

Ancient Theatres

Insights from Antique Use to Modern Use

by

Naif Haddad

Ancient Theatres: Insights from Antique Use to Modern Use

by Naif Haddad

2026

Ethics International Press, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2026 by Naif Haddad

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (Hardback): 978-1-80441-989-2

ISBN (Ebook): 978-1-80441-990-8

Contents

Prologue Insights on Ancient Theatres: From Antique Use to Modern Use.....	vii
Chapter 1: Examination and Understanding Ancient Theatre, Theatrical Performance, Cultural Significance, and its Role in Shaping Civic Identity: A Concise Overview.....	1
Chapter 2: Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman Functional, Typological, Morphological and Structural Theatre Architecture, Location and Landscape: A Critical Review	29
Chapter 3: Greco-Hellenistic and Roman Typo-morphological and Structural Theatre Architecture in the Near East.....	78
Chapter 4: Theatre and Ancient Societies: Social and Cultural Indications from the Conceptual Approach and Design of Ancient Theatres	125
Chapter 5: A Critical Anthology of Ancient Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman Theatres Orientation for Re-interpretation of Acoustic Qualities and Landscape, and Modern Use Recommendations.....	151
Chapter 6: Natural and Anthropogenic Risks Mitigation and Recovery of Ancient Theatres' Heritage: Assessment and Recommendations.....	191
Chapter 7: Conservation, Restoration, and Interpretation of Ancient Theatres and Odea: Towards New Aspects in Achieving Sustainability and Changing Societies	248

Chapter 8: Towards Conservation and Preservation of the Acoustical Qualities and Architectural Heritage of Ancient Theatres and Odea: Towards a New Approach in Achieving Sustainability	285
Chapter 9: Towards Establishing Criteria for Identifying, Evaluating, and Managing Risks to the Cultural Heritage of Ancient Theatres.....	329
Chapter 10: Epilogue: The Need for Intervention and Recommendations for Modern Use of Ancient Theatres and Odea	376
Annexure	390
References.....	396

Prologue

Insights on Ancient Theatres: From Antique Use to Modern Use

Why Ancient Theatres?

There are many reasons why I chose ancient theatres as the theme for this book. The ancient theatre is one of the most significant and creative socio-cultural edutainment centres in human history, and it is still in active use. Many of these remarkable structures from classical antiquity continue to serve their original function and are actively used today for attractive modern performances, festivals, exhibitions and events. They are now incorporated into modern-era buildings as a “Living Museum”.

They stood as large, multifunctional structures for social, religious, propaganda and political gatherings. They demonstrate a shared heritage that fosters mutual understanding and dialogue between cultures, play a significant role in building a peaceful, democratic and open-minded society, and promote cultural diversity.

Theatre was a window into society and a catalyst for important discussions about justice, power, identity, and citizenship. Its architecture is the most appropriate typology for cultural sharing, with a socio-economic legacy at the Euro-Eastern Mediterranean level. Their survival can define their cultural significance through ancient, impressive landmarks, extraordinary architecture, acoustic characteristics, and continued reuse in modern socio-cultural edutainment performances and events.

The extensive production of ancient theatres in the Mediterranean region can be related to "personal cultural ambition" and the search for "corporate cultural identity" for corporate cultural communications. Recognised as a feature of Greco-Macedonian, Hellenistic and Roman civilisation by at least the fifth and fourth centuries BC, the theatre continued to represent the ideology and values of the socio-economic forces primarily responsible for its production, including those of Roman capitalists, throughout the first centuries AD.

Eventually, the theatre emerges as a global "symbol of cultural sharing and modernity," encouraging cities to compete for the most prominent theatre building. Thus, it is reasonable to view the theatre case as an example of a "Global-localisation" or global-local paradigm as a "Living Museum".

Moreover, these mainly Hellenistic and Roman edifices represented a rapid expansion and integration of the East-West, with a shared cultural frame of reference, which should serve as an excellent paradigm for the "Glocal" to rethink the present East-West dichotomy. In this context, we might consider that the production of these Hellenic theatres in the Eastern Mediterranean can be related to "personal cultural ambition," the search for "corporate cultural identity," and "corporate cultural sharing communication."

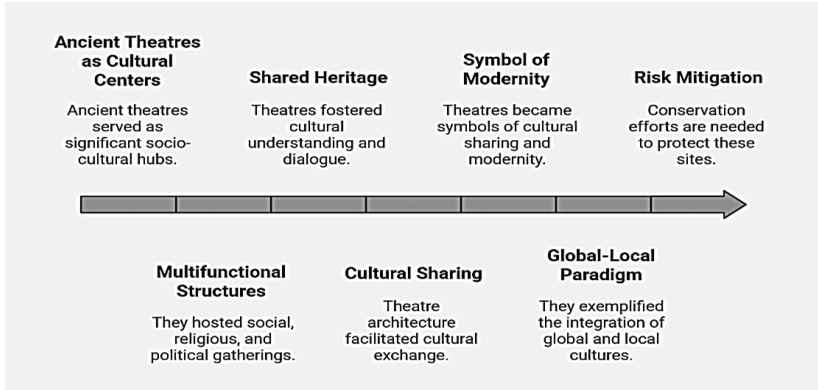


Figure 1 summarises the evolution and significance of ancient theatres

We can argue that local cultures seek to persuade the Greco-Macedonians, Alexandrians, Romans and Nabataeans by adopting the idea of Globalisation, as evidenced by these theatres and Odea. At the same time, their intention appears to be to protect and safeguard local beliefs and thoughts. This was carefully crafted to develop a hybrid approach that accounts for the political dimension. **Figure 1** summarises the evolution and significance of ancient theatres.

