3

Greco-Roman Beginnings of "Theatre" (as *Theatron*/*Theatrum*)

A. Minoan, Mycenaean, and Ancient Greece with TIMELINE

- 2600–1100 BCE, Minoan Civilization on the Greek islands
- 1600–1100, Mycenaean Greece on the mainland
- 1100–800, Greek Dark Ages
- 700s–510, Greek **Archaic Period**
- 687, an annual election of the *Archon* (ruler) was established in Athens, with any citizen eligible and Creon as the first
- in the 500s, Athens spread its colonies around the eastern Mediterranean
- 510, Spartan troops helped the Athenians overthrow their tyrant, Hippias
- 510–323, **Classical Period** (or "Golden Age")
- 507, Cleisthenes became Archon and increased the power of the people's assembly over the aristocrats
- 501, the City Dionysia added satyr plays (at the end of each trilogy of tragedies)
- 490, the Athenians and their allies beat the much larger Persian Army at Marathon, ending the First Persian Invasion, with the runner Pheidippides delivering the news to Athens (hence the term "marathon" today)
- 487, the City Dionysia added a contest for comedies on a single day
- 484, Aeschylus (who fought the Persians at Marathon) won first place for his tetralogy, for the first of many times, in the City Dionysia contest

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- 480, the Spartan "300" made a valiant, impossible stand at Thermopylae, allowing allies to escape, during the Second Persian Invasion, led by Xerxes, and the vastly outnumbered Athenian fleet trapped the Persian ships, destroying many in the Strait of Salamis (also forming the basis for Aeschylus's tragedy about Xerxes, *The Persians*)
- 479, the Greeks won further battles, on land and sea, at Plataea and Mycale, ending the Second Persian Invasion
- 478, the Athenians instituted the Delian League of city-states around the Aegean Sea, while continuing to attack the Persians and expand their own empire
- 449, a prize started being awarded for the best actor at the City Dionysia
- 443–39, the playwright Sophocles acted as a tax collector and military general in Athen's control over other city-states in the Delian League
- 432, the Parthenon was completed under the rule of Pericles, as a temple to Athena at the top of the Acropolis in Athens, above the Theatre of Dionysus
- 431, the Peloponnesian War began, with democratic Athens and its Delian allies fighting oligarchic Sparta and its Peloponnesian League for 26 years, resulting in widespread poverty for many Greek cities
- 416, during the Peloponnesian War, Athens invaded the island of Melos, besieged its city, and demanded that its starving citizens join them in the war against Sparta, but they refused, so the Athenians executed the men and turned the women and children into slaves, then put 500 of their own colonists on the island (as mentioned by Aristophanes in his comedy, *The Birds*, two years later)
- 415, on the night before the Athenian fleet was to sail for Sicily to battle Syracuse, all of Athen's *hermai* (square stone columns with a male head and genitals, honoring Hermes and warding off evil) were vandalized, a sacrilegious act, blamed on Syracusan or Spartan sympathizers—and then on the Athenian leader, Alcibiades, who was condemned to death, but fled to Sparta and joined their side against Athens (advising Sparta to build a bigger navy)
- 411, Aristophanes's *Lysistrata* provided a comical commentary on the foolishness of war during the Peloponnesian War
- 409, Alcibiades, who was accused of seducing a Spartan king's wife and fled to Persia, then returned to Athens with oligarchs taking control there (ending its democracy) and led its navy in beating the Spartan fleet and fighting the Persian fleet
- 406, the playwright Euripides died, possibly while in voluntary exile in Macedon (Macedonia) due to criticism of his work in Athens, with his exploration of characters' inner conflicts and women's rebellious desires

- 405–04, Lysander, the new leader of the Spartan (Persian-financed) fleet, beat the Athenians—ending the Peloponnesian War with Athens losing its navy, its protective city walls, and its overseas territories
- 399, the Greek philosopher Socrates was condemned to death for corrupting the youth and drank hemlock to fulfill the court's decision
- 371, Athens, allied with its old enemy Thebes, beat Sparta at Leuctra, ending Spartan dominance in the region—then Athens and Thebes formed rival leagues
- 347, Plato died, after founding his Academy (school of philosophy) in Athens and writing dialogs involving Socrates, thus preserving his teacher's ideas, although he criticized writing as harmful to oral debate and storytelling—and the arts as misrepresenting the ideal realm of ideas
- 342, Aristotle, a student of Plato, began tutoring young Alexander, Prince of Macedon (Macedonia)
- 336, Alexander became King of Macedon at age 20—when his father was assassinated, two years after beating Athens, Thebes, and other Greek city-states in the Battle of Chaeronea
- 333–27, Alexander the Great, continuing his father's expansion plans, beat Thebes and then persuaded Athens and other Greek city-states to join him, with 30,000 infantry and 5000 cavalry, in conquering Egypt (where he established the city of Alexandria in 331), the Persian Empire, and Western India, spreading Greek culture to those lands—with Greco-Buddhist art developing over the next nine centuries, often depicting Heracles as Vajrapani, the Buddha's guardian
- 323, Alexander died abroad and then his generals fought for control of various territories he conquered, splitting up his empire
- 323–30 BCE, **Hellenistic Period**, with the centers of Greek culture shifting to Alexandria (Egypt) and Antioch (Seleucid Syria)
- 316, Menander, writer of Greek "New Comedy," won the prize in Athens
- 307, Epicurus established his philosophical school
- 305, Ptolemy, a former Macedonian-Greek bodyguard of Alexander, became the new Egyptian pharaoh, starting the Ptolemaic Dynasty, which ended with Cleopatra (losing power to Rome in 30 BCE)
- 300, Euclid wrote *The Elements*, with mathematical proofs and geometrical discoveries

Fig. 3.1 Map of Greece and Crete (US CIA's *World Factbook*)

1. Archeological evidence from the remains of Minoan palaces, at Phaistos and Knossos on the island of Crete (Fig. 3.1), shows wide-stepped structures as possible audience areas in *cultic theatres* (Nielsen). Frescoes on the palace walls depict segregated male and female spectators, with aristocrats sitting on stools and a chorus of women or men (in different frescoes).
2. On Mycenaean gems and fresco fragments, there is evidence of *ritual dramas* with chorus members wearing animal masks and dancing (Nielsen).
3. In the 700s BCE, at the start of the **Archaic Period**, sanctuaries honoring female gods were more plentiful and prominent than those honoring male gods, with the exception of Apollo. But evidence also indicates that Apollo's worshipers usurped the cult sites, giving him attributes

of local female gods, including that of "nurturer" (*kourotrophos*). As patriarchal leaders in each city-state (*polis*), through competition with others, grew stronger as protectors and rulers, women were excluded from roles outside the home (except in Sparta) and male gods became increasingly prominent. One exception to this was Athena, the patron goddess of Athens and half-sister to Apollo, yet she also had patriarchal attributes, as a war goddess (Voyatzis 146–47).

