

HISTORY OF THEATRE

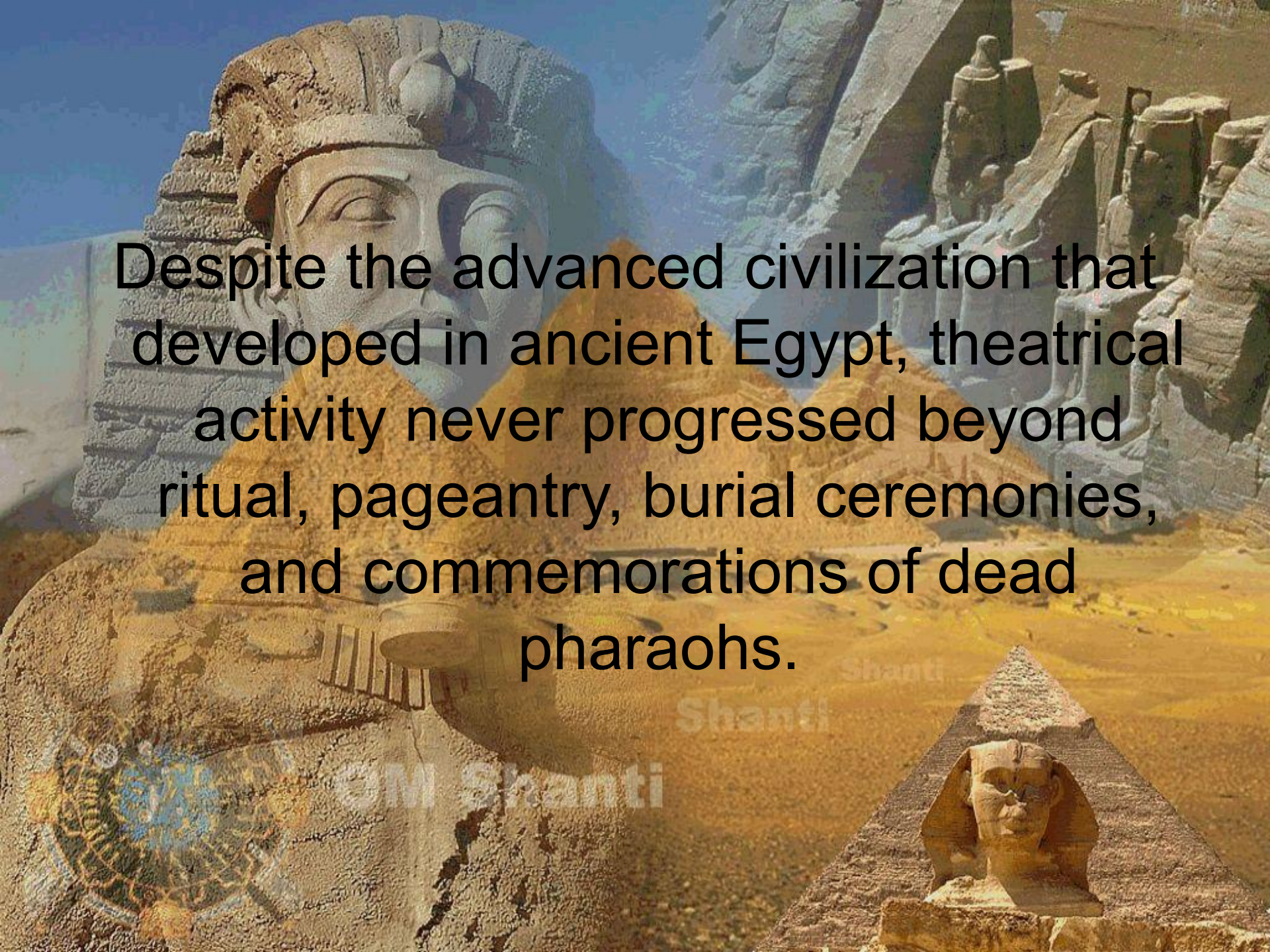
EGYPT

The background of the slide is a composite image of ancient Egyptian landmarks. On the left, a large, detailed head of the Sphinx is visible. In the center, a golden pyramid rises against a blue sky. To the right, a row of smaller pyramids and statues is shown. The overall color palette is dominated by the golden-brown of the pyramids and the blue of the sky.

A passion play performed annually
at Abydos from about 2500 BC to
about 550 BC

**...dealt with the
death and
resurrection of
the god Osiris**



The background is a composite image of ancient Egyptian monuments. On the left, a large, weathered stone head of a pharaoh, likely the Great Sphinx, is visible. In the center, the Great Pyramids of Giza are shown under a clear blue sky. On the right, a smaller sphinx is perched atop a pyramid. The overall scene is set in a desert environment with golden sand.

Despite the advanced civilization that developed in ancient Egypt, theatrical activity never progressed beyond ritual, pageantry, burial ceremonies, and commemorations of dead pharaohs.

GREECE

Greek philosopher
Aristotle (4th
century BC)
claimed that
theatre began
with hymns to
god Dionysus
presented at an
annual festival.



