ERASMUS+ PRESENTATION  
“The origins of drama”

SPEAKER 1: The origins of drama are connected with religious ritual: primitive people used to dress up as animals and demons in an attempt to approach and propitiate the supernatural forces they couldn’t control and which they named “gods”. Out of these rituals there was born a worshipping song accompanied by flute in honor of god Dionysus called“dithyramb”.

SPEAKER 2: Aristotle, our main source for ancient drama, claims that tragedy, the first dramatic form as we know it today, originates from the dithyramb and from “falika” a similar festival but much more liberating which resembles present-day Carnival.

SPEAKER 3: But how did the transition from religious rituals to drama actually take place? We are going to present in short the gradual changes that led from religious rituals to the attic drama, -that is tragedy and comedy, which were born in Attica and more specifically in Athens and are considered the first forms of theatre as we understand it today.

SPEAKER 1: The dithyramb is a lyrical song which refers to the life and passions of the new god Dionysus whose worshipping came to Greece from a region called Frigia located in Asia Minor. He was the god of wine, of fertility and vegetation. His worship was usually performed by women who due to dancing and wine consumption were often led to a kind of ecstasy which resembled madness!

SPEAKER 2: The worship of Dionysus dates back to the Mycenaean era. Dionysus is often depicted holding a thyrsus, riding a leopard, wearing leopard skin or riding a chariot pulled by panthers. Some of his symbols are the grapes, the ivy leaves and the figs.

SPEAKER 3: the passing of one religion to the next is generally presented in Ancient Greek mythology through myths which show conflicts and battles among gods. In our museum theatre project we dramatized the conflict between Dionysus and god Apollo who is the god of harmony and logic as they were both trying to dominate the oracle of Delphi.

SPEAKER 1: Here is a short part of this conflict!

**SHORT PART in Greek (translation of the part in writing)**

SPEAKER 1: So, Dionysus started being worshipped in Greece and various festivals were organized in his honor. “Anthestiria” was the oldest festival and it was held in February, “Linea” was held in January, “City Dionysia” in spring and of course “The Great Dionysia” a magnificent celebration for which visitors from all over Greece came to Athens.

SPEAKER 2: Let’s go back now to the dithyramb and see how it was developed into drama. Herodotus, the ancient well known Greek historian, informs us that a man named Arion was the first to teach the dithyramb by teaching 50 dancers to make a circle and sing wearing flowers on their heads.

**ΧΟΡΟΣ από παιδιά και ακούγεται διθύραμβος**

SPEAKER 3: In the time of Pisistratus, a well known tyrant in ancient Athens when Solon, the best known legislator of his time there lived a man named Thespis who is said to have taken the next crucial step for the birth of the theatrical genre. Thespis walked out of the circle and talked with the leader of the Chorus

**Ένα παιδί βγαίνει από τον κύκλο και μιλάει στον Χορό**

**ΜΙΚΡΟΣ ΔΙΑΛΟΓΟΣ**:

ΥΠΟΚΡΙΤΗΣ: Υγίαινε και τα ωφέλιμα εργάσου!

ΚΟΡΥΦΑΙΟΣ: Τις ει;!

ΥΠΟΚΡΙΤΗΣ: Αριστόδημος το όνομα, πιστός ειμί, Διόνυσον βούλομαι λατρεύειν!

ΚΟΡΥΦΑΙΟΣ: Καλώς όρισες, είσελθε στο ιερό!

SPEAKER 1: That’s how the first actor was born!

SPEAKER 2: Thespis wrote the plays, he directed them and he acted as an actor. Also, he was the first to paint his face with natural colors and then he made face masks –called «προσωπεία» in ancient Greek- from cloth. This was a surprise for many citizens and some of them didn’t like the idea at all! Solon, for example, who was old at the time accused Thespis that his dramatic art was based on lies!

SPEAKER 3: Thespis didn’t care at all! Smudged with mashed grapes he and his actors kept wandering around the country on a chariot singing choric parts and solos from his plays!

SPEAKER 1: it is the famous “Chariot of Thespis” which later inspired theatre on wheels, the first touring theatre company in Europe with the cart of the chariot used as a stage.