4. Those deities' roles in *The Oresteia*, a trilogy of plays by Aeschylus in 458 BCE, in the later **Classical Period**, reflect such shifts in social power from feminine to masculine—with nurturing or judgmental gods (involving the right-cortical improviser/designer and left-cortical scriptwriter/critic). After killing his mother and her lover in Mycenae, as a duty-bound vengeance against them for killing his father, Agamemnon, Orestes seeks sanctuary at Apollo's shrine in Delphi. Orestes is fleeing his mother's Furies, the fanged, snake-haired, Gorgon-like goddesses of guilt and reciprocal vengeance (with abject passions of subcortical brain networks as trickster stagehands). Apollo *nurtures* Orestes, reassuring him about the rightness of his cause, and puts the Furies temporarily to sleep. Yet Apollo also sends Orestes to Athens, where Athena sets up a court of human citizens with herself as *judge*. Apollo defends Orestes in the trial and Athena casts the deciding vote on Orestes's side with a split jury. She states that, although a goddess, she "prefer[s] the male in all respects," having been born directly from her father Zeus's head (lines 736–37). She also negotiates a compromise with the female Furies (Erinyes), getting them to accept her judgment, with a cave-shrine in Athens, plus future offerings, if they give up their fury, becoming the Gentle Ones (Eumenides). And yet, the bacchae in Euripides's play of that name (405 BCE), as wild women possessed by the theatre god Dionysus, show the power of the abject feminine *chora* to erupt from the Furies' cave, for good or ill, when repressed by society or the brain's inner theatre.
[How does *The Oresteia* reflect the social theatre of its time or ours, extending various aspects of the brain's inner theatre?]

5. From the Archaic to the Classical Periods, Athens developed trial by jury, direct democratic rule, and the art of theatre. Its trials had very large juries of 501 or more men. Democratic decisions involved about 6000 male citizens meeting in the Theatre of Dionysus or on the Pnyx hill to debate and vote. Yet most Athenians still owned slaves, averaging three to four per household in the 500s–400s BCE.

[Today, how is Euro-American culture still spreading globally with ideals of trial by jury, democracy, and theatre, but also aspects of slavery—akin to ancient Greece?]

6. The Rural Dionysia, a winter festival in Eleutherae, involved a procession honoring Dionysus, the god of wine and fertility, whose references go back to thirteenth-century Mycenaean Greece and possibly to "Zagreus" in the earlier Minoan culture. The people of Eleutherae offered a statue of Dionysus to Athens, wanting to join their city, but it was rejected. Then a plague infected the genitals of Athenian men. They changed their minds and accepted the gift, starting the City (or Great) Dionysia as an annual spring festival in Athens to honor the god.
7. In the 530s BCE, the City Dionysia, with its tribal contest of dithyrambic choruses, added a trans-tribal contest for the best new *tragedies*. This term came from the Greek words for "goat" (*tragos*) and "song" (*ode*). This might relate to a goat sacrificed at the festival or the goat-like *satyrs* who were mythic followers of Dionysus, or the young men with new beards who danced in the chorus (King 12–13). Initially, each tragedy had one actor, along with a chorus. The separate contest of dithyrambs continued with each tribe presenting two choruses, one with 50 men and one with 50 boys, competing at the City Dionysia festival.
8. All tragic actors and choruses were male. But male and female "mimes" performed by the 300s, as traveling players and festival entertainers, in *spoken* sketches. These included *phylax* satires (or *phylakes*, as depicted on vases from southern Italy), along with juggling, acrobatics, and wordless dances.
9. The tragic actor was known as the *hypokrites*, meaning "under" (the mask) "interpreter" or "answerer." He performed in dialog with the chorus. Its members sang and danced, probably playing a hand-held lyre (a stringed instrument), double flute, drums, horns, and bells.
10. According to Aristotle and others, Thespis (source of our term "thespian"), a singer of dithyrambic hymns to Dionysus, became the first *hypokrites* by stepping out of the chorus and impersonating a character. When the legislator Solon saw Thespis perform, he asked him if he was not ashamed to tell so many lies. Solon also said that if such lying were to become honored and commended, it would soon spread to politics (Nagler 3).

    [Where does a chorus appear, along with actors as answerers, in theatre today or in our mass and social media—and how does that involve a tribal or general contest, like in ancient Greece?]

