

of Greece (*see* Drama). As these great dramas remain one of the loftiest expressions of human genius, so the nobly proportioned Greek theatre is one of the most impressive memorials of ancient architecture.

The seats of the ancient Greek theatre were usually built on the side of a hill. Thus all the spectators on the rising slope had a clear view of the "orchestra," the circle where, in the beginning, Dionysus was worshipped with choric dances. At the back of the orchestra was a platform about 10 feet high, which in time became the stage. Across the rear of the stage extended the decorated front of the stage buildings, which took the place of a back drop and provided dressing-rooms behind it for the actors.

Divisions of the Theatre

The words used by the Greeks for the principal divisions of the theatre are the same words that we use in English, slightly modified through the centuries. "Orchestra" is the Greek word meaning "dancing-place," and is still used to denote the part of the theatre immediately in front of the stage. The word "scenery" comes from the Greek word *skene*, meaning a booth, used to denote the stage buildings which served the Greeks as scenery. "Proscenium" (the Greek *proskēnion*), the term applied to the part of the modern stage in front of the curtain, denoted the stage-front.

The theatres of the Greeks were all roofless, and the performances were given by daylight, hence there was no need for artificial lighting. Changes of scene were very rare, and only the most rudimentary stage machinery was employed, such as a "thunder-machine" and a crane for suspending in mid-air actors who represented gods. In order that the actors might be heard well in all parts of the vast theatre they wore masks, which increased the carrying power of their voices and also showed the appropriate facial expression. Tragic actors wore in addition a thick-soled boot or "buskin" to increase their height.

Theatres of the Romans

The theatres of the Romans were copied from the Greek structures, with certain variations and improvements. By the use of supporting arches they were able to build great sloping theatres, instead of using hillsides as the Greeks did. The orchestra was no longer used for the performance, and senators and other persons of note were seated here. At the same time the stage was lowered and enlarged. The chariot races, gladiatorial fights, and combats with wild animals took place in such structures as the Circus Maximus of Rome and the amphitheatres (like the Colos-

seum at Rome) which sprang up all over the Roman Empire.

As dramatic art grew more corrupt and debased and the circus more brutal, the power of the rising Church was exerted against it, until, finally, all theatrical and kindred performances were forbidden. In the course of the Middle Ages the arenas and the amphitheatres scattered throughout the Roman world were filled with buildings used for shops and dwelling-houses.

Miracle and Mystery Plays

During the Middle Ages there were no theatres in the proper sense. The chief form of drama consisted of miracle plays and mysteries, which at first took place inside the churches, and then, when they came to attract more spectators, in the churchyards or in temporary booths.

Gradually the religious drama came to be replaced by the secular drama, but for a long time plays were performed only by strolling players in barns, tents, or the courtyards of inns. Not until late in the 16th century were any permanent buildings used.

The theatres of Shakespeare's time were built in imitation of the inn court-yard. They were eight-sided, for the most part, with a raised stage built across one of the sides and extending into the body of the house. Favoured spectators sat on its edge or in the three-storied covered balconies that extended all the way round the building, even behind the stage. The "groundlings," as Shakespeare called the people in the "pit," stood during the performance and were unprotected from the weather. Flags were flown above the buildings in order to show that a play was in course of being acted.

Only Daytime Performances

At the back of the stage were dressing-rooms and a curtained recess used for such scenes as the play within the play in "Hamlet" and Desdemona's chamber in "Othello." The performance was always given by day, so that there was no lighting. Scenery was very simple and there was no curtain.

The public theatres during the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and James I were not patronized by women. If the court wished to see a performance, the company was "commanded" to appear at the palace. The form of entertainment which the higher classes preferred was the masque, which resembled the pageant of our day. Painted scenery was used and the entire production became very elaborate, thus foreshadowing the opera.

The tendency throughout the 17th and 18th centuries was toward extreme elaboration. In Italy opera-houses grew more and more