Abstract

SEEING THE SEEING PLACES

A Video Documentary on the Historical Significance of the Ancient Greek Theatres of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia

by Anezina Theodoraki

The purpose of this video documentary project is to introduce the theatres of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia to the general public while providing scholarly comment on the importance of their role and contribution to the development of Greek drama in terms of staging and performing in smaller theatres. Seeing the Seeing Places marks a new direction in the history of Greek theatre by focusing on the sense of intimacy created in small theatres and performing spaces between the actors and the audience. It also gives rise to new dramaturgical considerations regarding the way ancient Greek tragedies were originally structured and performed in small spaces.
An Evaluation of

SEEING THE SEEING PLACES

A Video Documentary on the Historical Significance of the
Ancient Greek Theatres of Lato, Thorikos,
and Makynia

Thesis Project

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by

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I. Statement of Purpose

To begin with, let me express my hope that the audience will find the topic of this documentary as important, challenging, and educational as I have found it. This is the primary purpose of this documentary: to introduce the theatres of Thorikos, Lato, and Makynia to the general public while providing scholarly comment on the importance of their role and contribution to the development of Greek drama in terms of staging and performing in smaller spaces; to challenge people’s curiosity to see how such old spaces look like and how they create a sense of intimacy between the actors and the audience; and finally to attract people’s interest to go and visit them.

Specifically, the overall small size of the theatres of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia and the oval shape of their *orchestras* give practicality in terms of the staging of the plays. They provide the opportunity for *stichomythia*-the argument between the actors and the chorus- at the same time they give the audience a sense of intimacy. On Thorikos’ stage, for example, the actors are never too far from the chorus and the audience enjoys the performance without getting too far from the actors and the chorus as well. This notion of intimacy makes these very first performing spaces of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia unique. These small performing spaces unquestionably serve best the plays written by the tragic poets because they make them more intimate by allowing the audience to see the eyes of the actors.

Compared to typical ancient Greek theatres like the theatre of Epidaurus- the most popular stone theatre in Greece built around the 3rd century BC- the theatres of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia are much older and different in terms of size, shape, and location. A typical ancient Greek theatre is constituted by a circular or semi-circular *orchestra* (the
open-air dancing floor), a *skene* (a low platform or stage at the back of the *orchestra* which also contains the dressing rooms), a *proskenion* (the roof or colonnade which is laid above the *skene*), a *thymele* (the altar of Dionysus in the middle of the *orchestra*) and a large *koilon* or *theatron* (the watching place for the audience above the *orchestra*) which can usually fit in from 3500 to 10000 people.¹

In contrast, the theatres of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia are particularly small in size; they have neither a *skene* nor a *proscenium* and the size of the *koilon* and the *orchestra* is small compared to the theatre of Epidaurus. Each of these theatres, for instance, can fit into the *orchestra* of the theatre of Epidaurus. The overall small size of the theatres of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia and particularly that of their *koilon*, which can barely fit in from 500 to 2500 people, reflect either their original construction between the 3rd and 6th century BC or the gradual enlargement of the theatres’ capacity. Above all, it leads scholars to the conclusion that Greek drama was originally written and performed in small theatres in front of a small audience.

Along with the theatre’s small size, the irregular shape of their *orchestras* is the most important reason which distinguishes these three theatres and brings forth their uniqueness. Compared to the usual circular or semi-circular shapes of the classical theatres’ *orchestras* built during the Hellenistic period (theatre of Epidaurus), the *orchestras* of the theatres of Thorikos, Lato, and Makynia are oval. The unusual elliptical plan of the *orchestras* makes the staging of the chorus unique in all three theatres. Such odd shaped *orchestras* in relation with the overall small size of the theatres alters the way an audience saw the plays or potentially influences how the

¹ In the Hellenistic and classical era the *skene* and the *proscenium* were merely served as a decorative background for the plays. In the 2nd c. BC the scene of performance was transferred to the roof or
viewers read the plays. There are ancient tragedies, for example, in which the audience needed to see the actor’s eyes in order to grasp the deeper meaning of the play and to feel the dramatic tension that is hidden underneath the character’s oral and physical expression. In a typical Greek theatre, like the theatre of Epidaurus or the theatre of Dionysus, audiences enjoy watching Sophocles’ *Antigone* but they cannot see the actress’s eyes. By counting just on the actors’ larger movements the audience looses the dramatic tension conveyed by the characters’ facial expression and the look of terror or excitement in their eyes.

