



# Introduction to Greek Theatre

The logo for the National Theatre, consisting of the words "National" and "Theatre" stacked vertically in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The text is positioned in the upper left corner of a large black rectangular area. The entire graphic is framed by a thin gold border, with light blue decorative bands at the top and bottom containing faint architectural details.

# The Purpose

- Not simply entertainment
- Linked with sacred rituals and with the Athenian social/political system
- Plays were written for the annual spring festival of Dionysus



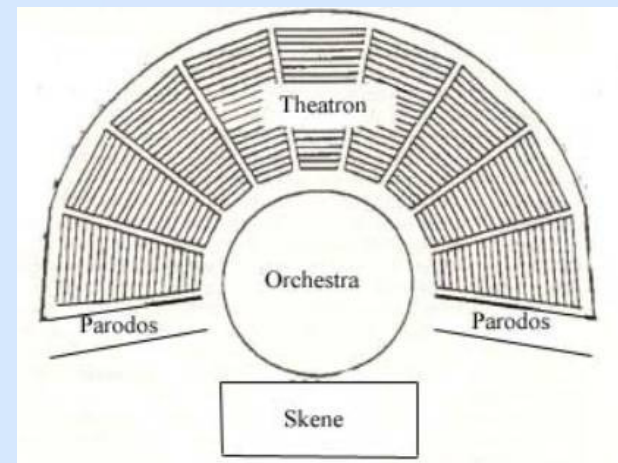
# The Theatre

- Plays were performed in outdoor, arena style theatres
- Performances took place during daylight hours



## The Theatre (Continued)

- **Orchestra-** a circular area with an altar in the center.
- **Skene** -a building that backed the orchestra and served as a setting for all plays.



## The Theatre (Continued)

- **Proskenion** - framework in front of the skene which supported a wide, shallow stage.



# The Conventions of Greek Drama

- Because the Greek outdoor theatre was so large, actors could not depend on facial expressions or vocal inflections



# Conventions

- Actors relied on large, simple physical gestures and on their ability to voice the poetry of the script.
- No female actors.





## Conventions (Continued)

- Chorus of approximately 15 actors who represented townspeople or other groups of people in the play.





**EASTERN**  
MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY  
**THEATRE**  
presents...

# The Greek Mask

- Actors wore stylized masks individual to each character
- Could easily be seen from the top rows of the audience- helpful since theatres were large





## The Greek Mask

- Acted as a megaphone to help project the voice
- Helped just three actors play all the roles in a play, including the female characters since there were no female actors.

## Style of Costumes



- Essentially the same as the Greeks' daily wear, with some exaggeration.
- The actors wore robes of finely woven wool or linen in a variety of colors.

# Festival of Dionysus

- Annual festival usually lasted 5-6 days
- National holiday
- Each day a different dramatist was featured.



## The Festival Continued

- The dramatist would offer four plays
  - a trilogy (or three tragedies centered around one theme)
  - a satire or farce, that made fun of the same tragic figures and provided the needed comic relief.

## The Festival Continued

- Comedies were sometimes given in the afternoon during the City Dionysia.
- Most comedies performed at the Lenaea festival where prizes were awarded for best comic writer



# Aristotle



- Famous poet and philosopher
- Identified 5 Elements for Tragedy

## Aristotelian Elements

- Tragedy must provide catharsis (an emotional purge)
- The hero must be someone of high social position and have a tragic flaw
  - Ex. “hubris:” excessive pride

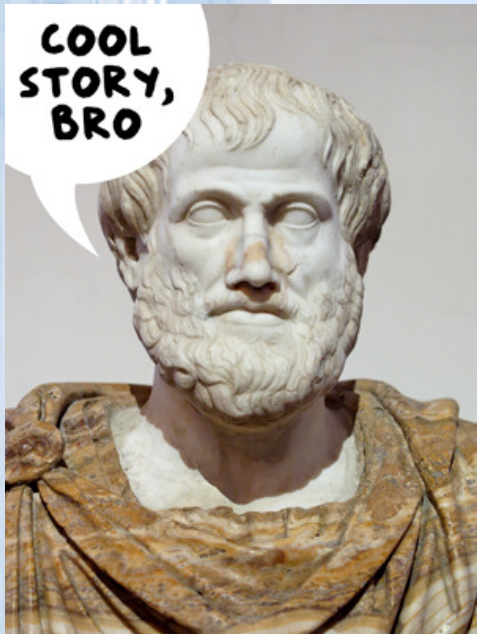
## Elements Continued

- There must be a change of fortune or discovery
- Plays must be written in the highest form of poetry.