However, this theatre's heritage is exposed to multiple risks at different times or simultaneously, and the likelihood of managing them is relatively low. Today, many valuable theatre sites are threatened; thus, there is an even greater need for risk mitigation and conservation plans to enable more effective modern use of these sites. Until recently, the conservation of ancient Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman theatres and Odea has not received the attention it deserves. However, many of their technical aspects have attracted attention in recent years, including their acoustic properties.

The author's extensive involvement in this subject and related projects, such as the ERATO Project (Identification, evaluation and revival of the acoustical heritage of ancient theatres and Odea, 2003-2006) and the ATHENA Project (Ancient Theatre Enhancement for New Actualities), positions them well to enhance and expand the book's content, covering the academic, theoretical, and practical technical aspects for the first time, synthesised into a book. Drawing on the ERATO Project's results, which have a beneficial influence on the modern use of ancient theatres and acoustics, and the ATHENA Project, which conducted a deep examination of the specific risks and threats affecting ancient theatres, my research has significantly contributed to the contemporary utilisation of these ancient structures by thoroughly investigating the risks and hazards they face.

These risks can be categorised as natural, anthropogenic, and "technical." Natural risks and hazards mainly include climate-related weathering and erosion, as well as earthquakes. Anthropogenic theatre risks arise primarily from improper use in modern times. Technical risk arises from implementing incorrect new conservation interventions. This analysis presents the natural and anthropogenic threats that pose theatre-risk challenges and opportunities, discusses and recommends the conservation and preservation of theatre heritage (technical and socio-cultural), and outlines the asset framework for risk mitigation and modern-use management.

Recently, there has been increased emphasis on the preservation of ancient Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman theatres, as well as Odea, accompanied by growing scholarly interest in their technical characteristics, particularly acoustics. This development highlights ongoing research and opens promising opportunities for modern and virtual uses, fostering optimism about the protection and revival of these landmark structures.

Addressing these challenges is crucial for effective risk management, mitigation and long-term conservation, as ignoring them could lead to the permanent loss of important technical, scientific, and acoustic knowledge.

As a comprehensive guide to theatre heritage, cultural significance, conservation and preservation, and modern use, the book is organised into ten chapters, discusses the history and concept, and provides a brief review of how they have been understood in the physical, technical, and socio-cultural contexts. It outlines the asset framework for risk mitigation management. This is followed by a discussion on theatre heritage criteria for compatible modern uses and management, and finally, a summary and concluding remarks. More analytically:

The book synthesises perspectives from diverse sources across theoretical and practical themes, employing interpretive synthesis to analyse arguments, evaluate evidence and methodologies, and present a clear, evidence-based narrative of the civic roles of ancient theatre. It explores how the theatre fostered pride and education in ancient Greece, drawing on history, philosophy, science, performance studies, education, architecture, and politics to highlight societal influences.

The book also fills a gap by analysing how theatre shaped viewers' thinking and mental frameworks, influencing their worldview through performances, dialogue, and collective reflection. It perceives ancient theatre as a tool capable of encouraging activism and shaping the formation of emotional, intellectual, and spatial citizenship. Incorporating historical, sociological, architectural, and educational aspects, the analysis aims to address the current inadequate understanding and existing knowledge gaps. This book also contributes a framework for interpreting classical theatrical drama not

only as a socio-cultural work of art but also as a communicative infrastructure—an early creative space for networked socio-cultural dialogue and interaction.

Uniquely, this book combines, illustrates, summarises, discusses, presents, and analyses the multifaceted issues surrounding ancient theatres and their contemporary applications, culminating in recommendations for compatible use criteria. This approach provides a nuanced and comprehensive account of how ancient theatre functioned as a powerful civic institution, shaping the emotional, intellectual, and spatial experience of citizenship.

It fills research gaps by emphasising relevant scholarship and limited evidence, employing a descriptive, interpretive method with qualitative analysis and interdisciplinary synthesis. This book makes a significant contribution by thoroughly examining both ancient and modern theatre theory and practice, drawing on current scientific research. It also addresses contemporary issues, such as the risks and opportunities involved in using historic spaces today. Given these significant factors and challenges, I have decided to write this book (see **Figure 2**).

- **Chapter One** provides a brief overview, exploring the understanding of cultural significance, theatrical performance and its role in shaping the civic identity, history, and both tangible and intangible concepts, along with how these elements ought to be understood within their physical and sociocultural settings. It highlights the long shadow cast by ancient theatre on life and how drama and masks provoke critical thinking and raise ethical questions. It also offers valuable insights into how culture shapes our mindsets and perspectives. The study traces the classics into more contemporary discussions of media and art, emphasising

their importance in framing public opinion, civic responsibility and society's essential values.

