EXPERIENCING THE ANCIENT THEATRE:
A PERSPECTIVE ON INTERPRETING THE ANCIENT GREEK AND ROMAN THEATRE THROUGH REFLECTIONS FROM THE SPACE OF THE PERFORMER

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

MEHMET SALİH YILDIRIM

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE

JANUARY 2013

Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. Meliha ALTUNIŞIK
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

Prof. Dr. Güven A. SARGIN
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

Prof. Dr. Suna GÜVEN
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Namık ERKAL (METU, AH) ____________________

Prof. Dr. Suna GÜVEN (METU, AH) ____________________

Asst. Prof. Dr. İdil KARABABA (BİLGİ U., IND) ____________________

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last Name : MEHMET SALİH YILDIRIM

Signature :

ABSTRACT

EXPERIENCING THE ANCIENT THEATRE:
A PERSPECTIVE ON INTERPRETING THE ANCIENT GREEK AND ROMAN
THEATRE THROUGH REFLECTIONS FROM THE SPACE OF THE PERFORMER

YILDIRIM, Mehmet Salih
M. A. Department of History of Architecture
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Suna Güven
January 2013, 161 pages

This thesis, in the very broad sense, evaluates the perception of an architectural structure through its history. It examines the 'theatre' as the building and selects 'ancient Greece and Rome' (mainly fourth century B.C. to second century A.D. which can be depicted as the golden age of the ancient theatre) as the period. It posits that the study of theatre requires more than formal data, hence, it employs a multidisciplinary approach, and combines the author's personal experience on the theatre.

The study believes that the subject-focused nature of available works is insufficient for the study of theatre, as they employ only a certain aspect of this structure. This thesis tries to examine the complete experience of the theatre for the people who were exposed to it; and present it, in a more relatable way, for the future researchers, theatre professionals and educated enthusiasts as an intermediate level source, where the need arises to increase the perception of theatre as a whole concept, so that its interpretation can be more complete.

Keywords: Greek, Roman, Theatre, Experience

ÖZ

ANTİK TİYATRO DENEYİMİ:
ANTİK YUNAN VE ROMA TİYATROSUNUN PERFORMANS MEKANI
ÜZERİNDEN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİNE YÖNELİK BİR BAKIŞ AÇISI

YILDIRIM, Mehmet Salih
M. A. Department of History of Architecture
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Suna Güven
January 2013, 161 pages

Bu tez, en geniş anlamıyla, bir mimari yapının onun tarihinin incelenmesi yoluyla algılanmasını değerlendirmektedir. Yapı olarak 'tiyatroyu', dönem olarak da antik Yunan ve Roma'yı (temel olarak antik tiyatronun altın çağı olarak nitelenebilen M.Ö. dördüncü yüzyıl ve M.S. ikinci yüzyıl) ele almaktadır. Çalışma, tiyatronun incelenmesinin deneysel verilerden daha fazlasını gerektirdiğine inanmaktadır. Dolayısıyla disiplinler arası bir yaklaşımı benimser ve bunu yazarın tiyatro alanındaki kişisel deneyimiyle birleştirir.

Tezin inancına göre mevcut araştırmaların konu odaklı yaklaşımı, yapının sadece bir özelliğine yoğunlaştığından tiyatronun incelenmesinde yetersiz kalmaktadır. Bu tez tiyatro deneyimini bir bütün olarak ele alarak gelecek araştırmacılar, tiyatro ile profesyonel olarak uğraşanlar ve yetkin tiyatro izleyicilerine, onların ilişki kurabileceği bir şekilde, sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Böylece bir mimari yapı olarak tiyatro algısı bir bütün olarak gelişebilecek ve yorumlanması da daha eksiksiz olarak yerine gelebilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yunan, Roma, Tiyatro, Deneyim

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor Suna Güven for being a mentor and a friend during this difficult process. If she had not believed in me and let me be creative, I would never be able to accomplish this. I realized that I did not really know how to 'read' and 'write' before I met Suna Güven. She turned all the difficulties and frustrations of writing a thesis into the most pleasant and fulfilling experience I have ever been through. I feel lucky to have met her and I hope to make her proud with my future works.

I would also like to thank the jury members, Namık Erkal and İdil Üçer Karababa for their positive attitudes, insightful comments and helping me find the right path to continue upon.

"Last, but not least", I would like to thank the Department of History of Architecture for accepting me into their family and being so helpful and welcoming.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM..........iii

ABSTRACT..........iv

ÖZ..........v

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..........vi

LIST OF FIGURES..........ix

CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION..........1

2. THE FOUNDATIONS..........9

2.1 A Change of Experience..........9

2.2 Enter the Actor..........11

2.3 The Station..........16

2.3. 1 The Site..........17

2.3.1.1 Orientation..........17

2.3.1.2 Religion..........20

2.3.2 The Stage..........22

2.3.3 The Orchestra..........27

2.3.3.1 The Altar..........29

2.3.4 Acoustics..........32

2.3.4.1 The Vessels..........35

3. THE STAGED OFFERINGS..........39

3.1 The Status..........39

3.1.1 The Festivals..........40

3.1.1.1 The City Dionysia..........43

3.1.2 The Actors 47
3.2 The Actor's Offer..49
3.2.1 Roman Adaptations 55
3.2.2 The Prologues 61
3.3 When on Stage Do as the Satyrs Do..65
3.3.1 Stage Elements 70
3.3.2 The Machinery 76
3.3.3 The Hidden Faces..78
3.3.3.1 Masks on the Roman Stage..81
3.3.3.2 Costumes 83
3.4 The Might..85
4. CONCLUSION 97
BIBLIOGRAPHY 104
APPENDICES
A. FIGURES 114
B. TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU 161

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURES

Figure 1 Sockets for wooden stage supports...114

Figure 2 Altar at the theatre at Priene...115

Figure 3 Orientations of various theatres..116

Figure 4 Audience Orientation by Quadrants..116

Figure 5 Roman Theatre at Bosra 117

Figure 6 Computer Model of a Greek Theatre..118

Figure 7 Computer Model of a Roman Theatre..119

Figure 8 Reconstruction of Theatre of Pompey..120

Figure 9 Model of the Acropolis of Athens...121

Figure 10 Plan of Theatre of Pompey at Rome...122

Figure 11 Reconstructed views of Theatre of Pompey in Rome................122

Figure 12 Computer Model of Theatre of Pompey in Rome 123

Figure 13 Vase Painting Depicting a Scene From *Cheiron* 124

Figure 14 Farcical scene, Heracles abducting a woman, Lentini................125

Figure 15 Birth of Helen..126

Figure 16 Hellenistic theatre at Priene 127

Figure 17 Plan of the theatre at Priene 128

Figure 18 Plan of the Theatre of Dionysus at Athens 129

Figure 19 Plan of the Theatre of Epidauros 130

Figure 20 Greek Theatre of Epidauros 130

Figure 21 Roman Theatre with semi circular orchestra, Aspendos 131

Figure 22 Vase Painting of a Greek Chorus Dancing................................132

Figure 23 Greek Dancers from a vase in the Museo Borbonico, Naples ...132

Figure 24 Choral Dance of Attic Girls, Villa Giulia, Rome..........................133

Figure 25 Plan for Presentation of Aristophanes' Frogs at Lenaion 133

Figure 26 Phaistos: setting for a choral performance 134

Figure 27 Knossos: the performance area...134

Figure 28 Restoration of the Council-House, Priene 135

Figure 29 Terra-Cota figures of slaves taking refuge on altars 136

Figure 30 Portrait of Sorix...136

Figure 31 Union Street Chapel, Brighton, 1825 137

Figure 32 Plan of the Lutheran Cathedral in Berlin, 1827.........................138

Figure 33 Plan of the Lutheran Church, Adelshofen, 1832.......................139

Figure 34 Top view of the stage of Priene 140

Figure 35 Reconstruction of Periaktoi 140

Figure 36 Rotating Advertisement Board 141

Figure 37 Restoration drawing of the theatre at Priene............................142

Figure 38 Stage decorations on the stage of the theatre at Ephesus........143

Figure 39 Tragic Stage Setting, Theatre of Ephesus..................................143

Figure 40 Tragic Stage Setting, Theatre of Ephesus..................................144

Figure 41 Tragic Stage Setting, Theatre of Eretria 144

Figure 42 The Room of the Masks, the House of Augustus 145

Figure 43 Painting from Villa Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale....................146

Figure 44 Euripides, Iphigenia in Tauris 147

Figure 45 The Mechane according to Bieber 148

Figure 46 The Mechane according to Ashby...149

Figure 47 Ekkyklema 149

Figure 48 Plan of Scenery and Machinery for Euripides' Hippolytus 150

Figure 49 Entrance of Lyceum Theatre, London 151

Figure 50 View of the stage from backseats. Lyceum Theatre, London 152

Figure 51 Interior of Lyceum Theatre, London 152

Figure 52 Young Woman and Slave 153

Figure 53 Slave Character Figurine 153

Figure 54 Slave Mask 154

Figure 55 Slave Mask 154

Figure 56 Slave Mask 154

Figure 57 Mosaic from Pompeii..155

Figure 58 Marble tripod base for supporting choregic tripod 156

Figure 59 Remains of a choregic monument..157

Figure 60 Choregic monument 158

Figure 61 Plan of the Theatre of Dionysos and Street of Tripods.............159

Figure 62 Temple of Fortuna Primigenia, Praeneste 160

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The disadvantage of studying Ancient History, according to Fergus Millar, is actually that "we do not know what we are talking about . . . We can study the remains of temples, the iconography of gods and goddesses, the nature of myth, ritual and sacrifice; but how and in what way did all this provide an important or intelligible context for a peasant in the fields?"[1] Of course, we know names, organizations; we have ruins of buildings, remains of paintings, but our knowledge is limited about "the impact . . . on the ordinary person",[2] despite the archeological evidence, we have little "notion of their social and economic functions";[3] basically, our perception is limited when it comes to how these elements affected the experience of the society.

However, it is different for the theatre, because it is more than just text, it is a context; when carefully reconstructed, its structure will revive the original experience, and only then can we "know from the experience" and understand "what an ancient audience knew".[4] The plays provide us information on the struggles of ordinary people, the problems they faced, their ambitions, their dreams; they give us insight on the minds of ancient societies, their culture, level of education; they improve our understanding

---

[1] Millar, 63

[2] Millar, 63

[3] Millar, 63

[4] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 87

on the structure of ancient societies, the classes, the professions and their roles; and most importantly, they do that through using an architectural form which has hundreds of examples all around the world, therefore, providing strong factual evidence for research. In addition, this remaining material evidence of architectural structures, together with ancient scripts, has shaped our modern understanding of the theatre in the past 2,500 years. That is why the ancient scripts of plays still get response from the audience when performed, because they are not "foreign at all: they have become part of our theatrical tradition"[5].

Especially the Elizabethan theatre was heavily influenced by the Ancient Theatre, and it is possible to find several references to ancient actors and writers, which indicates that the public was expected to be knowledgeable about them in order to understand the references, such as in *Hamlet*, where Hamlet mocks Polonius' news as old news saying "My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius was an actor in Rome, —",[6] where Roscius is among the most famous Roman actors. Another example from the same scene is when Polonius says "Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light"[7], referencing two famous Roman playwrights; and indeed Seneca is known with his tragedies, while Plautus is famous with his comedies.

The importance of context is a crucial reason why the theatre should be studied through the experience it delivers. Therefore, this study will focus on examining this structure through what it had to offer to the people who were exposed to it. Shopping malls could be inspected and maybe many

---

[5] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 88

[6] Shakespeare, Hamlet, 2.2.393-394

[7] Shakespeare, Hamlet, 2.2.402-403

have a front and a side entrance, maybe they have stairs arranged to direct people in a certain way; libraries could be designed to incorporate as many shelves of books as possible while presenting a comfortable environment to students; schools could be designed according to the needs of students, so that they stay there even after the classes, which may form an affiliation to make students feel in a space that belong to them instead of just a school building where they come to study. Yet, as much as the design affects those experiences, it does not define them. What really defines this experience is what happens in those buildings. It would be much different if one established an art department in a school building or an engineering department.

Especially in the case of the theatre, "one needs to go beyond empiricism and formalism to get at larger issues of how theatre works in history, how it works in society and culture".[8] Hence, this study will examine the story of the theatre, through its history. It will examine what the theatre building had witnessed, what had originated, and developed in its environment for the people who used it. This building is a monument of the city, which is not a temple, but has religious meaning to its users; it is not a senate house but has political power to offer; it is not a circus but offers entertainment. Moreover, it holds thousands of people at once, people who prefer to spend their time sitting in this huge monument from the early morning until late evening for several days, instead of their homes, the plains, the seaside, or instead of working, sailing, fighting, governing a city, or ruling an empire.

[8] McConachie, 218

As a performer I acted in several theatre plays and got the chance to observe and take part in both the technical and artistic struggles when putting a show together. I witnessed, first hand, how the choices made while preparing a performance directly affected the experiences of the performers and actors. The design of the stage, size of the stage, the decorations, the materials used, the costumes, the props, the comfort of the backstage, entrances to the stage and even the curtains had prominent effects on the experience that I went through in each performance. I also got the chance to see many plays as a member of the audience. I have seen many shows on the West End (London) and in Turkey; and had the opportunity to compare various aspects that affect the experience of the audience, such as the entrances and exits, the seats, the lighting, the height of the stage, the sound design, the wedges between the seats, and even the tickets. I noticed that the various combinations of these numerous elements yielded different experiences for the audience and performers, the interaction between them, and the communication of the play. I have also observed that there are many plays based on the stories that have originated in the Greek and Roman theatre, and our basic theatre design follows rules similar to its ancient counterparts, that have evolved over the centuries that passed. I wondered how this remarkable design was initiated, how it was originally intended to be presented, how this evolution began, how it affected the ancient societies, how it affected the shaping of an art form together with an architectural form, and most importantly how it formed an experience unlike any other.

The connection between the theatre that is "the architectural form" and the theatre that is "the script" is inseparable in the Ancient Theatre. The most important reason for this is that there are no stage directions in

ancient scripts of plays; yet, it all comes together when one visualizes the general form of the theatre. In doing so, everything the text states suddenly becomes clear and one understands how the playwright actually intended the play to be performed.[9] In this regard, Henry Arthur Jones emphasizes the difference between the drama (literature) and the theatre by saying that "the greatest enemy of the English drama is the English theater";[10] stressing the importance of separating the experience of the theatre from that of literature, because they differ in their "interests and aims". [11] It is the same for the plays of the Ancient Theatre, "we should try to . . . picture them as performed on . . . stage"[12], they were not designed for reciting only, they were works of performance, together with the architecture containing the performance and the audience observing it. Therefore the evaluation of the Ancient Theatre is only possible with its complete elements. These conscious choices made by the playwright and the architect highlight the experience of the Ancient Theatre, and its effects on shaping the societies. Hence, this thesis will try to evaluate the effects of those conscious choices shaping the ancient theatre; which in turn will let us know about its contribution to the experience that the performers and the audience went through, therefore, expanding our knowledge on the reason behind these design guidelines, so that our understanding on how the ancient theatre design worked will improve. Most importantly; this will, in turn, increase our perception of ancient mentality; leading us to understand how a form of art gave birth to an

---

[9] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 87

[10] Jones, Henry Arthur, 460.

[11] Jones, Henry Arthur, 460.

[12] Beare, The Roman Stage, 8

architectural form, and how, in turn this architectural form evolved to take place among the most important elements that shaped a society.

In this respect, the study will especially focus on the "space of the performer", as the focus of action, and where the experience of the theatre mainly forms. This includes matters such as the stage design, the stage machinery, the entrances, the costumes, the decorations, the plays, the actors' place in daily life, and the origination of acting. Throughout the thesis the issues of the working principles of the theatre design, the ancient perception and mentality, role of the design in plays, contribution of the design to the performers and audience, functions of stage elements, the reasons of improvements in the design over time, the time and places of performances, comparisons of the Greek and Roman applications, effect of technological advancements on presenting theatre plays, conformities between cultures and time periods will be highlighted in each section. Even though there are different approaches in various provinces of the ancient world, it would be neither ideal nor practical to treat the evolution of the experience of the ancient theatre, both architecturally and artistically, separated in regions; therefore, this study will try to evaluate the experience as a whole, stating the differences where relevant.

The study of the Ancient Theatre is a multidisciplinary one. It requires "artifacts uncovered at a particular site" by the archaeologist; it is nourished by "the architect's preoccupation with aesthetics, architectonics, and decoration"; supported by "the art historian's concerns . . . with aesthetics, composition, subject matter, dating and attribution"; and brought together by the epigrapher's contribution as a "jigsaw puzzle of

stone, clay, and metal".[13] During my research I encountered diverse and plentiful sources for architects, archeologists, art historians and epigraphers to study the Ancient Theatre. However, the sources are comparatively rare for directors, writers, actors and theatre enthusiasts who enjoy an educated experience rather than a random one, even though the Ancient Theatre is among the primary inspirational sources for modern theatre. With my background as an engineer, architectural historian, actor, and writer I intend this study to help the creative audience to understand how the Ancient Theatre was supposed to be experienced. Such an approach requires a multidisciplinary treatment, which is the kind of approach aspired in this study.

To present the wholistic experience offered by the Ancient Theatre, the study will trace the progression starting with the birth of the theatre and will follow by considerations in building the theatre, then lead into the actor's space, and how he was perceived as an individual, which will be followed by the power the theatre wielded. This approach will hopefully be helpful in understanding the experience offered by the ancient theatre, one of "the most characteristic monuments of an ancient Greek *polis*", and "a highlight of modern Roman architecture".[14]

The organization of this treatment in chapters is as follows: **Chapter 2: The Foundations** will deal with establishing the theatre. **A Change of Experience** will outline the setting for those foundations. The birth of acting, the formation of rules, and the evolution of different roles will be examined with the entrance of the actor in **Enter the Actor**. After the

[13] Ashby, 15

[14] Thomas, 177

entrance of the actor comes the place where the actors were stationed, starting with the site selection and then the stage, its evolution, variations and acoustics will be among the subjects of **The Station**.

The work performed on the Station had prominent social effects, which determined the place of the actors in the society, times and places of the festivals, where the plays were performed, the lifestyle of ancient societies, and of course all of those created important actors and poets who shaped the culture. Therefore, **Chapter 3: The Staged Offerings** will examine what the experience of the theatre had to offer. **The Status** will look into the place of the festivals and the actors in ancient societies. However, what did the actors and poets have to present in order to get the Status? The main topics of **The Actor's Offer** will consist of the concepts and contents of the plays, along with the playwrights' intentions behind those plays, and several elements that were required by the plays. Then **When on Stage Do As the Satyrs Do** will deal with those elements in more detail and look into what happens during the performance, concluding with **The Hidden Faces,** the most important props of the Ancient Theatre, the masks. Finally, **The Might** will inspect how the theatre was used as an indicator of power, to convey a political message and to control. All of these experiences will demonstrate the indispensable role theatre played in the daily life of the ancient societies, what it had to offer to an ordinary citizen and the formation of our own modern theatre.

And the experience will start with the idea that the art is about progression, so the evolution of experiencing the theatre is only through transformation.

CHAPTER 2

THE FOUNDATIONS

2.1 A Change of Experience

As the focus of action, the space of the actor contributed the most to the theatre experience in ancient times as it still does today. Ashby staged a production of *Ion* by Euripides as an example of the Greek theatre and he describes the experience saying that "the audience was charmed and amused by this adaptation of Euripides' ironic, tongue-in-cheek fairy tale";[15] Beacham staged *Casina* by Plautus, a Roman example, and he describes the experience remarking that "Plautus provides scenarios for performance that, 2,000 years later, readily respond to and reward sensitive analysis and trustful respect by a director and cast".[16]

The ancient theatre was designed in such a way to incorporate various types of spectacles, machinery, and even executions. A prominent change can be observed in the design of this performance area throughout history and between different cultures. Understanding the reasons for these changes and developments in the Greek and Roman theatre will lead to a better understanding of how the ancient theatre design worked, so that our perception of the ancient mentality can expand and enable us to evaluate the role of architectural design in theatre spectacles, hence its

[15] Ashby, 165

[16] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 87

effect on the public and its contribution to the performer. The reasons for the change in the design of the space of the performer could be caused by myriad reasons such as the change in the approach to the theatre plays, the newly emerging types of spectacles, shifts in the public expectations, the alterations in the aims of the performances, or even the transformation in the role of the actor in society. These changes can be as little as just changing the focus of the performance to another part of the space or could be as dramatic as a change in the material and the building technique as in from a temporary wooden stage [see Figure 1 for places of wooden beams for the stage] to a permanent stone structure. This change in material lead to a change in the size of the theatre, which might have also influenced the costumes of the actors resulting in the use of "high shoes, elaborate headdresses, and padded costumes" to make the human figure "larger-than-life" in front of this now monumental structure.[17] Since many of these design choices are still employed in modern theatres, this investigation will also enable us to improve our understanding on how the modern perception of theatre design was originally formed.

In his work *Ten Books on Architecture (De Architectura)*, Vitruvius dedicates six chapters, which is the majority of the fifth book, to theatre architecture; and starts his discussion related to the foundations and the site of the theatre by placing its order of construction right after that of the forum after a "healthy" site was selected, and states its purpose as "of seeing plays or festivals of the immortal gods". He further defines the event as a family experience where "the spectators, with their wives and children, sit

[17] Ashby, 18

through . . . spellbound”.[18] According to Ferrero, this implies that the theatre was not a place only for entertainment, but a place of religious celebrations containing poetry, reading, composition, music and competitions of dramatic performances.[19] Since Vitruvius mentions wives and children, he also highlights the fact that theatre was a family entertainment, not unlike the open-air entertainment of our time, which still thrives especially in the summer.

Although it may have served different purposes for the Greeks and the Romans, the theatre has always been the place presenting a unique experience through various types of spectacles, an experience of unity, nature, public, glamour, culture and faith; and the permanent vehicle of conveying this experience was the actor.

2.2 Enter the Actor

According to Bieber, the followers of Dionysus danced at their rituals with the accompaniment of various musical instruments, men dressed as satyrs and women as maenads. She further defines the word *tragos* as “one who dresses up and performs as a follower of Dionysus”, thus, stating that “tragedy is a song in honor of Dionysus”, developed by his Greek worshippers from the myths inspired by “his miraculous birth, his fights, sufferings, struggle for acknowledgement”. Hence forming the duty of the

[18] Vitruvius, 5.3.3

[19] Ferrero, 99

performer, that is to “disguise his individual personality in favor of a transformation into a higher being”, through costumes and masks.[20]

In a similar vein, in his Introduction to Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*, Raymond Geuss defines Greek tragedy as “the co-operation of Dionysus and Apollo, of music and words”.[21] He states that a “productive relationship” can be achieved when “the Dionysiac singing and dancing of a chorus is joined with the [Apolline] more restrained and ordered speech and action of individual players on stage”.[22] These opposing actions lead to the formation of the theatre experience. Therefore, the performers should leave their personalities behind, to turn into these “higher beings”, and combine all the elements of music, singing, dancing, poetry and acting to provide the complete theatre experience to the spectators, to help them reach the state of being “spellbound”.[23] Their aim is to combine “the imageless art of music, which is that of Dionysos” with the “Apolline art of image-maker”.[24] That is why the training of an actor is laborious and extremely hard. Cicero compares the training of an actor to a dancer and an athlete combined and says “philosophy is as necessary for the speaker as the gymnasium for the actor”.[25] Nietzsche resembles the gestures of an actor to an “enchantment”,[26] which is supported by Quintilian’s recommendation that public speakers should take example from the actors

[20] Bieber, 1-2

[21] Nietzsche, xxi

[22] Nierzsche, xi

[23] Vitruvius, 5.3.3

[24] Nietzsche, 14

[25] Cicero, *De Oratore*

[26] Nietzsche, 18

in working on their gestures.[27] These multi-disciplinary features can also be seen in the poet himself, as Nietzsche identifies the lyric poet with the musician;[28] the word "lyric" actually means "song to the accompaniment of the lyre", and indeed the Greek poem was read with a melody, rather than spoken words.[29]

All this preparation is for the transformation of man, in order for the "artist" to change into a "work of art",[30] enabling him to complete that designed environment of nature, architecture and culture. When this transformation is completed and the chorus turns into the satyrs, that is the audience to the god Dionysus standing on the stage; the actual audience of the play identifies themselves with the satyrs in the *orchestra*. The spectators imagine they are the members of the satyr chorus, witnessing this larger-than-life experience.[31] Nietzsche defines this phenomenon of drama as an "experience of seeing oneself transformed before one's eyes and acting as if one had really entered another body, another character".[32]

The transformation of the Dionysiac rituals into theatre plays lead the experience of "enchantment"[33] reach the common public, leaving them "spellbound". The space of the actor was the dream of the audience. The more taste the audience got out of this encounter, the more the theatre

---

[27] Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria*

[28] Nietzsche, 30

[29] Bieber, 4

[30] Nietzsche, 18

[31] Nietzsche, 42

[32] Nietzsche, 43

[33] Nietzsche, 18

evolved both in creation and design. It is even believed that before the beginning of a play an animal sacrifice took place in the theatre altar [Figure 2], which was located in the orchestra.[34] This tradition might have stemmed from the cultural aspect of the Greek and Roman cultures where the "aesthetic enjoyment" (a poem) and "functional power" (a magic spell) were combined; hence acknowledging the effectiveness of an "aesthetically appealing prayer".[35]

As the demand for the plays increased, permanent theatres were built; as the spectators become more and more part of the plays, the poets started changing the subjects from mythological to daily, so that the audience started identifying more with the actors instead of the chorus; and as they identified more with the actors, the status of the actors in the society started increasing, leading to design choices such as a special door in the middle of the stage for the lead actor. With this change of subject from myth to daily life, with the beginning of Menander's New Comedy, the plays no longer required imagination without any restriction from the spectators, therefore the structure that housed them "required solid and well-defined architecture".[36]

This progress starting with theatres in wood and evolving into permanent theatres is somewhat rare in the history of theatre in the respect that theatres generally adopted the available environments as a performance area, which can be called 'found spaces'.

---

[34] Ashby, 42

[35] Martin, 38

[36] Beacham, Playing Places, 211

> Medieval drama began in the church . . . Elizabethan theatre was born in bullbaiting pits and innyards . . . the French and English used tennis courts for theatres . . . Richard Schechner housed his *Dionysos* in a parking garage…[37]

Yet, for the ancients it was different, the theatre started with its own architectural design. Though the reason why theatres were created might not necessarily be the performance of tragedy, the theatre was definitely designed for spectacles. "The theatres were not 'found spaces'".[38] Ashby argues that the original reason of constructing the theatre was because of the *dithyramb*, "the annual competitions [that] involved twenty choruses composed of fifty members each, plus musician(s)".[39] The large number for the members of the chorus for the *dithyramb* would explain the design of such a large orchestra for the theatre, since tragedy only needs "three actors and some dozen chorus members".[40]

There were many factors shaping the play, which also affected the actor. Space was the most important among these, because the actor accepted the limitations for "the nature of the space available" and acted accordingly. Particularly for ancient cultures, "the space comes first, and imposes its own rules on the performances",[41] and this space was so customarily acquainted by the ancient writers that there was no need to describe it in the scripts of plays,[42] which leads us to the understand how closely the author, actor and theatre were "intertwined" with each other.[43]

---

[37] Ashby, 62

[38] McCart, 250

[39] Ashby, 63

[40] Ashby, 63

[41] Arnott, 1

[42] Arnott, 2

2.3 The Station

The importance of the space on the performance is essential. However, the design process of the ancient theatres is controversial. There have been several studies of the subject. The most important one is obviously the guidelines given by Vitruvius on respective chapters from his book *De Architectura* on designing the Greek and Roman theatre.[44] Unfortunately, his method does not precisely conform to the archaeological evidence. Other major methods proposed to explain the Vitruvian model and offer new solutions are by Sear[45] and Small.[46] There have been several discussions on the design of the several elements of the theatre design. The evidence is limited to point to a certain conclusion in many cases, however, "even when the rightness of the new explanation is less than demonstrable, the doubts cast on the old can be salutary."[47] Therefore, this section will examine several methods employed mainly on the space of the performer in an ancient theatre, to present the reader with several different views on experiencing the ancient theatre performances.

---

[43] Arnott, 4

[44] Vitruvius, 5.3.6-7

[45] Sear, Vitruvius and Roman Theatre Design, 249-258

[46] Small, 55-68

[47] Snodgrass, 138

2.3. 1 The Site

2.3.1.1 Orientation

"The theatre . . . represents, next to the temple, the most important Greek contribution to the history of architecture."[48] As with the temples, site selection is an important part of building the theatre. However, it is difficult to establish a pattern for determining the site and orientation of a theatre. The orientations of theatres vary in all directions in various sites, as shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4. Vitruvius warns against "a southern exposure", because "the sun shines full upon the rounded part" of the theatre, meaning the *cavea* [Figure 5, Figure 6, Figure 7], where the audience sits, claiming that it would not be a "healthy" site due to air drying up and impairing the "fluids of the human body";[49] yet the compilations in Figure 4 indicate that the largest portion of the theatres face south. This orientation is also contrary to the modern theatres as the lighting in the modern theatres is from behind the audience, resembling a northern exposure for an ancient theatre. However, since the spectacles were performed at daytime, the audience would already be able to see the stage, yet they would face the sun in some way, which the ancients might have settled for, so that the audience and the *cavea* would be kept warm. "A southern exposure invites the sun to shine upon and warm both spectators and benches in what must have been, in early morning, a stone-cold theatre."[50] Eastern exposure in %25 of the theatres also raises a problem, since the

[48] Norberg-Schulz, 50

[49] Vitruvius, 5.3.2

[50] Ashby, 107

idea that the spectacles began "at dawn's first light has achieved canonical status",[51] and the audience facing towards east as the sun rises would definitely cause problems, since the sun would be shining directly in the eyes of the audience. However, the reasoning behind a dawn performance is mainly because many tragedies begin at sunrise, "for example the *Agamemnon* and the *Andromeda* of Euripides".[52] This reasoning is similar to expecting Hamlet to start in the late hours of the night, because the script says so, therefore, the plays might not necessarily have started so early in the morning, a beginning at 9.30, by our time standards, in the morning might be possible which would explain the eastern exposure.[53]

The most obvious answer to the question of site selection could be that of a random hillside, Vitruvius confirms this preference saying that "the foundation walls will be an easier matter if they are on a hillside".[54] However, given that the only light source is the sun, its "seasonal position"[55] must also have been taken into consideration. The natural environment had a huge impact on site selection for the Greeks and "siting . . . was anything but arbitrary".[56] In their architecture the Greeks employed several aspects of the variety of the natural environment in Greek lands to "induce a certain relationship between man and his

[51] Ashby, 109

[52] Bieber, 53

[53] Ashby, 123, 125

[54] Vitruvius, 5.3.3

[55] Ashby, 100

[56] Norberg-Schulz, 47

environment";[57] and the theatre was an obvious place to establish such a relationship, forming a stronger effect for the experience of a performance.

