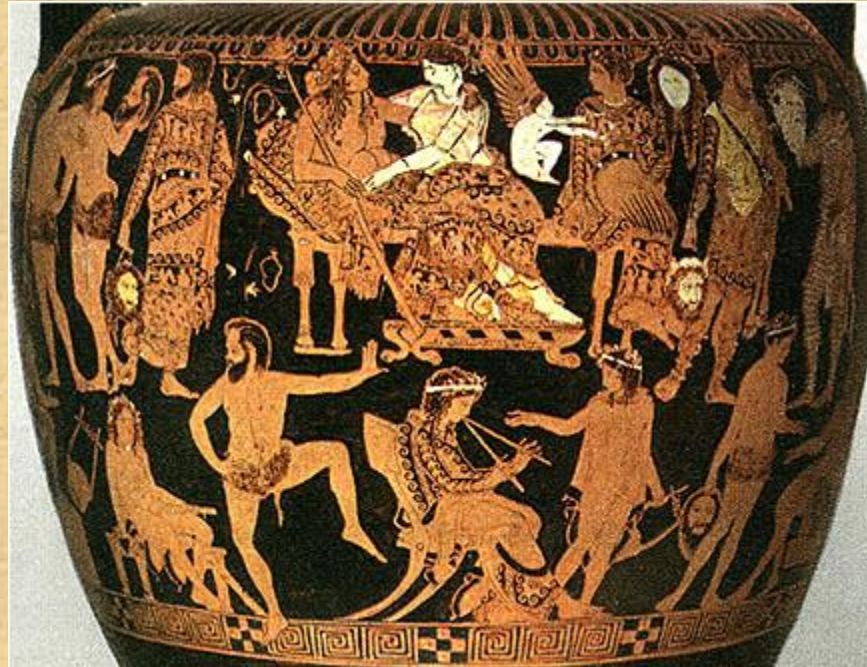


# 5<sup>th</sup> Century BCE Athenian Theatre



Pronomos Vase

Andromacha of Lesbos  
Bardic Champion – An Tir

# Today, we will discuss the...

- What was Athenian Theatre
- Where/When Athenian Theatrical Performances took place
- Genres of Athenian Drama
- Production of Athenian Drama
- Whose who of Athenian Playwrights

# What was Athenian Drama

- Plays performed during festivals to Dionysus
  - Greek God of Wine
- Contests
  - Playwrights
  - Actors

# When would the Plays take Place

- Plays would take place at festivals to Dionysus:
  - City Dionysia Festival
    - Between March and April
    - Week long festival
  - Lenaia Festival
    - Between December and January

# Where would the Plays take Place



Aerial view of the Acropolis in Athens, with  
the theater of Dionysos in the foreground  
(Goette, n.d.)

# Genres of Athenian Drama

- Tragedy
  - Predominately featured during the City Dionysia
  - Subject matter included:
    - Divine justice
    - One's place in the universe
- Satyr
  - Followed Tragedies of the City Dionysia
  - Chorus of Satyrs wandering into a myth

# Genres of Athenian Drama – Cont.

- Comedy
  - Predominately featured during the Lenaia
    - 5 Comic Playwrights with 1 play each
    - 2 Tragic Playwrights with 2 plays each
  - Performed the last day of the City Dionysia
  - Mocked politics of the time
  - Almost no topics were off limits

# Production of Athena Dramas

- *Archon Eponymous* – Oversees the City Dionysia festival; Selects the following:
  - *Chorêgoi* – Financial Producer nominated to finance the playwright
    - Dionysia:
      - 3 for Tragic/Satyr Playwrights
      - 5 for Comedic Playwrights
  - Playwrights



# Production - Continued

- *Chorêgoi* and the Playwright discuss:
  - Special effects
    - *Mechane* – flying characters
    - *Ekkuklema* – cart to roll out corpses
  - Costs
    - Actors (not including the Playwright if he participated)
    - Chorus
    - Unspeaking roles

# Production - Continued

- Costs ~ continued
  - Costuming ~ Embroidered Linen/Wool
    - Could include feathers, fur, or armor depending on Chorus/Nonspeaking pieces
  - Masks
    - Constructed out of cork, wood, linen, or leather

