

The Development of  
Greek Theatre  
And  
It's Role in  
Greek Society

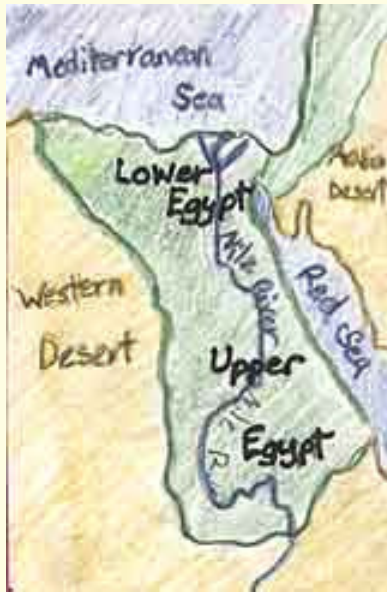
# Egyptian Drama

- Ancient Egyptians first to write drama.
- King Menes (Narmer) of the 32<sup>nd</sup> C. BC.
- 1<sup>st</sup> dramatic text along mans's history on earth.
- This text called, "the Memphis drama".
- Memphis; Egypt's capital

# King Memes( Narmer)



# King Menes



## EGYPT

King Menes unites Lower and Upper Egypt into one great civilization. Menes was the first Pharaoh. The Egyptian civilization was a great civilization that lasted for about 3,000 years.



# FROM EGYPT TO GREECE

- 8500 BC: Primitive tribal dance and ritual.
- 3100 BC: Egyption coronation play.
- 2750 BC: Egyption Ritual dramas.
- 2500 BC: Shamanism ritual.
- 1887 BC: Passion Play of Abydos.
- 800 BC: Dramatic Dance
- 600 BC: Myth and Storytelling: Greek Theatre starts.

## THE ROLE OF THEATRE IN ANCIENT SOCIETY

This is about the way theatre was received and the influence it had. The question is of the place given to theatre by ancient society, the place it had in people's lives. The use to which theatre was put at this period was new.

“Theatre became an identifier of Greeks as compared to foreigners and a setting in which Greeks emphasized their common identity. Small wonder that Alexander staged a major theatrical event in Tyre in 331 BC and it must have been an act calculated in these terms. It could hardly have meaning for the local population. From there, theatre became a reference point throughout the remainder of antiquity”. (J.R. Green)

### Tyre

**Tyre** (Latin *Tyrus*; Hebrew *Zor*), the most important city of ancient Phoenicia, located at the site of present-day Sûr in southern Lebanon. Herodotus, the Greek historian, records a tradition that traced the settlement of Tyre back to the 28th century BC. In the 7th century AD it came under the dominion of the Saracens. In the 12th century it was taken by the Crusaders, who kept it until 1291, when the town came under Muslim rule.

# TYRE



- A Roman Arch in TYRE.
- Tombs in TYRE.

