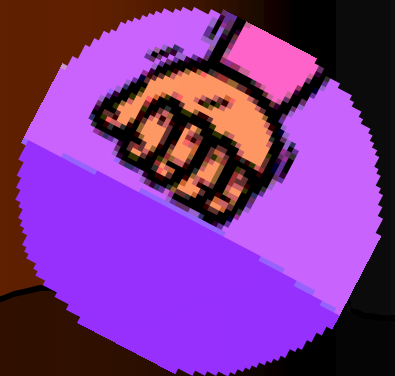


GREEK THEATER

Background
Information for
Antigone

PURPOSE OF GREEK DRAMA

- Dramas presented by the state at annual religious festivals.
- Plays were supposed to be presented for the purpose of ethical and moral improvement of the spectators and to ensure the spiritual survival of the community.
- Winners of prizes were selected by ten citizens chosen by lots for the duty.



MECHANICS OF GREEK DRAMA

- Actors were all male. They wore masks.
- Scenes of the drama were always outdoors; indoor actions were reported by messengers.
- There was no violence on stage
- There was "unity" in plot -- no subplots or irrelevancies.
- The action always took place in one day.
- There were no curtains or intermissions.



CHORUS IN GREEK DRAMA

- The function of the chorus was to :

- set the mood of the drama
- interpret events
- relieve the tension
- generalize meaning of the action
- converse with and give advice to the actors
- give background information
- emphasize the beauty of poetry and dancing
- leader acted as spokesman for the group



SUBJECT OF PLAYS

- The subject was almost exclusively taken from well-known myths.
- The plays explored the mysteries of life and the role of the gods in human affairs.
- The main purpose was ethical and religious instruction.



STYLE IN PLAYS

- There are long, wordy speeches (sometimes about current events or contemporary people).



MESSAGE FROM TRAGEDIES

- Out of great tragedy comes wisdom.
- *A tragedy is a play about the downfall of a noble, dignified character.*



CONCEPT OF TRAGIC HERO AND TRAGEDY (from Aristotle)

- Tragedy arouses the emotions of pity, fear, wonder, and awe.
- A tragic hero must be a man or woman capable of great suffering.
- Tragedy explores the question of the ways of God to man.
- Tragedy purifies the emotions (catharsis)
- Tragedy shows how man is brought to disaster by a single flaw in his own character.

Antigone and Greek Theatre Terms

- exodus --
- Dionysus --
- skene --
- theatron or orchestra --
- parados --
- thymele --
- prologue --
- episode --
- stasimon --
- chorus --
- choragas --
- proscenium --
- choral ode --
- strophe --
- antistrophe --
- epode --
- hubris --
- humartia --
- sphinx --
- unities --