- **Chapter Two** explores Greco-Hellenistic and Roman functional, typological, morphological, and structural theatre architecture, contributions, approaches and designs in theatre heritage, location, and landscape, from the archaic Greek to the Roman theatre, as a critical review. It also examines the critical issues surrounding ancient theatres, focusing primarily on technical considerations.
- **Chapter Three** explores the Greco-Hellenistic and Roman typological, morphological, and structural theatre architecture in the Near East. It explores the theatres in Provincia Arabia during the Hellenistic-Roman period, with comparative evaluation and observations on construction methods.
- **Chapter Four** presents classical theatre and ancient societies, the Greek, Hellenistic and Roman, based on social and cultural indications from the conceptual approach and design of ancient theatres.
- **Chapter Five** explores a critical anthology of ancient Greek, Hellenistic and Roman theatres orientation for re-interpretation, landscape and modern use recommendations. This will be based on an evaluation of the theatre's location, structure, and landscape in relation to orientation and acoustic qualities, as well as a statistical analysis and assessment of the orientation of 100 theatres.
- **Chapter Six** explores mainly the anthropogenic risks that threaten the heritage of ancient theatres and the recovery of their heritage, with an assessment and recommendations. It examines the various natural and anthropogenic risks that theatres face. In this chapter, the discussion centres on the difficulties of maintaining a theatre's unique identity and

authenticity, and it addresses various challenges and opportunities, offering practical advice.

- **Chapter Seven** delves into conservation, restoration, 3D virtual reconstruction and interpretation of ancient theatres and Odea, toward new aspects in achieving sustainability and changing societies. Additional strategies for protecting and preserving theatrical heritage in ways that are both culturally meaningful and technologically sustainable.
- **Chapter Eight** investigates the conservation of the acoustical qualities and architectural heritage of ancient theatres and Odea, toward a new approach in achieving sustainability. It explores modern use and ancient theatres, and the dilemma of reconstructing authentic scientific acoustical qualities, based on advanced technological investigation of the geometrical acoustics characteristics of ancient theatres and odea. It examines the mask function as an acoustic filter in ancient theatre performances and how to conserve the acoustic characteristics of ancient theatres.
- **Chapter Nine** effectively suggests a management framework for mode use/applications. It defines criteria for identifying, assessing and managing risks to ancient theatre cultural heritage by examining the proposed foundation of a management framework, offering recommendations for compatible modern applications, and establishing criteria for theatre heritage conservation. Furthermore, it investigates effective strategies for managing risks and maximising the potential of contemporary asset utilisation, including suggested indicators for theatre risk assessment in heritage conservation and a suggested conceptual approach for developing cultural heritage (CH) theatre risk assessment and management criteria.

- **Finally, Chapter Ten** effectively concludes the work with a closing brief statement that ensures the public is well-informed and equipped with practical recommendations for promoting, conserving and preserving theatre heritage, as well as the need for criteria for modern use and any intervention.

Professor Dr Naif Haddad

Professor of Architecture & Heritage Conservation, Dean of Queen Rania Faculty of Tourism and Heritage, Hashemite University, Jordan. E-mail: naifh@hu.edu.jo,

Former Acting President, Dean of the Faculty of Architecture and Design

Dean of Scientific Research & Graduate Studies, American University of Madaba (AUM), Jordan.

Chapter 1

Examination and Understanding Ancient Theatre, Theatrical Performance, Cultural Significance, and its Role in Shaping Civic Identity: A Concise Overview

Background

Cultural Heritage (CH) is an exceptional expression of human achievement and represents a valuable asset that belongs to everyone. It can be defined as comprising movable and immovable, tangible and intangible heritage that embodies historical, artistic, scientific, social, economic, spiritual, and cultural values of identity (Atakul et al., 2014; ICOMOS, 2005). The CH of Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman theatres was influenced by numerous geographic, climatic, political, economic, social, and cultural factors. It was not until the early sixth century BC that the theatre had a separate architectural space within the city for dramatic performances. Cultural significance refers to “the aesthetic, historical, scientific, social, or spiritual value for past, present, or future generations. It is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related areas and related objects” (Burra Charter, 2013).

Theatre is a specialised category of buildings designed for public assembly and performance. Ancient theatres are designed to serve as social, religious, and political meeting places, functioning as civic buildings for public activities and serving as performance spaces and multifunctional venues (Haddad, 2004). The civic architecture of

ancient theatres reflects the social structure of the period (Haddad, 2003). Various theories exist about the evolution of theatres, with the most objective indicating that their emergence stems from the evolution of myths and religious ceremonies (Al-Dahash, 1993).

Public entertainment space is needed in every city, so a theatre and, later, an amphitheatre were crucial components of the original planning and subsequent expansion of Roman towns, with their sizes determined by the city's population. A smaller but still more specialised type of theatre building identified by the generic Latin term *theatrum tectum* (roofed theatre) was being developed concurrently with the larger outdoor one. This kind of theatre, the *odeon/odium*, already existed in Greece and became widespread in the Roman period; it served as a concert hall for singing and musical performances and was also used for major meetings (Haddad, 2006a).

