WHAT IS THEATRE?
Theatre

• is a **story**
• told on a **stage**
• by **actors**
• in front of an **audience**.
Where did theatre come from?

• **Ritual**
• A set of actions or ceremonies performed on a regular basis.
• What type of rituals do we have today?
• Why do people perform rituals?

• 3 Basic Concerns of Ritual
  – Power
  – Pleasure
  – Duty
Greek Theatre
Dionysus

Greek god of wine, revelry, and fertility.
Dithyramb

• Song and Dance worshipping Dionysus.
Maenad

Female follower of Dionysus
Satyr

Male follower of Dionysus
Chorus

- A group of masked singers and dancers who would tell a story as a group.
Thespis

• First person to step away from the chorus and speak as an individual “first actor.”

Thespian

• Modern term meaning ‘actor,’ derived from Thespis.
Tragedy

- Early Greek play, based on the forces of fate.
Dionysia

- Main City where arts were prominent, hosted a dramatic festival
Pisistratus

- Greek Ruler, made the presentation of drama a government sponsored event.
• **Archon**: Greek official who became responsible for organizing Festival Dionysia

• **Choregus**: Greek citizen responsible for paying for Festival Dionysia (*producer*)
Theatre Criticism

- **Plato**
  Philosopher and theatre critic, believed theatre was a bad influence on society.
**Aristotle**: Philosopher and theatre critic, believed that theatre was a good influence on society.

**Catharsis**: emotional release, belief that theatre eliminated harmful feelings.
The Greek Stage
Orchestra: Circular space where the chorus sang and danced “dancing place”
Logeion: “speaking place” the stage of a Greek theatre
Theologeion: “speaking place of the gods”
• **Theatron**: ‘seeing place’
audience seating area of Greek Theatre

• **Skene**: Scenic building behind the Logeion, also used as acting area
• **Eccyclema**: Rolling Platform, often used to show dead characters

• **Periaktooi**: Three sided revolving column, used for scenery
**Deus ex machina:** a god would be brought in at the end of the play to help a character.

**Mechane:** a crane used in Greek theatre to bring a god onto stage.
Aeschylus: earliest playwright whose plays survive, wrote *Agamemnon*
Sophocles: Playwright, wrote *Oedipus Trilogy*, made actors more important.
Euripides: Playwright, wrote *Medea*, used scenery and machinery on stage