Antigone *and* Greek Theatre Terms

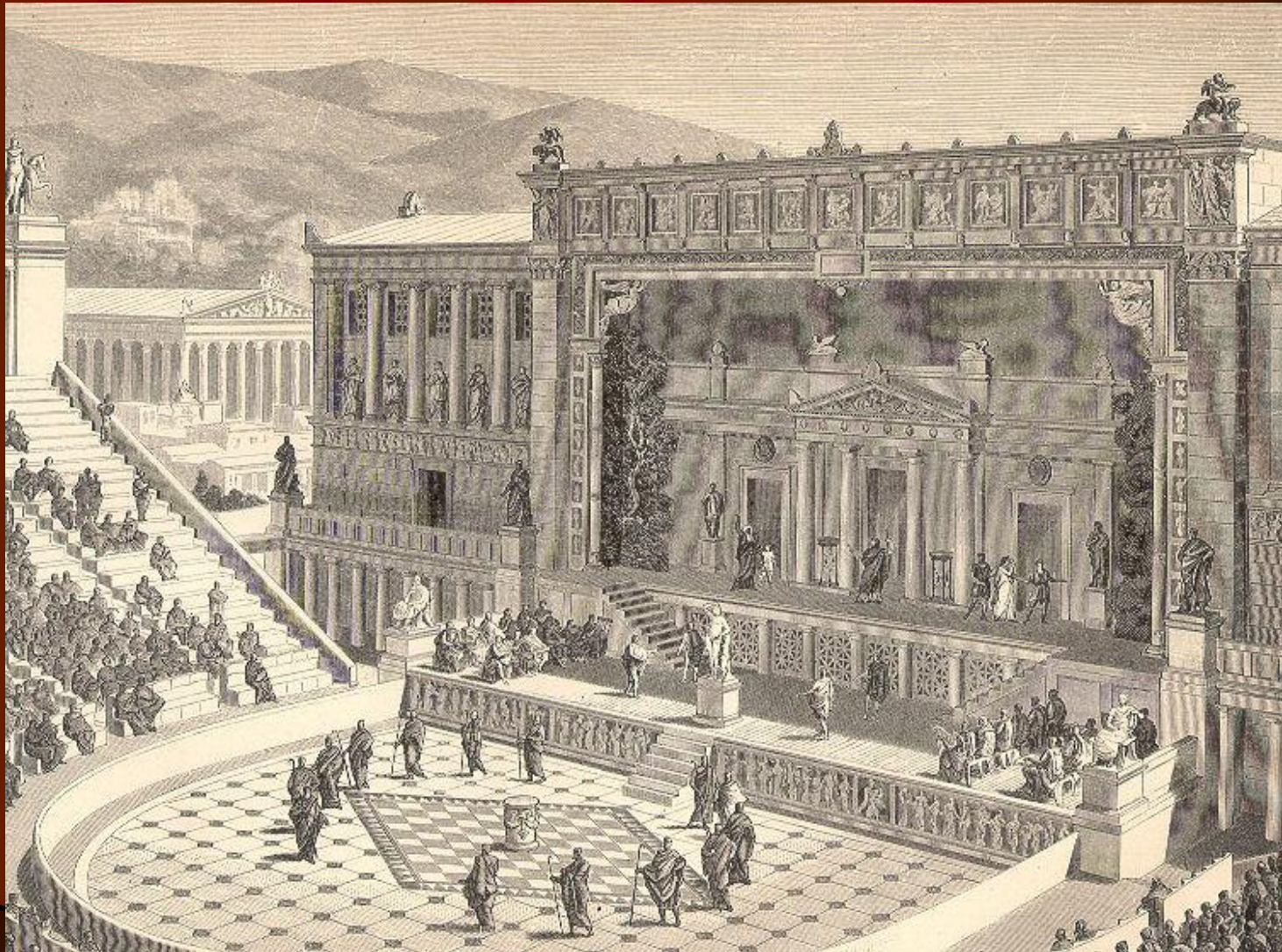
- exodus -- final action of the play
- Dionysus -- God of drama, wine, and fertility
- skene -- wooden building with three doors through which actors made their entrances and exits
- orchestra -- dancing place of the chorus
- parados -- chorus marching in from the left or right
- thymele -- altar to Dionysus on which sacrifices were made, and which was sometimes used as a stage prop

- prologue -- opening scene (introduction)
- episode -- act or scene
- stasimon -- choral ode (end of each episode)
- chorus -- clarifies experiences and feelings of the characters and expresses conventional attitude toward development in the story; also sets the mood; comments on action
- proscenium -- level area in front of the skene on which most of the plays action took place
- choral ode -- lyric sung by the chorus which develops the importance of the action

- strophe -- a turning, right to left, by chorus
- antistrophe -- a turning, left to right, by chorus
- choragus -- leader of the chorus
- epode -- the part of a lyric ode following the strophe and antistrophe
- hubris -- Greek word for excessive pride or arrogance

- humartia -- Greek word for error in judgment, especially resulting from a defect in the character of a tragic hero; the tragic flaw
- sphinx -- a female monster, usually represented as having the head and breast of a woman, the body of a lion, and the wings of an eagle
- unities -- time, place, action; a play should have no subplot, should not cover more than 24 hours and should not have more than one locale

