required?

nothing is known of them besides their accomplishments and a guestimate of birth date

b) who were the major playwrights/what were major works?

* Aeschylus (c. 523-456 BC) wrote oldest extant plays; began competing at City Dionysia c. 499, is credited with 13 victories (ie at least 39 tragedies); he is known for having introduced a second actor, and was interested in religious/philosophical conflicts, with cosmic conflicts and larger than life actions; his work was very spectacular--second chorus, many attendants, chariots drawn by horses, frightening myth. characters w/ grotesque wigs/masks/costumes; visual symbolism, unusual dances, and lavish costumes--the grandeur of his poetry/vision are unsurpassed. Although about 80 of his titles are known, only 6 are extant:

-*The Persians* - 477; *The Suppliants*- after 468; *Seven Against Thebes*- 467; the *Oresteia*, - 458- a trilogy of *Agamemnon*, *Libation Bearers*, *Eumenides*--*Agam.* is his most famous; this is only extant trilogy

* Sophocles (c. 496-406 BC) is thought to have written more than 120 plays, of which only 7 have survived, and to have won 24 contests, the first in 468, when he defeated Aeschylus (two years before A. death).

-S is credited with intro of 3rd actor, fixing the chorus size at 15, using painted scenes for the first time. He placed more emphasis on individual characters and reduced chorus role; his characters are complex psychologically and his protagonists end with a perception of a higher law than humans;

-S is the most dramatically interesting re structure, and *Oedipus the King* is often called the most perfect of Greek tragedies; S. poetry is clear, beautiful, and few visual effects are needed to complement the force of the actions and poetry.

-No S. trilogy exists which was written and performed as one, but the revisited/connected story of Oedipus is now often printed/ performed together (*Oedipus*, *at Colonus*, *Antigone*)

-His extant plays are:*Ajax*- 450-440; *Antigone* - 441; *Oedipus the King* (aka *Oedipus Rex*)- 430-425; *Electra* -418-410; *Trachiniae* - 413; *Philoctetes* - 409; *Oedipus at Colonus* (406), plus much of one satyr play, *The Trackers*.

* Euripedes (c. 480-406 BC) wrote about 90 plays, 18 of which are extant; the large number which survived is explained by his enormous popularity in later periods, although he was not highly appreciated during his life- he won only 4 contests;

-E was not popular with audiences, the government or the religious establishment because he introduced subjects they felt were unsuited to the stage which questioned traditional values--Phaedra's love for her stepson, Medea's murder of her sons, Pasiphaei's passion for a bull--were all seen as abnormal;

- E's realistic exploration of psychological motivation and intensely graphic language were thought undignified; his characters questioned the gods, seeing them as a source of misery as often as happiness; he suggested that chance, not fate, ruled the world, and that humans are more moral than the gods of the myths.

-his dramatic method was less traditional and stylish--especially next to Sophocles--and awkward, superfluous speeches, long monologues, unconnected actions, irrelevant choral passages, use of gods to resolve conflicts/foretell the future were too modern for many audiences

-E was seen as rebel--dangerous because of ideas and artistically inferior because of techniques--but dialogue, motivation, characterization were excellent, and he began many dramatic practises which influenced others in 4th cen. and in later Roman theatre;

-the Romans and others liked his sentimental, melodramatic aspects, which is why his work was copied/adapted/preserved so often

in one place, and all the actions related to the same people/plotline--no sub plots--these were traditional by c. 480 BC and disappeared gradually but not without controversy; since they had 3 plays to tell the story in, as well as the prologue, the unities were not as hard to conform to as we might think (think tv show 24-- whole season is 24 hours timespan)

* a central purpose of Greek tragedy was to induce a *catharsis* in the audience by the end of the play--eg., an emotional reaction in which one identified with the hero, suffered in watching his fate, and thus learned what it was like without actually having to have and deal with tragedy in one's own life

