

# GREEK TO ME!

*By Squire Fridell*

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## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

If you think ancient Greek theatre can be summarized in one word, "boring," think again. *Greek to Me!* provides an energetic, engaging look at how theatre developed, from the first actor to speak aloud to the idea of using scenery. That segues into a variety of scenes from the great plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes. The easy-to-present scenes show how ancient Greek plays, both tragic and comedic, became classics because they were insightful and truly entertaining. *Greek to Me!* has suggestions for lighting, slides, and music to immerse your audience into the theatre of 2,000 years ago. Written for a widely flexible cast of junior or senior high actors, it utilizes simple costumes.

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

CASTING IS MOST FLEXIBLE. The show can be produced with as few as a dozen cast members or as many as your facility will allow. The original production used a cast of over 50 actors. For the sake of simplicity, where multiple actors and/or narrators are required in any scene, they will be listed 1-10 and, obviously, can be adjusted to the needs of each production.

## **PRODUCTION NOTES**

Your production can be altered to your cast, facilities and requirements. The basic set consists of three parallel black 8x8 flats on stage, flat to the audience. Two are USR and USL respectively; one is CS with the top-center cut out and scrimmed for rear projection. In the original (and subsequent) productions, rear slide projection was most effectively used with two elevated side-by-side carousel projectors (50mm lenses) and a rented or borrowed dissolve unit. Effective, professional color images can be easily created by simply taking 35mm slides of photos and drawings that you find in books and magazines. Many photos are copyright protected however, so be sure to obtain permission or ascertain they are in the public domain.

### **SOUND**

Sound for this show is an important consideration. A professionally recorded CD with all sound sequences and effects is available from the publisher at [www.histage.com](http://www.histage.com). If you wish to create your own, sound effects include: "Empty" sound; "zip" sound; windstorm; thunder; gentle water flowing; reverb scream; calming wind; Greek music; cymbal crash; percussion "rim" shot; lighter Greek music; birds in flight; something falling followed by crash; crow squawk.

### **LIGHTING**

Can be used in its simplest form or can be quite elaborate. Careful attention should be paid so that stage lights do not wash out any rear projection.

### **COSTUMES**

They are simple and effective. Dyed sheets can be used to make upper torso tunics and full-length togas. Sashes and belts can be used to delineate playwrights, chorus members, nobility, etc.

### **PROPS**

Garlands for playwrights  
Mask of Dionysos  
Masks  
"Applause" signs, one in Greek and one in English  
Half masks for Chorus  
Bloody dagger  
Scepter  
Elaborate birds masks  
Rustic tools, lumber and building materials for Birds  
Long scroll for Poet  
Book for Prophet  
Tape measure, paper and pencil for Real Estate Persons  
Business card for Lawyer  
Papers for Tax Collector  
Tined fork for Neptune  
Dirty cloak for Barbarian god  
"Chicken Hawk" puppet, platter of sandwich makings  
for Pisthetaerus  
"Crow" puppet, fork, pepper grinder, pickle jar for Euelpides  
Egg for Bird

**PRONUNCIATION GUIDE**

Chaos	KAY-awss
Ouranos	YOU-rah-nohss
Gaia	GUY-yuh
Cronos	KROW-nohss
Zeus	ZOOss
Semele	SEH-meh-lay
Hera	HEH-rah
Dionysos	Die-oh-NEE-sus
Dithyramb	DITH-a-ram
Acropolis	A-KROP-oh-liiss
Dionysia	Die-oh-NEE-see-ah
Thespis	THESS-piss
Aeschylus	EH-skill-uhss
Tragoidia	Trah-GOI-dee-ah
Oresteia	Oh-ress-TIE-yah
Agamamnon	Ag-uh-MEM-non
Eumenides	You-MEN-eh-deez
Atreus	AA-tree-uhs
Clytemnestra	Klie-tem-NESS-trah
Electra	Eh-LECK-trah
Orestes	Oh-REHS-tiss
Furies	FHUR-eez
Sophocles	SOPH-uh-kleez
Argos	AHR-goss
Argive	AHR-gie-v
Oedipus	EHD-eh-puhss
Antigone	Ann-TIG-oh-knee
Ismene	Iz-MEH-knee
Jocasta	Joe-KAHS-tah
Creon	KREE-ohn
Eteocles	Eh-TEY-oh-kleez
Polyneices	Pah-ley-KNEE-sehs
Haemon	HAY-mon
Eurpides	You-RIP-eh-deez
Bacchae	BAHK-eye
Medea	Meh-DEE-ah
Pelias	Peh-LIE-ahs
Aristophanes	Air-iss-TOPH-an-eez
Komoidia	Kah-MOY-dee-ah
Kratinos	Krah-TEE-noss
Lysistrata	Less-iss-TRAH-dah
Euelpides	You-ELP-ih-deez
Pisthetaerus	Piz-the-TEAR-uss
Epop	EE-pops

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## **ACT I**

### **Scene 1: HOMAGE TO THE GODS**

*(AT RISE: Rear projection SLIDE is black. From out of the dark silence, a pre-recorded "EMPTY" sound fills the theatre. A pre-recorded GREEK NARRATOR begins, followed by a pre-recorded ENGLISH TRANSLATION.)*

GREEK NARRATOR: *(Voice Over.)*

eks arkees  
en too kronoo  
pro tu kronu  
prootista  
kaos egeneto

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: *(VO.)* In the beginning of time... before there was a universe...there was Chaos.