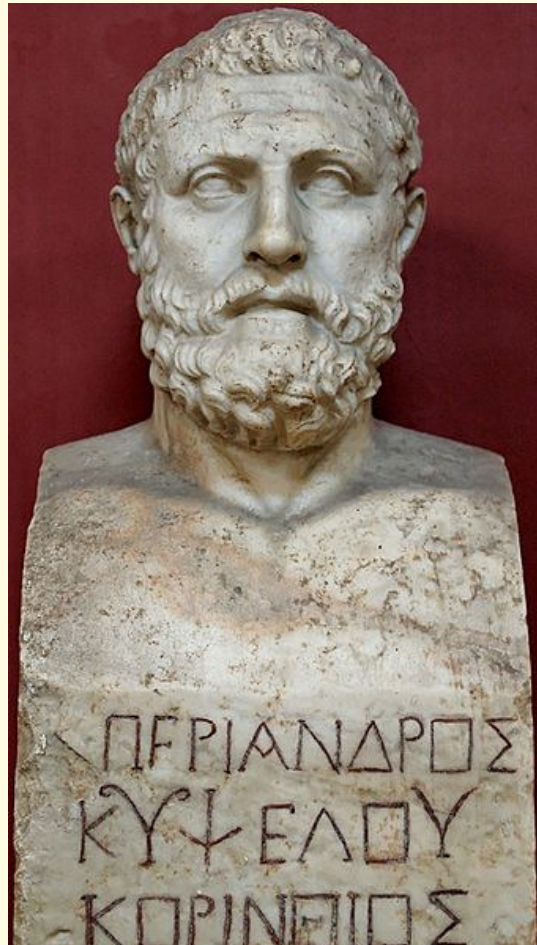


# Greek Drama

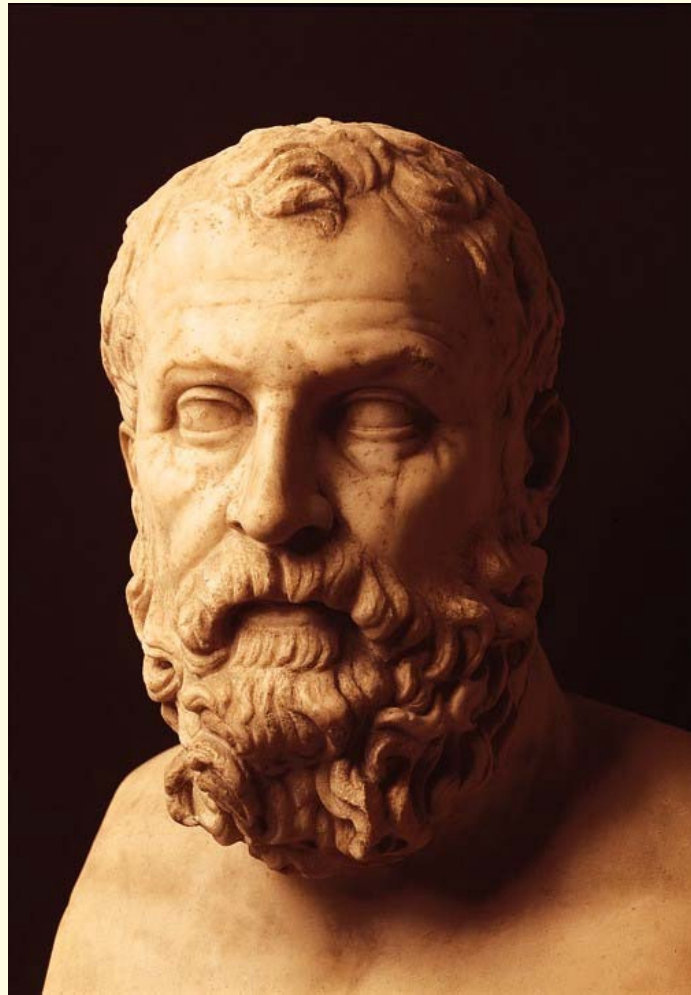
625 BC: Arion of Corinth produces named

- dithyrambic choruses.
- 600-570 BC: Cleisthenes, tyrant of Sicyon,
- Transfers “tragic choruses” to Dionysus.
- Dionysis, god of wine and revelry.
- 540-527 BC: Pisistratus founds the festival of,
- Greater Dionysia, annual springtime festival.

# Arion of Corinth



# Cleisthenes, tyrant of Sicyon



# Sicyon



# Sicyon



# Pisistratus

## Popular tyrant

As opposed to the contemporary definition of a [tyrant](#), which is a single ruler, often violent and oppressive, Peisistratus was the ideal classical tyrant, which was a non-heritable position that a person took purely by personal ability often in violation of tradition or constitutional norms. We see this in remarks by both [Herodotus](#) and [Aristotle](#). Herodotus, in his Histories, wrote that Peisistratus, "not having disturbed the existing magistrates nor changed the ancient laws... administered the State under that constitution of things which was already established, ordering it fairly and well,"<sup>[3]</sup> while Aristotle wrote that "his administration was temperate...and more like constitutional government than a tyranny."<sup>[4]</sup> Peisistratus often tried to distribute power and benefits, rather than hoard them, with the intent of releasing stress between the economic classes. The elites, who had held power in the [Areopagus](#) Council, were allowed to retain their [archonships](#). For the lower classes, he cut taxes and created a band of traveling judges to provide justice for the citizens of Athens. Peisistratus enacted a popular program to beautify Athens and promote the arts. He minted coins with Athena's symbol (the owl), although this was only one type on the so-called *Wappenmünzen* (heraldic coins), and not a regular device as on the later, standard silver currency. Under his rule were introduced two new forms of poetry: [Dithyramb](#) and [Tragic drama](#), and it saw the growth of the theater, arts and sculpture. He commissioned the permanent copying and archiving of [Homer](#)'s two epic poems, the [Iliad](#) and the [Odyssey](#), and the canon of Homeric works is said to derive from this particular archiving.

# The Origin of Ancient Greek Theatre

- 1. Festivals honoring their gods.
- 2. The cult of Dionysis, the festival of Dionysis..
- 3. Satyrs, drunken half-animal, half-human creatures.
- 4. Maenads, “mad women”.
- 5. Greeks assumed these roles.
- 6. December in the countryside and March in the city.
- 7. Rituals must be completed.

# The Celebration

- At the start of the festival in Athens, rituals were performed. A wooden statue of Dionysis would be taken from Eleutherai to the city. The statue would be moved to one of the god's sites and a bull would be killed in his honor. A song, dedicated to Dionysis might be performed. This was called a dithyramb.