* the tragic plotline involves a great hero of high social position who has great *hubris*, or self-pride, which is a tragic flaw; he experiences reversals of fortune, discovery of unknown past events, meetings with people he has wronged or gods he has defied, and is destroyed by his own lack of understanding of who he is/how he fits into the moral universe; he is warned often by the chorus, and sent messages by the gods, but all this is in vain because of his assumptions about his own heroism and importance and his inability to realize his lack of self-knowledge

* the comic structure involved a prologue to set the mood and the "happy idea"--a farfetched theme which is treated as quite feasible; the chorus enters and an *agon*, or debate, on the merits of the idea is held, followed by a decision to try the scheme. A *parabasis* or choral ode divides the play into two parts and was often used to praise the dramatist, plead for the audience's favour, or support the sponsor's fame. The second part shows what happens when the happy idea is put into place, and the final scene concludes with the reconciliation of all the characters and their exit to a feast or revels (a la many Shakespearian comedies!)

* the satyr plays seem to have come from an earlier source and take their name from the chorus, which was made up of the half-goat, half- human companions of Dionysus; the leader of the chorus was Silenus, the father of the satyrs. Sometimes the theme or subject of the satyr play was connected somehow to the tragedies it was presented with, but often it was independent. Essentially it was a burlesque/satiric view of myth which ridiculed gods or heroes; it included boisterous action in rural settings, indecent language, costume, and gestures (ie overly large phallus' which were attached to the front of costumes, masks with prominent tongues, fake large-breasted costumes.) A series of episodes was separated by choral odes, but the spirit was ribald comedy to provide comic relief after several hours of tragedy/grief/pain. Only extant and complete satyr play is Euripedes' *The Cyclops*.

c) to what degree did plays utilise music, choral work, dance?

* no Greek tragedy was without large amounts of all of these things,performed before, during and after the actual play in the orchestron; the chorus was originally c. 12-15 men, but expanded/contracted from time to time; Greek comedy also utilised all of these elements

4. Who were the key playwrights of this period?

a) what social class did they come from; what education, skills or training did they have?

* because we only have extant works by 3 tragic and 1 comic dramatist, it would be hard to say, especially since little or

-because only 3 actors played all parts, and the audience was huge, some at a great distance, they depended on elaborate methods to distinguish characters: color-coded costumes, high, elaborate head dresses, crowns and/or wigs, and very high platform sandals- an actor could, when fully dressed, be c. 3 feet taller than usual- more important the character, taller the headress and sandals

- masks were worn by all characters, and were usually owned by and created for a particular actor to represent 'comedy' and 'tragedy' --for men and women, young and old-- and were made out of thick cork, carved balsa wood, or linen; they fitted over the face and the top of the head, so that wigs/head dresses/crowns could be more easily attached; they may have also had a slight megaphone effect because of the way the mouths were cut, but this is theory only--pictures on vases and walls, but no extant masks

* by the time the Theatre of Dionysus was finished, in 325 BC, it was extremely elaborate compared to earlier theatres, completely in stone;with a three-storied, columned skene and a split level paraskena; but by this time, theatre in Athens was no longer on the cutting edge.

3. What were the plays about?

a) what were the plot sources?

* all were religious/mythic/historic stories -- with conflicts between men/heroes and gods and Fates; but each dramatist could alter the stories and invent motivations--so basic stories were widely varied and interpreted by different dramatists for different purposes and in different time periods

b) what structural/stylistic elements were used?

* there are only 31 tragedies *extant* (eg still in existence) by three dramatists of the more than 1,000 written by numerous playwrights between 500-400 BC, in the Golden Age --but they have many of the same structural features:

-*prologue* which provides info about events which happened before the opening of the play (kind of like tv-- "last week we saw....")