With the scripts of the plays, the Greeks continue their efforts in questioning "the position of humankind in the universe"[58], and the placement of the theatre emphasizes this question. Therefore, "juxtaposition of sea and plain and mountain"[59] supplies great aid in determining the orientation of the theatre as in "the human need for physical and spiritual orientation".[60] Hence, not only the actual performance space, but also its surrounding environment was an important element in shaping the imagination of the audience.[61] This manner of using the scenery to improve the experience of the audience is still valid as in the case of the Broadway performances presented in Mount Tamalpais, California. Every year, thousands travel there to experience these spectacles.[62]

[57] Norberg-Schulz, 47

[58] Rhodes, 11

[59] Rhodes, 17

[60] Rhodes, 17

[61] Beacham, Playing Places, 206

[62] Ashby, 100

2.3.1.2 Religion

Since the theatre involved an act in the honor of gods, site selection might have been influenced by religious landmarks. For the Greeks, the evidence denies such a custom, although there are several examples of theatres somehow related to temples, there is "not a single known Greek theater . . . architecturally bound to a temple" directly as in the case of Theatre of Pompey [Figure 8].[63] Yet, we know that for the dedication ceremony of the Erectheion, Euripides' *Erechteus* was performed.[64] Also, a similarity to Roman examples can be observed for the acropolis of Athens, where the Parthenon towers above Theatre of Dionysus [Figure 9]. However, for the Romans, the dedication ceremony of a temple to its patron god would include scenic plays.[65] Many theatre plays were presented in such ceremonies, such as "Plautus' *Pseudolus"* and "Terence's *Andria, Hecyra, Heauton Timorumenos, and Eunuchus*".[66]

As in the modern custom where, for example, the dedication of a post office does not take place in a stadium several kilometers away; it would not be too implausible to suggest that theatres would be built in the vicinity of temples, for those ceremonies.[67] The evidence suggests that all the sites for scenic plays in Rome, before the permanent theatres were erected, correspond to a site "not only connected with a temple, but . . . in

[63] Hanson, 29

[64] Hesk, 78

[65] Hanson, 17

[66] Hanson, 16

[67] Hanson, 18

front of a temple”.[68] That might have been the case for the temporary theatres, and that custom might have influenced the site choice for the permanent theatres; as Pompey dedicated his theatre, which was the first permanent theatre in Rome, to Venus and defined it as “a temple under which we have placed steps for spectacles”[69] [Figure 10, Figure 11, Figure 12, Figure 8]. As seen in the figures, the Temple of Venus Victrix towers above the *cavea* of the theatre as if witnessing the spectacles given in her honor.

In fact there are several Roman examples supporting this argument.[70] “*Theatrum et proscaenium ad Apollinis*” was stationed near the temple of Apollo.[71] It was constructed with a low auditorium wall, where the temple touched the central axis of the *cavea*, facing the stage directly, as if Apollo himself was a spectator of the theatre, overseeing what was occurring on the stage; which is the exact position acquired later in the theatre of Marcellus[72]; so that architecturally the temple would stand above and behind the theatre, in which case the actors would face the temple from the stage.[73] The most important thing to remember about the space of a theatre is that “the space itself was sacred” for both Greeks and Romans.[74]

---

[68] Hanson, 25

[69] Hanson, 29

[70] Hanson, 59-77, presents twenty more examples

[71] Hanson, 18

[72] Hanson, 22-23

[73] Hanson, 31

[74] Beacham, Playing Places, 204

2.3.2 The Stage

If the actor was the main vehicle for conveying the experience of theatre, what was the optimum placement for this vehicle, where was the station of focus? How did this placement affect the actor's performance and the perception of the audience? Understanding the main logic behind the stage design of an ancient theatre should be crucial in interpreting the effect it aimed to produce. The depth of the stage gives information on the freedom of movement of the actor, and whether the plays really required large movements. However, since the ancient plays were played in masks there were no facial expressions, which led to emotions being conveyed solely through gestures. The importance of the actors' station leads to several theories arising on the subject, unfortunately, it is not possible to reach a certain conclusion when interpreting the evidence; therefore, most of these issues can be classified as "the almost insoluble problems dealing with the Greek theatre building."[75]

There are three main views concerning the use of the stage in Greek theatre: Dörpfeld's idea that the stage building was for decoration only and the plays took place in the *orchestra* completely, except such instances as when plays required the roof of a house; A. Von Gerkan's idea that the *proskenion* was first built as a decorative background, but later, by the second century, the plays started taking place on top of the platform itself; and finally the more widespread idea shared by Bethe, Bieber, Bulle, Dinsmoor and Fiechter that the *proskenion* always served as a platform on

[75] Markman, 279

which the actors performed.[76] The latter is also supported by Vitruvius himself, as he states that the actors stood on a platform 10-12' high and adds that "they call this the '*logeion*', for the reason that there the tragic and comic actors perform on the stage".[77]

Dörpfeld believes that Vitruvius mistakes the *proskenion* of the Greek theatre as the same as the Roman *logeion*, which he claims, is not; and further argues that the *proskenion* is merely a decoration unless there is a need for the roof of a house in the play, which he also underlines saying that the height of the *proskenion* is the same as the height of a Greek house. There are many examples in scripts requiring the roof of a house. In Aristophanes' *the Wasps*, "Philocleon, seeking to escape from his house, climbs into attic",[78] in Euripides' *Orestes*, "Orestes threatens to cut Hermione's throat and hurl her to the ground below" supposedly from the edge of the roof.[79] His second argument is about the narrowness of the stage, claiming it would not be probable for the actors to perform on this narrow stage with the stage decorations, especially with their masks on, it would limit their movement strongly.[80]

Dörpfeld's argument may be plausible on the grounds that in his time (first century B.C.), Vitruvius had not necessarily seen a theatre play as it was presented in the fourth century B.C. Furthermore, my experience of performing on a modern 10m deep stage with a mask on, evoked nerves even though I had lots of experience performing on the same stage. Even

[76] Bieber, 114; Ferrero, 101; Bethe, 230; Fiechter, 28; Bulle, 234; Dinsmoor, 298

[77] Vitruvius, 5.7.2

[78] Ashby, 89

[79] Ashby, 90

[80] Harrison, 274-275

the modern silicon masks limit the peripheral vision, leading to uneasiness of tumbling down into the orchestra pit; let alone the crude and huge masks of the Greek theatre. The inconvenience of acting with a mask on must have been multiplied when we add the high thick-soled shoes (*cothurnus*) the Greek actors wore on stage. It is hard to see the practicality of this highly elevated stage design when we know that the Greeks were practical in their architectural design above all.

If the Greek *proskenion* was never used as a stage, then how did it evolve into the Roman *logeion* on which the actors performed? "The *proskenion* of the Greek theatre . . . never did become the *logeion* of the Roman theatre…"[81] For example, examining a mostly Roman theatre Aspendos, leads us to conclude that the bottom row of seats is on level with the *logeion*. If we look into the evolution of modern theatre design, we see a similar tendency; in the course of time instead of raising the stage, the orchestra is lowered into a pit. This tendency may be a result of the orchestra losing importance and the focus shifting to the actors on the stage. This change of focus from the *orchestra* to the *skene* needed other architectural elements to be added to the structure, such as stairs to let the actors get on the stage, which also created new opportunities to embellish performance by use of these stairs in the space, such as the scene from *Cheiron*, where actors are struggling on the stairs, for a comic scene [Figure 13]. These sorts of vase paintings containing a stage representation also give us an idea on the height of those stages, which should be around "a metre and a metre and a half" for six to eight steps.[82]

[81] Harrison, 276

[82] Beacham, Playing Places, 214

Vitruvius states that the Roman stage is deeper because all the artists perform on the stage and the *orchestra* contains seats, unlike the Greek theatre where the chorus performs in the *orchestra*.[83] And as a matter of fact, we know that the Roman stage was large enough to incorporate the whole ensemble of the play, hence “the Roman chorus appeared . . . upon the stage”.[84]

The Greek theatre had one actor on the stage in the beginning and then this number increased to three or in some cases four and “the scenery in the Greek drama was of the simplest possible description”.[85] There is no doubt that the Greek actors were specially trained to perform on a narrow stage, despite the inconvenient masks and costumes. The elevation of the stage might have contributed to “emphasize the separation between the actors and the chorus”[86]. Also it might have provided a better vision for the audience by placing the actors at a higher place, as, otherwise, they might have been obscured by the chorus.[87]

Another point is that Dörpfeld’s theory assumes that there had never been an elevated stage for the whole course of the Greek theatre, which lasts up to the second century AD; therefore, Vitruvius must actually have seen an original Greek play during his travels. Vitruvius accurately describes the *proscenion*; he is a professional architect and this is his subject.[88] It might be an exaggerated criticism of Vitruvius’ work to admit he is right on

[83] Vitruvius, 5.7.2

[84] Capps, 300

[85] Haigh, 279

[86] Haigh, 280

[87] Haigh, 280

[88] Haigh, 278

everything but the use of the *proscenion*. Yet, Ashby also questions Vitruvius' expertise on theatre, claiming that Vitruvis shows no "particular affinity for the theatre nor informed knowledge on how it operated".[89]

There are vase paintings showing actors performing on a platform, as both Dörpfeld and Haigh agree, however, these vases are from Southern Italy and not Greece, thus may not provide accurate information and as Pickard-Cambridge states, they "have little to contribute to our knowledge of the Athenian theatre".[90] Moreover, they do not depict a chorus, therefore, it is difficult to speak about a relative position between the chorus and actors; still, there are several examples of vases from Southern Italy that contain actors on an elevated stage, with stairs leading onto it [Figure 14, Figure 15]. Furthermore, as much information as the vases provide, they "frequently depict dramatic moments never seen in the theatre –not unlike present day publicity photos";[91] and some vase paintings are only inspired by the stage performances while actually just displaying a mythological scene, therefore, it is difficult to determine if they "correspond with the details of production".[92]

Whatever the specifics, on their stations, the actors were transformed into gods and their servants, and they reflected this transformation to the audience. This station might have been an elevated one in the Greeks, or the elevation might have been just for the god's entrance as in the *Deus Ex Machina* in several plays, where the god descended onto the scene. Furthermore, the raised stage might indicate the increase in the

[89] Ashby, 10

[90] Pickard-Cambridge, 74

[91] Ashby, 18

[92] Beare, The Roman Stage, 5

importance of the individual actor. The Romans situated the actors and chorus together on a lowered stage and presented a more interactive experience for the audience. That would allow a sort of dialogue to form between the actor and the audience as in the Prologue of *Amphitru*o by Plautus where the god Mercury speaks directly to the audience.[93] Unlike our actors, who speak to each other, the Roman actors would directly address the audience, and even face and look at the audience all the time during the performance.[94] Since both the actors and chorus started performing on the stage, in the Roman theatre architecture, the *orchestra* belonged to the space of the audience, while in the Greek theatre it belonged to the space of the performer.

2.3.3 The Orchestra

Another controversial issue in the actors' station in the ancient theatre is related to the shape of the orchestra. Earlier excavations led to the belief of a circular orchestra, such as the ones in "Priene [Figure 16, Figure 17], Sikyon, Eretria, and the Theatre of Dionysos at Athens [Figure 18]" and especially "Epidauros [Figure 19, Figure 20]".[95]

This evidence suggests the idea that a progression from the full circle orchestra of the early Greek theatre to the semi-circular Roman theatre [Figure 21] took place.[96] The circular orchestra might have been formed as

---

[93] Plautus, Amphitruo

[94] Beare, The Roman Stage, 183

[95] Ashyb, 24

[96] Ashby, 24

a natural result of a need for the circular dancing formation of the Classical times.[97] However, the vase paintings suggest that most Classical dancing took place "in-line, often with hands linked"[98] and also the "present-day Greek dance is serpentine, not circular"[99] [Figure 22, Figure 23, Figure 24]. Furthermore, even though circular dancing took place in private celebrations, it was not suitable for purposes of spectacles since the audience would not be able to see the chorus clearly in this round formation. The line formation allowed the dancing to be spectated more easily in a theatrical setting, which is probably "the essential difference between folk and theatrical dance".[100]

The archaeological evidence is too scarce to place the complete-circle orchestras in a developmental sequence.[101] Carlo Anti suggested that "the oldest theatres had rectangular or trapezoidal orchestras".[102] Actually, the evidence confirms that it is quite difficult to say a whether circular orchestra existed before the theatre at Epidauros.[103] Anti's work was also praised by Margarete Bieber, who confirmed Anti's theory in her reconstruction of the stage for Aristophanes' play, *The Frogs* [Figure 25], she states that Anti's beliefs on earlier orchestras being rectangular is certainly correct for the Lenaion precinct.[104] This sort of a rectangular setting indeed makes sense for the earlier less refined plays depending

---

[97] Dilke, 128

[98] Ashby, 25

[99] Ashby, 25

[100] Ashby, 25

[101] Ashby, 26

[102] Ashby, 26

[103] Gebhard, 440; Senseney, 86

[104] Bieber, 55

upon the visual performance of the chorus. This progression from a rectangular orchestra can also be seen in the pre-Greek Minoan and Mycenean "straight-line performance sites"[105] [Figure 26, Figure 27]. The rectangular design also supports the "transitory nature" of the theatre building from wood to stone, since, as a use of material, wood is difficult to fit in a circular plan, and the effort and expense spent would be futile. Furthermore, there are no known circular theatres until Lykurgos, Epidauros and Megalopolis.[106] With the change of material, the plans of the theatres probably changed also to better employ the use of the new material and improve the design to provide a better experience for the audience.

2.3.3.1 The Altar

The altar mentioned earlier in the text, was an important element in several buildings along with the theatre. It was "essential"[107] for the temple and was also included in council houses [Figure 28].[108] In the theatre, it was where the supposed animal sacrifices took place,[109] and "where the chorus assembled when it was not singing, . . . was in the centre of the whole building".[110] The belief of a central altar mostly stems from the remains of the Theatre of Epidauros and the Theatre of Dionysos in Athens, the former

[105] Ashby, 28

[106] Csapo, 106

[107] Wycherley, 89

[108] Wycherley, 129

[109] Ashby, 42

[110] Buckham, 216

being a “round stone located in the middle of the circular orchestra” and the latter being just “a round hole at the center of the orchestra”.[111] The approach of scholars to this evidence is generally saying that if that hole did not belong to the altar what was it for?[112] However, “only one theatre altar has ever been found”, which is in Priene [Figure 2]; and it contradicts this orthodox view, because it was located in the perimeter of the orchestra, rather than at the center; it was aligned with the *prohedria,* the special seats especially for priests of Dionysus and other important individuals. It is probable that the priests performed the sacrifice before the plays and took their seats right beside the altar.

The scripts of plays do not provide any information regarding the location of the altar, however, “many scripts require places of sacrifice”.[113] Pollux writes about an altar being present in the orchestra, however, he names it as *thymele* and differentiates it from another altar used in the plays:

> And the *skene*, on the other, is part of the actors’ realm, but the orchestra, on which there is also the *thymele*, being either some sort of a raised platform or altar, is part of the realm of the chorus. And upon the *skene* is situated an altar…[114]

This sort of a two-altar approach might have been similar to the example of the temples, where one major altar was situated in front of the temple, while another minor altar was sometimes placed inside the temple.[115]

[111] Ashby, 43

[112] Cook, 375

[113] Ashby, 45

[114] Pollux, Pollucis Onomasticon, 237

[115] Wycherley, 92

Suda describes the location of the altar saying "After the orchestra is the altar of Dionysos, which is called the *Thymele*".[116] The *thymele* was probably where the earliest dithyrambic choruses danced around and sang, a place of sacrifice in the more raw form of Dionysiac rituals as mentioned earlier.[117] It is worth noting that Vitruvius does not mention the altar in his work *De Architectura*, in the chapters dedicated to Roman and Greek theatres. Bieber provides terra-cota figure examples [Figure 29] from the plays where an altar was used as part of a play. The altar could be a mobile altar placed on the stage, or it could be located in the orchestra and included in the play somehow after the sacrifice. Bieber underlines the use of the altar as a "refuge"[118] during the play, which could indicate that the altar might have retained its religious features during the play. Standing or sitting upon an altar would indicate a "specially belonging to" or being "under the protection" of the god, to whom the altar was dedicated to.[119]

The peripheral placement of the altar would allow less distraction during the performance, while still providing "prominence without constituting a major obstacle to dramatic performance".[120] The only evidence in Priene contradicts a central placement; and other physical remains are questionable in nature. However, taking into consideration that scripts made use of the altars frequently, it might make sense that a central altar would not really distract the performance, but blend into the performance, if used as in Bieber's figures. In that sense, a peripheral altar might have

[116] Suidas, Suidae Lexicon, 4.375-376

[117] Cook, 370

[118] Bieber, 105

[119] Cook, 373

[120] Ashby, 59

disturbed the priest sitting next to the altar, when a slave came and sat on the altar next to him.

Other examples have been suggested where a central altar makes more sense for the contribution to the play, as in the case of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Vinctus*, where the hero must have been bound to a rock, and that rock had to be placed so that he would not be able to see the entrance of the chorus of *Oceanids*. A central placement of the altar in the orchestra would allow the staging of the play perfectly. This also supports the view that either the altar lost its sacred position or transformed it during the play itself.[121]

2.3.4 Acoustics

The role of "Acoustic and musical imagery" is quite significant in "myth and legend".[122] Therefore, acoustic design was a crucial part of theatre design for the ancients. Since the Ancient Theatre was a huge monument, much larger than our modern theatres, "a good actor and a good voice were synonymous".[123] Large modern theatres have a capacity of 2-3,000, while the ancient theatres seated 15-25,000. As a matter of fact, the acoustic designs of "ancient theatres were extremely good", as would be expected.[124] The acoustic design started with site selection, namely choosing sites with little "background noise" and "protected from strong

[121] Davidson, 33-35

[122] Maconie, 75

[123] Arnott, 79

[124] Landels, 91

winds".[125] Furthermore, the architectural elements such as the *skene* and the *orchestra* had prominent effects in the acoustical design along with the semi-circular and sloped form.[126]

Epidauros was especially famous for its acoustic design; and even today, the sound of a coin dropped at the supposed location of the altar can be heard from the upper rows of the *auditorium.*[127] The amazing acoustics were probably due to the remarkable "harmony" in the design of Epidauros, as Pausanias states that "Megalopolis excelled in size", while Epidauros "surpassed all in harmony and beauty".[128] By combining the elements of "audibility", related to the architectural design; and "intelligibility", related to resonances and reflections, the ancients managed to obtain perfect acoustics for their theatres.[129] A recent acoustic study on Epidauros indicates that "the source position does not have an influence on the acoustic properties of the theatre" and any source position in the *orchestra* or where the stage used to be provides equal amount of sound quality "in terms of intelligibility".[130]

Another theatre with exceptional acoustic design was Aspendos. A recent study documented its "superior" acoustic quality based on its "slope, hearing angle, stage back wall height, smooth orchestra surface and speech transmission".[131]

---

[125] Irklı, 122

[126] Irklı, 121

[127] Arnott, 74

[128] Fossum, 70

[129] Maconie, 76

[130] Angelakis, 76

[131] Irklı, 122

Vitruvius reveals the ancient understanding of how sound travelled as follows:

> . . . the voice executes its movements in concentric circles; but while in the case of water the circles move horizontally on a plane surface, the voice not only proceeds horizontally, but also ascends vertically by regular stages. [132]

As expected from a "practical professional" [133] architect of his status, Vitruvius understood that the sound waves travelled spherically. This probably was among the major reasons for the design of the theatre with the "semicircular auditorium", [134] eliminating unwanted "echo and reverberation",[135] while conforming to the directionality of sound waves. Furthermore, even though he was not a musician, Vitruvius still included a chapter on harmony and music theory in his book, to justify the practical necessities of acoustic design in a theatre.[136]

The musical nature of the ancient plays was prominent; and may be argued to be particularly close to the modern operatic tradition, as the Greek tragedy was the inspiration for the first operas in the western world.[137] Another similarity to opera is that in ancient plays, old people were not actually played by old people; the masks took care of that transformation. The character of the 'old man' was extremely old and senile, and a real actor would probably not be that old. Acting required much stamina that a person of a certain age would lack anyway. This is similar to our operatic

[132] Vitruvius, 5.3.7

[133] Maconie, 76

[134] Maconie, 77

[135] Landels, 92

[136] Vitruvius, 5.4.1-9; Maconie, 79

[137] Arnott, 86

tradition, “old character does not sing in an old voice”.[138] The similarities continue in musical theory, since the musical scales used by the Greeks, such as “*Lydian, Dorian*, and *Phrygian”,*[139] are still being used today in modern music.

2.3.4.1 The Vessels

Vitruvius gives one chapter, in his work *De Architectura,* to the explanation of sounding vessels for the acoustic design in a theatre.

> In accordance with the foregoing investigations on mathematical principles, let bronze vessels be made, proportionate to the size of the theatre, and let them be so fashioned that, when touched, they may produce with one another the notes of the fourth, the fifth, and so on up to the double octave. Then, having constructed niches in between the seats of the theatre, let the vessels be arranged in them, in accordance with musical laws . . . They should be set upside down . . .[140]
>
> On this principle of arrangement, the voice, uttered from the stage as from a centre, and spreading and striking against the cavities of the different vessels, as it comes in contact with them, will be increased in clearness of sound, and will wake an harmonious note in unison with itself. [141]

Even though no bronze vases have been discovered, earthenware vases made for this purpose were found, together with the niches that Vitruvius talks about confirming the existence of this design.[142] Such vases were

[138] Arnott, 87

[139] Landels, 81

[140] Vitruvius, 5.5.1

[141] Vitruvius, 5.5.3

[142] Montgomery, 244

found at Aezani "embedded in a block of marble", they were also discovered in Saguntum and the small theatre at Nemus Aricinum.[143] According to Vitruvius' explanation those bronze vessels, probably vases or jars, were used to amplify and increase the clarity of the sound in a theatre, similar to our modern acoustic design, where we use electronic equipment for the same purpose, which we call Hi-Fi (High Fidelity). Vitruvius also states that these vessels should be placed upside down, therefore, they were not filled with water, yet they were 'tuned' in such a way to not only amplify the sound but also to create harmonies; which indicates the possible use of "hot pitch or wax"[144] for the purpose.

Actually, the similarity to our Hi-Fi systems is immense. These vessels were made in different sizes, so that they were able to enhance different pitch intervals. Montgomery, in his article in 1959, compares this system to the modern "small speakers" representing the high pitched voices named as "tweeters" and the "large speaker" enhancing the bass sound, named "woofer".[145] Fifty years later than Montgomery and 2,500 years later than Epidauros, everyone in their homes now have this sound system, commonly six tweeters and one sub-woofer, to bring what ancients experienced in their monumental theatres to our homes.

However, if the acoustics were really good in ancient theatres, which they still are, and can be observed readily, what was the need for the sounding devices? One reason, as Vitruvius states, could be to increase clarity and provide a richer experience. That sort of design might have increased the

[143] Sear, Roman Theatres, 8

[144] Landels, 87

[145] Montgomery, 244

sound quality overall, even for more inferior singers, similar to today's insertion of various effects on the recordings of many pop singers.[146]

A more important reason for implementing such sounding vessels could be to provide feedback for the actors, for which the modern terminology is 'monitoring'. Even though the audience was able to hear the actors clearly enough, the case might not have been the same for the performers on the stage and in the *orchestra*. Their voices would get lost among the audience of thousands of people, and they would hardly get any feedback. The modern performances use amplifiers turned towards the performers giving them exactly what the audience hears, or in some cases, earphones are used as monitors. And it is extremely difficult to perform without those, the most important problem being staying in pitch. In one of my experiences as a member of the chorus in the orchestra pit, similar to the chorus in the *orchestra* of an ancient theatre, loss of the monitor sound let all the chorus members lose their pitch, resulting in a cacophony. It is also worth noting that not only might these sounding vessels have provided feedback, but also they created harmonies helping the performers further in keeping their pitch, which was indispensable considering the musical nature of the ancient theatre performances.

A further effect of these sounding vessels might have been in character delineation and transformation in plays. Since the vessels were tuned, any line delivered by the protagonist that is in tune with the vessels would sound much stronger, while if this character later transformed into a villain in the story, he would modify his pitch and therefore the character would

[146] Landels, 92

sound more sinister with dissonant resonances through the sounding vessels.[147]

[147] Maconie, 81-82

CHAPTER 3

THE STAGED OFFERINGS

3.1 The Status

The theatre was so integrated into the daily life of the ancient people that it formed its own industry and jobs. In this respect, there were several words in Greek and Roman denoting theatre jobs. In Greek, "*rhabdouchos*" was a word given to people responsible for bringing the audience to order; the person who operated the *mechane*, mentioned later in the text, was called "*mêchanopoios*"; the one who made the masks was "*skeuopoios*", the costume maker was "*himatiomisthês*". In Rome ushers were called "*pedisequi*", the superintendent was the "*curator*", the manager of the theatre was named "*imperator histricus*", and the announcer was "*praeco*".[148]

The experience offered by the theatre was closely related to the status it was presented in. As with the modern audiences, the status of where the plays were presented or the status of the actors within the society would directly change the perception of the spectacles. A large festival like City Dionysia would offer a different experience than a smaller one like Lenaea; as a very well known actor like Roscius would invoke a different excitement than that of an ordinary citizen, a lowly slave, or in some cases a magnificent emperor.

[148] Walton, 288

3.1.1 The Festivals

Festivals, which were mainly "religious occasions", were the main events where the ancient theatre was presented for Greece and Rome; and provided "public occasions" for "ritual worship". [149] Since Dionysus encouraged "*ekstasis* (standing outside oneself)" [150], theatre was the perfect ritual for the ceremonies of Dionysus. In time, this ritual turned into a more general form of worship, and by the time of Romans, there were festivals dedicated to a "variety of divinities" instead of a "particular god".[151] The festival season for the Greeks started in December and ended in March, "when agricultural work was at its least intensive",[152] while for the Romans the festival season started with "*Ludi Megalenses* and *Ludi Ceriales* in April" and ended with "*Ludi Plebeii* in November", not including other special occasions where theatrical performances were performed, such as funerals.[153]

The duration of the festivals varied for the Greeks from about a week for City Dionysia, to two days for *Thargelia*, which was held in May, after the usual festival season.[154] The effect of the theatre must have grown and become stronger on the society as time passed, because the number of spectacles kept increasing. In Rome, in 214 BC, only 4 days were allocated for plays at *Ludi Romani* before gladiatorial fights took place; by 200 B.C,

---

[149] Rehm, 184

[150] Rehm, 185

[151] Rehm, 185

[152] Rehm, 188

[153] Rehm, 194

[154] Wilson, 151

the number of days for official scenic presentations increased to 11-17, during the Augustan period, the number was 40-48.[155] Both for the Greeks and the Romans, there were several occasions where theatrical shows were presented. In Rome, the officials and persons of influence competed among themselves to arrange these spectacles to gain public favor.[156] The festivals were named after gods (*Ludi Apollinares),*[157] emperors (*Hadrianeia Epibatheria),*[158] or important persons, even donors (*Balbillea* – Balbillus, Governor of Claudius).[159]

The tradition of Olympic games and mythological tales of heroes results in an "urge to compare performances"[160] for the ancient societies; even trials were contests employing "competitive speech";[161] therefore many performances were also competitions; and there were large prizes for the winners. *Lysimacheia* festivals in *Aphrodisias* cost 120,000 *denarii* total, and there were thirty-one prizes, which ranged from 150 *denarii* for the second place for an actor in comedy to 2,500 *denarii* for the first place for a leading actor in tragedy,[162] the second prize for a tragic actor was 800, and for the comedy first and second prizes were 1,500 and 500 respectively.[163] Suetonius notes that the playwright Terence was awarded 2,000 *denarii* for

[155] Bieber, 152

[156] Ferrero, 150

[157] Bieber, 152

[158] Ferrero, 151

[159] Ferrero, 151

[160] Martin, 40

[161] Martin, 48

[162] Magie, 635; Walton, 289

[163] Walton, 289

his play *Eunuchus,*[164] and the famous actor Roscius, who was friends with and knighted by the Roman dictator Sulla,[165] earned more than 50,000 *denarii* annually;[166] and "his contemporary, the tragic actor Aesopus, left a fortune of 20 million sesterces [5 million denarii]".[167] The extent of these rewards can only be seen when compared to other wages; for example, Polybius approximates the daily pay of a centurion—a professional officer in Roman army commanding 100 soldiers—to be 1 denarius,[168] which was worth six weeks supply of bread, and a senator was expected to have "property worth 200,000 *denarii*".[169]

A similar estimate for the costs can be made for the Greek examples, where the cost paid for a comedy by a patron was 1,600 *drachmai;* for the men in the chorus of *dithyramb* it was 5,000 *drachmai*. The total income from the City Dionysia was 25,000 *drachmai*. The vastness of these sums can be seen better when compared to the "upkeep of a warship for one year" which was approximately 5,000 *drachmai*.[170]

Since the importance of the festival events was great, sometimes, rich individuals in the society covered some of the expenses of the festivals, when the state could not pay for all the glamour and luxury that was expected. These individuals were called *Agonothetes,*[171] which before

[164] Beare, The Roman Stage, 165

[165] Beare, The Roman Stage, 166

[166] Beare, The Roman Stage, 166

[167] Beare, The Roman Stage, 166; see Walton 288-289 for Greek and Roman currency conversions

[168] Polybius, 6.39

[169] Walton, 290

[170] Walton, 289

[171] Magie D, 653

fourth century B.C. were called "*chorêgoi"* and supplied all the needs of the dithyrambic choruses appointed to their names and received awards.[172] They were responsible for keeping records of the competitions, and presenting the awards, sometimes they provided the food and beverages. This honorable title was only given to the most influential and wealthy members of the empire; every now and then, a well-known lady of the society could be given this title.[173] While in Athens, wealthy citizens paid for the expenses of the festivals, in Rome, young politicians took over this duty gladly, because a successful production could result in a "dangerous political power"[174], so much that "*aediles"*, who were the counterparts of *Agonothetes in Greeks,* were among the strongest candidates to raise to the high ranks of *praetor* or *consul* in Rome.[175]

3.1.1.1 The City Dionysia

At this point, examining a single festival would be helpful in understanding the context of festivals. A very important festival was from the earlier Greek examples, the annual festival of City Dionysia in Athens, which took place in March, ending the festival season. The festival would open with a sacrifice, which would be followed by *dithyrambic* competitions of ten choruses from "the ten *phylai* (tribes) of the city". Then, the next three days would consist of the *tetralogies* presented by three playwrights, each

[172] Rehm, 189

[173] Ferrero, 152

[174] Martin, 50

[175] Rehm, 196

with "three tragedies and a satyr play", for which the chorus parts were played by Athenian citizens "who had trained for many months". The festival would end with comedy, where one work from "five playwrights", who would have been chosen by the *magistrate*, would be performed.[176] The paragraph below summarizes the first moments of the first play in the morning:

> The spectators, thousands and thousands of them, begin arriving in the chill hours before the equinoctial dawn; a few torches cast huge shadows over the cavernous theatron as they move to their seats. Clutching woolen himations about them, they arrange the cushions that will soften the long sitting as well as insulate them from the night-chilled benches. The spectators are hushed, almost reverential, speaking to each other in low tones. They are not a people given to breakfasting: a few munch on olives and bread, while others tilt their wineskins for a dilute but still warming jolt of the grape. As the first streaks of light appear in the sky at the eastern side of the theatre (near the Stage Right parodos), the Watchman appears on the roof, eerily lit by the flaming brazier he carries onstage. While the audience listens to an already familiar exposition it looks to the southwest, awaiting the flare of a beacon fire on the nearby Pnyx that will signal the fall of Troy.[177]

Every year, awards for the first, second and third places were presented,[178] which comprised, the best director and producer, the best lead actors for tragedy and comedy, and the best chorus for a *dithyramb*. The judges were selected randomly, one from each tribe, "to avoid bribery"; and the awards were presented in the *orchestra.* [179] Along with monetary awards, the victors were also presented with "crowns of minutely weighed goldleaf",[180] similar to the tradition of Olympic medals. This tradition "lasted into late

[176] Rehm, 187

[177] Ashby, 118

[178] Martin, 44

[179] Rehm, 187

[180] Slater, 41

Roman empire".[181] These crowns might have been placed in the hands of an Athena statue and lowered onto the stage using the *mechane* (a type of crane on the stage), to be placed upon the receiver's head by probably the *magistrate*.[182] Apart from these, there was another important honor given to the victors by their native lands called *eiselasis*, which meant "triumphal entry".[183] Another compensation as a celebration of participation, rather than a prize, was thought to be oxen sacrificed and eaten together by the chorus members. The association of the bull with Dionysus might have been a reason for this tradition.[184] Therefore, it might have contributed to the ritualistic and religious nature of the performances.