# Dithyramb

- Dithyrambs were sung by a Greek chorus of up to 50 men or boys dancing in circular formation (there is no certain evidence that they may have originally been dressed as satyrs) and probably accompanied by the aulos. They would normally relate some incident in the life of Dionysus. The leader of the chorus later became the solo protagonist, with lyrical interchanges taking place between him and the rest of the chorus.

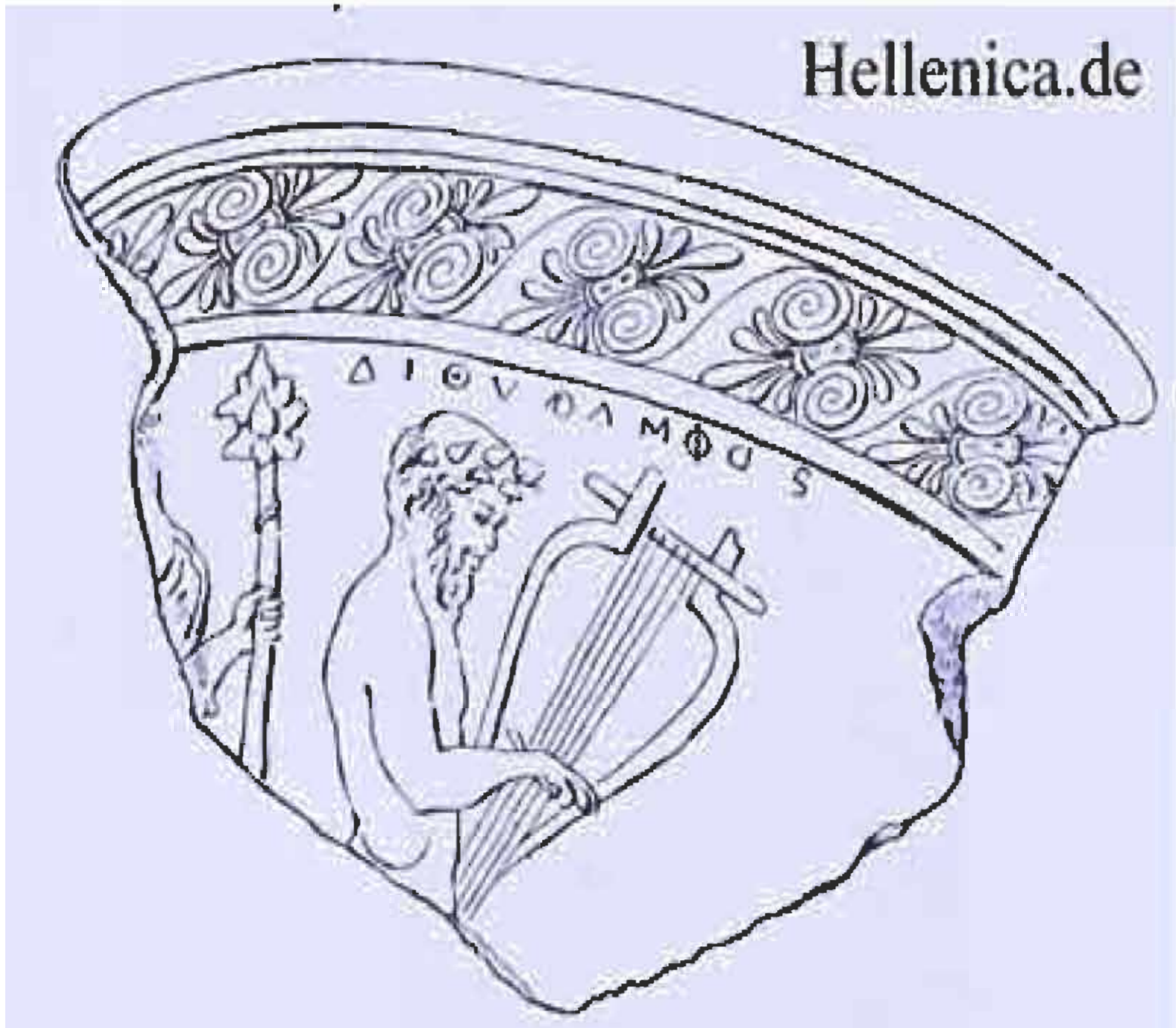
# Dithyramb

- Competitions between groups singing dithyrambs were an important part of festivals such as the Dionysia and Lenaia. Each tribe would enter two choruses, one of men and one of boys, each under the leadership of a choragos. The results of dithyrambic contests in Athens were recorded with the names of the winning teams and choregoi recorded.

# Dithyram Cont.



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# Myths, Chorus, Thespis

- 1. Members of the cult always told of the myths centered around their god.
- 2. This was the chorus, made up of about 50 men.
- 3. Thespis, a Dionysian priest, spoke.
- 4. He stepped out of the chorus.
- 5. He acted out a Dionysiac myth through spoken dialogue rather than a song, creating Greek tragedy.
- 6. This kind of performance gained popularity and led to intervention by Pisistratus, an Athenian tyrant.

