

IDENTITY MASKS

Greek theatres were cleverly designed so that everyone could hear well, but the auditorium was so large that people sitting at the back were too far from the stage to see clearly. So the actors, who were always men, wore masks to show who they were - man or woman, young or old - and what mood they were in. Some masks were reversible:

they had calm expressions on one side and angry ones on the other, so the actor could change moods with a twist of his hand.



Masks were made of stiffened, painted cloth. They had funnel-shaped mouths to amplify the actors' voices, so everyone could hear them.

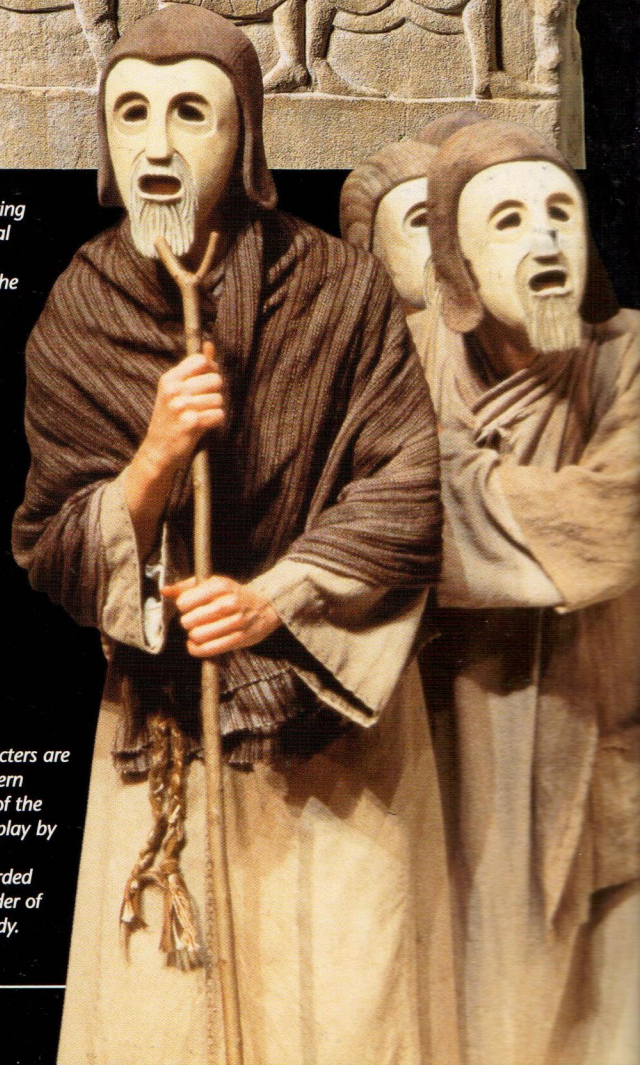


COSTUMES

The actors wore special costumes - wigs, thick padded tunics and shoes with thick soles - to make them look larger and taller. Bright clothes meant they were playing happy characters, and dark clothes were for tragic roles. In comedies, the chorus also wore special outfits and sometimes dressed up as birds and other animals.



This Archaic Period carving shows an early theatrical performance, with two dancers performing to the sound of a double flute.



These characters are from a modern production of the Oresteia, a play by Aeschylus, who is regarded as the founder of Greek tragedy.