11. By the 400s, the City Dionysia included a set of four plays by each playwright, on each of three days: three tragedies and one satyr play (mythic satire) as a tetralogy, in a contest between the three writers. Satyr plays may have derived from an early form of ritual drama in ancient Greece prior to the development of tragedy and comedy from dithyrambic hymns (Nielsen).
12. Eventually, a day for comedies was added, first at the related Lenaia festival. They were overtly political in the 400s (Old Comedies) and about romantic relationships in the 300s (New Comedies). Between the scenes of Old Comedy, there was a *parabasis*, when the chorus spoke directly to the audience about things different from the play. But that was lost in New Comedy as the role of the chorus was reduced to just singing songs.
    [How are ancient Greek tragedies, satyr plays, and comedies like and unlike modern European operas and recent musicals, onstage and onscreen?]
13. The *archon* (government ruler) organized the festival, assigning a *choregos* (wealthy citizen) as sponsor/producer of each writer's plays. The *choregos* sometimes created a stone memorial if his playwright won the contest (Fig. 3.2).
14. By the 200s, actors, chorus members, and playwrights became professionalized in a guild, the Artists of Dionysus. Then the government paid for the play festivals with an *agonthetes* (official) in charge of the production.
15. The City Dionysia started with a procession (*pompe*) of phalloi and the wooden statue of Dionysus, which was placed in the Theatre of Dionysus (Fig. 3.3), at the foot of the Acropolis, below a temple to Athena. Pig's blood was sprinkled at the edge of the performance space to purify it and a bull burned in the Temple of Dionysus behind the theatre as a sacrifice. After the initial *pompe* procession, plus animal sacrifices, there was a feast for all citizens and a drunken, ecstatic *komos* procession. The next day, the playwrights announced the titles of their plays, with their sponsors (*choregoi*) and unmasked actors, at the *proagon* (pre-contest), a term also used for the initial slapstick dialog between the chorus and characters in comedies.
    [Which gods (or forces of human nature and culture) are watching or desiring our theatrical media today, including film, television, video games, news, and social media—akin to the statue and spirit of Dionysus in his theatre and festival?]

Fig. 3.2 Lysicrates monument, celebrating his win as *choregos*, 335–34 BCE, on the road to the Theatre of Dionysus, Athens (photo: Mark Pizzato)

16. The Odeon of Pericles in Athens, adjacent to the Theatre of Dionysus, was a square, roofed, many-columned, performance space (4000 square meters), holding about 3000 people, used for music and choral rehearsals—and for the proagon of the City Dionysia.
17. The plays initially included a 50-member chorus (like the dithyramb), then 12 (with the playwright Aeschylus), 15 (with Sophocles), or 24 (with comedies). The chorus probably involved young men (*ephebes*)

Fig. 3.3 Theatre of Dionysus, Athens, with a semicircular orchestra in the later Roman redesign (photo: Mark Pizzato)

trained to march in the military, singing and dancing. The tradition of one speaking actor changed to two (with Aeschylus), and then to three (with Sophocles), often including the playwright.

18. Aeschylus (525–456 BCE) added the second speaking actor and reduced the size of the chorus, while writing over 70 plays. Only 7 of his tragedies remain, often involving gods interacting with humans, including one complete trilogy, *The Oresteia* (458), which includes *Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, and *The Eumenides* (summarized above).
19. Sophocles (496–06 BCE) added the third speaking actor and wrote over 120 plays, but only 7 of his complete tragedies survive. They often explore psychological conflicts of the hero against fate or other forms of authority, as in *Oedipus the King* (c. 429) and *Antigone* (c. 441). Sophocles acted in his early plays and became the most celebrated Athenian playwright, winning 24 of the 30 contests he entered. Also, soon after the *Antigone* performance, Sophocles was one of ten Athenian generals who beat the island state of Samos, forcing it to return to the Delian League.

20. In *Oedipus the King*, the hero becomes a detective, seeking to find the killer of the previous king in order to save his city, Thebes, from a plague. But he discovers that his fate, which he tried to avoid after being warned by an oracle, drove him into that role and it also involved marrying his mother and having children with her. He and his wife/mother, Jocasta, respond with tragic self-sacrifices.
21. In *Antigone*, the daughter of Oedipus rebels against her uncle, King Creon, by twice burying the body of her slain brother (killed by her other brother), as a family duty expected by the gods, although it is forbidden because he was an enemy to Creon. As punishment, Antigone is walled up in a cave to die and she then hangs herself. Creon's son, who loves her, commits suicide in response, as does the queen to his death, leaving the king to mourn his errors in judgment. Thus, there are several tragic figures in this play, struggling with fate, duty, passion, and authority, in different forms.
22. Euripides (480–06 BCE) wrote 92 plays, with 17 tragedies and a satyr play (*Cyclops*) surviving today. They offer intense twists in mythic stories and characters, sometimes with sensational violence taking place offstage, as in *Medea* (431) and *The Bacchae* (405). The latter was written during Euripides's exile in Macedonia, north of Greece, in the last few years of his life, and first performed in Athens a year after his death.
23. In *Medea*, the granddaughter of the Sun (Helios) feels betrayed when her husband, Jason, takes a new wife, the princess of Corinth. In the backstory to the tragedy, Medea had helped him to take the Golden Fleece from her father in Colchis (east of Greece on the Black Sea), causing the death of her brother in their escape. She also helped Jason to escape from his uncle and they have taken refuge in Corinth. Medea gets revenge on Jason through magic garments, as a gift to the princess, killing her and her father. Medea also kills her two sons to harm Jason further (in a possible addition to the myth by Euripides) and flies away with their bodies on a dragon-led chariot, as their father mourns.
24. In *The Bacchae*, the theatre god Dionysus returns to Thebes, where he was born to a human mother, Semele. She was destroyed by his father Zeus, king of the gods, through the disbelief of her sisters—who shamed her into proving her relationship with Zeus by making him appear as lightning, which killed her. Dionysus gets revenge on his aunts, on King Pentheus (son of Semele's sister, Agave), and on the entire city. He first appears in disguise, with his worshipers, as a priest of his cult from the East. He also has local worshipers, including the former king, Cadmus,

and blind prophet, Tiresias. King Pentheus tries to repress the worship of Dionysus, which involves women as bacchae (or maenads) leaving their families and suckling wild animals in the woods, or tearing them apart (*sparagmos*) and eating them raw (*omophagia*). But Dionysus breaks out of prison and lures Pentheus into wearing a fawn-skin disguise as one of the worshippers, to spy on the wild women offstage—where he is caught and torn apart by them. His mother (perhaps played by the actor who had played him) brings his head onstage, claiming it is the head of a lion she caught, until she is brought out of her trance by Cadmus and sees the tragic reality.