However, in every historical epoch, both outdoor and roofed theatres have been used for a range of purposes. These are categorised technologically as either multi-purpose theatre, which is the outdoor open-air theatre intended to accommodate a variety of public events, ranging from athletics to the performing arts, or multiple-use theatre, which is the outdoor open-air theatre designed to accommodate a variety of public events, ranging from athletics to the performing arts (Izenour, 1992). Ordinarily, the *odium* was built in a short distance from the larger open-air theatre. It is also characteristic that the amphitheatre is located far away from the theatre and the odium. Both theatre and odium served as cultural centres and stood as large, multifunctional social, religious, propaganda, and political meeting spaces (Haddad, 2007).

The city's importance was reflected in the number and scale of its theatres. According to Mourjopoulos and Fausti (2013), to date, 741

structures of ancient theatres and Odea have been identified and documented, of which 194 correspond to the first Greek theatres, while 425 theatres and 46 Odea belong to the Roman era. The remaining 76 cannot be precisely identified as either Greek or Roman (Girón et al, 2020). According to Berardi et al. (2016), a 2010 survey revealed that Italy is home to the remains of 224 ancient theatres and odea (also known as odeia), constructed during the Greek and Roman eras. From this extensive collection, 191 theatres can still be recognised as architectural entities, with nearly half currently serving as venues for drama, dance, and music festivals (Girón et al., 2020).

The theatrical presentations were considered major events. When festivals were held in the theatre in a city the size of ancient Athens, the city became the centre of attention, and all normal civic activities came to a halt because a significant proportion of the free population attended the events (Peter, 1989). Interestingly enough, the ticket was a donation from the state (Walton, 1980). As a gathering spot, it offered a respectful and welcoming atmosphere, with seating arranged according to status, thereby directing the gaze naturally toward the wealthy and the colonned scaenae frons (Bieber, 1961). **Figure 1** illustrates and summarises the evolution and the meaning of ancient theatres and Odea.

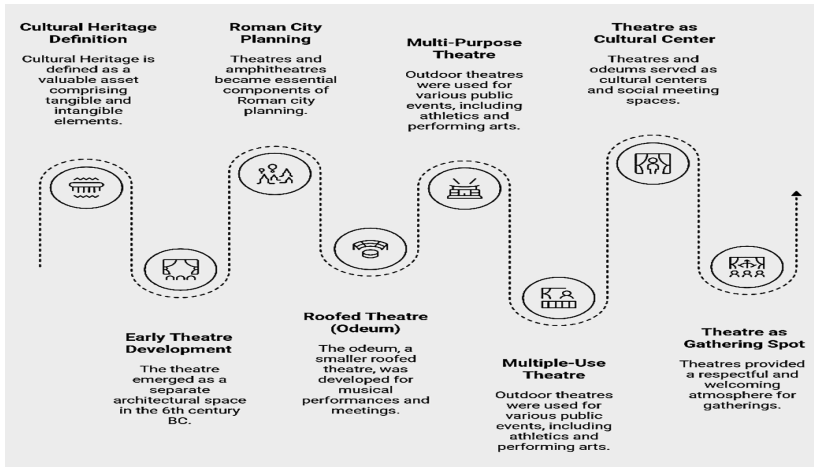


Figure 1 illustrates the evolution and the meaning of ancient theatres and Odeia

Ancient Theatres' Role in Shaping Civic Identity

Theatre in ancient Greece's civic mind, however, was also a civic mental tool, connected, through ritual, architecture, acoustics, pedagogy, and audience participation, to the foundations of ethical thought, the shaping of group identity, and a consciousness of democracy. Drama mattered to how Athenians perceived themselves, their state, and what it meant to stand in a moral world — not to mention that it was no mere art form.

It was Athenian city-state communities, the Hellenistic era, and the Roman period that most powerfully shaped the civic identity behind ancient Greek theatre. These spaces began to evolve from mere entertainment or spiritual observances into fully inclusive social contexts where people came together to discuss justice, governance, and accountability. Plays were performances not just as performances — as in the example before them — but as elements in a longer

political and philosophical discourse on what it meant to reside as a citizen of the polis.

The theatre's role was to serve as an institution that integrates aesthetic appeal with civic identity, intellectual exploration, and democratic reflection. Its place within the broader cultural, political, religious, and educational spheres fosters collaboration among playwrights, artists, and audiences and promotes civic discourse.

Researchers have recognised that drama has promoted dialogue amongst the public as a means of philosophical, democratic and social/spiritual reflection. Dramas helped to develop civic solidarity and social reflection on justice, duty, and participation (Minillò & Baccarini, 2021). The Greek drama emphasised themes of Athenian ethos, such as leadership failures, resistance to authority, ethical contradictions, and the tension between law and conscience.

The themes on stage and in the live theatre festivals helped to foster community and enhance both critical thought and moral awareness. They were vehicles for democratic ideals and civic education. Maybe that explains why theatre still provides a window into ideas and the ways people talk about people's identity and common values in the ancient Mediterranean.