# The Festivals

Tragedies were being presented to honor god Dionysus. In the major Athens area four festivals were being organized in god's honor: The **Rural Dionyssia**, the **Lenea**, the **Anthesteria** (*or Small Dionyssia*) and the **Great Dionyssia**.

# The Festivals

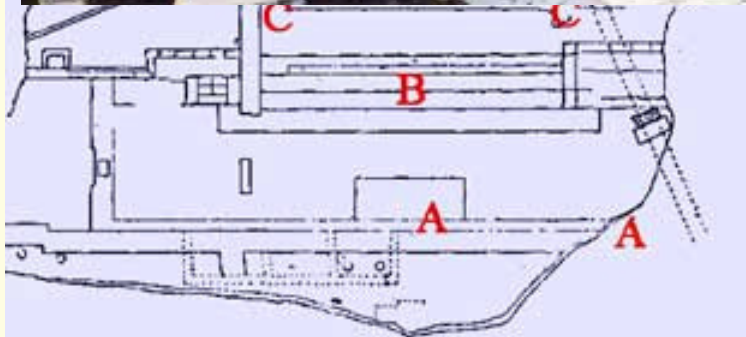
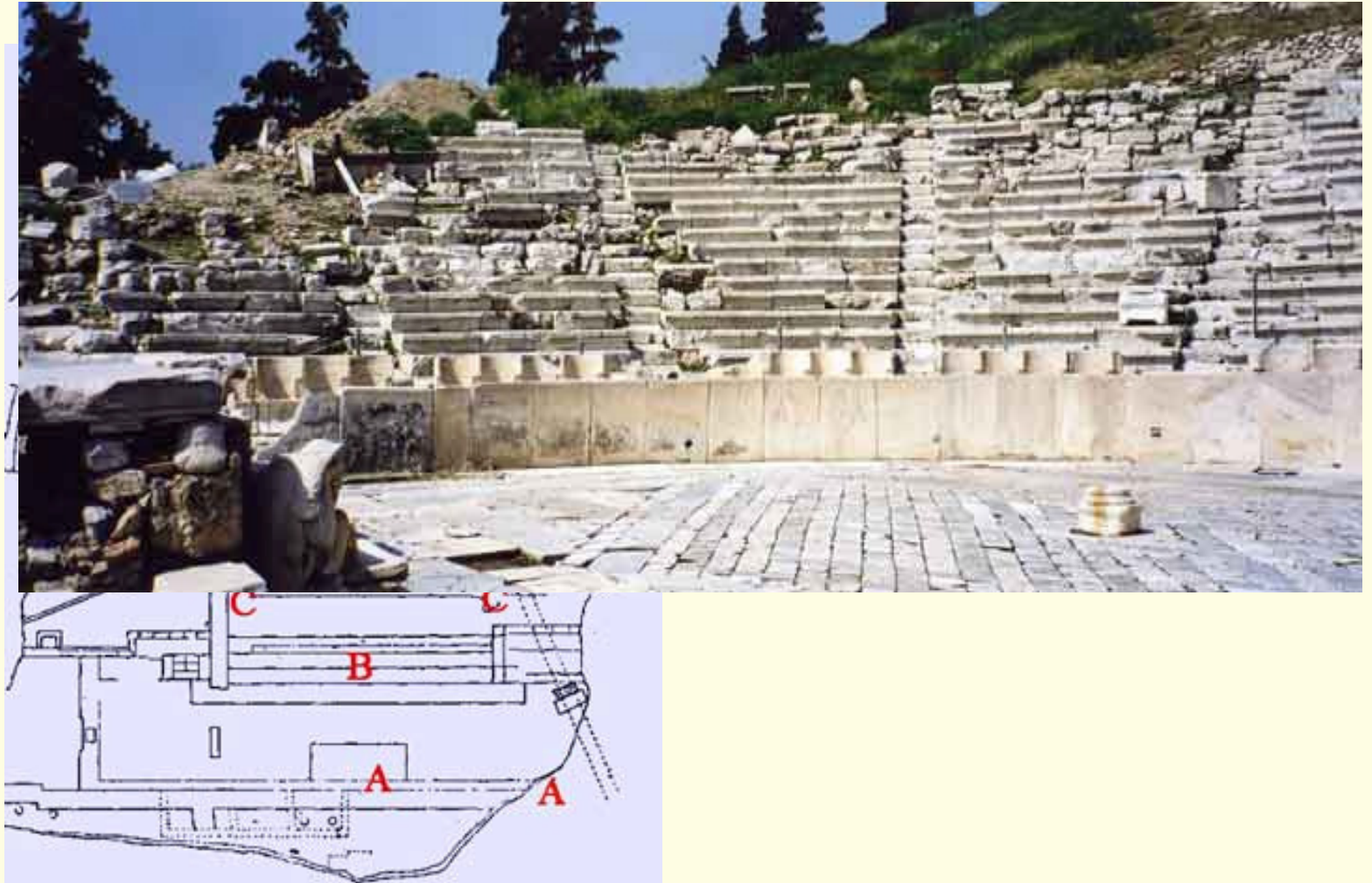
RURAL DIONYSSIA

