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Editions: "Diazoma"

*Diazoma, Citizens' movement for the promotion of ancient theaters*

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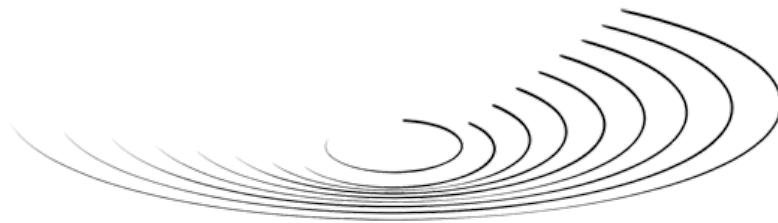
D I A Z O M A

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# Diazoma

Citizens' movement  
for the enhancement of  
ancient theaters



D I A Z O M A



# Contents

<b>S. Benos</b> <i>“Diazoma”</i>	<b>6</b>
<b>O. Taplin</b> <i>The open character of the ancient Greek theater</i>	<b>11</b>
<b>K. Boletis</b> <i>Introduction to the ancient theater space</i>	<b>27</b>
<b>N. Ch. Hourmouziades</b> <i>Drama and space in the classical theater</i>	<b>37</b>
<b>N. Ch. Hourmouziades</b> <i>An Athenian spectator in the City Dionysia</i>	<b>51</b>
<b>P. G. Themelis</b> <i>Protection and use of the spaces of viewing and listening</i>	<b>81</b>
<b>V. Lambrinoudakis</b> <i>We and the ancient spaces of viewing and listening</i>	<b>87</b>
<i>Statutes of the Association named “DIAZOMA”</i>	<b>93</b>
<b>Th. P. Koutoupis</b> <i>The institution of sponsorship in the Golden Age of Pericles and in the 21st century</i>	<b>103</b>
<i>Sources of illustrations and photos</i>	<b>108</b>

**Stavros Benos**  
*President*



## “Diazoma”

My voyage to "Diazoma" was a long one with lots of stops: City of Kalamata, then Ministry of Culture, then Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization, and then Ministry Aegean. But also, rebuilding a city devastated by earthquakes, highlighting its historical center, creating cultural networks. From the educational program “Castles Periplous” and the program for the ancient theaters, to policies for the islands and the Citizens Service Centers (CSC). These were all stations en route to a destination that I had not even realized where or what it was, it had not taken a concrete form.

Caring for monuments was always and still is a special piece of my life. I cannot see them as ruins, as dead things. I see in them living organisms emitting messages of knowledge, wisdom, beauty, harmony, dialogue with the environment and nature, messages of life. I always disagreed with the classical concept of monuments as museum items, as things that should be put away, at the margins of our times, in a society that turns a blind eye to their secret life, ignoring their own adaptability and harmonization with each historical period.

Therefore, from wherever I was, I tried in every way to integrate them into the daily life of the country and the people. From the neoclassical buildings of Kalamata and the reconstruction of its historical center to the open doors of archaeological sites for the people to enjoy them in summer nights of full moon, all my actions were directed to the same way, having the same ultimate objective and inspired by the same philosophy.

Ancient theaters are unique samples of outstanding architecture. Top achievements of the ancient Greek civilization. Artworks built to present artworks. Buildings that in their structure, parts, but also in their details are full of originality, grace, ingenuity, expression of democracy and citizen participation, which were the best features that the Greek spirit gave the world. Buildings that have been preserving their usability and uniqueness of form alive and contemporary for centuries.

These features made me merge my ideas for the monuments with ancient theaters. I started this particular effort 5-6 years ago. I failed. "Come back to where you failed and go away from where you succeeded" said Kazantzakis. I listened to him. So, I came back two years

ago. It seems that the time had come. I was now more mature to have a more dynamic approach of monuments.

I was mature enough to know that some things go ahead because we ourselves take their fate in our hands. And we help them go ahead. And we participate in their development. The time was ripe for the creation of a Citizens' Movement, a large group of people who can see beyond the miserable limits of a shortsighted era, and feel it is their fundamental right to demand to overtop the gray everyday life, by integrating monuments in our daily routine.

I immediately found myself surrounded by an enthusiastic and dynamic team that got bigger with the blink of an eye. All of them, "as if long prepared..." Scientists, intellectuals, artists, people of local governments and active citizens, all embraced "Diazoma." Fellow citizens who decided that the research, the study, the protection, the enhancement and, where possible, the use of ancient theaters and other venues of viewing and listening, like ancient odeons and stadiums, was their own affair. These people are determined to take the fate of these monuments in their hands, join forces and actively help the state and the competent authorities in the big effort to integrate ancient theaters in contemporary life.

On July 8, 2008 "Diazoma" became a reality. It was founded as an Association, an example of sound operation, transparent financial management, efficient activities, and effective objectives. Our aspiration is not just to find or simply convince major donors, but to inspire them to help the competent authorities mobilize the Ministry of Culture, and to involve more and more of our fellow citizens in our work.

I do hope that "Diazoma" will be an Association that expresses a new way of thinking, addressing and managing issues that concern us all. An Association that motivates both citizens and state.

This collective edition outlines in a direct and indirect way Diazoma's identity. It reveals the ideas behind its activities, the objectives set and, in the broader sense, the association's perception on the protection and enhancement of ancient theaters and other venues of viewing and listening. At the same time, this edition is a general introduction to architecture, the evolution of ancient theater spaces and the place theater had in ancient societies.



*Theater of Dionysos: view of the cavea today*



*Photorealistic depiction of the cavea, as provided for by the restoration study*



## The open character of the ancient Greek theater

In the spring and summer of 1962, when I was 18 years old, I stayed in Greece for four months that changed my life. Traveling by train, via Munich and Belgrade, took three days. From the beginning it became a kind of pilgrimage. And like the ancient pilgrims who visited the healing sanctuary of Asclepius, I made the trip to Epidaurus, sometimes from the long way, via Nafplion, and other times by that small boat, Galini, which made the weekend special route from Piraeus for those who were going to the theater.

**Oliver Taplin**  
*Magdalen College,  
Oxford*

That summer I was in the audience of most performances at the ancient theater. And this educational experience left me with an indelible impression. I had never dreamed that works of human art played in theater - poetry, music, movement and dance, painting, beauty of voice - could be made accessible to an audience of thousands of people. From what I remember, the audience was always over ten thousand. And these were not people who had come slapdash by their private cars. Most of them had traveled for hours by public or coach bus. The experience I had for the first time at Epidaurus was the feeling of participating in a massive gathering, the power of an experience you share with others within a very well-elaborated frame. Although my Greek was inadequate and I could not understand most of the words, I could feel intuitively but strongly not only the emotional power of these plays, but also their ability to pose questions that make you think, questions that remain urgent and alive. And so I began to explore the ways in which Greek tragedies raise and explore complex and profound questions about life and death, social symbiosis of humans. And this journey continues until today.

The original idea for the subject of this essay was born then, those summer nights of 1962 (and again in 1964 and 1966). I must point here that the large audience of all sort of people and the unhindered investigation of man's major issues are somehow linked organically. Open air theaters allow you to develop open-minded interactions between intense emotion and intense contemplation. They show you a



*Theater of Dionysos*

path toward understanding what it means to be human and how this meaning becomes part of the theater space.

First of all, to our knowledge, all Greek plays, at least those of the pre-Roman period, were performed in open spaces, in places specially selected and adapted that were worthy of viewing (the word theater comes from *thea* which means view). This was the case for the entire ancient Greek world, for communities either large or small, known or unknown. Few theaters had a capacity of less than 1,000 or 2,000 spectators. Many were built so solidly that excavations unearthed them nearly untouched. An impressively large number of theaters, in many places, are still in use or have been used for modern performances.

*Theater of Argos*



There is disagreement about the size and capacity of the theater of Dionysus in Athens, the primary cradle of tragedy. It was usually calculated that it seated 12,000 to 15,000 spectators. Plato says 30,000, but in ancient Greek that probably meant a "very large number." A comedy writer of that time, however, said that viewers "are as many as the grains of sand." Some archaeologists argue that there are indications that in the 5th century, the theater had a capacity of only 5,000 to 6,000 spectators. "Only" is an odd word when used to refer to a size that makes 20% of all the free male population of Athens and Attica. Whatever the truth about this question (hopefully new excavations will answer it), the capacity of the theater in the 4th century was well over 10,000.



In the late 5th and early 4th century, theaters for over 10,000 spectators were built in other cities, such as Argos, Eretria and Syracuse in Sicily. When the Arcadians founded the new city of Megalopolis after 380 BC, in its center they built a theater with a capacity of 20,000 spectators. Even the somewhat remote ritual theater built in the sanctuary of Asclepius in the area near Epidaurus, could accommodate more than 10,000 spectators.

*Theater of Eretria*

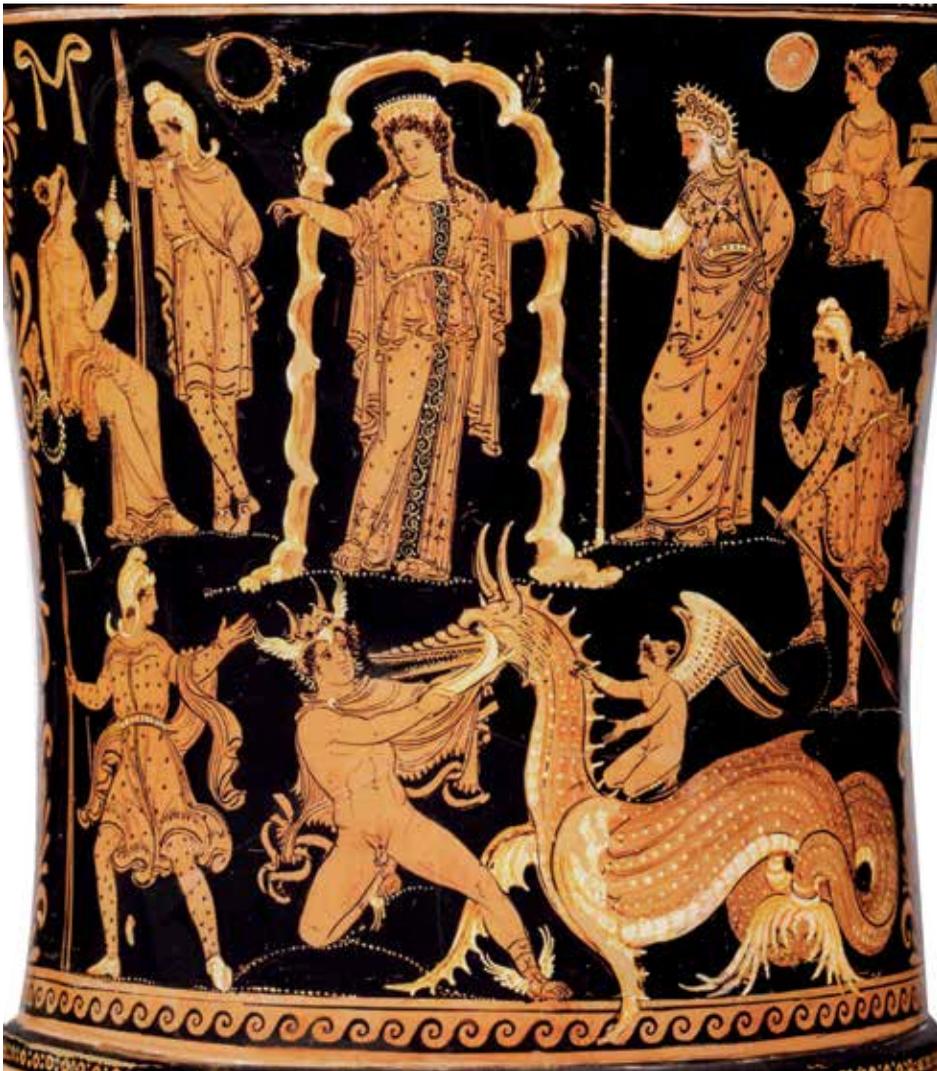
This is indeed a fact of architecture and the history of theater. But is it merely an archaeological fact? Could that fact differentiate then, and would it not differentiate today, the whole experience of theatergoers and its meaning? These are the questions which I will try to respond positively to at the end. First of all, we must recognize that the kind of space which hosts the performance of a play makes a big difference when it comes to the theatrical act itself, depending on whether it is a closed or an open space, whether it is a small or a large amphitheater, with an arched proscenium, an open stage, a circular orchestra, or it is a different kind of construction. The importance of these issues has been widely recognized and discussed by teatrologists in the last 25 or so years. To give an example, when Epidaurus theater stages performances which were originally set up for indoor theater spaces, very often it becomes obvious that these productions have not been given a new concept and adequate adaptation and that from many aspects, regardless of how powerful they may be in a limited theatrical space, they cannot transmit their power at the very different space of Epidaurus. Of course, the same applies vice versa.

But the question I want to raise here is not only linked to the space of theatrical action and the practical aspects of the performance. It is mostly associated with the whole experience of those going to the theater, with what does the experience of a tragedy performance mean to them. Before going back to the theaters and the major elements of audience experience, I want to make some general and inevitably personal observations on the theater of the ancient Greeks and on the reason why it occupied such a central place in their entire cultural life.

Greek tragedy, originally Athenian tragedy, developed quickly from sources that remain obscure, at the exact same time when Athens established an early democratic state and became the richest and largest city of the Greek world. It seems that theatrical drama form was already well developed and presented in a major annual celebration that lasted three or four days, in about 490 BC. The surviving works of the three great tragedians, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, were written and performed in the theater between 472 and 406 BC. But the boom of the classics was short. Nevertheless it is a mistake, proclaimed by Nietzsche, to think that tragedy died with the big three (let's not concern ourselves with the view that Euripides murdered it). The art of tragedy continued and flourished throughout the course of the 4th century BC. Theatrical contests flourished with new plays and new tragedies indeed continued to be written, somewhat disorderly, unsystematically and without continuity, for another eight centuries. Furthermore, theater spread from Athens to the rest of the Greek world with great speed and vigor. Already before 300 BC theater had become the dominant national form of art, overshadowing epic poetry on public preferences.

How is this galloping success explained? Why was tragedy such an important part of Athenian life and, soon enough, of Greek life everywhere? I will attempt to answer these questions distilling my personal experience and condensing it into a very short and necessarily dogmatic core.

Basically, tragedy absorbed the repertoire of powerful and diverse Greek heroic myths and presented them on stage in the form of theatrical act. This mode of representation exercised powerful influence on the large audience who had no previous relevant experience. That



*Apulian bathwater vessel which is probably referring to tragedy performances on Andromeda*

influence was the result of a complex and inextricable combination of intense emotion and original thinking experienced by the audience in conditions of extreme condensation.

The set of emotions caused by the tragedy exceeds by far the standard wording "through pity and fear" (which students are parroting from Aristotle's *Poetics*) although pity or mercy is certainly playing a central role. Any analysis should have to include grief and pain, horror, indignation, disgust, sympathy, excitement, joy, pride, anguish, abandonment. All these emotions are present, through various references in the narrative, in advance, in the present, and retrospectively.



*Apulian crater. Possible reference to a scene of a tragedy about the death of a child*

(I deliberately avoid the term "catharsis" which I consider so fuzzy and worn that has no special value any more).

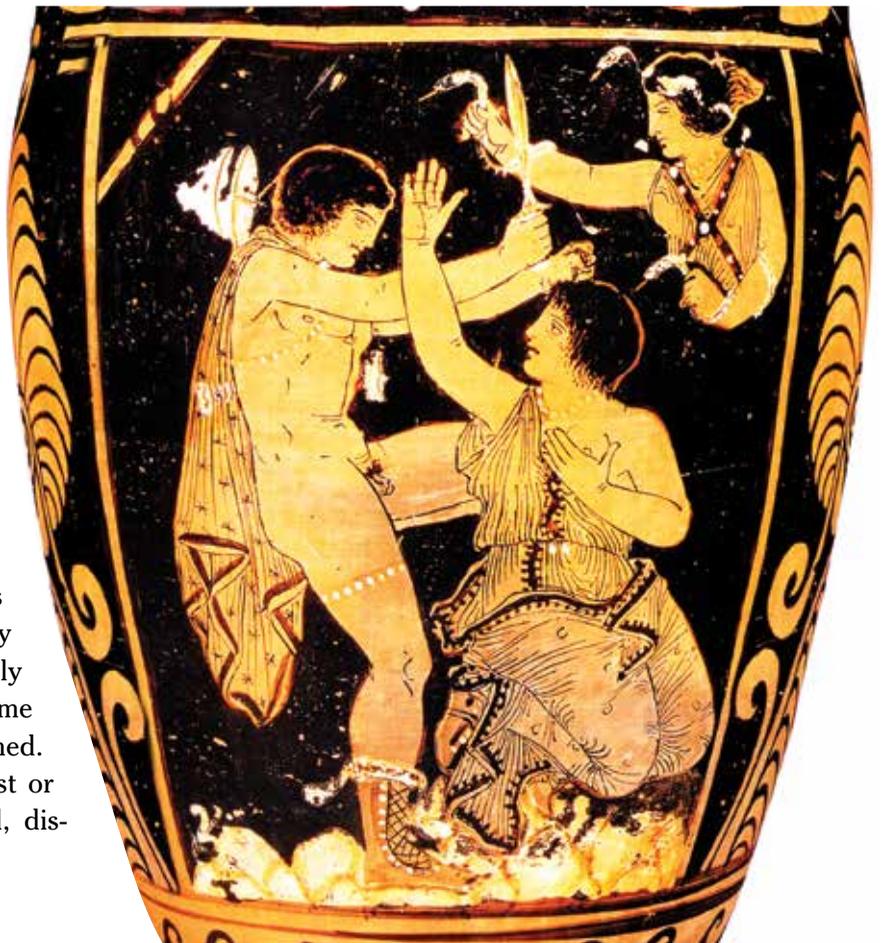
A brief list of all the subjects with which Greek tragedy spurs the thought can only indicate the complexity and their amplitude. Nevertheless, I suggest a "check-list": politics (in the sense of the importance of social coexistence), power, persuasion, justice, revenge, family ties and conflicts, blood relatives, marriage, bereavement, male and female, public and private, strength and weakness, love and hate, the harmful and the protective, emotions and what generates them, rationality and irrationality of emotions, their justification and the harm they can cause, function of the mind, madness, the question of how conscious the incentives, benefits and risks of reason are, responsibility, free will, fate, the limits of choice, the imputation of guilt, the nature of truth, relativity, being and appearing, the human meaning of supernatural forces or gods, the question whether gods are virtuous or vicious, whether they have any sense of justice or not, whether it is possible to understand them or they are essentially incomprehensible, the meaning or lack of meaning in life, the sufferings, death. This is a neither short nor superficial list! And in my opinion, after making of course the necessary adjustments on the factors that should be adjusted, or in other words, *mutatis mutandis* (what a conveniently robust Latin phrase!), this set of issues and this set of emotions are the reason why Greek tragedy continues to converse with us even today.

The experience of the interaction of thoughts and emotions was (and still is) essentially pleasant, was (and still is) re-creational or psychagogia (in Greek "psyche" is the soul and "ago" means "lead"; so the word literally means "to lead the soul"). This property was due to the performance and the communication tools it used. The narrative turned into action within a specific space for the performer, who was integrated into a broader "space of theasis" or viewing, i.e. in a theater. The narrative attracted the attention of the audience using

visual means, which included the live physical presence, masks, costumes, stage equipment, painted scenography. The story was getting alive, turning into action through the body language of the actors and the collective movement of the choreographed dances. At an acoustic level, the means that fascinated and magnetized the audience were the actors' beautiful voices, the poetry of the spoken language, and interlocking poetic speech and music into the songs of the chorus.

The result of the performance was that the audience had the experience of a kind of an "alternative life," which was very strong but cut off from the everyday life world. Within this special shell of space and time, and through the elaborated composite action, Greek tragedy led its audience to areas of human experience which are rarely visited by anyone in everyday life. Experiences that many would hope never to have in their lives or experiences that they could not possibly have in reality, such as a man feeling how it is like to be a woman. Through a representative, the audience is "playing the other" (according to the priceless wording by American academic Froma Zeitlin). Viewers experience what it means to be - obviously for those who are not - woman, old man, a foreigner, cursed, helpless, dying, without family, poverty stricken, killer, enslaved. Moreover, the audience travels to worlds where social stability has been overturned, the family is torn apart, the weak become strong, and freedom is abolished. What the viewer loves the most or feels dependent to, is crashed, distorted or removed.

*Amphora from Poseidonia (Paestum) depicting the scene of matricide from "The Libation Bearers" by Aeschylus*

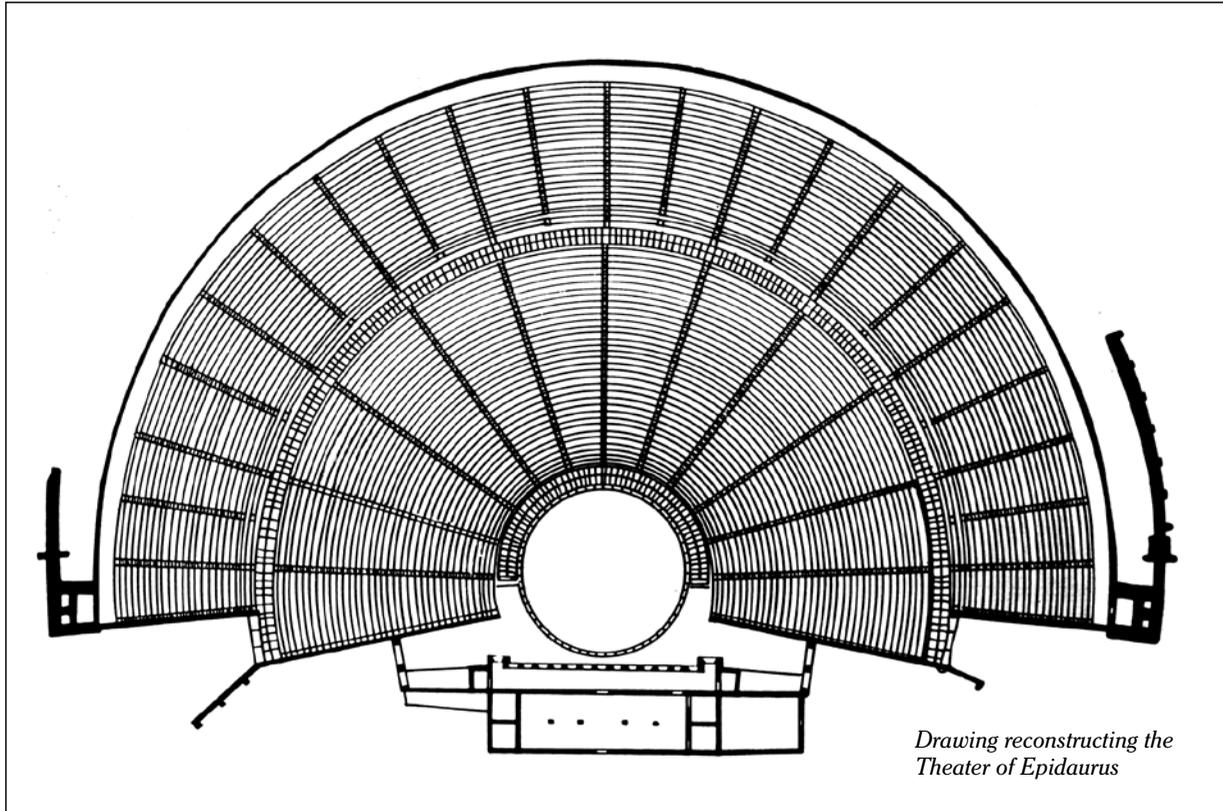


So tragedy takes its captivated viewers to the worlds of their worst fears, horror and doom. Yet - and this is essential - nothing really happened. All that experience was gained in the strictly delimited and formatted world of the theater, in its own privileged space and time. And at the end of the play, society has not turned upside down, family is not torn apart, the dead have not died. Outside of the theater life continues.