# Elements Continued

COOL  
STORY,  
BRO



## Three Unities

- Action (related events)
- Time (within 24 hrs)
- Place (one locale)

## Violence

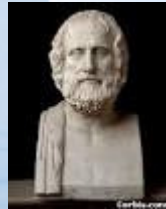
- All violence happened off stage- Greeks found it distasteful to watch



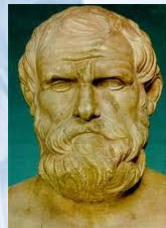
# Famous Playwrights



- Sophocles (tragedies)



- Euripides (tragedies)



- Aristophanes  
(comedies)



- Menander (comedies)



# Introduction to Greek Theatre



## The Purpose

- Not simply \_\_\_\_\_
- Linked with sacred \_\_\_\_\_ and with the Athenian social/\_\_\_\_\_ system
- \_\_\_\_\_ were written for the annual spring festival of \_\_\_\_\_



# The Theatre

- Plays were performed in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ style theatres
- Performances took place during \_\_\_\_\_ hours





## The Theatre (Continued)

- \_\_\_\_\_ - a circular area with an \_\_\_\_\_ in the center.
- \_\_\_\_\_ - a building that backed the orchestra and served as a \_\_\_\_\_ for all plays

## The Theatre (Continued)

- \_\_\_\_\_ -  
framework in front of  
the \_\_\_\_\_ which  
supported a wide,  
shallow stage.





## The Conventions of Greek Drama

- Because the Greek outdoor theatre was so \_\_\_\_\_, actors could not depend on \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ to convey their characters.

# Conventions

- Actors relied on large, simple \_\_\_\_\_ and on their ability to \_\_\_\_\_ the poetry of the script.
- No \_\_\_\_\_ actors.



The background of the slide features a light blue gradient with a faint, semi-transparent image of classical architectural columns on the left side. The columns are white with detailed capitals and fluted shafts, set against a darker blue background.

## Conventions (Continued)

- Chorus of approximately \_\_\_\_\_ actors who represented \_\_\_\_\_ or other groups of people in the play.

# The Greek Mask

- Actors wore stylized \_\_\_\_\_ individual to each character
- Could easily be seen from the \_\_\_\_\_ rows of the audience-helpful since theatres were \_\_\_\_\_





# The Greek Mask

- Acted as a \_\_\_\_\_  
to help project the voice
- Helped just \_\_\_\_\_  
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- The actors wore \_\_\_\_\_ of finely woven wool or linen in a variety of \_\_\_\_\_.



## Festival of Dionysus

- \_\_\_\_\_ festival usually lasted \_\_\_\_\_ days
- National \_\_\_\_\_
- Each day a different \_\_\_\_\_ was featured.

## The Festival Continued

- The dramatist would offer \_\_\_\_\_ plays
  - a \_\_\_\_\_ (or three \_\_\_\_\_ centered around one theme)
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# Aristotle

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- Identified \_\_\_\_\_  
Elements for  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Aristotelian Elements

- Tragedy must provide \_\_\_\_\_ (an \_\_\_\_\_ purge)
- The hero must be someone of high \_\_\_\_\_ position and have a \_\_\_\_\_ flaw
  - Ex. “\_\_\_\_\_ :”  
excessive pride



## Elements Continued

- There must be a \_\_\_\_\_ of fortune or \_\_\_\_\_
- Plays must be written in the highest form of \_\_\_\_\_.



## Elements Continued

- Three \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_ (related events)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ (within 24 hrs)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ (one locale)



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## Violence

- All violence happened \_\_\_\_\_ stage- Greeks found it \_\_\_\_\_ to watch



## Famous Playwrights

- Sophocles (tragedies)
- Euripides (tragedies)
- Aristophanes  
(comedies)
- Menander (comedies)