SPEAKER 2: Thespis took part in the first drama competition in 536 BC and his prize was a male goat!

SPEAKER 3: The next step in the development of the theatre was made by Aeschylus, the famous tragic poet who wrote more than 80 tragedies and satiric dramas although only seven made it to our era. Aeschylus added one more actor thus ensuring a democratic balance between the choric and the dialogical parts. The heroes had now the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings more accurately because they could speak to each other as well and not only to the leader of the chorus.

AESCHYLUS: I’m thinking of adding an extra actor! The chorus speaks a lot and the actor doesn’t have the chance to express his thoughts and feelings. If I use one more actor thus increasing dialogue I’m sure my play will be more balanced!

SPEAKER 1: After Aeschylus it was the turn of Sophocles to make a change by adding one more actor and making three of them! He wrote around 100 plays but again only 7 were saved through centuries! Sophocles made dialogue even longer and so the poet could describe in greater detail the character and the state of mind of the heroes. And Sophocles was a real master in doing this!

SPEAKER 2: Sophocles introduced more innovations that contributed in the development of drama: he got rid of having a single topic for all four plays, and used separate myths for each tragedy. He also enhanced the musical parts with new rhythms and the use of a new instrument: a kind of flute .

SPEAKER 3: Ηe also improved the set design by using a stage building, a special stage for gods to speak (theologion), and paintings. He introduced tragic irony in his plays and established a chorus of 15 members.

SOPHOCLES: I have great plans for the genre of drama! I will use an extra actor and make three of them! So the dialogical parts will be even longer and this will allow me to describe the character of my heroes in more detail! And the chorus will consist of 15 members. The chorus is important, I can’t deny it, but the dialogue is the actual strength of drama!

SPEAKER 1: Sophocles was right! He did manage to show the audience the depth of his characters; personality. Take Antigone for example, one of Sophocles’ best known and more popular plays. Have you heard of it? Antigone decides to bury her dead brother although her uncle, the king of Thiva has forbidden it. They have a wonderful dialogue where each hero can display their arguments!

SPEAKER 2: We study this tragedy at school. Let us show you a little extract!

**ΑΝΤΙΓΟΝΗ (μικρό απόσπασμα, θέατρο αναλόγιο στα αγγλικά)**

SPEAKER 3: So in the course of time dialogue became longer and longer while the role of the chorus became shorter and shorter and more innovations were gradually added!

SPEAKER 1: Euripides, the youngest of the three tragic poets introduced realism in his plays and he demythologized both human heroes and gods as well. He often dressed his heroes with rugs to imitate reality!

SPEAKER 2: Aristophanes, the great comic poet of antiquity makes fun of Euripides about this!

SPEAKER 3: But his satire does not seem to stop Euripides! He goes on to introduce the element of Eros (Love) in his plays and presents it as a force that drives his heroes’ actions and determines their choices. Take Medea for example who kills her own children to take revenge on Jason her ex husband who abandoned her for another woman.

SPEAKER 1: Euripides also adds an introduction where information about the play is given to the audience. And he makes lots of innovations with the set design. He actually uses cranes and other mechanical media which take the actors up and down the stage making the whole play really spectacular!

SPEAKER 2: Tragedies have nothing to do with religion anymore! Euripides, for instance, is very interested in current affairs. His plays are full of anti war messages!

SPEAKER 3: This is the way in which tragedy is gradually created in the course of time from the religious dithyramb, as the first dramatic genre in ancient times!

**BINTEAKI**

SPEAKER 3: So tragedy was the first dramatic genre which developed in ancient Greece. The word “tragedy” probably derives from the words “tragos” which means “male goat” and “odi” which means “song” because the dancers were disguised into goats to remind the audience of “Satyruses” who were the followers of God Dionysus. So, the word itself reveals the origins of tragedy from the dithyramb which was actually a musical about the passions of Dionysus.

SPEAKER 1: There is, however, a significant difference! While the dithyramb was closely related to religion, tragedy was disconnected from religion and showed the sufferings of humans not gods on stage.