Through dramatic engagement—on stage, in chorus, or as spectators—Greek theatre cultivated a population of thoughtful, expressive, and morally engaged citizens. According to Grammatas et al. (2023), these performances promoted philosophy, spirituality, and open dialogue on key Athenian principles, including governance, justice, social responsibility, and the balance between freedom and civic duty. **Figure 2** illustrates and summarises the main ways in which ancient theatre shaped civic identity and community.

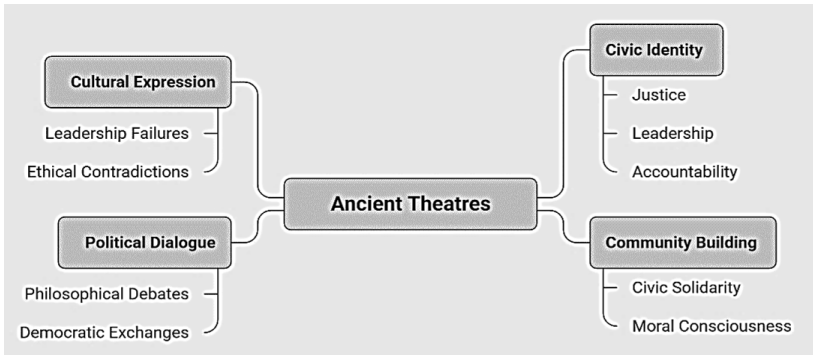


Figure 2 illustrates and summarises the main ways in which ancient theatre shaped civic identity and community

Cultural Significance of Echoes on the Stage: How Ancient Greek Theatre Shaped Civic Ideas and Moral Awareness

This subchapter examines theatrical styles, audience interaction, and playwright contributions in an interdisciplinary manner. It shows how theatre, especially in Athens, evolved to reflect society and foster open discussion, shaping how Greeks thought about and engaged with critical issues. It explores how theatre was a vital part of ancient Greek society, helping to shape community ideas, civic pride, and moral values. The aim is to examine how Greek theatre shapes civic opinion and conversation. Examine also how theatrical themes and stories promote critical thinking about ethical, political, and social matters. Finally, explore how playwrights use theatre to shape and influence philosophical ideas, debates, and public discourse.

Ultimately, it is about recognising how theatre shaped Greek attitudes, values, and perceptions across psychological, philosophical, and civic realms, and how it influenced people's thoughts through performances, dialogue, and rituals, serving as a space for societal and

philosophical reflection. It was the keystone of civic education in ancient Greece, providing citizens — especially youths — with the moral insight, rhetorical skill, and emotional intelligence needed to engage with the polis. It served as a shared instrument to foster creativity and awareness.

The influence of drama on wider society has ancient Dionysian roots, as well as on performers and audiences, gender roles, and even on playwrights like *Aeschylus*, *Sophocles*, *Euripides*, and *Aristophanes*. *Hypokrisis* (oratory or dramatic delivery) played an important role in actor training—emotional tone, persuasive speech, and choreographed movement were interwoven (Hall, 2023). They were publicly subsidised and presented at festivals, using story and laughter to wrestle with themes ranging from justice and authority to the nature of human character, making vague concepts more accessible and memorable.

Although a vast literature has been produced, particularly in formal, ceremonial, and political analyses of ancient Greek theatre, much less attention has been paid to its cognitive-psychological features. Although there is also rich interdisciplinary work, significant gaps remain in research on non-elite, lower-socioeconomic-status, and metic audience members, who have been less studied in their engagement with theatre, their consumption, and the effects of theatre on them. However, we have to rethink how the performances resonated with them and what it all meant for their experiences.

Kakoudaki (2016) advocates further research into how Greek theatre, as part of the present educational system, promotes civic engagement and thus calls for a study of the long-term impact of such integration. Plays like "*Antigone*," *Oedipus Rex* and *The Persian* "affirm ideas of

morality, authority and vulnerability that enhance understanding of cultural insight and civic consciousness," she cites.

Dynamically, theatre has also been concerned with fate versus free will, the relationship between man and the universe, the moral dilemmas confronting man and the world in general, and the relationship between social forces and individual beliefs (Feng, 2017). Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes and the rest of the ancient Greek theatre community can be identified by their writing. Aristophanes satirised military authority, womanhood, and social hypocrisy in his comedies, such as *Lysistrata*. Moreover, Euripides finally departed from stereotypical heroic narratives by foregrounding marginalised voices — women, outsiders, and emotional expression — the other side: men.

The *History of the Greek and Roman Theatre*, published by Princeton University Press in 1939 and reissued in 1961, covers a wide range of material objects, such as figurines of actors and their masks, as well as a concise survey of theatre buildings. Whatever the case, the more popular books, such as *Greek Theatre Production* and the extraordinarily useful *Illustrations of Greek Drama*, written with Trendall, were built on a solid foundation of comprehensive catalogues of objects that had been carefully classified in their own terms.