ANTHESTERIA

LENEA

THE GREAT DIONYSSIA

# The Performance Space



# Dionysus



# CALLIOPE: Muse of Epic & Lyric Poetry



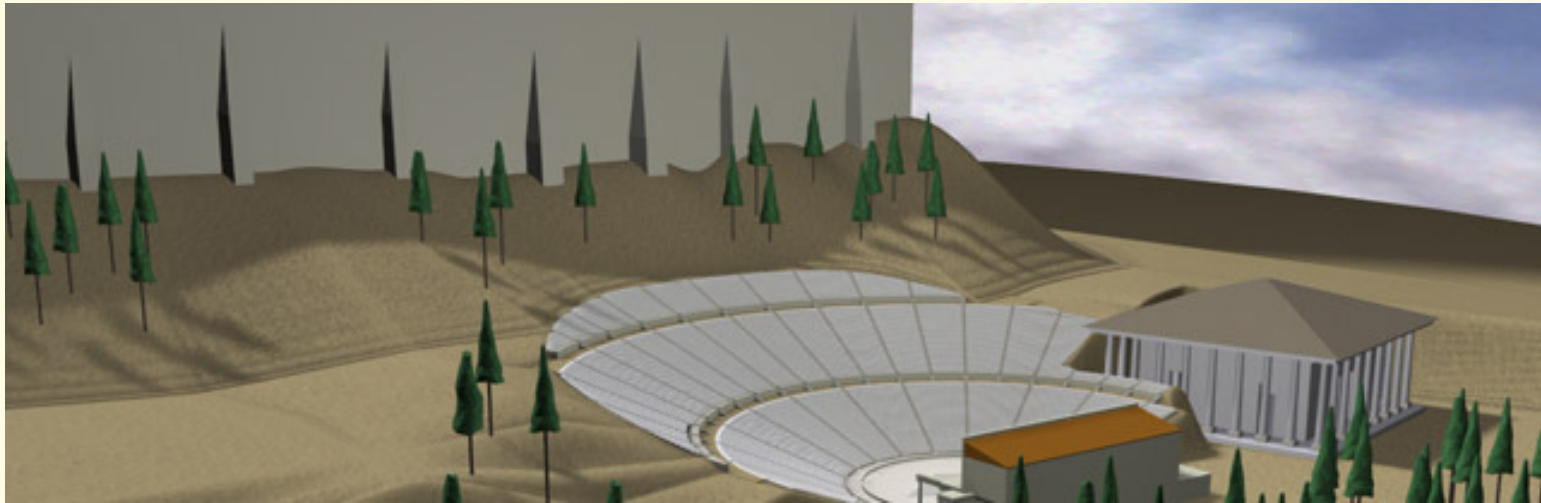
# MELPOMENE: Muse of Tragedy



# THALEIA: Muse of Comedy



# Theatre of Dionysus in Roman Times



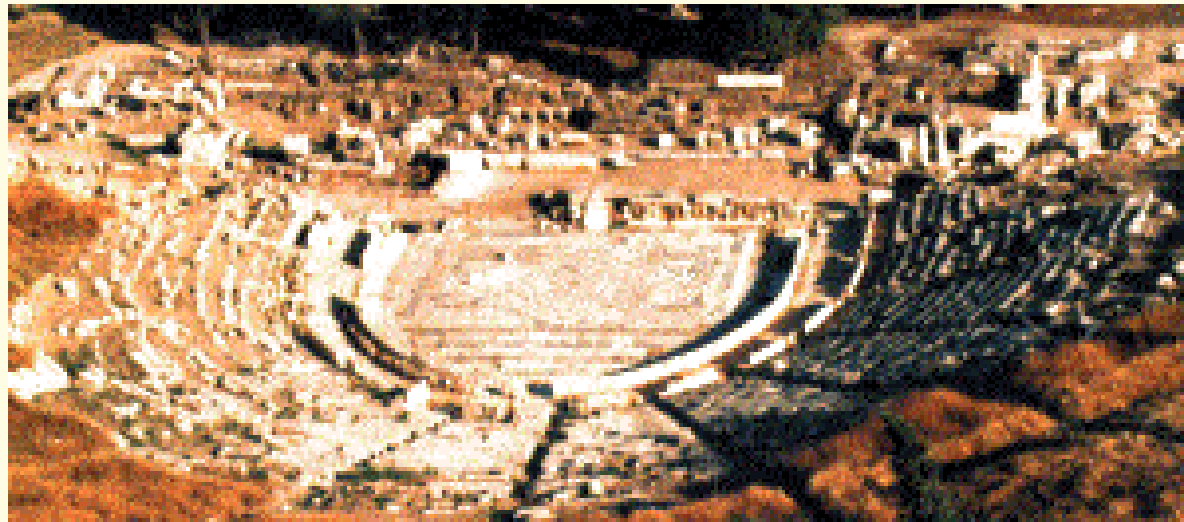
