Greek Theatre Notes

**Dionysus**

* God of wine and fertility
* Greek theatre came out of the worship of Dionysus
* Major Theatre festival was called City Dionysia

**Thespis**

* According to Aristotle he was the first actor to appear on stage
  + Other sources say he introduced the first character OTHER than the chorus.
* Introduced idea of masks to portray different characters.
* Won the first tragedy competition
* Thespians

**Greek Ampitheatre**

* Open air space using sloped hillside for seating
* Placed near sanctuaries

Orchestra – “the dancing space” for the chorus, chief performance space, circular.

Thymele - An alter to Dionysus was generally placed in the middle of the orchestra

Theatron – “the seating place” semi-circled terraced area with benches (built with wood or stone)

* Sight not great but acoustics excellent, words spoken silently in orchestra could be heard all the way up.

Skene – “tent” covered structures where actors stored costumes and masks (originally temporary wood structure eventually stone) and performed quick changes out of sight.

\*Upper platform

Paraskenia – “beside the skene” wings on the side

\*Chorus stayed in the orchestra but actors used skene to make entrances and exits

Proscenion – platform in front of the skene

Parodos – “passageways” actors took to enter and exit the proscenion. Ramps on the side of stage between skene and audience.

**Greek Festivals**

* Largest and most prolific of festivals was City of Dionysia or Great Dionysia
* Held late March – Early April
* Singing, dancing, satyr costumes, and lots of wine drinking to worship god Dionysus
* Parade to carry a stature of Dionysus to the Acropolis

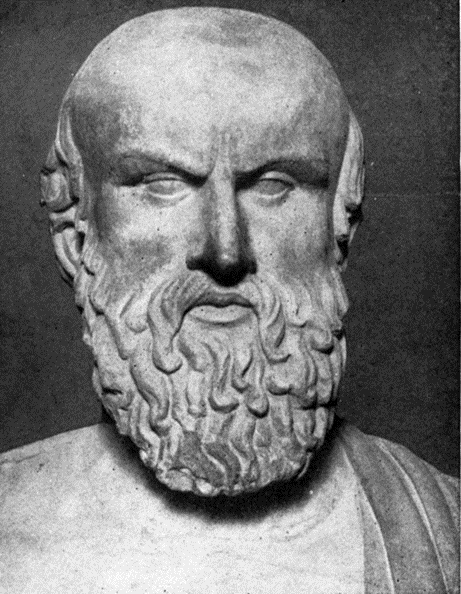
*Competition of theatre tragedies*

* Three playwrights competed
* Thought to have to submit 3 tragedies (in a trilogy) and a satyr
  + Related By:
    - Theme
    - Myth
    - Character

\*3 days of the competition, one for each playwright

\*Put to a vote

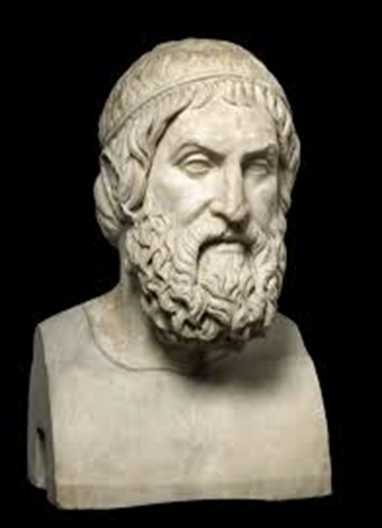
**Greek Playwrights**

***Aeschylus (523-456 B.C.E.)***

* “The Father for Tragedy”
* Oldest plays surviving
* 7 of 80 plays remaining
  + ***Only surviving trilogy Orestia*** (Agamemmnon, Libation Bearers, Eumenides)
* Winner of the Festival of Dionysus 13 times

Contributions

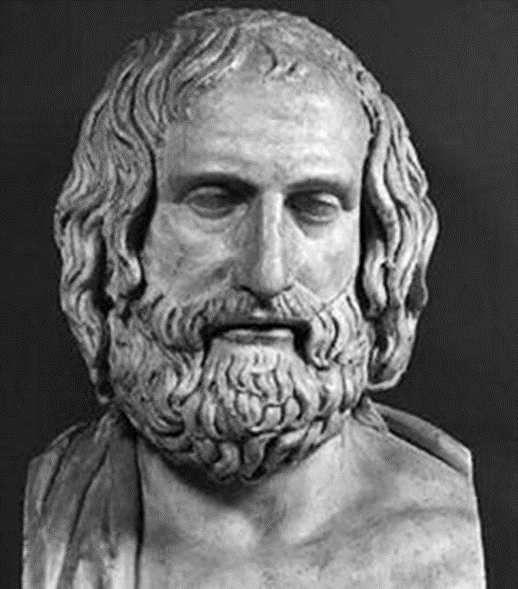
* First to add a second actor to allow for dialogue
* First to allow chorus to be part of the action

***Sophocles (496-406 B.C.E.)***

* Considered “best of the three”
* Won 24 contests at festival
* 7 of 120 plays survived
* *Oedipus the King* “perfect Greek tragedy”
* Allowed his characters to question the fate and will of the Gods

Contributions

* Addition of a 3rd actor
* Limit chorus to 15 actors
* First use of scene painting

**Euripides (480-406 B.C.E.)**

* Won festival only 4 times
* 18 plays survived
* Most unique of the three
* Mainly minor myths or greatly changed major myths
* Known as the Master of Pathos (Human compassion and sorrow)

Contributions

* First to combine tragedy and comedy elements
* Only surviving satyr play Cyclops
* Wrote *Medea*



**Aristophanes (446-386 B.C.E.)**

* Known for his Satyr’s.
* Wrote 40 plays,11 plays survived

Contributions

* *The Frogs*
* *The Clouds*
* *Lysistrata*