The drama fostered such thinking, emotional expression and reflection on society in a ceremonial setting with rites (Kattenbelt, 2014; Messing, 2020). Acting required both discipline and expression: masks concealed facial expressions during performances, so actors had to communicate their emotions to the audience through hand and bodily movement. The linkage that drama makes to society could encompass its Dionysian origins, the relationship between the actor and the audience, role-play between males and females, and

contributions from playwrights such as Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes. Hypokrisis, oratorical and dramatic performance, developed as an actor-training modality (Hall, 2023) and combined emotional tone, persuasive speech, and choreographed motion. The State-sanctioned and Festival-sponsored performances, which used narratives and humour to address themes of justice, authority, and human nature, presented concepts that were broader and more nuanced, yet also more accessible and easier to remember. **Figure 3** illustrates and summarises the impact of ancient theatre on society.

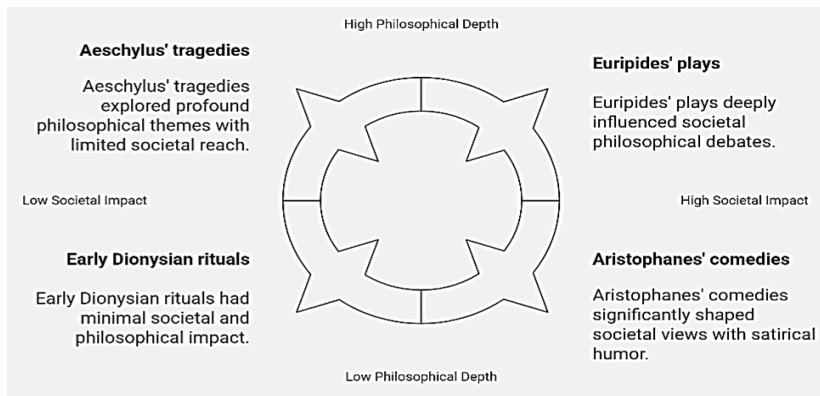


Figure 3 illustrates and summarises the impact of ancient theatre on society

While studies of the structure, formal activities, and political values of ancient Greek theatre exist, its cognitive and psychological implications are few. However, despite the depth of interdisciplinary work, there is also a gap in studies of audience participation in theatre that is particularly critical for non-elite audiences – women, ethnic and lower-class – who, to date, have not received as much attention on how they both participate in, and are influenced by, theatre. It is worth considering what they took away from the performances and the interpretations that they made of them.

Oscar Brockett (1977) noted that, although the study of ancient theatres began in the late 19th century, it has not received the attention it deserves. Ancient theatres, spanning antiquity to the modern period, remain the central focus of this book for several compelling reasons. These structures are among the most remarkable, innovative, and creative socio-cultural edutainment centres in human history, with many continuing to thrive as vibrant spaces for contemporary use.

It is remarkable how many theatres from classical antiquity continue to operate today, hosting performances, festivals, exhibitions, and various modern events. **Figure 4** illustrates and summarises the evolution of ancient theatres from ritual to modern entertainment. Historically, these theatres served as vast, multipurpose venues for gatherings related to society, religion, politics, and propaganda.

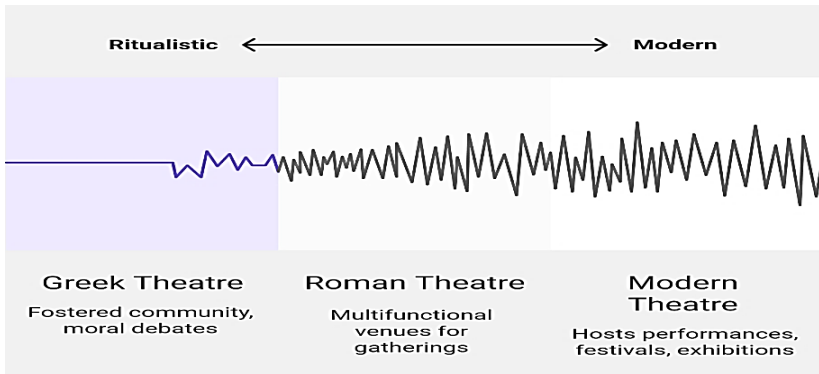


Figure 4 illustrates and summarises the evolution of ancient theatres from ritual to modern entertainment

Theatre functioned on a deeper level than mere entertainment—it fostered community, contributed to moral development, and encouraged civil discourse and citizen engagement. It upheld a shared CH and promoted deeper understanding and cross-cultural exchange.

Additionally, theatres contribute to the creation of peaceful, open, and democratic societies that value cultural diversity. In this context, Pericles (5th century BC), the governor of Athens in the golden age of Greek civilisation, believed that an educated citizen is a free citizen. He established the "*theoritica*," emphasising that attending theatrical performances constitutes a form of education, as they serve as "*daskali*," or teachers, alongside poetry in general. Theatrical presentations were considered a form of schooling in ancient Greece. Meanwhile, the Roman theatre was "another way of keeping people busy and happy, so they would not plot against the emperor" (Haddad, 2007)

Historians distinguish between classical theatres by their regional styles: Greek, Hellenistic, Eastern, Western, and Roman. The historian Paul Cartledge (1997) noted in his book *Deep Plays: Theatre as Process in Greek Civic Life* that Athenian theatre was inseparable from major public rituals—the City Dionysia and other forms of public theatre in the history of the Greek civic community. These plays, he clarifies, were crucial for religious and state celebrations. So, he went on to say that the art of a society, which he called a vital part of religious and state festivals, turned these acts into lively civic celebrations and brought people together. These concerts accordingly gave citizens a chance to grapple with moral, political, and social concerns. Cartledge's reading portrays theatre as an instrument of training that inculcates democratic values and civic unity.