# Remodeled Theatre of Dionysus



# Remodeled Theatre of Dionysus



# The Theatre of Dionysus in Athens







# Oldest Greek Theatre Theatre of Dionysus



# Ancient Theatre at Miletus



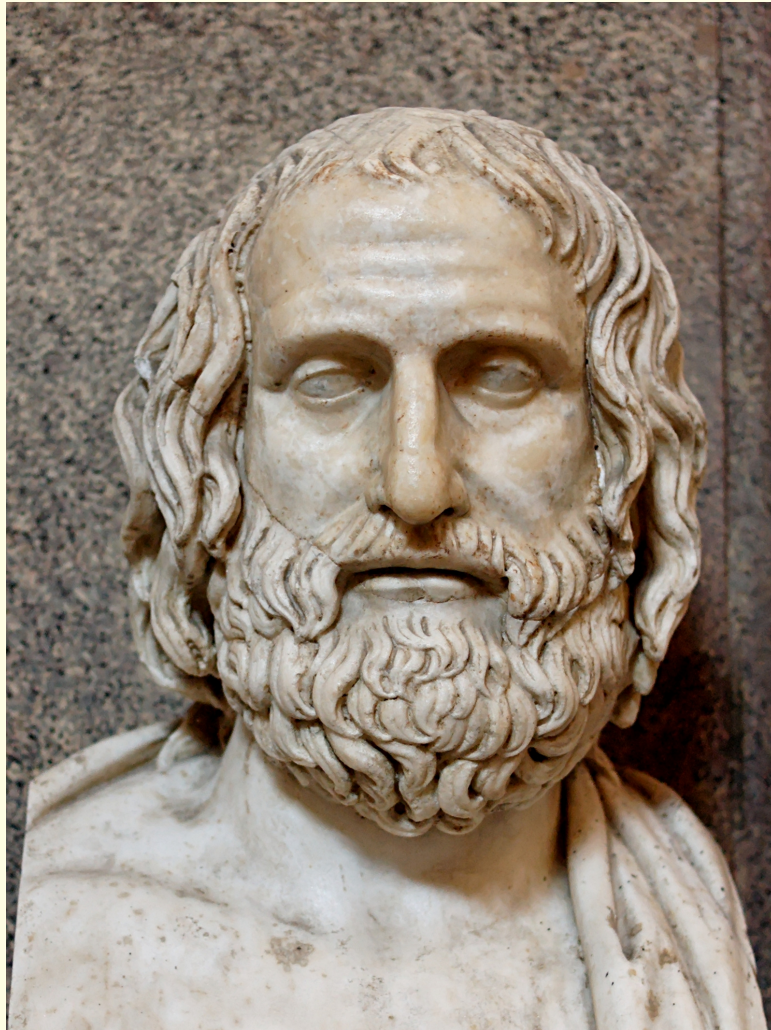