This kind of treatment is quite similar to our current understanding of film and theatre festivals. It is not difficult to imagine a similar experience with a film festival such as Cannes, where several films, some of which with their premieres, are presented for the audience's taste for approximately two weeks. The festival opens with a ceremony, there is an international jury selected among the respected members of the film industry who evaluate these films, and present the awards at the end of the festival.

The total number of plays presented in these festivals was enormous. It is assumed that approximately 15 new scripts were presented every year. This festival is very old and it dates to 4th Century B.C., so if the number of plays presented only in one century is calculated, we come to the conclusion that "900 tragedies, 300 satyr plays, and more than 300 comedies" were presented, which makes "a total of 1500 original scripts";

[181] Slater, 42

[182] Chaniotis, 58

[183] Slater, 43

[184] Ceccarelli; Milanezi, 205

and mind that this is for only a single festival, in the course of one hundred years. There were 3-4 other festivals only for Athens, such as, "*Anthesteria, Lenaia*, *Rural Dionysia*, and possibly the *Panathenaia*", where new plays were also performed; and in addition to those, other city states would have their own festivals, as there are "roughly 200 known theatre sites", which gives us an insight on the enormous scope of theatrical plays created.[185]

Therefore, we can see that there were more than enough occasions for actors to perform and earn a living; still, apart from contests, the performers worked as private teachers, gave private performances, or toured with the plays to make a living;[186] not unlike the actors of our current time. During the summer school I attended in Guildford School of Acting, Surrey, UK; one of our instructors told us that acting was a part-time job unless we were "very, very, very lucky". Although there are thousands of theatres performing thousands of plays in the UK, acting is still regarded as a part-time profession even in an acting conservatory; and actors have to do additional jobs such as playing in commercials and TV shows, giving private lessons, or even working in unrelated jobs like working as waiters. The situation must have been similar for the ancient performers, unless they were really renowned performers. In many cases, the lead actors were really famous, since winning the competitions was a matter of great importance. This also is similar to current applications in theatre, where important actors are cast in lead roles, which increases the chances of winning awards.

---

[185] Ashby, 2

[186] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 22

3.1.2 The Actors

The acting is thought to have become a profession by the fourth century B.C.[187] For the Greeks, an actor played only comedy or only tragedy and the Greeks valued the collaborative nature of the theatre more, so they valued all the ensemble collectively; however, for the Romans this changed; an actor could play both tragedy and comedy, yet still he specialized in certain characters; and the Romans praised the stars more than the ensemble. The increase in the status of the individual actor started with the increase in "the audience's fascination with actors" [188] in Hellenistic times and continued through the Roman era. Aristotle notes that "theatre actors are more important now than playwrights (*Rhetoric*, 1403b33)"[189] for the late fourth century B.C. Since the competitive nature of acting was strong a particular actor played in a tragedy of all three playwrights in a festival. Previously, this tradition was the same actor playing in all the tragedies presented by a single playwright only, however, by applying this method, the actors were made to focus on their own performances instead of being bound to a single playwright.[190]

It is worth noting that both aforementioned famous actors, Roscius and Aesopus were Roman citizens, the former making money from theatre even after being ranked and appointed as a knight. The acclaimed actor,

---

[187] Ashby, 111

[188] Rehm, 190

[189] Beacham, Playing Places, 212

[190] Rehm, 190

praised by Cicero as "worthy of being a senator",[191] played both comedy and tragedy. "Roscius is said to have acted on the stage one hundred and twenty five times in one year."[192] Roscius was also said to have squinted when he acted, which may lead to the belief that he occasionally performed without a mask.[193]

Another important actor was the archimime (leading mime actor) Sorix, he was also a friend of the Roman dictator Sulla.[194] Being an *archimime* was quite prestigious in that another *archimime* at that time was the director of an actor's guild. They were so famous that sometimes their busts were erected, as in the case of Sorix. His bust was erected in Temple of Isis in the Forum of Pompeii [Figure 30]. However, unlike actors, not all the mimes were as highly esteemed as Sorix; actually, most of them were of lower social status, and even held in contempt and even compared to prostitutes.[195] After establishing a guild called "Artists of Dionysos", actors gained several rights concerning their status. These rights included "freedom from arrest in war and peace, exemption from military and naval service and, generally, safety of person and property".[196]

---

[191] Frank, 16-18

[192] Bieber, 164

[193] Cicero N.D. i 28, 79

[194] Plutarch, Sulla, 36, 2

[195] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 131

[196] Pickard-Cambridge, 292

3.2 The Actor's Offer

As mentioned earlier, the Greek theatre was derived from the religious rituals in honor of Dionysus. The costumes and masks allowed the worshippers to transform themselves into mythological beings, allowing them to literally live the experience of worshipping through this transformation. This strong experience was then transformed into theatre for everyone to undergo the same intense feeling. And the fact that there was no lighting as in a modern theatre, where actors cannot see the audience, made this experience more like "public worship", or "assembly"; since everyone was able to see each other and their reactions.[197]

The importance of following the ritual for the ancients can be seen in Ammianus Marcellinus' description of Procopius' revolt against the emperor Valens in 365 AD:

> Because a purple robe could nowhere to be found, he was dressed in a gold embroidered tunic, like an attendant at court, but from foot to waist he looked like a page in the service of the palace; he wore purple shoes on his feet, and bore a lance, and a small piece of purple cloth in his left hand . . . (Ammianus Marcellinus 26.5.15-18) [198]

Even though Procopius was successful in becoming the emperor, his attempt was still perceived with contempt by Marcellinus because the ritual was not complete, there was no "purple robe", which had to be worn by the emperor. It was not acceptable to wear a gold tunic with purple shoes. Even though he just took over the whole empire, it was sloppy work. This was the case for the theatre performances also; they were rituals that

[197] Arnott, 11

[198] Chaniotis, 49

must be followed orderly. Therefore, they had symbols, such as masks. For example, in Ephesos, theatre spectacles began with a procession from the temple of Artemis, through the Magnesian Gates, to the theatre, carrying figures of silver and gold, which were set up in the *cavea*.[199]

As mentioned earlier, the plays were acted mainly in festivals devoted to gods for both Romans and Greeks; "all *ludi* [festivals] are in origin religious acts".[200] Therefore, as it was for Greeks, theatre had religious importance in Roman life also and it was an important part of the spectator's and the performer's experience. Even so, "if the play were interrupted . . . it had to be repeated from the beginning just like any other formal religious ceremony".[201] This treatment was called "*instauratio*" and it was a reflection of "religious concerns".[202] This also explains the adoption of masks in the Roman theatre, since the masks were used mainly because of their religious significance. Vitruvius confirms that the public watched "performances on the holidays of the immortal gods",[203] emphasizing the religious factor in theatre spectacles. Moreover, the Church denounced the Roman theatre on the grounds that it was "associated with pagan religion".[204] They were correct in a way as theatre was noted among the principles of "natural theology" of Varro as the "poetic", "mythical part", which was later specified by St. Augustine.[205] Nevertheless, especially the Protestant churches built after the Reformation have many comparable

---

[199] Chaniotis, 53

[200] Hanson, 4; Beacham, Playing Places, 222

[201] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 21

[202] Rehm, 194

[203] Vitruvius, 5.3.1

[204] Hanson, 3

[205] McEwen, 49

features to ancient theatres.[206] [Figure 31, Figure 32, Figure 33] It is worth noting the *paraskenia* type stage in Figure 32, and the central communion table like the altar in a theatre. In Figure 33, the resemblance is more striking as the altar is placed in the orchestra, and the stage is labeled as *pulpitum* as in Roman theatre.

The scripts of ancient plays indicate a tendency of the Greek theatre to be more educational, aiming for a kind of enlightening. The way it was presented also encouraged artistic excellence, since the competition was a crucial part of the Greek theatre. Both poets and actors aspired to win these competitions by trying various methods, to such a length that the state initiated a fine for changing the text during the performance. In an instance Alexander the Great himself paid the fine for an actor who performed admirably, yet changed the text![207] The acting was so important for both Greeks and Romans that Terence said "good acting might give a bad play undeserved success",[208] and Plautus notes that "bad acting may spoil a good play".[209]

The Romans adopted the art of theatre readily, because of the importance of religion in their culture and since they treasured the art of public speech for obtaining offices in the Roman state.[210] For the Romans, theatre was more for entertainment purposes, they did not like theatre plays to question the authority or raise social issues.[211] They preferred visual shows

[206] Wakeling, 265

[207] Bieber, 83. Plutarch Alexander, 29,3

[208] Beare, The Roman Stage, 168

[209] Beare, The Roman Stage, 168

[210] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 2

[211] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 16

that did not require active participation from the spectators.[212] As in the failure of the first performance of Terence's famous play *Hecyra*, where the reason of the failure was thought to be another spectacle at the same time, which included a "rope-dancer" and "a pair of boxers".[213]

The subjects were mostly mythological and heroic tales for theatre plays, though as time passed, the subjects of everyday life started to make their place more and more. Theatre, as we perceive it, is obviously a field of imagination, however, especially in Roman examples; sometimes executions were performed as part of the plays, to compete with gladiatorial games and to make the spectacles more attractive to the public.[214] Sometimes the level of violence was extreme for the Roman examples, where for example a criminal was in fact crucified on stage for the sake of the spectacle;[215] in another instance someone was taken apart by a bear on stage.[216] However, for the Greek examples, the lack of onstage fights and kills on scripts might indicate that "there existed a rule forbidding onstage violence".[217]

Unfortunately, as with many ancient studies, the evidence is limited. As mentioned earlier, there must have been 1,500 plays written in the course of one hundred century, however, from those only "forty-four complete plays"[218] survive for the Greek examples; for the Romans, the majority of

---

[212] Bieber, 222

[213] Beare, The Roman Stage, 173

[214] Bieber, 238; Suetonius, Caligula, LVII

[215] Juvenal, Satires, 8.187-8

[216] Martial, De Spectaculis, 7

[217] Ashby, 6

[218] Ashby, 3

remaining plays are "twenty-six comedies"[219] by Plautus and Terence, as for tragedies we have "only fragments"[220] for the Roman examples. The comedies of Plautus and Terence are, unfortunately, not originals, but translations from the Greek; and the original Greek versions of those works have not been preserved.[221] The tradition of adaptation from the Greeks was already accustomed for the Romans, since it also existed in sculpture. The evidence regarding the satyr plays is quite limited as the only complete satyr play that has reached us is Euripides' *Cyclops,*[222] however, a major portion of *The Trackers (Ichneutae)* by Sophocles was also retrieved.[223]

The Greek plays were played from a script; however, the Roman plays started as improvisational comedies, without plots, employing crude characters. The main Roman characteristic in theatre was the obvious musical elements, such as singing and dancing.[224] Musical accompaniment was indispensable for a Roman play, where the musicians played a flute with "two pipes, each about twenty inches long, bound to his mouth by a bandage round his head, so as to leave his hands free to work the stops".[225] Music had a very important role in the life of Romans and was "observed and applied by the great majority of the Roman people . . . It was used to excite and to control . . . It was used as an encouragement of natural

---

[219] Beare, The Roman, Stage, 1

[220] Beare, The Roman Stage, 72

[221] Beare, Recent Work on the Roman Theatre, 105

[222] Adkins, 283

[223] Flickinger, 123

[224] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 12, 13

[225] Beare, The Roman Stage, 168

affections and a means for developing spiritual powers" as well as "sensual enjoyment".[226]

First to employ a plot in Roman theatre was Andronicus Livius:

> Livius, who was the first to lay aside medleys, and to digest a story into a regular plot, being also, as all were at that time, the actor of his own pieces; and, having broken his voice by being obliged to repeat them too often, after requesting the indulgence of the public, placed a boy before the musician, to chaunt, while he himself performed the gesticulations.[227]

Therefore, according to Livy, not only did Andronicus start staging plays with a previously set story, he also acted in them himself, and started a new tradition in performing where the singer and actor were separated, enabling the actor to concentrate on his gestures only. He also won a victory in *Metaurus*, because he wrote and played in his plays.[228] As a matter of fact, unlike modern examples, where music, text and dance choreography are generally done by different people, the ancient poet composes all of those element by himself.[229] Aristotle further advises the composer to arrange proper gestures during the composing process, for the actors to perform.[230]

Another important trait of the ancient plays was that the audience was made to be distant to offending characters. For the Greeks, where "the men marry their mothers, and wives murder their husbands" was not Greece. Those characters were generally from "Thebes and Argos, both

---

[226] Antcliffe, 344

[227] Livy, VII, Y.R.391. 361.

[228] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 19

[229] Zarifi, 233

[230] McCart, 252

long-standing rivals of Athens".[231] In Euripides' Medea, the title character Medea kills her children. Conveniently, she is not from Greece, she is from a 'distant land' called Colchis, which is currently Georgia.[232] For the Romans, this 'distant land' was Greece, in their plays, the normally 'unacceptable behavior' performed on stage were generally performed by Greek characters.[233]

3.2.1 Roman Adaptations

Demands of the Roman audience differed greatly from that of the Greeks. Therefore, in their adaptations, Roman playwrights removed the "dull" [234] parts, inserted "puns on Latin words"[235] and introduced more grotesque, entertaining and laughable elements. The characters tended to be "caricatures, funnier but less sympathetic than their [Hellenistic] predecessors". Since slaves sometimes took part in the plays as actors, it was customary in theatre to use extreme violence towards them as it was in the Roman life generally. This was not true for their Greek counterparts and it seems that it was a choice of the playwright to exaggerate the elements of torture.[236]

---

[231] Arnott, 9

[232] Arnott, 10

[233] Rehm, 195

[234] Beare, The Roman Stage, 8

[235] Beare, The Roman Stage, 8

[236] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 30

The belief that the Roman audience preferred comedies to tragedies might also be inferred from the Prologue of *Amphitruo* by Plautus when the god Mercury says:

> Well, first I'll tell the favour I'm to ask,
> And then the story of our tragedy.
> What are you frowning at? because I said
> 'Twas going to be a tragedy? Never mind!
> I am a god: I'll alter it. If you like,
> I'll turn the tragedy to comedy [237]

Nevertheless, the affinity of the Romans for comedy certainly does not mean that the Roman adaptations lacked originality by employing only simple-minded comedy. On the contrary, even though they acquired the original concept of the plays, they managed to emphasize particular ideas by their use of language and different arrangements.[238] Furthermore, the Latin playwrights openly admitted that the works were translations by adding acknowledgements in the beginning of the script such as "This play is called in Greek the *Emporos* of Philemon; in Latin it is the *Mercator* of Titus Maccus".[239]

The translations were "creative, selective and inevitably political".[240] They even went into more dramatic changes in order to reinforce the connection of the audience with the play, such as in the case of Ennius' *Iphigenia*, the chorus of maidens was replaced with soldiers;[241] due to the importance of the military in Roman life. "Roman audience would prefer a troop of

[237] Plautus, Amphitruo, 50-55

[238] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience,119

[239] Beare, Recent Work on the Roman Theatre, 106

[240] Hesk, 87

[241] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 120

soldiers to a party of young women".[242] Actually, the chorus was shaped as whatever the playwright required it to be to present the perfect experience for the audience. It was sometimes the narrator; when the actor was the god, the chorus played his worshippers; if the actor was a king, the chorus members were his subjects.[243] The chorus was the ideal audience of an actor.

In some examples, the translated plays were actually a combination of more than one Greek play. For example Terence's first play, the *Andria,* was a fusion of the Greek playwright Menander's *Andria* with additional characters from Menander's *Perinthia*. This treatment was criticized as "contamination" by some.[244] Nevertheless, two thousand years later, this application was embraced by Stephen Sondheim, with his adaptation of Plautus' *Pseudolos, Miles Gloriosus and Mostellaria,* called *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, winning him a Tony Award for Best Musical.

Even though the Roman audience might have preferred comedy, tragic plays were also enjoyed. Cicero notes that tragedies were "attended by eager crowds" who were so familiar with the works that they would catch the mistakes made by the actors and many tragic writers such as "Ennius, Pacuvius and Accius" were highly regarded with great respect.[245] The tragedies would probably speak to the Roman audience's sympathy towards "melodramatic effects, horrific plots, flamboyant personalities"

---

[242] Beare, The Roman Stage, 74

[243] Arnott, 30

[244] Beare, Recent Work on the Roman Theatre, 106

[245] Beare, The Roman Stage, 70

and "superhuman virtue",[246] since the comedies were closer to reality while the tragedies were more like larger-than-life adventures.

Among the most important characteristics of Roman adaptations and originals was the element of music. Plautus was the first to turn the plays into a musical comedy. Rhythm and word plays were an important part of the show and the element of sound introduced an "emotional impact to characters' language". In Greek theatre, the music acted as a combining section between parts of the play. However, the Roman theatre established a style integrating the music into the body of the play.[247] The importance of the music was revealed further, as in some foreword notes of plays where the composer was named separately, if he was different from the playwright.[248] The increasing importance of the music leads to a change of perception about the theatre. This might have triggered the difference in words used by the Greeks and Romans; as the Greeks use the word *theatron,* meaning seeing place; while the Romans use the word *auditorium*, emphasizing the hearing, which also is closer to the modern use.[249] The importance of hearing could also be the reason why the Romans kept building wooden theatres even after building permanent stone theatres. Vitruvius underlines the importance of wood in theatres stating that to amplify the sound the performers would turn back "towards the folding [wooden] doors on the stage".[250]

---

[246] Beare, The Roman Stage, 71

[247] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 32

[248] Bieber, 150

[249] Bieber, 57

[250] Vitruvius, 5.5.7

The unscripted nature of the early Roman plays made audience participation an important component of the play as it enabled the play to take shape as the performance moved along. The Greek actor presented an imaginary experience; however, the Roman actor tried to combine this imaginary scenario into the real life by constantly acknowledging the audience. “The spectators and performers are simultaneously inside and outside the world of the play”.[251]

Even though it may seem that the Roman actor would try to offer entertainment above everything else, it would be unfair to limit the Roman theatre to simple jokes, or clowning. As a matter of fact, at the end of the Republic era, the Roman tragic writing was quite developed, even more than comedy.[252] Horace appreciates the development of tragedy in the Roman theatre saying that after the Punic wars, Roman writers started focusing on Greek tragic writings and succeeded in interpreting it in their own style.

> [The Roman writer] applied his genius to the Grecian pages; and enjoying rest after the Punic wars, began to search what useful matter Sophocles, and Thespis, and Aeschylus afforded: he tried, too, if he could with dignity translate their works; and succeeded in pleasing himself, being by nature [of a genius] sublime and strong: for he breathes a spirit tragic enough, and dares successfully. . .[253]

This development can also be taken as an indication that the Roman audience got more sophisticated in time, or that theatre succeeded in expanding its audience profile to a more educated type, increasing its influence. This increase of influence can be seen as a factor to see the

[251] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 35

[252] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 117

[253] Horace, Epistles, 2.1.235-240

Imperial period as the golden age of theatre in Rome, because by that time, the politicians realized the influence of the theatre as a tool for manipulation. The quality of the works might be argued, however, as Horace indicates, the tragedy actually got stronger. What really happened was an increase in the variety of styles in the theatre, because the size of the audience increased, so new styles such as mime, and pantomime emerged to pleasure different crowds; which, as mentioned earlier, is in the nature of Roman theatre: to interact with the audience and present an experience accordingly.

As mentioned earlier, both Greek and Roman theatres certainly had a religious meaning and should be taken seriously as such by the audience and the actors. It was a ceremony and must be performed and completed without interruption, as it was written by the poet. The scripted nature of the Greek theatre made this ceremony stricter and exact; however, this does not make what Roman actor's tried to offer inferior, what they tried to achieve was something more interactive to engage the audience, such as a joke addressed, by the slave acting on the stage, to the slaves sitting at the back seats of the theatre.[254] Yet, this experience was not completely absent in the Greek theatre, there were examples of direct addressing of the audience, especially in Aristophanes, such as in *The Frogs*, where the Priest of Dionysus was addressed saying "My Priest, protect me and we'll dine together!"[255]

Even the modern religious ceremonies differ from society to society. The same religion is celebrated quite differently in various places, according to

[254] Rehm, 196

[255] Arnott, 12

the demographic classification of the audience. What Roman poets did was exactly this; they adapted the ceremony according to their society's needs. Still, some Roman playwrights tried to follow a path more similar to their Hellenistic counterparts: "I am a human being, and nothing human is foreign to me" says the Roman playwright Terence. His style is much different than that of Plautus. Unlike Plautus, who tries to please the audience by giving them what they want, Terence tries to raise their standards. His plots are more realistic and he does not turn to simple jokes just for the laughs, or frivolity.

3.2.2 The Prologues

The theatre building and the play have never been separate from each other but they cooperated together to present an experience. "The imagination is never completely separate from the ambience in which the performance is taking place". In the prologue of *Truculuntus*, Plautus says "I shall transform this very stage into Athens while we present this comedy".[256] Therefore, the prologues of the plays acted as a transition zone between the reality and imaginary worlds. They set the mood and ambience; connected the architecture to the environment of the play. As the actors got in and out of the character, the space of the actor also alternated between the real and the imaginary.

Setting the mood of the audience before the play began was especially important for the ancient theatre, because unlike our modern theatres, the

[256] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 40

lights could not be dimmed, and curtains could not be raised (although there might have been stage curtains in some Roman theatres). Actors, “small dots in a huge theatre”, had to catch the attention of the audience by themselves.[257] Therefore, the prologues were supposed to warm up the audience for the show, catch their attention, and warn them to be silent. None of the information in the prologues was crucial in understanding the play, so even if the audience missed some of it, they still didn’t miss anything.

Some prologues gave a general summary of the play or general information on the play, while some others were means for a playwright to express himself freely to the audience, as in the case of Terence’s *Hecyra*, where he reminds the audience how the first performance had to be cancelled because of an intervention.[258] Sometimes, to catch the audience’s attention, and let them know that the play was about to start, comedies began with a “broad horseplay, fast and noisy”.[259] Some comedies began with what we would call a ‘stand-up’ comedy type of soliloquy with the audience, which were unrelated to the play itself. Such a prologue can be seen in *The Acharnians* by Aristophanes, where Dicaeopolis opens the play saying:

> What cares have not gnawed at my heart and how few have been the pleasures in my life! Four, to be exact, while my troubles have been as countless as the grains of sand on the shore! Ah! I remember that I was delighted in soul when Cleon had to cough up those five talents; I was in ecstasy . . .[260]

---

[257] Arnott, 6

[258] Walton, 294

[259] Arnott, 6

[260] Aristophanes, The Acharnians

Then he continues by telling about the problems in his life and jokes about current events about which the audience was probably aware. Aristophanes was especially known with making jokes about the well-known, influential people of his time, such as playwrights like Socrates and Euripides; or Cleon, as in the above example, who was a politician.[261] Once the attention of the audience was kept, it continued since there were no intermissions.[262]

A similar way of opening a play can be seen in Plautus' the *Mercator*, where Charinus opens the play by saying:

> Two things I'll do together; I will tell you
> The plot of the play, and the story of my love.

Then he goes on explaining the disadvantages of being in love

> There are the troubles that attend on Love:
> Care, Sorrow and Excessive Daintiness,
> Grief, Sleeplessness, Flight, Fright and Wandering,
> Stupidity, Ineptitude, and Rashness [263]

As it started with light entertainment, or casual dialogue to warm up the audience and set the mood, the theatre has also been a place where people wanted to depart with some sort of pleasure. Therefore, above anything else, the actor offered entertainment for both Greek and Roman audiences, however, the meaning of entertainment is culturally bound. The tradition of leaving the theatre in a positive mood reaches to our times from the ancient theatre. During the 17th century Elizabethan Stage, after a Shakespearean tragedy was performed, sometimes actors would perform

---

[261] Arnott, 8

[262] Arnott, 28

[263] Beare, Plautus and His Public, 107

dances, so that the audience would depart cheerfully from the theatre.[264] Even the legendary 20th century actor Laurence Olivier, after whose name the Olivier Awards were named, adopted this tradition. After his performance of Sophocles' Oedipus, Olivier would perform a satiric play (similar to as in a *tetralogy)*, The Critic by Richard Brinsley Sheridan, in his renowned twin bill performance, so that the audience would not depart with an "emotional burden".[265] The *tetralogy* (a full day's performances in Greek theatre) would consist of three tragedies followed by a satyr play, which would take "from dawn to evening".[266] The reasoning is, as mentioned earlier, so that the audience would end the day with a comedy, hence, leave the theatre in a positive mood. It would allow the spectators to "escape from the long-winded tirades of tragedy, flying home to dinner and flying back to the theater for the comic performances".[267] Actually, not even all the tragedies were sad stories with unhappy endings. Aristotle defines "the perfect plot" as a journey from "happiness to misery",[268] yet there existed several tragedies with happy endings, such as "*Eumenides*, *Elektra* (Sophocles), *Philoktetes*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, *Heraklidae*, *Iphigenia at Tauris*, *Ion*" and "*Helen*".[269] Therefore, the ancient understanding of tragedy was actually different from that of the Renaissance. As a matter of fact, the whole experience of the ancient theatre was tried to be made as pleasurable as possible. Ashby quotes Philochorus describing Athenians at the Dionysiac festivals saying that "the entire festival wine was served to

[264] Schanzer, 465-466

[265] Ashby, 6

[266] Pickard-Cambridge, 272

[267] Bieber, 53

[268] Aristotle, The Poetics, 1453a12

[269] Ashby, 167

them and sweetmeats were passed among them".[270] Also, the meat of the sacrifice might have been distributed among the audience.[271] The Greek word for festival, *euochia,* meaning "the merriment, i.e. entertainment, wine and sacrificial food" is an indicator of the Greek perception of the festival. And, as many ancient authors confirm the presence of food in the festivals, "to enjoy themselves at the altar", was essential.[272] This is also not very different from the modern performances, I remember that I was served wine in many occasions as an audience; one I remember was a performance of Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra*. For the Romans, it was different as in Plautus' Poenulus the audience was told "there is nothing to satisfy their appetite except the play itself";[273] and in another instance "Augustus was shocked to see a knight drinking in the theatre".[274]

3.3 When on Stage Do as the Satyrs Do

What gives a work of theatre life is more than just the script. The text written by ancient poets still has power when recited today, because the subject matters remain essentially the same as in the modern theatre, such as "the relations between the sexes, class conflict, generational antagonism, and reactions to disparities of power and authority"[275]; however, the visualization of the works plays an indispensable role. This

[270] Ashby, 119; Beare, The Roman Stage, 174

[271] Rehm, 186

[272] Slater, 23

[273] Beare, The Roman Stage, 174

[274] Beare, The Roman Stage, 174

[275] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 88

visualization that completes the experience is only whole when the actors, the audience and the theatre building come together. This sort of visualization could only be possible by understanding what took place on the stage.

The modern scripts contain stage directions. However, the ancient theatre did not. "There is no mention of settings, costumes, blocking (stage positions and movements of actors) . . . not even notations of entrances and exits."[276] The main reason was because the information given in the text perfectly matched the architecture of the theatre. Therefore, it is rather difficult for us to visualize a scene just by reading it; the audience must experience it with all the necessary elements present.

When the design of the theatre is kept in mind, "the essential stage picture and the lineaments of the actors' movements can be readily discerned from the text".[277] For example, "an offstage area probably existed", so that actors could enter and exit the stage and change costumes, which would in addition require at least one door, the location of which was not indicated in scripts, but can be deduced only when the script is evaluated together with the architectural evidence of the theatre.[278] Only by establishing the physical setting of the theatre, can we understand the dynamics of the play. Hence, this experience can only be recovered by replicating the intended conditions of the playwright; therefore, the visualization of the stage is of utmost importance in understanding the experience of the Ancient Theatre.

---

[276] Ashby, 6

[277] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 87

[278] Ashby, 7

Some of the most prominent visual evidence for ancient performances come from the vase paintings; Figure 14 and Figure 15 show such cases from fourth century BC. The former depicts a scene where Heracles is trying to abduct a woman praying before an altar.[279] The latter is Helen rising from an egg, just as Hephaestus is about to break it with an axe, while her mother is peeking through the door and her stepfather is in awe.[280]

These vase paintings contain some standard elements that can be found in many other vase paintings, too. The stage is raised with stairs leading onto it. Often there is a door leading onto the stage, sometimes a window. There are different types of props, such as altars and statues, or baskets. The stage is positioned over posts the bottom of which is covered by a cloth, sometimes, with ornaments. The background in Figure 14 also employs Ionic columns and roof ornamentations. The masks are huge, grotesque and blatant. Various garments are worn over tights; male characters also seem to wear a *phallus* in Figure 15.