SPEAKER 2: So the ancient drama was born out of religion but it acquired its own life as soon as it abandoned religion and had humans replace gods as drama heroes!

SPEAKER 3: These are all gradual changes that take place during the Athenian democracy in the 5th century BC thus allowing us to assume that it was democracy that gave tragedy its humanly quality.

SPEAKER 1: So, what do you think was the experience of going to the theater like for an ancient person? Was it similar to our experience nowadays?

SPEAKER 2: Nowadays when we want to go to the theatre we usually call a friend of ours!

**DIALOGUE**A-Hi there! I am going to the theatre tonight. Would you are to join me?

B- Sure, why not? What shall we see?

A-I don’t know, there are many good performances on at the moment. You choose! Perhaps something amusing! I feel like watching a comedy!

B- Ok, I’ we heard of a good one at ARK theater. Shall I book online?

A-Yes, and make sure you get us some really good seats at the front row!

B-I will! Let’s meet outside the theatre at 8.00

A-Great! Shall we go for a drink afterwards?

B-Sure, why not? I’d love to!

**SOUND EFFECT**

SPEAKER 3: Do you think that ancient people had conversations like this one? Well, definitely not! In antiquity you could attend performances only on particular times of the year and always on Dionysus’s festivals in January or in March when the Great Dionysia took place in Athens with visitors from all over Greece.

SPEAKER 1: In ancient Athens going to the theatre was an actual ritual which lasted for 6 whole days! It started on the 8th of a month called “Elafivolion”

MESSENGER 1: Day first! In the morning: the statue of Dionysus is transferred to Eleftheres, an area outside Athens.

At noon: there is a pre-contest when each poet talks about his plays to the audience.

In the afternoon the statue of Dionysus comes to the city of Athens in a festive parade which symbolizes the coming of his worship to the city. In the parade male Athenian teenagers carry the wooden statue of the God and crowds of people follow holding lit torched as far as the theatre of Dionysus.

**SOUND EFFECT**

MESSENGER 2: Day two: In the morning there is a great parade with a decorated ox which is then sacrificed at the sanctum

At noon there is a circular dances: 5 groups of men and 5 groups of children with 50 singers each sing dithyrambs.

In the afternoon there is a special event called “komos”. People dresses up in the most amazing costumes have fun in a wild way drinking and dancing until they fall thus reviving the oldest custom connected with Dionysus.

**SOUND EFFECT**

MESSENGER (ΜΑΖΙ, εν χορώ) Days three, four and five! Dramatic Performances!

MESSENGER 1: in the morning sacrifice of a little pig and lottery to decide which poet will perform first, second or third. Each poet presents a tetralogy: three tragedies and one satirical drama. Performances start in the morning and each poet has the whole day in his disposal.

The afternoon is dedicated to comedy

MESSENGER 2: day six, “pandia” a religious ritual of purification

MESSENGER 3: day seven, assembly of citizens in the theatre of Dionysus where accusations are heard and the trouble makers are put on trial!

SPEAKER 3: Did you expect something like this to happen? Well, the Athenians actually did it! You see although they had accepted the worship of Dionysus they had imposed Law and Order on the Bacchus orgy!

SPEAKER 1: Six whole days at the theatre? And who did the work during all these days?

SPEAKER 2: Who else? The ones who did all the hard and dirty work in ancient Athens so that the Athenian citizens had plenty of free time to go to the theatre or deal with city matters as well as practice philosophy, their favourite pastime!

SPEAKER 3: The slaves!

SPEAKER 1: Although in Athens we have the first democratic government in the ancient world, people thought it was absolutely normal to have slaves who were loaded with all kinds of work and were often treated with no respect as the Athenians felt that slaves belonged to them just like objects!

SPEAKER 2: while working on our museum theatre project we studied a liberating inscription found in Delphi which is about the slave Sostrata. So, we created a play to investigate the lives of slaves in ancient Greece and we found out it was not at all pleasant or easy…

**ΑΠΟΣΠΑΣΜΑ από ΔΟΥΛΟΥΣ**

SPEAKER 1: Unfortunately no time and no society is perfect after all. And humans are capable of the brightest and also for the darkest actions. The invention of drama was for sure one of the bright moments in the history of ancient times!

