

art (vase painting and mosaics) to examinations of practical aspects of performance, including dance, masks, costumes, props and the theatre space. Because of the skilful editorial work, the occasional overlap that (necessarily) occurs does not detract but rather serves to deepen the reader's understanding of this complex and varied world. Some might argue that most of these topics have been covered elsewhere, yet each chapter presents new material and the latest research. For example, Beacham's examination of 'Playing Spaces' is illustrated not with photographs of ruins, but with 3D-models that allow the reader to imagine these sites as functional theatres. The volume also includes some unexpected but very welcome material such as Denard's fascinating exploration of 'lost' theatre forms and McDonald's own examination of the legacy of ancient myth in the modern media of opera, radio, television and film. Ley's chapter on costumes, props and scenic effects and Walton's contribution on 'Asking the Wrong Questions' present a mine of information about the material practicalities of ancient theatre, while Zarifi's section on 'Dance and Chorus' uncovers the seeds of dynamic physical performance that reside within the texts of these plays. Theoretical ground is covered, too, for example in Wiles's accessible and illuminating chapter on 'Aristotle's *Poetics* and Ancient Dramatic Theory' and Martin's analysis of 'Ancient Theatre and Performance Culture'. The scope of the book – encompassing both Greek and Roman theatre – also allows for interesting comparative analysis in these related but distinct cultures.

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Mask and Performance in Greek Tragedy: From Ancient Festival to Modern Experimentation. By **David Wiles**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. xii + 320 + illus. £50 Hb.
Reviewed by Angeliki Varakis, University of Kent

Wiles offers a comprehensive study on masks and performance in Greek tragedy that challenges conventional text-centred readings of Attic theatre. He proposes that fifth-century Athenian tragedy should be approached as a religious as much as a political event that brings mythical heroes to life, loosening in this way the usual distinction between theatre and ritual. In this approach the function of the mask is of paramount importance as it is through this sacred object rather than the text that the participants access the divine world of gods and heroes. As Wiles states, "Hypocites", the Greek term for an actor, implies an "interpreter", as of omens and oracles' (p. 179). His understanding stems from his phenomenological approach to Greek theatre and close study of the cultural and religious context in which it emerged. He approaches the mask as a non-autonomous product of a polytheistic civilization where the concept of a stable and single selfhood was non-existent. The power of the face lied not in its ability to conceal or identify an individual persona, as in modern times, but in its gaze, which captured the viewer, allowing a physical and mental transition to occur. Wiles surveys the archaeological evidence that testifies to the peculiar intensity of the face's gaze, which also suggests a technique of mask manufacture that intended to make a face seem alive.

The book also examines a number of modern artists and practitioners preoccupied by the idea of the mask as well as productions and current experimentation with masks, revealing not only the wide gap that separates our modern understanding of the mask from that of the Greeks, but also the potential power of the mask to engage an audience and transform the performer. The tensions and challenges that accompany creative efforts that use Greek-style helmet masks in a text-based theatre are also noted. In the author's view these experiments highlight the greatest importance of the Greek mask for modern theatre, by offering a unique challenge for the performer posed by the dichotomy of language and body. As the author observes in his epilogue addressed to the performer, when wearing a helmet mask 'the actor needs to find the point where language and body converge in the voice and the breath that produce sound' (p. 290). In his attempt to understand Greek masked acting as a product of an 'other' culture and comparable to non-Western notions of performing, Wiles provides the reader with a deep insight into the nature of Greek theatre where the religious, political and aesthetic concerns of the performance were indistinguishable. By concentrating our 'gaze' on the mask as an integral component of the performance he offers a body-centred way of reading Greek theatre, making it a particularly fascinating study for scholars and students as well as an inspiring source of knowledge for theatre practitioners.

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The Art of Commedia: A Study in the Commedia dell'Arte 1560–1620 with Special Reference to the Visual Records. By M. A. Katritzky. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2006. Pp. 625 + 340 illus. €180 Hb.

Reviewed by Kenneth Richards, University of Manchester

Although governed by an emphasis on the illustrative materials, Katritzky's study is impressively wide-ranging, and systematically treats in meticulous detail many aspects of the Italian players' beginnings and early heyday through to 1620. Her introduction examines the term itself and its many and varied critical interpretations, notes the key documentary sources, and briefly reviews the illustrative materials. Then, Section I provides an overview of the rise of Italian professional acting and the peregrinations of the early companies, explores as a case study the Munich wedding performance of 1568 and events associated with it, and offers a succinct analysis of the improvising players' stock types and roles. Section II consists of select art-historical case studies, including acute critical analyses of the theatrical and carnival pictures of Vrancx and his circle, a wide-ranging examination of the work and influence of Tempesta, and a re-exploration of early French paintings. Section III then focuses on theatrical interpretation, treating of stages and scenes, and the major stage figures, including Arlecchino, Pantalone, Zanni and the female roles, while the conclusion neatly draws together the many arguments advanced. There is a detailed, comprehensive bibliography and – a particularly significant feature of the book – no fewer than 340 plates, a number of which contain two or more, and in some cases multiple, illustrations, all finely reproduced, making this pictorially one of the most richly documented accounts of the subject.