In Aristophanes' *Frogs* (lines 1909-1910) all agree that tragedy "makes people better in their societies." The particular way in which tragedy broadens people's lives without crashing or injuring them, as it would have happen if they actually had had these experiences, is interwoven with the congruent and controlled time and space of the experience itself. Horror becomes benefit and beauty. From the seemingly senseless passions comes meaning and form. Thus, the audience leaves the theater stronger and richer in life experiences.

In modern times the congruent and controlled time and space of the theatrical experience is usually not placed in a large outdoor area. In contrast, most theaters in most countries, even in Greece, are obliging the viewer to enter an indoor auditorium and sit in one of the rows of seats. The area where the audience is sitting stays in the dark (while the space of theatrical action is illuminated), resulting to viewers, who are basically strangers one to the other, becoming almost invisible. Therefore, between the individual and the stage there is a kind of empty space, which escapes attention or is "lost." But this is far from the experience of the theater in ancient Greece and is completely alien to the viewing conditions that nurtured the development of tragedy.

The ancient theater was built with concentric circular tiers surrounding the space of theatrical action up to two thirds. In my opinion this space was rather round, even during the 5th century, although there are experts who believe that originally it was square-shaped. In any case, the whole experience was taking place in broad day light and a large part of the audience could clearly see each viewer. They were sitting there, under the sun, surrounded by their fellow citizens, by thousands of citizens. In this way, the area between each viewer and the space of action, instead of being a dark or "lost" space, was full of visible people. And they were all viewing the same spectacle together. It was like thousands of pairs of eyes, individually and together, like the sun's rays through a magnifying glass, were directed to the same incarnated and dramatized narrative. The concept of



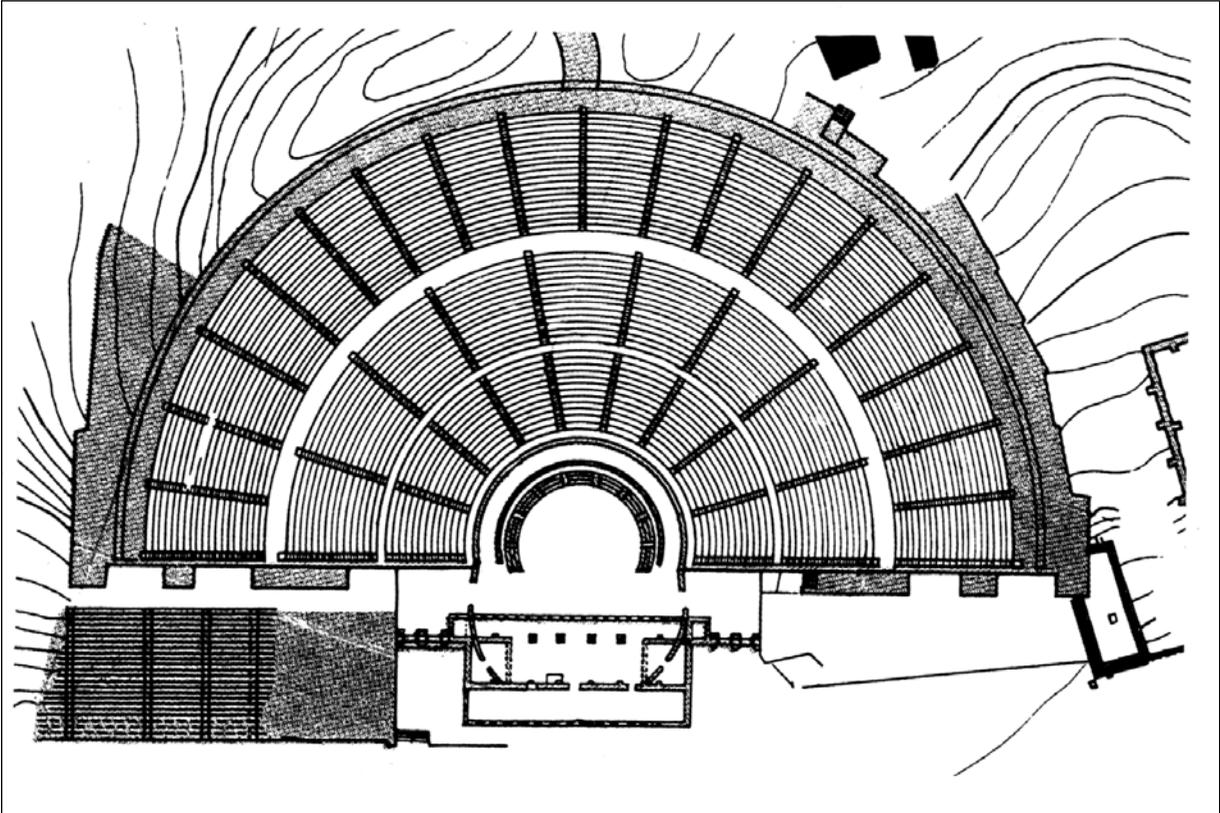
*Drawing reconstructing the Theater of Epidaurus*

community, the sense that everyone watched concentrated the same words and the same acts, movements and sounds, I guess it should be having a strong and intense effect.

In our fragmented and individualistic age there is a tendency to emphasize the differences in the experience each member of the audience has – whereas not even two viewers have the same perception, the same feeling and the same reactions. But there is also the opposite perception: based on my experience, I realize that when we watch a play together with others, we have the impression that we share a common experience, even if it is not uniformly identical for everyone. There is an English touring theater company with the wonderful title “Shared Experience,” which surely sounds like an invitation to the concept of community and not individualism. The bottom line is that if the experience is not shared by a community, then the size of the audience and the open or closed space of the theater make no difference at all.



*Theater of Dodona*



*Drawing reconstructing the  
Theater of Dodona*

I reasonably suspect that in ancient Greece there was a fundamental distinction between two types of performance spaces and conditions for poetry viewing and listening. This distinction, if my assumption is right, has largely escaped the attention of modern theorists. The first type, which I call "comprehensive," took place outdoors, was attended by a large and heterogeneous audience and was open to all those who could attend. The presentation of hymns and other poems in religious festivities gives an example of this kind of poetry. The other kind, the "exclusive," was performed at home, in a room of limited capacity, accessible by a small and homogenous group of people, namely those who were invited to watch the show. The lyrical poetry performed in a symposium by a vocalist gives the main example of this type. As a rule, this was poetry for the aristocracy that excluded those who did not belong to the elite, while its purpose was to invigorate that elite.

While in classical times the performer of epic poetry, or rhapsodist, performed the work before a "comprehensive" audience, open to debate remains the issue about when and how the epic took its shape during the great creative period of oral poetry which culminated with the Iliad and the Odyssey. I have argued that the epics were created for "comprehensive" audiences, in open space, like the one described in the Homeric Hymn to Apollo (lines 146-151): "Ionians" gather in god's honor in Delos, "with their children and shy wives."

There was no indication that any Ionian had ever been excluded (although non-Ionians may have actually been excluded). An interesting issue is whether Pindar's victory poems that glorified athletic success, were originally performed at home to an "exclusive" invited audience, thus enhancing the separation of the aristocratic elite from the public or, conversely, they were performed in open space to a "comprehensive" audience, as an attempt to integrate the winner in the wider society to which he belonged.

In any case, there is no doubt that ancient theater, tragedy and comedy, was fundamentally and essentially presented in "comprehensive" performances outdoors. In Athens every male citizen had the right to participate in the audience. And there is clear evidence that the audience also included a significant number of non-Athenians.

Everyone was "invited." No citizen was excluded for reasons related to family, politics, social class, place of residence or wealth. It is very possible there was a ticket (this interesting topic is being examined in a fresh view by Eric Csapo, an academic working in Sydney), but it is rather certain that the Athenians were receiving a grant from the city ensuring that no citizen would be excluded, for economic reasons.

A complex and annoying question remains open and no one can deny it: whether free women who were citizens were part of the Athenian public or were excluded. This important and still unresolved issue requires a separate discussion. In my personal view, women did not participate in the Great Dionysia in Athens in the 5th century and this makes theater an exclusively male activity, such as the participation in the democratic assembly, or ecclesia. However, although the absence of women in the public affairs of Athens allowed tragedy to



explore gender issues with an almost obsessive insistence, I believe that this exclusion did not apply everywhere. It is very likely in other cities, like Argos and Syracuse, that women were part of the audience early on. This could also be the case in smaller theaters of the municipalities of Attica. But after a bit of time, women's participation became a fact in Athens too. Without doubt, although half of the free population (leaving slaves out) was indeed excluded, and this was considerably reducing theater's demand for "comprehensiveness," the fundamental condition remained intact: the open theater was welcoming thousands of community members who had the right to participate.

It seems to me that the audience of the open theater and the power of open plays coexist organically in conditions of mutual interaction. My argument is that the performance in an open space meant "comprehensiveness" and a sense of community. These were the elements that incited and encouraged the open character of the issues and per-



ception of ancient tragedy. The tragedy was able to explore and expose so pervasive and stable conceptions about life and people's passions, exactly because it was open to all community members who were eligible to participate. Theater was not hierarchical, it was not restrictive, everyone had access. And this phenomenon very soon included also women, even though this did not originally happen in Athens. The nature of the conditions in which the performance was taking place, was in no case a peculiar feature of the history of the theater. On the contrary, it was an integral part of how ancient drama was facing human life, with an understanding that was comprehensive, uncensored, pure and sharp. The greatness of poetry, drama and though co-existed harmoniously with the audience's size and open character.

I think that this sequence of thoughts can still contribute to understanding the value of theater nowadays. A theater which is "comprehensive" and not exclusive, accessible and not intended for insiders, open and not enclosed, can reach even greater depth and strength. And it can definitely attract a wider audience, without discriminations based on wealth, social class or education. Modern Greece, more than any other country in the world, can be an example of this dynamic. Because in this land the general public created the conditions for the greatest and most penetrating of the arts. The open space planted and nurtured the most open exploration of what it means to be human. Greece, now and in the future, still has something vital to offer to the theater.

*Translation: C. G. Lazos*







# Introduction to the ancient theater space

## Evolution, character, expansion

### The beginnings

Group dances and the dithyramb are probably the earliest forms of outdoor theatrical enactment. Starting with the cult of Dionysus they evolve over time, leading to the tragedy and the great poetic dramas of the classical period. The initial circular space of performance, the **orchestra** (B), is initially combined with the slope of a small hill. Gradually, on the slope, a cavity for hosting the spectators is being formed, the **auditorium** (A). The orchestra is the brainchild of the 6th century BC, while the auditorium is a conquest of the 5th. The conjugation of the two will become the main feature of the Greek theater. Soon, the cavity will be covered with wooden benches (ikria) for the convenience of spectators and until the next century, the auditorium will evolve into a stone-made, stable construction.

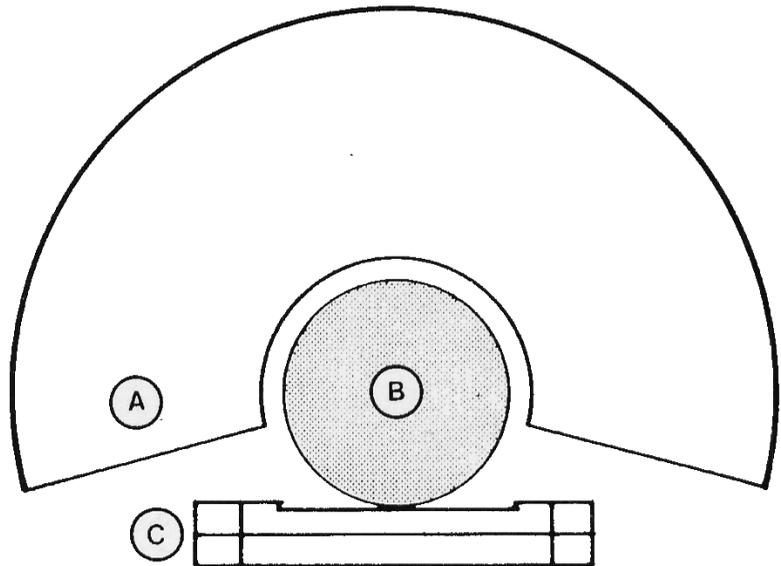
**Konstantinos  
Boletis**  
*Architect - restorer*

The theatrical phenomenon in antiquity, even during the heyday of dramatic art, remains connected to its original ritual and religious character. The construction of public buildings to serve theater performances is originally associated with a temple or a sanctuary, and later it spreads to all city-states, with the religious dimension always visible.

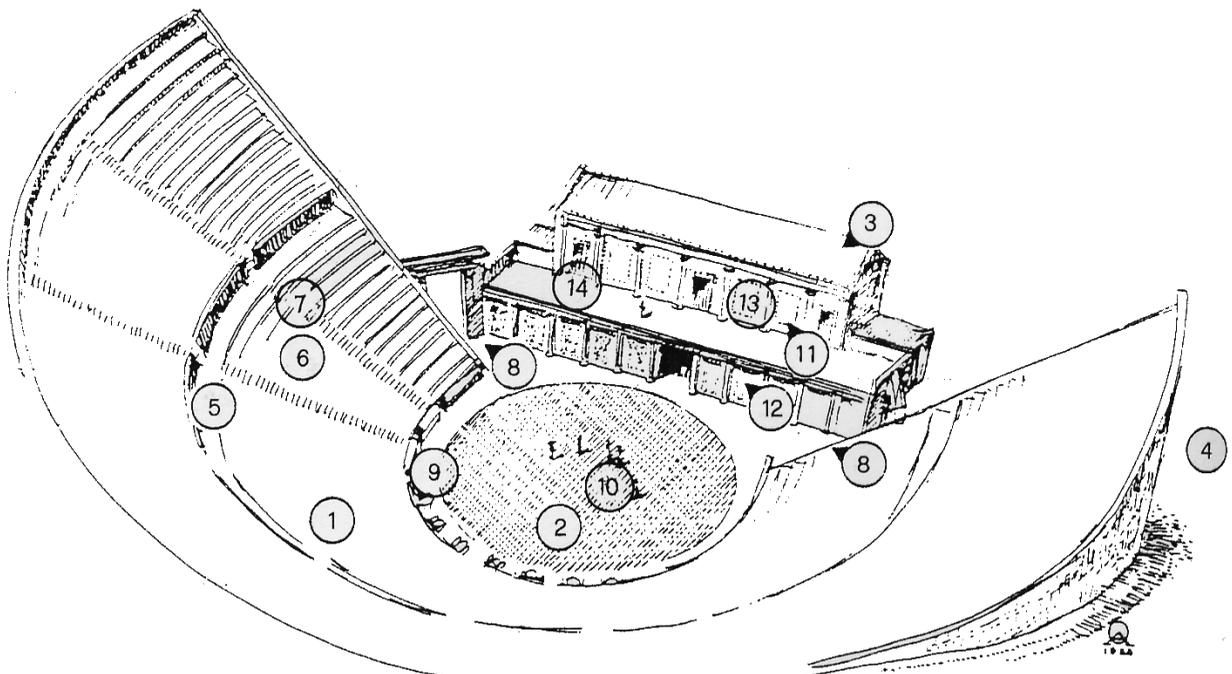
### The gradual evolution in Hellenistic times

The first tragedies and satirical plays are performed with no permanent scenographic depth. Light constructions are roughly erected behind the orchestra to be removed after the performance. The first “stages” were simple shacks of wood and fabric imitating mere architectural forms. The **stage** (C) as a structure takes form in the late classical period and evolves fully during the Hellenistic period. Between the stage and the side retaining walls - **analemmata** (4) - that support the auditorium, passageways, or **parodoi** (8), give the chorus basic access to the orchestra and are used by the audience for entrance and exit from the auditorium. In classical drama actors performed in the orchestra and rarely on stage.

- A Cavea
- B Orchestra
- C Scena



- 1 Koilon (cavea)
- 2 Orchestra
- 3 Schené (edificio scenico)
- 4 Analemmata
- 5 Diazoma (precinzione)
- 6 Kerkides (cunei)
- 7 Klimakes (scale)
- 8 Parodoi
- 9 Proedria
- 10 Thymele (altare di Dionisio)
- 11 Proskenion o logheion (palcoscenico)
- 12 Pinakes (scene dipinte)
- 13 Thyromata
- 14 Porte



da A. Olivier

*Drawing reconstructing a Greek theater*

In the second half of the 4th and throughout the 3rd century BC, the structure and character of the stage (3) undergoes major changes that are mainly directly related to the theatrical presentation. These changes highlight the evolutionary stages of the stage structure, from an early type of light construction edifice to a two-story building, typical of the Hellenistic period, and give birth to the heaviest and more permanent element of **theater building**.

In the second half of the 3rd century BC dramatic action unfolds mainly on the first floor of the stage structure, while the use of **scenography** and stage **machinery spreads**. This change coincides with gradual changes in the structure and content of drama plays that led to a rapid increase of the standards in the visual and technical part of the performance. The stage expands at the expense of the orchestra, while we have a crystallized form and function of **the parascenium**, **the proscenium**, **the pulpitum** (11) and the openings (doorways) on the first floor of the scene building, known as **thyromata** (13). Most of the architectural terms for the individual sections of the Hellenistic scene have been rescued in building inscriptions, while later writers, such as **Vitruvius** or **Pollux**, provide detailed information on specific theater structures and theatrical props devices, which was a usual practice in theater production of the time.

Changes in the auditorium were clearly of limited nature and primarily consisted on the development of new structure techniques and the evolution of the form of seats, the parallel “establishment” of the honorific seats, or **proedria** (9) and the monumental enhancement of the passageways (parodoi). A characteristic element of the new era is the enlargement of the space for viewing, which in existing monuments is achieved with building over the initial shell of the theater an additional construction, the **epitheatron**. These are separated from the lower - main - section by horizontal walkways, or **diazomata** (5). Vitruvius in his *De Architectura* provides instructions for building two versions of theater spaces, distinguishing them into “Roman” and “Greek” theaters. The most characteristic difference of their design lies in the normal geometric shapes drawn on the orchestra's initial circle: four triangles in the Roman and three squares in the Greek typology. These shapes give decisive straight lines which divide the auditorium into individual wedge-shaped seating sections, the tiers, or **kerkides** (6), or designate positions for the development of the main fronts of the scene building. Vitruvius' instructions, which according to the prevailing scientific views, echo the knowledge of previous, earlier literature, are documented in a few of the surviving monuments of the so-called “Greek” type.

## The Roman theater

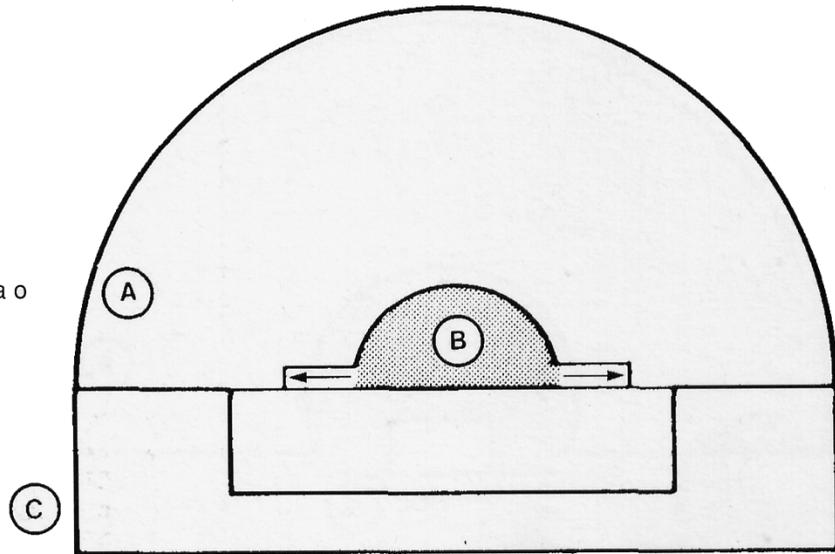
The beginnings of the Roman theater are traced in light constructions, which were dismantled after their use and should not be significantly different from the wooden scaffolding props of the **Phlyax comedy** or the *palcoscenici* of the **Atellan farce**. Greek standards affected, directly and indirectly, both the purely Roman typology of theater spaces, and the individual local architectural idioms in the Empire's provinces. General dimensions get bigger and metron is abolished. Theaters become heavier and isolated from their natural environment. The theater type that got eventually consolidated is that of the free-standing edifice, with richly decorated façade of the scene building. Musical performances are now hosted in a special category of buildings, corresponding in construction but smaller in overall dimensions, the **Odeons**.

