

Greek Playwrights

Surviving complete scripts

Aeschylus (of ≈ 90 plays)

The Persians
The Suppliant Maidens
Seven Against Thebes
[*Prometheus Bound*]
Agamemnon
Libation Bearers
The Eumenides

Sophocles (of ≈ 123 plays)

Ajax
Antigone
Oedipus the Tyrant
The Women of Trachis
Electra
Philoctetes
Oedipus at Colonus

Euripides (of ≈ 92 plays)

Rhesus
Alceste
Medea
Hippolytus
Heracleidae
Andromache
Hecuba
The Cyclops [satyr play]
Heracles
The Suppliant Women
The Trojan Women
Electra
Helen
Iphigenia in Tauris
Ion
The Phoenician Women
Orestes
Iphigenia in Aulis
The Bacchae

Aristophanes (of ≈ 40 plays)

The Acharnians
The Knights
The Clouds
The Wasps
Peace
The Birds
Lysistrata
The Thesmophoriazusae
The Frogs
The Ecclesiazusae
Plutus

THESPIS (6th century BC) The "inventor of tragedy" was born in Attica, and was the first prize winner at the Great Dionysia in 534 BC. He began modern theatre, introducing the independent actor, separate from the choir, as well as masks, make up and costumes. Thespis walked around Athens pulling a handcart, setting up a kind of one-man plays, where he showed the bad behaviour of man. The word for actor "thespian" comes from his name.

Aristotle wrote that Greek tragedy developed out of the choric dithyramb. Thespis was the first actor known to step away from the chorus and make a dramatic scene. Suddenly, he could not only just tell a story (e.g. Homer) but actually act it out in present time. The actor could answer the chorus in a dialogue, presenting different points of view at once, allowing the portrayal of conflict. In 534 BC Peisistratus, who had over Athens, sponsored the first festival with a dramatic performance by Thespis and his troupe. Peisistratus' opponent, Solon, disliked this, feeling that what an actor showed on stage soon would be acted out in reality as well. He once asked Thespis if he were not ashamed to be telling so many lies in public; but the actor explained there was no harm in doing so in a play. In fact, the stage is exactly where many of society's conflicts and ethical issues can be shown in a true light, with less political risk.