This notion of seeing comes from the ancient times. The name “theatre” or “theatron” in Greek derives from the verb “to see” in the ancient Greek language which means a seeing place or a reviewing place. The name “theatron” was referred only to the sitting place in the ancient times and it was later extended to the entire performing space. It is particularly significant that the Greeks wanted to see as well as hear whereas the Romans emphasized hearing by calling their seeing place an auditorium. Since the construction of a formal seeing place was totally based on the notion that seeing was extremely important to the ancient Greeks, Greek cities invested on it during the ancient times. They began building small performing spaces like the theatres of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia in which the audience could witness every single detail in the actors’ movements and see the anxiety in the characters’ eyes.

Therefore, *Seeing The Seeing Places* is timely and particularly important because it increases people’s perception of how Greek dramas function in relation to their very first performing spaces. This documentary also challenges scholars to continue this research.

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colonnade which was now used as a platform for the actors (*logeion*).
by bringing up more sources that shed light on the relation between the theatres of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia and their contribution to the development of ancient Greek drama in terms how a performance of an ancient Greek tragedy is originally structured and performed in a small space.

It is also very worth mentioning that along with the theatres’ small size and irregular shapes, there are different assumptions for the theatres’ original function. Some scholars believe that all three theatres were first used as meeting-places (agora) where all gatherings of the demos were held. There is also the assumption that even religious ceremonies devoted to the worship of an ancient God were taking place in these theatres. This may be best confirmed by the fact that these public places are located in the middle or the edge of a built-up area. However, the different assumptions concerning the small size and original function of the theatres continue to be a matter of scholarly inquiry since all three of the spaces have received significant archaeological attention and restoration in the last three years.

II. Focus

Although this documentary introduces all three theatres to the general public, it particularly focuses on the theatre of Thorikos. The theatre of Thorikos is the linchpin that connect the theatres of Lato and Makynia to each other in terms of structure, shape and style and shows the continuity of a particular pattern of using which is utilized in the construction of other Greek theatres.

2 The title Seeing The Seeing Places reflects this notion of seeing which was a great value for the ancient Greeks and their theatrical culture.
The theatre of Lato represents a very small performing space; its simple structure and style make scholars believe that such a space was considered to be a proper thing for an ancient city to invest on a location. Lato, dating to the Minoan/Mycenean period (8th to 9th century BC), is the ancestor of the theatre of Thorikos. Its style, pattern, and culture have a great impact on the way the theatre of Thorikos was constructed. Lato represents the influence of Minoan culture on the Mycenean culture (the attic or archaic culture of Athens during the period where the famous Pericles was the leader of the Athenian hegemony). Thorikos itself was a Mycenean site and one of the most populous of the Attic demes belonged to the Athenian hegemony. Behind the theatre of Thorikos people can still see Mycenean tombs that testify the direct influence of the Minoan theatre (Lato) on the space where Thorikos’ theatre is located. Thus, the theatre of Lato, which is dated before the theatre of Thorikos and is considered to be the first formal performing space that was built in Crete, sheds light on the historical and cultural significance of Thorikos’ theatre as one of the oldest and most important stone theatres in Greece. Without Thorikos’ theatre Lato is just a Minoan performing space.

Thus, Thorikos, as a natural development of Lato, moves a particular structure and architectural style forward and becomes a structural model for the construction of other ancient Greek theatres like the theatre of Makynia. The theatre of Makynia, becomes particularly important because it comes after the theatre of Thorikos and carries the exact style and pattern that characterizes both the theatre of Lato and Thorikos. The theatre of Makynia testifies that the pattern that started from Lato and later was used and improved for the construction of Thorikos theatre is repeated. Without Thorikos as a reference the theatre of Makynia is put aside as a simple odd space.
Thus, on the one hand, without the theatre of Thorikos neither Lato or Makynia is historically important. One the other hand, everything about Thorikos’ theatre is dependent on the other two spaces; without the theatre of Lato people cannot see an evolution of an early architectural form; without the theatre of Makynia people cannot see a repetition of the same form and pattern.