The gradual revision of the characteristics of the Hellenistic period is completed during at least four centuries and in two overlapping major phases. Along with the new generation of theater spaces, a large number of earlier buildings undergoes systematic changes. The alteration of the horseshoe-shaped auditorium into semi-circular is accompanied by the simultaneous introduction of several new elements in the scene building. Such were the elongated low level (**pulpitum**) (17), in front of the stage façade, which was adorned with alcoves of various morphological structures on its side towards the auditorium (**frons pulpiti**) (18). The pulpitum often concealed an interior space (**hyposcaenium**) and a ditch hiding the curtain (**aulaeum**) (22). The scene building becomes huge, gaining a height of two or three stories, and the heavily decorated stage façade (**scaenae frons**) (19) integrates structurally and morphologically with the **parascaenia**, thereby enclosing from three sides the pulpitum, the main space of theater action.

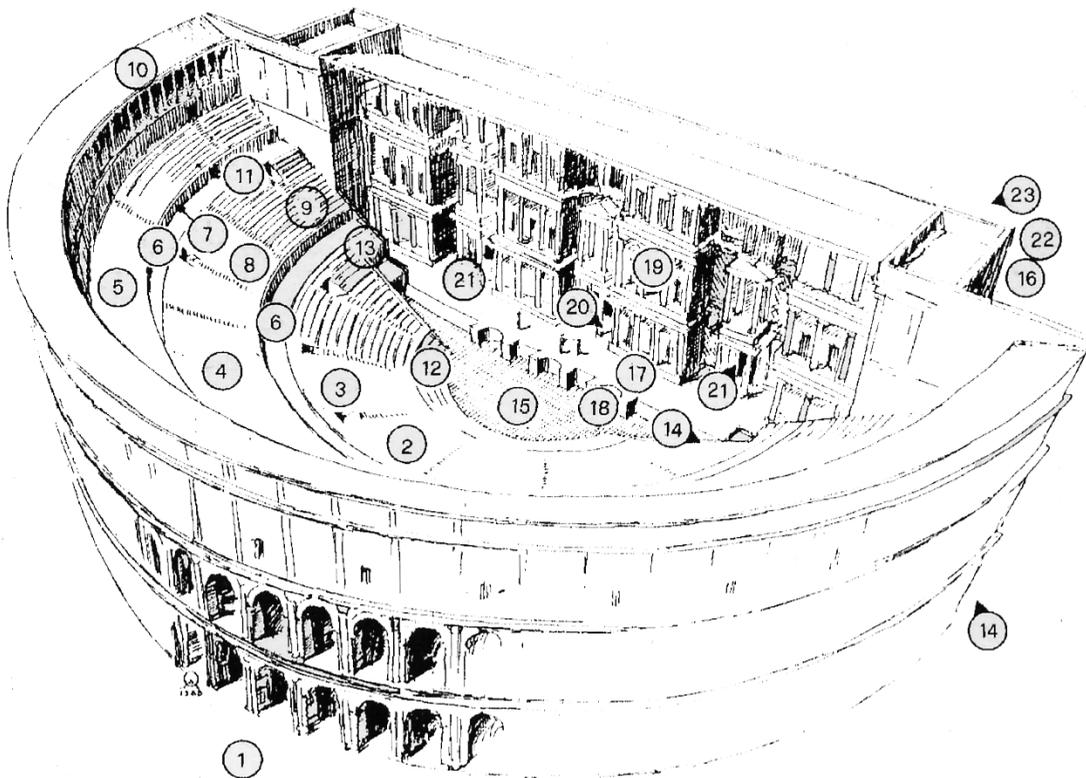
The actors exit from the inside of the stage (**postscaenium**) (23), through one of the three main gates of the ground floor: middle gate (**valva regia**) (20) or the side gates (**valvae hospitales**) (21). Some of the openings of the upper floors also serve specific needs of the theater performance. The very high external appearance of the stage often had a gallery on the ground floor for the protection of the audience.

In its crystallized, free form, the Roman auditorium was supported by built vaulted structures and was often hinged on more than one parts (**ima, media and summa cavea**) (3, 4, 5), separated one from

- 1 Ambulacro
- 2 Maenianum
- 3 Ima cavea
- 4 Media cavea
- 5 Summa Cavea
- 6 Precinzioni
- 7 Balteo
- 8 Cunei
- 9 Scalaria
- 10 Porticus in summa cavea o  
in summa gradatione
- 11 Vomitori
- 12 Proedria
- 13 Tribunalia
- 14 Parodoi
- 15 Orchestra
- 16 Edificio scenico
- 17 Pulpito
- 18 Frons Pulpiti
- 19 Scaenae frons
- 20 Porta regia
- 21 Portae hospitales
- 22 Aulae
- 23 Postscenium



- A Cavea
- B Orchestra
- C Scena



da A. Olivier

*Drawing reconstructing the Roman theater*

the other by corridors (**praecinzioni**) (6). In the spaces formed by the radially arranged walls, it was frequent to create corridors leading outside, but also passages towards distinct points within the building. The successive levels of the surrounding wall had decorative arcades (1), organized by the Doric order on the ground floor, the Ionic order on the first floor and the Corinthian order on the second floor. The role of the now semicircular orchestra (B, 15) becomes weakened and its interior is covered with soil or marble slabs .

The main side accesses to the orchestra were covered by vaulted structures, in operative connection with the auditorium, through which the whole edifice acquired the structural and morphological unity of a single building, for the first time in the history of the theater space.

### **Current character and expansion**

Ancient theater spaces, as subjects of archaeological and theatrological research, confirm the inextricable connection between architectural design and the theatrical phenomenon. The creation and historical evolution of each theater act, as emerged in different periods, influenced and was influenced by the main architectural convention: auditorium, stage, orchestra. From the time of the "discovery" of the ancient theater standards in the Renaissance until now, the determined commitment to the same initial tripartite structure and its resulting forms is impressive.

Ancient theater spaces as protected monuments trigger a multifaceted scientific and socio-political interest in their study and their safe delivery to future generations. Their archaeological restoration, in accordance with the modern restoration ethics, primarily safeguards their authenticity and irreplaceable character. These spaces, occupying a prominent place throughout the ancient architectural heritage, make up the most concrete basis for the formulation of theories on the origins of the ancient theater as an art form, while offering the possibility of their corroboration in situ. Their concession for occasional or systematic hosting of contemporary artistic activities must always take into account the constraints imposed by the protection of vulnerable and non-perishable elements of a historic site.

According to recent scientific data<sup>1</sup>, so far 743 ancient theater constructions have been recorded and documented by their surviving parts, ancient sources (inscriptions, texts, etc.), contemporary research or oral tradition. From Alexandria on Oxus (Ai-Khanoum) in

Afghanistan to Lisbon (east-west axis), and from Roman settlements in northern England to Ptolemais in southern Egypt (north-south axis), ruins of ancient theater installations have been saved and preserved in varying degrees of conservation: "almost intact" buildings that highlight original sizes and morphological details, and meager outlines of lost buildings that can be seen only in aerial photographs or through characteristic traces in their natural environment. They can be found in bigger numbers in countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, the cradle of Greco-Roman civilization.

At a typological and chronological level and with the most elementary recording, the already indexed theater spaces to date are divided into 196 "Greek" theaters, whose first phase of construction and operation dates back to the "Greek period," as well as 426 theaters and 45 odeons of the "Roman period." Another 76 registered theater spaces do not allow relevant datings and they cannot be categorized in any of the two groups. The Greek territory today is hosting 107 of the 196 registered theater installations of the "Greek period," from early times to the Late Hellenistic era, as well as 18 theaters and 14 odeons of the Roman period.

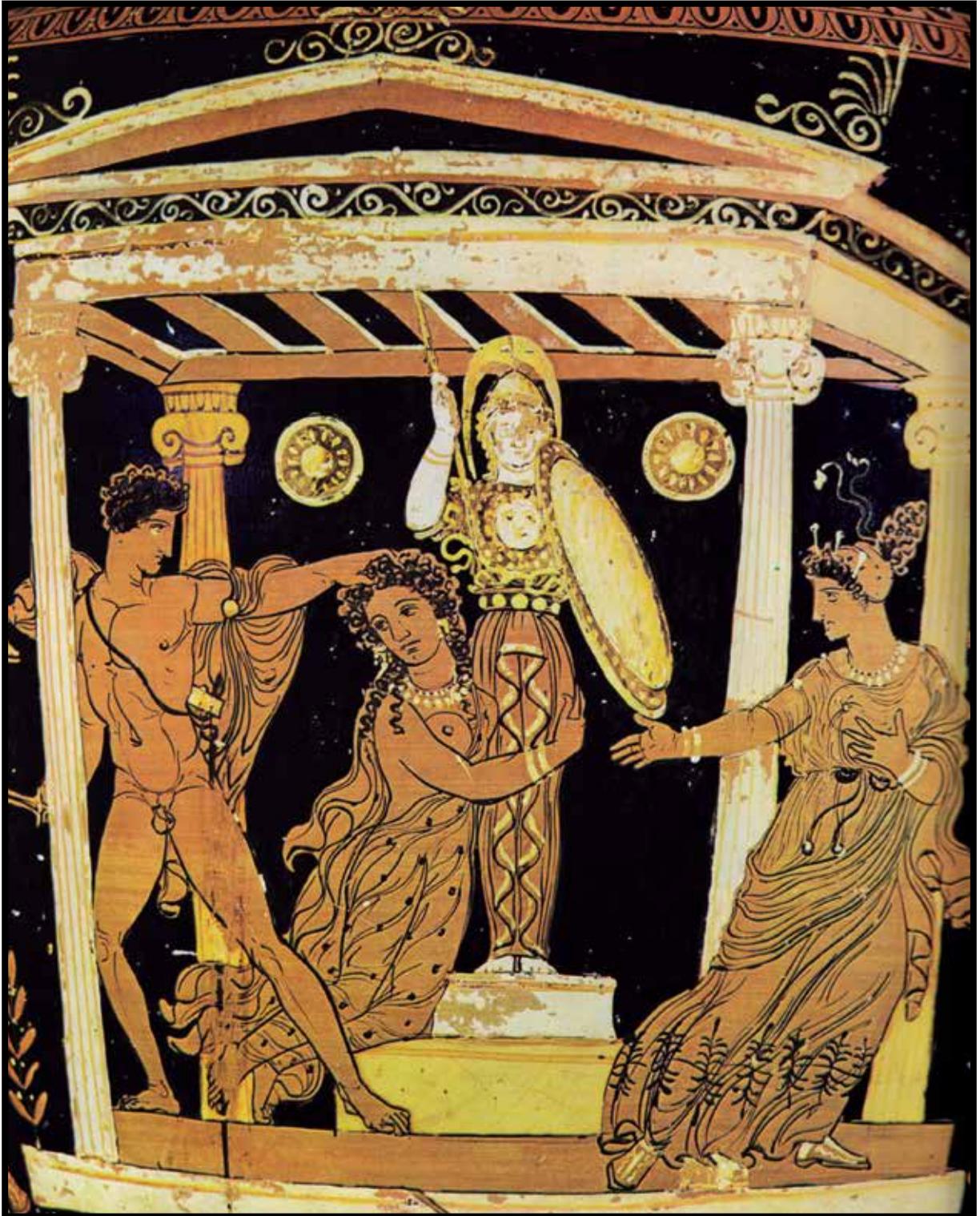
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<sup>1</sup> *The bulk of this research was conducted by the writer and Michael Pitenis, in the spring of 1997 and has since been subject to continuous updating.*

*A scene probably the from satirical drama of Aeschylus "Sphinx" which parodies the myth of Oedipus*



Crater Illustration of "Lycurgus' painter," which probably depicts a theme from a tragedy by unknown author





## Drama and space in the classical theater

One of the sad gaps in our knowledge of Greek antiquity surrounds the theater, as it evolved, as space and act, and operated in classical Athens, becoming perhaps the most emblematic expression of democracy in the history of the so-called "western" world. We do not know if there is even one eloquent stone preserved today from that phase of the theater of Dionysus Eleuthereus, where the four great dramatists performed their works - Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes. Their texts today, as contemporary direct sources, thankfully contain some indicative information on the subject. It is a fact, however, the genesis of the theatrical phenomenon goes back to the archaic period of the peisistratid tyranny of the 6th century, when its politicians, partly perforce populist, accepted the worship of Dionysus which was attractive to the lower social classes. There is evidence that around 535/534 BC a tragedy performance takes place - possibly the first in a state organized framework. Moreover, that performance had a "competition" character, with a goat as a symbolic prize which was won by tragedian Thespis, who is believed to have played a key role in the creation of tragedy. That "dark" ancestor, who among other things was the first "actor" to ever combine "melody" with "speech," marks the beginning of a path leading to the introduction of the third individual performer, standing opposite to the chorus, by Sophocles, who enters the theatrical arena in 468 BC, when, as Aristotle would say, *tragedy acquired its natural form*.

Apart from the rather graphic traveling "chariot" which is believed Thespis was using for his activities, we have not been able to identify with certainty a space where the first performances were taking place before the establishment of a permanent theater venue, by the early 5th century. Traces of a rather archaic "orchestra" in the Athenian agora northwest of the "Panathinaic Way" fostered the possibility that this was the right place. But this does not explain why an exclusively Dionysian event was taking place so far away from the great temple of the honored god; nevertheless it is possible that the newly founded art form during its early, mostly lyrical, phase, was put to the test for the first time actually there, where a variety of dances were probably performed earlier.

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During the democratic reforms of Cleisthenes, such events with a religious context were taking the form of a broader and more complex festival, as was the case in the City Dionysia (or Great Dionysia), becoming thus an important, well-organized political event. In the meantime, besides the tragedy and alongside with other relevant activities, two more popular theater genres had been incorporated: the satirical drama – an always obvious product of tragedians – just before or after 500 BC, and comedy in 486 BC. So, especially for those theatrical events of peculiar interpretation requirements, a permanent and well suited venue was needed. In any case, it seemed that it was only natural to select a place which was relevant to the dramatic religious contests, such as the temple of Dionysus Elefthereus under the southern slope of the Acropolis, where there had been a temple of the God, already from the archaic times. It is not known if the *ikria* (wooden benches for spectators positioned probably in an amphitheatrical layout) mentioned in a subsequent source, refer to this stage of the genesis of the theater space. According to the same source, this construction collapsed in the middle of the first decade of the 5th century. That accident became probably the excuse to seek a permanent and of course safer solution, on a natural cavity in the nearest slope of the Acropolis. We must assume that the right time came after the end of the Persian Wars when the theater space was further configured to become more operable.

Despite the unanswered questions still triggered by the research on the form and function of the theater in the classical era - mainly due to the lack of archaeological findings – it becomes clear that there was a decisive bidirectional relationship between space and theater drama. Some characteristic signs of this can be found in surviving material from tragedies that encourage some conclusions as to their parallel conformation, even during the 5th century.

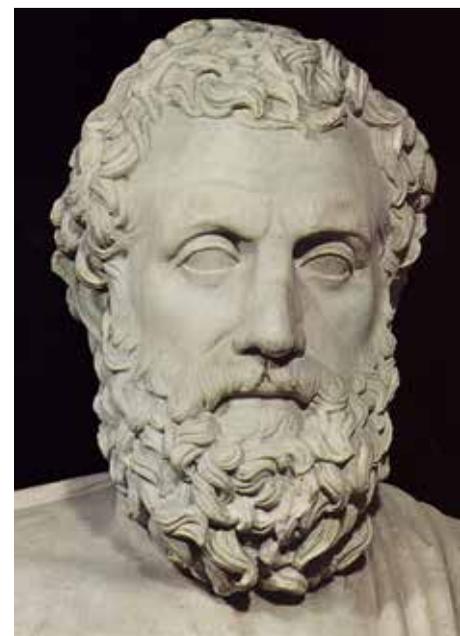
But in order to even secure some convincing conjecture, the obvious precondition is that we must approach, firstly, the dramatic texts as “scripts” destined exclusively for performance and, secondly, the authors primarily as “stage directors” with a direct and continuous contact to the theatrical space, who were certainly avoiding to create technical problems they could not possibly resolve by themselves, in a context of competition for winning a prize. Besides, the very dramatic texts contain numerous verbal indications that inform, usually in precision, which part of the writings - and future events – is

actually material that was addressing the visual senses and not the imagination of the viewer. Especially as to tragedy, we conclude that only the events unfolding artistically and technically before the eyes of the spectators were part of the authors' intentions. This is why it is no coincidence that they were frequently using narrative methods to describe dramatic events that were impossible, for technical reasons mainly, to be performed.

This conclusion excludes some arbitrary and simplistic comparisons (or efforts made frequently in the past to present as identical) of the ancient Greek theater to other traditional theater genres, such as the Japanese No theater or even the English Elizabethan theater. In both cases, the surviving texts describe events that are interpreted only through a highly conventional mime performance which is aiming mostly at the spectators' imagination and less at their sense of sight: it would have been unthinkable in a tragedy performance to interpret the crossing of a river or a battle, which could be conveyed through the narration of a messenger. It is exactly this connection with the possible that makes the Greek dramatic texts useful sources to draw conclusions as to their relationship to the theatrical space where they were presented.

In what concerns tragedy in particular, a first decisive element related to the configuration of the space was the dramatic transition of this theatrical genre from a performance dominated by the interpretation of the chorus, which was occupying the orchestra, to the emergence of individual performers, the actors, who were rarely expressing themselves in the choral form. This development is mentioned in Aristotle's *Poetics*, which says that Aeschylus, who first appeared around 500 BC, had already introduced the second, after Thespis, actor, and had *made the word* (meaning the dialogue parts) a protagonist. However, clear remnants from the early phase can be found in the poet's surviving theater works: a simple quantitative comparison shows that while in his *Suppliants* (c. 465 BC) two thirds of the whole text is written for the chorus, in Euripides' *Orestes* (408 BC), the chorus text is no longer than one eighth of the whole. Moreover, only in Aeschylus works, such as *Suppliants* and *Eumenides*, there is a leading chorus. But while the chorus is used by younger tragic poets persistently as an element of functional significance, it remains a secondary factor and stays in the shade. This degradation of choral sovereignty reinforces the archaeologically-based conclusion that the area of the orchestra was being gradually reduced respectively. So it

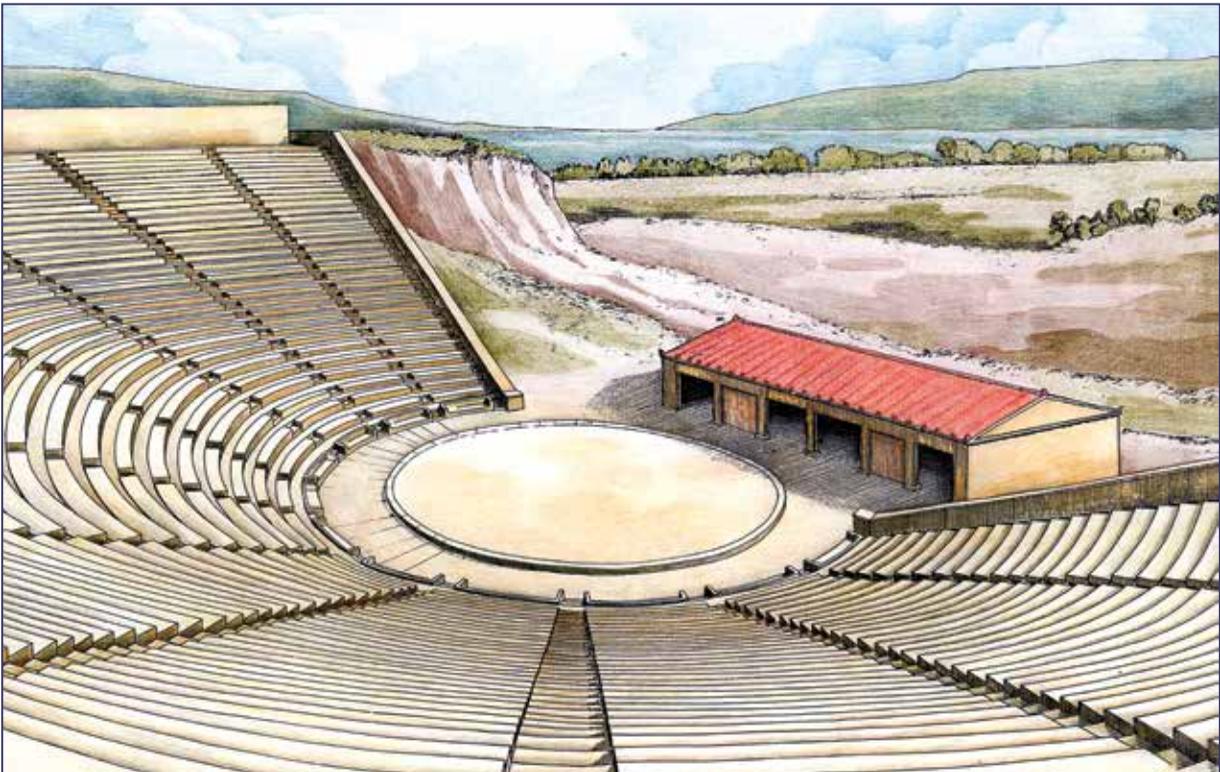
*Aeschylus*

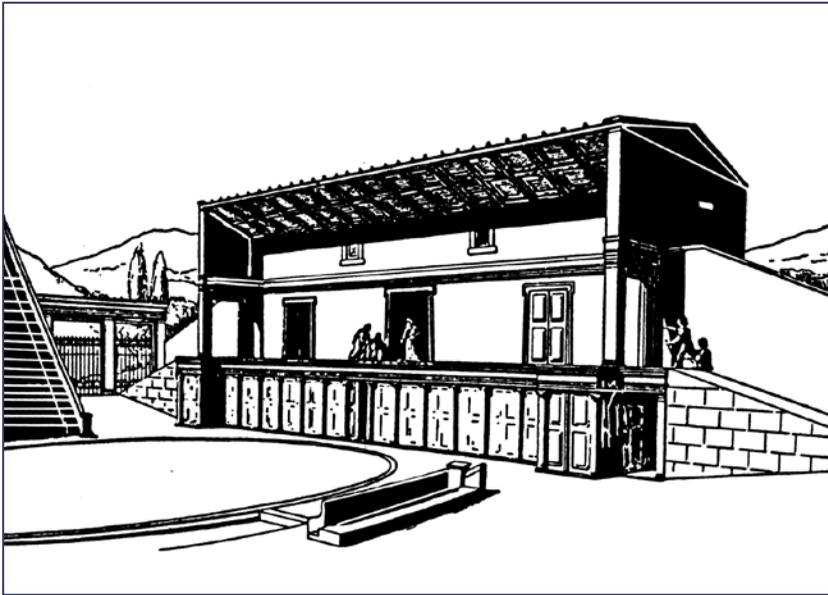


is certain that from early on in the theater there was a special space, which was dependent on the actors' interpretation (distinct of that of the chorus): that space was the disputable and much debated "skene."

