

Research paper on greek theatre and ritual

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



Part 1: Annotated Bibliography

Chris Vervain " Performing Ancient Drama in Mask: the Case of Greek Tragedy." *New Theatre Quarterly*. 28. 2 (2012): 163-181. Internet resource. The author of article has conducted through research into Greek plays and the use of masks in Greek Theater. This resource will be helpful with the paper mainly because it contains extensive information on Greek costumes that are used in plays. In addition, the article is current and up to date with the author being a very credible source. This is mainly because he is a renowned Greek theater mask maker.

Bain, David, and Peter D. Arnott. " The Greek Theatre." *Classical Review*. 40. 2 (1990): 298-300. Print.

The authors of this article have critically examined Greek theater. This resource will be helpful with the paper mainly because it contains extensive information on Greek theater. According to the article Greek plays were categorized into two major types namely tragedy, which was a derivative of the word tragos meaning goat. The other form of plays was comedy derived from the term odé meaning song. Tragedies received their names from how they were performed, and its actors wore goatskins dancing like goats. This information is appropriate for this paper.

Csapo E., Miller M., *The Origins of Theater in Ancient Greece and Beyond: From Ritual to Drama*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2007. Pp 18-68. Print

In this book the authors examine the origins of Greek drama. The book presents different arguments that support the development of drama. Some of the reasons that have been provided in support of the development of

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drama is religious practices. The book examines rituals as well other theories that explain the origin of Greek drama. Thus, this is an appropriate source for the paper since it contains vital information.

Kuritz P., The Making of Theatre History. New York: PAUL KURITZ. 1988. Pp 13-54. Print

In this book the author examines the history of theater. The book examines the history of drama around the world as well as in Greece. In addition it examines different facts that influenced drama. Thus, the book examines critically Greek theater making it a reliable source for this paper.

Lichte E., Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual: Exploring Forms of Political Theatre. London: Routledge. 2005. Pp 7-80. Print

In this book the author, examines the relationship between theater and politics. The book examines the relationship between the two in ancient Greek theater. This makes it a reliable source of information since it examines Greek theater from a political angle as compared to other sources of information that has been selected for this paper.

Sophocles, and Robert Fagles. " Oedipus the King." Theatre Alive!. (1991). Print.

This source contains readings of Oedipus the King. This is a critical source since Oedipus the King is a critical part of answering the questions that need to be addressed for this paper. This is mainly because some of the questions that have been asked are based on Sophocles as well as Oedipus the King.

Webster, T B. L. " Staging and Scenery in the Ancient Greek Theatre." Bulletin of the John Rylands Library. 42 (1960): 493-509. Print.

This is a reliable source for the paper. This is mainly because there exists an oblique suggestion in the texts of that period in which permanent screens made of architectural images were introduced. Clearly, they were not focused on ' sets' of various specific plays but in permanent fixtures. It is also conceivable, that some rather underground passage was in existence, which allowed ghosts to arise from below. There were various disputes referring to the existence of the stage and the Athenian religion. Thus, the article contains reliable information for the paper.

Part 2: Greek Theatre and Ritual

In Athenian society, theatre was institutionalized as a schedule of festivals popularly known as the Dionysia in honor of the god. Tragedies, comedies, and the satyr plays and their respective colonies were the most out right dramatic genres emerging there (Kuritz 13). Athens continued to export these festivals to numerous colonies as well as to its allies with the aim of promoting common cultural identities. The culture of western theatre tracks its origin in Athens while its drama had significant and sustained impacts on the entire culture as a whole. There were people who worked in unison which were the chorus. These groups performed each aspect at the given time. There are parts of the Greek theatre and Athenian religion stage that needed the building of structures around the hills and mountains because sounds bounced off which made them sound even louder.

The main purpose of plays such as Oedipus the King in Athenian society was

to entertain as well as teach members of society. This is mainly because the Athenian theatre mostly consisted of plays that focused on the different gods. The Athenians had annual fertility festivals held around the month of March. The religious rites were performed as an ancient dance chanting to the fertility god. It happened outside in bowl-like craters in which festivals were aimed at celebrating the wine god. The religious rites relating to the Athenian societies and their ceremonies could eventually be written down in the form of verses, which later turned into plays (Kuritz 13).