According to
tradition
Dionysus died
each winter

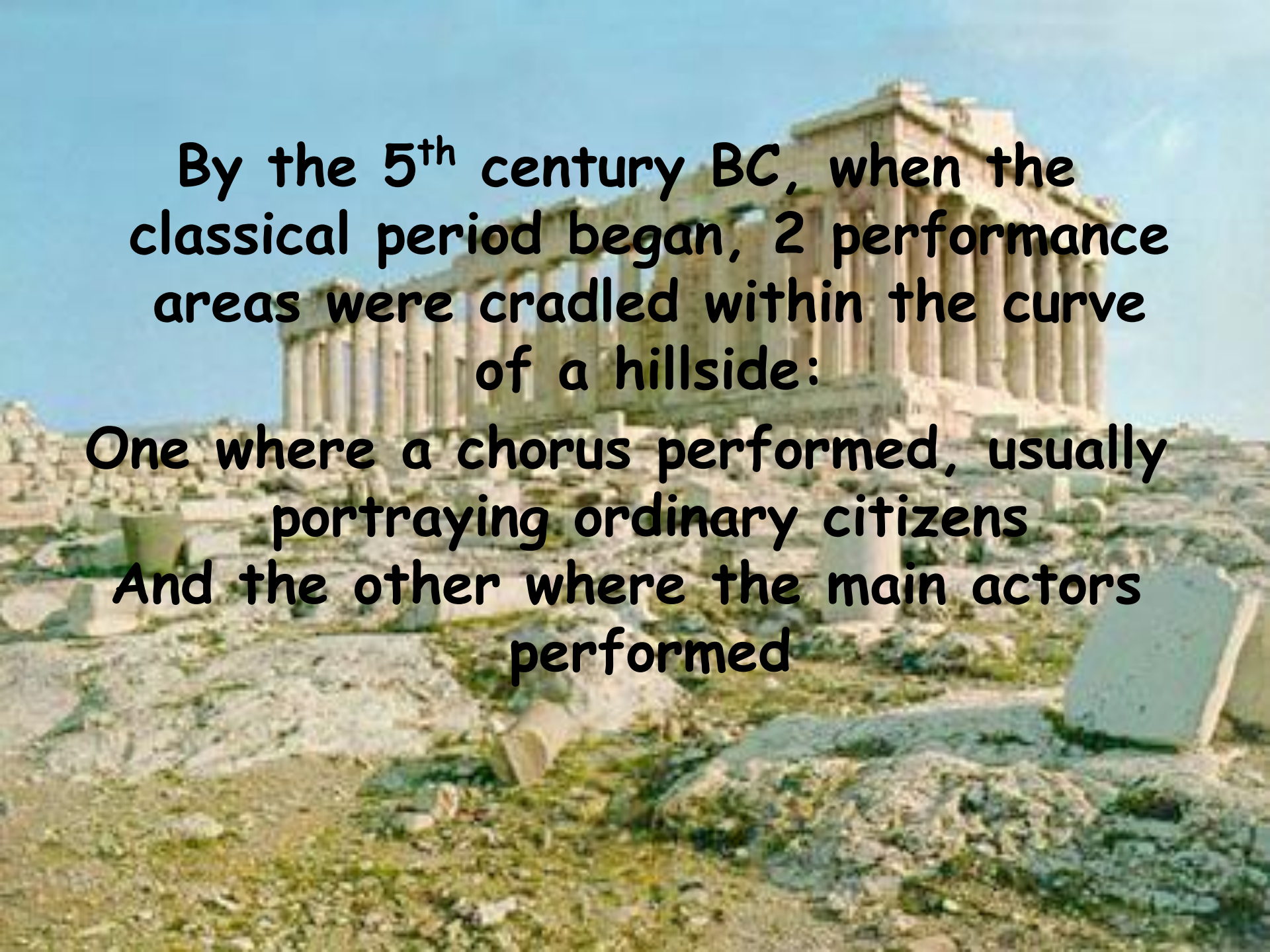


and was reborn
each spring



Greece's earliest
theatre
architecture took
its form from the
threshing circle - a
round, flat circle at
the base of a
hillside that was
used for separating
wheat from the
chaff