There are no archaeological evidence to support the view that before the 4th century, particularly during the time of the comic poet Menander, the theater had a permanent skene, made of durable material. All speculation, based on indirect evidence, converge to the conclusion that throughout the classical era, this was a simple wooden oblong structure, no higher than three meters and relatively shallow. But probably this was not a flimsy shack destined to be dismantled after the end of each festival, nor was it just a space suitable only as an actors' changing room. There are eloquent details found in the texts which indicate that this structure gradually began to function as part of the action space, as a "background," as a kind of primitive theater stage. It should be mentioned that Aristotle, commenting a certain part in the tragedy, the "kommos," a head-beating lament sung in parts alternating between chorus and actors, refers to the latter as "those from skene," an expression that cannot simply mean "those

*Theater of Stratos. Color drawing showing building phase I by E.-L. Schwandner*





*Drawing reconstructing  
the skene of the Epidaurus  
theater*

appearing from the skene" but instead "those whose interpretation depends on the skene," as opposed, of course, to the orchestra.

Furthermore, nothing excludes (or at least there are no contradicting findings) the use of a low wooden platform along the skene front, giving easy stairway access to and from the orchestra, as a space meant not for the exclusive use but for the facilitation of the actors' interpretation. Texts indicate an impression of distance between the two interpretative parts (actors and chorus), especially in extensive interactive scenes written by younger tragic poets, with the chorus standing still and silently aloof, like a kind of passive "listener." Obviously, actors too (usually the leading actor), just like the chorus, were using the orchestra, as well as the skene space.

Therefore, it is only normal to ascertain that during the 5th century the most severe of the three interpretive theatrical genres, tragedy, undergoes changes and transformations at a level of plot and dramaturgy, which decidedly have corresponding interpretative requirements that certainly affect the configuration and operation of the theatrical space specifically toward the skene. For example, it is no coincidence that out of the seven surviving tragedies by Aeschylus only one, *Agamemnon* (c. 458 BC) requires a clearly identified space, dominated by a "building," the Atreides Palace, in front of which all action takes place. This functioning of the skene, with a clearly set



Attic pelike depicting the scene at the tomb of Agamemnon from "The Libation Bearers" by Aeschylus

identity and complex use- as a palace, temple or even military tent and cave - becomes a rule in all of the surviving drama works of the two younger tragedians.

Besides, we see shifts in action only in the works of the oldest poet - at least three in *Eumenides* - while for Sophocles and Euripides the "unity of space/action" is an inviolable rule, with the sole exception of the oldest of Sophocles' dramas, *Ajax*, dated before from 450 BC. This significant change probably signals the gradual transition from a space of stage action, somewhat neutral and undefined (therefore providing freedom in its use) to a strictly definable space (therefore consciously binding). Indeed, in some of Aeschylus' surviving works we can establish an almost "Shakespearean" connection to the space. In *The Persians* (472 BC), for example, the only specific space of action is the "tomb," on top of which appears the Image of Darius the Great. The author earlier mentions, rather as a pretext for some

chorus movement and without a further use, an *ancient roof*, although there's no doubt that both "spaces" refer to the skene. The skene space appears also vague and free scenic area in other tragedies by Aeschylus, namely in the *Seven Against Thebes*, where only some statues of gods are mentioned as present (but no impression is given whatsoever that there is a holy shrine somewhere, since the action in other parts of the play excludes such a possibility), or in the second play of *Oresteia's* trilogy, the *Libation Bearers*, where action, especially in the first part, reciprocates between the tomb of Agamemnon and the Palace, two local "spots," which logically cannot belong to the same drama space. The whole thing changes radically in the works of the two younger tragedians, as evidenced particularly by introspection in their existing production, namely Euripides, whose rescued works are more than double in number, with the oldest of all being, *Alcestis*, written in 438 BC, 20 years after *Oresteia's* premiere. In the works of this author, which span a period of more than 30 years, there is a strong sense that the manipulation of the stage space, dominated by the actors' interpretation – therefore, the dialogues and not the singing-orchestral element - has entered a

*Apulian bathwater vessel depicting the scene of the death of Alcestis*



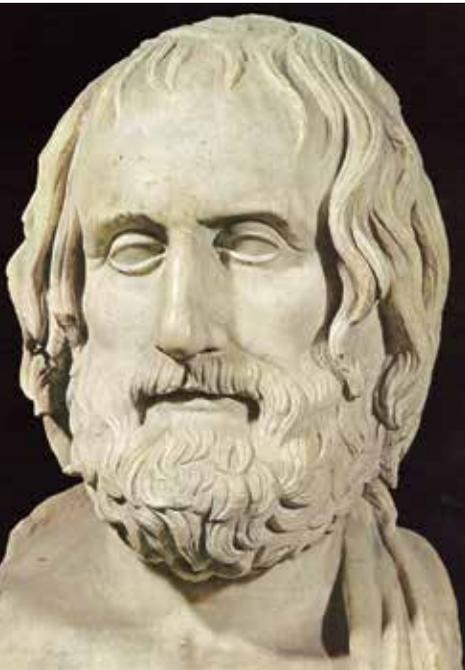


*Sophocles*

radically different phase, where "Aeschylean" poetic freedom seems to have pulled back in favor of a much more binding environment. In *Alcestis*, the palace of Admetus, "represented" by the skene building, is shown with unprecedented completeness, notably the interior, with surprisingly dense and realistic details, as well as with relevant events off stage, while there are also commentaries on its facade. There's also an extensive, motionless episode in front of the palace, with bedridden Alcestis, having Admetus and her two small children by her side, some slaves nearby, and the chorus standing silent and still in the orchestra, which makes it safe to guess that the show would have been more impressive if performed onto a low platform along the skene.

Similarly, an extensive episode is described in Sophocles' *Ajax*, where we see people in two conflicts taking place in front of a still image, like a kind of Pietà at the background. In Euripides' later works, such as *Ion* and *Iphigenia in Tauris*, references to details related to the external form of "buildings" do not oppose the possibility of a visual representation, even elementary and conventional. This is more so in performances of this author's works that are imbued of obvious elements of realism.

*Euripides*



In similar cases that may be more than a few, there is a strengthening impression that the simple wooden skene ceased to be as "impersonal" as in the time of Aeschylus, and acquired the possibility of a somewhat permanent or casual, identifiable character: gradually, it started also playing a role in "stage design," depending each time on the narrative of the performed play. Needless to say that there were no complex settings succeeding one another back then. Actually, the only thing required in some plays that needed a "public" building as a backdrop was perhaps to add some movable items on stage, such as altars. However, during the second half of the 5th century, especially after Sophocles abolished the "Aeschylean" trilogy composition, a lot of changes occurred in the program of the theater games of the City Dionysia which could stage daily only one of the four plays submitted by each contestant. Thus it is not obvious that the skene remained unchanged for all cases, even for the satirical drama. Some "changes" were also demanded for the performance of *Eumenides* by Aeschylus, a play that has several shifts in action, as noted before. The play starts with the Prophetess' monologue in front of the gate of the Delphic temple. That scene has no problem but complications start when she enters the oracle to return immediately freaked out by what she saw



inside: Orestes as a suppliant in the holy navel is surrounded by the furious but asleep Furies. That scene is performed right after, revealing, therefore, part of the "interior" of the sacred place. Then, action shifts to Athens with Orestes, suppliant again, in front of the sacred statue of Athena, somewhere in the Acropolis, while the final events unfold in Areios Pagos, the court established by the Goddess. How did those "changes" happen? Starting from the observation that there is a decisive shift of action and characters between the changes (for example when the chorus also withdraws after Orestes' departure, and supposedly is chasing him from Delphi to Athens), the following simple solution may be suitable: after the Prophetess leaves in panic, from the gate of the skene appear (it will be discussed below how this happens) a "tableau" with the sacred navel, Orestes and a "sample" of the Furies. In the next scene, with the chorus absent and Orestes having already gone and entering through one of the side entrances,

*Apulian crater depicting Orestes supplicant in the sacred navel from the "Eumenides" by Aeschylus*



*Apulian crater depicting Orestes supplicant in Athens, in front of the sacred statue of Athena, from the "Eumenides" by Aeschylus*

the navel “withdraws” to be replaced by the goddess' statue, which then disappears in the same way, to be replaced later by a symbol that refers to a court.

So the natural question is: was it possible for the skene setting to change from play to play (but never, at least after Aeschylus, in the same play) with some basic “interventions,” and be “transformed,” for example, from a palace to a cave? We can trace the answer in the information provided by Aristotle that Sophocles along with other innovations also introduced scenography. According to other relevant evidence, scenography was also used by major artists, capable of delivering artistically the "third dimension," such as the architect Agatharchus or painter Apollodorus, a.k.a. the skiagraphos (shadow painter). So it is possible that already from the classical era, some form of painted surfaces placed in front of the skene, were defining its identity. For example: after the end of the show, with the skene representing a "palace," everything extra that was defining the stage setting gets removed and replaced at the two side openings (if there were any) by paintings depicting something of the natural landscape, e.g. a clump or some fountain. Like this, the “cave” needed for the next show was ready. Besides, from early on the skene served for multiple uses, not just for the entrance or withdrawal of the actors. It is no coincidence that in the works of all three tragedians there are extended parts involving more than one person, which certainly involved more action levels. In Sophocles' *Ajax* the unique in tragic irony prologue requires the use of three levels, even one on the roof: relentless Athena stands on the roof, barmy Ajax by the entrance of his military tent and humane Ulysses at the orchestra. In Euripides, Orestes' exit requires four levels: with the hero holding Hermione hostage, Pylades and Electra with torches in their hands ready to set fire to the palace, all of them onto the roof, Menelaus trying to breach the break in the gate of the skene, while soon appears "ex machina," literally and figuratively, Apollo with Helen, and lastly with the chorus at the orchestra! It would have been impossible to perform differently *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus, when the Oceanids chorus must appear onto the roof, at least at the beginning of its passage, and use that same roof as “landing” spot for Oceanus when he appears on his the explicitly announced bird-pulling chariot.

The question that has been raised ever since Aeschylus wrote that tragedy (dated by those who argue its authenticity after 458 BC) is how was Oceanus' flight performed, as well as the descent of Prometheus into Tartarus (the underworld), in the end, without the



*Lucanian crater depicting the final scene from "Medea" by Euripides.  
The chariot of the Sun carrying Medea shows the performing capabilities of the "machine"*

help of two suitable machines that had already been devised. These are the machines that are probably mocked by Aristophanes as not entirely convincing theatrical conventions: in *Acharnians*, Dikaiopolis asks Euripides to “come on wheels,” to appear apparently on a wheeled vehicle outside his house; and in *Peace*, Trygaeus appears floating in the air (apparently hanging from a crane) and begs the machine operator to handle the device with care. This is how both the “wheeled vehicle” and the “machine” are mentioned. They were two simple pieces of theatrical machinery that were easily operated and could help not only to create stunning scenes, but also to extend the space of action: the first one would be used to show scenes from the skene interior of still groups of people and objects that would later on start moving, while the second to make people “fly,” sometimes onboard vehicles or on animals. If not explicitly mentioned as floating in the air, Gods would frequently appear standing on their feet onto

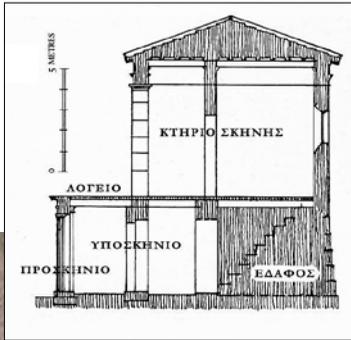
*Theater of Amphiareion. Part of the restored proscenium*



the roof. It is not by chance that Aristophanes associates the wheeled vehicle to Euripides (maybe also to the machine, if the allusion refers to his play's hero Bellerophon appearing on the back of flying Pegasus), because it seems that the tragedian was making frequent use of both machines with impressive results. A single example of his surviving works sheds light to the objective: in *Hercules Furens*, two envoys of jealous goddess Hera, Iris and Madness, appear simultaneously in the middle of the play "over the palace" (meaning floating, maybe onboard a vehicle, definitely with the help of a machine), as mentioned by the elders of the chorus, panic-stricken by the scary incident. The two women have orders to make the hero so furious so that he'd murder his children and wife. After the Messenger completes the detailed description of the massacre, the chorus sees through an opening an image from "a place in the interior of the palace": it is Hercules in a coma-like state, surrounded by the corpses of the victims, while Amphitryon grieves nearby. Needless to say that the general feeling created is that the chorus - and through it, at the same time, the viewer - "has entered" the palace: that scene has apparently been wheeled-in like a kind of tableau vivant, but will perk up as a continuation of the action, as soon as the hero wakes up upon the arrival of his friend Theseus, who is obviously not "entering" the palace: the boundaries between the two spaces, "exterior" and "interior," have been consciously canceled, so theatrical convention dominates.

About a century after the first performance of this tragedy, a complete work of the surviving remnants of Menander's production, *The Grouch* (*Dyskolos*), as well as extensive excerpts of other comedies of the same author, imposed a theater space that is radically different in form and function, where the two interpretative bodies are positioned at two levels, distinct one from the other: the logeion for the actors, which is a long and narrow "runway" - overlooking the architecturally impressive skene which is now stone-made - that stands at least two meters above the level of the orchestra, which is where the chorus performs its choral inlines (parts in between the episodes of the comedy), as Aristotle would have called them, since they were completely unrelated to the subject matter of the play. There are two important remnants in Greece today that reveal the form of this kind of theater, especially as regards the part of the skene, during the Hellenistic times: the elegant small theater in Amfiareio of Oropos and the recently restored theater in the impressive surroundings of ancient Messene. Needless to mention that there

*Intersection of a theater  
skene building*



has been no convincing answer so far as to how were tragedies performed (and there are explicit evidence that indeed they were) in a similar theater, in those times when actors and chorus were still two independent factors, maintaining a mutual and vital relationship between them in what regards the dramaturgical and the theatrical space. Unfortunately, not a single drama work has been saved since the 4th century that would help us learn even elementary information and draw some conclusions as to the relationship with the space.



*Theater of Ancient Messene. Orchestra and skene building*

# An Athenian spectator in the City Dionysia

## Biographical data and other contextual information

Let's start with a short curriculum vitae of the citizen. His identity: Anthemocritus Meliteus, son of Demodorus, of the Cecropian tribe, lamp maker. In the 90th Olympiad, Anthemocritus is around his 43rd year of age, married to Nicarete, daughter of Pamphilus, and he is father of two children: 15 year old Rodilla and 12 year old Demodorus. He owns a small but thriving lamp making industry, close to Kerameikos, and he employs five slaves, while he is mainly occupied with the decoration of his products.

Anthemocritus' house is situated some 500 meters southwest of Areios Pagos, in a neighborhood dominated by buildings of diverse shapes and sizes. It has two floors, on one side of its facade with the entrance facing a very busy street leading to the highway that connects Athens to Piraeus. The house's back door sees a dark and dirty alley. The central rectangular antechamber on the ground floor is surrounded by six rooms: the andron, or male-quarters, which is the biggest and cleanest room, a small dining room, the kitchen and the bathroom, the master bedroom for the couple. At the most remote part of the yard there's a kind of small stable which houses poultry, two goats and the dog. On the upper floor there are the bedrooms of the children and the three slaves (one of them is old Smikythus who is Demodorus' tutor) and a working room for the women housing two looms. A wooden external staircase gives access to the upper floor. At the middle of the yard stands a well for drinking water, which is an important advantage since it relieves their slaves from the continuous comings and goings in the neighborhood's communal faucet. At the eastern corner of the yard there is a small altar for goddess Athena, protector of potters.

Anthemocritus is a virtuous and respectable citizen, a regular in the meetings of the popular assembly of the ecclesia (his part-time occupation at the lamp factory gives him time for this). He is very reliable on his financial obligations, always willing to serve his country from any service the state assigns to him (in the last five years

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he has already served twice as a member of the assembly, once as a juror in the lower court of Heliaia and once as a judge at the Lenaia festival). He is a man of faith, committed to the values of genuine democracy, as practiced by wise politicians like Nicias. He firmly believes in peacekeeping, because as a soldier and as a brother of a farmer he lived throughout the adventure of war. These days he feels very concerned with the political brinkmanship of the radical circles. Yesterday evening, actually, after the performance of the comedy, he came into a sharp conflict with his neighbor Koroivus, who hosts at his barbershop every day many of these disreputable persons. If it was in his hand, he would have immediately ostracized Hyperbolus, would offer a cup of poison hemlock to Antiphon and would send all the youngsters surrounding Alcibiades chained in the mines of Laurium.

The preferences in theater are tragedians Sophocles and Eupolis -although the strongest emotions he ever felt, shortly before the peace accord, came from a performance of a trilogy by Aeschylus, given by his descendants, according to the special privilege granted to the state. It was then when Anthemocritus realized how major were the changes that had occurred in the program of the theater games, compared to the old times when his father was young and was often describing the plays to his sons. These changes fell into two categories: a) those who were institutionalized with the gradual development of drama and had already been tradition, b) those imposed by the exceptional circumstances of the war, which required general cost cutting and saving time and energy. The most decisive change in the drafting of the program came from the elimination of a type of theatrical composition that characterized the era Aeschylus: the same-theme tragic trilogy, which was actually complemented by a satirical drama usually from the same mythic cycle. In Anthemocritus days poets were almost never presenting contiguous trilogies -not even Philocles, Aeschylus' nephew from his sister, who was competing in this year's Dionysia. They were saying that Sophocles had never written the trilogy. Of course, tragic poets were still forced by the state to participate in the Games with four dramas, but these constituted separate dramatic units, without having common thematic or being consistent with each other. This was one of the reasons for which satirical drama seized being a complementary part of the tragic trilogy; and to some extent this resulted to giving freedom to some dangerous innovators to substitute satirical drama with some drama plays that could hardly been part of any given genre.

So, with each tragedian's work being so independent, it was no longer necessary to perform them all on the same day. Instead, for reasons of variety and for reasons of ensuring common standards for the contestants (from the weather conditions as to the composition of the public or the psychological state of the judges) a new institution had been established for many years (at least Anthemocritus could not remember otherwise): the “drama-to-drama play,” which meant that every day one tragedy of each three authors was performed and at the end of the day the satirical drama of one of the three. No need to say that the order of shows was always determined by lot.

This new regulation was associated with another substantial change, imposed by the effort of the state to ensure the fairest possible conditions of competition. Because, as is evident, protagonists had a crucial role in what concerns the quality of drama interpretation, organizers removed the privilege of poets to choose their actors by themselves and established again the process of drawing lots: for each tragedian, a protagonist was chosen by lot to interpret the main roles in all four dramas. That protagonist was also responsible for recruiting the two other actors. But with all the importance and gravity which had acquired the roles of the leading characters, it was humanly impossible for a protagonist to fulfill the interpretational needs of four dramas on the same day.

But although the program had also been altered because of the war, the new regulations were standing even in the period of so-called peace. Austerity measures included less days for the theater games, three instead of four. The games used to run for five days in the past, with the last day dedicated exclusively to comedies. But that fifth day was removed and one comedy performance had been added in the evening of each of the remaining four days, following the program for the tragic poets. Today is the 13th of the month of Elaphebolion (4th of March), fourth day of the City Dionysia festival and last day of the theater games.

With the old program (a tetralogy every day, comedies rolled into a special day), it would have been simpler and the problem whirling around in Anthemocritus' head even before the day breaks and Nicarete comes to wake him up is about the decision he must take whether at least today, last day of the games, he should take his wife to the theater. The bad thing is that in Athens there is no

legal provision on the matter, or even an institutional basis, so each family man decides on his own depending on his ideas and the moral standards imposed by his social class. Nicarete is different from most women of the neighborhood who come from somewhat lower social layers or have husbands in professions that allow a wider social life and more liberal social relations, therefore feeling themselves less restricted. This year, the problem became particularly intense because Nicarete's closest friend, Metreche, the barber's wife, had watched all the performances, while Anthemocritus family had attended only the events of the first day, on the 11th of Elaphebolion. The attendance of the entire family, particularly in the large procession (which this year had regained something of its prewar splendor) and the dithyrambic competition of 10 boys and 10 men, was more than obvious, because for the first time little Demodorus participated in the chorus of the Cecropian tribe. This is why his father was throwing this little party tonight, although the victory was given to the children of the tribe of Aias.

This year Anthemocritus was very hesitant because five days ago, he had watched the pre-contest at the Odeon of Pericles (where all poets, like every year, presented to the public short summaries of their works, as well as their partners, namely the actors and musicians, if they had hired others, like Euripides last year) and was left puzzled by the myths of Philocles whose leading characters were women, not all of them of the highest caliber. Of course, today's program included the less disturbing dramas, but with Euripides participating no one can be certain. Anthemocritus brought back to mind his shock when, about ten years ago, he watched Hippolytus and felt Nicarete, just 21 years old then, blushing with shame at the upper tier (yet it had become known that Euripides in his current drama had corrected the obscenities he had used in one of his previous works of the same theme).