Edith Hall's *The Sociology of Athenian Tragedy* (1997), one such exploration of the portrayal of women, enslaved people, and foreigners in the theatre, it was a key text. They were kept out of politics and represented in vivid detail, challenging even the elite male audience to interrogate conceptions of justice and civic boundaries. The theatre here emerges, in the process of her reading, as a pivotal site for questioning and validating dominant social rules.

Kakoudaki (2016) draws a connection between the ancient and the modern in her article "The Song of the Ephebe," which explores how Greek tragedies, including *Sophocles' Antigone*, are taught in contemporary curricula. She shows that themes of justice, civic duty, conscience and authority in performance nurture civic awareness, moral reasoning and active citizenship. From "Art, Architecture, and Spaces in Greek Participatory Societies," by Tonio Hölscher (2015), we learn about the fascinating qualities of Greek theatre architecture. The circular orchestra, the design's openness, and the acoustics are among the factors that contribute to a sense of community and civic engagement, he notes. This made these spaces central to social interaction, as they welcomed spectators to engage more with civic life.

As for architectural identity, Hölscher and others discuss theatre architecture, but further research is needed on how elements such as seating, visibility, and acoustics construct civic identity. Moreover, although its architecture does indeed provide a major typology of cultural exchange, the socio-economic legacies it leaves behind are evident throughout much of the Euro-Mediterranean region. The historical, architectural, acoustic, and cultural value of the remaining cities is not only obvious to the visitor but also evident in their enduring role in modern culture, society, and events, as will be addressed in the following chapters.

Theatre, according to authors such as Gulkhara and Elza (2025), is a significant and vital institution for social resistance and transformative change (particularly during turbulent times of adversity).

In the course of general approaches to social movements, however, early models of inclusion are excluded from their analysis, and these often lack a formalised process for classical Greek theatre. In 'Theatre as a Reflection of Social Change', Gulkhara and Elza write that theatre

is a vehicle of social change amid upheaval. Even if not all traditional styles are rigidly adhered to, they argue that drama, when harnessed in its appropriate form, can lead to civic consciousness. In addition, Sue-Ellen Case and Froma Zeitlin examine gender performances – and contend that male actors play the parts of women in ways that are simultaneously self-correcting and open them up to civic questioning of identity and power relations. **Figure 5** illustrates and summarises scholars' views on ancient theatre and civic engagement, from reflection to action.

Theatre in the Greek city-state was an epicentre of social life, a means of resistance, and a way to ask how audiences might reconceptualise justice, authority, identity, and moral duty. Theatre and theatre design – two things that come naturally to every theatre – offer their own adaptations, have their own structures, and their designs may be more reflective of their setting than of their criteria. This variety led to many versions depending on taste and appearance.

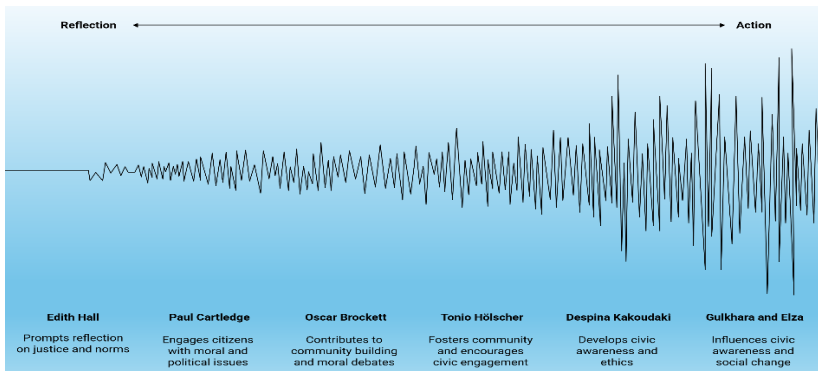


Figure 5 illustrates and summarises scholars' views on ancient theatre and civic engagement, from reflection to action

The theatre stage of ancient Greece was far more than mere entertainment; it served as a critical forum where the population

could examine its own conscience. In Athens, it was supported by a philosophy that laid down the very foundation of philosophical thought and morality. Far from just a parlour for entertainment, it served as a stage for debates among civic members on ethics, politics, and cultural identity. It also produced theatrical mythological archetypes and satire, as well as elaborate representations of human suffering and heroism, which were used as conduits for public discourse, educational understanding, human contemplation, and social understanding.

Theatre propelled debate beyond the stage — its concerns echoed in courtrooms, assembly halls, and public square debates. Playwrights used rhetorical devices — Agon and Parabasis among them — to encourage audience members to become actively engaged in reflection, thus replicating deliberation in the theatre itself. Within a protective performance frame, a dramatic metaphor enabled discussion of taboo or controversial topics such as war, tyranny, sexuality, and class tension.