SPEAKER 3: As we have already seen, drama in ancient times was in the form of a competition, a feature that drama has lost today. The truth is that many aspects of ancient Greek life were competitive and the aim was not so much profit but the glory and prestige that was gained out of a victory, which were of great value for the Greeks.

SPEAKER 1: In which way did tragedies function in ancient Greece?

SPEAKER 2: The actual aim of the plays was didactic to an extent. Through the hardships and the final fall of the mythical heroes the poets sent messages to the Athenian people. A significant message was the renowned motto “everything must happen in moderation” which means we shouldn’t overdo it because if this happens gods get angry and punish them!

SPEAKER 3: When did you go to the theatre for the last time? Which performance did you attend? What did you learn?

SPEAKER 1: So what was the usual subject of tragedies? As we have already seen tragedies gradually move away from the Dionysian mythical circle with plots concerning Dionysus and they start dealing with issues of everyday life!

SPEAKER 2: Although poets in general avoided dealing with current affairs so as not to upset their audience we know that some plays did deal with current historical events such as the Fall of Militus and Women of Finiki.

SPEAKER 3: Poets of tragedy usually took their subject from great mythological circles like the Trojan which included all the events from the beginning of the Achaen campaign, the occupation of Troy, the fate of the generation of King Agamemnon and the Thebaic circle which deals with another great family with the myth beginning with King of Thebes Laius, who received an oracle from Delphi which said that the son he would have was going to kill him and marry his wife.

SPEAKER 1: And this is what actually happened! As we know from the well known tragedy: Oedipus” by Sophocles.

**ΑΠΟΣΠΑΣΜΑ ΑΠΟ ΟΙΔΙΠΟΔΑ (βίντεο)**

SPEAKER 2: In ancient tragedy originality was not considered as important as it is today. Poets often dealt with the same myth.

SPEAKER 3: The audience knew what will happen, so there was no suspense but nobody cared. What mattered was the way that the myth would be presented.

SPEAKER 1: Poets never presented scenes of violence to the audience, such as murders. Their purpose was not to impress the audience but to make them think critically and feel deep emotions.

SPEAKER 2: tragedies were very serious and this didn’t match the free and happy spirit of the Dionysian feasts. So they added satirical drama which was more hilarious with a comic plot and Satyrs who had a funny behavior and made the audience laugh creating a cheerful mood!

SPEAKER 3: Satirical dramas dealt with everyday life and people of the day!

SPEAKER 1: The comedy appeared later in 486 BC with Aristophanes being the best known comic poet of the 5th century and the most popular. That’s why 11 of his comedies have been saved complete and we have extracts from 30 more plays.

SPEAKER 2: Ancient comedy was a political satire with melodic choruses and frenzy music which criticized currents politicians and affairs in a sharp and strict manner.

SPEAKER 3: Aristophanes was conservative and peaceful and exercised sharp critic to politicians who were in favour of war.

SPEAKER 1: One of his best known plays is “IRINI” (Peace) a dramatic utopia which reconciles all Greeks in the time of war, a few months before the actual treaty of peace was made by the politician Nikias in 421 BC

**BINTEAKI**

SPEAKER 2: If you visit an archaeological museum in Greece you will see masks. In ancient Greece masks were called “prosopia” and people put them on during the feasts of Dionysus or other religious customs.

SPEAKER 3: Masks were used in the attic drama in the 6th century by Thespis. In the beginning they were made by linen colorless material but gradually they acquired the color and features of the human face. Actors used to wear masks that depicted several mental conditions and moods. Ahhh, and actors were only men in antiquity so men also played women’s parts wearing masks!

SPEAKER 1: You will have the chance to learn how to make a mask at the mask Workshop in which you will participate while you are here!

SPEAKER 2: While epic and lyrical poetry were born in regions outside Attica drama ia a purely attic invention and expresses the Athenian society. But why is this so? Why was drama born in the 5th century Athens?