# Ancient Theatre at Dodona



# Theatre of Milos



# EURIPIDES: 485-406 BC



# EURIPIDES PLAYS

*Alcestis*

*Medea*

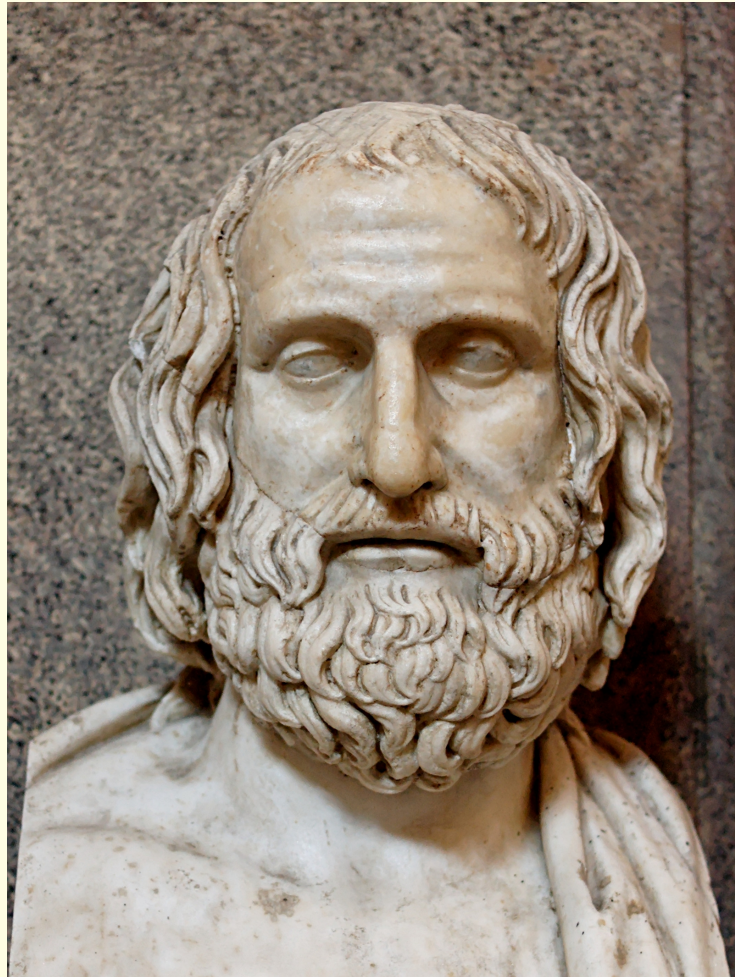
*Trojan Women*

*The Bacchae*

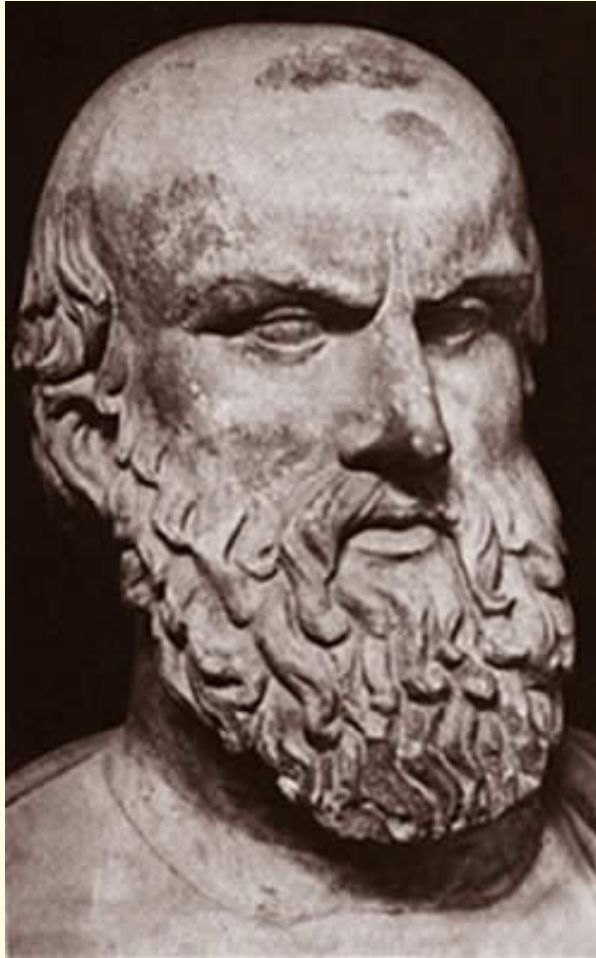
*Cyclops*

There were many more, but these seem to be his greatest works.

