

Greek Theatre

Festival of Dionysus

3 Tragedies/ 1 comedy/ 1 satyr (satire) play

- Lasted 3-4 days
- Businesses closed
- Prisoners out of jail
- Held in outdoor stadium - amphitheatre

Evolution of the Greek Theatre

- Thespis - 1st and only actor (Thespians today)
One actor presented the story and chorus sings, dances, and gives commentary on hero's suffering.
- Aeschylus (pronounced Esskalis) 525-456 BCE
Added 2nd actor - beginning of conflict (Orestes)
Wrote 90 tragedies
- Sophocles (496-409 BCE) 125 plays
Added 3rd actor and made characters more human.
Chorus became less important. (Oedipus)
- Euripides (480-406 BCE) Wrote Medea
More complex plots and realistic characters.

Aristotle's Definition of Tragedy

- Form - beginning, middle, end
- Plot - What happened? (Linear construction)
Unity of Time, Place and Action
- Character - interaction & conflict moves story
- Content/Thought - emotional release (catharsis)
- Poetry - the right word for the right moment
- Spectacle - what the audience sees & experiences
- Song - music that intensifies each scene

Tragedy

A form of drama in which the audience is carried to a purgation of the emotions through intense involvement with the downfall of a sympathetic protagonist, one who, despite a flaw of character, is believed to deserve a better fate.

- Catharsis: release or purging of emotions taking place at the end of the tragedy.

Aristotle believed order needed to be re-established after viewing a tragedy for proper social conduct to continue.

Greek Theatre vs. Shakespearean

Masked

Stadium

Monologues

Annual - Dionysus Festival

No violence on stage

Not more than 3 actors on stage at a time.

No women acting

Hero always of noble birth.

Tight plot with chorus.

Not masked

Stage (Globe Theatre)

Soliloquy

More often - season

Loved violence on stage

Many actors on stage at once

No women acting

Hero not always noble.

Insight into life's complexities.

Comedy

Drama where the gap between the rational norm and the comic situation or character creates an inner tension eased by laughter.

- Farce: a highly exaggerated comic play that uses two-dimensional stock (stereotypic) characters, unbelievable situations & improbable resolutions.
- Parody: a critical, but comic effort to duplicate a well-known work so as to exaggerate its flaws. (Saturday Night Live) (Scary Movie)
- Satire: form of drama exaggerating a situation, person, event that the satirist believes is in need of criticism (makes us think). (Good Morning Vietnam)

- Comedy of Character: People who are funny, but acquire more complex human characteristics. (Lucille Ball, Charlie Chaplin, Jim Carey)
- Comedy of Ideas: Real characters and dialog that move us to tears or laughter, but the audience becomes aware of definite problems in the way we live and the social codes we follow.

Hero vs. Protagonist

Greek hero, a king or son of a god (Zeus), had tragic flaws based on arrogance (hubris) going through the hero cycle.

Shakespearean hero and contemporary heroes can be **protagonists** (lacking in heroic qualities and not a royal person or 1/2 god).

Today **protagonists** are noted in film noire, typically “heroes who are not heroic”, even suspect in motive and ethics; main character.

- **Rogue Hero**: witty, clever, charming Con artist. Most appealing in times of strict social mores. (Hawkeye Pierce, Eddie Murphy, Jim Carey)
- **Comic Fool**: stupid, arrogant, foolish person, who gets what he/she deserves. (Moliere specialized in fools.)

The End