SPEAKER 3: As many scholars agree drama is closely related to democracy. The Great Dionysia of the City were actually the feast of the democratic city. Drama uses the myth only as an excuse to talk about city matters and was meant to make citizens think about what was happening to their city and also about the tensions, the problems and the contradictions of democracy, a regime completely new in world history.

SPEAKER 1: So, politics had n direct impact on drama. The stage was a kind of parliament where a dialogue could be developed between the poet and the audience even if the audience kept silent. And real dialogue, as we all know, can only exist in democratic societies.

SPEAKER 2: The direct relation between drama and democracy can be deduced from the mere evolution of drama.

SPEAKER 3: When Athens lost its power and got conquered by the Macedonians democracy was eliminated and drama form changed, as well.

SPEAKER 1: The part of the chorus got really small and gradually disappeared completely.

SPEAKER 2: plays were not political anymore and comedy didn’t talk about current politicians and currents affairs.

SPEAKER3: If a poet dared to criticize a politician he was punished severely.

SPEAKER 1: So, poets started dealing with safer topics

SPEAKER 2: kidnaps and recognitions of children, misunderstandings, pirates and of course love.

SPEAKER 3: Slaves were also common characters each of whom had their own personality…

SPEAKER 1: The main representative of this new comedy was Menander who influenced Roman Comedy through Plautus and Terence. But, this is something our friends from Italy will tell us about when we visit Rome!

SPEAKER 2: So, what was the place where ancient Greeks attended performances like?

SPEAKER 3: We know exactly what it was like thanks to the remaining parts of them we have today as well as ancient studies of architecture like the study of Vitruvius De Architectura.

SPEAKER 1: Some of them are actually in a very good condition!

SPEAKER 2: The first ancient theatre, as all evidence indicates, was the Theatre of Dionysus in Athens which was built at the beginning of the 5th century BC.

SPEAKER 3: the architectural structure of the ancient theatre was formed rather early in time. It comprised of three parts: the orchestra, the stage and the place where tha audience used to sit which in Greek is called “kilon”

SPEAKER 1: At first, the place for the audience was an amphitheatrical slope where the spectators sat on the ground.

SPEAKER 2: this slope gradually developed into stands initially made of wood and later made of stone.

SPEAKER 3: The orchestra was a circular platform where the Chorus stood and moved. In the beginning the place was empty and the scenery was the natural landscape completed by the temple of Dionysus which was located nearby.

SPEAKER 1: Aeschylus was the first one to add altars, graves and idols in the scenography. Buildings were added later as in the forst plays of Aeschylus there is no need for buildings.

SPEAKER 2: in the course of time an extended wooden building, which initially served as a warehouse but gradually became an organic part of the theatre with actors using its main gate to enter or exit the stage.

SPEAKER 3: The narrow space between the stage and the orchestra was called “Logion” and was the place where action took place. The stage later was made of stone.

SPEAKER 1: Since then the buildings of the theatre acquired several forms and today there are theatres that don’t resemble at all the ancient ones.

**PPT Παραδείγματα από θεατρικούς χώρους σήμερα**

SPEAKER 2: We will have the chance to visit the ancient theatre in Delphi where you will be able to see what we have presented you with today up close!

**BINTEAKI με αρχαία θέατρα**

SPEAKER 3: To sum up, this was how drama was born and developed in ancient Greece in the 5th century BC.

SPEAKER 1: It was closely related to democracy and the human need to pretend and act while someone is watching as according to an up-to-date drama definition “we have drama when A pretends to be B while C is watching”.

SPEAKER 2: Drama is one of the most amazing inventions of all time, which underwent through many stages of development through the ages.

SPEAKER 3: In this Erasmus program “In the theatre of life” that we are running together we will have the chance to explore all this long way that drama had to travel from antiquity to modern era.

SPEAKER 1: Here in Greece which was the first station in this long journey we worked on the birth of drama and theatre.

SPEAKER 2: And we hope we did manage to give you a clear picture of how and why drama and theatre began in ancient Greece.

SPEAKER 3: Thank you for listening to us! We hope you have enjoyed our presentation!