# Euripides



# AESCHYLUS: 525-455 BC



# The Plays of Aeschylus

*The Persians*

*The Seven Against Thebes*

*The Suppliant maidens*

*The Orestia*

*Agamemnon*

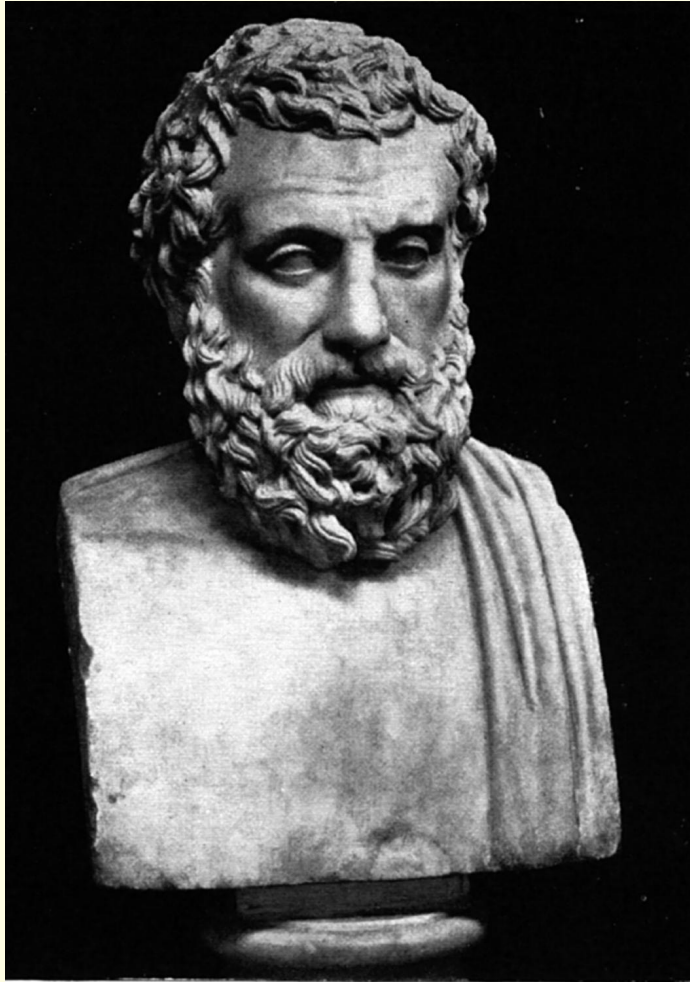
*Choephoroi*

*Eumenides*

*Proteos-lost satyr play.*

*Prometheus Bound*

# SOPHOCLES: 495-406 BC



# The Plays of Sophocles

*Antigone*

*Oedipus Rex*

*Oedipus at Colonus*

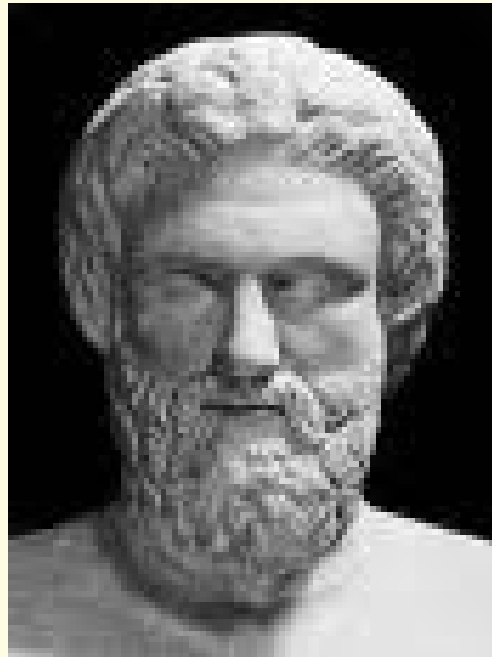
*Ajax*

*The Trachiniae*

*Philoctetes*

The first three are called the Theban Plays.

# ARISTOPHANES 448-385 BC



# The Plays of Aristophanes

*The Banqueters: 1<sup>st</sup> play 427 BC 2<sup>nd</sup> place*

*The Acharnians*

*The Knights*

*The Clouds*

*The Wasps*

*Peace*

*The Birds*

*Lysistrata*

*The Women*

*The Frogs*

*The Assemblywomen*

*Wealth*

# THE ACTORS

## **The actors**

At first in dithyramb, there were no actors. Thespis was the poet who introduced the first hypocrite, Aeschylus the second and Sophocles the third one. Besides these actors, who were playing the leading parts, there were also some other persons on the orchestra (=stage), playing "dumb" roles (the "followers").

# Actors, Continued

At the beginning the actors have been chosen by the poets (they -sometimes- played the roles themselves). Later, when theatre competition became tough, the need of professional actors emerged. Some actors tended to attach themselves to a poet. Still in the 5th century, when the success of a production depended on the actors as well, they were being chosen by the State.

# Costumes for the men

In order to play female roles, since the actors were always men, they were wearing a “prosterneda” (in front of the chest, to imitate female breasts) and “progastreda” in front of the belly.

The actors used to put on ordinary shoes, such as loose fitting boots and laced boots. In some scholars' opinion, the actors used shoes with high heels ("kothornoi"). We cannot be sure about that, because we do not have a clear evidence from the pottery. In the later years (2<sup>nd</sup> century BC), it is sure that these shoes with high heels ("kothornoi") have been introduced.

# CHORUS

The chorus, was considered to be the mouthpiece of society (in its humble form) and morality, and they were suffering along with the heroes.

Tragic chorus called: emnelia

Comedic chorus called: codrax

Satiric chorus called: sicinnis

# THE CHORUS

## **The chorus**

Up to the point when Sophocles imported his innovations in drama, the chorus had 12 members. Sophocles added three more. The 15 members of the chorus were entering the orchestra in rows ( usually face=3, depth=5 ), which means that although in old dithyramb the chorus was making a circle, in ancient theater the chorus was making squares. The leader of the chorus ("*Coryphaios*") was in the middle of the first row. *Coryphaios* was a professional dancer and singer. The rest of the chorus consisted of amateurs chosen by the poet and payed by the sponsor (*choregos*)

# Greek Parts of Theatre

Satyrs

Skanographia

Theatron

Paraskenia

Paradoi

Logeion

Kothurnus

Deus Ex Machina

Maenads

Orchestra

Skene

Proskenia

Episkenion

Thymele

Ekkuklema

Brings Us To *Clouds*

