

Greek theater in Ancient Greece took form in about 5th century B.C. The major

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Characteristic of the Greek world was the supernatural. In 'The Iliad' by Sophocles, this characteristic is presumably truly evident. The involvement between the mortals and the immortals lead to the downfall of the hero and seen as the tragic flaw in the character. Aristotle named this tragic flaw in the main character as 'hamartia'. Aristotle, by searching the works of writers of Greek tragedy, Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles (whose Oedipus Rex he considered the finest of all Greek tragedies), arrived at his definition of tragedy. The best detailed description of a tragedy was given by Aristotle who described tragedy as largely based on life's pity and splendor. He was also the one who focused upon the element of 'catharsis' or purging of emotions such as pity and fear in the audience. The word tragedy even comes from 'tragedia' and Greek tragedy was originated in honor of the God of wine — Dionysus (the patron God of tragedy). Tragedians used the chorus to create a psychological and emotional background to the action through its odes. The chorus' part was gradually reduced, and the dialogue of the actors became increasingly important. The word "chorus" meant "dance or "dancing ground", which was how dance evolved into the drama. Members of the chorus were characters in the play who commented on the action. They drew the audience into the play and reflected the audience's reactions.

Plays at that time were performed only at dramatic festivals and in outdoor theaters. The area in front of the stages was called the "orchestra", the area in which the chorus moved and danced. There was no curtain and the play was presented as a whole with no act or scene divisions. There was a building at the back of the stage called a skene, which represented the front of a palace or temple. It contained a central doorway and two other stage entrances, one at the left and the other at the right, representing the country and the city. Sacrifices were performed at the altar of Dionysus, and the chorus performed in the orchestra, which surrounded the altar.

The theatron, from where the word "theater" is derived, is where the audience sat, built on a hollowed-out hillside. Seated of honor, found in the front and center of the theatron, were for public officials and priests. Episode: the counterpart of the modern act or scene, in which the plot is developed through action and dialogue between the actors, which the chorus sometimes playing a minor role. Stasimon- the choral ode. A stasimon comes at the end of each episode so that the tragedy is a measured alternation between these two elements. Exodos: the final action after the last stasimon, ended by the ceremonial exit of all the players.

The theatre of Ancient Greece consisted of three types of drama: tragedy, comedy, and the satyr play. Athenian comedy is conventionally divided into three periods, "Old Comedy", "Middle Comedy", and "New Comedy". Old Comedy survives today largely in the form of the eleven surviving plays of Aristophanes, while Middle Comedy is largely lost (preserved only in relatively short fragments in authors such as Athenaeus of Naucratis). New Comedy is known primarily from the substantial papyrus fragments of plays by Menander. Aristotle defined comedy as a representation of laughable people that involves some kind of error or ugliness that does not cause pain or destruction.

Whereas, the Elizabethan theatre was influenced by the Roman and Greek dramatists. Morality plays were developed in the 14th and 15th century which reenacted the scenes that are represented by the Christian way of life. But by the middle of 16th century, morality and mystery plays lost its popularity. William Shakespeare's plays were performed in the globe structure theaters. The structure of the theater included main stage- extended out into the open -air yard where common people stood, hell- a space beneath the stage which enabled actors to 'disappear' or descend into a hole if the play needed such action, heavens-roof above the stage, chamber- located above rear stage and huts- windows located above music gallery. The sole initiative was taken up by Sam Wanamaker to raise money and reconstruct the globe theatre.

Within the early modern era when drama flourished, there are three periods named after each of the monarchs at the time. Elizabethan Theater only spans, properly, from 1562 to 1603. Jacobean Theater runs from 1603 to 1625. And Caroline Theater extends from 1625 to 1642. The English Renaissance theatrical era came to an end in 1642, with the Puritanical parliament banned the performance of plays. During the interregnum, or this period between kings, public theater was not allowed by law. When Charles II returned to the throne, theater flourished in a new era dubbed the Restoration. Since before the reign of Elizabeth I, companies of players were attached to households of leading aristocrats and performed seasonally in various locations. These became the foundation for the professional players that performed on the Elizabethan stage.

The tours of these players gradually replaced the performances of the mystery and morality plays by local players, and a 1572 law eliminated the remaining companies lacking formal patronage by labelling them vagabonds.

The City of London authorities were generally hostile to public performances, but its hostility was over matched by the Queen's taste for plays and the Privy Council's support. Theatres sprang up in suburbs, especially in the liberty of Southwark, accessible across the Thames to city dwellers but beyond the authority's control. Along with the economics of the profession, the character of the drama changed toward the end of the period. Under Elizabeth, the drama was a unified expression as far as social class was concerned: the Court watched the same plays the commoners saw in the public playhouses. BY AAKRITI SAXENA MAHARAJA AGRASEN COLLEGE 5th june'20



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