Another important point to note is that the number of actors is three, which is the standard set by Sophocles, according to Aristotle.

> The number of actors was first increased to two by Aeschylus, who curtailed the business of the Chorus, and made the dialogue, or spoken portion, take the leading part in the play. A third actor and scenery were due to Sophocles.[281]

One of these three was the lead character, the other one had one or more major supporting roles, and the third actor played all the other small

---

[279] Bieber, 134

[280] Bieber, 135

[281] Aristotle, The Poetics, 4.1449a.15-19

parts.[282] Choral passages would allow time for the actors with multiple parts to change masks and costumes.[283] This limitation of the cast might be because the performances were also contests, and similar limitations can be seen in modern competitions to provide equality between contestants.[284] This tradition was probably inherited from the Olympic tradition of Greece, where there had to be rules, and there still are, to ensure fair competition; and along with the actor limitation there might have been other rules such as the number of strings on a lyre and the length of the plays.[285]

The Romans transformed part of the space of the actor in the Greek theatre into the space of the audience by adding special seats to the orchestra. By doing so, they tried to establish a balance between "entertaining the majority" and acknowledging "an influential minority".[286] This architectural change also invoked a conceptual change as this "influential" audience was more sophisticated and their demands were different from the common people's demands, leading to more realistic plays as in Terence's works.

Initially, the temporary wooden stages were the main theatre buildings for the Romans. Vitruvius states that they were still being built in his own time.[287] One example was Theatra Curionis,[288] a temporary theatre built by

---

[282] Ashby, 131

[283] Ashby, 137

[284] Ashby, 129

[285] Slater, 28

[286] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 48

[287] Vitruvius, 5.5.7

[288] Ulrich, 109

Scribonius Curio in 52 BC, which “boosted his political career” and helped him achieve the office of tribune two years later.[289] This shows that temporary theatres were not inferior to the permanent ones. Actually, even though the building material has an effect on the permanence of the structure, it is worth noting that the Elizabethan Theatre, Shakespeare’s Globe was wooden, yet indisputably permanent.[290] Until the construction of the first permanent theatre, the Theatre of Pompey, the Roman stage kept being shaped according to needs of the plays; at first borrowing the designs of the permanent theatres in Magna Graecia, however, at its final free-standing form, establishing an original character, different from the Greek examples.[291] Formation of this architectural structure also defined the Roman theatre experience, and the evolution of the Roman theatre stimulated the evolution of the temporary wooden theatres into permanent ones.

The Romans seem to have been inspired by the *paraskenia* [Figure 6, Figure 7] type theatres of Magna Graecia, meaning “a raised stage (or perhaps in the earliest period, an acting area upon the ground itself) which had a façade (the *skene*, or scene building) behind it, and two projecting wings (the *paraskenia*) containing doors, on either side”. Later on, this model was replaced in the rest of the Hellenistic world by a straight façade with openings called *thyromata*, omitting the projecting wings, but not in Southern Italy.[292] The Romans combined the elements from these permanent theatres, with their own elements from the temporary

---

[289] Beacham, Playing Places, 218

[290] Beacham, Playing Places, 204

[291] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 56

[292] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 57

theatres, such as a roof above the stage. There was also a roof on one of the three stage doors, and a raised porch in front of it[293]. These openings probably employed folding doors as mentioned by Vitruvius.[294] The *paraskenia* form appearing like a combination of three different structures supports this design of three openings. The need for this three-door structure was probably aroused because many plays required three entrances, and this three-sectioned view enabled the audience to visualize the doors as the entrances to different places.[295] The chorus entered from the *parodos.* [Figure 6] The *parodoi* were probably also used for ceremonial entrances for the people to take the seats of honor, just before the play began.[296]

3.3.1 Stage Elements

The openings at the stage wall were also used for placing decorations. Vitruvius names these places "*periaktos"* [Figure 34, Figure 35] and describes their use for decoration "triangular pieces of machinery which revolve, each having three decorated faces".[297] This indicates that removable triangular prism panels were placed in these openings with different paintings on each side, much like the modern advertisement panels, when turned they formed a different scene [Figure 36].[298] Other

---

[293] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 60

[294] Vitruvius, 5.5.7

[295] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 62

[296] Chaniotis, 61

[297] Vitruvius, 5.6.8

[298] Ferrero, 109

than the *periaktoi*, the *thyroma* might have been used for placing props or other types of flat paintings to strengthen the stage image.[299] Placing different objects in these openings changed the perception of the stage immediately and created the illusion of a space on the shallow Greek stage. Figure 37, Figure 38, Figure 39, Figure 40 and Figure 41 show reconstructions of the stage of Ephesus and Eretria, set up with various props and paintings. The ancient audience was accustomed to the approach of minimal depiction of places, i.e. attaching "signs" for representation.[300] A pediment would automatically "divinise" a place, and the ancients were "used to reading the signs that defined important façades".[301] Therefore, paintings did not need to be complicated, a temple could have been designated with a column and statue, inserting a closet would indicate interior, a tree a grove etc.[302] The exact place of the *periakti* was found by Dörpfeld in Epidauros as pivot points for turning in two openings of the wall facing the *orchestra*.[303]

The scene painting was always an important part of the Hellenistic theatre and Romans borrowed this also. As a matter of fact, a gradual transition from "a Greek tradition of architectural decoration to a pictorial Roman" form can be mentioned.[304] In his work *Poetics*, Aristotle gives credit to Sophocles for using the first *skenographia,* which is believed to be the first

[299] Little, 29

[300] Onians, 178

[301] Onians, 183

[302] Gardner, 261

[303] Gardner, 260

[304] Little, 32

mention of the term, therefore relating the origins of the term with theatre.[305]

For the Greeks, the 'scene' was an important part of the architecture, hence Hellenistic structures are always in harmony with nature, nature is part of the design, especially so for the theatres.[306] The perspective of the scene—the sea, the mountains, the necropolis—at the background of the theatre was part of the theatrical experience. The scene painting might have tried to imitate this experience of perspective, therefore, leading to the development of perspective painting.

The interaction of the physical scenery with the theatre architecture lost its importance in Imperial Rome.[307] However, this does not mean that the employment of scenery was abandoned. On the contrary, it might be because the Romans adopted the perspective painting so strongly that they preferred it over the actual scenery, freeing themselves from an important part of the site selection in the Hellenistic age, just as they freed themselves from employing the use of natural slopes by building free standing theatres. As the background scenery was no longer part of the theatrical scene, they were able to raise the height of the stage back wall to the level of the top rows of the auditorium, creating the new glamorous, extravagant background of theatre stage, the *scaenae frons* [Figure 5, Figure 7].

The Romans welcomed perspective painting and its effect of creating imaginary spaces so much that they employed this style of painting in their

---

[305] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 64

[306] Ferrero, 41

[307] Ferrero, 28

domestic architecture, as well, such as in the Boscoreale Villa,[308] Villa of Mysteries,[309] Room of the Masks[310] [Figure 42] and House of the Gladiators;[311] and these intricate paintings might have been the foundations of the final form of the Roman stage background, the *scaenae frons.*

As a matter of fact, it is possible to make a connection between those paintings and the *scaenae frons* of the Roman theatre.[312] These paintings are believed to depict theatre scenes, therefore, providing valuable insight on stage decorations of ancient theatres. Vitruvius confirms that the paintings in houses actually depict real things by saying " . . .ancients required realistic pictures of real things. A picture is, in fact, a representation of a thing which really exists or which can exist".[313] Then he adds on the following section "they depicted the façades of scenes in the tragic, comic, or satyric style".[314] Actually, those paintings were, sometimes so realistic that Pliny the Elder notes "crows were deceived into flying to the painted image of roof tiles (Pliny the Elder, *Nat. Hist*., 35.23)".[315]

Vitruvius also defines all three of these scenes:

> There are three kinds of scenes, one called the tragic, second, the comic, third, the satyric. Their decorations are different and unlike each other in scheme. Tragic scenes are delineated with columns, pediments, statues,

[308] Ferrero, 103

[309] Ferrero, 104

[310] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 72

[311] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 75

[312] Little, 27

[313] Vitruvius, 7.5.1

[314] Vitruvius, 7.5.2

[315] Beacham, Playing Places, 217

> and other objects suited to kings; comic scenes exhibit private dwellings, with balconies and views representing rows of windows, after the manner of ordinary dwellings; satyric scenes are decorated with trees, caverns, mountains, and other rustic objects delineated in landscape style. [316]

All three of these forms can be observed as united in the paintings between the pilasters in a room in Boscoreale [Figure 43]; and the absence of human figures might indicate that these were actually the backgrounds for the stage.[317] Furthermore, these forms, underlined by Vitruvius, were also adapted for the sixteenth-century “genre of the pastoral play” by Italian stage practitioners.[318]

In Figure 42, The Room of the Masks, the depiction of a Roman stage can clearly be seen. The whole structure is of *paraskenia* type, meaning that there are two prominent wings at the sides, protruding into the stage, which is raised from the ground as a platform. There is one main stage door in the center with a roof on it supported by pilasters, inside of which seems to be a painting portraying a scene, which might be a wooden panel, and showing sort of a sacred tree or a shrine, which reminds Vitruvius' depiction of satiric decorations. The roof is coffered which is another feature of the Roman stage. There are three doors as required by many plays, and the side doors have wooden folding doors as Vitruvius suggested. As the indispensable elements of the theatre, the faces of the actors, the masks are known to be used as decorations in many ancient stages, as well, and the presence of the masks should also be acknowledged in this painting, hence the name the Room of the Masks.

[316] Vitruvius, 5.6.9

[317] Little, 27

[318] Peacock, 206

Furthermore, the use of *paraskenia* in the Greek theatre can be seen in Figure 44, which depicts a scene from *Iphigenia in Tauris* by Euripides, where Iphigenia is at one *paraskenion* and the statue of Athena is at the opposing one, while Orestes and Pylades are in the middle. As seen in the figure, the *paraskenia* allows actors to be “more tightly framed and focused”.[319] The roofed structure is not coffered unlike the Roman example and seems to be wooden; also the support of the beams is provided by beams instead of pilasters in the Roman example, the wooden doors of the wings are mutual in both cases. The perspective seems to have been provided by putting the foot of one of the actors in the middle towards the edge to align with the protruding *paraskenia*, hence resulting in a scenic design by placing one actor slightly upstage and the other slightly downstage. The most prominent difference is the lack of a central door in the Greek example. The existence of a middle door in the Greek theatre can be classified among the “the almost insoluble problems dealing with the Greek theatre building”.[320] Pollux talks about three doors on a stage building saying that “the middle one [door] is a palace or cave or distinguished house or entirely belongs to the protagonist of the drama, the right one is the lodging of the deuteragonist, and the left-hand one contains the lowest character or a remote temple or is uninhabited.”[321] However, the middle door is never depicted in any vase paintings, and

[319] Beacham, Playing Places, 210

[320] Markman, 279

[321] Pollux, Onomasticon, 4.124-125

"actual theatre remains are not helpful"[322] on the matter. Therefore, Vitruvius' "Royal Door"[323] mainly remains a feature of the Roman Theatre.

Many other types of stage machinery and stage props were circumstantial: Such as a chariot for Agamemnon's arrival in the play *Agamemnon***,** an altar for Orestes to leave a lock of his hair, a wheelbarrow for Medea to carry her dead children, an opening representing a cave for Philoktetes, and a decoration resembling a hut for Elektra.[324]

Even though the scripts lack stage directions, especially the plays of Aristophanes provide invaluable information on "costuming, machinery, tragic playwrights, and acting", along with information on drinking and eating habits of Athenians, "their couplings, their attitudes toward the gods, women, foreigners, and each other". Therefore, they are an indispensable source for the historian, in evaluating the ancient societies.[325]

3.3.2 The Machinery

The most important invention of the Greek theatre as a stage device might be the *mechane* [Figure 45*,* Figure 46], used mainly for the *Deus Ex Machina* scenes, hence the name Machina, where the god descended from the sky in a play, "like a god from the machine (Demosthenes, *Against*

[322] Ahby, 70

[323] Vitruvius, 5.6.3

[324] Ashby, 7

[325] Ashby, 7

Boeotus, 2.59)".[326] It was used in many plays, in *The Clouds,* Socrates "appears suspended above the other actors and later descends to the stage . . . In *Thesmophoriazusae*, Euripides flies on in the wing-footed guise of Perseus".[327] From two different designs included here, my experience in Fiddler on the Roof, where Fruma Sarah flies onto Tevye's bed in a haunting dream, is in accord with the necessity of Asby's two-rope controlled system, in order to stop the actor from revolving around himself when dangled through a single roped system.

Another important invention of the Greek theatre was the device called *ekkyklema,* which was basically a revolving stage used for "revealing bodies of those slain offstage in the tragedies",[328] it was also used to differentiate interior scenes [Figure 47, Figure 48]. This device was adopted by the modern theatre and used in several plays.

> The ekkyklema is a high podium on beams, on which rests a throne; it looks down on unspeakable deeds committed behind the skene in the houses. The thing on which the ekkyklema is introduced in called an eiskyklema. One must assume this for each door.[329]

Therefore, according to Pollux's description there was not only one ekkyklema, but several for each door present, in the case of the Greek theatre according to Pollux, that would be three, one center, and two side doors of the paraskenia, as discussed earlier.

[326] Ashby, 81

[327] Ashby, 81

[328] Ashby, 7

[329] Pollux, Onomasticon, 4.127-128

3.3.3 The Hidden Faces

Mainly, the masks were overly expressive, even grotesque representations of the human face, or "gods in anthropomorphic disguise"[330]. The most important thing in understanding the function of masks is by understanding the ancient perception of what a character is. For the ancients the choices made by the characters were trivial, only the gods decided who was the "victor or victim"[331]. That may be among the reasons why tragedies have unhappy endings.

> Tragedy is a representation, not of people, but of an action . . . They do not act so as to represent character but they include character on account of the actions. (Aristotle, *Poetics* 1450a.20-23) [332]

The fate of the protagonist was insignificant compared to the gods' will. It was not important if Electra was the victor and her murderer/mother was the victim, it is negligible whether Pentheus was the victim and his mother/murderer Agave was the victor; only the will of the gods was crucial. Therefore, the characters had to surpass the individuality and symbolize this "existential dilemma".[333] And the masks were the perfect tools to achieve that.

As, certainly, an "essential feature of theatrical performance in ancient Greece and Rome"[334] masks constituted several problems for the actors wearing them, while also providing important advantages. Among these

[330] McCart, 258

[331] McCart, 257

[332] Martin, 36

[333] McCart, 257

[334] McCart, 247

advantages was that they provided a “close-up of an actor’s face”,[335] the disadvantage of that was, unlike the close-ups in a movie, these faces were not able to change expressions. This was limiting in many respects for the actors and they needed to express themselves through gestures. They had to “learn to thrust out their chests, open their shoulders, raise their arms, clench their fists or extend their fingers, adopt an open stance and stride purposefully over the ground”.[336] Still, the masks were far from neutral and they contained powerful expressions engraved onto them, and even by simply lowering or raising the mask several different emotions could be achieved, even so there were silent characters in several plays, employing only the emotion of the mask.[337] Changing the frontal formation of the mask made an instant significant difference and there are several references in plays regarding the orientation of the masks. In *The Madness of Heracles*, Heracles instructs his children to “look up to the light”; in *Iphigenia in Aulis* and *Antigone* there are similar references implying that the face is somehow bent or turned.[338] “There are few things so forbidding as a masked face turning away and refusing to listen”.[339]

It may be difficult for us to visualize the significance of the expressions of masks. Our perception of theatre buildings is actually in a much smaller scale than that of the ancients. Most of the large modern theatres hold about 2-3,000 people. It is worth noting that the largest modern American theatre is only about half the size of the smallest theatre in Imperial

[335] McCart, 248

[336] McCart, 248

[337] McCart, 253

[338] Arnott, 63

[339] Arnott, 65

Rome.[340] My experience of Lion King in Lyceum Theatre, London (note the Roman influenced *Corinthian* colonnade and pediment at the theatre entrance in Figure 49) had its difficulties in differentiating the actors' expressions, and I had to use binoculars in this theatre of 2,000 people capacity [Figure 50, Figure 51]. Now compare this to a theatre like Epidauros, Dionysus at Athens, Ephesus, or Aspendos, which held 15,000-25,000 spectators. This could also be the reason why the ancient theatre was a lot of "show and tell". The actors described what was happening on stage. In Euripides' *Hecuba*, Polyxena pleads to Odysseus saying "Odysseus, I can see you hide your hand. Under your cloak, and turn away your face".[341] It may be inferred that the ancient playwright wrote in the fashion of a modern "radio scriptwriter".[342]

Another problem was that the masks prevent resonance, even though they had open mouths. The material used for the masks was probably sort of a "stiffened linen", however, the material was still hard enough to restrict vocal projection, even with the great acoustic design of a theatre, such as Epidauros, where even "the slightest sound made at this spot [centre of the orchestra] can be heard clearly throughout the towering arc of seating"[343], providing the vital element for the actors to make their voice heard by an audience of 15,000 in some cases.

My experiences of performing with a mask, which included lots of dancing, are in accordance with McCart's experiments working with masked actors,

---

[340] Carcopino, 244

[341] Arnott, 50

[342] Arnott, 95

[343] McCart, 250

where the actors would "suffer disorientation and restriction".[344] Especially, the lack of peripheral vision, as mentioned earlier during the discussion of the stage design, changes the actor's perception of natural movement. The actors can only see forward, they need to turn their whole bodies to see around them, and even with much practice it is still difficult not to trip over objects on stage, or crash into other actors while moving around the stage.

3.3.3.1 Masks on the Roman Stage

There is some debate on whether the Roman theatre employed masks before Terence or not. The most important reason for wearing a mask is obviously that the actors would be able to play different roles.[345] This cannot be denied for the Roman theatre nor the Greek. However, since the leading actor played only one part, this discussion is worth looking into. It was mentioned earlier that, in *De Oratore*, Cicero stresses the importance of gestures when performing; he also mentions how Roscius squinted while acting and some elders preferred seeing him perform without wearing a mask.[346] In his interpretation of fourth century A.D. Latin Grammarian Diomedes' *Grammatici Latini*, Beare states the ancient grammarian's belief is that Roscius started the use of masks to hide his squint.[347] However, some of the audience members must have preferred him without the

---

[344] McCart, 252

[345] Ashby, 153

[346] Cicero, Natura Deorum, i.28, 79 iii

[347] Beare, Masks on the Roman Stage, 140

mask, hence, Cicero's statement. Beare believes that a regulation to act without masks on occasion might have been issued; so that "the cloak of anonymity upon the government or upon leading citizens" would be prevented.[348]

The religious and ceremonial nature of masks has already been mentioned before, but another important reason why the masks were required is contextual. A widely used theme in theatre was the "comedy of errors", where the exact resemblance of two individuals, during their confrontation, was required to form an illusion of mistaken identity; and the masks were, undoubtedly, an indispensable tool in creating this illusion.[349] There are several examples of plays by Plautus and Terence where doubles were required, as a matter of fact in Plautus' *Amphitruo* there are two pairs of doubles confronting each other, which would definitely require the use of masks, so that the audience would not be able to differentiate between them, which would lead to a more realistic experience, which was closer to the Roman style.

There are many other examples where masks are referenced in the original text, since Plautus precedes Terence; his *Casina* is a good sample. In one of the jokes of the play the master Lysidamus says to the slave "Well, for starters, put on a happy face when you speak with me; it's ridiculous for you to scowl like that when I'm the one in charge here",[350] however, the slave obviously cannot change his face because he is wearing a mask; otherwise the joke would be lost.

---

[348] Beare, Masks on the Roman Stage, 143

[349] Beare, Masks on the Roman Stage, 143

[350] Plautus, Casina, 281-2

Moreover many descriptions of characters in plays are actually descriptions of masks.[351] In *Asinaria*, again by Plautus, the slave Saurea is described as "He's pot-bellied, with lantern jaws, and hair as red as flame, with savage eyes, of medium height, a frown upon his brow"[352]; which, actually, is a description of the 'slave' character in ancient theatre, therefore, the actors must have worn masks matching the descriptions.[353] (See Figure 52, Figure 53, Figure 54, Figure 55, and Figure 56).

3.3.3.2 Costumes

The costumes were not as important as the masks since the masks were the main props defining the characters, also, "elaborate costumes were expensive",[354] while masks were easier to produce along with a stronger dramatic effect. Even the gender of the character was defined by the color of the mask, brown and white,[355] where brown was for males and white for females because of the pale features of females.[356] The masks were the most important props of the Ancient Theatre, because, as in real life the characters would be defined by their features.[357] Usually, the actors wore the "Ionic *chiton*, a linen or woolen shirt with holes for the neck and arms"

---

[351] Beare, The Roman Stage, 194

[352] Plautus, Asinaria, 400-1

[353] Beare, Masks on the Roman Stage, 146

[354] Beare, The Roman Stage, 187

[355] Carcopino, 245

[356] Adkins, 280

[357] Beare, The Roman Stage, 187

under the "*pallium* or Greek mantle of everyday wear"[358] [Figure 57]. As for the shoes, Roman actors would wear high boots, as mentioned earlier, because of the lowered stage; while the Greek actors probably did not wear any "exaggerated footwear", because as discussed earlier, the Greeks probably used a raised stage anyway.[359] Except for special props such as the "cook's knife", or "fisherman's hooks" the costumes were "more or less the same for all characters".[360] Therefore, the masks distinguished the individual, while the costume defined the profession or status.[361]

Still the way the costumes were fashioned would implicate Roman or Greek nationality and social status of the characters. It is also thought that different colors might have indicated different characters, such as "white for an old man, multicolored for a youth, yellow for a courtesan, purple for the rich, red for the poor, a short tunic for the slave . . ."[362] etc. This way of dressing was similar to the costumes worn in daily life, since the color and fashion of the clothes would depict status in civilian and military life; therefore, it was a tradition that the audience was already used to.[363]

---

[358] Beare, The Roman Stage, 184

[359] Beare, The Roman Stage, 191

[360] Beare, The Roman Stage, 188

[361] Beare, The Roman Stage, 191

[362] Carcopino, 246

[363] Onians, 182

3.4 The Might

It might not be accurate to categorize Greek tragedy as politically didactic, while it definitely emphasized some character virtues.[364] However, the Roman theatre was about “worship of the Gods, the honoring of the dead, and individual self-glorification.”[365] Rome can be regarded as a “theatricalized society”, and opportunities for exhibiting “status, dignity and power” were highly pursued,[366] which increased the popularity of theatre not only among the citizens, but also and maybe even more among the politicians. “Virtually every city would have had a theater in Roman times.”[367]

Polybius and Livy confirm the use of scenic representations for “self-promotion” and “cultural control in the city”, and sometimes it might seem to go even further to indicate that Roman theatre was nothing but a tool of “self-representation and socio-cultural hegemony”.[368] Even the festivals in honor of gods “reinforced political and social differences”.[369] Especially the way festival patrons dressed let them stand out among others. The clothing and seats were separated clearly to indicate “imperial entourage, the senators, knights, plebeians, freedman and finally slaves”.[370]

---

[364] Hesk, 83

[365] Jory, 146

[366] Beacham, Playing Places, 218

[367] Sturgeon, 411

[368] Hesk, 87

[369] Rehm, 185

[370] Rehm, 186

The show itself did not only contain theatrical performances. As mentioned earlier, this was a ritual. Accordingly, it consisted of several other actions. It was a great place for showcasing, since people from various classes were present in the same place at the same time, such as “the citizens, the representatives of the imperial administration, the foreigners, sometimes the emperor himself”.[371] The spectacles started with processions through the city carrying the images of the emperors and placing them in the theatre, accompanied with incense-burners lit by magistrates, and prayers for the safety of the rulers.[372]

Even the entrance of the *prohedria* was with a special announcement. They would take their seats after their names were announced, with their “impressive garments and crowns”. Agrippa, the Roman general, son-in-law and defence minister to Augustus, was said to enter the theatre in “robes of shimmering silver” to take advantage of the sunlight, forming a “wondrous sight”.[373]

Furthermore, the announcement of honors and crowning of benefactors were performed during dramatic festivals, hence, in front of as many different people as possible.[374] Apparently, the crowns had degrees of importance, similar to the Olympic medals. There was a crown called “the greatest crown that the law provides for”, another was “a distinguished crown”, one was named as “a crown of merit”, and another “a crown of

[371] Chaniotis, 52

[372] Chaniotis, 53

[373] Chaniotis, 62

[374] Chaniotis 54

excellent behavior as a citizen", along with " a crown of virtue" or "the crown of the god".[375]

"Control over taste and culture" was of great interest for the Roman elite.[376] For both Greeks and Romans, temporary theatres were built in agoras, close to temples, or used in combination with other buildings such as circuses. Unlike Greek theatres, Roman theatres were not employed for public assemblies. One reason could be because the Roman state tended to exercise power a lot and the theatre play was mostly a controlled environment since the political messages given in a play were controlled by the patron. "The Romans were at all times fond of theatre-going; but the drama of the Empire was blighted by the shadow of the Caesars, the bookishness of the literary classes, and the degradation of popular taste."[377] Moreover, a public assembly might not have been that easy to control, and this could also be a reason leading to the design of the free-standing theatre. Because, unlike the Greek theatre, where people could enter from various places, Roman theatres had controlled entrances, enabling the utilization of control over who entered the theatre and who exited.[378] This could also be the reason why the state changed its mind about building permanent theatres, which was not until the "Theatre of Pompey in 55 B.C."[379]. The realization of this sort of a control over the audience should have tempted the state officials and satisfied their wish to

[375] Chaniotis, 58

[376] Beacham, Playing Places, 117

[377] Beare, Recent Work on the Roman Theatre, 105

[378] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 83

[379] Beare, The Roman Stage, 171; Beacham, Playing Places, 202

"monitor and modulate" what the public received from the spectacles.[380] Since the wooden theatres did not let them employ such manipulations easily; possibly only after they established such control, did the Romans start to allow political assemblies in theatres. On the contrary, the earliest stone theatre for the Greeks was considerably earlier, dated before mid-fourth century B.C.[381] This might indicate that the Greeks did not have the same reservations with Romans and they just wanted to provide permanence, as the permanent theatres were probably built where the temporary wooden theatres were built. The reason for the delay in building temporary theatres for the Romans could also be because of attention taken and authority exercised by "the ritual of erecting and dismantling temporary structures".[382]

Since the patrons of theatre plays were generally influential men of the time, frequently the theatre was used to give political messages to the public, failing to give the intended message led to the punishment of the writer as in the case of Naevius, where in his play titled the Clastidium he wrote about an influential family called the Metelli, one member of which was a *consul* of Rome, saying that "by fate [i.e. not by ability] the Metelli become *consuls* at Rome", the results of which would later lead to his exile.[383] Censorship was not uncommon for the Roman theatre, and sometimes a "preliminary performance [was] given in the presence of the magistrates"[384] to confirm that the play did not contain anything offensive.

[380] Beacham, Playing Places, 217

[381] Csapo, 98

[382] Goldberg, 2

[383] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 25

[384] Beare, The Roman Stage, 169

It can be argued that "Roman Republican tragedy spoke provocatively and productively to its audience's specific socio-political milieu."[385] Especially towards the end of the Republic, both the "danger" and "usefulness" of the theatre were perceived. "Admission was free"[386] to the Roman theatre, which indicates that it was not aimed for monetary profit, but the large sums of money spent on the festivals prove that there was some kind of compensation for these expenses, and that was obviously political power, which was gained through "controlling those who attended festival *ludi*".[387] There still were tickets though, "mainly circular", but also "in the shape of fish or birds". They contained information on the doorway of entrance and locations of the seat, which in some cases was a quite exact location indicating the section, row and the number of the seat.[388]

The tickets for the Greek theatre cost two *oboloi* for a day's performance. The average wage of a craftsman was 1 *drachma* a day, which is 6 *oboloi*. [389] Half of the ticket cost was probably for the food and wine that was offered in Greek theatres.[390] However, it seems like there were some occasions when admission was free for Classical Athens also, as Walton quotes Theophrastus, a character-study writer, talking about a "stingy man" who only took his children when there was free entrance.[391] Still, this would mean that attendance to the whole festival would cost around 1

---

[385] Hesk, 72

[386] Rehm, 197

[387] Rehm, 197

[388] Sear, Roman Theatres, 4

[389] Walton, 289

[390] Walton, 300

[391] Walton, 299

drachma, which was "more than a nominal sum".[392] Considering this fee, and the capacity of the theatre, it might be inferred that festivals were fairly important in the ancient life. If they did not expect many people attending the theatre, they would just build smaller theatres. A capacity of 15,000, for example, was about a quarter of Athens, so, apparently, a large majority of people was expected to attend the festivals. And there were several festivals, yet people were not hesitant to spend their hard earned money for theatre.

The institution of liturgy, meaning the *choregoi, agonotheses* and *aediles* mentioned earlier, who provided monetary means for the festivals, was extremely important. They were important individuals and "leading citizens", so as to build a "victory monument" after a successful festival, as a token of private achievement.[393] These monuments were in various styles and included "votive reliefs, herms, large-scale statues, tripods, and even small temples".[394] [See Figure 58, Figure 59 and Figure 60 for examples of *choregic* monuments] Several of these monuments were discovered throughout Athens, particularly around the Theatre of Dionysus, because of the nature of these remains, the area was named Tripod Street (or alternatively Street of Tripods).[395] [See Figure 61 for the plan of Theatre of Dionysus and Tripod Street] On the plan, Temple of Nikias, numbered as 1, was built as a commemoration of a victory for the dithyrambic competion. As can be seen from the examples, these monuments might have even

---

[392] Csapo, 97

[393] Goette, 123

[394] Goette, 123-125

[395] Goette, 131

created an architectural genre for experimentation since they were not exactly bound by any form of architecture.[396]

A similar tradition also existed for Romans, as *aediles* would add inscriptions to theatres. Even the name "*monumentum"* implies the aim to "preserve the memory of the person or persons who erected them".[397] One such inscription is in the theatre at Corinth, where an *aedile* named Erastus laid the pavement for the theatre and inscribed that he did so to honor his "civic duty" and in return for the honor of his *aedileship.*[398] The famous Roman general Agrippa also served as an *aedile* and some of the buildings his name was attached to were from his *aedileship,*[399] among such buildings are the theatre at Augusta Emerita and the theatre at Ostia.[400] As a matter of fact, several generals built theatres in celebration of their triumphs, turning their glories into monuments for the public.[401] Furthermore, the benefactors were seated near the front, their inscriptions placed in the *proscaenium, tribunalia, or* in the *scaenae frons*, thus "always in the public eye".[402]

It can be argued that building in Rome was "*ludic*", meaning it was a competition in itself among people of similar status to claim a more advanced status. It was not acceptable for a farmer to build glamorously, he could not be an "*aedificator"*, because building required status and in

---

[396] Goette, 143

[397] Onians, 181

[398] Sturgeon, 412

[399] Sturgeon, 414

[400] Sear, Roman Theatres, 12

[401] Sturgeon, 415

[402] Sear, Roman Theatres, 11

return it acquired higher status.[403] Thus, building theatres became more important in time, because theatres turned into places where "emperor and people could meet together", yet, separated "according to their ranks and status".[404] This nature of assembly was so strong that the theatre was a place of "communal debate and acclamations", so much that the theatre at Ephesus witnessed the gathering of Ephesians who assembled in the theatre, not in the forum, not in front of the temple nor the senate house but in the theatre, to protest the Christianity to protect their beloved goddess Artemis in A.D. 57.[405]

A similar sense of assembly existed for the Greeks. The nature of this assembly changed according to the festivals. For example, City Dionysia, was a large festival that took place at the end of March, where people from several other cities came to Athens to attend; however, Lenaea was at the end of January, so the navigation was not safe, hence it was more private, "like a family gathering of the Athenians".[406]

> . . . Cleon shall not be able to accuse me of attacking Athens before strangers: we are by ourselves at the festival of the Lenaea the time when our allies send us their tribute and their soldiers is not yet here. There is only the pure wheat without the chaff: as to the resident aliens settled among us, they and the citizens are one, like the straw and the ear. [407]

The lines stated above are a reference to Aristophanes' criticizing of Cleon in an earlier play presented in City Dionysia, where "aliens" also attended.