**III. Audience and Distribution**

*Seeing the Seeing Places* targets both the scholarly audience and the general public. If someone wants to explore the very first performing spaces that contributed to the development of Greek drama the names of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia will be placed first. It is significant for everybody to see and learn about the formal seeing places where the plays of young Aeschylus were first performed. Especially people who have a good knowledge of theatre history and drama will appreciate more the value of such old performing spaces. Even if scholars are not exactly sure what sort of performances were given at the theatre of Lato\(^3\), Lato still remains important. The theatre of Lato is one of the very first performing spaces that was built in Greece and set the example for other theatres to follow. However, the theatre of Thorikos probably attracts the audience’s attention because there are written testimonies from the 4\(^{th}\) century BC of plays being performed in this theatre\(^4\). Therefore the audience witnesses an evolution of the very first performing spaces and their function starting from Lato and then moving to the theatres of Thorikos and Makynia.

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\(^3\) Probably some sort of performing dances and festivals related to the name of Dionysus.

\(^4\) However, neither the theatre of Thorikos, Lato or Makynia are in operation nowadays.
Seeing the Seeing Places is a detailed introduction to a cultural study on the historical significance of the very first performing spaces that moved the staging of Greek dramas forward. Thus, it is informative and didactic to everybody. A tour guide is also providing the audience with more historical information about the beginning of ancient Greek theatre (festivals of Dionysus) in terms of staging and performing in small spaces like in the theatre of Thorikos.

Many scholars worldwide have studied and appreciated the theatre of Thorikos as one of the oldest performing spaces or even the oldest stone theatre that it was built in Greece without extending their research to the theatre’s roots and its resemblance to other performing spaces. The theatre of Thorikos is particularly known to them for its old age and the irregularity of its shape and size whereas the theatres of Lato and Makynia have never been extensively researched by scholars. Neither have they been ever compared to each other or related to the theatre of Thorikos. In fact, very few people know where the theatre of Makynia is located and almost nobody knows anything about Lato. However, there is only an assumption, found in the documents that accompanied the excavation of Thorikos’ theatre carried by the German archaeologist Musshe, that the orchestra of Thorikos’ theatre may resemble the orchestra of the theatre of Lato in terms of shape and size. Furthermore, Dr. Savas Gogos, professor of ancient Greek theatre at the University of Athens Greece and the official spokesperson who claimed the space of Makynia, further connected it to the theatre of Thorikos. But there is no indication of a scholarly work that seeks to bring those three theatres together by combining their common characteristics (size, shape, location). Even Dr. Mary Ikonomakou, the archaeologist who is in charge of the theatre of Thorikos, has never looked for common features to
connect the theatre of Thorikos to other Greek theatres. Furthermore, Dr. Howard Blanning, professor of theatre at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, has extensively visited the site of Thorikos and given lectures at national conferences about the contribution of the theatre of Thorikos to the staging of Greek dramas. By focusing on small theatres (theatre of Thorikos) in order to explore the impact of the space on the interpretation of dramatic plays, Dr. Blanning became interested in other small performing spaces besides Thorikos (theatre of Makynia, Lato).

Seeing the Seeing Place is particularly valuable for the scholarly audience because it is a linkage between what these scholars know and think of these theatres; it also carries the research between the scholars and motivate them to occupy themselves with such a new subject. Thus, Seeing the Seeing Places is a valuable tool for researches active on this subject.

Seeing the Seeing Places also targets the general audience and the tourists who are planning to visit Greece for the Olympic Games in the summer of 2004. Thorikos used to be one of the most inaccessible theatres where few knew where it was located. However between now and next summer’s Olympic Games in Athens the theatre of Thorikos will attract people’s attention since Laurion, the area where the theatre of Thorikos is located, is one of the Olympic villages. Thorikos is the closest theatre to Spata, the area where the Greek international airport is located; it is 30 minutes drive on an excellent European Union highway from Spata airport. Thus, many people who are visiting Greece for the Olympics in the summer of 2004 will express the desire and curiosity to see how one of the oldest Greek theatre looks like. A copy of this
A documentary project has been provided to the Hellenic Ministry of Culture for the possibility of its usefulness during the Olympics’ broadcastings.

