

The Greek theatre

The Greeks loved theatre. They brought incredible stories to life with drama, music and dance.

So, in ancient Greece, theatres were everywhere. Every town had a big bowl-shaped arena, usually on a hillside, where thousands would flock to sit on hard stone seats and watch the latest play.

The most successful Athenian playwright was Sophocles, who won so many Greek theatre competitions that he became a big celebrity.

There were three types of plays - comedies, tragedies (which were sad, serious play), and satyrs (a rude kind of play involving naughty half-men, half-goat characters).

Audiences could make a play a success by cheering and stamping their feet – or a miserable failure by throwing food at the performers. But if the audience we're getting too rowdy, the theatre staff had big sticks to keep them quiet.

Actors in ancient Greece were all men... apart from that one... oh no, that's a man too. Actors changed the way they looked by wearing masks, wigs and padded costumes.

The chorus, standing below the stage, told the audience what was going on in the story – lots of the time they delivered their lines in beautiful song and dance. Their costumes could be even stranger than the actors' – with animal skins and bird heads!

So next time you see a play, a film or are even just sitting at home watching TV – remember that it all started with the Greeks and their masks. Just don't try and throw your dinner at the telly!