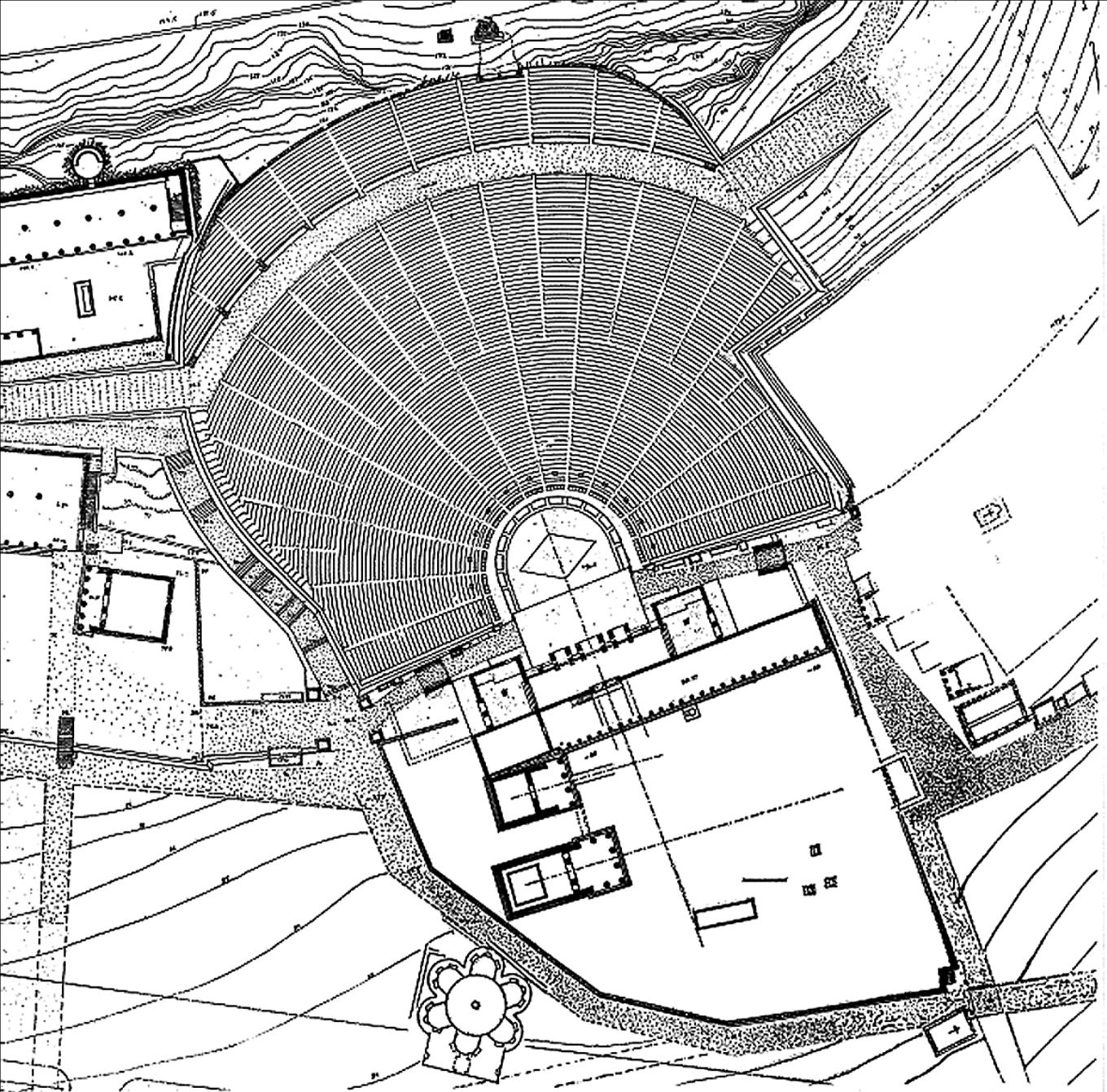
Besides, the risk did not always come from the drama's unfolding events or the given behavior of the characters, but by the words, and mainly by the arguments that men once used in speech competitions to support their actions. However, the story of today's tragedy was one of the best known and this provided safety. Lately, on the way to his workshop in Kerameikos, Anthemocritus was often passing by the teaching center rented by Euripides' sponsor for the preparation of the chorus, but had directly overheard or told nothing bad or reprehensible (scandalous details in theater plays circulated

rapidly, despite the efforts for secrecy made by the organizers of the performance). Moreover, a neighbor, who was taking part in today's female chorus of Philocle's tragedy, told him in detail the story of the play. Thus, the descent lamp maker finally takes his decision, reinforced by the disarming image of Nicarete holding a lamp before dawn, as she comes to wake him up.

He announces the great news to his wife, as she pours him water near the well to wash his face (no question about Rodilla: she will stay back home to prepare dinner along with the two slaves). He feels very happy about this, as he offers to goddess Athena's altar his morning libation of pure wine before he dips his bread in it and eat for breakfast, which all these days is much richer than usually, because the breaks between the drama plays of the three tragedians are extremely short and leave no time to eat, while the relatively longer break before the comedy's matinee show, comes somewhat late. So, apart from the usual bread, olives and figs, today Anthemocritus enjoys again a cup of fresh milk, honey and thick drained cheese, recently sent to him by his brother Chairias from the estate. Meanwhile, Nicarete has prepared Demodorus, hastily swallowing his breakfast, while the slave woman makes a small bundle of pillows the family needs to take to the theater (today the wooden benches will be wet from last night's rain) and two bags of food: bread, cheese and dried figs; plus a small flask of wine for Anthemocritus. Meanwhile, already waiting outside is the boisterous family of Koroivos, who shouts to them to hurry, because today the theater will be overcrowded. Headed by old Smikythus, holding in one hand Demodorus and the other the bags with supplies, the small group departs. Sunrise has already started.

## **The preliminary events**

As they leave behind the hill of the Nymphs and begin to go down to the temple of Dionysus Eleuthereus, the road is already full of small and large groups of locals and foreigners, who walk hastily. Fortunately, they left home quite early, because Anthemocritus must collect Nicarete's entry ticket, which is leaden token with Athena's head on one side and the letter of the tier reserved for the Cecropian tribe on the other. This means that he would have to wait in line, Gods know for how long, outside one of the stands built up near the props warehouse for theater-goers who are affiliated to the city, in order to buy last-day tickets of two obols (one third of a drachma) – there are always late-goers and undecided. When they arrive at the sanctuary,



*Drawing reconstructing the  
Theater of Dionysus (M. Korres)*

a motley crowd is already there: some scattered on the altars and the small shrines, others, mostly foreigners, crowded outside the temple of Dionysus Eleuthereus where two young sacristans are trying to impose some order to those who persist to take a last-minute look at the famous statue of the god, sculpted by Alcamenes. Anthemocritus asks Smikynthus to take care of Demodorus, while Nicarete with Mitreche find the opportunity to deliver some small silver offerings to the priest who attends the high altar near the entrance of the sanctuary and buy fresh holiday wreaths for their husbands from the florist a little further down. Anthemocritus along with Koroivos who's mocking his friend for his imprudence, moves towards the props warehouse sheds, where fortunately the situation is not that hopeless, at least at the shed for citizens who do not make use of the theoric fund for the poor. On the contrary, at the section reserved for the foreigners who

arrive daily from all parts of Greece with the hope to even watch just one performance, there's terrible overcrowding of people who make non-Greek sounds.

Having bought, relatively quickly, the tickets, they unite with the rest of the group, as agreed, at the edge of the western passage and are now preparing to enter the theater, which is already half-full, although it is still too early. This year the number of farmers and foreigners is indeed impressive, thanks to the calmness prevailing throughout Attica following the signing of Nicias' peace treaty. But this peace is fragile since it is still undermined by an undeclared war between the two principal cities that are often involved in conflicts caused by diplomatic interferences of each side to the opponent's sphere of influence: the latest example this time can be seen in the Peloponnese with the erratic activities of this charismatic but dangerous leader of the radical democrats, Alcibiades of the Alcmaeonidae family. The city itself is much less decongested now after most of the farmers returned back to the countryside. According to Pericles' war plan, farmers had been forced to move to the city, abandoning their properties at the mercy of the invaders of Archidamus. Now the city is clean and renewed having freed itself from the unacceptable pollution and the numerous shacks that had been set up in every corner. And most importantly, the city now has inns to house not refugees, but foreign visitors. Moreover, a series of public construction projects has been scheduled in order to improve the situation mainly of public buildings, which had been abused by the general deterioration of residential conditions.

Theater has benefited greatly from this project, as one can see by the new skene building, which was constructed last year using a much more durable wood, and the refurbished wooden tiers, which are now full of people, all except the central one of course, right behind the throne of Dionysus' priest, next to the small podium where they erected the statue of the god which they took from the altar. There, the space is still empty, because the seats are reserved for VIPs honored this year by the state: the nobles and high officials of the year, the representatives of the allied cities (who just three days ago had paraded in the theater showing small vaults with their annual contributions), children of the heroic dead of the last battle, their deputies and various other officials. There are then seats in the tier that are placed isolated the rest of the public, for obvious reasons. They are reserved for the ten judges, who were chosen by lot just

before the opening of the first day performances, out of a hundred candidates, ten of each tribe.

Anthemocritus with Koroivos and young Demodorus find several good seats at the middle more or less of their tier, while Koroivos' eighteen year old son Cleophantus goes to the tier's special section for teenagers. Women climb up higher, over the tier where the bleachers are bisected, to the left. At the extreme upper tiers, next to the resident aliens (metics), is where old Smikythus will find his seat, along with others, very few indeed, household-slaves leaving with families residing within the city. Despite the overcrowding that is intensified as time passes, Anthemocritus notes that today there is more order than on the other days, perhaps because, apart from rod carrying police, almost all of the ushers are here to oversee the seating of spectators. This was expected of course after the sad incidents which occurred yesterday during the short break. It started as a little conflict of two people fighting over a seat and ended up to becoming an unspeakable riot. There is no doubt that this incident will be a matter of discussion the day after tomorrow at the special session of the assembly that takes place every year after the festival, to check the chief magistrate's performance throughout the organization of the events, and to examine several cases of citizens' improper behavior.

Young Demodorus tells his dad that the two upper tiers reserved for foreigners are already chock full. Indeed, at this point spectators are arriving in galloping pace, and Anthemocritus finds it even hard to show to his son and, when appropriate, comment on the various VIPs of Athenian society coming in the theater. Just a while ago, he did not even have to tell young Demodorus who was that ugly, badly dressed, middle aged man, vigorously climbing the stairs of the adjacent tier: he was Socrates, who does not miss a single play by Euripides. Shortly soon after, however, he shows his son the famous sophist Prodicus, the great language teacher, who is back in Athens with a mission from his native Keo. As usual, it seems he intends to extend his stay, to show his art and leave richer than he was when he came. Anthemocritus can not resist to make a bitter comment to Koroivos, when he sees that lout of a man, Hyperbolus, appearing from the right corridor, gesturing clumsily to someone who obviously does not understand his barbaric Greek. It is indeed, an overwhelmingly contradictory comparison to the majestic Nicias, who is coming now luxuriously dressed, walking somewhat uncertain and sickly (he suffers from kidney problems) to occupy one of the first seats of



his tier, where some fans welcome him with cheers. When Agathon appears, handsome and gently moving like a Lydian dancer, Koroivos is again ready to start his vicious insinuations, but Anthemocritus stops him with a pinch on his arm, showing the child with his eyes. Lately it is spread that Agathon is apprenticed to Euripides and is soon to try his luck in Lenaia festival.

*Image from an Attic black-figure vase depicting spectators seated on a stepped platform*

But the most impressive of all entries is that of Alcibiades, who is literally rushing in from the left lane, surrounded by a crowd of smartly dressed young men, definitely his companions in some of the many secret societies, for which many whisper lately so many unspeakable things. These groups have become a real plague in Athens and their number has increased alarmingly since there are literary no requirements for accepting a citizen as a member: you

don't need to be anything close to a nobleman, as before, or at least have some financial status; those clubs are open to all those who have spare time and are willing to conspire. The diffuse murmur following the parade of these impostors into the theater is interrupted only by a loud and long applause coming from a large group of dowdy Athenians of the lower classes, of those who take advantage of the absence of the quiet farmers from the assembly and give unprecedented majorities to their aristocrat leader. Anthemocritus feels sad when he thinks of the current confusion in the political arena of Athens with the new and unprecedented manners of the radical politicians who manage to hide their contradictions and falsehoods with eloquent arguments loaned from the Sophists. The reason that the amiable fan of Nicias felt so much troubled whether or not to bring Nicarete, or even Demodorus, to the theater was this: in recent years, these new subversive morals have not only affect political behaviors, but also have found expression through the characters of the theater plays. Take for example Euripides, who in one hand fascinates with a moving scene, and in the other makes his heroine argue as if she was Antiphon! Thus, often at the end, the viewer is left fascinated and puzzled together, especially when he needs to vote to show where he stands in relation to the teachings of the poet.

When the theater is full and the last latecomers climb with haste to the remaining seats, the ushers divided into two groups, line up in the two lanes, while the sound of trumpets announces the opening of the show: then the officials come in. Today it is not necessary to announce entering individuals and groups, because this happened in the first day. Last and most imposing is the entrance of the high priest of Dionysus Eleuthereus who is accompanied by ruler A. and a small group of young deacons, in charge of the preliminaries of the short ritual. Today they are not going to slaughter the usual piglet, like they did in the first day of the games, but instead they will just sanctify the platform of thymele in the orchestra with pelanos (a mixture of olive oil, honey and flour) before offering it to the statue of the god. With a gesture of the priest, the crowd gets up standing. Then they crown the altar and clean its grate. During the libation, the priest supplicates the present god for the success of the competition. The crowd repeats the last verse of the prayer. Finally, the ritual team withdraws from the right lane, the priest sits on the throne and immediately after that the herald, standing next to thymele, announces the program of the day: one tragedy by Euripides, one by Iophon and one by Philocles, a satirical drama of the latter, and in the afternoon, after a long

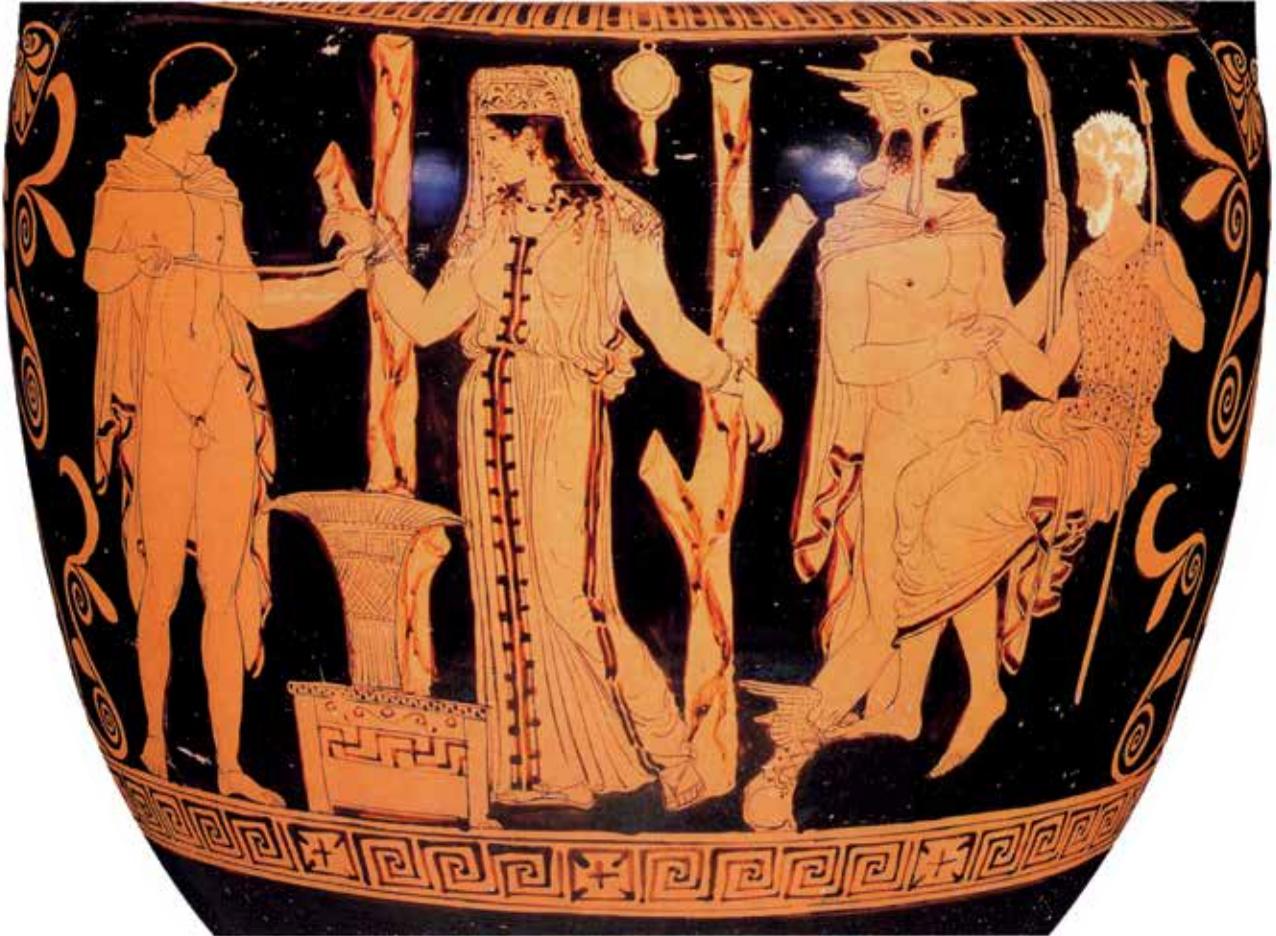
interlude, a comedy by Plato. The sun has already risen high on the ridge of Mt. Hymettus. If the threatening clouds chasing each other in the morning sky do not send rain, the day will be warm and bright.

## The performance

The humming of the audience stops, the first flute player (aulete) walks slowly towards the thymele and takes his place at a low pedestal, a sign that the drama will not have a normal course. Anthemocritus has no time to explain to puzzled Demodorus why the facade of the skene is not configured as one would have expected for a myth that had always been associated with a palace. Now the skene has lost something of its monumental feature: with the two side openings covered with paintings depicting trees and rocks, the skene gives the impression that a satirical drama is about to start; it is clear that Euripides is again preparing one of his surprises. Certainly not at the beginning of the performance, since so far the play structure repeats precisely as Anthemocritus had seen it in the two previous days but also as he recalls it from all the past plays of the author he had seen: a person appears from the main gate and pronounces slowly and clearly his prologue. This makes it easier for Anthemocritus since it rids him of the obligation to tell his son what he had already learned by watching the pre-contest. The audience does not seem to be taken aback neither from the status of a prologue teller (Euripides often gives this role to a nanny or a tutor), nor from the details of the storyline. Up to the point when viewers learn how this character is related to the heroes of the play, which is where everything they knew by tradition turns upside down. This is where the humming starts spreading to the theater, which is neither a sign of displeasure nor a signal of enthusiastic approval. Finally, that murmur turns into a sound of relieving approval when viewers hear the author's wise opinion on the criterion of authenticity in human behavior. Had it been later on the day and the atmosphere were more receptive, Anthemocritus would have expected to see Socrates and his companions giving the first ovation. But as he watches the first scenes after the prologue, in which the characters are involved in improper relationships and situations, he starts questioning his own decision to bring Demodorus to the theater and subject him to the test of doubting the truthfulness of the myths he had recently learnt in class. Because surely not even the boy's most wise permanent tutor Smikythos had gone that far in his teachings.



*Throne-like front seat of the Roman period at the theater of Dionysus*



*Apulian crater. The design is probably referring to "Andromeda" by Euripides*

It seems though that the kid's questions are not just about the deflections of the myth but about the shabby costumes of the actors. So, he asks his father the reason why the author failed to dress them the way he was remembering from the other performances, the first he had ever watched. Anthemocritus is willing to explain, but his mind is elsewhere right now. As a new character comes onstage and during the mourning scene, performed with the utmost craftsmanship by a kneeling protagonist in a smooth Mixolydian mode, Anthemocritus is trying to identify a frisk memory triggered by the action: he has a faint feeling that this is something familiar. His attempt to remember is interrupted by the rather belated entrance of the chorus and the extremely melodic lamentation song. The shifting between solo and choir singing, combined with the lightness of the dance performed by

the fifteen chorus members, who have literally encircled breathlessly the protagonist, bring peace back to Anthemocritus' soul. But not for long... In the next scene and more specifically at the height of a crosstalk, suddenly clear up all connotations that - it's obvious now - Euripides deliberately incites when he refers to works by Aeschylus that had been performed a few years back. As was the author's intention, gradually a large part of the audience identifies with the action and viewers start slowly to react not exactly in a negative way (because successful correlation gives a taste of pleasure to all) but still critically, particularly when, a little later, references become clearly controlling. However, Anthemocritus together with the rest of the audience feels captivated little by little in the next scene with the long and detailed monologue of the messenger that brings to life the events in his imagination in a much clearer way than the actual action onstage (he remembers with pleasure the recitation of the Homeric epics by a virtuoso troubadour in the last Panathenaia festival), and above all with the subsequent speech contest that triggers such intensity of attention, as if it were a hearing of a serious case at the Heliaia court of law.

The ending of the storyline is not much different than expected, except for some small changes that will certainly alter with the usual appearance of the god. Just then, the rhythm of the flute changes gradually from a lament to anapestic tetrameter to accompany a drastic move coming from the outside: behind the skene building, the machine raises in slow and somewhat uncertain motion that crowns the roof in a curve to show the celestial path of God. Anthemocritus ignores the public's reactions, caused probably by the clumsiness of the mechanism rather than the dramaturgical theophany itself, as he sees his son with eyes wide open watching in awe: Demodorus has never seen before the appearance of gods in the theater. Just before the reciting of the final verses of the chorus which is about to withdraw headed by the flute player (aulete) from the western lane, the first approving applause is heard mainly from the seats of the Sophists. The applause is then spread gradually - somewhat reluctantly at first, then as a long but not enthusiastic clapping sound - around the auditorium, which fills little by little of a deafening buzz, a sign that comments have already started. Among these reactions Anthemocritus has just enough time to spot the most impressive one: Agathon stands up conspicuously, walks along the tier and reaches the seat where Euripides sits, next to his sponsor and the others tragedians. He then embraces him and kisses him on the forehead.