25. When *The Bacchae* premiered in Athens, in the Theatre of Dionysus, it won first prize, during a festival honoring that god, with his temple behind the stage and his statue in the theatre. It also related to ritual performances in the mystery cult of Dionysus, god of wine, with a drunken *ekstasis* ("out-standing" ecstasy), as inside-out Altered State of Consciousness, and *enthousiasmos* ("in-god" enthusiasm).
26. Aristophanes (448–380 BCE) wrote 40 plays and 18 survive, exemplifying what ancient scholars called "Old Comedy" with their political parodies, as in *The Clouds* (423), *Lysistrata* (411), and *The Frogs* (405).
27. *The Clouds* parodies the goddesses of philosophy as a chorus of "Clouds," along with Socrates, who first appears aloft in a basket, as head of "The Thinkery," a school for silly inventions and lazy young men. However, this caricature of Socrates contributed to his subsequent trial and death for corrupting the youth, according to his student, Plato.
28. *Lysistrata* shows women from various city-states going on a sex strike (and taking over the treasury in Athens) to stop men from making war. It was first performed just after the Athenians lost a big battle during the Peloponnesian War.
29. In *The Frogs*, Dionysus travels to the underworld (Hades), costumed as his heroic half-brother Heracles, who had been there before, which causes comic confusion. On the way, Dionysus debates with a chorus of frogs whose croaking annoys him. Eventually, he judges a contest between the dead Aeschylus and Euripides about who was the better tragedian, as they mockingly quote each other's plays. Dionysus declares Aeschylus the winner and takes him to the surface to improve the theatre in Athens.
30. Menander (342–291 BCE) wrote what scholars categorized as "New Comedy," involving urban and domestic scenes with romantic plots about young people and servants in conflict with their elders, along

with a reduced role for the chorus—all of which influenced the development of Roman comedy. Menander wrote *The Grouch* (*Dyskolos*, 317–16), the only complete New Comedy that survives from ancient Greece.

[Which types of plays do you value in our current theatrical media and why: mythic stories about divine figures (as in Aeschylus's *Oresteia*), psychological mysteries (as with Sophocles's *Oedipus* plays), violent action (as in Euripides, where it is heard or described), political satire (as with Aristophanes), or romantic comedy (as with Menander)?]

31. Typically, Greek plays had a *prologos* (prolog by one character), *parodos* (ode sung and danced by the chorus as they entered the orchestra), then various scenes as episodes with alternating choral odes, which had counter-movements of *strophes* and *antistrophes*, and an *exodus* (final exit ode).
32. Aristotle (384–22 BCE), who was a tutor to the young Alexander the Great in Macedonia for three years, describes in *The Poetics* (c. 335 BCE) six elements of tragic drama, in descending order of importance: plot, character, idea, diction, song, and spectacle.

    [Are these the main elements today, not just of tragedy, but also of other genres, with spectacle and song as the least important?]
33. Aristotle's *Poetics* gives us further terms to define plays and their effects: *mimesis* (imitation of action), sympathy and fear (emotions aroused in the audience through the mimesis onstage), *hamartia* (tragic flaw or judgment error in the hero, from "missed aim" as when shooting an arrow), and hubris (excessive pride as an example of hamartia). Aristotle also mentions catharsis as the purification or "cleansing" of emotions in spectators, through their sympathy with the hero as admirable, yet fear during the plot twists and recognition scenes, revealing his fatal errors, toward the conflict's climax and final catastrophe.
34. Plato, Aristotle's teacher, wrote an earlier criticism of "mimesis" in poetry and visual art (in *The Republic*, Book 10), as being an imitation of an imitation of the ideal (Form), with an artist *describing or painting* a bed that a carpenter *made* from an *idea* of it. This suggests that theatre is a further degree removed from the truth, with poetry and paintings onstage.

    [Does theatre bring us closer to the truth, through a purification of emotions, or delude us with imitations? Which forms of theatre, how and when?]

35. Outdoor *wooden* theatres were built on hillsides in the 400s (during the Classical Age) in Greek city-states and early colonies. Then in the 300s (during the late Classical and Hellenistic Ages), *stone* theatres replaced them and were built in further lands conquered by Alexander the Great. Ruins of those stone theatres exist today from Sicily and mainland Italy to Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus.
36. The most significant stone theatre ruin is in Athens, at the foot of the Acropolis hill (which has the Parthenon on top): the Theatre of Dionysus where the festival performances were located near a temple to the god. But that stone theatre was later redesigned in the Roman style, with a semicircular orchestra, and another Roman theatre was built nearby (the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, 161 CE).
37. In Epidaurus, a stone theatre was built with the fully circular, Greek orchestra, near a shrine to the god of healing, Asclepius. Today, that theatre has an almost complete Greek *theatron*, with acoustics aided by its hillside shape, and holds about 14,000 people (Fig. 3.4). A smaller theatre exists at Delphi, with the ruins of Apollo's temple behind it, where the female oracle gave prophecies—a key element in *The Oresteia* and *Oedipus the King* (Fig. 3.5). There is also an Athenian Treasury, which held offerings from that city.

Fig. 3.4 Ancient Greek theatre at Epidaurus (photo: Mark Pizzato)

Fig. 3.5 Ancient Greek theatre and Temple of Apollo (with the Athenian Treasury behind it) at Delphi (photo: Mark Pizzato)

Fig. 3.6 *Proedria* in the Theatre of Dionysus, Athens (photo: Mark Pizzato)

