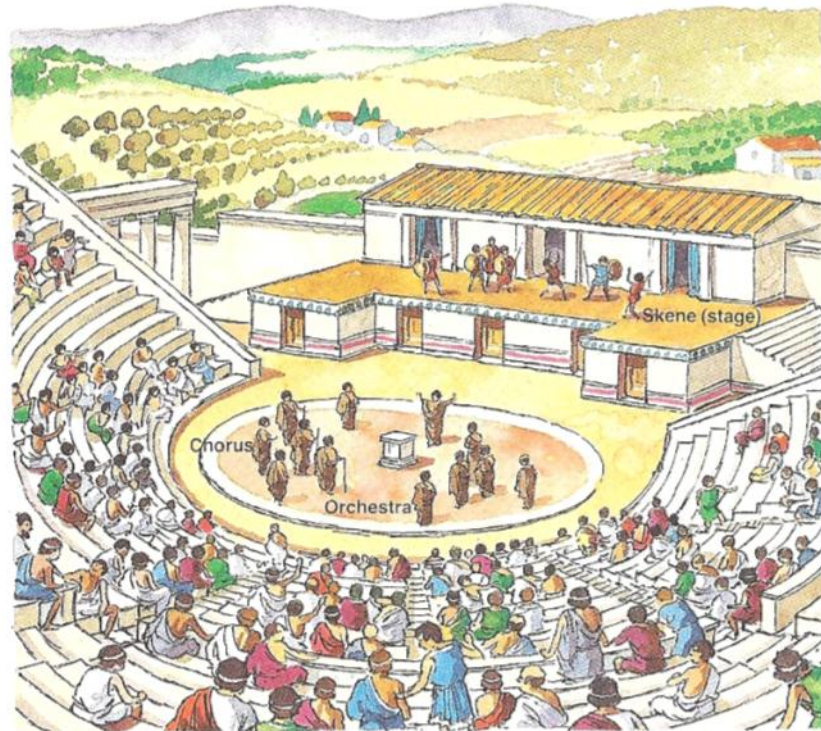


# The Theatre

Drama developed from the songs and dances performed in Athens at the festival of Dionysus, the god of wine. The songs in the god's honour were sung by a group of 12 to 15 men, called the chorus. Then an actor was included, who talked with the leader of the chorus. As more actors took part, the words and action became more important and proper plays were written.



Plays were performed in theatres in the open air. Seats for the audience were cut into the slope of a hillside. They were made of wood at first, but were later replaced by stone. The

philosopher Plato tells us that in some theatres there was room for up to 30,000 people. Performances lasted all day, with several plays in a row.



These bronze tickets told you which block of seats to sit in. They cost two *obols* each. Poor people could get help from public funds to pay for them.



Important people, such as judges and local officials sat in the front. This seat of honour was for the priest of Dionysus.



Plays were divided into tragedies and comedies. The judges awarded ivy wreaths to the authors of the best tragedy and the best comedy.

## Tragedies

Tragedies told sad tales about the conflicts of love, honour and religious duty. They were usually based on stories the audience knew well, such as the Trojan War. This painting shows Queen Clytemnestra killing the Trojan princess, Cassandra.

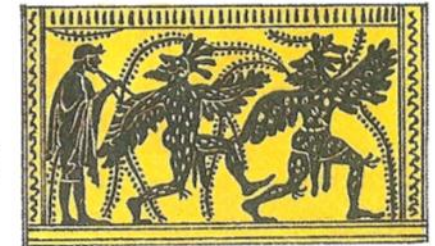


The chorus sometimes sang and danced, but their main role was making speeches to tell you more about the story.



## Comedies

This painting shows a scene from a comedy. Comedies made fun of all kinds of things, including politics, religion and important local personalities.



In comedies the chorus sometimes represented animals. This painting shows them dressed as birds.

## Costumes



All the actors wore masks, with different facial expressions. They changed masks to show the changes in mood of the character. Wide mouths in the masks helped them project their voices.

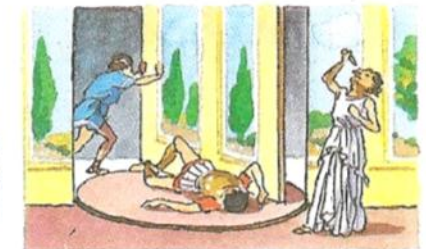


In comedies the actors wore padded clothes to make them look funnier. There were no female actors, so men had to dress as women to play the women's parts.

## Scenery



The scenery was usually painted to look like a palace or temple, as shown on this piece of painted pot.



Scene changes were rare. They were probably done by revolving part of the wall, like this.