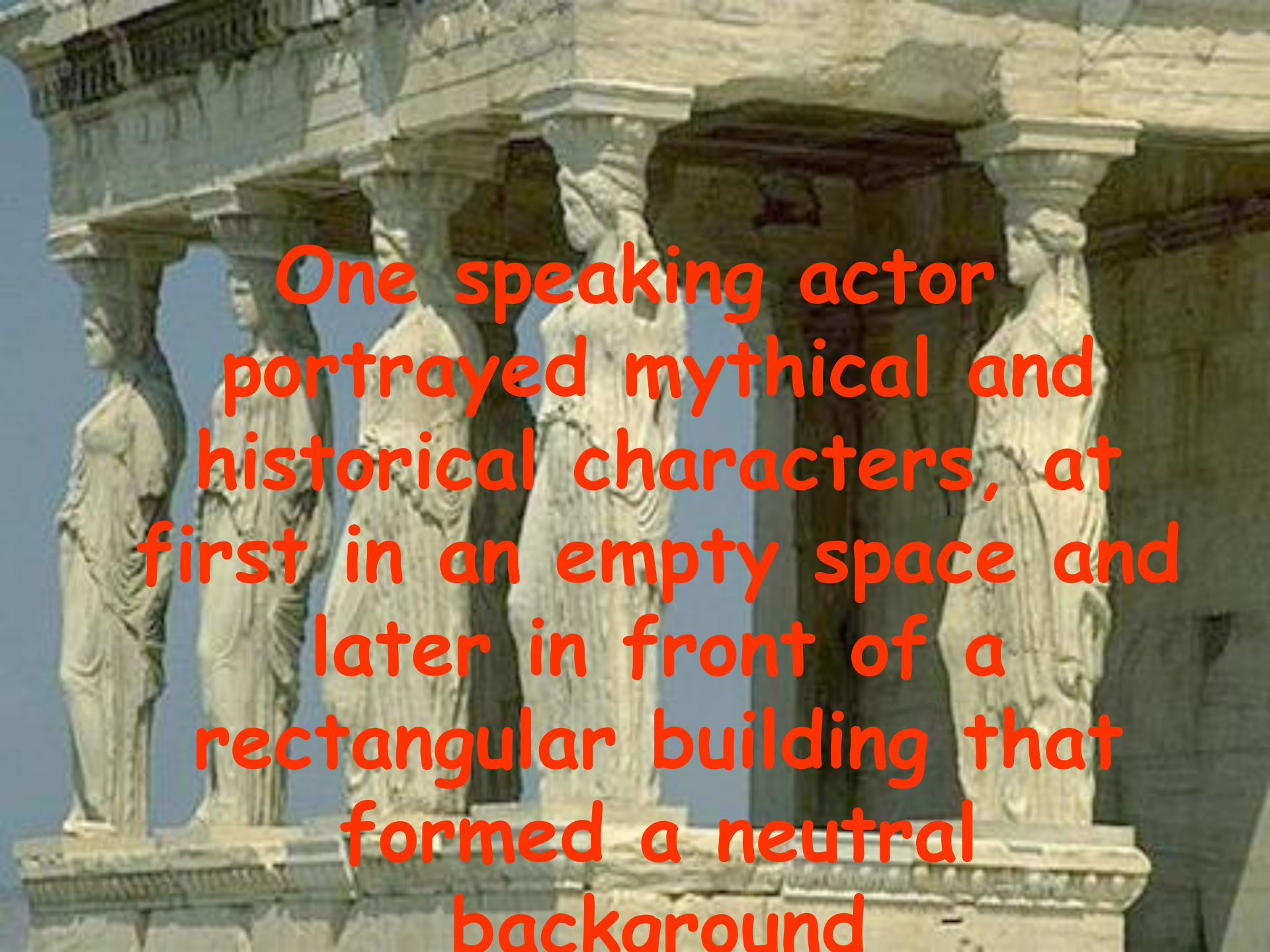




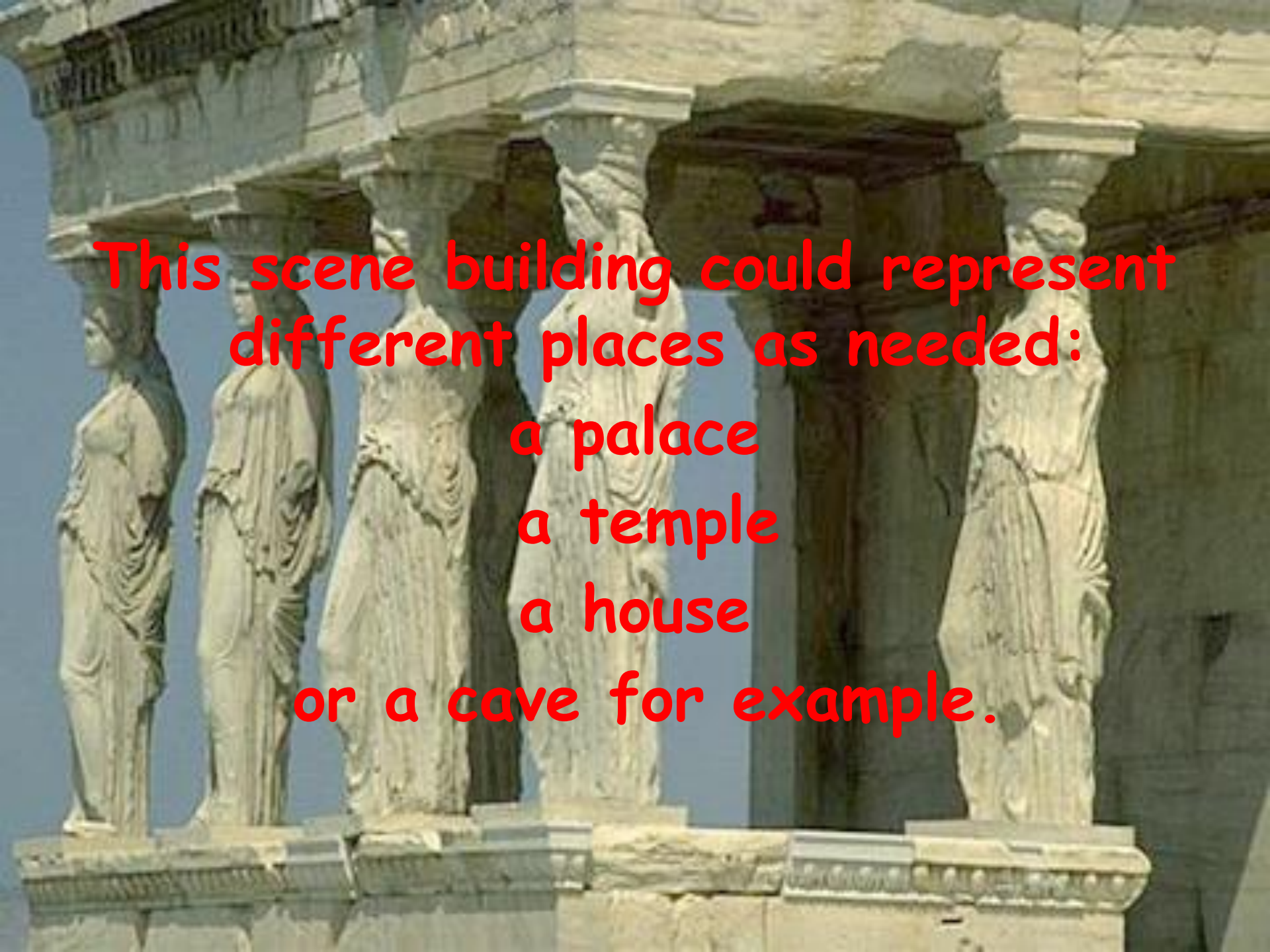
By the 5th century BC, when the classical period began, 2 performance areas were cradled within the curve of a hillside:

One where a chorus performed, usually portraying ordinary citizens

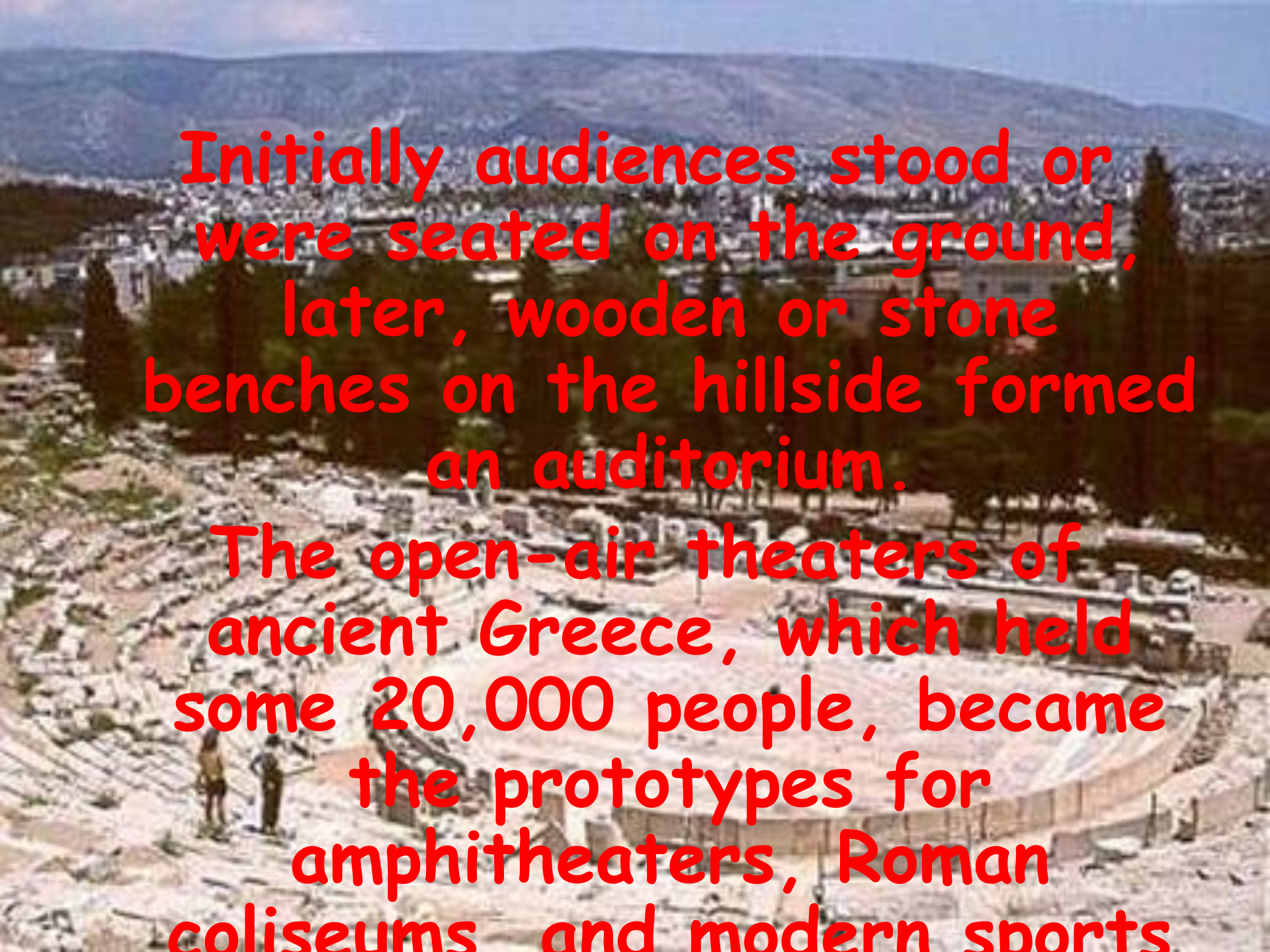
And the other where the main actors performed



One speaking actor
portrayed mythical and
historical characters, at
first in an empty space and
later in front of a
rectangular building that
formed a neutral
background



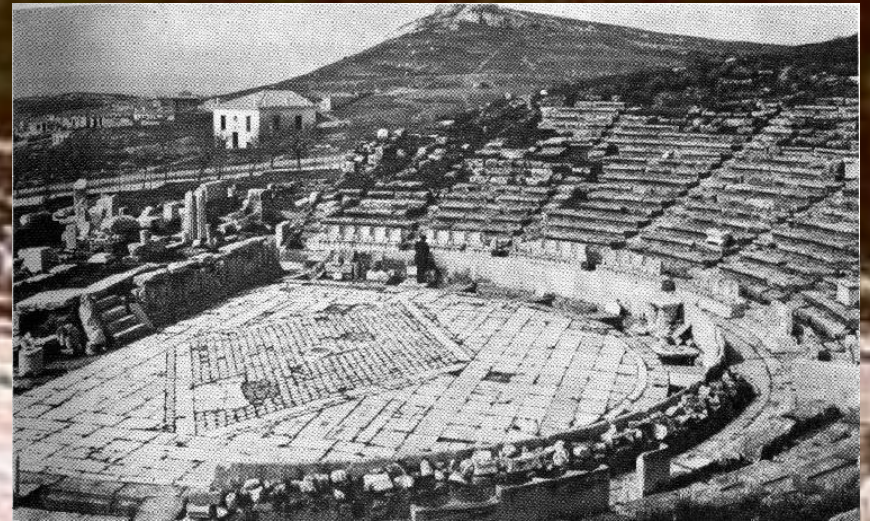
This scene building could represent
different places as needed:
a palace
a temple
a house
or a cave for example.

The background image shows a wide-angle view of an ancient Greek theater, likely the Theater of Dionysus in Athens. The theater is built into a hillside, with its semi-circular seating area (cavea) visible in the foreground. The stage (orchestra) is a flat, circular area in the center. In the background, the city of Athens is visible, nestled in a valley with mountains in the distance. The sky is clear and blue.

Initially audiences stood or were seated on the ground, later, wooden or stone benches on the hillside formed an auditorium.