*Lucanian urn. The chariot of the Sun from the final scene of "Medea" by Euripides*



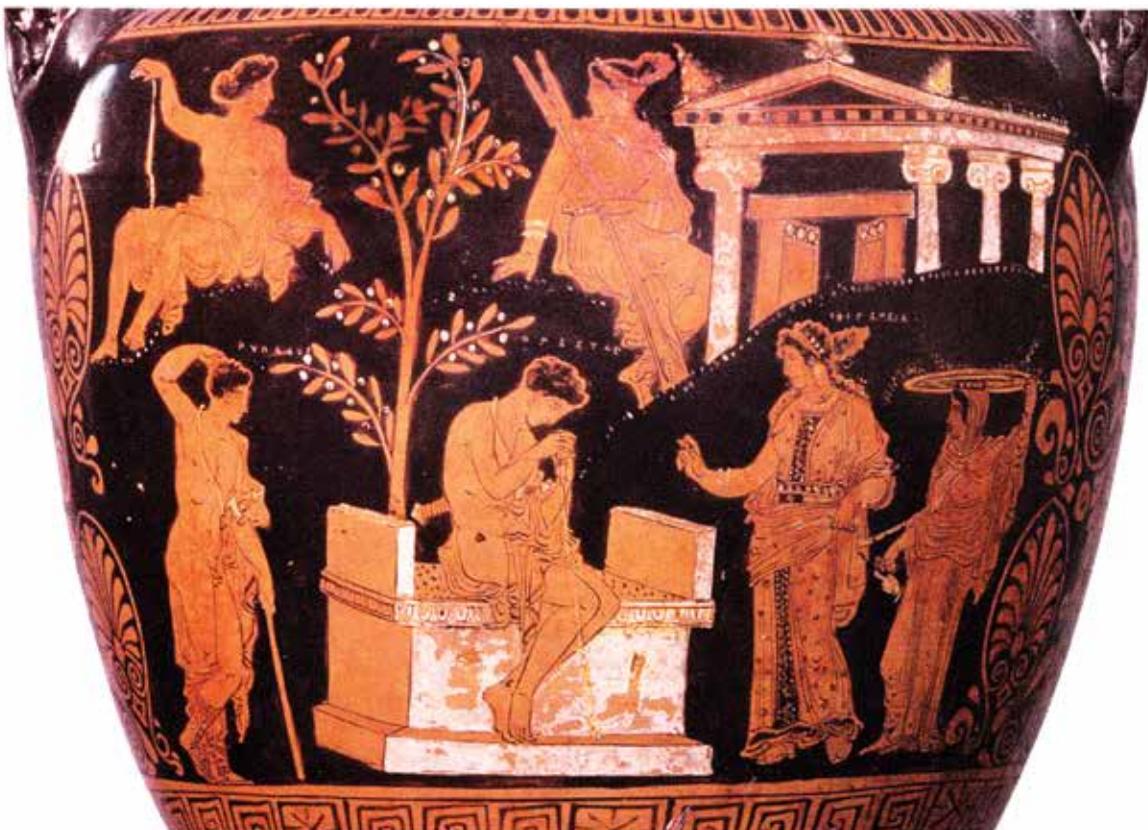
The author embarrassingly returns the kiss.

In the short break before the next drama play, spectators find the opportunity to move a little to warm up and take out the numbness, while a small group of stage workers are preparing the skene for the next play: they remove the tablets from the two side openings and add two altars on either side of the central gateway, a sign that the story of the next play by Iophon unfolds in a palace or a temple. Anthemocritus gives Demodorus two or three dried figs and prepares to refute Koroivos' enthusiastic comments. He argues that in conclusion he felt discomfort in his heart after seeing this degradation of tragedy, which is day after day ridding itself of morals and splendor to descend at a level of intimacy that leaves it no space anymore to exercise its educating service. In these difficult times, Anthemocritus believes, theater must restore the teachings that founded the Athenian democracy and not speak with tricks used by young orators to mislead citizens and the assembly. So he finds a very appropriate analogy to depict his viewpoint: he compares the curve of decline with the transition from Pericles to Hyperbolus. The scathing analogy triggers the immediate reaction of Koroivos and one of their usual conflicts would have started, if the sound of the trumpet did not announce the

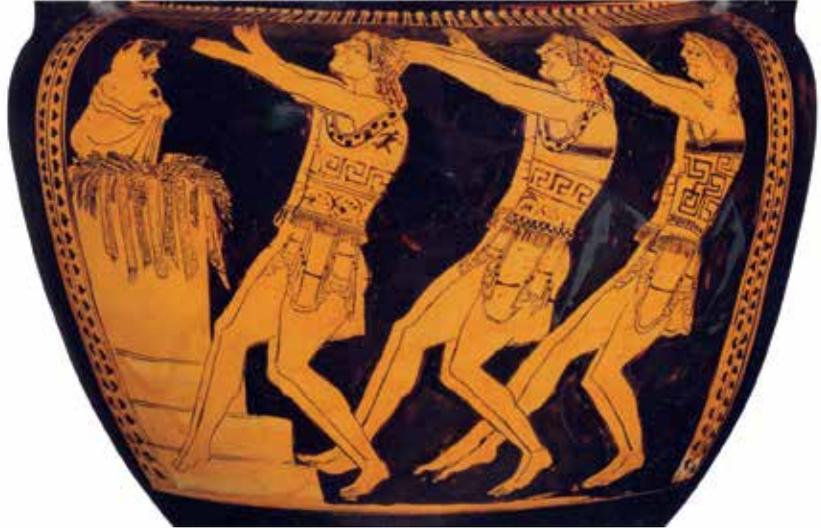
beginning of the next tragedy by Iophon. Spectators turn their eyes to the author, who is trying to spot out somewhere in the nearby tier his father Sophocles, as if to elicit an encouraging nod. But the wise head of the great poet is already focused at the themele.

The differences between this play and Euripides' previous play can be seen right from the beginning with the entrance of the two actors from the left lane: it is obvious that in this drama too, Iophon applies his father's technique. Anthemocritus reaches out and brings Demodorus closer to him, as if to keep him warm and at the same time to reassure him that now things are in a more appropriate way. His full attention turns to the fancy dressed chorus of elders, entering in pairs from the western lane, with left-standers of the pair closest to the viewers in upright and lofty position. The coryphaeus (chorus leader) is in front of the line, dressed differently than the others, and follows the aulete in a short distance. Once more, Anthemocritus realizes how much he prefers slow passages, with a prologue in the anapestic

*Apulian crater. Meeting of Orestes and Iphigenia, from 'Iphigenia in Tauris' by Euripides.*



*Attic crater with depicting a chorus performance. The display is probably referring to the lost tragedy by Aeschylus "The Youths."*



tetrameter rhythm leading imposingly the chorus to the orchestra and then taking it to the square formation around themele, preparing thus the expressive choreography in the lyrical part of the play. He leans over and whispers to Demodorus asking him to pay attention to the exemplary expressiveness of the chorus members at the strophe as they create the feeling of a series of images almost only with gestures while at the antistrophe, although accompanied by the same melody and the same rhythms, they erupt in violent forms. In gently wording he turns to Koroivos and makes a remark about Iophon's luck or ability to always find the richest and most generous sponsors. In response, Koroivos mockingly comments that Iophon's greatest luck is sitting over there, as he turns his eyes toward Sophocles, summing up like this all the malignancies that circulate each time Iophon participates in the theater games and especially when he wins the first or the second prize. Aristophanes in his comedies often criticizes severely that practice, which is not just limited to the natural help given to the author by his father. Many believe that it is a full support in every possible way. It goes to such extent that, when a few years ago, father and son coincided in the same competition and won the first two prizes, people jokingly released the famed proverbial expression "Sophocles competed against Sophocles."

With the modest choreography of the chorus and, soon after, the grand entrance of the protagonist (at this point the impartial lot did not particularly favored Iophon), surrounded by a group of equally fancy-dressed actors, Anthemocritus feels that the festival has regain

its moral fiber, so he is willing to let himself express spontaneity and contribute to the long applause and the continuous shouting of "once again, once again." This cry of enthusiastic approval came from one of the top tiers during a scene of conflict, when a venerable man reminds his ruler of the limits of human power, which cannot give trust to shaky foundations of a misleading language. This opinion is of particular weight, not only because it will come true in the end with the destruction of the hero, who is currently reinforcing his strength with dire rhetoric, but also because it reminds the public of politicians' arrogant hot air which has recently invaded the plenary of both the people's assembly and the parliament. It's true, Anthemocritus admits to himself, the show lacks that tension caused by the usual unpredictable turns in Euripides' dramas. He admits that the next choreographies are strangely motionless (one would think that the chorus members are hindered by the weight of their costumes) but with this play he feels more secure. For example, the hymn about Zeus' fair supervision, sung by the chorus in its last passage verifies respective religious memories and ceremonial appearances, giving thus the impression that it does not put to test Demodorus, who is watching the performance with a calm face, as if it were an intimate experience.

Anthemocritus takes a look around to see if his opinion is shared by



*Chorus performance  
from a black-figure  
amphora*

the rest of the public, and indeed he notices that in general everyone is calm and quiet, which could easily be interpreted by someone as wicked as Koroivos as indifference. This is an irrefutable sign that the play performed right now could never be Sophocles', since he is always making the audience freeze in a religious commitment of tense expectation. Not even the short lines of the messenger who brings the news of the destruction create the tension that had been achieved in the relevant piece of Euripides' play. The same happens with the subsequent lament, despite the vocal virtuosity of the second actor who interpreted the primary female character, and with the hyporchematic response of the chorus. The show regains its splendor only at the end, when a grand pageant is formed to accompany the funeral procession of the dead hero, who is transferred from the main gate to the interior of the skene, while the chorus under the accompaniment of the flute, follows the last anapestic tetrameter closing with an adage. Anthemocritus recalls that in that notorious performance of Hippolytus, Iophon had won the second prize. Many spectators as they cheer (not as warmly as Anthemocritus would have expected or wanted), they are looking uneasily at the sky where clouds have completely hidden the sun: rain is not just a threat; it's coming.

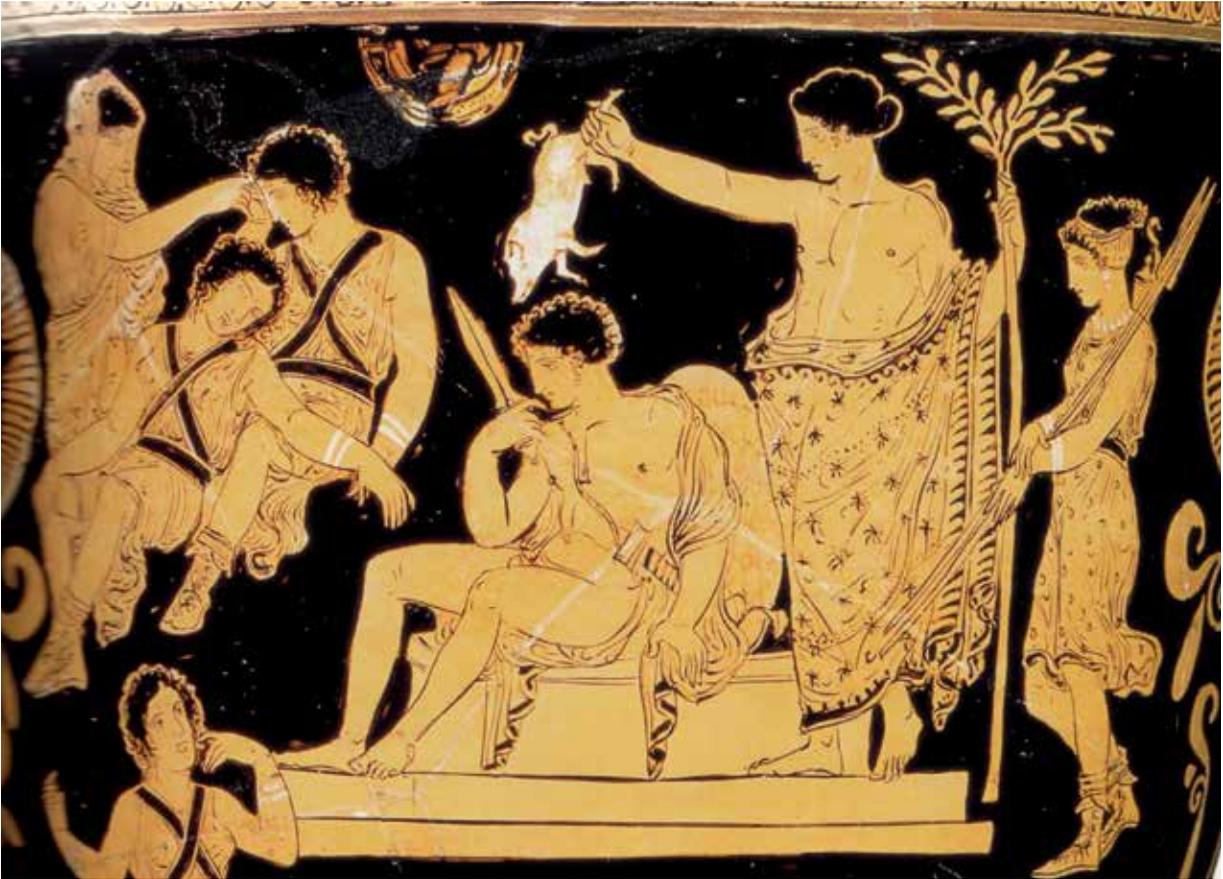
During the short break, the two friends find the time to drink some of Anthemocritus' wine of and test Demodorus' knowledge on the myth of the next tragedy. His father backs from his initial decision to prepare the boy for a possible disappointment, because he thinks that the public will eventually play that role anyway, if yesterday's reactions are repeated today. But should this happen, he thinks, he would definitely have liked to go along with them, if his sense of decency wouldn't stop him. Because admittedly Philocles seems to have inherited nothing from his mother's brother, the great Aeschylus, except maybe the moral obligation to compose some times (but very rarely) trilogies. And, of course, the prestige of the family name, which still affects the judgment of the chief ruler and -with the help of a generous sponsor to invest properly on the performance - of the public. And if he was lucky enough to book one of the notable protagonists, then victory was close. This had happened some many years ago (certainly after the declaration of war, Anthemocritus recalls), when Philocles had defeated Sophocles, who had come second with a wonderful drama about Oedipus. But this time the Philocles was unlucky in everything. It had already been known that the costumes for all four choruses had been rented because his sponsor claimed that his financial situation did not allow him to order new ones to



one of the costume makers. Citizens who participated in the chorus were often complaining about the teaching conditions, because the rehearsal venue was not appropriate and the food quality was bad. In addition, another obstacle was the issue of the protagonist, because even the greatest masterpiece would be doomed if the role was given to one of the sons of Carcinus, like that pygmy, who is desperately struggling right now to perform this lousy song, composed for him by the tragedian.

However, Anthemocritus is fully focused on the play, because he loves watching the most well-known popular myths dramatized for the stage. It seems to him like a very familiar fairy-tale, told each time by different storytellers, each one of them giving their own version. He is especially fascinated by that feeling of expectation every time, when he's trying to guess which new characters have been invented by the author, what relationships he's built between them and in what order he presents the known facts of history. But above all he is fascinated with making comparisons to other plays, especially when the previous

*Apulian crater depicting a scene probably from Sophocles' tragedy "Thyestes."*



*Apulian crater.  
Possible reference  
to "Eumenides" by  
Aeschylus*

presentation of the myth is recent. For example, these two characters conversing right now in Philocle's play had never met anywhere in the previous tragedy on the same myth that he had seen the year before the last. And it would be interesting to see how she heroine would react to the news of the disaster and how she would devise a plan of revenge, or if, before that, there would be a brawl with the victim. Yes, he'd enjoy all that if the author allows it with his writing and he hasn't used again those stiff iambic verses that had given him the nickname "bile spewer" in the works of the comedians.

Once again, Anthemocritus feels more assured about the correctness of the proposal which was rejected by the assembly, regarding the need to maintain flexible the number of drama plays presented by young poets and establish the regular teaching of older works, like the works of Aeschylus a few years back. Because now, in a festival like Dionysia, where thousands of foreigners are flocking from all over Greece just to watch the dramatic contests, Athenian prestige is literally at stake with performances like this. And the chief ruler is certainly not responsible for this, because with the number of contestants determined in advance, he is required to see the proposed drama plays in a comparative way, thus he chooses the less bad ones. So it is certainly preferable to have a foreign crowd watching Philocles'

tragedy instead of some twisted work by Morsimus or Xenocles or, even worse, by that foreign-bred Acestor.

Although Anthemocritus does his best, he fails to focus completely at the play and often captures himself scanning with his eyes the nearby tiers to see spectators' reactions. A little further down, a small company of friends have opened their food bags and devour their content. Some others, a little higher, have gotten up from their seats, others are commenting on the weather - rain is coming at any moment - while a large group from the upper tiers openly expresses discomfort by loudly deploring the protagonist. The sound of the flute makes him turn to the orchestra but not for long: chorus members are performing their last stationary song, roaring but staying almost motionless as if they suffered a stroke. The possibility that the poet had not even used a chorus teacher at all sounds reasonable enough! Things improve a little by the middle of the exit scene, where the drama reaches an unexpected climax which manages to calm the audience down for a while to the point that everyone ignores the rain that has started falling.

It is now certain that the performance of the satirical drama will be canceled (unless the weather improves soon to allow the return of the spectators in the theater), but given that it's long before sunset, there is some hope that the afternoon comedy show will be performed. The messenger is trying to inform the public about all the possibilities, but in vain, since there's some panic spreading in the tiers and his voice cannot be heard. Spectators are trying to leave the theater from wherever there is a way out. Few will manage to find shelter in the large gallery of the props warehouse, some will find a spot next to the small sanctuaries or under the dense trees of the sanctuary, foreigners will find refuge in galleries, public buildings and market sheds. Only the city people can count on the safety under their own roof, together with those who have been invited by them and have come from the villages of Attica. Anthemocritus with Demodorus and Koroivos are not even trying to find the two women. Instead they are all running straight home among a crowd that overwhelms the muddy roads.

### **The intermission**

At home now, Anthemocritus finds the opportunity to slaughter earlier than expected the baby-goat that his brother Chairias had

sent from the estate and give the last orders for the evening banquet. When he got home, Nicarete with Metreche and Rodilla had already arrived and were busy cleaning vegetables in the kitchen. In one of the rooms upstairs, Smikythus, the only one in the house that remembers performances of works by Aeschylus when the poet was still alive, undertakes to answer all of Demodorus' questions and explain to him why he should not be so excited with Euripides. Now the two men, seated in the men's quarters, are accompanying their frugal lunch (due to the expected dinner) with some wine, and find, at last, some common ground for the dramas that had attended. They are both enchanted with a little exercise game they play, as one is trying to test the other's memory on correlations and comparisons between modern works and others that they had recently seen, because two of the tragedies of this year's Dionysia were on myths that had reappeared in the last two years. This was no coincidence, because often in the past a performance could excite the public's interest so much that there could be a follow-up in one of the next festivals, with drama plays based on the same myth. Thus, the poets gave the impression that they were initiating a kind of dialogue, and when their works had quality, they were becoming a fruitful source of learning for regular theater-goers: myths were never fossilized and dead because they were constantly revitalized, modified, interpreted. Also revitalized were their characters who were facing their predetermined fate every time, transmitting this not only through different costumes, but also with different morals and intellect, with different words. So the conversation inevitably focused at one of Euripides' dramas that was impressed more than others in the memory of the two friends. This was because during the performance they were both taken aback by the sudden turn of events in the third episode and the novel course of events up until the appearance of the god, although they had reacted differently to the hero's attitude in the hour of the great decision: Anthemocritus did not allow himself to be sentimental by the hero's endless retrogressions.

Heavy rainfall was coming to an end when the two friends decided to head to the agora. Koroivos was even hoping he could fish for some last-minute customers for his barbershop. This time of course, they did not have to face the problem of women, since not even Metreche would dare to claim a theater seat in Plato's comedy. Demodorus would be taken to the theater by Smikythus. In a while, they were in the middle of a motley crowd of people, who were completely ignoring the continuing rain, shouting as they were wandering greedily the

streets and shops. Anthemocritus had two choices: either to stay at his friend's barbershop which was about to fill with known and unknown people who would spice up Koroivos' hairdressing juggles with comments on the performance, or to try to enter an arcade, where definitely there would be a more serious forum of dialogue around some sophist. Anthemocritus made the second choice. First, he runs to the nearest arcade near the Enneakrounos Fountain-House at the southern side of the agora, where he decides to stay only because rain suddenly grew stronger, since he was not at all in the mood to listen to Antiphon. Soon, however, he is forced to admit to himself that the crowd's stranglehold encircling around the despicable oligarchist is justified: two of the orator's good, it seems, students are involved in a virtual speech contest, having reversed roles and positions from the corresponding part of Euripides' tragedy. And although Anthemocritus felt uneasy by this reversal, which fostered the idea that truth is only valid depending on the view or the method of its approach, he could not help but being fascinated by that continuation of the dramatic game beyond the boundaries of the theater. Besides, he was convinced that Euripides himself would have found this perfectly legitimate and interesting.

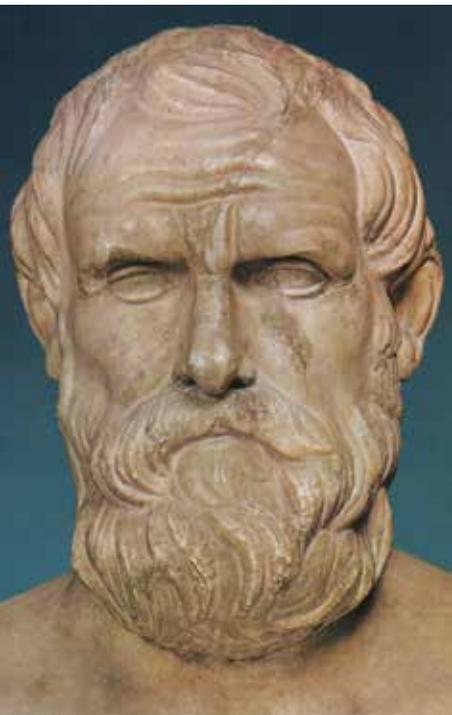
At the end, the rain lasted longer than expected, so the cancellation of the satirical drama performance was now more than certain. Thus, the decision of the judges on the three tragedians would be based



*"Horsemen" dancing from  
a black-figure vase*

only on their tragedies -a limitation that was both fair and favorable for all, since rarely in the teachings of the recent years a satirical drama had been more remarkable than a tragedy. Thankfully, the sun had not started to descend and it was still too early to light up the street lamps, so for sure the comedy would be finally performed. Otherwise, Anthemocritus would be profoundly sorry for the loss because he appreciated Plato almost as much as Eupolis and Aristophanes, not only for his right, meaning aggressive, attitude towards the younger politicians, but also for his ingenuity in devising his myths, notably when trying, though not very often, to combine traditional material with current events. Recently he had surprised the audience by presenting a comedy with a continuous story that reminded more of a satirical drama. The main interest in tonight's show lays in the outright audacity of the theme of the play, which had provoked violent reactions even during its presentation in the pre-contest. Anthemocritus had even wondered why Plato did not decide this time too, as he had done often in the past, to conceal, even for the sake of formality, his identity behind the name of another teacher to escape the consequences. The idea that soon he would see the poet sitting close to the victims of his own mockery really intrigued him because he could predict that after a certain point through the performance, the public's interest would shift from the orchestra to the seating area. He had no doubt that ruler A.'s decision to approve the participation of this comedy in a festival that would attract many foreign viewers and not to enlist it for the next Lenaia Festival was a clearly political move.