Based on analyses from classical history, political theory, aesthetic philosophy, education, performance studies, and theatre architectural design and dramatic narratives, many bonds with modern discussions regarding the formative impact of cultural media and insights into the ongoing dialogue between art and mind of how performance influences perspectives, and how narrative functions as a scaffold for individual and collective reasoning. At least, parallels between the classical stage and today's media highlight how public storytelling influences civic behaviour and morals.

This suggests a reevaluation of Greek theatre beyond the magnificence and ritual of the stage, toward a role as a tool for cognitive and public education. It promotes critical thinking and

ethics, echoing Athens' educational ethos. In addition, we can illustrate and explain the links between classical performance traditions and contemporary discussions of media, including social media and art, and how these impact the framing of public discourse, civic responsibility, and societal values.

It has been for so long, a lot more than entertainment — a vital point of civic education, a vital way to think morally, a platform through which we encounter the public and help form our identities together. It started with the cult of the sacred ritual work of Dionysus, and developed into a lively public art style for thousands of people in thousands of seats. Many open-air theatre productions are staged in outdoor venues and seek to be inclusive and socially active (Cartwright, 2016).

Mythological tales, satire, and ethics on the Greek and Hellenistic stage were more than mere entertainment; they also promoted democratic philosophy and values, sparked philosophical discourse, and fostered community cohesion. They had tremendous influence over general behaviour, vocabulary, voting habits, and moral perception. This highlights the important role that the arts occupied in fostering a culture of mutual sympathy in Greek society. It was not where people would escape politics, it was where they practised the hardest in politics, through this most visceral, reflective practice of democracy – an emotional, intellectual, and participatory practice of democracy itself.

It was a bustling site where communities met to debate major issues through the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes. These shows used storytelling and humour to address issues such as justice, authority, and human nature, thereby distilling complex concepts in ways that made them more memorable. Such is

the connection among the historical, cultural, social, and performative influences noted in academic research that it would be worthwhile to consider theatre's impact on civic engagement beyond its status as an art form alone. Some of the key works cited are seminal analyses (Cartledge, 1997), sociological approaches (Hall, 1997), architectural studies (Hölscher, 2015), current pedagogical applications (Kakoudaki, 2016) and wider research on civic engagement and performance.

The expansion of ancient theatres into the Mediterranean can be ascribed to "cultural ambition by individuals" and, in some cases, to the need for a "corporate cultural identity" in communication. By the end of the fifth to the mid- to fourth century BC, the theatre became an acknowledged symbol of Hellenistic Greco-Macedonian and Roman culture, and that held during the early 1st- and the 4th-century CE. Although research on the technical, religious, and politico-cultural aspects of ancient Greek theatre is relatively common, its role in our cognitive processes and thought is rarely discussed. It provoked people to ponder these themes more deeply.

Arts such as theatre are also shaping how people think about the world around them, affecting public opinion, the language we use to communicate, how we vote, and our morals – in ways that can shape a better understanding of our society. Theatre is also a tool for cultural exchange and progress at the time, leading cities around the world to open their own theatres, often reflecting the spirit and values of wealthy northern nations, especially those inspired by forward-thinking Roman entrepreneurs.

The social impact of ancient Greek theatre has been much less discussed, given the focus on its technical aspects and its religious and political implications. The art of theatre influences how society views

the world. It shapes our thoughts and actions, from how we vote to how we talk, to our moral compass. It teaches us to be better. Theatre at the time also represented advancement and cultural exchange across cities. Many cities around the globe decided to build their own theatres, often imitating societies with greater economic advantages, such as Roman entrepreneurs. **Figure 6** illustrates and summarises the cognitive and societal impact of ancient Greek theatre.

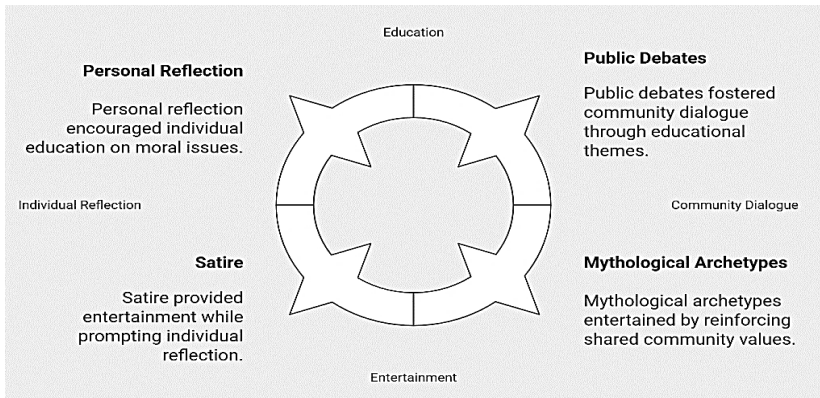


Figure 6 illustrates and summarises the cognitive and societal impact of ancient Greek theatre

The growth of theatre offers a compelling illustration of "glocalisation," where international influences blend harmoniously with local traditions. These Hellenistic and Roman structures are excellent examples of the 'Glocal' concept, showing how Eastern and Western cultures quickly came together and evolved within a shared system.

Constructed in the Eastern Mediterranean, they presumably aimed to establish a "corporate cultural identity" for cohesive cultural expression and individual "cultural ambitions," thereby challenging