38. The major structural elements of the Greek theatre were the *logeion* (stage), orchestra (for the chorus to sing and dance), *theatron* ("seeing place" or auditorium with curved benches), *skene* (scene house), *paraskenia* (side buildings), *parodoi* or *eisodoi* (entry/exit-ways between the logeion and theatron), *thymele* (altar with a platform in the orchestra, perhaps for the chorus leader), and *proedria* (front row of seats with backs for the elite, Fig. 3.6).
[How do these areas relate to ancient plays, such as *The Oresteia*, and today's expectations? How does "theatre" involve "theory"—with both terms originating from the Greek *théa*, "a view"?]
39. By the time of the stone theatres in the 300s, there was a *raised* stage with *thyromata* (arched doorways) in the skene and in its upper level (*episkenion*).
40. Key performance elements were the *pinake* (painted flat), *periaktoi* (changeable scenery with three pinakes joined), *mechane* (crane to fly actors), *ekkyklema* (wagon for rolling out dead bodies), *persona* (full-head mask), phallus (exaggerated for comedy), *kothornoi* (high-heel boots in the 300s), and *onkos* (headdress on top of the mask, also in the 300s).
[How are these performance elements like and unlike today's, onstage and onscreen? How does *persona* as mask relate to "personality" today and the inner theatre elements of "actor" and "character" as neural networks?]
41. Women did not perform in the formal play contests, just as "mimes" in informal, sometimes spoken sketches. But there is evidence for women in the *theatron*. Plato denounced tragedy as a rhetoric addressed to "boys, women and men, slaves and free citizens, without distinction." In his comedy, *The Frogs*, Aristophanes presents Aeschylus as mocking Euripides for his abandoned sluts onstage, which caused women in the audience to hang themselves. And the ancient Roman text, *Life of Aeschylus*, reports that the Chorus of Furies in *The Eumenides* was so monstrous that pregnant women watching them suffered miscarriages (Kitto 233).
42. Spectators paid a fee to watch the plays, two obols, about a day's wage for a laborer. But the Greek leader, Pericles, established a Theoric Fund in the 400s to help poor citizens attend.
43. In the 1870s, Friedrich Nietzsche defined the "birth of tragedy" through opposite yet interdependent elements: the ancient Dionysian chorus in the orchestra, as a wildly passionate "womb" of music, producing the ordered, dreamlike, Apollonian mask of the tragic actor onstage, as ideal classical beauty.
[How does Nietzsche's view of Dionysian wildness fueling Apollonian beauty apply today?]

B. Ancient Rome with TIMELINE

- 753 BCE, the city of Rome was founded
- 753–509, the **Roman Kingdom** developed, greatly influenced by Etruscans to the north, who ruled the city of Rome in the 500s
- 667, the city of Byzantium (later capital of the Eastern Roman Empire) was founded by Megarian Greek colonists
- 509–27, the **Roman Republic** was governed by aristocratic "patricians" in the Senate, who elected "consuls" to rule over the lower-class "plebeians" and slaves (but the patricians depended on the plebeians as infantrymen when their territory was invaded)
- 501, facing a potential Sabine invasion, the Senate gave absolute power to a temporary dictator, who was obliged to step down after it was over or at the end of six months
- 471, the Plebeian Council was reorganized by tribes, giving the commoners more independence from their patrician patrons, with the right to pass laws, elect judges, and try cases—though their laws were subject to vetoes from the Senate
- 447, the Tribal Assembly was established, with each of the 35 tribes having a vote
- 445, marriage between patricians and plebeians was legalized
- 351, the first plebeian dictator (again only temporary) was elected by the Senate
- 340–38, Romans won the Second Latin War, absorbing nearby territories
- 218–201, Romans won the Second Punic War against Syracuse and Carthage, along the north coast of Africa and parts of today's Spain ("Punic" with reference to the Latin term for the Phoenicians, ancestors of the Carthaginians)
- 146, during the Third Punic War, Rome burned Carthage and enslaved its survivors, further expanding its territories around the Mediterranean Sea
- 73–71, the Third Servile War was started by 70 slave-gladiators who escaped from their school and were joined in two years by 120,000 men, women, and children, roaming the countryside and raiding towns, led by the former gladiator, Spartacus, but they were defeated by several Roman legions and then 6000 survivors were crucified along the Appian Way, a major road leading in and out of Rome, as a warning to others
- 63, Pompey conquered Jerusalem and entered the Holy of Holies in the Jewish Second Temple

- 58–50, Roman legions, led by Julius Caesar, conquered Gaul (today's France and Belgium)
- 49, Julius Caesar was ordered by the Senate to relinquish command of his army, because he wanted reforms supported by the common people, yet he crossed the Rubicon River illegally and advanced toward Rome, so his rival, Pompey, fled
- 45, after four years of warfare between Caesar's and Pompey's armies at various sites around the Mediterranean, Pompey was killed in Egypt, but Caesar continued pursuing his sons
- 44, Julius Caesar was assassinated in the curia (assembly hall) adjacent to the Theatre of Pompey by a conspiracy of senators
- 31–30, the forces of Marcus Antonius (friend of Caesar), then allied with Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, were defeated by Octavian and he committed suicide, as did she
- 27, Augustus (Octavian) became the first Emperor, or *Princeps Senatus* (First Man of the Senate), expanding Rome's territories in Hispania, Germania, and Africa
- 27 BCE–476 CE, the **Roman Empire** developed, with dictators governing
- 64 CE, the Great Fire of Rome led to the first persecution of Christians because Nero made them the scapegoats
- 70, putting down a Jewish revolt, the Romans under the command of Titus sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Second Temple (and Titus later became emperor)
- 79, the Vesuvius volcano erupted, burying Pompeii and Herculaneum, yet preserving them for later discoveries
- 80, the Flavian Amphitheatre (Colosseum) was completed in the center of Rome after eight years of building, funded by war spoils from Jerusalem and using 100,000 Jews brought to Rome as slaves
- 128, under Emperor Hadrian, the rebuilt Pantheon (temple to multiple gods) was dedicated to Agrippa, its original builder
- 132–35, the Jewish followers of Simon bar Kokhba, believing him to be the promised Messiah, started a revolution against the Romans, but it was put down at the cost of 10,000 Roman soldiers and 600,000 Jewish civilians, including bar Kokhba
- 180, Emperor (and Stoic philosopher) Marcus Aurelius died, marking the end of the Pax Romana, an era of relatively peaceful Roman expansion and good rulers
- 192, Emperor Commodus, son of Marcus Aurelius, after rejecting his father's Stoicism and killing many as threats—while seeing himself as the demigod Hercules—was assassinated in his bath by his wrestling partner,

Narcissus, one month after shooting hundreds of animals and fighting as a gladiator in the Plebian Games