*Aristophanes*



### **The following events**

Thinking all that, he arrives at the theater, which is now quite different, as the seats reserved for women are almost empty, except those in the zone for foreigners. Also, there are almost no children. He turns to the upper tiers to spot Demodorus with Smikythus, but in vain. Once seated, this time in some distance from his friend who came earlier, he feels the already tense atmosphere. The tension is clearly visible in people's reactions, as they scream with the entrance of all known political figures. Neither the presence of the priest of Dionysus, nor even the sound of the trumpet announcing the beginning of the show, brings the prospected peace. Things calm down for a bit only when two people appear from the central opening of the skene: a master and a slave, as they can be easily identified

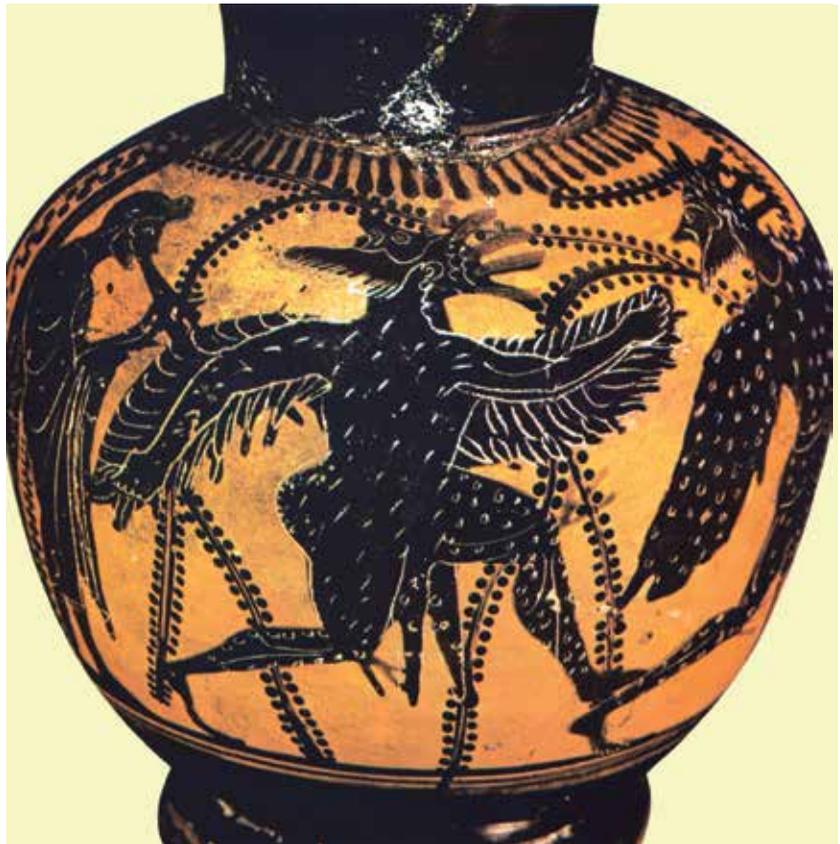
by their costumes, who are supposedly continuing a sharp debate. But as they recite the fifth verse, the mention of a particular name from the political pantheon ignites the first spark for a blended roar of approval and disapproval, which shows the polarization of the public and the adventurous sequel. When the master dismisses his slave by hitting him and turns to the public to expose the facts in the development of the myth, Anthemocritus sits comfortably on his soaked pillow and prepares to enjoy the unfolding of the conspiracy that has been plotted, if he is allowed, of course, to do so by all those people raising their voices every now and then to express their agreement or disagreement with what is happening. The noise stops suddenly only when the chorus dancers, covered with long cloaks, enter the stage in a most aggressive way, a sign that some revelation is about to take place. Any attempt to guess what's going to happen is out of place. The demonic choreography, accompanied by an extremely virtuoso piper, drifts him into a state of euphoria. And when the chorus directs its attacks against the enemy of the myth, the seemingly lamp maker starts to identify himself to it and, gradually, to feel released from the restrictions that regulate his behavior. The same had happened on the first day of the festival when he attended the komos procession together with some friends. It was after a robust wine drinking when they all rampaged in the streets and joined in a

*Apulian crater referred  
to a comedy performance*



common scurrilous explosion insulting the holy of holies. Now, like then, the happenings in the orchestra transmit to him a clear desire to become more spontaneous in his manifestations.

However, the part of the parabasis (when actors leave the stage and the chorus is left to address the audience directly), with its intensity and severity, literally nails the viewers on their seats. The chorus, appearing either united and almost motionless, or divided into two equal parts of rampant choreography, criticizes with catalytic scoff all the wrongs of Athenian life, political and intellectual. The poet manages to distract the public only with the power of these catalytic scoffs, which have a much more powerful effect than the most severe criticism in a debate at the assembly. And he succeeds in this without having to resort to devious means to appease the uneasy viewers, as did Leucon yesterday, after the parabasis of his own comedy, when he made his actors give the spectators almonds and dried figs. Anthemocritus observes that even foreigners in their tiers are in a kind



*Black-figure wine jug. The chorus of "The Birds" by Aristophanes was probably not very different*

of turmoil, while he almost feels ready to go down to the orchestra and join the aggressive fellow citizens of the chorus. But, soon enough, in one of the subsequent short scenes, this elation is consumed once again in hostile events: when the chorus starts mocking, anonymously but revealingly, a high-ranking politician for his faulty Greek accent, a part of the public recognizes who the politician is and openly shouts his name, demonstrating a wild enthusiasm for his ridicule. As a result, Hyperbolus, in a rare outburst of self-awareness, gets up from the lower tiers and flamboyantly withdraws from the left lane, taking with him a small group of people sitting next to him. Anthemocritus is now certain that the session of the assembly in two days is going to be long and intense and that Plato is going to remain silent for the next two years. But at the last komos, he takes off together with the entire audience, when the chorus and the protagonist, reconciled in a bacchanal procession, sing along their triumph and optimism. He feels a kind of euphoria, as if he had drunk a whole flask of Chian wine, and joins his voice with those of the crowd that is now showing, in all possible ways, its appreciation and gratitude, not for the ending of the performance but for experiencing this whole celebration.

The only people who watch absolutely motionless are the ten judges who underline with their stillness their disconnection from the rest of the audience. Soon they will be called upon to use the three of the nine marked voting cards that they keep hidden under their tunics: three with the names of the tragic poets, three with the names of the tragic protagonists and three with the names of the comic poets. Two stage servants have already placed next to them the four ballot boxes -the fourth will accept unused voting cards. Once the trumpet announces the start of voting, the judges one by one, after the messenger calls the name of their tribe, proceed and cast their votes with four slow moves. When the voting is over, ruler A. rises to announce the result, giving the final say to the most unbiased of all judges: luck. From each ballot box he draws only five votes, while the remaining five are emptied at the ballot box for the unused votes. This announcement of the results follow: From the first box, four go to Iophon and one to Euripides, from the second, five to Euripides' protagonist, and from the third box, three votes to Ameipsias and two to Plato.

The winning names together with the names of their sponsors, are announced each time by the messenger, interrupting the deathly silence that prevailed during the voting of the judges and the counting of the votes. Then the messenger invites the first winners to them.



*Apulian crater depicting scene from "Thesmophoriazues" by Aristophanes*

where the ruler crowns them with an ivy wreath. Needless to say that the two poets are accompanied by their sponsors. The fees for all those who participated in the games will be given the following day. As the priest raises, the audience calms down. The farewell wish to the present god is heard and the signal of departure is given.

Walking back home in a hurry, Anthemocritus notices that the air is completely clear after the midday rain, and the shiny sun is about to start setting. Women should already have prepared everything for the dinner by now. The table will be set for only five people, all neighbors and everyday friends. Apart from the rich dishes, a little surprise had been organized: a brief music demonstration by Demodorus, who had lately made great progress as a guitarist. In recent months he had been working on a complex exercise for his participation in the dithyrambic dance of his tribe, and now the boy was ready to perform

some of the songs he was taught. The small demonstration would take place after the main meal. Then, drinking endlessly wine and consuming huge amounts of nuts and all kinds of cookies brought by the slaves from the kitchen (where women and children were dining) dinner guests, in the light of torches, would have all the time of the world to exchange their impressions of the theater games and scuffle.



## Protection and use of spaces for viewing and listening

I would like to emphasize one point of the four main objectives of “Diazoma” association, which are described in Article 3 of the Statutes: the use of ancient sites of viewing and listening, many of which still serve the purpose they were created, since they remain spaces of contemporary artistic expression and creation, as is primarily the art of Theater and Music.

**Petros G. Themelis**  
*Emeritus professor  
 University of Crete*

In recent years, the concept of a new relationship between the monument and the people is predominant in the European Union member states, including Greece. This relationship is finally described at the Article 3 of the current archaeological Law 3028/2002, to the drafting of which I personally contributed during the so-called Delphi Meeting in July 1996. This article of the Law, inter alia, says the following:

“The protection of the country's cultural heritage consists mainly of:

- a) its enhancement and integration into the modern social life,
- b) general education, aesthetic education and citizens' awareness of their cultural heritage.”

In my opinion and, I believe, in the opinion of all members of "Diazoma", cultural property - in this case theaters and similar structures of viewing and listening - have to be integrated into modern life, not just because younger generations have the right to see, understand and enjoy them, but because through their integration and contemporary function, citizens become aware and more interested in these monuments. Thus, as responsible and well-informed members of the society, they do care for and protect them.

This of course, under the inviolable condition that any kind of contemporary function will not threaten the authenticity, integrity and "charm of old age" of the spaces of viewing and listening, and that contemporary spectacles accepted to perform there will not offend the morals, peace and sanctity of these venerable monuments.

Like religious monuments that integrate in modern religious life on

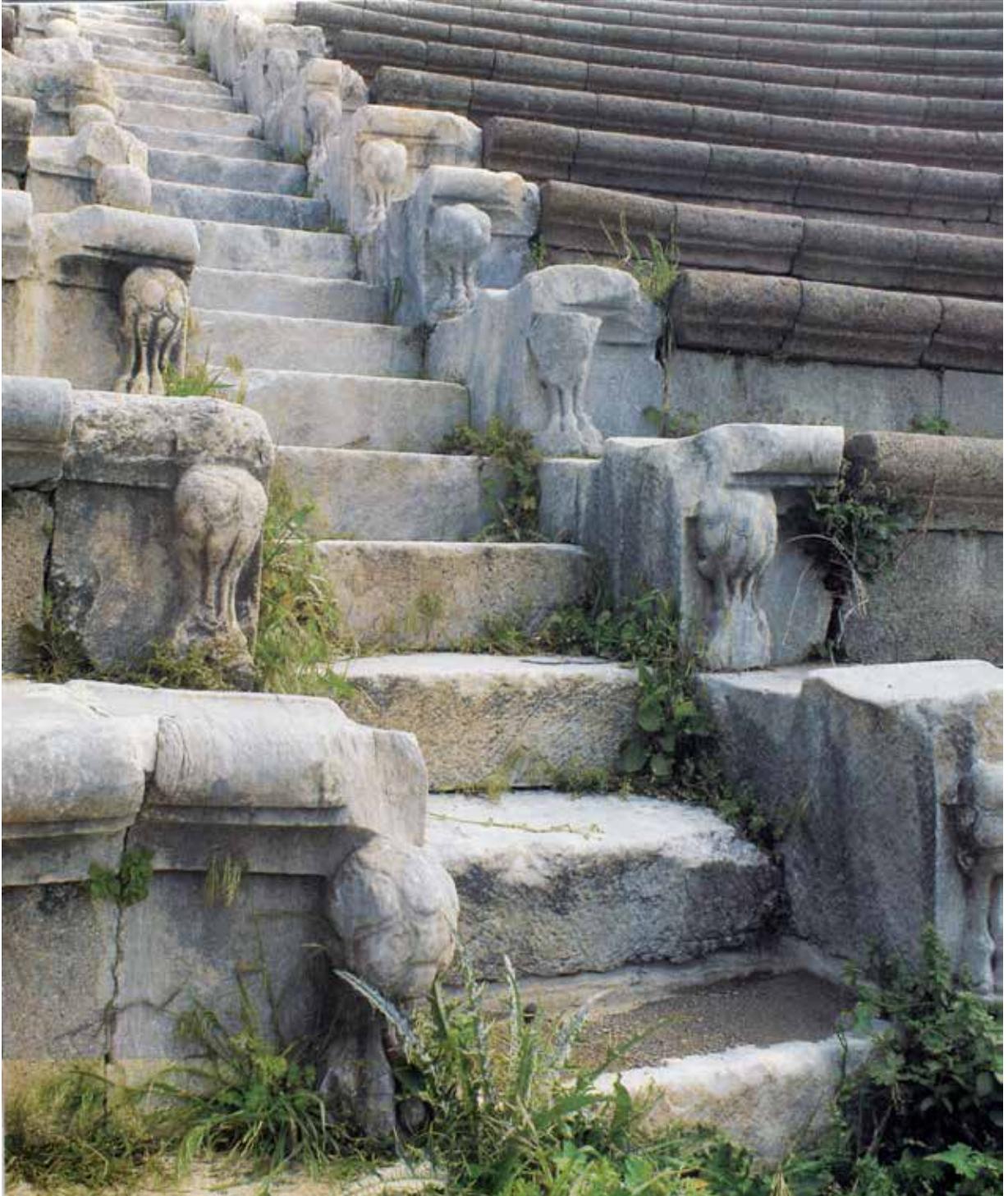
certain conditions and accept the faithful in a mass, the ancient sites of viewing and listening are entitled to a similar treatment and operation, which is compatible with their nature.

Programs of the Council of Europe and debates in EU Committees have led to the conclusion that many of the ancient theater spaces and related buildings (amphitheaters, odeons, stadiums, arenas, ekklesiasasteria for assembly meetings) in southern, eastern and western Europe, particularly around the Mediterranean Basin, are abandoned and in an advanced stage of deterioration. The organization of modern, high-quality cultural events could contribute to their preservation, after having taken very drastic measures in order to fix and restore them following modern principles and methods, and place under control the uncontrolled mass waves of tourists that trample carelessly on them.

*The Odeon of Ancient Messene*

The main principles of conservation and use of ancient theaters were addressed in the famous "Segesta Declaration" in 17-20 of Sep-





*The theater at the Asklepieion of Pergamon*



*Relief display of mask from the theater of Myra*

tember 1995. Being part of all peoples' common heritage which was indelibly marked by Greek-Roman culture, theater spaces have also left their marks in History and continue to influence us, by inspiring artists who give life to these spaces of viewing and listening, as they cultivate a new dialectical relationship with contemporary audiences who come to them.

I think that ultimately the dilemma “protection or use” is false, because there is no conflict of values. The answer, I believe, can be: protection and use. The protection provided by a single government organization, the Ministry of Culture (protection of the natural beauty, natural and historical features, and the monuments in general, including spaces of viewing and listening), may be in line with recreation

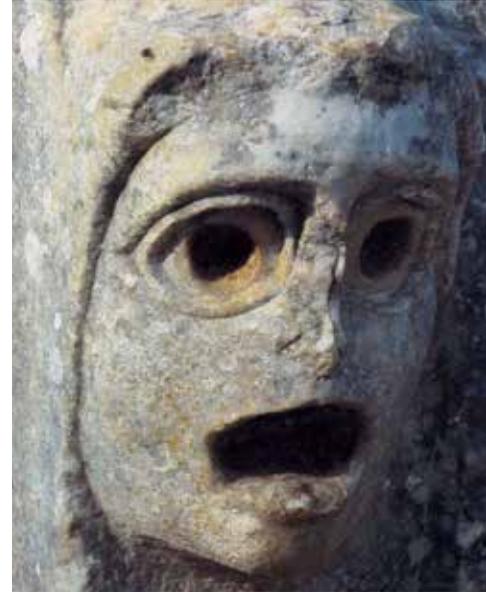
and aesthetic education, through a new functionality and awareness of the citizens, in a way and with means that do not harm these cultural goods.

The elitist proposal follows the strategy that says "save the monuments - keep people away." But visitors cannot be kept outside the fence of the archaeological sites, look at the theaters from afar, or stop outside a locked door of Byzantine churches and monasteries. It is necessary that they are offered recreation coupled with knowledge on the monuments and their value, recreation through a functionality that is in line, as pointed out before, with the character of the monuments. When the use/protection dilemma appears in its actual dimensions, namely when the monument is indeed in danger, then of course protection comes first, meaning that the appropriate measures for conservation, support and restoration should be immediately taken to prevent the risk.

Ancient monuments in general, especially the spaces of viewing and listening, are somehow or other embedded in modern life and continue to live in the present. In them, ancient and modern culture coexist in a harmonious continuum of space and time. Monuments continue to play their part in the modern world, as key elements in building our national identity and our social cohesion, but also as elements that determine the single identity of European citizens, who are practically sharing the same cultural heritage.

With our programs and strategies we are basically addressing those who usually visit the monuments, and we are trying to make them aware and bring them even closer. I think, we should somehow revise this policy and start addressing not just those who visit the monuments, but also those who have never visited them. The greatest challenge is to make all the citizens in this diverse population (children, young people, old people, disabled or healthy, rich or poor, immigrants and others) "stakeholders", spiritually and sentimentally co-owners of the monuments' value.

The function of the ancient sites of viewing and listening under the terms and conditions described above would help, I think, in this direction.



*Etching display of mask from the theater of Ephesus*



*"Oresteia" by Aeschylus, directed by Karolos Koun, 1980. In the role of Clytemnestra Melina Mercouri*

# We and the ancient venues of viewing and listening

The spaces of viewing and listening created in Greek antiquity constitute for many one of the most important group of monuments in our cultural heritage.

First of all because through their architecture these spaces, as venues for massive gatherings for religious, political or recreational purposes, express in the most obvious way the democratic concept for life and the strong sense of community that characterized life in the ancient times. The relevant architectural features of these constructions (theaters, assemblies, etc.) are still today hosting similar activities.

Another reason that makes these spaces extremely significant is that the shows and the spoken works presented there, especially the entertaining spectacles (in the real sense of entertainment, meaning the education of the human soul) are considered as one of the most important social and cultural goods ever produced. From the birth of drama at the spaces of worship in ancient Greece until our days, speech and action unfolding within the theater venues are producing culture.

A third reason is that in the Mediterranean and especially in Greece there is a great number of preserved sites which hosted performances of works of theatrical creativity from the early years of its development. These sites, more than all the other remnants of the past, create a special challenge of contact of the present with the past for modern society and contemporary artistic creation. This is because these sites are par excellence venues that serve exactly the same purpose since the day they were designed. This contact of the present with the past, not just for the specialists but also for the wider public, is one of the main goals of modern archaeology, which finds vindication when society experiences the historical content and message of life embedded in the monuments. But from the other hand, experiencing the monuments and integrating them in everyday life evolves from being a tendency to being a demand of the modern society.

**Vassilis  
Lambrinoudakis**  
*Emeritus professor  
University of Athens*

The pursue of an encounter of modern creativity and theater spaces fashioned by the creative past, which answers to that demand, creates some problems of course, since ancient theaters and other performing venues, like odeons, stadiums, etc. are now monuments that have all suffered more or less damages and injuries. Indeed, most of them are preserved fragmentarily to the point of not being able to be revived and serve the purpose of their original function.

This problem is certainly dealt with various measures, duly established by the State and in particular by the Ministry of Culture. Monuments in better preservation are maintained and restored up to a permitted point, according to international rules and standards in order to be able to host events. Other monuments of this kind are classified in the list of non-usable spaces. The permit to allow performance at certain theaters is given after the approval by the Central Archaeological Council and contains terms of use that are supposedly protecting these monuments from damages and aesthetic burdens.

*theater of Philippi*



Nevertheless, this really developed system of modern usability, with concurrent safe protection of used monuments, cannot be implemented problem-free. The main relative problems recorded are the failure of follow the terms of use, or pressures applied by event organizers (another aspect of the same problem) for softening the archaeological protection measures. Sometimes organizers are even pressing for further use of the monument, asking to allow a larger number of events on the same site (as for example in the theater of Epidaurus, which is considered a venue of prestige and recognition for a contemporary artist). Pressure is also applied by mainly local parties, like local governments for example, asking to allow the presentation of events in monuments that are either unsuitable due to poor conservation or even not ready to use.

These problems, should not necessarily lead, of course, to a negative response to the demand for the modern use of the monuments that are suitable for such activities. The public's contact with the monuments, and particularly in this case the wider public's will to experience contemporary reflections and artistic expressions through its historical environment is the best and most effective way to

*Theater Dion*





*Relief detail from the theater  
of Philippi*

approach and share our cultural heritage. But it is also the most drastic way to make society aware, respectful and protective of our own monuments.

“Diazoma” was born out of these thoughts and reflections, thanks to Stavros Benos' initiative, noble vision visualization and capacity of making it reality. “Diazoma” aspires to assist the state into creating conditions for the unimpeded application of sound management policies in what regards the invaluable treasure of the historical spaces of viewing and listening.

Including all these monuments - the more or less known, the identified but not explored, as well as those whose existence is only traced from ancient sources – into a data bank which contains all kinds of information (their history, features, state and potential for usability or simple enhancement) will provide a very important tool in the systematic management of this wealth.

