

## **Greek Philosophers**

### **Socrates 469 - 399 BC**

- \* Put to death for corrupting the youth.
- \* He took hemlock poisoning solidifying his place as a martyr.
- \* He challenged the belief in the gods.

### **Plato 427 - 347 BC**

- \* He pronounced that the New Great Era of Drama has ended.
- \* He attacked the need for the importance of drama.
- \* Ironically, Plato was a great dramatist and writer of dialogue.

### **Aristotle 384 - 322 BC**

- \* He set out to reverse Plato's attack on drama.
- \* He lectured proclaiming the need for drama in people's lives.
- \* These lecture notes were compiled and created the book, "Aristotle's Poetics."

### **Greek play structure:**

Beginning (Prologue), Middle (Episode), Ending (Exodus)

**Note:** Euripides' "The Bacchae" was written in 410 BC

Choragus - Head of all the Chorus. Serves as a modern day producer. It was a very important job.

### **SOPHOCLES 496 - 406 BC**

- \* Famous Playwright
- \* Wrote over 123 Plays
- \* Arguably, 24 won first prize. These numbers vary with time.

### **Sophocles Oedipus Trilogy:**

"Antigone" 441 BC

"Oedipus Rex" (also called "Oedipus the King") 430 BC

"Oedipus at Colonus" 401 BC (Produced posthumously: after his death)

**Note:** Sophocles created the buskin (high soled shoe), first scenery in plays and the introduction to the third actor.

Interestingly, this first play "Antigone" is really the last part of the three part story if he wrote the entire tale in order. Now it reads as a prequel to "Oedipus Rex." The order of the entire saga would be "Oedipus Rex" followed by "Oedipus at Colonus" and finally "Antigone." In the play "Antigone." Oedipus is already dead.

The setting of the three plays is about 700 years before the plays were written (1200 BC). During the setting of the plays the Greek government is tyrannical, but it is starting to feel the first pangs of democracy. That democracy took another 700 years to truly occur.

### **Athens:**

- \* The world's first democratic government (508 BC).
- \* It was a city-state just like Sparta, Thebes and Corinth.
- \* Like all city-states, Athens was relatively small, homogeneous, and self governing.
- \* Citizens usually had a strong loyalty to their city-state.

### **Logos:**

- \* Logos - means grand design carried out by the gods. It's part of the uncaused first cause. The plan that cannot be comprehended by man.
- \* Logos also refers to the 3 appeals of writing: Logos (logic/reason), Pathos (emotion), Ethos (ethics)

### **Greek Gods:**

- \* Greek gods have failings that are all too human.
- \* They are dreadfully unfair, frivolous, promiscuous, unimpressive when compared to our religious figures.

### **Greek Theater:**

- \* Greeks had an aversion to showing violence on stage.
- \* Instead, they would have the messengers tell about the violence.
- \* Nevertheless, Greek dramas were very violent.
- \* Unlike messengers in our plays, the character of the Messenger in Greek plays was a big role.
  
- \* The Greek actors wore huge masks.
- \* The acting was very big so the patrons could see from their seats in the **amphitheaters**.
- \* Amphitheaters held anywhere from 17 - 30 thousand people.
- \* Archaeologists stated 17 thousand, while Aristotle wrote 30 thousand.
- \* Actors wore platform shoes called **buskins**.
- \* Their masks were also used as megaphones.
  
- \* The performances took place in the **orchestra** ( an altar used for sacrifices to Dionysus).
- \* Fronts seats were occupied by priests of Dionysus, judges and individuals of high rank.
- \* Judges for the plays were chosen by lot.
  
- \* All citizens of Athens could attend the 4 day celebration, but women were not considered citizens.
- \* Nevertheless, women, slaves and foreigners were admitted to the festivals if invited.
- \* The festivals were filled with drunkenness, dance, sacrificing of animals and not so pleasant mingling between men and women.

### **The Dionysian Festivals:**

- \* They lasted for days in honor of Dionysus ( the god of wine, fertility, ecstasy, song, dance, inspiration, creativity, etc.)
- \* At first, the tragedies were shown at the spring festival (between March and April).
- \* The comedies were shown in the winter festival (between January and February).
- \* Later, they combined them and it was held just in the spring.
- \* The festival was a national holiday.
- \* At first, admission was free, but after it became popular patrons were charged a modest price.

### **Myth of Dionysus:**

- \* He was a demigod.
- \* His father was Zeus (Chief of the gods) and his mother was the mortal (Semele).
- \* Hera (Zeus's wife) was angered by his infidelity and coaxed Semele to see Zeus in his divine state as a lightning bolt.
- \* Hera (goddess of marriage and child birth) is instantly killed; but, before the unborn Dionysus dies in her womb, Hermes (god of thieves, money, messengers) swoops down and takes the child from Semele's womb.
- \* Hermes then takes the unborn child and sews him up in Zeus's thigh.
- \* Some folklore tells that after Dionysus is born he is immediately taken to the nymphs (beautiful maidens dwelling in the forests, mountains and trees).
- \* They take care of Dionysus until he is old enough to care for himself.