- 222, Emperor Elagabalus, after ruling for four years as a teenager, was assassinated by his own Praetorian Guard (elite bodyguards), like his father, the emperor Caracalla before him
- 286, Mediolanum (Milan) replaced Rome as the capital
- 303, Emperor Diocletian issued his first edict against Christians, stripping them of political rights and destroying their worship places and holy books—which led to further edicts, also from the next emperor, Galerius (305–11), resulting in approximately 20,000 Christian martyrs, executed in arenas as entertainment or otherwise, for refusing to sacrifice to Roman gods, especially in the eastern parts of the empire
- 313, Emperor Constantine made Christianity legal and eventually converted to it
- 325, Constantine summoned the Council of Nicaea, which produced a collective Nicene Creed (statement of beliefs) for all Roman Christians
- 330, Byzantium, renamed as Constantinople by Constantine, was dedicated as the new capital of the Eastern Roman Empire (which then became known as "Byzantium")
- 361–63, Justinian II tried to return the Roman Empire to Neoplatonic pagan worship
- 379–95, Theodosius, the last ruler of both western and eastern empires, made Orthodox Nicene Christianity the official state religion and allowed the destruction of Greek temples
- 402, Ravenna became the capital of the Western Roman Empire
- 410, Rome was sacked by the Visigoths led by King Alaric
- 476, the Western Empire collapsed but the Eastern Roman Empire continued until Constantinople was conquered by the Muslim Turks in 1453

1. Atellan farce, with masked improvisations from Campania, a region to the south of Rome, became popular with its stock characters (the braggart, the greedy blockhead, the clever hunchback, and the stupid old man), developing from local sources.
2. Roman tragedy borrowed from Greek models and romantic comedy from Greek "New Comedy," all with masks.
   [How are these forms of ancient Roman performances related to ours today—and the identity needs of our inner theatres?]
3. By 240 BCE, the Ludi Romani, a 12-day September festival in honor of Jupiter (the Greek Zeus, king of the gods), added four days of

tragedies and comedies in the Circus Maximus, a chariot racetrack and building. It was free like other festivals, with costs paid by the state or wealthy citizens.

4. Roman "mime" (*fabula riciniata*) involved male and female actors without masks, sometimes nude, performing short comic sketches, through speech and gesture. Plots came from Atellan farce, but with urban settings, singing, dancing, juggling, acrobatics, and dog tricks. Mime appeared on bare stages or in home theatres of the wealthy, eventually surpassing tragedy in popularity.
   [How do today's "home theatres" with television screens and laptops involve similar yet different entertainments from live performances in ancient Rome?]
5. By 173 BCE, mime was a key feature of the Ludi Florales, an April to May fertility festival in honor of the goddess of love, Venus (the Greek Aphrodite).
6. Mime actors sometimes performed live sex acts—especially as commanded by Emperor Elagabalus (a.k.a. Heliogabalus, the name of a Syrian sun god he worshiped as high priest), who reigned in 218–22 CE, when he was 14–18.
7. Roman "pantomime" (meaning a dancer who acts all the roles) developed during the first century BCE with a single *silent* dancer, musicians, and a chorus chanting the narrative of a mythic, historical, erotic, or comical story.
8. Plautus (meaning "Flatfoot," 254–184 BCE), who first worked as a stage carpenter and actor, wrote 130 romantic comedies after 205 BCE, 20 of which survive, such as *Amphitryon* and *The Menaechmi* (dates unknown). *Amphitryon* shows the king of the gods, Jupiter, disguised as a Roman general, so that he can sleep with the general's wife, while the god Mercury, disguised as a servant, beats up the real servant to stop him from bringing news of the real general's arrival. *The Menaechmi* is about twin brothers with the same name who are mistaken for each other by other people, with comic confusion. (It later inspired Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* and Goldoni's *The Venetian Twins*.) Plautus's plays were akin to Greek New Comedy without a chorus, yet probably with sung dialog, and often with slapstick farce, involving clever servants outwitting their masters.
9. Terence (Publius Terentius Afer, 195/85–159 BCE) was a slave from the north coast of Africa (as "Afer" denotes). But he was educated by his master and freed, eventually writing six plays, all of which survive. *Phormio* (161 BCE) features a "parasite" or trickster servant who makes

money by helping two young men get the wives they desire. Terence's plays have conversational language and verbal humor, often with double plots, showing characters in similar romantic situations but with different reactions.

10. Seneca (4 BCE–65 CE) was a Stoic philosopher and playwright, who believed in the values of moderation and calmness. Yet he was also an epicure, enjoying wealth and many pleasures, especially as an advisor to Emperor Nero (from 54 to 62 CE). Then he fell out of favor with the emperor and was ordered to commit suicide. At least eight of his tragedies survive (with two more attributed to him), based on Greek myths, such as *Thyestes*, and they sometimes show extreme violence, along with a chorus and supernatural figures. They may have been "closet dramas," meant just for reading, or they may have been performed in Seneca's lifetime. *Thyestes* involves rival brothers, with Atreus (father of Agamemnon) losing his wife to Thyestes and then pretending to forgive him, offering a banquet where he serves him his sons to eat before telling him of this revenge.
    [How do movies, television shows, and video games today with supernatural characters reflect stoicism, yet epicurean materialism and disgusting violence, akin to Seneca's tragedies, or other values like/unlike the comedies of Plautus or Terence?]
11. Horace (65–8 BCE), the son of a freed slave, argued in his *Art of Poetry* that theatre should both instruct and entertain, for "profit and pleasure." He stated that tragedy and comedy should be distinct genres, with plays in five acts and a maximum of three speaking characters onstage. All characters should perform according to decorum (appropriate to their class), along with a moral chorus, and no gods should appear unless necessary to resolve the plot (as a *deus ex machina*). These prescriptions influenced later Renaissance playwrights, who used Aristotle and Horace to develop neoclassical ideals.
    [Considering Horace's argument, which do you value more in our current media—moral instruction, challenging ideas, or pleasurable entertainment—and how might these ideals conflict? How do other rules from Horace apply today?]
12. In the city of Rome, temporary wooden theatres (*theatra*) were used until the Theatre of Pompey was built, from 61 to 55 BCE, as the first permanent theatre building (not set on a hillside) and probably the largest ever. It had a temple of Venus at the top of the auditorium (with her statue watching) and a garden with surrounding colonnade behind the stage. It was also connected to further temples and a "curia"

(assembly) building where the Senate sometimes met and where Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BCE. Pompey was a rival to Julius Caesar (a successful military general) and built his theatre to gain popularity, although there was a ban on such buildings in the sacred area of Rome. So he built it on the edge of that area and declared it was not a theatre, but a temple of Venus with "the steps of a theatre," where plays and gladiator shows were performed.

