

Greek Theatre Terms

1. **Dionysius** – Greek God of wine and fertility that was honored in an annual festival. This is important to us because the festivities included a competition for the best play. Playwrights would write and rehearse their own plays.
2. **Thespis** – the first playwright to win the contest at the Dionysian festival in 534 B.C. He was also the first to have a member of the chorus (himself) step away from the group and speak lines as a solo character. Thespis, then, is credited with being the first actor.
3. **Thespian** – an actor. The term was created from Thespis' name.
4. **Orchestra** – a round floor on ground level at the bottom of a hill. This floor was the Greek stage.
5. **Thymela** – originally an altar on the orchestra, this became the spot where the leader of the chorus (koryphaios) would stand.
6. **Koilon (or Theatron)** – the auditorium of the Greek theatre. Originally, the audience just sat on the slope of the hill, looking down to the orchestra. Over time, the Koilon was built, first of wood, then stone.
7. **Diazoma** – upper and lower levels of the Koilon (auditorium).
8. **Scene** (*pronounced SKAY-nuh*) – was a temporary enclosure with doors. Performers would get into masks and robes in the scene and enter through the doors, which represented the temple or palace.
9. **Proscenion** – the area directly in front of the scene where the actors would perform. NOTE: the proscenion gradually became the acting area – the original acting area was the orchestra.
10. **Paradoi** – were aisles that actors would use to enter if they were supposed to be coming from outside (not the temple or palace). The right parados came from the city or port; the left parados led from the fields or abroad.

11. **Theologion** – the flat roof of the scene, reserved for actors playing gods.
12. **Greek Theatre Machines** – were used during the performances. They were kept inside the scene.
13. **Periactoi** – two prismatic pillars, one stage left, one stage right. These could be rotated to change scenes during the performance.
14. **Ekeclema** – platform carrying “dead bodies” that was wheeled on. This was done because Greek theatre never showed a murder or suicide on stage.
15. **Aeorema** – a crane that lifted the “gods” from the scene onto the theologion. “Gods” would often appear at the end of a play to resolve the conflict.
16. **Deus Ex Machina** – literally “god from the machine”. This is the term for a play’s conflict being solved by a supernatural power. This is considered a poor way to resolve a play.
17. **Sophocles** – a Greek playwright who wrote tragedies, including *Oedipus Rex*.
18. **Aeschylus** - a Greek playwright who wrote tragedies, including *The Suppliants*.
19. **Euripides** - a Greek playwright who wrote tragedies, including *Medea*.
20. **Aristophanes** - a Greek playwright who wrote comedies, including *The Birds*.