[403] Thomas, 21

[404] Patterson, 198

[405] Parsons, 113

[406] Flickinger, 117

[407] Aristophanes, The Acharnians, 471-518

Apparently, it was not acceptable to criticize a city official in front of strangers. However, since Lenaea is among "family", Aristophanes feels free to criticize Cleon without being accused. This gives us an indication about the intimacy of theatre gatherings. Therefore, it can be argued that the power of the theatre was comparable to the power of the press of our time.[408] And it continued being a platform for great masses of people for expressing their opinions until the end of the Empire of Rome.[409]

Several Roman rulers were in close relationship with the theatre throughout their reigns. Sulla, the Roman dictator, was particularly interested in theatrical spectacles and used them "as an instrument of power, personal prestige, and popularity". He was particularly interested in mimes and even tried to compose some.[410] The Temple of Fortuna Primigenia, built under Sulla's patronage was a "combination of a theater-like structure and a temple building", possibly "intended and conceived as a theater"; which also might have inspired Pompey in building the first permanent theatre in Rome.[411] The inspiration might be evaluated better when two structures are examined in Figure 62 and Figure 8.

Pompey, as the heir of Sulla in many respects, acquired Sulla's perception of theatre as a tool of "political propaganda and personal glorification" and used it likewise.[412] He was especially interested in religious associations of theatre, hence dedicating his theatre to Venus and defining it as a temple, as mentioned earlier; and by doing that he also made sure that his name

---

[408] Abbott, 49

[409] Abbott, 56

[410] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 133

[411] Güven, 18

[412] Hanson, 47

remained as “one of the principal monuments of ancient Rome”.[413] He also built a *curia* (senatorial assembly room) in the theatre complex, [Figure 8], so that senate meetings would take place there, where after his death a statue of Pompey was erected.[414] Ironically, this *curia* was the stage to one of the most renowned assassinations of history, where Julius Caesar, who was responsible for Pompey’s assassination, was himself killed, as Antony says in Shakespeare’s words: [415]

> For when the noble Caesar saw him [Brutus] stab,
> Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,
> Quite vanquish'd him: then burst his mighty heart;
> And, in his mantle muffling up his face,
> Even at the base of Pompey's statue,
> (Which all the while ran blood) great Caesar fell [416]

As the influence of the theatre kept increasing, many other powerful individuals started getting involved in the theatre. One of those is the prominent politician Strabo, uncle of Julius Caesar. He created several works as a playwright and also was a member of the same *Collegium* (Guild), the leader of which was Accius, an influential playwright.[417] As time passed, theatre became more and more important as a way of expression and political activity. Consul Lucius Cornelius Balbus, a member of Caesar’s party wrote a tragedy about Roman history, employing his experience, and later he gave his name to the Theatre of Balbus in Rome as a sponsor. Julius Caesar, following the footsteps of Sulla, was aware of the power of

---

[413] Beacham, Playing Places, 219

[414] Beacham, Playing Places, 220

[415] Beacham, Playing Places, 221

[416] Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, 3.2.189-194

[417] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 125

theatre and even composed a rendition of *Oedipus* himself; and Augustus composed a tragedy called *the Ajax.*[418]

Nero, The Roman Emperor, who was tutored by the tragedy writer Seneca,[419] was among the ones most interested in theatre and performed on stage on several occasions, he also played the lyre. In *Neronia*, the festival in his name, he would perform as a musician and a poet. He would also perform in tragedies wearing masks especially modeled for his face and he even toured Greece as a performer.[420] In addition, he had his own voice instructor to train him on how to use and preserve it[421], as all the modern actors do now. Nero's "narcissism and megalomania" was nourished by "image and prestige" he gained in the eyes of the public through his theatrical performances,[422] so much that, he would hire supporters to applaud his performances to "set the mood" and place them among the audience.[423] And to much surprise(!), "the emperor emerged victorious in every contest he entered"[424].

Even in some modern adaptations, ancient plays were arranged to convey a political message, such as Peter Sellars' version of the *Ajax,* where the play turned into a criticism of neo-imperialism. Another example is Seamus

---

[418] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 126

[419] McCart, 264

[420] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 148

[421] Suetonius, Nero, 24

[422] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 149

[423] Rehm, 198

[424] Rehm, 198

Heaney's *Philolectes*, where the chorus condemned the political violence in Northern Ireland.[425]

[425] Hesk, 75

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

As revealed several times throughout the text, the architecture and the content are inseparable for the case of the ancient theatre. There is a remarkably close relationship between the progression of the theatre architecture and the progression of the plays. The *dithyrambic* choruses consisting of fifty people require a large space to perform, so the architect designs a large *orchestra*. The playwright, Thespis, introduces the lead actor, a *protagonist*, "to deliver the prologues and converse with the chorus";[426] and the architect designs a stage for him to be separated from the rest of the chorus. The playwright, Aeschylus increases the number of actors to two, adding the *deutragonist*, [427] and the architect adds *paraskenia*, hence two opposing doors to accommodate both actors. Then, the playwright, Sophocles, decides to add a supporting actor to play various small parts named *tritagonist*;[428] and the architect introduces a three-door structure to the stage wall. The plays require a rooftop; the architect adds a roof on the stage. Romans decide to accommodate all the performers on the stage; so the architect increases the depth of the stage, and increases the number of doors to five as in the case of Ephesus. Nevertheless, the main form of the building and the main experience of the spectacle stay comparable throughout ages. Hopefully, the readers of this

[426] Adkins, 280

[427] Adkins, 280

[428] Adkins, 280

study will appreciate this close relationship and will accommodate it in their further approaches related to the study of theatre.

The difference in performing reflects strongly on the performance space as seen in the two different design approaches by the Romans and the Greeks. As mentioned earlier, the scripted Hellenistic drama after the 4th century BC did not require much interaction between the actors and the chorus, meaning the *orchestra* and the *proscenion.* The plays were scripted and the action took place among the actors; the chorus only performed as a transition between sections. Because of this type of literary performance, the chorus was not the bridge "between audience and stage"[429] anymore, the raised stage (as is the widely accepted opinion) separated the actors from the chorus and evidently the audience was altogether outside the action. However, because of the developing, unscripted and improvised, style of plot, the Roman theatre required lots of interaction between the actors, the chorus and the audience. Therefore, the Roman stage was lower and deeper, enabling all the performers to act on the stage. Furthermore, placing seats for special members of the audience in the *orchestra* might have made their participation in the play easier, giving them power over the play, which was strongly desired in Roman society, especially for people with influence.

The most important aim aspired to achieve with this study was for it to construct a perception for the reader, hence, the main focus of this study was to present an experience, which would lead to an increased awareness of the Ancient Theatre, its customs, its building techniques, its performers, its spectators and its ideas. After reading this study, it is expected that

[429] Beacham, The Roman Theatre and Its Audience, 59

watching a play such as Hamlet by William Shakespeare, again, should yield a different experience for the reader than it did before, simply because the little detail that the spectator is informed about the actor Roscius that Hamlet talks about, or Plautus that Polonius talks about, or Seneca, who is mostly known from his quotes, but indeed a tragic writer; they would know the irony of Julius Caesar dying in the theatre that Pompey built; Shakespeare, along with several other authors, expected his audience to know about them when he used references to their names.

Going to a theatre and just looking at an empty stage should be different for the readers of this study, because they may now question the evolution of that stage, and ask what would have happened if the raised Greek stage was used for this performance, and maybe they will see a raised stage and will know that it was inherited from the Greek theatre, and this perception offers much more than only the archaeological discussion on the height of the Greek stage.

When the actor on the stage does a soliloquy, which is a Latin word that is still used, the readers of this study would know that this is our inheritance from Roman traditional acting. The readers of this study would feel different if they go and see a live performance in a Roman theatre such as Aspendos. Maybe they would have a seat at the back of the auditorium; as such, they would have difficulty seeing the show, then they would see protocol seats in the orchestra, where the governor and the Minister of Culture would be sitting, and they would know that they are living the Roman experience of a low-class citizen, and the governor would be living experience of the Priest of Dionysus, maybe he would even give a speech before the ceremony; but maybe knowing this would make them forget

how bad their seats actually are, because they would enjoy living this two thousand year old experience. Then maybe they would question that if the stage were raised it would have been better for the people sitting at the back with them, a compromise for both people at the front and at the back; then they would be longing for a Greek experience. Perhaps, they would go to a ceremony in a theatre, where some government official would give a speech filled with political messages, and the readers of this study will know that this was inherited from Romans, they would know that this is a two thousand year old method of public manipulation. The most important result and contribution of this study would accordingly be that the readers would combine and build upon their own experiences by knowing the origins of those experiences. They would know the story of the theatre, and what it had witnessed, so they would witness it through their experiences.

The similarities and differences in the ancient and modern perceptions underlined in this text will hopefully help the readers improve their understanding of ancient mentality and form greater empathy with them in their future experiences regarding the ancient societies, not only in theatre but in every part of their life; as this study tries to provide a general glimpse of the ancient approach to many things, such as religion, politics, art, architecture and design through the effect of theatre imposed on the people. The theatre building was witness to many important changes in the world. It was where Julius Caesar fell getting stabbed behind his back by his most trusted; the ironic theatricality of which became subject to many other theatre plays, among which is Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. Theatre was a place of worshipping to gods, a place to declare imperial power, a place to establish democratic rule, a place to entertain, an altar of sacrifice,

an unofficial house of senate (or even an official one as in the Theatre of Pompey), a gathering place through winter, spring, summer and fall. Maybe it was the only place where all different classes of people, foreign or citizen, slave or free, even emperors gathered together to share a mutual experience, since theatre was designed to offer something for everyone.

It might be argued that the Greek and Roman theatres should be discussed separately. It might even be claimed that there are prominent differences between the Classical and Hellenistic, or Republican and Imperial. Yet, hopefully, the readers of this study will see, despite the differences, the experience offered by the theatre is comparable and relatable. It is even comparable to closer ages such as Elizabethan or even modern. In a way, the experience of theatre created by the ancients lives on and it is a timeless one. If we take a 12-year-old, who has seen a church, to a Greek or Roman temple, the kid would probably not recognize this structure as a house of god. However, if we take a child, who has seen a modern theatre, to an ancient theatre, he would probably recognize this structure as a theatre. Furthermore, if there is spectacle at the time of the child's visit, he would definitely recognize this structure as a theatre, because he would relate to the experience. Hopefully, the readers of this study will consider this timelessness in their future experiences and studies.

The approach this study tries to offer is an interdisciplinary one aiming to combine the architecture, history, epigraphy and drama to present the complete experience offered by an architectural structure. It tries to evaluate this structure's history through its story, through what it had witnessed. This experience turns out to be an almost timeless one, as it reaches through several ages to us, yet protects its relatable nature. This

approach may be applied to several other structures in evaluating the experience they had to offer, such as the temple, the forum, the bouleuterion, the palaestra, the church, or maybe the school. It is among the findings of this study that by examining the experience a building had to offer, its history would uncover itself in a more relatable way.

Someone who decides to study ancient theatre architecture might decide to start with plans and designs of those theatres. However, he would be able to interpret little about the reasons of those design considerations without knowing about content of the plays, the roles of the actors in the society and the power that this structure held. All those elements were inseparably connected and nourished on each other. The architect made his design choices according to what playwrights required and in turn, they formed one of the most influential structures of the time, which created an experience that reached through ages to us.

The study embraces the idea that in order to understand how theatre worked throughout history one needs to go beyond "empiricism and formalism"; and only then can one perceive the role of an architectural structure in the "society and culture".[430] It also grasps the idea that the study of theatre required contributions by the architect, the archaeologist, the epigrapher, the art historian and the dramatist.[431] However, many sources encountered during this study were found to be limited to only one area on the subject, hence, even they gave the researcher the information, they lacked to present the reader with the 'experience' this structure had to offer. This thesis aspires to achieve this effect.

---

[430] McConachie, 5

[431] Ashby, 8

The design of the theatre “relates to theories of vision”.[432] It was “the architect’s unique invention of a vessel for communal vision”.[433] *Theatron* means a place to ‘see’.[434] However, the vision of the ancient theatre was not limited by what could be observed; it presented a much wider experience. Vision is not limited to what can be seen, “vision is social and historical too”.[435] And to perceive its context completely, it must be examined through the relations of its elements and their effects on each other, only then can we ‘experience’ the many differences “among how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this seeing or the unseen therein”.[436]

[432] Senseney, 60

[433] Senseney, 77

[434] Bieber, 57

[435] Foster, ix

[436] Foster, ix

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbott, F. F. (1907). The Theatre as a Factor in Roman Polities under the Republic. *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association , 38*, 49-56.

Adkins, L., & Adkins, R. A. (2005). *Handbook to Life in Ancient Greece.* New York: Facts on File Inc.

Angelakis, K. (2006). *The Modern Use of Ancient Greek and Roman Theatres from an Acoustic Point of View.* Technical University of Denmark, Acoustic Technology.

Antcliffe, H. (1949). What Music Meant to the Romans. *Music & Letters , 30* (4), 337-344.

Aristophanes. (1938). The Acharnians. In W. J. Oates, & E. J. Oneill (Eds.), *The Complete Greek Drama* (Vol. II, pp. 429-480). New York: Random House.

Aristotle. (2006). *The Poetics.* (J. Sachs, Trans.) Focus Publishing.

Arnott, P. D. (2003). *Public and Performance in the Greek Theatre.* New York: Taylor & Francis e-Library.

Ashby, C. (1999). *Classical Greek Theatre New Views of an Old Subject.* Iowa City, USA: University of Iowa Press.

Beacham, R. C. (1991). *The Roman Theatre and Its Audience.* Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA: Harvard University Press.

Beacham, R. (2007). Playing Places: The Temporary and the Permanent. In *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre* (pp. 202-226). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Beare, W. (1939). Masks on the Roman Stage. *The Classical Quarterly , 33*, 139-146.

Beare, W. (1928). Plautus and His Public. *The Classical Review , 42* (3), 106-111.

Beare, W. (1937). Recent Work on the Roman Theatre. *The Classical Review , 51* (3), 105-111.

Beare, W. (1964). *The Roman Stage.* Northampton: John Dickens and Co. Ltd.

Bethe, E. (1896). *Prolegomena zır Geschichte des griechischen Theaters im Alterthum.* Leipzig University.

Bieber, M. (1961). *The History of the Greek and Roman Theater.* Princeton, New Jersey, USA: Princeton University Press.

Buckham, P. W. (1827). *The Theatre of the Greeks* (2nd ed. ed.). (J. W. Donaldson, Ed.) Cambridge: W. P. Grant.

Bulle, H. (1928). *Untersuchungen an Griechischen Theatern.* München.

Capps, E. (1895). The Chorus in the Later Greek Drama with Reference to the Stage Question. *The American Journal of Archaelogy and of the History of the Fine Arts , 10* (3), 287-325.

Carcopino, J. (1964). *Daily Life in Ancient Rome: The People and the City at the Height of the Empire.* (E. O. Lorimer, Trans.) London: Penguin Books.

Ceccarelli, P., & Milanezi, S. (2007). Dithyramb, Tragedy and Cyrene. In Wilson, & Peter (Eds.), *The Greek Theatre and Festivals* (pp. 185-214). New York: Oxford University Press.

Chaniotis, A. (2007). Theatre Rituals. In P. Wilson (Ed.), *The Greek Theatre and Festivals* (pp. 48-66). New York: Oxford University Press.

Cicero, M. T. (2001). *De Natura Deorum.* (P. Walsh, Trans.) New York: Oxford University Press.

Cicero, M. T. (1875). *De Oratore* (Vol. III). (C. D. Yonge, Trans.) London, UK: George Bell and Sons.

Cicero, M. T. (1967). *De Oratore* (Vols. I-II). (E. H. Warmington, Ed., & E. W. Sutton, Trans.) Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA: Harvard University Press.

Cook, A. B. (1895). On the Thymele in Greek Theatres. *The Classical Review , 9* (7), 370-378.

Csapo, E. (2007). The Ment Who Built Theatres: Theatropolai, Theatronai, and Arkhitektones. In P. Wilson (Ed.), *The Greek Theatre and Festivals* (pp. 87-121). New York: Oxford University Press.

Davidson, J. (1994). 'Prometheus Vinctus' on the Athenian Stage. *Greece & Rome, Second Series , 41* (1), 33-40.

Dilke, O. A. (1948). The Greek Theatre Cavea. *Annual of the British School of Athens , 43*.

Dinsmoor, W. B. (1981). *The Architecture of Ancient Greece: An Account of Its Historic Development.* Chrysalis Books.

Ferrero, D. d. (1990). *Batı Anadolu'nun Eski Çağ Tiyatroları.* Ankara, Turkey: Dönmez Offset Basımevi.

Fiechter, E. R. (2011). *Die baugeschichtliche Entwicklung des antiken theaters.* Nabu Press.

Flickinger, R. C. (1914). The Influence of Festival Arrangements upon the Drama of the Greeks Part I. *The Classical Journal , 10* (3), 115-125.

Fossum, A. (1926). Harmony in the Theatre at Epidaurus. *American Journal of Archaeology , 30* (1), 70-75.

Foster, H. (1988). Preface. In H. Foster (Ed.), *Vision and Visuality* (pp. ix-xiv). Dia Art Foundation.

Frank, T. (1931). The Status of Actors at Rome. *Classical Philology , 26* (1), 11-20.

Gardner, P. (1899). The Scenery of the Greek Stage. *The Journal of Hellenistic Studies , 19*, 252-264.

Gebhard, E. (1974). The Form of the Orchestra in the Early Greek Theater. *Hesperia: The Journal of the Amercan School of Classical Studies at Athens , 43* (4), 428-440.

Goette, H. R. (2007). Choregic Monuments and the Athenian Democracy. In P. Wilson (Ed.), *The Greek Theatre and Festivals* (pp. 122-149). New York: Oxford University Press.

Goldberg, S. M. (1998). Plautus on the Palatine. *The Journal of Roman Studies , 88*, 1-20.

Güven, S. (1991, May). The Swan-Song of a Roman Dictator: Sulla's Offering to Fortuna Primigenia. *METU Journal of Faculty of Architecture* , 17-36.

Haigh, A. E. (1890). Dr. Dörpfeld's Theory about the Logeion in Greek Theatres. *The Classical Review , 4* (6), 277-282.

Hanson, J. A. (1959). *Roman Theatre-Temples.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Harrison, J. E. (1890). Dr. Dörpfeld on the Greek Theatre. *The Classical Review , 4* (6), 274-277.

Hesk, J. (2007). The Socio-Political Dimension of Ancient Tragedy. In M. McDonald, & J. M. Walton (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre* (pp. 72-91). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Horace. (1953). Epistles. In *Horace's Complete Works* (C. Smart, Trans.). J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.

Irklı, D. (1995). *Acoustical Properties of Ancient Theatres: Computer Simulation and Measurements.* Ph.D. Thesis, Middle East Technical University, Department of Building Science, Architecture, Ankara.

Jones, H. A. (1918). Introduction to Brunetiere's Law of the Drama. In B. H. Clark (Ed.), *European Theories of the Drama* (pp. 460-471). Cincinnati: Stewart & Kidd Company.

Jory, E. J. (1986). Gladiators in the Theatre. *The Classical Quarterly New Series , 36* (2), 537-539.

Juvenal. (1928). Satires. In *Juvenal and Persius* (G. G. Ramsay, Trans.). London: William Heinemann.

Kostof, S. (1995). *A History of Architecture.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Landels, J. G. (1967). Assisted Resonance in Ancient Theatres. *Greece & Rome, Second Series , 14* (1), 80-94.

Little, A. M. (1956). A Roman Sourcebook for the Stage. *American Journal of Archaeology , 60* (1), 27-33.

Livy. (1823). *The History of Rome.* (G. Baker, Trans.) New York: Peter Mesier et al.

Maconie, R. (2005). Musical Acoustics in the age of Vitruvius. *The Musical Times , 146* (1890), 75-82.

Magie, D. (1950). *Roman Rule in Asia Minor.* Princeton.

Markman, S. D. (1949). Review of Teatri greci arcaici. *Classical Journal , 44*.

Martial. (1919). De Spectaculis. In *Epigrams* (W. C. Ker, Trans.). London: William Heinemann.

Martin, R. P. (2007). Ancient Theatre and Performance Culture. In M. W. McDonald (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre* (pp. 36-54). New York: Cambridge University Press.

McCart, G. (2007). Masks in the Greek and Roman Theatre. In M. McDonald, & J. M. Walton (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre* (pp. 247-267). New York: Cambridge University Press.

McConachie, B. A. (1994). Realizing a Postpositivist Theatre History. *New Theatre Quarterly , 10* (39), 217-222.

McEwen, I. K. (2003). *Vitruvius: Writing the Body of Architecture.* The MIT Press.

Millar, F. (1981). The World of the Golden Ass. *The Journal of Roman Studies , 71*, 63-75.

Mongomery, H. C. (1959). Amplification and High Fidelity in the Greek Theaer. *The Classical Journal , 54* (6), 242-245.

Nietzsche, F. (2007). *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings.* (R. Geuss, R. Speirs, Eds., & R. Speirs, Trans.) Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Norberg-Schulz, C. (1978). Greek Architecture. In C. Norberg-Schulz, *Meaning in Western Architecture* (pp. 43-80). New York, USA: Praeger Publishers.

Onians, J. (1999). *Classical Art and the Culture of Greece and Rome.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Parsons, P. W. (1989). Reflections upon the Great Theatre at Ephesus. *METU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture , 9* (2), 109-116.

Patterson, J. R. (1992). The City of Rome: From Republic to Empire. *The Journal of Roman Studies , 82*, 186-215.

Peacock, J. (1993). The Stuart Court Masque and the Theatre of the Greeks. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes , 56*, 183-208.

Pickard-Cambridge, A. W. (1953). *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Plautus. (1893). *Amphitruo.* (E. H. Sugden, Trans.) London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co.

Plautus. (1894). Asinaria. In *The Comedies of Plautus* (H. T. Riley, Trans., Vol. I, pp. 477-524). George Bell and Sons.

Plautus. (1881). Casina. In *The Comedies of Plautus* (H. T. Riley, Trans., Vol. II, pp. 303-350). George Bell and Sons.

Plutarch. (1886). Sulla. In *The Life of Lucius Cornelius Sulla* (H. A. Holden, Trans.). Cambridge University Press.

Pollux. (1967). *Pollucis Onomasticon.* (E. Bethe, Ed., & J. Cole, Trans.) Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner.

Polybius. (2010). *The Histories.* (B. McGing, Ed., & R. Waterfield, Trans.) Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Quintillian. (1996). *Institutio Oratoria* (Vols. I-III). (C. P. Goold, Ed., & H. E. Butler, Trans.) Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA: Harvard University Press.

Rehm, R. (2007). Festivals and Audiences in Athens and Rome. In M. McDonald, & J. M. Walton (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre* (pp. 184-201). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Rhodes, R. F. (1995). A Sense of Place and the Seeds of Monumentality. In R. F. Rhodes, *Architecture and Meaning on the Athenian Acropolis* (pp. 1-27). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schanzer, E. (1956, November). Thomas Platter's Observations on the Elizabethan Stage. *Notes and Queries* .

Sear, F. (2006). *Roman Theatres: An Architectural Study.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Sear, F. (1990). Vitruvius and Roman Theatre Design. *American Journal of Archaeology , 94* (2), 249-258.

Senseney, J. R. (2011). *The Art of Building in the Classical World: Vision, Craftsmanship, and Linear Perspective in Greek and Roman Architectu.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Shakespeare, W. (2000). *Hamlet.* (S. Lamb, Ed.) New York: Hungry Minds.

Shakespeare, W. (2002). *Julius Caesar.* New York: Barron's Educational Series Inc.

Slater, W. (2007). Deconstructing Festivals. In P. Wilson (Ed.), *The Greek Theatre and Festivals* (pp. 21-47). New York: Oxford University Press.

Small, D. B. (1983). Studies in Roman Theatre Design. *American Journal of Archaeology , 87* (1), 55-68.

Snodgrass, A. (1983). Archaelogy. In M. Crawford (Ed.), *Sources for Ancient History.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sturgeon, M. C. (2004). Dedications of Roman Theaters. *Hesperia Supplements, Essays in Honor of Sara A. Immerwahr , 33*, 411-429.

Suetonius. (1931). Caligula. In J. Cavorse (Ed.), *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars* (pp. 165-204). The Modern Library.

Suetonius. (1931). Nero. In J. Cavorse (Ed.), *The Lives of Twelve Caesars* (pp. 239-280). The Modern Library.

Suidas. (1971). *Suidae Lexicon.* (A. Adler, Ed., & J. Thorburn, Trans.) Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner.

Thomas, E. (2007). *Monumentality and the Roman Empire: Architecture in the Antonine Age.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Ulrich, R. B. (2007). *Roman Woodworking.* Yale University Press.

Vitruvius. (1914). *The Ten Books on Architecture.* (M. H. Morgan, Trans.) London: Humphrey Milford Oxford University Press.

Wakeling, C. (2001). 'A Room Nearly Semi-Circular': Aspects of the Theatre and the Church from Harrison to Pugin. *Architectural History , 44*, 265-274.

Walton, J. M. (2007). Commodity: Asking the Wrong Questions. In M. McDonald, & J. M. Walton (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre* (pp. 286-302). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Wilson, P. (2007). Performance in the Pythion: The Athenian Thargelia. In P. Wilson (Ed.), *The Greek Theatre and Festivals* (pp. 150-184). New York: Oxford University Press.

Wycherley, R. E. (1967). *How the Greeks Built Cities* (2nd Edition ed.). Macmillan and Company Ltd.

Zarifi, Y. (2007). Chorus and Dance in the Ancient World. In M. McDonald, & J. M. Walton (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre* (pp. 227-246). New York: Cambridge University Press.

