

## Menander on the Big Stage: *Dyskolos* in the Theater of Dionysus

Now that recent scholarship has reconfigured the fifth-century Theater of Dionysus (Goette 2007, Lech 2009, Hughes 2012: 59-65), Menander's *Dyskolos* takes on increasing significance for scholars of ancient performance, because it becomes the only complete script of a play documented to have been performed in the Lycurgan Theater. This paper seeks to present some blocking for such a space based on the requirements of the script and the space of the Lycurgan Theater.

While scholars have fruitfully studied *Dyskolos* for stage dynamics and their interplay with meaning (e.g., Traill 2001), assumptions about the blocking of the play have relied implicitly on anachronistic assumptions about the ways Menander could use the space. In particular, the three structures referenced in the play (the shrine to Pan, Knemon's house and Gorgias' house) are assumed to be aligned side by side, usually with the temple in the center, an arrangement sensible for a Roman stage or a modern proscenium stage. The statements and reactions by characters in the script, however, make any such linear arrangement across the stage problematic or contradictory.

With one simple move, the arrangement of these structures becomes more lively and eliminates all the contradictions. Gorgias' house, while referenced only rarely, should not be back at the *skene*, but away from it, most sensibly off to an edge of the orchestra.

Action is connected to Gorgias' house only three times during the course of the play: (1) Near the end of the first Act, Daos emerges from Gorgias' house and watches while Sostratos delivers water from Pan's shrine to the Girl, who goes into Knemon's house. (2) At the end of the third Act, Daos goes back inside and that is the last we see of him. (3) In Act 4, the crippled Knemon tells Gorgias to go retrieve his mother, which he does. These three actions are the sum

total of the action that pertains to Gorgias' house. By contrast, the other two structures are the constant focus of attention and have greater dramatic needs. The shrine has to host a chaotic, noisy feast, with characters constantly coming and going, including the large party entering in Act 3. Characters converse back and forth into Knemon's house, and he has to be wheeled out of it. Gorgias' home has no particular requirements other than a couple of actors needing to enter and exit.

The scene where Daos watches Sostratos and the Girl makes clear that Gorgias' house cannot stand between the shrine and Knemon's house. Putting Gorgias' home on one side, either neighboring the shrine or Knemon's home, causes problems perpetually throughout a performance. In either position, traffic is entering and exiting and having to ignore his house as they do. Moreover, Gorgias in Act 3 describes a scene where Knemon in his field can see Gorgias and company working on their own land, implying that their properties are contiguous. While not mandatory, we can expect their houses to be on their properties, but this is impossible when everyone is using a single exit to go to the combined fields. It is a disorienting disjunction for the spectators.

Finally, the new placement of Gorgias' house also makes sense of a crucial and confusing reference to stage action. In the initial scenes, all the activity involves the shrine and Knemon's house. The sudden appearance of Daos from Gorgias' house is startling and suddenly expands the live dramatic space. He watches the scene with Sostratos and the Girl with suspicion and announces to the audience that he had better go tell his master Gorgias what he just saw.

Right away he also sees the chorus of drunk Pan worshippers coming and says it would be better not to get caught up with them. If Gorgias' house is off of the orchestra, however, then the entering chorus is parading into the orchestra straight toward him, so he exits via the *eisodos*

toward the fields. The chorus members are logically entering from the *eisodos* that leads to town and when they are finished, they exit into the shrine. In subsequent breaks, they enter and exit the playing space from the shrine.

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