

## Greek Theatre

Almost every Greek city had a theatre because plays were part of many religious festivals. The Greeks enjoyed singing and dancing. At first, theatres were only used for festivals.

The theatres were built on hillsides in the open air and could often hold more than 18,000 spectators.

The theatres were open air and built in a semi-circular shape with rows of tiered stone seating around it. The shape of the theatres gave everyone in the audience excellent viewing and also meant they could hear the actors well too. In the centre of the theatre was a circular dancing floor (orchestra), with an altar for sacrifices dedicated to Dionysus. The stage was a raised area within this circle.

Athens was the place to go for plays too. The city put on a drama festival called the **Dionysia** in honour of the god Dionysus. He was the god of the theatre and wine. The festival was a bit like a competition. Judges gave prizes for their favourite tragedy and comedy performances.

All the actors were men. They wore large masks that exaggerated facial features and emotions. The mouth hole was large to help amplify the voices. Greek plays were either comedies or tragedies. Tragedies were often about the past, whereas comedies tended to be about current and everyday life. Actors in comedies wore bright colours. Actors in tragedies wore dark colours.

Plays were either spoken or sung in rhyme. They use choral speech and choral movement to deliver their performances. This is where the group of performers called the chorus move and speak at the same time. They can narrate or comment on the action.