APPENDIX A

FIGURES

Figure 1 Sockets for wooden stage supports, theatre at Pergamum. Source: Ashby, 16

Figure 2 Altar at the theatre at Priene. Source: Ashby, 51

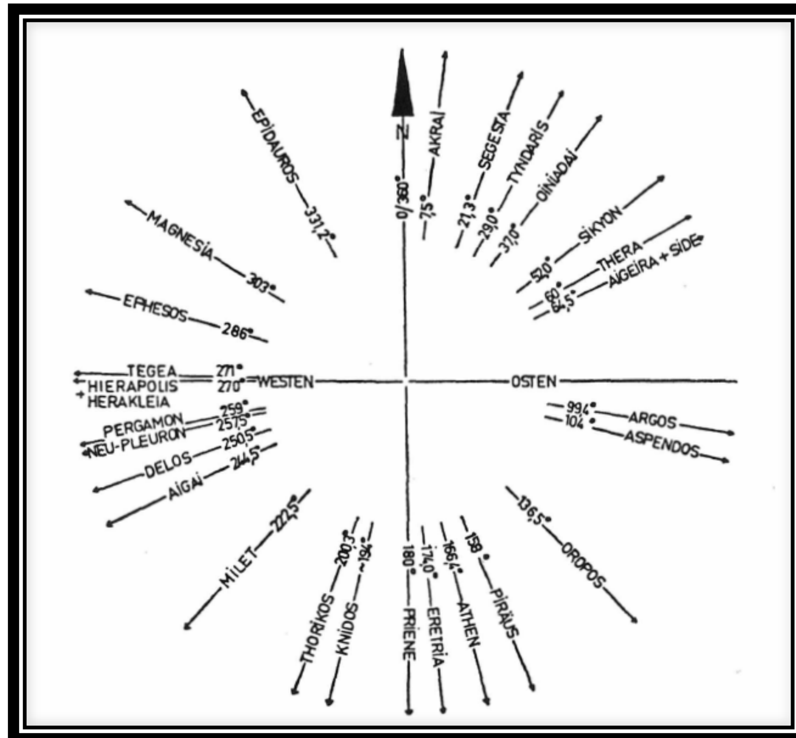

Figure 3 Orientations of various theatres. Source: Armin Von Gerkan, Wolfgang Müller-Wiener, Das Theater von Epidauros, 5

	North (315–44°)		East (45–134°)		South (135–224°)		West (225–314°)		Total
Mainland Greece	18%	(9)	24%	(12)	43%	(21)	14%	(7)	49
Anatolia	15%	(7)	21%	(10)	48%	(23)	17%	(8)	48
Greek Islands	8%	(1)	42%	(5)	25%	(3)	25%	(3)	12
Magna Graecia	14%	(2)	29%	(4)	50%	(7)	7%	(1)	14
Total	15%	(19)	25%	(31)	44%	(54)	15%	(19)	123

Figure 4 Audience Orientation by Quadrants. Source: Ashby, 104

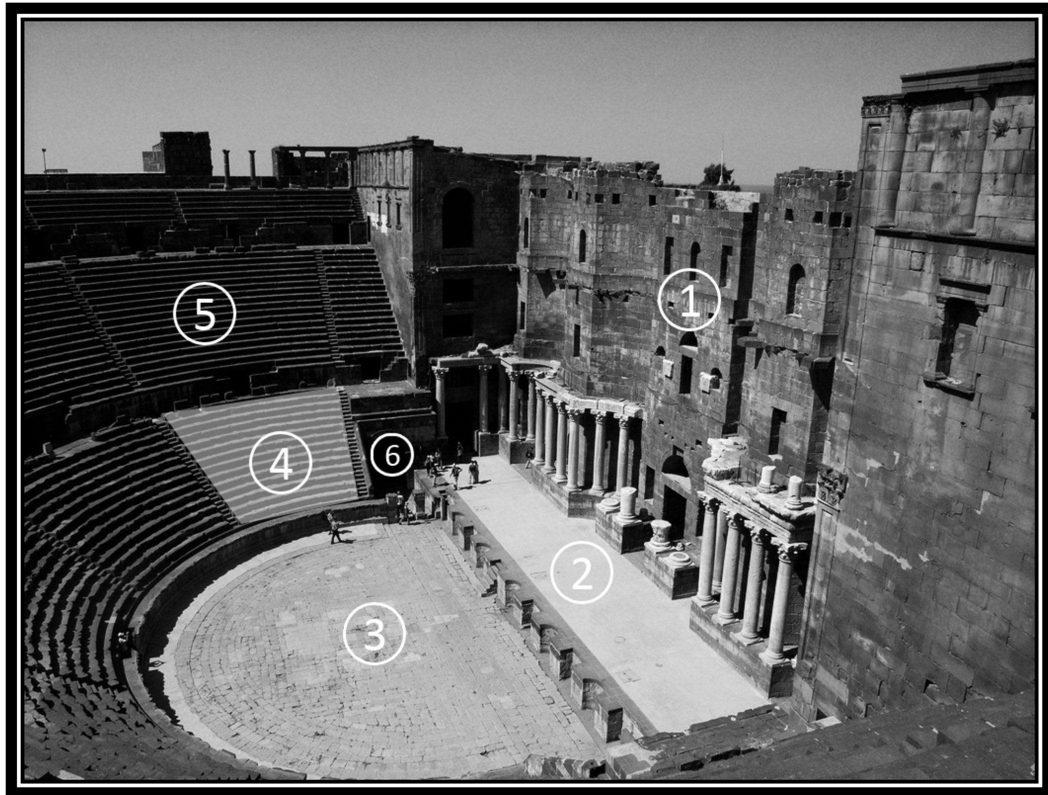

Figure 5 Roman Theatre at Bosra.
Source:http://www.flickriver.com/photos/shaneh/5031374824/ (© Shane Horan, 2009) [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

1. Scaenae Frons
2. Proscenion
3. Orchestra
4. Cuneus
5. Auditorium
6. Aditus Maximus (Main Entrance)

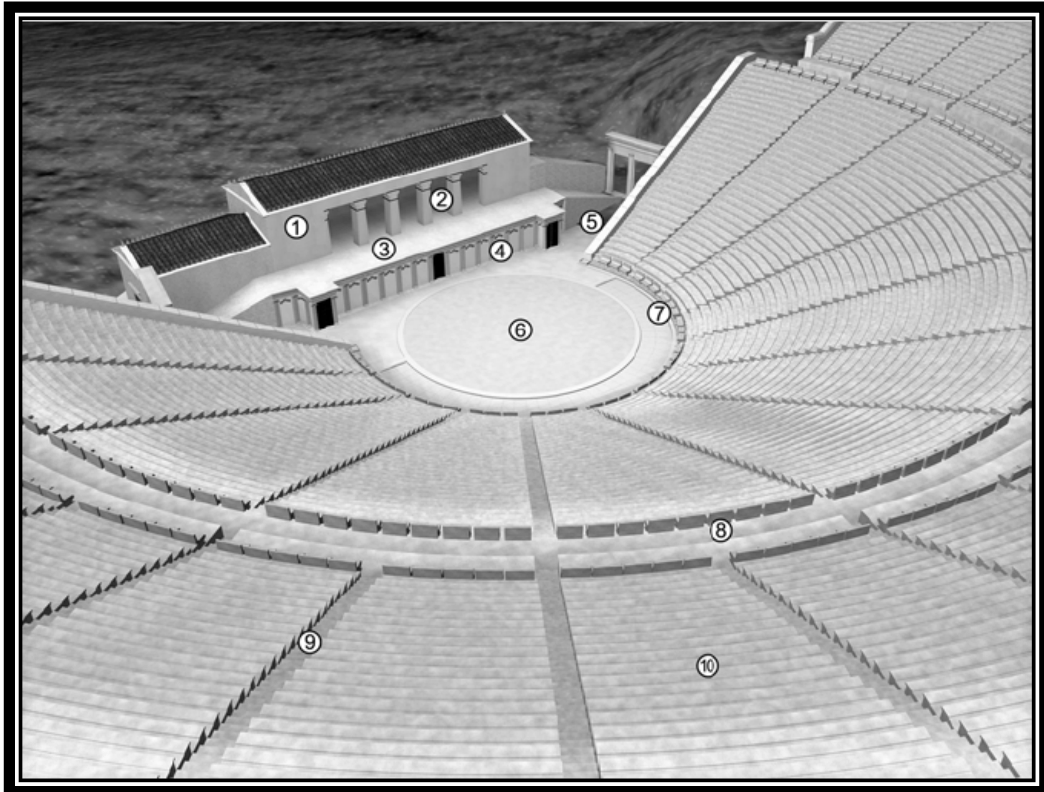

Figure 6 Computer Model of a Greek Theatre. Source: Beacham, Playing Places, 212

1. Skene
2. Thyromata
3. Proskenion
4. Pinakes
5. Parodos
6. Orchestra
7. Prohedria
8. Diazomata
9. Klimakes
10. Kerkides

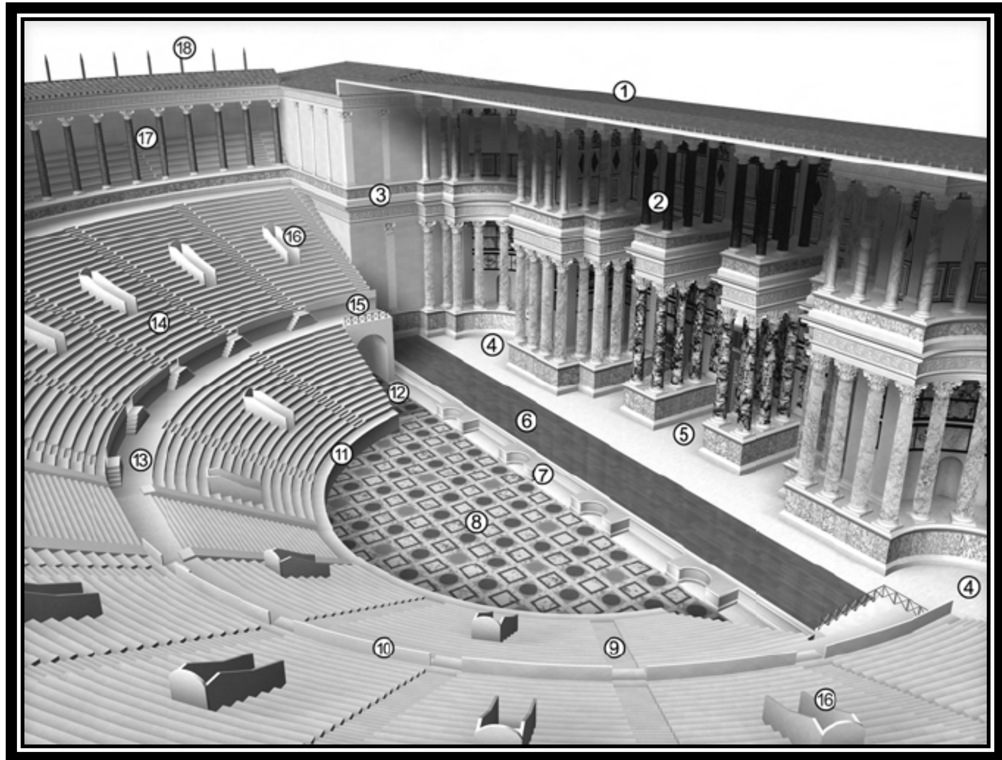

Figure 7 Computer Model of a Roman Theatre. Source: Beacham, Playing Places, 221

1.Postscaenium
2. Scaenae Frons
3. Versura
4. Portae Hospitales
5.Porta Regia
6. Pulpitum
7. Frons Pulpitum
8. Orchestra
9. Scalaria
10. Parapet
11. Proedria
12. Aditus Maximus
13. Praecinctio
14. Cuneus
15. Tribunal
16. Vomitoria
17. Porticus in Summa Cavea
18. Supports of the Vela

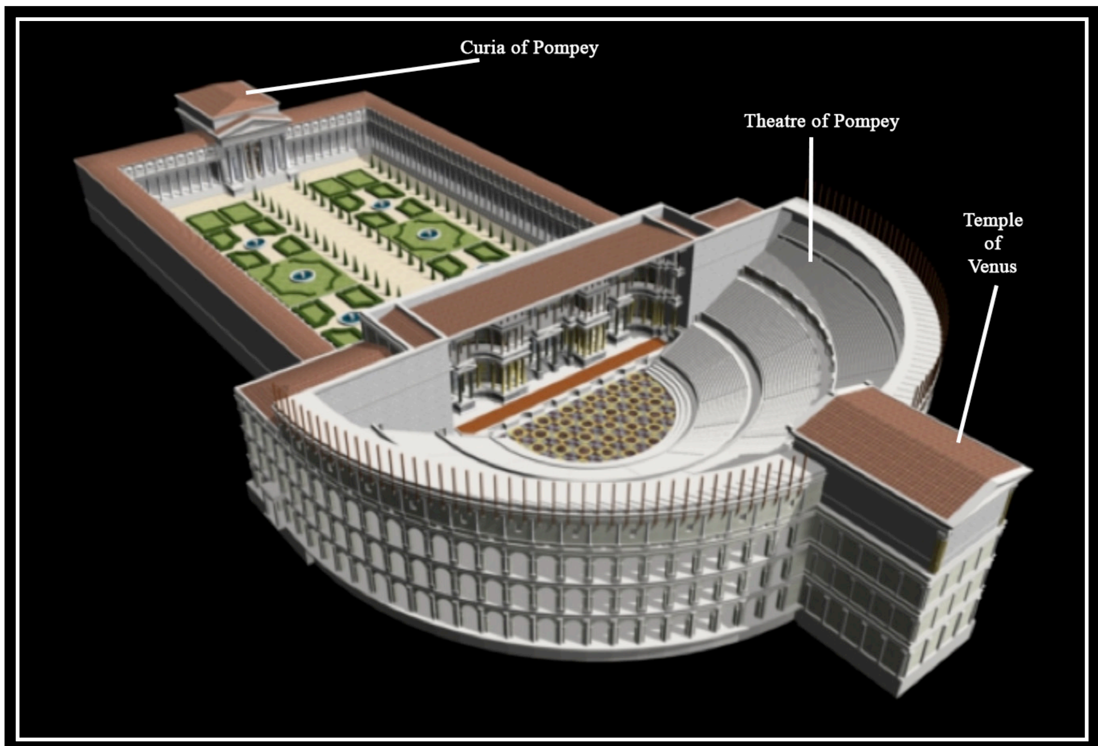

Figure 8 Reconstruction of Theatre of Pompey by Dr. Matthew Nicholls Source: http://blogs.reading.ac.uk/engage-in-teaching-and-learning/2012/08/06/rebuilding-the-ancient-world-digitally-by-dr-matthew-nicholls/ [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

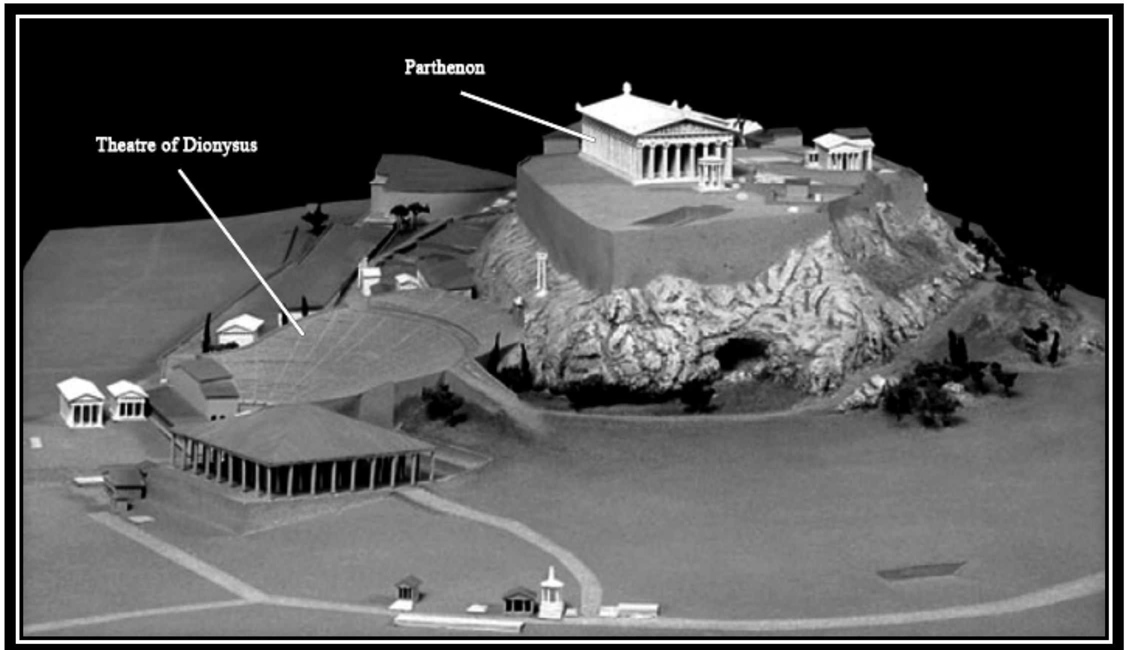

Figure 9 Model of the Acropolis of Athens. Source. Goette, 144

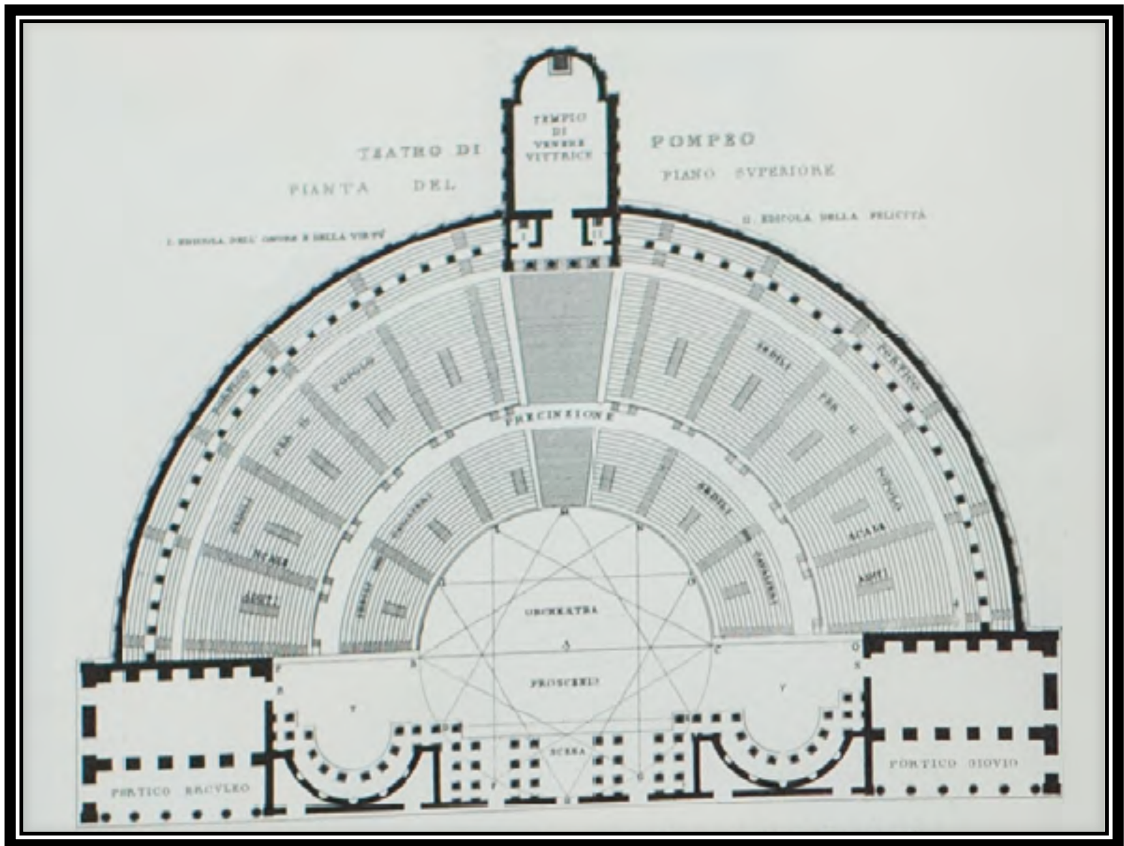

Figure 10 Plan of Theatre of Pompey at Rome. Source: Hanson, 120

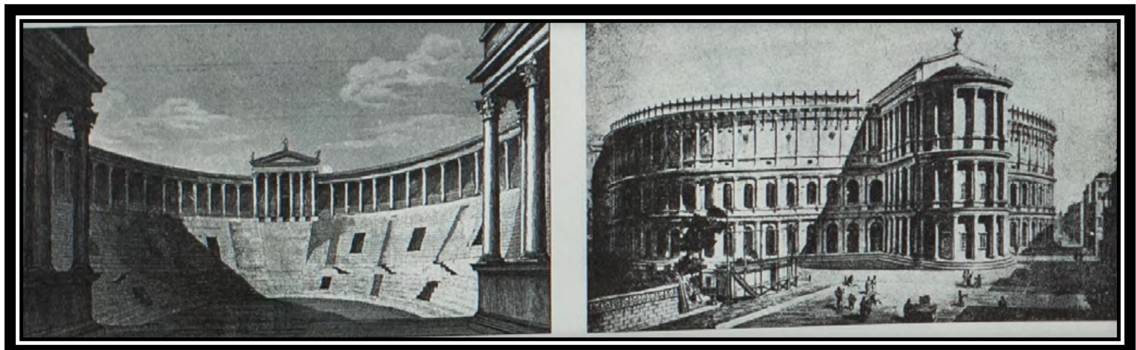

Figure 11 Reconstructed views of Theatre of Pompey in Rome. Source: Hanson, 120

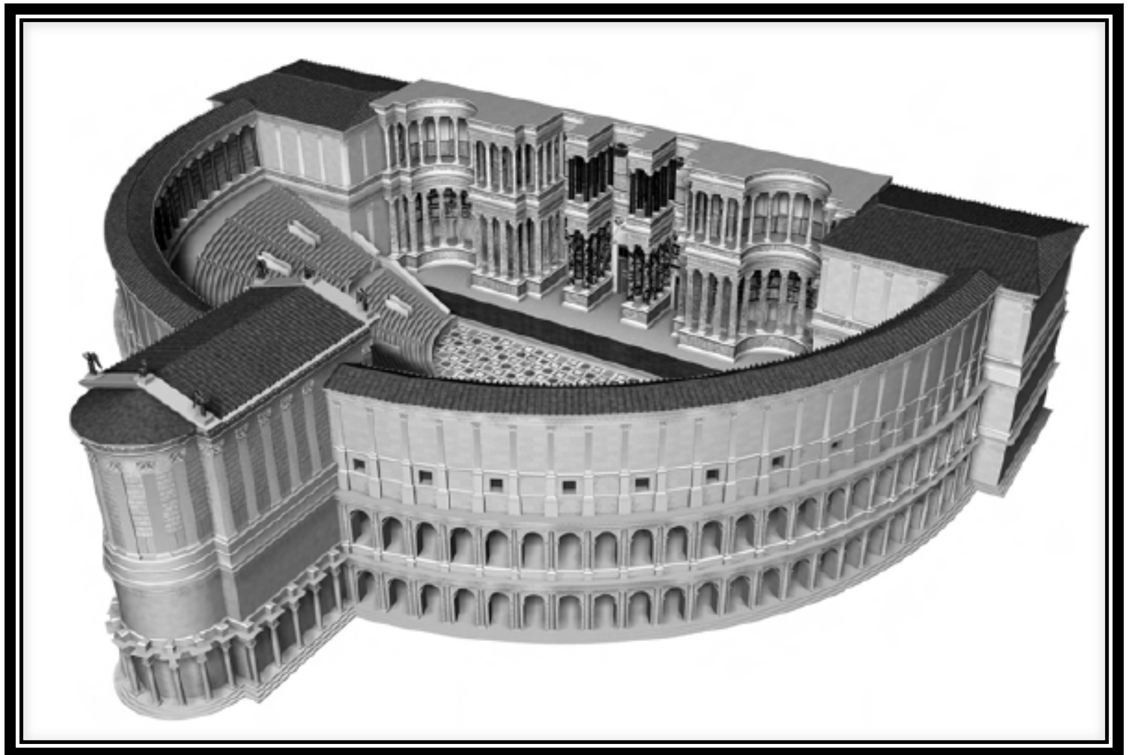

Figure 12 Computer Model of Theatre of Pompey in Rome. Source: Beacham, Playing Places, 219

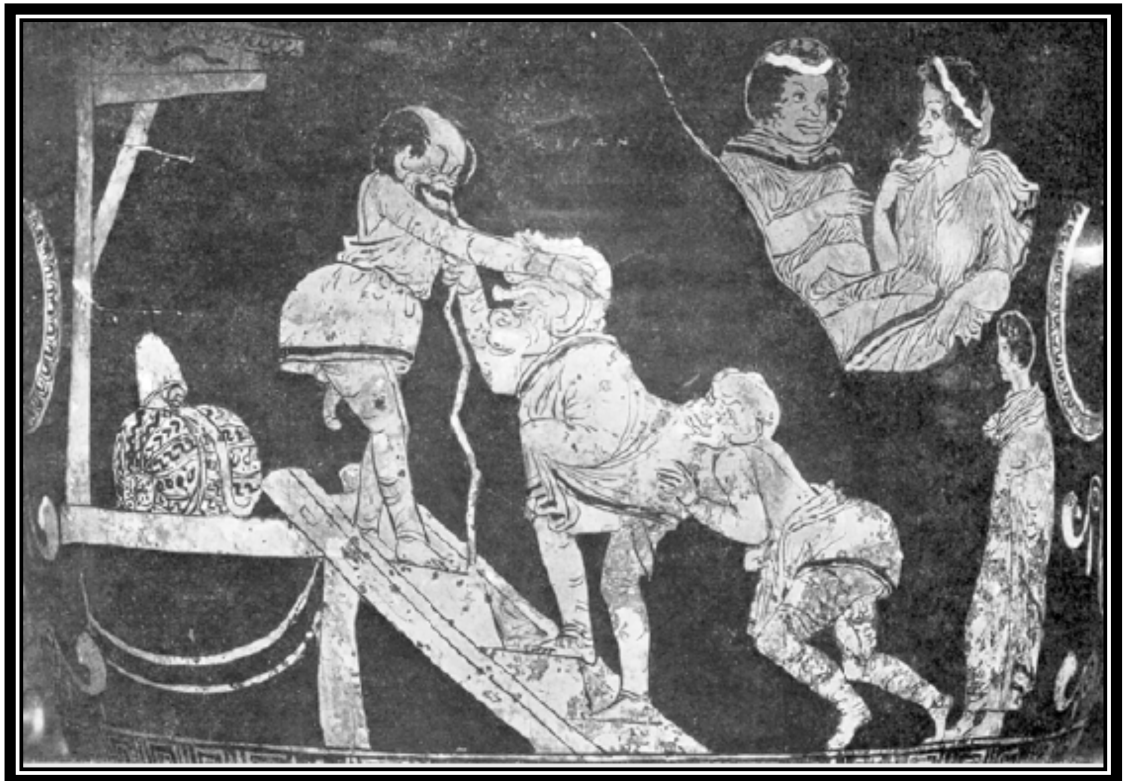

Figure 13 Vase Painting Depicting a Scene From *Cheiron*. Source: McCart, 259

Figure 14 Farcical scene, Heracles abducting a woman, Lentini. Source: Beacham, Richard C. The Roman Theatre and Its Audience. Harvard University Press, USA, 1996, p. 7

Figure 15 Birth of Helen. Source: Bieber, 135

Figure 16 Hellenistic theatre at Priene. Source:
http://www.whitman.edu/theatre/theatretour/priene/images/large%20images/Priene.cover.s.jpg [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

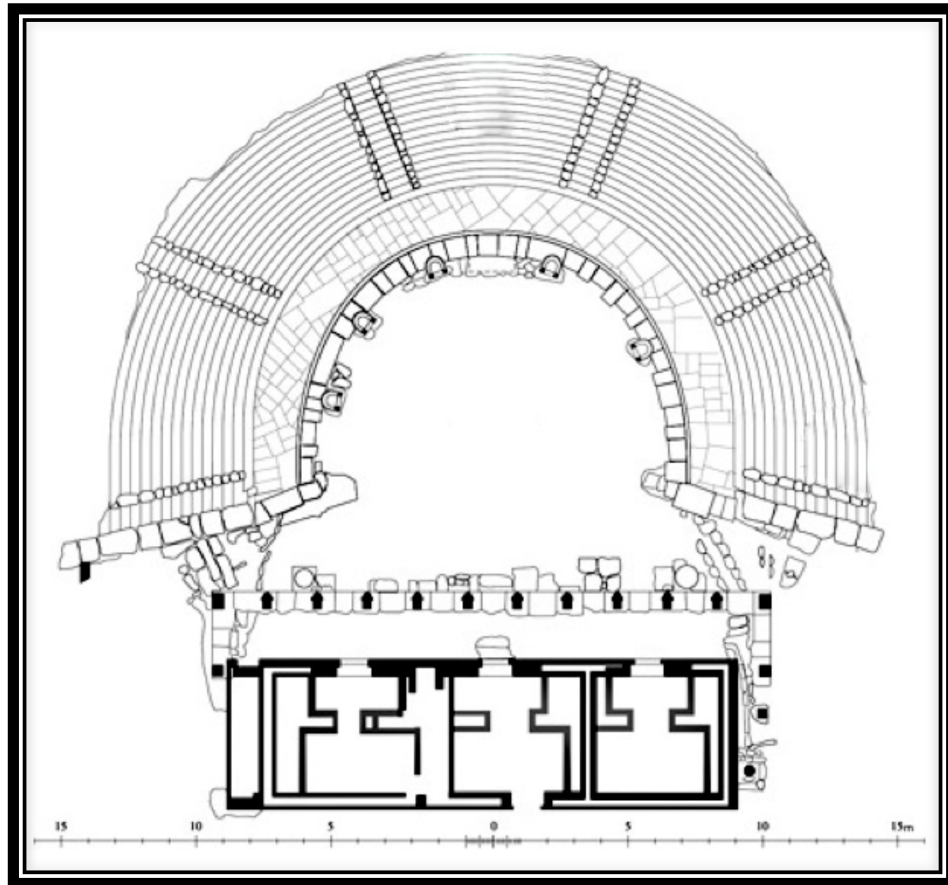

Figure 17 Plan of the theatre at Priene. Source: http://www.whitman.edu/theatre/theatretour/priene/images/large%20images/Priene.panoplan.jpg [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

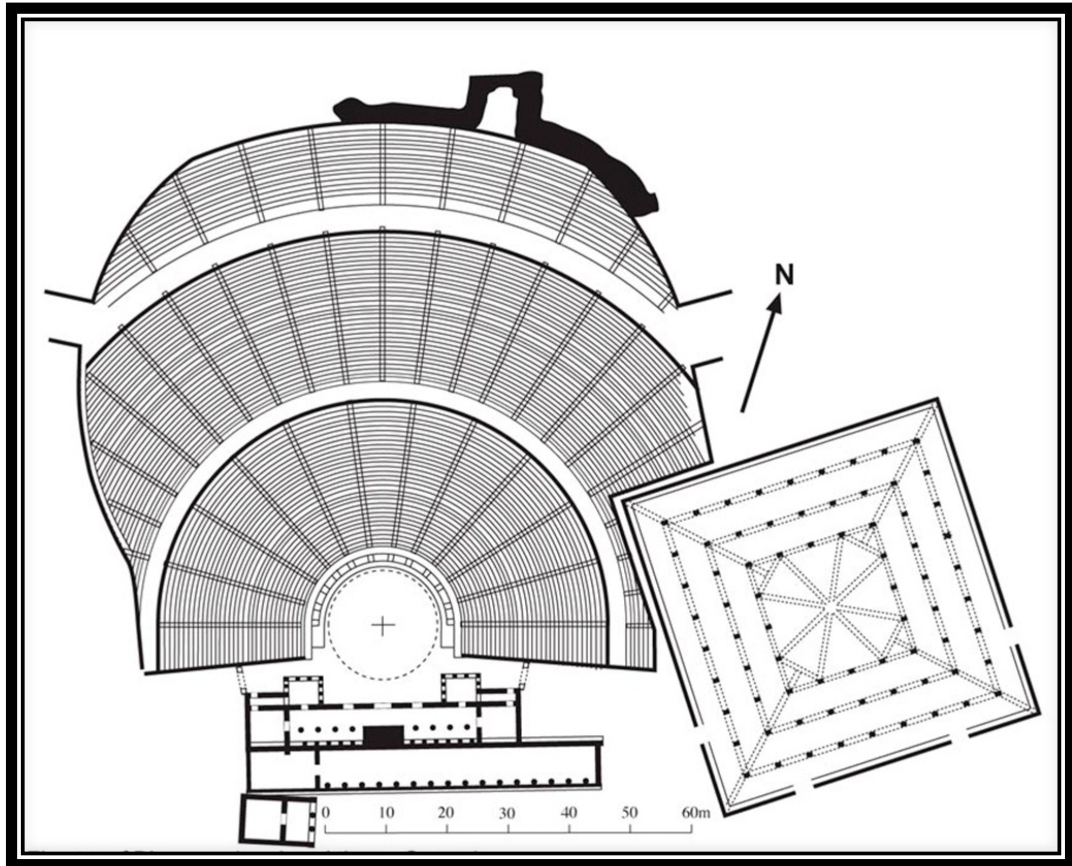

Figure 18 Plan of the Theatre of Dionysus at Athens.
Source:http://www.whitman.edu/theatre/theatretour/dionysos/images/large%20images/dionysus.panoplan.jpg [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