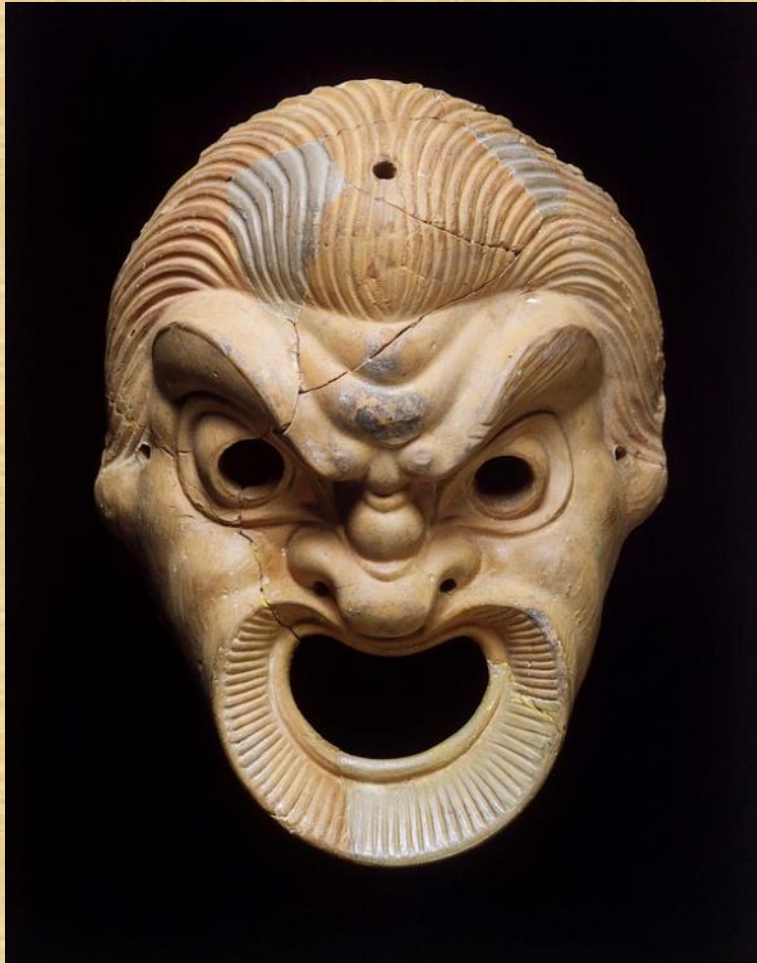


Greek vase depicting comic choirsters dressed as birds



Terracotta statuettes and molds for statuettes of Actors. 4<sup>th</sup> Cen B.C.E.

# MASKS



Terracotta masks  
were not worn by  
actors/chorus.

These were more  
than likely...

Terracotta  
mask 250  
B.C.E.

# Masks

## THEATER SWAG!!!



# Production - Continued

- Playwright had many jobs
  - *Didaskalos* (Director) of the chorus
  - Choreographer
  - Costume designer
  - Set designer
  - Actor

# Production - Continued

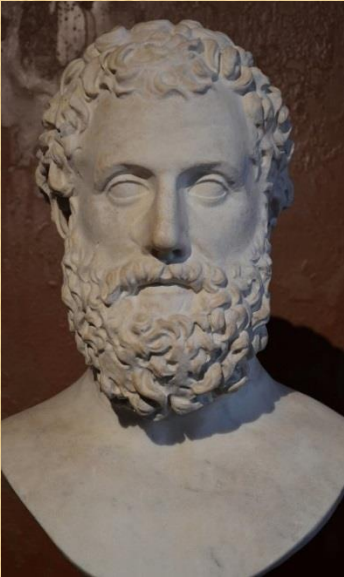
- Cast - All Male
  - Actors - played multiple roles
    - Drama/Satyr - 1 to 3 actors per playwright
      - Performed all four plays for the City Dionysia Festival
    - Comedy - 1 to 3 actors
  - Chorus
    - Drama/Satyr - 12 to 15 choral members
    - Comedy - up to 24 choral members
  - Musicians - aulos, lyre, tambourine
  - Non-speaking roles

# Production - Continued

- Literacy amongst the actors and chorus was not guaranteed
- Theorized playwright read play out loud to cast to memorize
- Dramas started off as an idea; final product was a collaborative effort by all