[How are performances today made for a popular audience and yet tied to an ideal Other watching and to real-life political dramas?]

13. Key structural elements of the Roman *theatrum* (Fig. 3.7) included a *pulpitum* (stage), *scaena* (scene house), and *scaenae frons* (permanent façade of the scaena, often with columns, arches, and statues on multiple levels and stage-level doorways, representing a city street and houses). They also included the *auleum* (front curtain with telescoped poles raising it, which the Greeks did not have), *siparium* (back curtain), *periaktoi* (as scenery), and semicircular orchestra. For the audience, there was the *cavea* (auditorium with tiered sections and marble benches), *velarium* (awning) over it, and *vomitoria* (entry and exit tunnels).

Fig. 3.7 Ancient Roman theatre remains at Orange, France, with scaenae frons (photo: Mark Pizzato)

[How are today's theatre conventions, including the curtain over the screen in many movie theatres, related to the ancient Roman development of—and additions to—previous Greek theatre elements? How are the ancient structures related to inner theatre elements of the brain?]

14. Arenas were built across the Roman Empire as "amphitheatres" (*amphitheatra*), meaning "both viewing-areas," as two theatres joined together to form a central performance area surrounded by the audience (Fig. 3.8).
15. The largest arena, the Flavian Colosseum, was completed in the city of Rome in 80 CE and held 50,000–80,000 spectators, with its ruins still existing today. So do the remains of a smaller arena in Pozzuoli (Puteoli), near Naples. Visitors can see the underground architecture (Fig. 3.9) with cells, passageways, and openings to the arena floor above—where wild beasts, criminals, and gladiators were lifted up, with rope elevators and elaborate scenery, to appear on the sandy floor of the amphitheatre (Fig. 3.10).
16. Some arena games offered huge spectacles, with entire habitats appearing or disappearing through the arena floor. Ancient sources describe, for example, a forest with perfumed rain; a wooden mountain with real plants, a stream flowing, and wild goats; or a cage in the shape of a ship that broke open to release hundreds of animals (Coleman 52).

Fig. 3.8 Ancient Roman arena (amphitheatre) at Arles, France (photo: Mark Pizzato)

Fig. 3.9 Underground passageways of the Pozzuoli arena (photo: Mark Pizzato)

Fig. 3.10 Stage floor of the Pozzuoli arena with modern grates over the traps (photo: Mark Pizzato)

17. In the morning, arenas typically offered animal hunts (*venationes*) with exotic beasts, including lions, bears, tigers, elephants, giraffes, and deer. 9000 animals were killed in the 100-day grand opening of the Colosseum. The *venator* (hunter) also performed tricks with the animals, such as putting an arm in a lion's mouth, riding a camel while pulled by lions, or making an elephant walk a tightrope (according to Seneca).
18. At noon, arenas presented executions by crucifixion, burning at the stake, or by beasts (*damnatio ad bestias*), such as lions, bears, or bulls. Such victims included many Christians, who were condemned as traitors for not believing in the Roman gods, but prayed and sang hymns as they were sacrificed. Sometimes, condemned criminals were dressed as mythic figures and suffered their torments, such as Atys being castrated or Hercules burned alive (Tertullian).
19. In the afternoon, arenas offered *individual* gladiator fights and sometimes *group reenactments* of historical victories. By the beginning of the Empire, gladiator games might involve hundreds or thousands of captured warriors, trained slaves, condemned criminals, and exotic animals. For example, under Emperor Claudius in 52 CE, a *naumachia* (staged sea battle) on the Fucine Lake started with a silver image of the god Triton, who rose from the lake and blew a trumpet. Then 19,000 war captives and condemned criminals fought as "Sicilians" against "Rhodians" (Coleman 71).
    [How were gladiator fights and other arena events like/unlike our current media spectacles?]
20. The playwright Seneca stated his moral disgust at the mass audience lusting for blood, animal-like, at the midday executions: "In the morning men are thrown before lions and bears, at noon they are thrown before the spectators." But he also expressed Stoic admiration for brave gladiators—and for the condemned who chose to commit suicide in their cells or on the way to execution (choking on a sponge or putting one's head between the cartwheel spokes), showing that they were free of the fear of death (Wistrand 16–20).
21. Gladiators became popular stars, both despised and idolized as figures of vulgarity, sexuality, and former warrior ideals. They evoked nostalgia for earlier centuries when Roman wars were fought by citizens, rather than by mercenaries from conquered lands. A clay baby-bottle even had a gladiator's image on it, preserved by the volcanic eruption in Pompeii (Hopkins, *Death* 7). Gladiators were slaves but could earn their freedom (with prize money) and become rich if successful in many fights. Citizens in debt also sold themselves into gladiatorial slavery, to save the family's honor.

[How are the sacrifices demanded by our current media spectacles of "selfies," sports, news, screen games, and fictions akin to—or distinct from—the ways that animals and humans were offered to the crowds and emperors in ancient Rome, or to Venus in her temple atop the Theatre of Pompey?]