The establishment of the association aimed at bringing together archaeologists, theater people, local governments and intellectuals. This interplay will certainly create much better conditions for a joint effort of balanced and prudent approach to this kind of monuments. Transmitting to the general public, through various events, such an attitude towards monuments, will surely be a substantial positive contribution both for their comprehensive protection (proactive protection also by the general public) and for a creative experience of the ancient spaces of viewing. An important practical aspect of this effort is “Diazoma's” intended incitement of sponsorships and contributions by the public to help take care of these monumental spaces.



*Restored pillar of the western passage at the Epidaurus theater*



# Statutes of the Association named “DIAZOMA”

## **ARTICLE 1. ESTABLISHMENT, NAME AND STAMP**

We herewith establish a non-profit association, named "DIAZOMA," which is based on voluntary work and contribution by its members, as well as on the cooperation of other citizens.

The distinctive title of the Association is "DIAZOMA." Its logo is a composition of allusive references to the objectives of the Association.

The seal of the Association includes the title in Greek and Latin letters, as well as the logo.

## **ARTICLE 2. SEAT OF THE ASSOCIATION**

The Association has its seat in Athens (30 Bouboulinas Street, 10682 Athens). The governing bodies can also legally meet and lawfully decide away from the seat. The Association may establish Branches, Offices and Technical, Educational, Research or other units for the support, dissemination or enhancing of its work, or to appoint representatives in cities, towns or localities in Greece or abroad to serve its objectives.

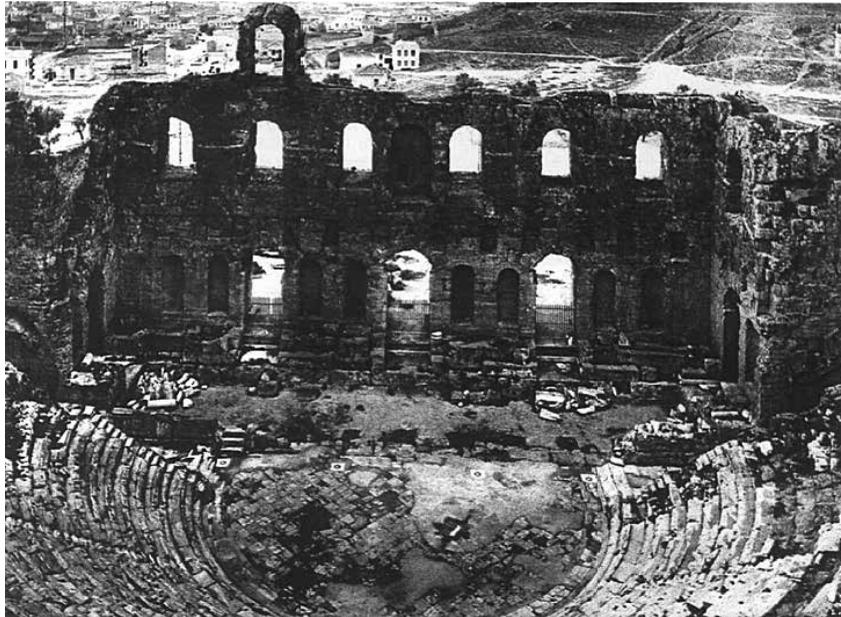
## **ARTICLE 3. OBJECTIVES**

1. Contributing to the protection and enhancement of ancient spaces of viewing and listening (theaters, odeons, stadiums, amphitheatres) and disseminating the values of our cultural heritage, combined with the development and promotion of contemporary cultural creation.

2. Creating awareness and providing support, through a network of citizens, to all organizations that are related to the rehabilitation, the enhancement and, where duly authorized, the use of ancient spaces of viewing and listening, these important monuments of the ancient world, many of which are still serving the purpose for which they were created.

3. Supporting the recording and documentation of the ancient spaces of viewing and listening in order to exploit them as sources of knowledge for the archaeological science and the evolution of the art of theater.

4. Presenting and promoting to the general public of information



*Odeon of Herodes Atticus.  
The "Herodion" before the  
restoration works*

related to the research, protection and management of the ancient spaces of viewing and listening in order to have their value recognized as sites of artistic expression and creativity from the ancient times to date, underlying that antiquity and contemporary culture can coexist in a harmonious continuity of space and time.

5. Respecting the degree of conservation of the authenticity of the ancient spaces of viewing and listening by creating all the conditions of their protection during their contemporary use.

#### **ARTICLE 4. ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES**

To achieve the aforementioned objectives, "DIAZOMA" Association aims at:

1. Creating of a citizens' movement aiming at the restoration, enhancement and utilization of ancient theaters and generally ancient spaces of viewing and listening along with the surrounding area, which is their integral part.

2. The cooperation and unity of action of the competent ministries (Culture, Education, Tourism, Development, etc.), academic institutions, local authorities, NGOs, private companies, independent organizations, institutions and associations, as well as individuals interested in the archaeological, architectural, literary, historical, geographical, technological and artistic research and management of ancient spaces of viewing and listening.

3. Encouraging and supporting the local government to create a "Network of Cities of Ancient Theaters'.

4. The international cooperation between institutions and individuals working in related fields.

5. Organizing events at the appointed by the Archaeological Service ancient spaces of viewing and listening.

6. Organizing seminars, exhibitions and other events, producing informative and other publications, in print and digital format, in order



*The "Herodium" today*

to raise public awareness and support the work of the Association.

7. Exploiting modern technological developments and the Internet to create digitized material relating to the ancient spaces of viewing and listening, and to manage this material. These activities are intended to preserve/rescue valuable architectural and other data, to provide information and support to scientists/researchers, as well as to develop special applications that will enhance education and attract visitors to the same places, such as 3D virtual reconstructions of ancient spaces of viewing and listening.

At the same time, this digital stock will become a permanent "observatory" for the development of all programs related to the protection and enhancement of the ancient spaces of viewing and listening.

8. Assisting the funding of the necessary research, studies and actions for the restoration, enhancement and utilization of ancient theaters and in general of ancient spaces of viewing and listening, by systematically searching for resources, both from the public and from the private sector, and by raising awareness and attracting sponsors. "DIAZOMA" Association will ensure that the funds offered by donors, are invested entirely in the specific purpose for which they were granted.

9. Undertaking initiatives to establish or extend, through appropriate legal forms, partnerships, joint ventures or other entities that undertake the study, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects or actions related to the objectives of the Association. In this way, the Association contributes to the development of synergies between the competent services of the State, organizations of the wider public sector, local governments, legal persons under public or private law and institutions of civil society. The Association can actively participate in these entities and contribute to the implementation of projects and actions with its expertise and resources available.

10. Encouraging local governments to adopt the institution of "cul-



*"Herodium". Side steps and railing in the cavea*

tural fee" and take actions that converge to those of the "Network of Cities of Ancient Theaters".

11. Reference of the above is indicative. By decision of the Board, other forms of action might be decided for the implementation of the Association's objectives.

#### **ARTICLE 5. COMMUNICATION**

The Association communicates with its members and third parties in the traditional ways as well as online, by regularly updating its website, through emails to the citizens and online opinion postings on major issues relating to the objectives of the Association.

#### **ARTICLE 6. RELATIONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS**

The Association may cooperate or sign up as member to other unions, associations, federations, national and international organizations with the same or similar purposes.

The Association may create or contribute to the creation of other non-governmental organizations (non-profit organizations, associations, institutions, NGOs, etc.) provided that its broader goals are served by its participation in them.

#### **ARTICLE 7. INDEPENDENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION**

The Association operates with administrative and financial autonomy and is governed only by the provisions of its Statutes and the relevant legislation.

#### **ARTICLE 8. RESOURCES OF THE ASSOCIATION**

Resources of the Association are:

- Registration fees, subscriptions or exceptional contributions by its members.
- Revenues from organizing events or from activities of public awareness publication/distribution of printed or audiovisual material, etc.
- Subsidies from Greek or international institutional entities.
- Donations, inheritances, legacies, as well as any other kind of lawful collection.
- Revenues from the exploitation of its property.
- Sponsorships in the familiar form, but also rough the parallel development of the institution of popular sponsorship.

#### **ARTICLE 9. MEMBERS**

The members of the Association are divided into regular, associate, honorary and benefactors.



*"Herodion". Marble ending of porus-made parapet*

### **Regular members**

Ordinary membership can be obtained by all natural persons older than 18 years, provided they submit a signed request to the Board in which they include their personal data (name, surname, place of birth, home address) and a statement that:

- They unconditionally accept the current Statutes, any possible inner rules and all legal decisions taken by the Board of Directors and the General Meeting.
- They are not restricted by any of the impediments of Article 11 of the Statutes.

The status of regular member is acquired with the approval of the Board of Directors which decides on the applicant's request, within two months of its submission.

Only regular members have the right to vote and be elected, provided they have fulfilled their financial obligations to the Association.

Upon approval of the application, the new members pay their subscription fee.

Regular member status can be given also to legal persons governed by public or private law which will be represented by a natural person, designated by them. Legal person must submit a relevant appli-



*Stoa of Eumenes*

cation in their exact name, address and TIN.

The Founding Members of the Association are considered Regular Members.

#### **Associate members**

By decision of the Board of Directors, associate members are declared, upon their request, all citizens who wish to assist in any way to the achievement of the Association's objectives, namely through:

- Voluntary work.
- Financial support.
- Activity on the level of public relations, etc.

Associate members do not have the right to vote or being elected, nor do they have the obligation to pay an annual subscription fee to the Association.

#### **Honorary members**

By decision of the Board of Directors, honorary members are declared persons who have contributed in an exceptional way in promoting the objectives of the Association. Honorary members may be natural persons, as well as organizations, non-profit corporations, associations and committees, legal persons governed by private or public law, local government entities and NGOs. Honorary members are exempt from the requirement of an annual subscription fee to the Association.

#### **Benefactors**

The Board of Directors of the Association may award the distinction of “member-benefactor” to natural and legal persons, who have given their support to the Association in an exceptional way. This prestigious distinction may be also awarded to organizations, companies, associations and committees, legal persons governed by private or public law, local government entities and NGOs.







***Choragic Monument of Thrasyllus.***

*. Image of Thrasyllus monument in the mid 18th century (J. Stuart and N. Revett) (101)*



# The institution of sponsorship in the Golden Age of Pericles and in the 21st century

Sponsorship becomes for the first time an institution by the end of the 6th century BC, at the time of Cleisthenes in the Athenian Democracy. But it is in the 5th century BC, during the Golden Athenian Age of Pericles, that the new institution reaches its height with the following characteristics:

**Thales P. Koutoupis**  
*Communication advisor*

**a.** In the beginning, sponsorship was not a general concept. It was a very specific one. It referred exclusively to the funding of the arts (sponsor, or choregos in Greek, means the leader of the chorus). It was one of the four **liturgies**, the other three being gymnasiarchia (managing and financing of the gymnasium), trierarchy (equipping and maintaining of a trireme boat) and hestiasis (fund the public dinner of the liturgist's tribe).

But, with time and especially today, the concept of sponsorship widened and meant all kinds of financial support to any kind of social purpose.

As it was obvious, the four liturgies in ancient Athens were a way to transfer resources from the private sector to the State and the society in general. Through this distribution of funds the state could feed the poor and support defense, sports and of course the arts and culture. In other words, it was just another way of indirect taxation of the rich Athenians.

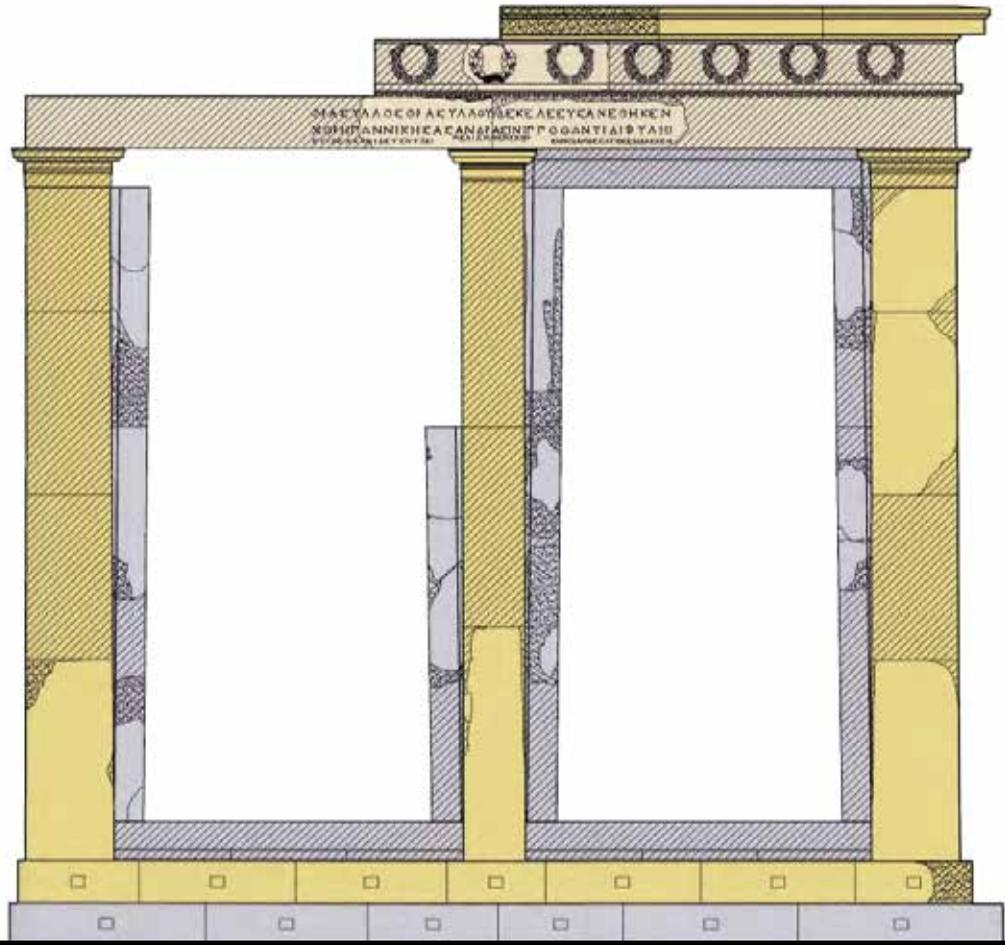
**b.** Sponsorship was **required by law** for the 120 richest citizens from each one of the ten tribes of Athens.

**c.** Sponsors were undertaking all expenses of the event, like for example of the Panathenaic Games, the Eleusinian Mysteries, the Dionysia or the Anthesteria festivals.

**d.** Sponsors were also responsible for selecting the personnel and the “protagonists” - as we would call them today – as well as for the preparation and the rehearsals that were starting 11 months before the event. In other words, mutatis mutandis, they were today's “producers” of art events.

**e.** The sponsor was considered a sacred person throughout the duration of 12 months of his sponsorship. The honors given by the state and the rest of the citizens to the sponsor was the only compensation he would get from the city for his contribution.

**f.** Among the sponsors there was very tense competition for the production of the most brilliant event, because this was reflecting on



*The approved restoration proposal of choragic monument of Thrasyllus*

the entire tribe of the wining sponsor.

**g.** The institution of sponsorship gradually spread from Athens to Aegina, Thebes, Orchomenus and other Greek cities, as well as on the Asia Minor coast, where, however, it was voluntary, as it is today.

**h.** Finally, the institution begins to degenerate in the 4th century BC and it seems to be lost in the Hellenistic period.

### **Similarities and differences**

From a very first reading of the elements of ancient sponsorship, the key similarities and differences from the current form can be easily identified.

#### **The similarities are obvious.**

**a.** The content of the sponsorship today is also social.

**b.** The only compensation, the only thing that the sponsors get in return, was and still is solely their "honorary" credit from state and society, for their social beneficence.

**c.** As a function, sponsorship continues to supplement or replace the state support and funding of the cultural sector mainly, but also of other areas of social content, where public funds are insufficient.

**d.** It was then and is still now a way to transfer funds from the private to the public/social sector.

Also apparent are the differences.



*Choragic  
Monument  
of Lysikrates*

**a.** The sponsorship back then was required by law and as such it constituted an indirect form of taxation of the wealthy Athenians, while today it is optional.

**b.** Sponsors always had an active and decisive participation in the organization of the event for which they were fully responsible, while today, very often, sponsorship is accomplished simply by the payment of financial assistance to the producer of the cultural product, without substantial participation of the sponsor to the events.

**c.** Sponsorship concerned only art events back then.

**d.** Since back then businesses were not legal entities, the sponsors were individuals, professionals, business people, entrepreneurs, such as gunsmiths, bakers, potters, the saddlery makers, etc.

By contrast, today sponsors are legal entities, companies (the individuals, the natural persons, who offered greatly to contemporary Greece and are still offering today money and/or assets to the community, are called benefactors or donors).

**e.** The promotion of the sponsors and the honors given to them by the society was made then officially, on the initiative of the state. Today, it is made by the recipient of the sponsorship through the modern means of printed and digital communication.



*Apulian crater, the so-called  
"vessel of sponsors"*

But the main common element that characterizes the sponsorship and confers substantial social content to it, has been underlined by Demosthenes who said: "**THE WEALTHY SHOULD MAKE THEMSELVES USEFUL TO THE CITIZENS**". In modern democracies, as in ancient Athens, sponsorship is an institution of social responsibility and participation in public life that honors the sponsors and requires that the state and the recipient of the sponsorship recognize their social contribution.



## Sources of illustrations and photos

**p. 12**

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**p. 13**

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**p. 15**

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**p.16**

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**p. 17**

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**p. 19**

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**p. 34-35**

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**p. 40**

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**p. 42**

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**p. 43**

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**p. 45**

*Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg*

**p. 46**

*Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, phot. Johannes Laurentius*

**p. 47**

*The Cleveland Museum of Art*

**p. 48**

*P. Maximos, Ancient Greek Theaters, phot. P.Maximos*

**p. 59**

*A stage for Dionysus, 1998, ed.. KAPON*

**p. 61**

*Museo Archeologico Regionale “Paolo Orsi”, Syracuse*

**p. 62**

*J. Paul Getty Museum, phot. Ellen Rosenbery*

**p. 64**

*Museo Nazionale della Siritide*

**p. 65**

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**p. 66**

*Antikenmuseum, Basel*

**p. 67**

*Christchurch, New Zealand*

**p. 69**

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**p. 70**

*Antikenmuseum, Basel, phot. Claire Niggli*

**p. 73**

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**p. 75**

*The Metropolitan Museum of Art, N. York*

**p. 76**

**British Museum, London**

**p. 78**

*Wagner Museum, Würzburg, phot. K. Oehrlein*

**p. 83**

*P. Maximos, Ancient Greek Theaters, phot. P. Maximos*

**p. 84**

*P. Maximos, Ancient Greek Theaters, phot. P. Maximos*

**p. 85**

*P. Maximos, Ancient Greek Theaters, phot. P. Maximos*

**p. 86**

*A stage for Dionysus, 1998, ed. KAPON*

**p. 88**

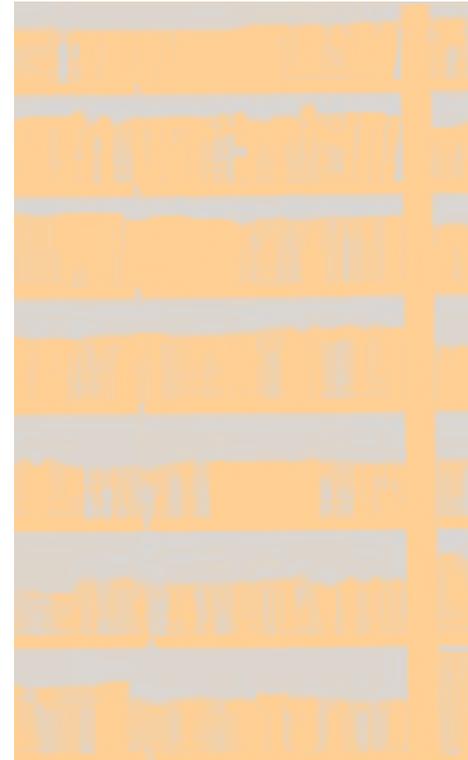
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**p. 90**

*P. Maximos, Ancient Greek Theaters, phot. P. Maximos*

**p. 106**

*J. Paul Getty Museum, phot. Bruce White*





ΤΟ ΒΙΒΛΙΟ «ΔΙΑΖΩΜΑ ΚΙΝΗΣΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΩΝ ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΑΝΑΔΕΙΞΗ ΤΩΝ ΑΡΧΑΙΩΝ ΘΕΑΤΡΩΝ», ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΟΘΕΤΗΘΗΚΕ ΚΑΙ ΣΕΛΙΔΟΠΟΙΗΘΗΚΕ ΣΤΗΝ ARTE CREATIVE TEAM ΚΑΙ ΤΥΠΩΘΗΚΕ ΣΤΟ ΤΥΠΟΓΡΑΦΕΙΟ ΤΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΗ ΦΟΡΤΩΣΗ ΚΑΙ ΣΙΑ ΕΕ ΣΕ ΧΑΡΤΙ GARDA PAT 135 ΓΡΑΜΜ. ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΟ. ΟΙ ΤΥΠΟΓΡΑΦΙΚΕΣ ΔΙΟΡΘΩΣΕΙΣ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΤΟΥ Χ. Γ. ΛΑΖΟΥ. Η ΒΙΒΛΙΟΔΕΣΙΑ ΕΓΙΝΕ ΣΤΟΥ ΘΟΔΩΡΟΥ ΗΛΙΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΝΤΕΛΗ ΡΟΔΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ ΣΕ 2000 ΑΝΤΙΤΥΠΑ ΤΟΝ ΝΟΕΜΒΡΙΟ 2009 ΓΙΑ ΛΟΓΑΡΙΑΣΜΟ ΤΩΝ ΕΚΔΟΣΕΩΝ «ΔΙΑΖΩΜΑ». ΤΗΝ ΕΚΔΟΣΗ ΣΧΕΔΙΑΣΕ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΙΜΕΛΗΘΗΚΕ Ο Χ. Γ. ΛΑΖΟΣ.

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Αριθμός Έκδοσης

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