

## Facing the Audience: Using Masks in Ancient Theatre TiGR Workshop

Masks were integral to the performative culture of ancient Rome. From the masks at aristocratic funerals, noted by Polybius, Diodorus Siculus, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, to the likely use of masks for performing *comoediae palliatae*, it is clear that ancient actors used these performative tools to enhance their transformation into other characters. Yet, there is no doubt that the masked aspect of ancient dramatic performance is one of the more alienating features when presenting to modern audiences accustomed to naturalistic productions.

When instructors welcome students to perform ancient drama, students with extensive acting experiences might also the loss of the face as a mechanism for conveying the appropriate emotional tone of scenes. Masks surely take additional practice time so actors can comfortably and confidently navigate their performance spaces. Creating the masks themselves can be a time-consuming process for productions tight on budgets and time.

All of this said, the use of masks can have very practical benefits for modern theatre producers in understanding certain aspects of ancient drama. This workshop is intended to give participants practical activities that they can use with students in thinking about how the use of masks impacted the production of theatrical works in Greece and Rome. Chris Bungard, coming from a Classics perspective, and Wendy Meaden, coming from a theatre practice perspective, will walk participants through a series of exercises that can be used in the college classroom. Using masks inspired by terracotta statues, frescoes, and mosaics as well as scenarios from Roman comedy, they will help participants come to an understanding of:

1. Role of masks in establishing basic characteristics
2. Ability of static masks to portray various emotions with accompanying body posturing

3. Snapping focus on the stage
4. Practical concerns of movement and actor spacing on the stage

Participants with extensive experience using masks in staged productions are welcome to bring masks of their own to the workshop as well as contribute activities that they have used with their students.

Finally, it is our hope that by the time of the CAMWS annual meeting, we will have available 3D renderings of the masks that will be used in the workshop which participants can download for 3D printing and use at their home institutions.

#### Selected Bibliography:

- Cohen, A. 2010. "Can You Hear Me Now?: Implications of New Research in Greek Theatrical Masks." *Didaskalia* 7(1).
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- Marshall, C. 2006. *The Stagecraft and Performance of Roman Comedy*. Cambridge.
- Meaden, W. and M. Brown. 2023. *Theatre Masks Out Side In: Perspectives on Mask History, Design, Construction, and Performance*. Routledge.
- Questa, C., and R. Raffaelli. 1984. *Maschere, Prologhi, Naufraggi nella comedia plautina*. Bari.