The open-air theaters of ancient Greece, which held some 20,000 people, became the prototypes for amphitheaters, Roman coliseums and modern sports

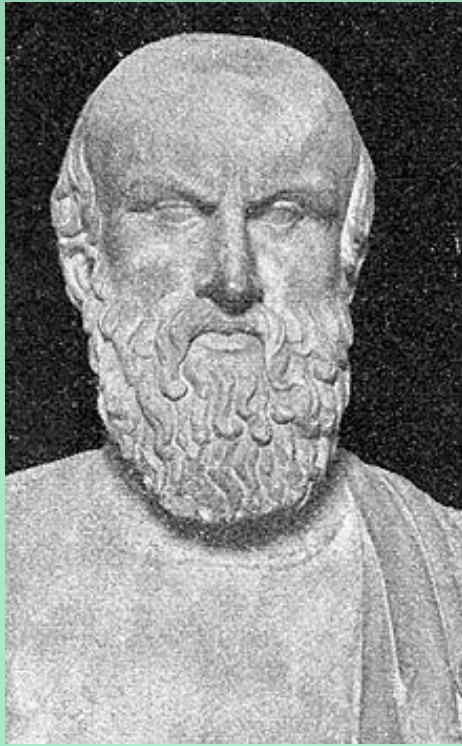
The most celebrated theater of classical Athens, the theater of Dionysus, was located on the slope of a hill below the Acropolis



The four Greek playwrights
whose work has survived,
wrote for annual dramatic
festivals held there:



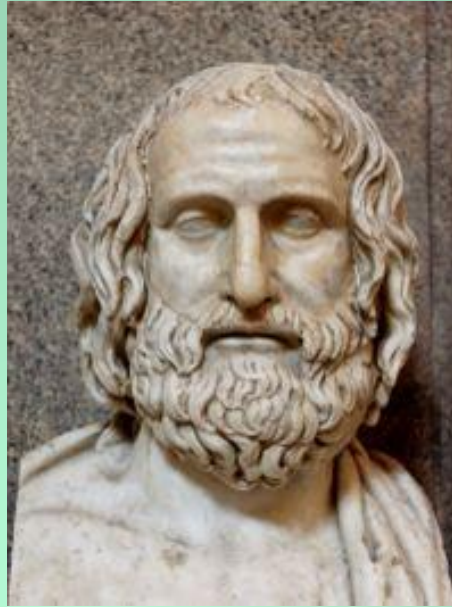
Aeschylus



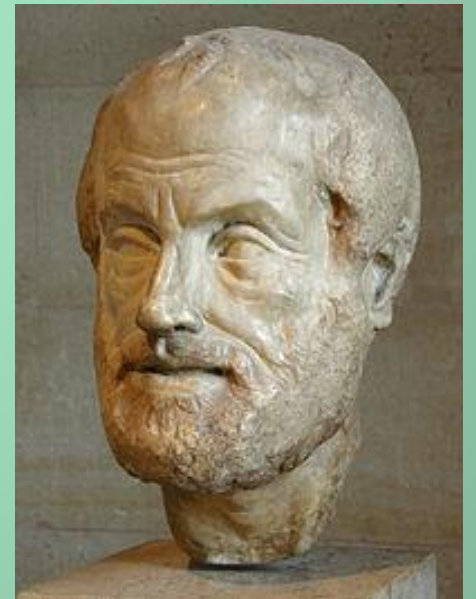
Sophocles



Euripides

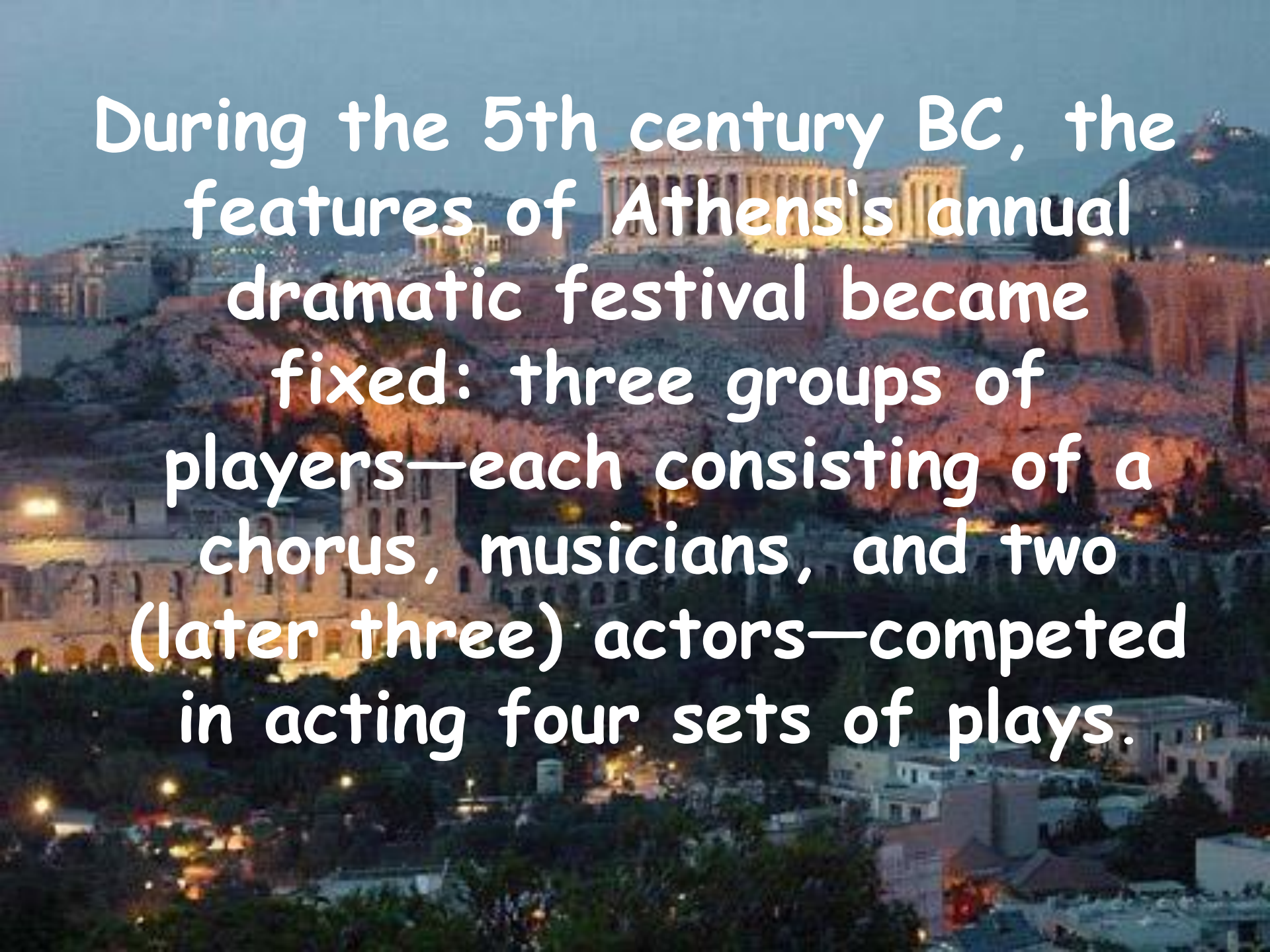


Aristophanes

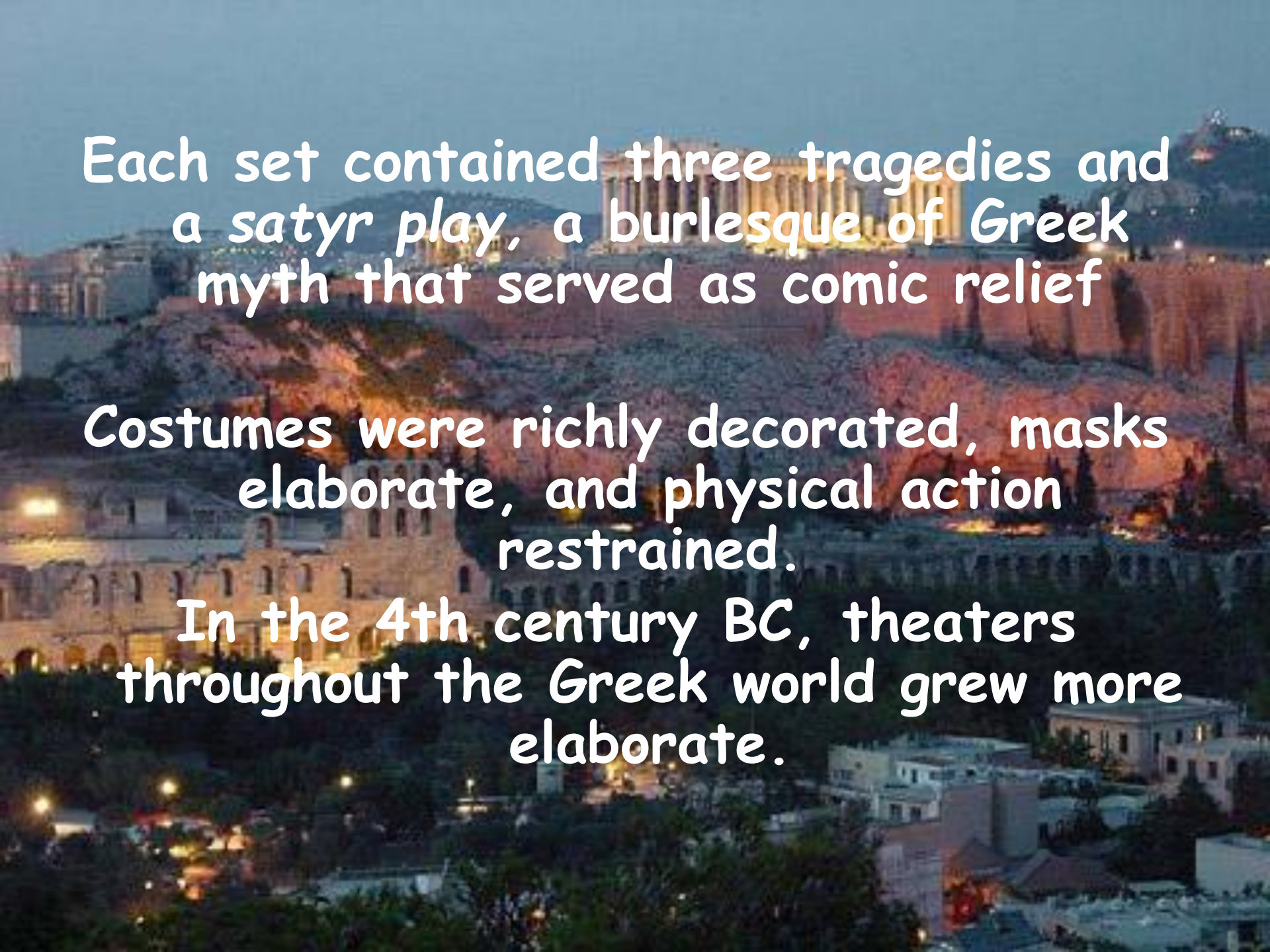


Their plays expanded and
interpreted the characters and
stories of legend and history





During the 5th century BC, the features of Athens's annual dramatic festival became fixed: three groups of players—each consisting of a chorus, musicians, and two (later three) actors—competed in acting four sets of plays.




Each set contained three tragedies and a *satyr play*, a burlesque of Greek myth that served as comic relief

Costumes were richly decorated, masks elaborate, and physical action restrained.

In the 4th century BC, theaters throughout the Greek world grew more elaborate.