A number of the existing plays make extensive use of buildings or scene buildings. This aspect of theatre was applied in changing-rooms for actors as well as a sounding board. It also served as a representation of the palace and house in which the plays were set. First, it was a temporary building, which was re-erected every year. This mere 'tent' or 'hut' was makeshift in nature. According to Sophocles, there is a dispute of the number of doors with reference to its façade. Most tragedies required just one even though it was most likely three in fact. Both actors and choruses entered by paths, which were known as *parodoi*, or *eisodoi* located at either sides of the stage (Lichte, 7).

Chiefly the actors made such entrances through the facilitation of horse-drawn chariots. The building's roof was used like the acting area, for gods, guards and others. This meant that the actors had to be raised above the orchestra in which the Sophocles chorus performed. However, evidence is sparse even though it is probable that such a stage existed despite the fact that it was not so high to prevent due interaction between actors and the audiences. Some of the other features of the orchestra included central altar

images of gods that were notable in the plays as required.

In ancient Greece, the sun was the sole provider of lighting. The torches, which were used, were more of properties which were aimed at heightening the appearance power of certain passages as well as those of characters, for example the furies. The actors were dwarfed by their surroundings. The tiniest movements as well as nuances of facial expression made extensive use of modern actors, which were invisible to the play's audience. In such a case, creative gestures needed to be considerably large and the sweeping costumes needed to be large and flowed with the aim of allowing free and athletic movements on the stage (Lichte 7). This was used to make strong visual impressions on certain audiences. The fact that facial expressions had been lost past the first several rows, they made it clear that masks had to be used. They were simply designed with the aim of making them visible from as long way off as possible.

The main traits of such characters that were portrayed had been expressed in the mask and simple conventions could arise in which various types of character put on their respective types of masks. This approach of human types in a way and view of human psychology continued to shape Greek theatrical presentation into the 17th century in Europe. The plays and tragedies portrayed these types in rare few and simple forms. There were protagonists, the messengers; the sightless seer, the noble men/women; and the careworn serious or men, the figure of respect and responsibility (Csapo 18). The ancient Greek drama, or theatre of Ancient Greece, is a theatrical environment and culture, which flourished in ancient Greece. With time, the city-state of Athens became an integral military, political and cultural power

during this period and was the centre of theatre and other forms of creative arts in the Athenian religion.

Therefore, the conclusions made are highly conjectural as most theatre critics discuss standard accepted perspectives of the Greek theatre. The major aspects of the structure of Greece in theatre plays included late points of attack, violence and offstage death, frequent use of messengers relating to subject information, often continuous time of action, usually single place and stories based on history or myth with varied interpretations of events. There was also crucial focus on both Sophocles' ethical and psychological attributes of characters as compared to physical and sociological.

Characteristics of some of those plays that were staged for large audiences included reduced role of chorus and emphasis on individual characters.

These were the main characteristics of the plays. On the other hand, the plays dealt with subjects that were often considered unsuitable for the stage and that questioned traditional values. They also had dramatic criteria and methods that were often unclear in the Athenian religion. They were not always causally clear as they were related to episodes, many reversals, and their endings. Most of the practices were becoming more popular as they used minor myths as well as severely altered key ones. The less poetic languages, dialogs and realistic characterizations were important in generating meanings to the plays.

Functions of the chorus included adding song, movement, spectacle, and dance. It was also agent in giving, asking and taking part in advice. It was also used to establish ethical frameworks in setting up standards against which actions would be judged. It was also an ideal spectator as it could

trigger reactions as playwrights hoped the audience would. In plays, choruses were used to set the mood as they heightened dramatic effects. They also had rhythmical function such as pauses and paces in which actions were aimed at reflecting on the respective audiences. Most comic Athenian society costumes agreed that plays were adapted from day to day-Greek life. They also made short distinctions with the aim of emphasizing on comic elements. The male characters wore a phallus while slaves as well as old men wore costumes that were comically exaggerated. On the other hand, women wore more of day-to-day costume.

Music was also a major part of plays in ancient Greece. Most theatre critics maintain that music was an integral dialog as well a major recitative in the Greek society. The music probably made used of one single flute, which was sometimes a lute. It is however not clear who was the chief composer of the music or what it actually sounded like. The music of that time resembled several oriental quartertones as well as different music modes, which were associated with comedy and tragedy. The ancient actors in the Athenian society had to have strong voices in order to be audible. As such, the costumes, sets as well as the movements also needed to be intelligible at and visible from great distances.

Works Cited:

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