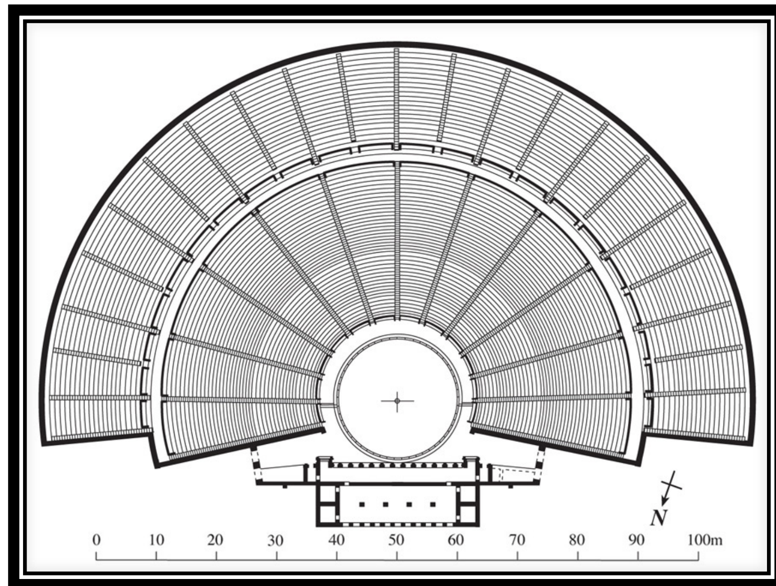

Figure 19 Plan of the Theatre of Epidauros. Source:
http://www.whitman.edu/theatre/theatretour/epidaurus/images/large%20images/epidaurus.panoplan.jpg [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

Figure 20 Greek Theatre of Epidauros. Source:
http://www.whitman.edu/theatre/theatretour/epidaurus/images/large%20images/epidaurus.cover.jpg [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

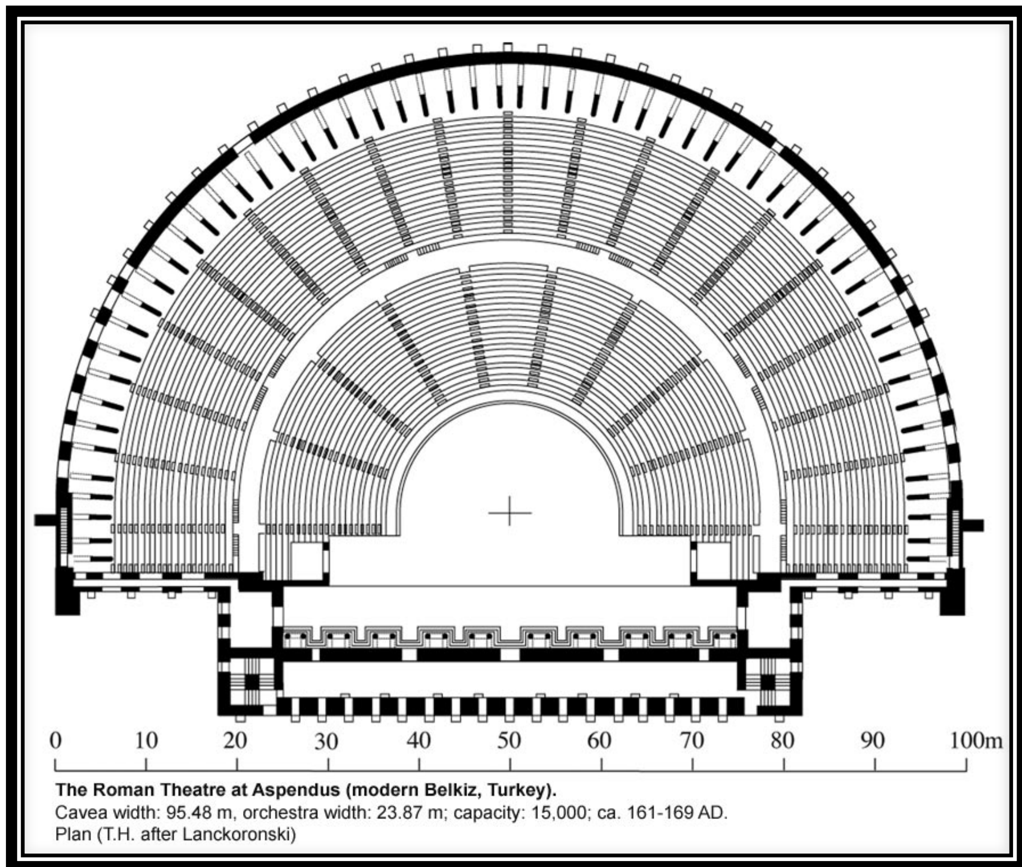

Figure 21 Roman Theatre with semi circular orchestra, Aspendos. Source:http://www.whitman.edu/theatre/theatretour/aspendos/images/large%20images/aspendos.plan.jpg [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

Figure 22 Vase Painting of a Greek Chorus Dancing. Source: http://darastrata.com Photo by Dara Weinberg [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

Figure 23 Greek Dancers from a vase in the Museo Borbonico, Naples. Source: http://www.bencourtney.com/ebooks/dance/#c2 [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

Figure 24 Choral Dance of Attic Girls, Villa Giulia, Rome. Source: Bieber, 6

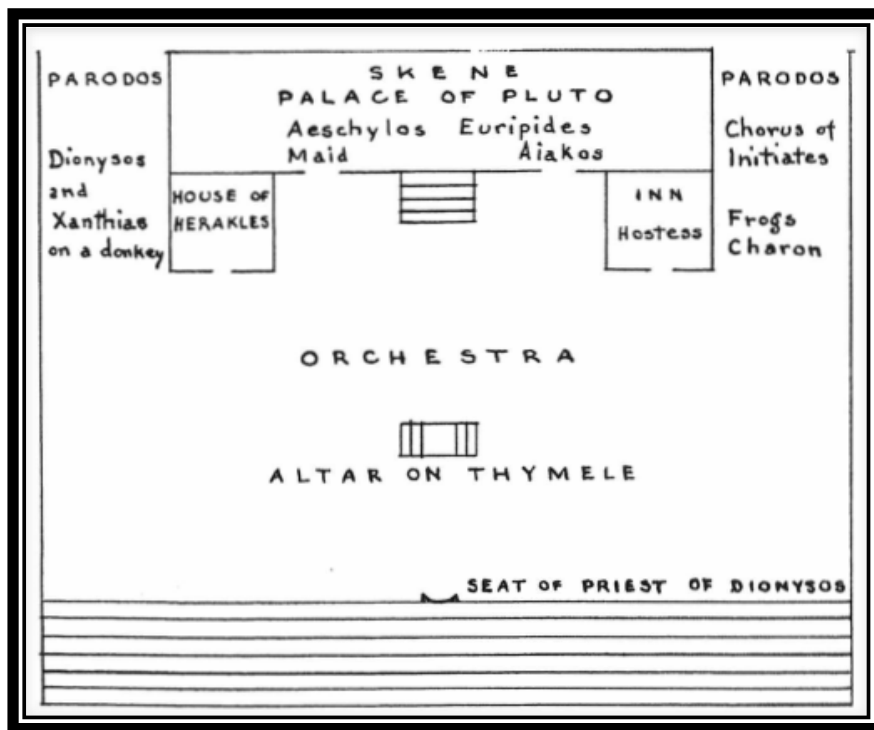

Figure 25 Plan for Presentation of Aristophanes' Frogs at Lenaion. Source: Bieber, 54

Figure 26 Phaistos: setting for a choral performance. Source: Ashby, 28

Figure 27 Knossos: the performance area. Source: Ashby, 29

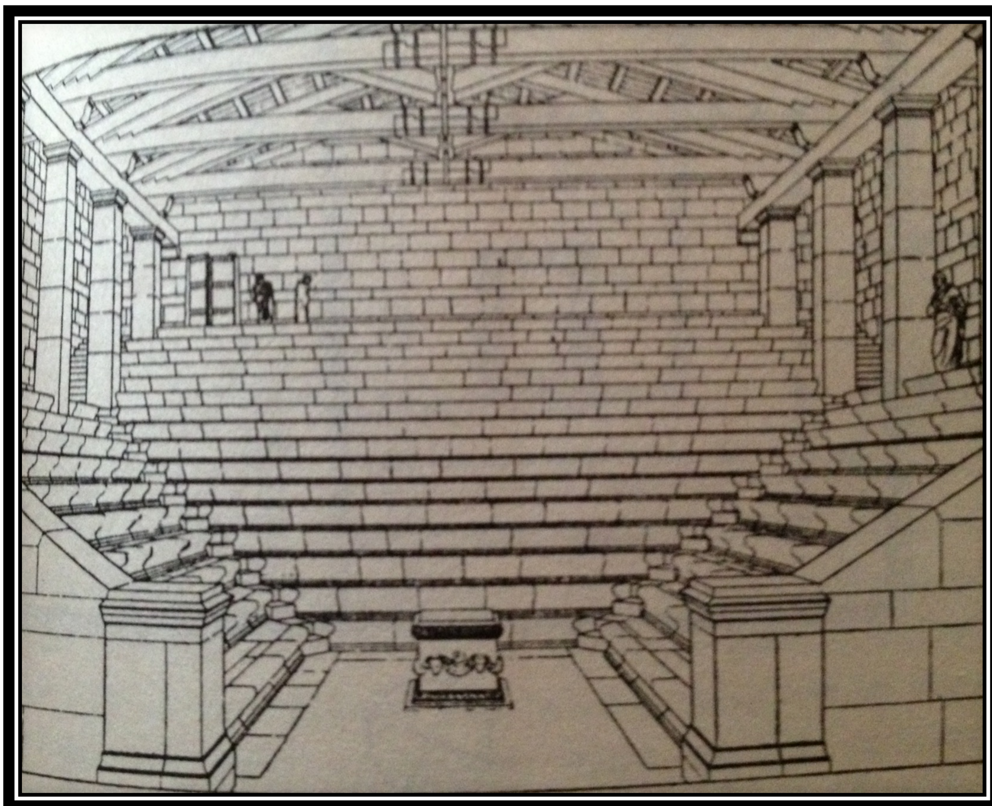

Figure 28 Restoration of the Council-House, Priene. Source: Wycherly, 131

Figure 29 Terra-Cota figures of slaves taking refuge on altars. Source: Bieber, 105

Figure 30 Portrait of Sorix. Source: Bieber, 165

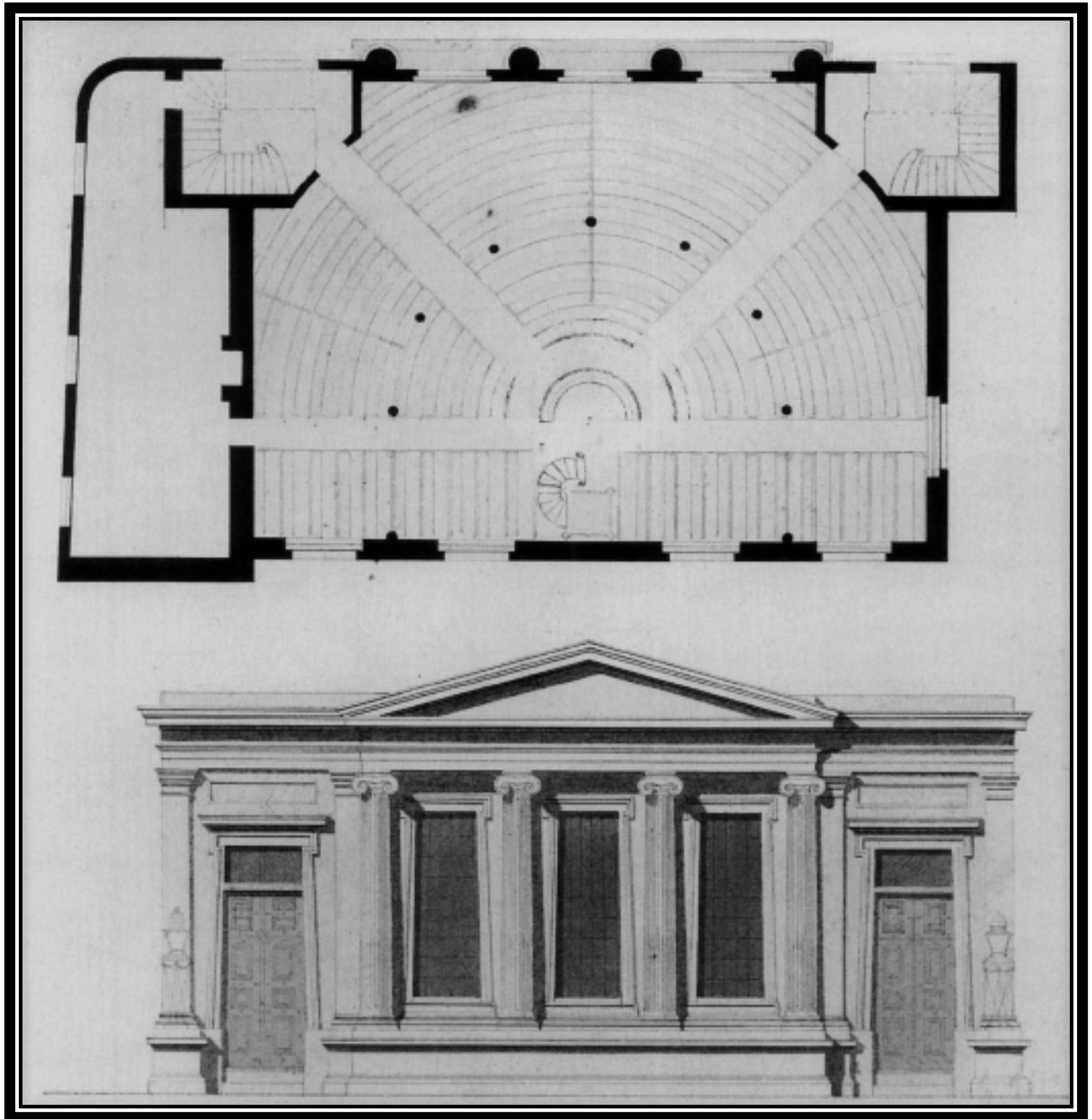

Figure 31 Union Street Chapel, Brighton, 1825. Source: Wakeling, 268

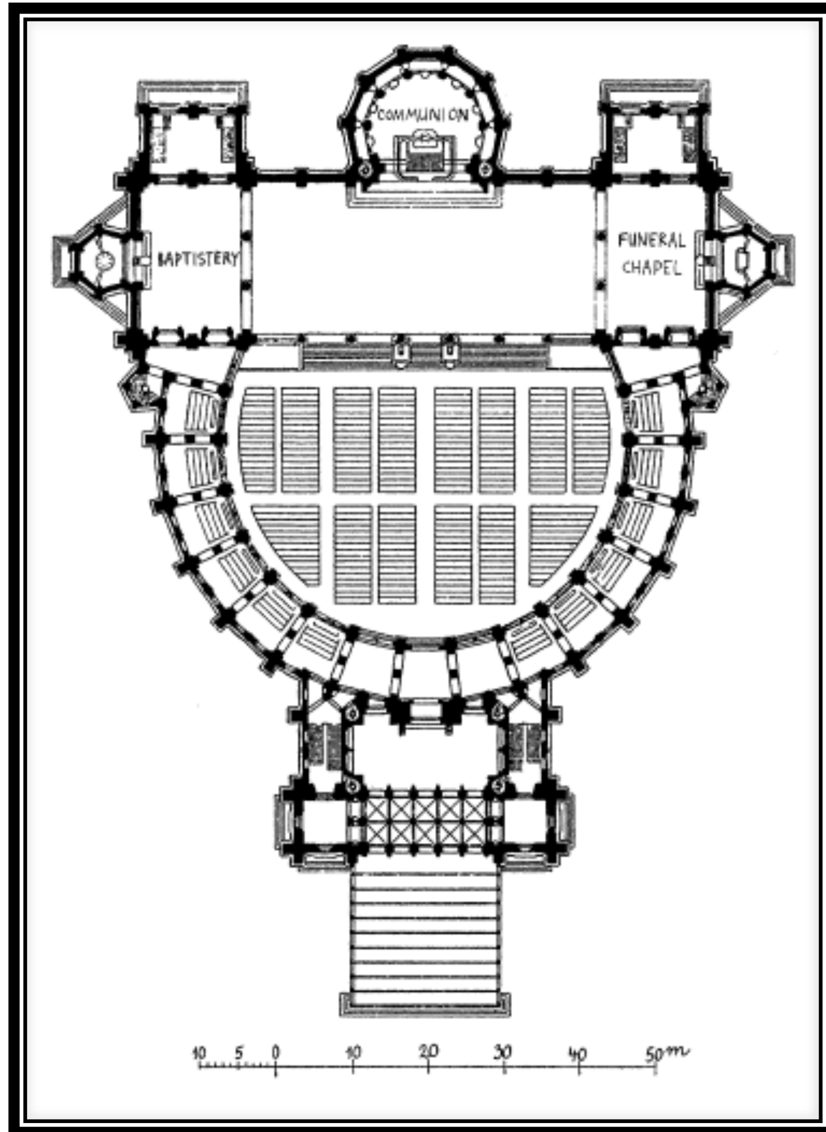

Figure 32 Plan of the Lutheran Cathedral in Berlin, 1827. Source: Wakeling, 270

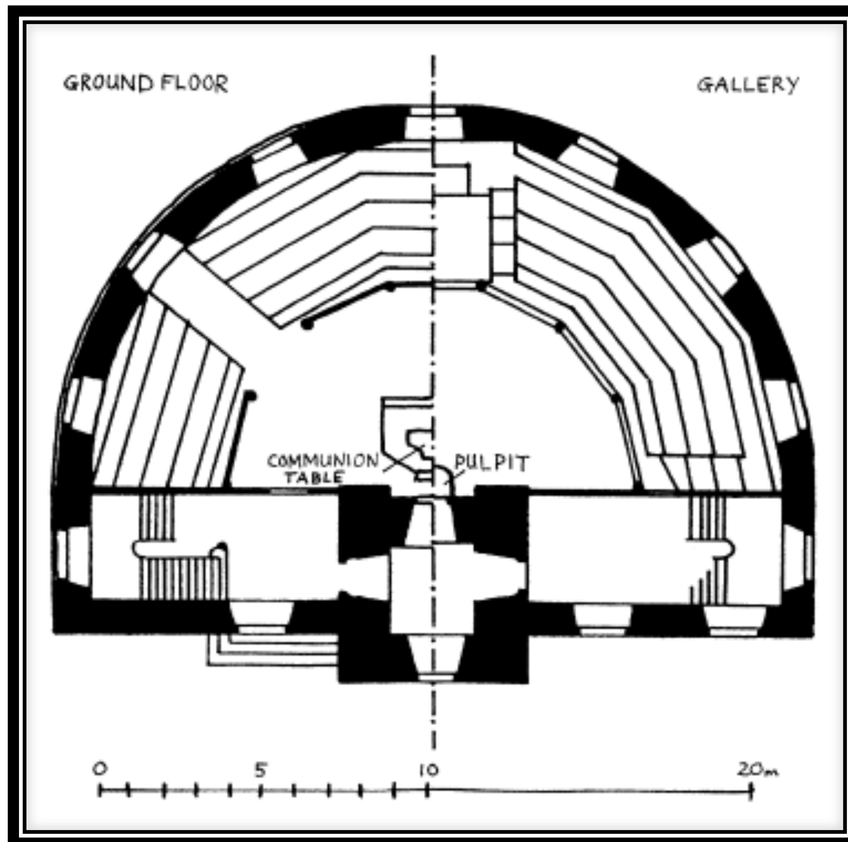

Figure 33 Plan of the Lutheran Church, Adelshofen, 1832. Source: Wakeling, 271

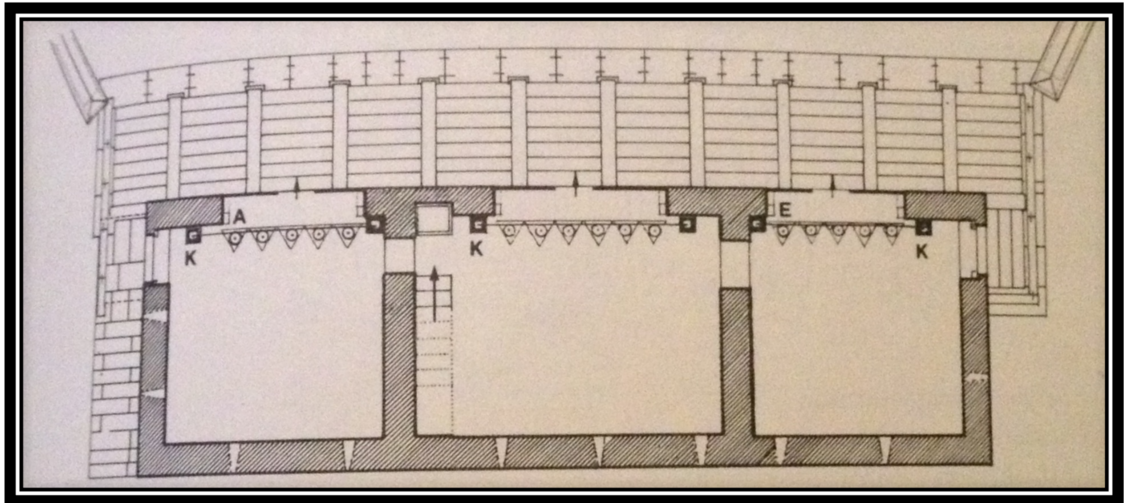

Figure 34 Top view of the stage of Priene showing *periaktoi* in three openings in the stage wall. Source: Ferrero, 253

Figure 35 Reconstruction of Periaktoi. Source: http://www.silentsource.com/diffusors-rpg-triffusor.html [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

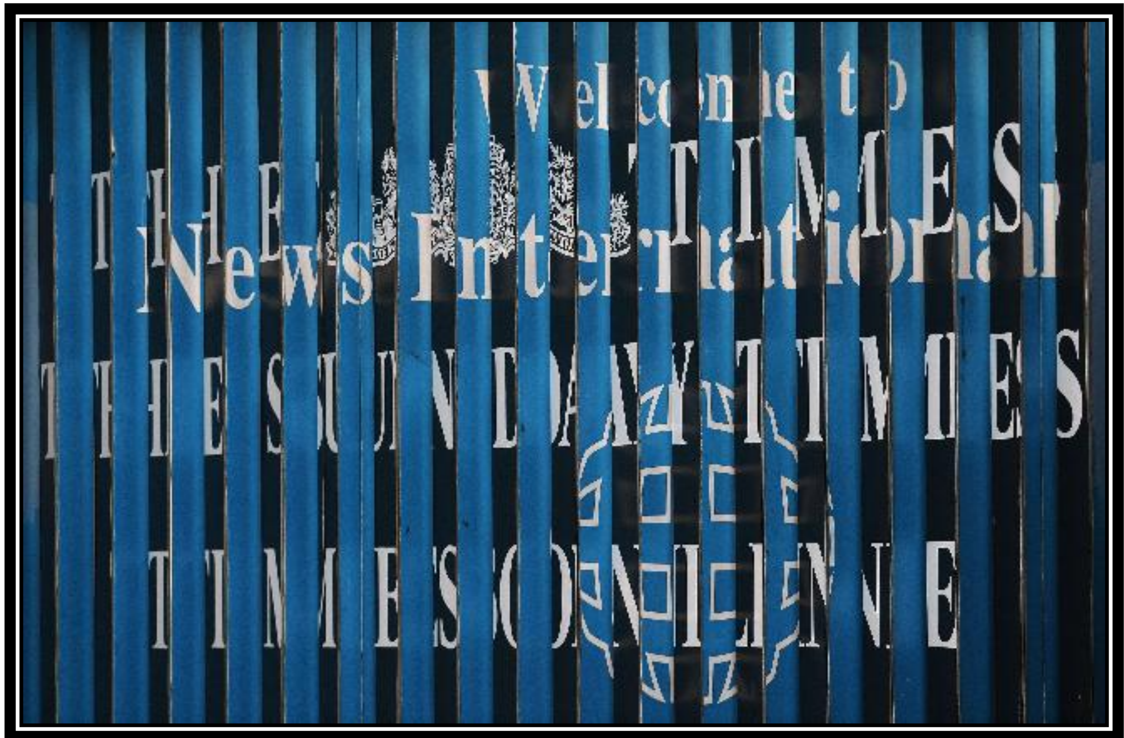

Figure 36 Rotating Advertisement Board. Source: http://www.trust.org/alertnet/multimedia/pictures/detail.dot?mediaInode=894ab3dc-410d-43e4-9e1b-074cb5eb51f3 [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

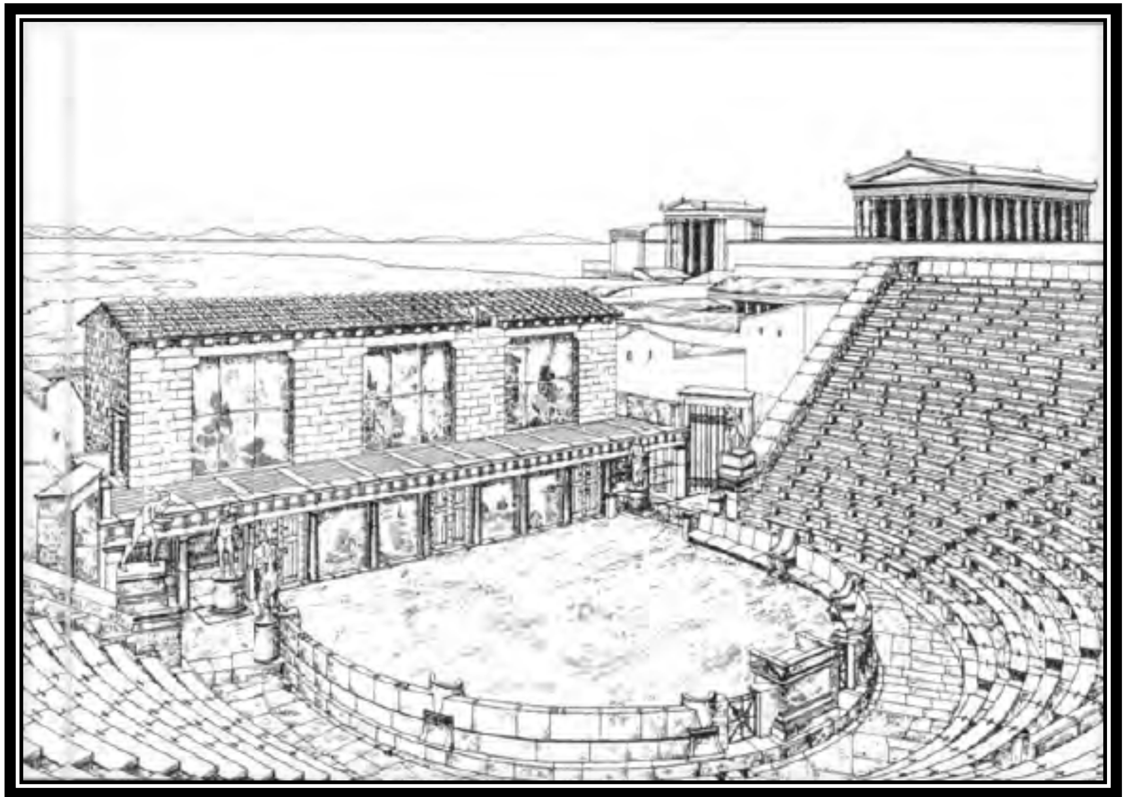

Figure 37 Restoration drawing of the theatre at Priene, including *pinakes* placed inside the *thyromata*. Source: Kostof, 149

Figure 38 Stage decorations on the stage of the theatre at Ephesus. Source: Ferrero, 254

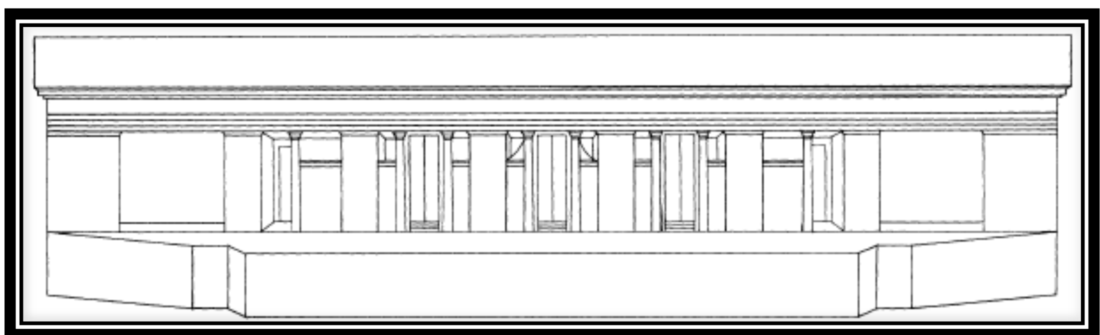

Figure 39 Tragic Stage Setting, Theatre of Ephesus. Source: Little, 38

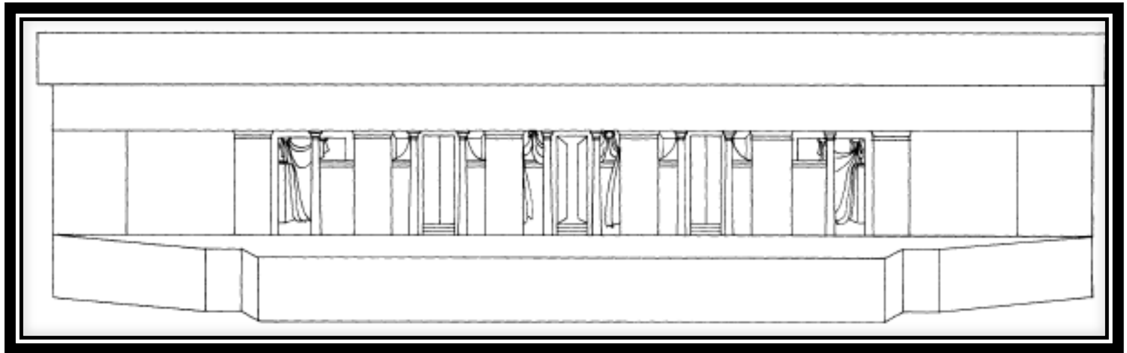

Figure 40 Tragic Stage Setting, Theatre of Ephesus. Source: Little, 38

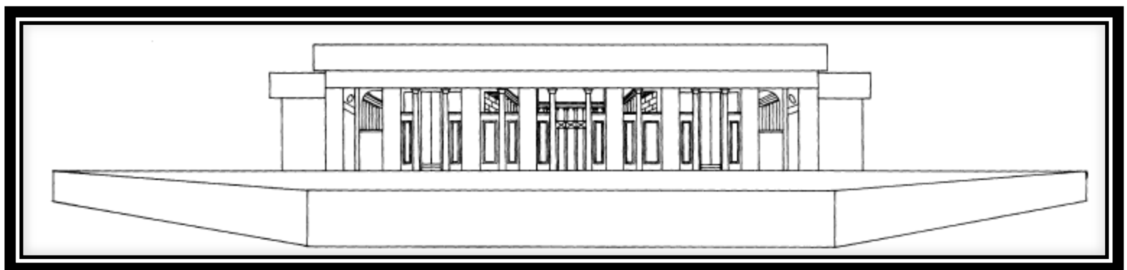

Figure 41 Tragic Stage Setting, Theatre of Eretria. Source: Little, 38

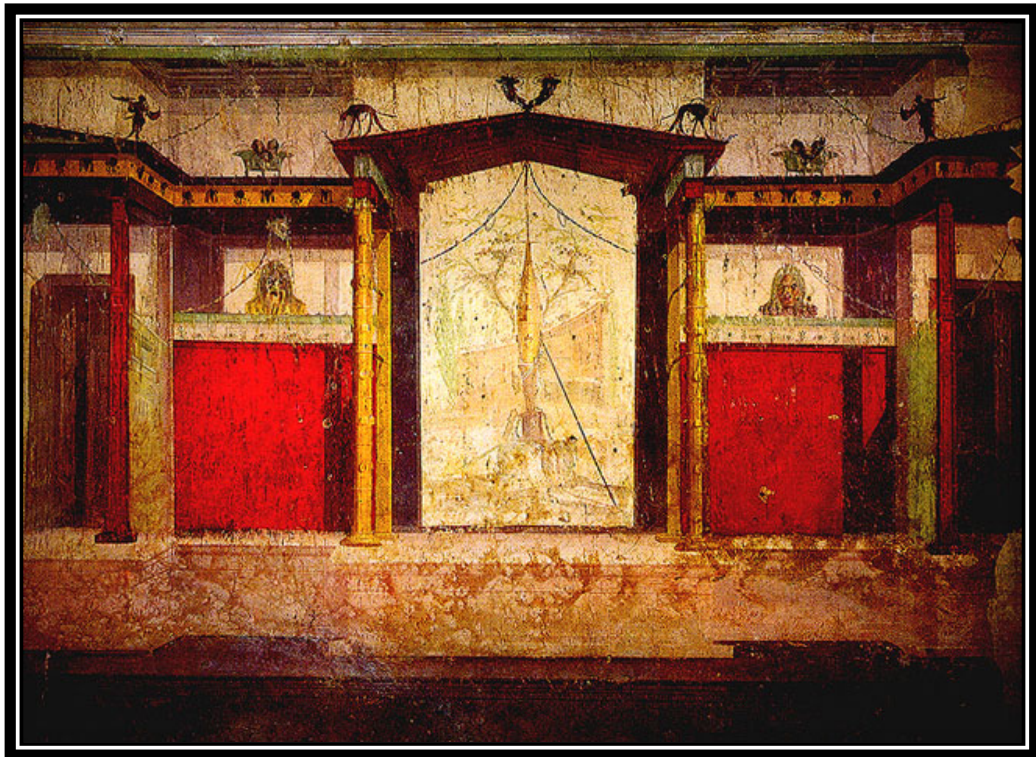

Figure 42 The Room of the Masks, the House of Augustus. Source: http://www.skenographia.cch.kcl.ac.uk/aug_rm_5/analysis.html - King's College London – Skenographia Project