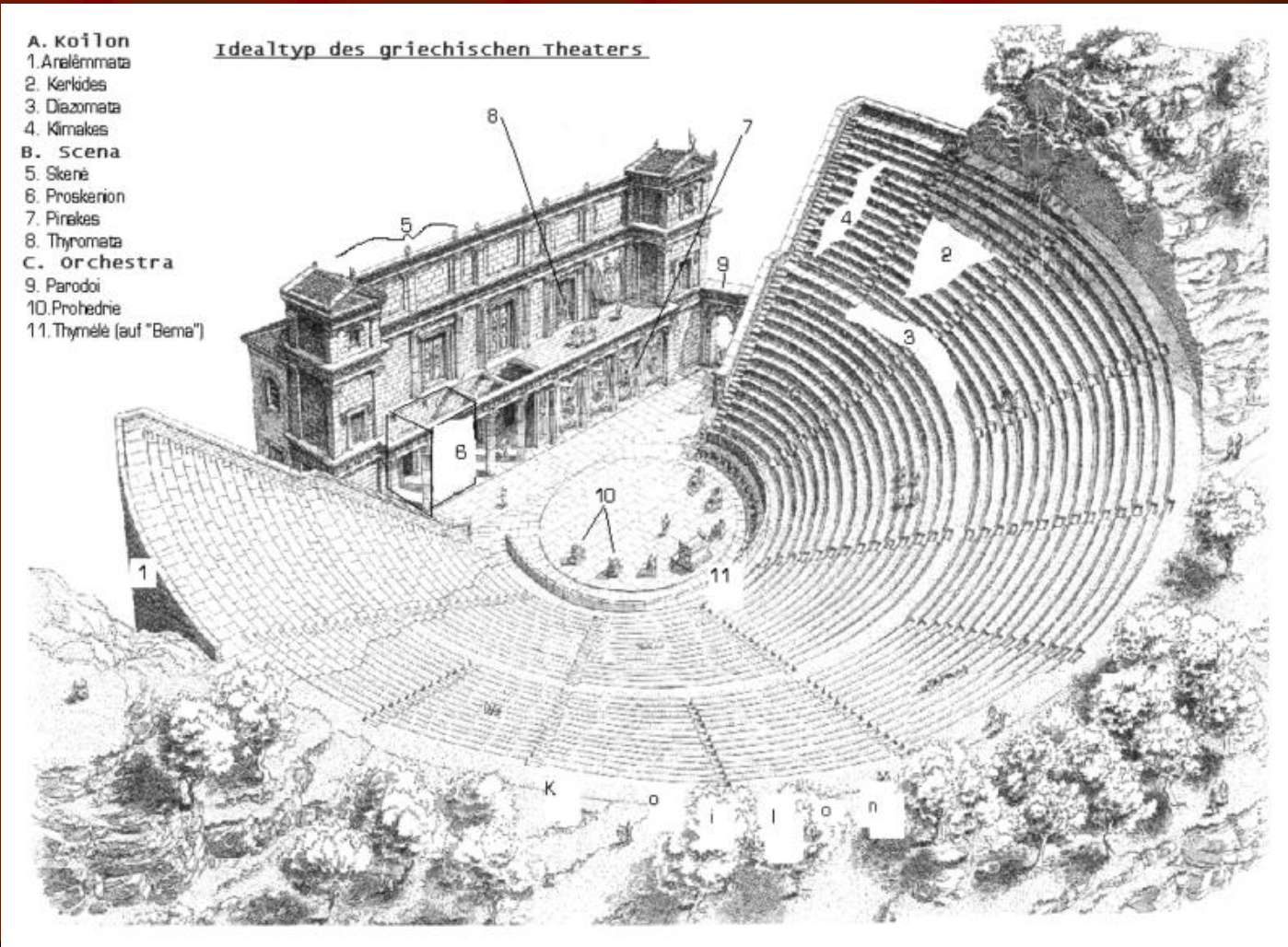
The Dionysus Theatre in Athens built into the Acropolis, ~3rd century BC.



Panoramic view of the Greek theatre at
Epidaurus.



A blueprint of an Ancient Theatre. Terms are in Greek language and Latin letters.



Greek Theatre Masks



Antigone Masks



Picture Sources

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_theater
- <http://www.flickr.com/photos/theatrical03/139882732/>
- <http://www.flickr.com/photos/stevesawyer/1590919673/>
- <http://www.flickr.com/photos/kishimoto/2532521476/>