Conventions of the Theatre

Sarah Phan, Allissa Valenzuela, Angel Simmala, Tiffany Ma
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Period 2
Elements of Structure: Major

- Theatron
  - Seating area
- Skene
  - Behind the stage
- Orchestra
  - Where chorus performs
- Parados
  - Where chorus enters orchestra
Elements of Structure

- Proscenium
  - Stage

- Paraskenia
  - Extension of skene

- Thymele
  - Altar

- Machine
  - Device that lowered the “god” onto the stage
Use of Staging

The way that characters are staged can be revealing of character and tone.

- lighting: characters can be associated with colors that describe their identity
  (red=angry, green=lively)
- backdrops: (palace=royal)
- sounds/music: (light, airy music=frolicsome, carefree)
- furniture/props: (sword=fighter/defender)
- costumes: especially indicate social status of a character
- Placement of characters in relation to other characters: (being on a raised platform or sitting in a throne suggest higher status)
Interaction Between the Chorus and Characters

● In *Antigone*, there is no physical interaction between actors and the chorus, only verbal.

● Verbal interaction between the Chorus and the protagonist and antagonist allow the playwright to thoroughly communicate his views and other personal ideas to the audience.

● Also allows Chorus to interpret characters’ actions in relation to the law of mortal man and the law of the gods.
Masks

- Masks were used to help define facial expressions and characters, allowed actors to play more than one role or gender, and even helped the actors’ voice projection.
- Tragedy: masks were more life-like.
- Comedy: masks were ugly and grotesque.
- Constructed out of lightweight materials (wood, linen, cork, hair, etc.)
- Lacked durability.
Costumes

- Helped indicate the gender, age, and social status of a character.
- Actors were heavily disguised in order to let another speak and act through him.
- Examples of costume pieces:
  - Peplos: Cloak
  - Chlamys: Short cloak
  - Chiton: Robe
- Males would wear posterneda and progastreda when playing female characters to mimic feminine shapes.
Masks, Costumes, Etc.

In Greek tragedies, ideas are more important than action and this is shown through costumes and masks.

The costumes and masks help transform the actors into their characters and this illusion is just as powerful as the actual acting and movements.

They helped solidify the idea of that character actually being onstage rather than someone pretending to be them.
Discussion Questions

● How has the structure changed between Greek and modern theatre? Does it alter how the play is performed?

● How are the costumes and masks seen today similar to ancient Greek theater? Do they serve the same specific purpose?

● When Sophocles staged the original version of Antigone, which character do you think he chose to stage in a way that would symbolize a higher status than the other characters? Why?

● How does the interaction between the Chorus and Creon show his separation from the people?