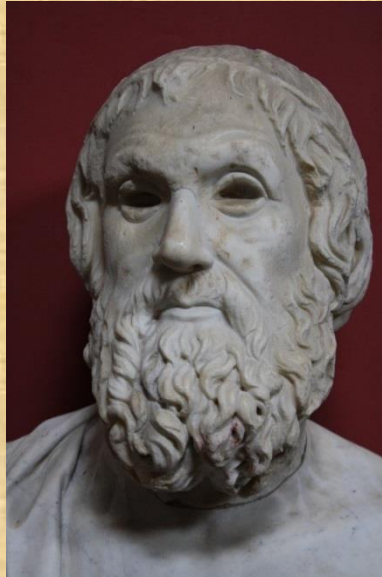
# Whose who... Drama

Aeschylus



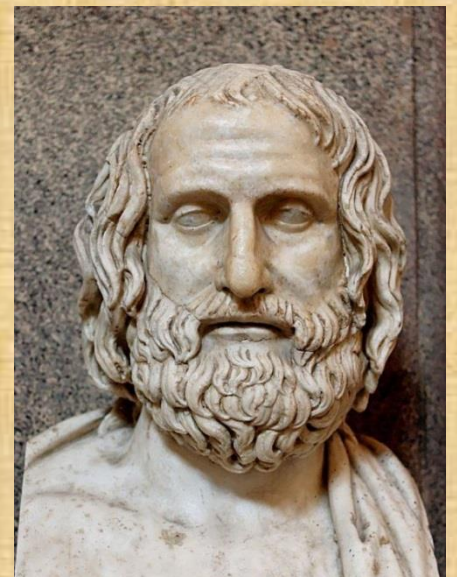
c. 525 – c. 456 BCE

Sophocles



c. 496 – c. 406 BCE

Eurípides



c. 484 – 407 BCE



# Whose who... Drama - Continued

## Aeschylus

- Earliest surviving playwright
- Served in Navy and Army
- 90 plays written
- 7 Survived
- Only surviving trilogy

## Sophocles

- Most successful playwright
- Highly political figure
- 123 plays written
- 7 Survived

## Euripides

- Not as well known
- 120 plays written
- 19 survived
  - Only surviving Satyr Play
- Used mostly "female" protagonists

# Whose who... Comedy

## Aristophanes

c. 460 – 380

BCE

- Not much is known
- Only surviving examples of Old Comedy
- 11 Survived

## Cratinus

c. 523/21 –

423/21 BCE

- 21 – 29 extant plays

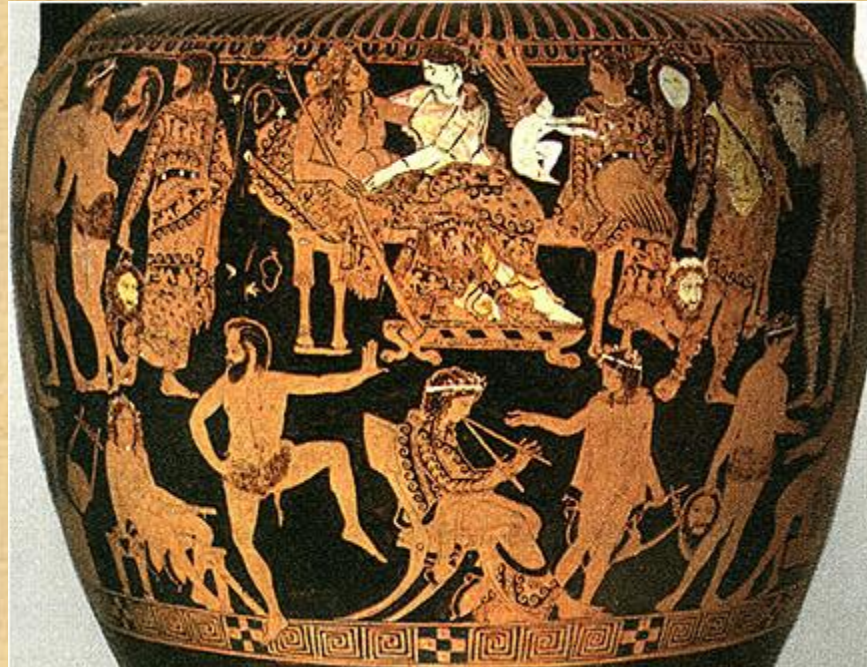
## Eupolis

Died around

410 BCE

- 19 extant plays

# Questions? Comments?



# Picture References

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