22. The first recorded gladiator battle, in 264 BCE, was staged at the public funeral of an aristocrat, with three pairs of fighters. Ritual elements continued in the gladiator games, as honorable reenactments of the past, appeasing the spirits of the dead, believed to sometimes threaten the living (Pizzato). For example, stagehands dressed as *larvae*, the dissatisfied spirits of the dead, gave new gladiators a ritual beating in the arena prior to the fight (Barton 19).
23. Individual fights usually had a referee with a *rudis*, a wooden wand as symbol of authority, used to separate the gladiators. Fights to the death were *not* the norm, but a special event, with the loser's death rehearsed in advance, as part of the gladiator's training (Auguet 51, 59). Special fights between female gladiators were staged, too.
24. Arena contests had musical accompaniments (with trumpets and water organ) and wooden balls for prizes thrown to spectators (*missilia*). Stagehands, dressed as the gods Mercury and Pluto (or Charon, Etruscan ferryman of the underworld), tested the dead or finished them off, with a red-hot iron and hammer, and then dragged the bodies away. There were also clowns (*paegniarii*, meaning "of play") who pretended to duel, wearing padding but no armor, between the gladiator fights.
    [Which of these elements are similar to theatre and sporting events today, although usually without the loss of life?]
25. As spectators in the *cavea*, senators and knights were dressed in purple-bordered togas and had special seats near the emperor's or local ruler's gilded box. Other citizens, seated further away from the arena floor, wore white togas—and women or poor men wore gray cloth—together forming a mass political audience, gossiping and performing in relation to their rulers and the "editor" (producer of the games). The arena became a parliament where citizens could support their leaders or complain en masse (Hopkins, "Murderous"). Sometimes, riots broke out between groups, such as the bloody battle between Pompeian and Nucerian spectators in the amphitheatre at Pompeii in 59 CE (Barton 63).
26. At least eight emperors appeared as gladiators in the arena (including Commodus, as shown in the movie, *Gladiator*), along with many senators and knights. Commodus exemplified the godlike persona that many emperors cultivated, claiming that he was the reincarnation

of Hercules. There were sculptures made of him as Hercules wearing a lion-skin and holding a club. Commodus appeared often in the Colosseum to act as the mythic Hercules, by shooting ostriches, giraffes, elephants, panthers, and lions (reportedly 100 in one day) with a bow and arrow. He also fought as a gladiator, sometimes slaying disabled citizens with missing limbs.

27. Commodus appeared as a *secutor* ("chaser") in the arena, wearing a smooth helmet with full-metal visor over the face, and a padded arm guard, while carrying a large shield and short sword (*gladius*). This type of gladiator was based on the elite, heavy-armed infantry of the Roman Legion.
28. The typical opponent of the *secutor* was the *retiarius*, with light armor, a net, and a trident (three-pointed spear). The bare face and net of the *retiarius* made him an effeminate figure and the lowest class of gladiator.
29. The *murmillo* was similar to the *secutor* in appearance, but with a stylized fish (related to his name) as helmet crest. He usually fought against the *thraex*, based on the Thracian soldier with a short, curved dagger and small, rectangular or round shield, or the *hoplomachus*, based on the Greek soldier.
30. Some of the early gladiators were prisoners of war, who wore their native equipment. This led to the costume and props of certain classes of slave-gladiators, and influenced their pairings.
31. The equipment of the *gallus* mimicked the soldiers of Gaul (France). But when its territory was fully conquered and the Gauls became integrated into Roman society, that gladiator type was changed to the *murmillo*. Likewise, the *samnite* gladiator, one of the earliest types (with a plumed helmet), was replaced by the *secutor* and *murmillo* after Samnium (in Campania) was conquered and its citizens became important members of the Roman Empire.
32. The *dimachaerus* fought with two swords (the meaning of the name). The *laquearius* used a lasso in one hand and a sword in the other. The *cestus* was a boxer who wore metal on his hands, sometimes with spikes or blades. The *eques* fought on horseback, against other *equites*, wearing a brimmed helmet with two feathers, a breastplate, and thigh guards, while carrying a round shield and sword or spear. The *essedarius* was a charioteer, probably modeled after British enemies, since the name came from the Latin word for a Celtic war-chariot.
33. Chariot and horse races were also staged in the "circus" (circular racetrack), such as the Circus Maximus in Rome, which held over 150,000 spectators. Chariots drawn by four horses raced on long tracks with tight turns at each end. If charioteers fell off, they could be dragged

or trampled. Thus, the popular audience enjoyed a double drama: who would win the race and who might fall to a horrible death.

34. Sea battles (*naumachiae*) were also held on artificial lakes, or possibly in water-sealed arenas and theatre orchestras.
35. Roman actors, like gladiators, were often "slaves." But if successful, they could become free and wealthy celebrities. The head of the acting troupe, the *dominus*, was usually the lead actor, who bought the plays, hired musicians, and obtained costumes, including linen head masks worn by actors as stock characters. Actors were generally considered untrustworthy, so they were not allowed to serve in the army, to run for government office, or to vote (Easterling and Hall 380).
36. During the Empire, plays lost many of their viewers to the increasingly popular arena games. Even earlier, Terence complained in the second prolog to his comedy, *Hecyra* (*The Mother-in-Law*, 165 BCE), that wild spectators disrupted its initial performances, screaming and fighting for seats, on a rumor that gladiator fights would appear in the same place (Augoustakis and Traill).

    [How do we value stage actors, action-movie performers, or athletes today, like/unlike actors and gladiators in ancient Rome?]
37. As Christianity grew in the Roman Empire, theatre was condemned by various Church Fathers. Clement of Alexandria (150–210 CE) criticized such shows as a false rival to Christ in the theatre of the universe. Tertullian (160–230) attacked theatre, especially the Theatre of Pompey, as the dwelling place of the Roman gods, Venus (beauty) and Liber (wine, fertility, and freedom), producing sinful behaviors. Augustine (354–430) viewed theatre as a deadly poison, recalling his youthful enjoyment of surface emotions through plays (Schnusenberg).
38. After the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, ancient playscripts were studied and preserved in the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire. But public theatre was suppressed and religious plays were not created there as in the West—because of an emphasis on sacred icons, beyond human reality, in Eastern Orthodox Christian churches. Pantomimes with their sexual gestures and songs, along with public dancing and cross-dressing, were repeatedly banned as pagan customs. Mimes (popular verbal sketches) were also attacked by the Church as satanic for their female nudity and parodies of Christian baptism (Easterling and Hall 312–16).

    [Which kinds of theatre are considered dangerous or sinful to some people today, as in Christian Byzantium?]

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