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An introduction to Greek theatre

Dr Laura Swift:

Traditional Greek theatre was open air and was built into the side of a hill, so the spectators sat in a semicircle up the hillside and at the bottom of the hill was a flat area, called the "orchestra", which is Greek for 'dancing space', where the chorus would have performed. Behind that, a raised stage area and some buildings for the actors.

Professor Edith Hall:

Some modern theatres have been deliberately built in order to imitate, in some respects, the Ancient Greek theatre. The Olivier Theatre at the National, for example, was actually modelled on Epidaurus, which is the best and earliest surviving stone theatre on a big scale in Ancient Greece. This means that you have an approximately circular space, which is open and extends, to some extent, into the audience and you have tiered seating in a semi-circular or horseshoe shape around it that rises up.

Michael Grady-Hall:

As an actor working on a stage like the Olivier, because of the wrap-around nature of the audience, it feels like you are connected more strongly to the people you are trying to communicate with and tell the story to.