ROME

The background of the slide is a photograph of the Colosseum in Rome, Italy. The iconic amphitheatre is shown from a low angle, emphasizing its massive scale and the intricate details of its arches and columns. The sky is a clear, bright blue, and the overall scene is well-lit, suggesting a sunny day. The word "ROME" is superimposed over the top of the image in a large, green, serif font.

The first drama was performed outdoors at annual games dedicated to the gods, and Roman theatre maintained a circus-like atmosphere

Works by only two Roman writers survived till today:

Plautus



Seneca

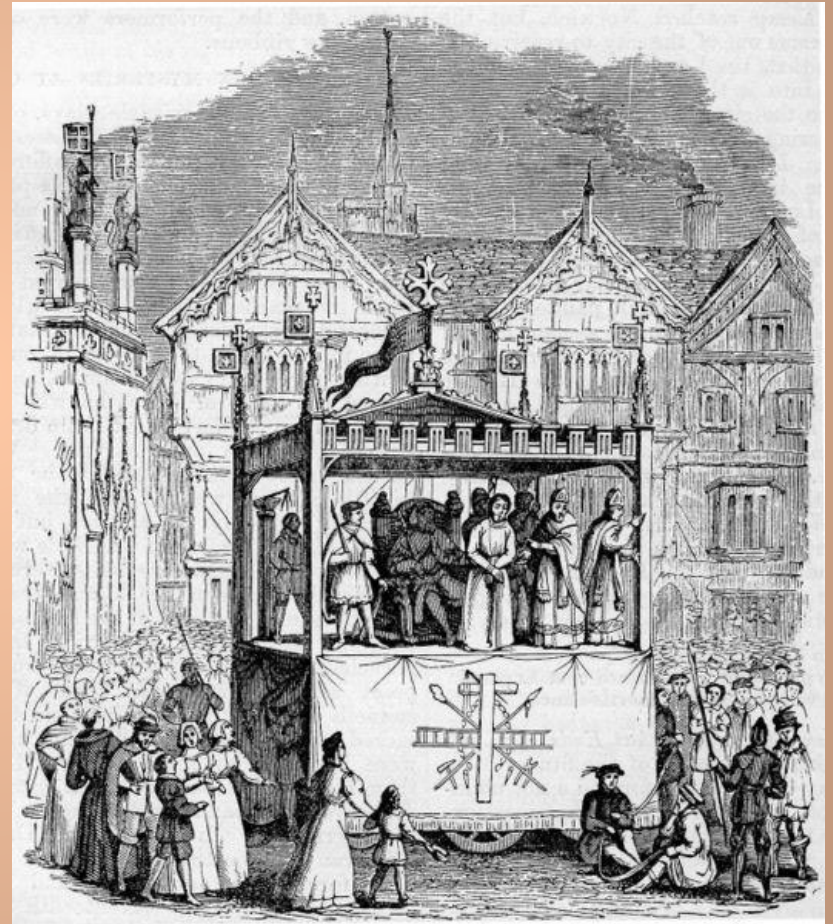




Early Roman stages were temporary narrow platforms of wood approximately 30 m (100 ft) long.

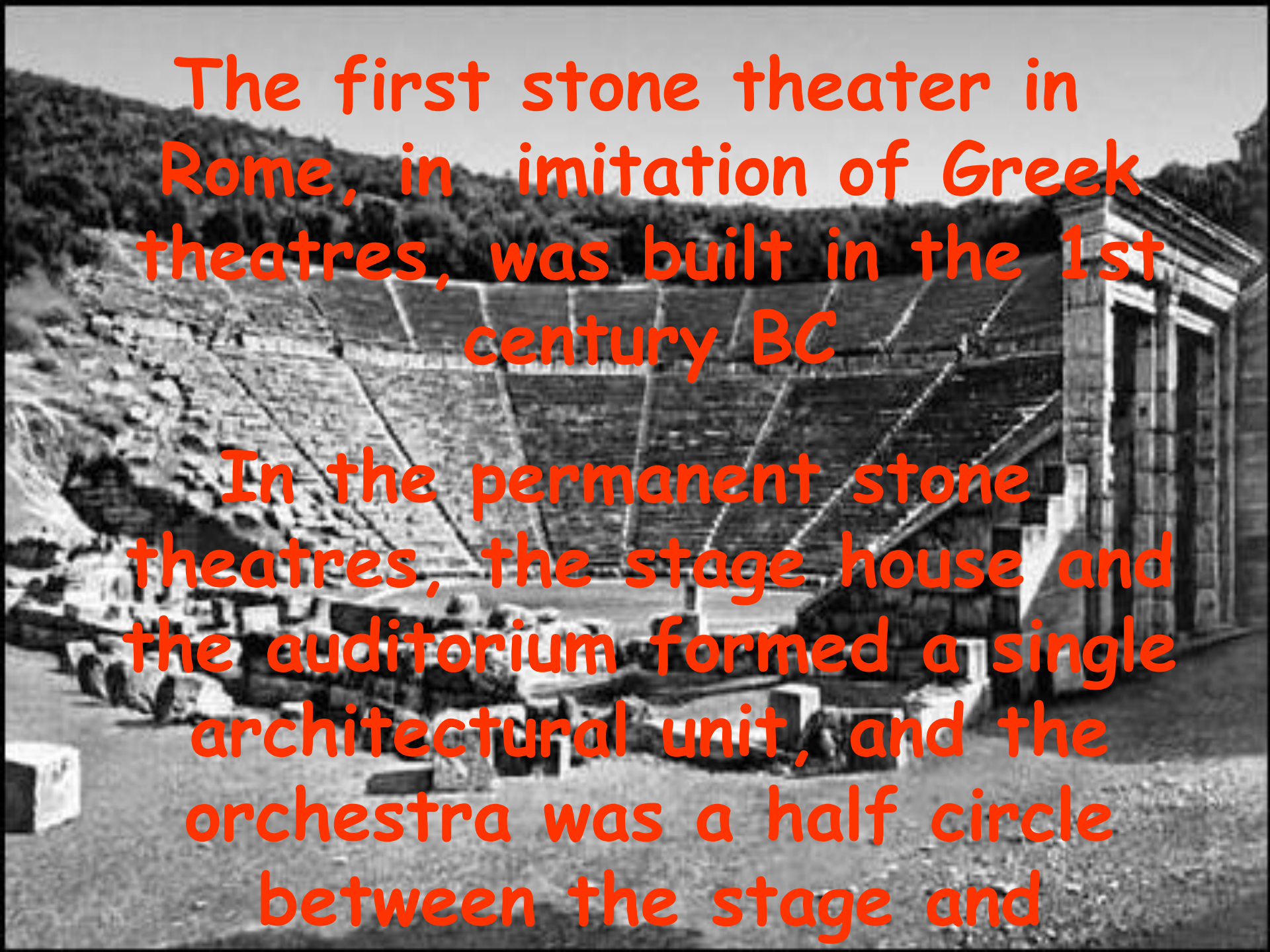
The stage house was decorated with columns, statues, niches, and porticoes, and covered with a roof.