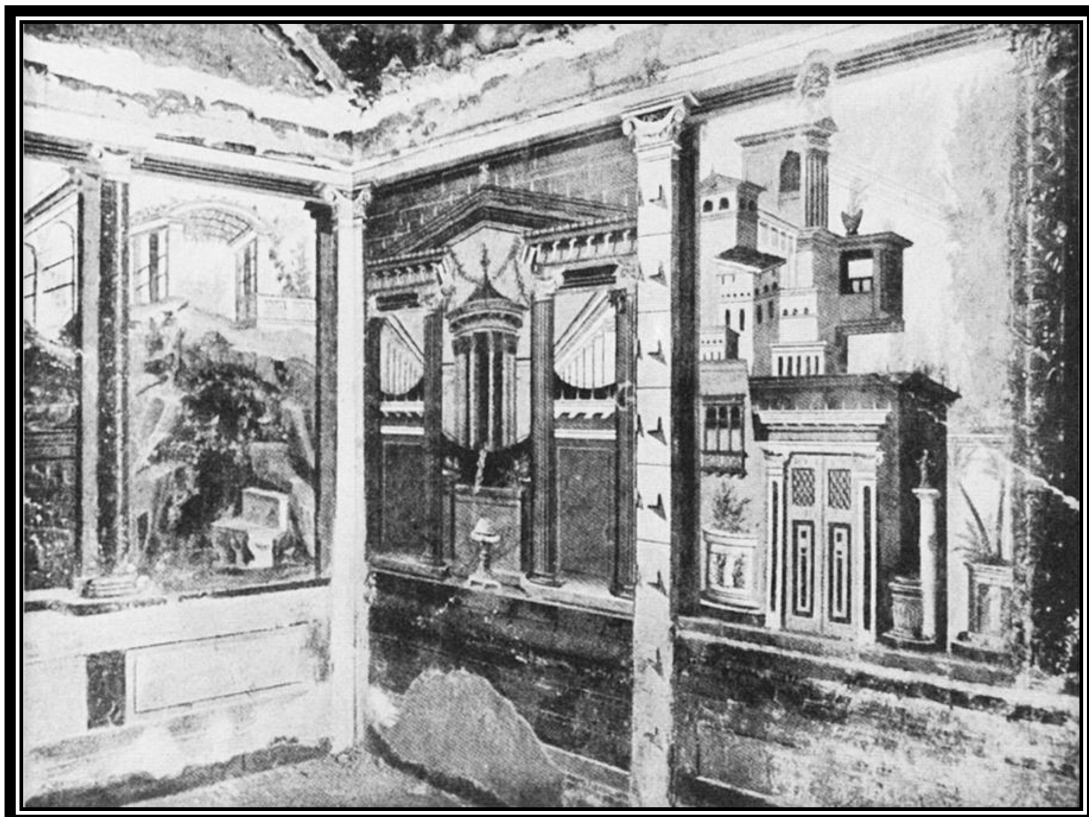

Figure 43 Painting from Villa Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale depicting satyric, tragic and comedic scenes together, respectively from left to right. Source: Little, 34

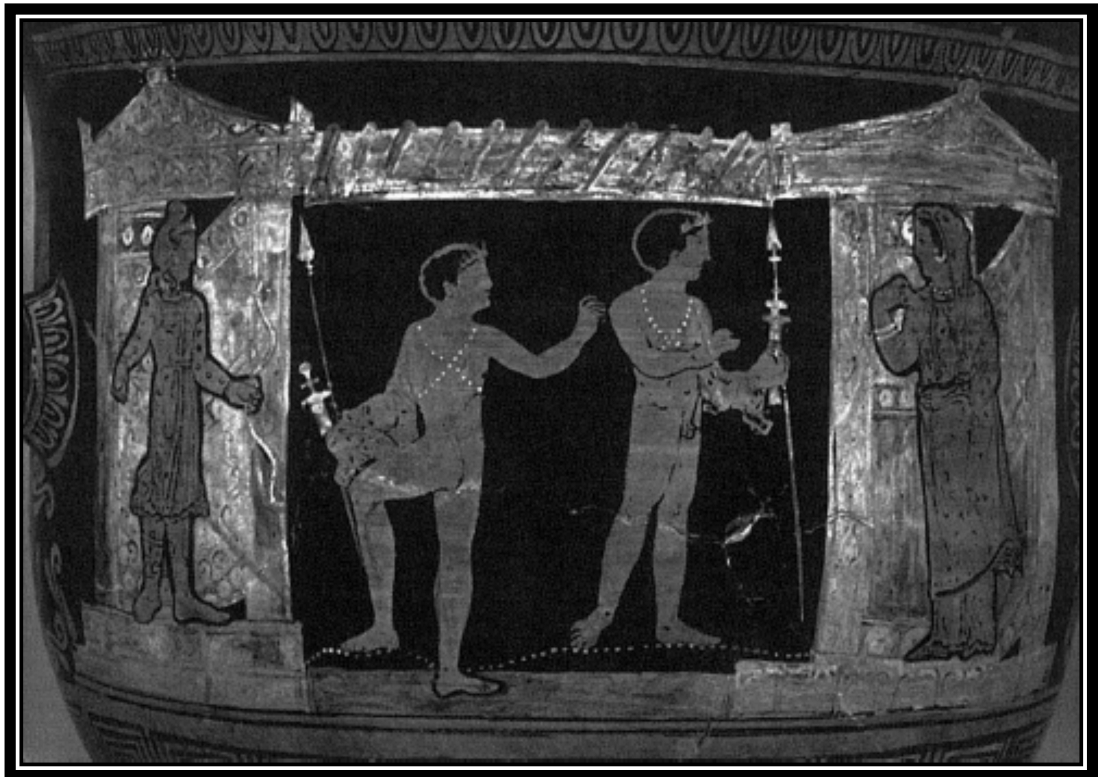

Figure 44 Euripides, Iphigenia in Tauris. Source: Ashby, 67

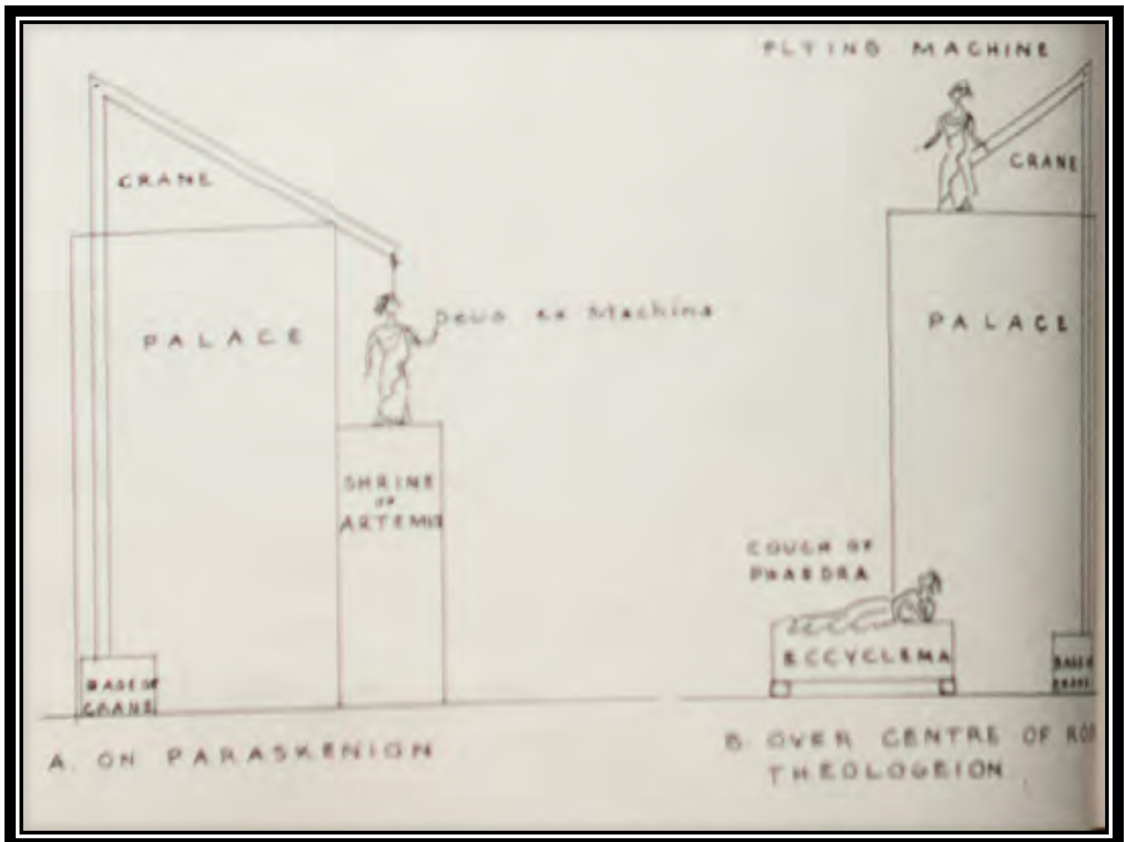

Figure 45 The Mechane according to Bieber. Source: Bieber, 76

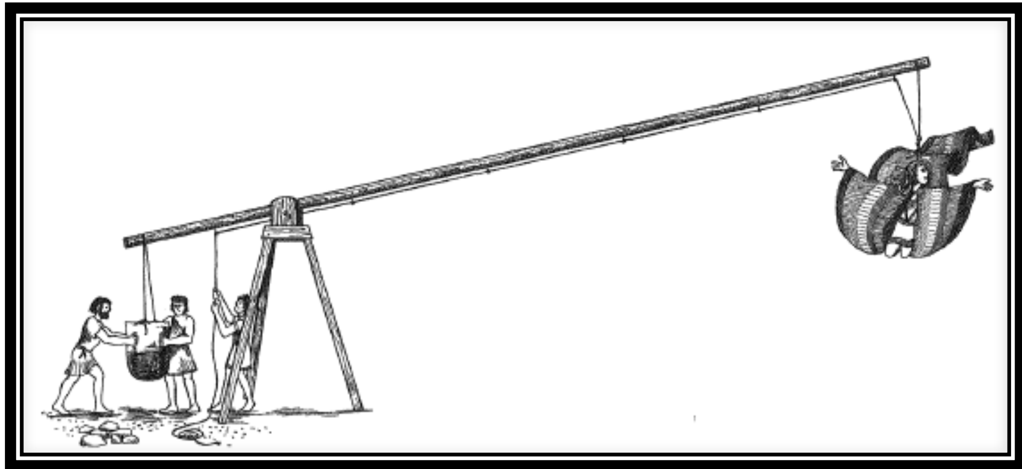

Figure 46 The Mechane according to Ashby. Source Ashby, 85

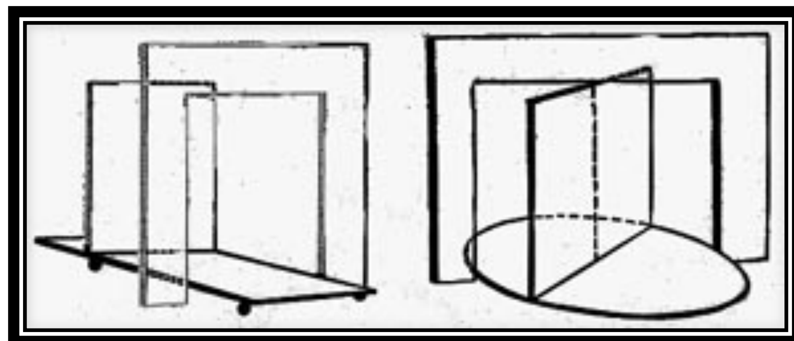

Figure 47 Ekkyklema. Source: Bieber, 76

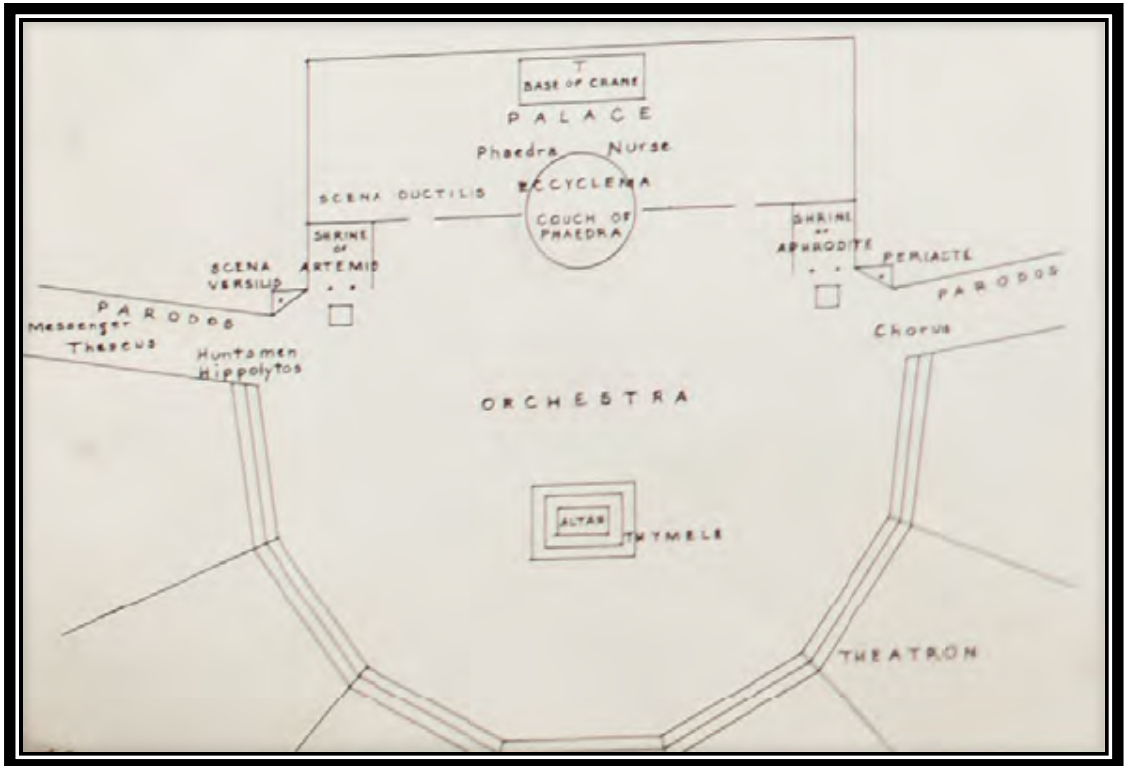

Figure 48 Plan of Scenery and Machinery for Euripides' Hippolytus according to Bieber. Source: Bieber, 76

Figure 49 Entrance of Lyceum Theatre, London. Source: http://www.lyceumtheatrelondon.com/images/theater.jpg [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

Figure 50 View of the stage from backseats. Lyceum Theatre, London. Source: http://www.londontheatredirect.com/img/microsites/venueImage_4.jpg [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

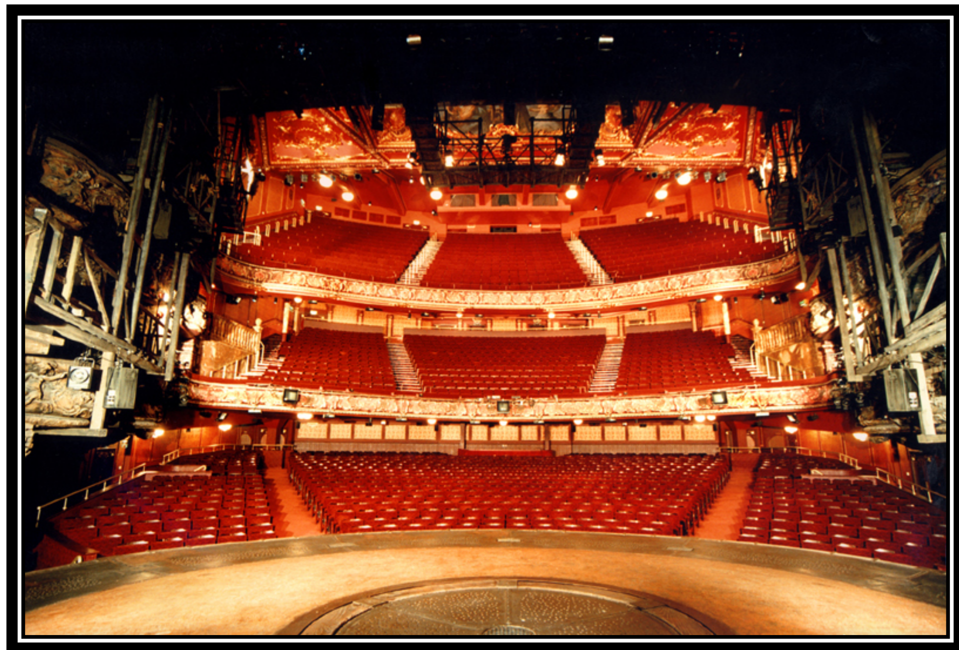

Figure 51 Interior of Lyceum Theatre, London. Source: http://www.circllp.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/LT002_72.jpg [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

Figure 52 Young Woman and Slave. Source: http://www.the romans.co.uk/p7hg_img_8/fullsize/10.comic_masks.jpg [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

Figure 53 Slave Character Figurine. Source: http://library.calvin.edu/hda/node/965 [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

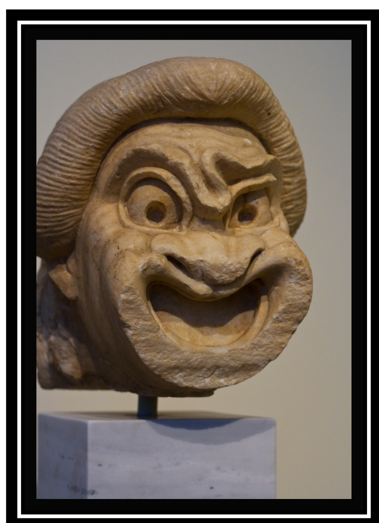

Figure 54 Slave Mask. Source: http://www.theromans.co.uk/p7hg_img_8/fullsize/10.comic_masks.jpg [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

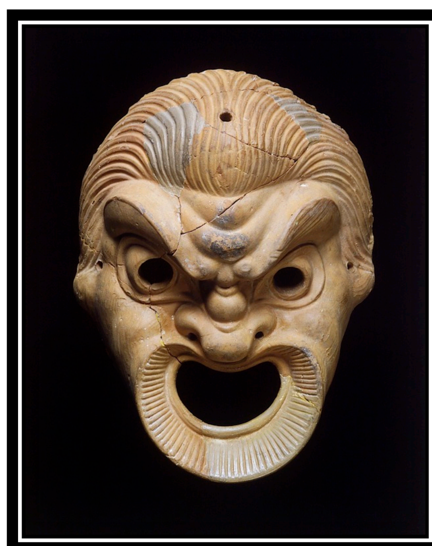

Figure 55 Slave Mask. Source: http://www.agathe.gr/id/Agora/Image/2007.10.0089 [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

Figure 56 Slave Mask. Source: http//www.vroma.org/images/raia_images/mask_slave.jpg [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

Figure 57 Mosaic from Pompeii showing costumes and masks on stage. Source: McCart, 261

Figure 58 Marble tripod base for supporting choregic tripod, with Dionysos and Nikia (Victories) in relief, found on the Street of Tripods. Source: Goette, 129

Figure 59 Remains of a choregic monument (left). Reconstruction of the bronze top (right). Source: Goette, 133

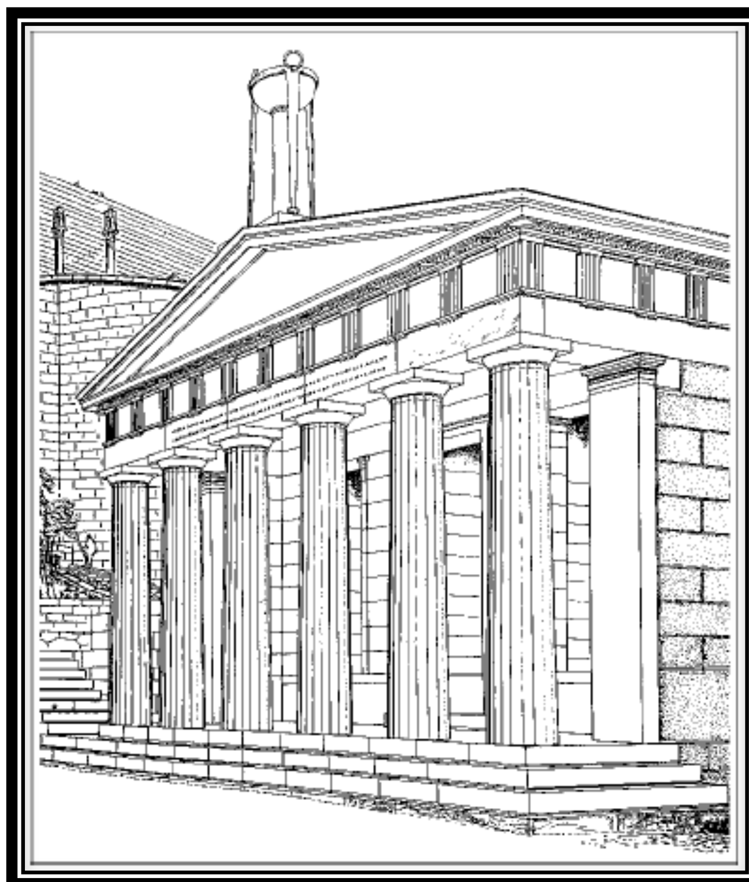

Figure 60 Choregic monument. Reconstruction of the victory temple of Nikias.
Source: Goette, 135

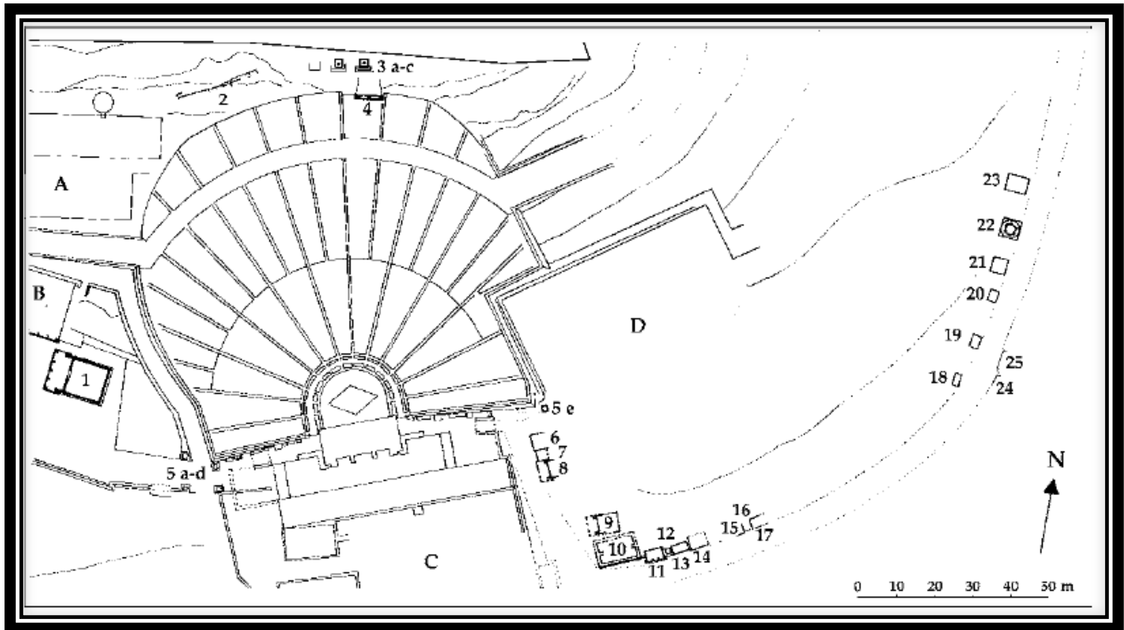

Figure 61 Plan of the Theatre of Dionysos and Street of Tripods along 6-25. Victory temple of Nikias at 1. Other choregic monuments at 2-5. Source: Goette, 130

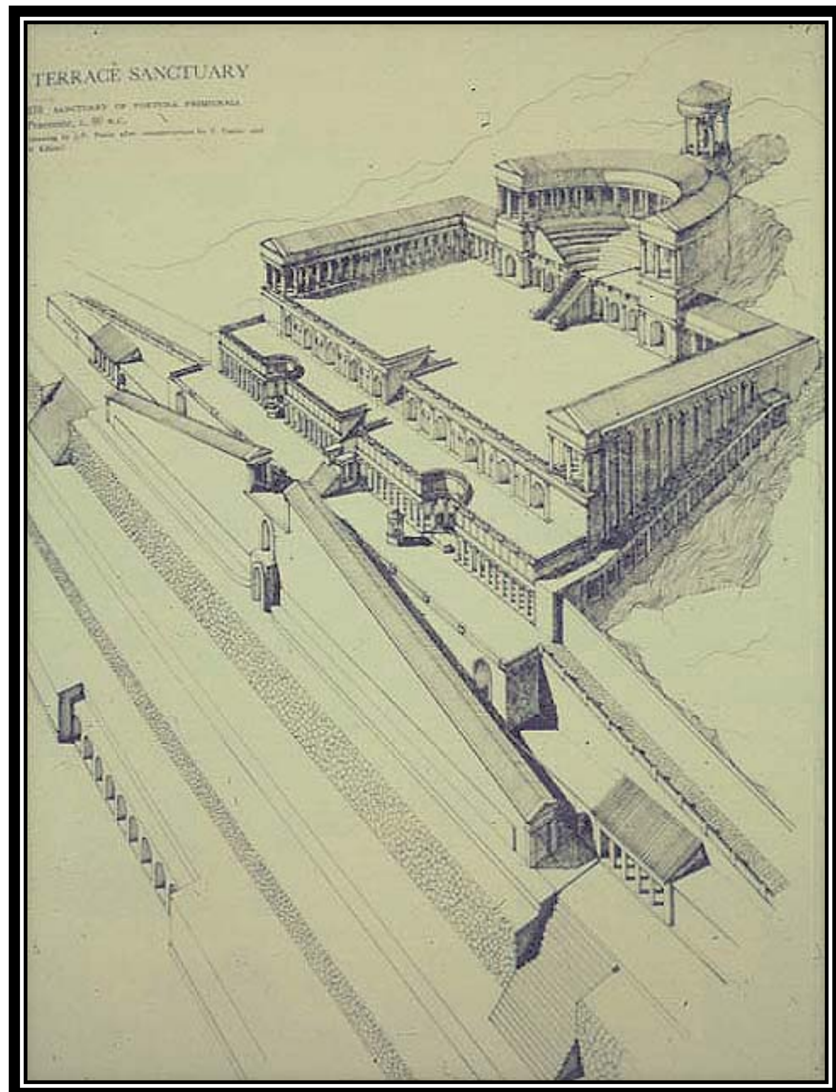

Figure 62 Temple of Fortuna Primigenia, Praeneste. Source: http://www.pitt.edu/~tokerism/0040/images0/061.jpg [Last Accessed: Jan 12, 2013]

APPENDIX B

TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü ☐

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü ☐

Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü ☐

Enformatik Enstitüsü ☐

Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü ☐

YAZARIN

Soyadı : YILDIRIM
Adı : MEHMET SALİH
Bölümü : HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce) : EXPERIENCING THE ANCIENT THEATRE: A PERSPECTIVE ON INTERPRETING THE ANCIENT GREEK AND ROMAN THEATRE THROUGH REFLECTIONS FROM THE SPACE OF THE PERFORMER

TEZİN TÜRÜ : Yüksek Lisans ☐ Doktora ☐

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir. ☐
2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir. ☐
3. Tezimden bir bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz. ☐

TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ: