The History of Theatre

Theatre had its origins in the earliest parts of human history. The first form of theatre can be found in the development of dance culture. Dances were originally performed in commemoration of major events, celebrations and religious ceremonies. At first, they were very informal affairs, but dancing as rituals evolved into very sophisticated forms of artistry.

The foundation of Greek theatre evolved directly from these tribal dances and dramas. Greek theatre is where modern theatre draws its roots from. It is the start of the Western tradition of theatre because not only did the Greeks enjoy theatre as part of religion, but also saw it as an art form. The first steps towards Greek theatre occurred when dances and rituals to the ancient Greek God of Win, Dionysus, became more and more sophisticated. The biggest change was the addition of style and theme that led to the development of plays, where spoken word was used rather than only song and dance.

Formal Greek theatre is renowned for its style, themes and physical constructions. Every element of modern theatre can be traced to Greek theatre. The great Greek playwrights were very interested in the development of theme in their plays. They were the first to create category of themes suited for different plays. These themes included tragedy, comedy and satire. Tragedy was the most common element in Greek plays, in particular, the biggest development that the Greeks made as in the concept of a “Tragic hero”, or a hero who is ultimately defeated by their hubris. Stylistically, Greek plays had a very specific structure; they were created primarily to be played once, therefore, they were often staged in a series of four plays. With the first three being tragedies and the final one a comedy that tied them all together to lighten the mood of the crowd. The development of style and a system for organizing plays along scenes and acts was very important and is still something that persists in modern theatre. Finally, the Greeks were also known for their actual physical constructions of theatre areas. Unlike, the previous era where rituals were performs at religious centers and in preparation for battles, the Greeks created amphitheaters within every city where they would hold yearly plays and contests. Amphitheaters were large central stages that are surrounded by raised stairs for seating. They became the popular form of theatre construction for the next thousand years.

Greek theatre can be seen as the roots of all modern theatre because they added many of the different core elements that we see in theatre today. They were also the first to have professional actors and playwrights rather than religious figures. Greek theatre started the trend of having professional performers by introducing the actor’s guild where they trained very skilled troupes that would travel around Greece and perform for cities and rural areas along the way.

Exercise 1: Прочтите и переведите текст.

Exercise 2: Составьте к тексту 12 вопросов.

Exercise 3: Подготовьте краткий пересказ текста (12-15 предложений)