*(SLIDE fades into a blue color. Stereo "ZIP" sound travels from one side of house to the other.)*

CHAOS: *(VO.)* I am Chaos. God of All that Exists. I am God of the Infinite. God of Boundlessness. The God of Power.

*(Stereo "ZIP" sound travels from one side of house to the other, and back again. Back to "EMPTY" sound.)*

GREEK NARRATOR: *(VO.)*

kaj ek tutu tu pantoon toon ontoon teu  
ek tutu tu teu tu apejru  
egenonto oy te oy uranos kaj gaja

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: *(VO.)* And from that God of All That Exists, that great God of the Infinite, came the gods Ouranos and Gaia.

*(SLIDE dissolves to solar system.)*

OURANOS: *(Male VO.)* I am the Sky. I am the Sun, the Moon and the Stars. I am Ouranos, God of all Heavenly Bodies. *(SLIDE dissolves to distant earth.)*

GAIA: *(Female VO.)* And I am Gaia, fertile source of all living things. *(SLIDE dissolves to closer earth.)* I am the Earth ...Mother Earth. I gave birth to the forests and the plains, the mountains and the valleys, the oceans and the deserts. I am Gaia.

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GREEK NARRATOR: (VO.)

kai epejta gaja  
uranoo oneetejsa  
kronon eteke

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: (VO.) And from the union of the Gods of the Earth and the Sky, Gaia and Ouranos, came the god Cronos. *(SLIDE dissolves to red flames.)*

GREEK NARRATOR: (VO.)

kaj ek kronu...

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: (VO.) And from Cronos...

GREEK NARRATOR: (VO.)

egeneto omegistos zos

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: (VO.) Came the Almighty...Zeus.

*(The SOUND of windstorm. SLIDE dissolves to a star burst.)*

ZEUS: (VO.) I am the King of All the Gods. *(Sound of WINDSTORM grows in intensity.)* I have the power of the gods before me. I am the God of Rain...and Lightning...and Thunder. *(A crack of THUNDER.)* I have power of life and of death. *(Double THUNDER hits.)* I am King of All the Gods.

*(SLIDE dissolves to black. The SOUND changes from storm to gentle water flowing.)*

GREEK NARRATOR: (VO.)

kai ek dijios panta ta zooa egeneto  
kai zos gynajka egameese broton  
teen basilejan semeleen *(A beat.)*  
kaj okseetee megalee o dijios pros  
semeleen filotees

*(SLIDE dissolves to pleasant rising sun.)*

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: (VO.) And Zeus created life. And took as his wife a mortal woman, the Princess Semele. *(A beat.)* And the love of Zeus and Semele flourished.

*(SLIDE dissolves to bird in flight.)*

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GREEK NARRATOR: (VO.)

kai teknon ti emele tiktestaj  
aren teknonti dija ton tu teu gamon  
kai tneetees tees gynajkos  
atanatoo too teou miktejs ees

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: (VO.) A child was to be born. A man-child born of the union of a god and a mortal.

GREEK NARRATOR: (VO.)

ala mentoj en too uranoo  
panta ta pragmata kakoos ejke  
eera ee kakurgos  
tymon kaj orgeen pojeesamenee  
teen tu dijós gynajka apektane

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: (VO.) But all was not well in the heavens. The evil goddess, Hera, in a fit of jealousy and rage...murdered the wife of Zeus.

*(SLIDE dissolves to red. The sound of MAJOR THUNDER hits followed by a terrifying reverb SCREAM. Finally, a distant CALMING WIND as slide dissolves to black.)*

GREEK NARRATOR: (VO.)

a la zos to teknon to upoo tiktomenon  
eske soozejn  
en too eotu soomati otón apokryssas

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: (VO.) But Zeus was able to save the unborn child by taking him into his own body.

GREEK NARRATOR: (VO.)

kaj ek tu dijós soomatos  
opantoon toon teoon bazilos  
o areen pajs egeneto  
to eemisy tneeton teknon  
to eemisy atanaton  
dijonyzos

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: (VO.) And from the body of Zeus, the King of all the Gods, was born the man-child...half mortal...half god...Dionysos.

*(SLIDE dissolves to a statue of Zeus and baby Dionysos. The distant sound of GREEK MUSIC fades in.)*

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