-*parodos*, or entrance of the chorus, to begin the play--anywhere from 20 -200 lines, to set mood and introduce the chorus, which provides facts re situation and characters--usually many, since the action in GT begins late, often right before the climax

-*episodes*, 3 to 6 scenes which develop the main action of the plot, separated by choral dance songs (*stasima*) ; these also contain many reports from messengers, since physical violence and death aren't seen, just reported; the time of the action is continuous and usually 'real time', and the actions almost always take place in only one location with a maximum time span of 24 hours

-*exodus*, concluding scene, departure of all characters and chorus

* Greek dramatists used few events and characters, with little attention to what we are familiar with, like physical/sociological factors--very interested in ethical/moral dilemmas and psychological conflicts

* earlier playwrights conformed to 'the unities' of time, place, and action--eg., all the actions had to take place in one day,

* first performances were in natural amphitheatres built into the hilly areas, usually in a circular paved space in front of a temple--partly due to natural geography of Greece, partly because acoustically great

* when amphitheatres were built as public works, they duplicated this concept by building into a hillside when possible

b) what did the design of the stage/audience areas look like?

* key areas were:

- the *theatron* was the 'seeing place', or many semi-circular stone rows of backless benches rising up the hillside, often seating as many as 10-20,000 people, and acoustically taking advantage of sound rising
- the *orchestron* was the large, paved circular space where the chorus, dancers and musicians performed; in the center of this was the altar to the gods, and front row center seats were reserved for the important/wealthy
- the *skene* cut one side of the orchestron flat; it was a roofless building with one doorway at first, but later a more elaborate, roofed building, sometimes two storied, with columns and three doorways from which actors came--tradition said that someone coming from left door was coming from out of Athens, the center door was reserved for the protagonist's house/palace, and the right door for Athenians/messengers; the skene provided backstage work space and storage for costumes, masks, sets
- the *proskenion* was a platform added in front of the skene, as long as the building, c. 5-8 ft. off the ground, and often quite narrow--c. 6 feet-- it was a later invention, to make the actors more visible and separate them from the chorus
- the *paraskenia* were wings added to the sides of the skene on which generic forest/temple scenes were painted, another later add-on;

c) what technical effects were used?

* sets, props, special effects, music (no lighting--daylight shows only)

- at first there were no sets, just the doorways; later, *pinakes* were developed, which were wooden scenic flats painted and put against the paraskenia or in front of the proskenion on the orchestron's paved base
- later *periaktoi* were also added-- triangular, rotating set pieces (like a library book rack which rotates) which would have more specific location paintings for as many as 3 different scenes
- sheets of metal were hung backstage and struck to create thunder/lightening, very useful for gods' messages; also drums cymbals, flutes and various instruments no longer in use provided backup for chorus/dancers/singers, as well as punctuating the dialogue to build tension/create mood
- the *eccyclema*, or death wagon, was a decorated set piece which held the bodies of the many dead people resulting from the typical Greek tragedy, since death never occurred on stage; the center doors would open and it would be pushed out so the pitiful remains (dummies) could be seen briefly while the chorus bemoaned
- the *deus ex machina* was a sort of hydro-bucket piece of equipment which allowed the god of a particular play to be seen above the skene building while delivering a warning/final words

* costumes & masks:

drama based on human struggles:

- man vs. the gods/fates/nature
- man vs. other men/society
- man vs. himself

* original meaning of *tragoidia* was 'goat song' and it apparently dated from a time when a chorus danced either for a goat as a prize or as part of a sacrifice; how this led to drama is largely guesswork/theories

- Aristotle in *Poetics* (c. 330 BC) said that tragedy came from improvisations by leaders of dithyrambs, which were hymns sung and danced before the temples in honour of Dionysus, Greek god of wine and fertility-- this happened over long period of time, little understood; four festivals/year in Athens c. 600 BC
- Thespis is said to be first actor, probably involved addition of a prologue and lines spoken by one person as distinct from narrative poem chanted/sung/danced by entire chorus- c. 560 BC

b) what was the legal position of theatre and the social status of participants?