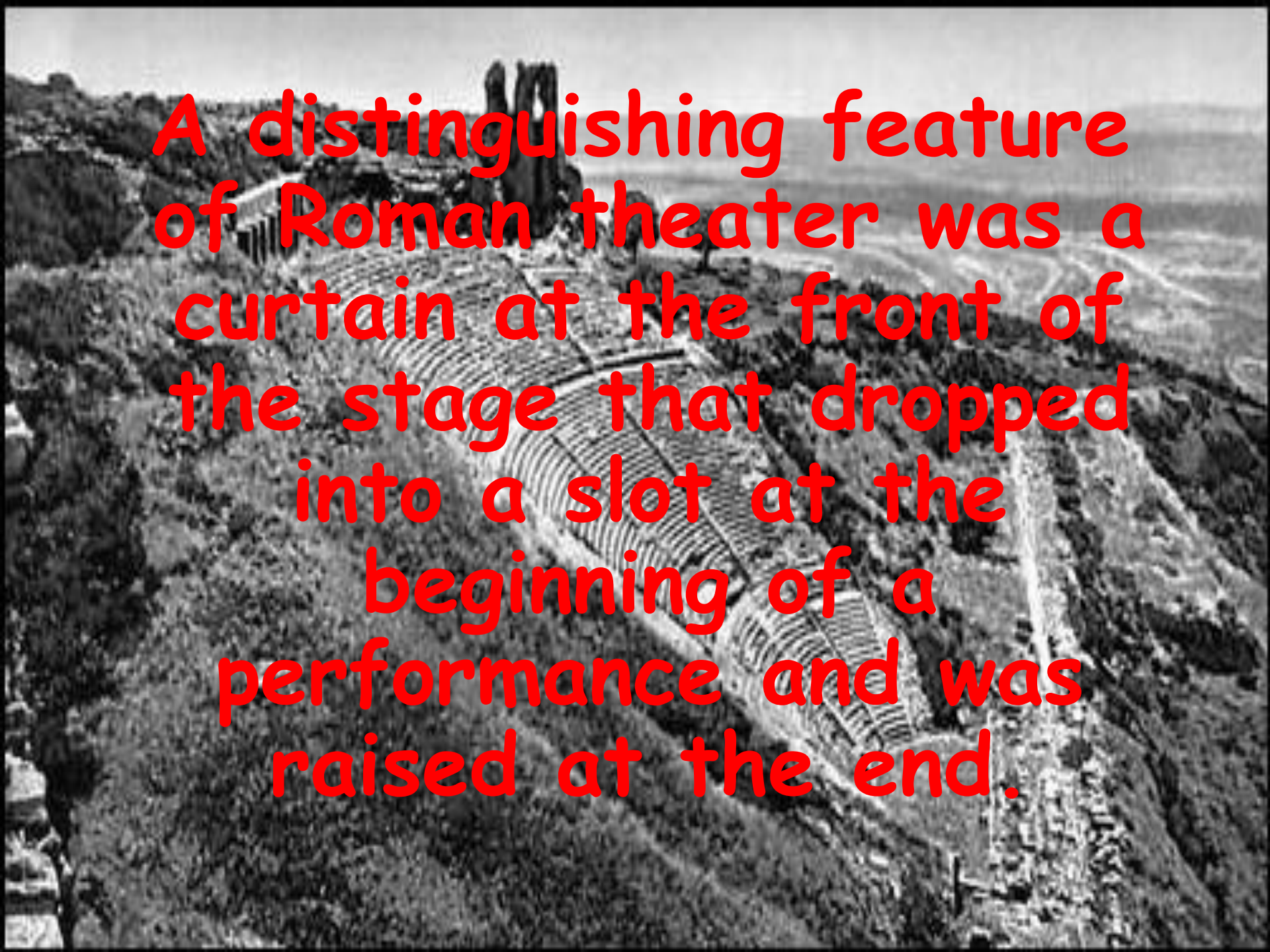
The platform served as a street, where the dramatic action occurred, and openings in the back wall served as doorways into fictional houses that bordered the street.



The first stone theater in Rome, in imitation of Greek theatres, was built in the 1st century BC

In the permanent stone theatres, the stage house and the auditorium formed a single architectural unit, and the orchestra was a half circle between the stage and






A distinguishing feature of Roman theater was a curtain at the front of the stage that dropped into a slot at the beginning of a performance and was raised at the end.

**Roman actors
wore thin
sandals,
garments of
the time, and
masks that
were useful for
playing multiple
roles**





By the 1st century AD,
these spectacles had
become increasingly
bloodthirsty . The last
recorded performance in
Rome occurred in 533AD.

The ruins of many Roman theatres erected in Europe, Asia and Africa may still be seen today. Theatre reemerged in religious festivals of medieval Europe.

