

Student 3: Low Merit
NZQA Intended for teacher use only

Aristophanes' audiences for his plays usually consisted of many Athenian citizens. Many have said that the audience included everyone from the area – as everyone had to attend so they are seen to worship the god, Dionysus.

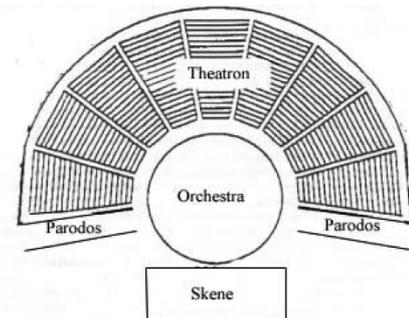
3

However, many have debated in whether women attended or not. In a play written by Aristophanes called "Peace", Aristophanes addresses the women in the audience with the line "I will explain the matter to you all, children, youths, grown-ups and old men, aye, even to the decrepit dotards." The line seemed to exclude women in it – which could mean that women didn't attend the festivals. However, in another story written by H.D.F Kitto, called "The Greeks", He states that the story 'Life of Aeschylus' talks about how the Chorus of Furies in the 'Eumenenides' was so terrific that some boys died of fright and some women had miscarriages (1) This meant that whoever first said the tale must have thought that women attended the festival. Others believe that women were able to attend the theatre – but were said to be mostly slaves or hetaerae. "Proper" women were only allowed to stay at home.

1

The audience also included many other visitors from other parts of Greece who arrive to experience and attend the festival. Many of the visitors included adults, children, priests, or people in the politics. The people would be seated on the "theatron", on semi-circular terraced rows of benches made from stone. The audiences face the stage (called the skene), where the acting takes place as well as facing the orchestra.

2



Parts of a Greek Theater



Athens: Throne of the Priest of Dionysus (circa 1922)

It is said that the higher ranking people – such as the members in the *boulê*, which was a 500 member executive council of the assembly, had a special block most probably near the front closer to the stage.

2

It was said that a set of 67 high-backed seats made of Pentellic marble were added to the Theatre of Dionysus (1). They were reserved for dignitaries and judges. The seats also had the names of their "owners" inscribed on the seats. The centre is the best seat, which was a throne for the Priest of Dionysus Eleutherios. There is said to be 2 satyrs which were on opposite side of the throne feeding the Priest of Dionysus grapes. Normal citizens of Athens were said to be assigned seats according to their 10 Attic tribes – meaning that

they would be seated according to which Attic tribes they were from. The theatres were big and could contain up to 14,000 people in it. The theatre was very steep and usually resided on a hill.

2

Plautus' plays were also performed at a festival. But instead of the Dionysia festival like Aristophanes, his was performed during the festival of Ludi or festival games. He had many similarities compared with Aristophanes as well as many differences. A big difference between Aristophanes and Plautus is that Plautus does not teach the audiences or improve the audiences through his plays like Aristophanes does, however his plays are still thoroughly entertaining to the audiences. The layout of where the audiences were placed in the theatre also differed to the ones in Athens. Greek theatres were much bigger than Roman theatres and their audiences were much more furtherer away than the ones in Rome. In Rome, the theatres there were much more smaller as they had limited space. Therefore the audiences were more closer to the actors and therefore the actors engaged more with the audiences than the Greeks did due to the limited space available to act, as we as to view the performance. The differences of the physical appearance of the theatre in Roman times compared with Greek times were fairly similar but a bit different. The Roman theatre's appearance was inspired by Greeks, Etrusans and the Oscans theatre. Differences were that the Roman theatre was more elaborate and ornate compared with The Greeks. Unlike the Greeks, the Romans did not build there theatre on the hills but on ground level – most probably due to the fact also that they do not have permanent ones (until the Theatre of Pompey in 55 BCE(1)) that time so they did it anywhere close to the city. Another difference was that the stage house and the auditorium were both built to the same height all the way around the theatre. So unlike the Greeks, the audience's view was confined within the structure. The audience behaviour were different to the Greeks/ Aristophanes time as in the Roman period, it was considered disrespectful to shout at the plays or throw things at the actors if they did not like what they were being shown.

2

2

However, the difference between Shakespeare and Aristophanes was that Shakespeare's plays can contain up to 20-30 characters on stage. Thus, making the room on the stage to be very small for actors compared with the Greek theatre. The average size of a theatre in Shakespeare's time was around 1500-3000 people. That is small compared to the size of Greek and Roman theatre which could fit up to 15000 people. Another difference was that the Greeks and Romans only showed their plays during a particular festival – eg Festival of Dionysia. In Shakespeare's time though, the theatre was considered a great entertainment activity. The people went to the theatre – not to worship and show their commitments to their gods but to enjoy and be entertained. During Shakespeare's times, many of the people liked the Ancient Greek and Roman theatres so they were inspired to place two columns in the architecture of the theatre due to the Greek and Roman theatres, as seen in the Globe Theatre in London. 1

Differences of Elizabethan time of the theatre were that the theatre were made out of different materials such as: timber, nails, stone, plaster. As well as it included a thatched roof. The theatre had many merchandise store and refreshments – possibly on the outside of the theatre to attract many non-playgoers to come in and enjoy the play. There may have been some artificial lighting for performances in the evening. The floor of the stage was also made out of wood – instead of the stones Greeks and Roman's use. There were also many other rooms in Shakespeare's time such as: The Pit, The Lords' room, and the Gentlemen's room – these rooms separated the "rich" from the "poor" I would suspect as the richer ones would be able to afford rooms such as the lords room, compared to "the pit" where audiences had to stand. 2

Women were debated on whether they attended the theatre or not. However, in Greek or Roman theatre, it is believed that only female slaves were only allowed to attend – perhaps to serve their masters. Proper women were only allowed to stay home and could not attend these social activities. During the Elizabethan period though, women were allowed to attend these events but were not allowed to perform on stage. However, "Proper" women were allowed to go and attend these performances. This was also probably because that women were starting to be "looked upon" during the period and were allowed to attend. Social morals during the period for women may not have been as low as the Greek and Roman periods. 3