* by 534 BC the Athenian government sanctioned and paid for theatre as part of religious festival for the City Dionysia. It was a great honor to be a dramatist who won the gold wreath, money, fame for this; little known of early performers-- possibly still priests of temples ?

c) for what purposes was theatre performed?

* plays were performed as part of the City Dionysia, a 5-6 day festival held in March, when no one had to work, whole city partied; full of choral contests, processions, 24/7 of dancing, drinking, debauchery for all

d) when were performances given?

* on the last 3 days of City Dionysia, from dawn to dusk each day, the tragedy contests were held: each dramatist had to write & direct a *trilogy* and a *satyr play* to enter; in early years, only one actor played all characters, subjects mostly recent history, much choral/dance/music; after 487 BC full length comedies were also presented at the CD

e) who paid for and sponsored performances, and why?

*later, as the technical requirements and number of performers made productions far more expensive, wealthy men were appointed by the government to be the *choreogus*, or sponsor, for a particular trilogy, which involved building the masks & costumes, paying for training chorus/rehearsals/musicians/dancers/actors; this was considered to be a great honour, and a civic duty, although very expensive; the state paid the dramatist for his work and awarded the prize to dramatist and choregoi together.

2. Where and how were performances produced?

a) indoors/outdoors/what kinds of spaces/stages?

Notes on Classical Theatre in Greece and Rome

by Sue Daniel

These are organized according to the Six W's and probably provide more information than you need or want in relation to follow up activities for The Babysitter, but feel free to pick and choose and to use none, some or much of these now or at any time in the future when they may be helpful!

- 1) *what roles did theatre play in this time and place?*
- 2) *where and how were performances produced?*
- 3) *what were the plays about?*
- 4) *who were the key playwrights of this period?*
- 5) *who were the actors/dancers/musicians?*
- 6) *who were the audiences?*

1. What roles did theatre play in this time and place?

a) what influenced the development of theatre at this period?

* cultural influences on development of Greek theatre were the earlier Mediterranean Sea civilizations--via gods, heroes, historic events--are the basis of Western literature/drama

- Minoan culture, Crete/Thera, 2500-1400 BC (ref. Theseus & Minotaur & Ariadne, Atlantis myth)
- Mycenaean culture, Greece, 1600-1100 BC (ref. Jason, Hercules, Agamemnon, movie *Alexander the Great*)
- Trojan culture, Asia Minor, c. 1200 BC (ref. *Iliad*, Trojan War-Helen, Paris, movie *Troy*)

• Homer's *Iliad*, *Odyssey* absorbed these stories and then served as material for most later Greek drama

* development of Greek *polis* or city state, c. 900-700 BC-- Attica (Athens), Sparta, Corinth, Thebes, Megara, Argos + colonies from the Black Sea in Asia to coasts of Africa, Spain, France; largely in Sicily and southern Italy; all these states depended on control of the sea/trade for wealth, power--major cause of ongoing wars

• first ruled by kings, then after 800 BC by nobles, then by tyrants (650-500BC) like Peisistratus, who ruled Athens from 560-510 and made it center of arts/trade/agriculture

• c.500 BC- first democracy founded in Athens, although slavery was a major support for its economy and women had very restricted role; by then Athens was artistic centre of Greece, while Sparta was major military power; then c. 30 yrs. of war w/ Persia and within Greek city states followed

• by 450 BC or so, Athens ruled Mediterranean area, wealthy, powerful--Pericles was leader (495-430 BC) when many temples, public buildings like Parthenon, theatres built; this ended when Athens lost the Peloponnesian Wars in 404 BC--this era is called the 'Golden Age' of Greece-- we now know that this happened in part due to epidemic of typhoid fever, which killed most of army and Pericles

* Greek view of man + gods=gods as bigger people; Greeks questioned nature of man, Fate, and increasingly the myths which formed religious system; happiness depends on relationships between human and superhuman forces--tension between belief in human rational powers and unpredictability of natural forces/people's actions; this viewpoint promoted a