IV. Background

Nowadays, the theatre of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia are not very well known or even unknown to the general public. Bigger theatres, like the theatre of Epidaurus or other classic theatres of the Hellenistic period (theatre of Dionysus) usually receive more attention than the small ones for different reasons. Some scholars, like Dr. Savas Gogos, assume that big theatres better serve the increased needs of modern plays that demand more space to be performed. Other scholars believe that the size of the audience became bigger with the passing of time and therefore a small theatre was not adequate. There is a third assumption that is based on the natural law of evolution in that everything which follows an evolutionary stage needs to become big. According to Dr. Savas Gogos, there are seventy-two other theatres in Greece bigger than the theatres of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia that are unknown to the wide audience or they may be known only to a local community.

Although small in size, the theatres of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia are big in value. The size, shape, and location of these three performing spaces symbolize the transitional period in the history of drama from the very first dramatic festivals that were given in the name of Dionysus, to the performances of the ancient drama. Moreover, they give rise to new dramaturgical considerations of Greek tragedy itself, particularly in regards to the

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5 Greek drama was born out of religion. According to Aristotle, Greek tragedy began in improvisation arising from the dithyramb, a choral poem in honor of the God of Dionysus. The performances of Greek tragedies were part of the religious celebrations confined to the festivals of Dionysus, the Great Dionysia and Lynea.
original physical relationship of the actor and the audience and how the three tragic poets (Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides) would have utilized that relationship in the dramatic construction of their plays.

The tradition of theatre performances of Greek tragedies started in 534 with the Athenian Thespis’ innovation of dramatic dialogue between himself and a chorus as part of the Great Dionysia in which the god of Dionysus was being worshipped. It was not until the 500s when the Great Dionysia got institutionalized as a theatre festival of tragic (and satyric) drama known as a festival of democratic liberation. In that period (until the 5th century BC) there were many important tragic poets like Hyrilos, Pratinas, and the young Aeschylus who were both writers and directors of their own tragedies. As directors of their own plays, tragic poets had a deep knowledge of the performing spaces that existed in that period of time. During the 5th century BC a proscenium and a skene did not exist in the very first performing spaces at all. The first construction of a proscenium, according to Dr. Gogos, took place in 458 BC with the performance of Aeschylus’ Oresteia in which the presence of a skene (Agamemnon’s palace) was required. Moreover, in other tragedies written by Aeschylus like The Persians or Seven Against Thebes there is no indication of a proscenium in their texts.

Therefore, the intention of the tragic poets who lived and wrote their dramas in the first half and the last quarter of the 6th and 5th c. BC was not to have their plays performed in big theatres. Instead, the way their tragedies were written was strongly related to the capacities of the performing spaces that existed in that period of time. For instance, in Persians the palace is not visible by the audience because a proscenium was not possible to build. Thus, Aeschylus adjusted the story in Persians according to the capacities of
the space where the tragedy was going to be performed; he had the queen riding a horse on stage pretending that she was coming from the palace in order to avoid the construction of a *skene*. So, there is only an altar dominating the entire stage in *Persians* which symbolizes the tomb of Darius’s king. In *Seven Against Thebes* as well, there are many altars on stage and nothing else because the tragedy itself does not require the presence of a *proscenium*.

The theatres of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia represent the very first purpose-built theatres dated between the 6th and 4th c. BC in which a *proscenium* was not possible to exist. It was during that time that dramatic performances were first transferred to those theatres from their previous venue, the Agora⁴.

However, many archaeologists consider the all-stone theatre of Dionysus built in 500 BC at the foot of the Acropolis in Athens to be one of the first formal performing space of ancient tragedies. Although this possibility may exist, the construction of the theatre of Dionysus does not present any peculiarities in terms of shape, size, and location. The theatre of Dionysus follows the style and pattern of the Hellenistic period and hence it cannot be related to the theatres of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia. Moreover, there is always the assumption that the theatre of Dionysus is so well known because it is located at the foot of the Acropolis in Athens. One of the very first places that a tourist will visit in Greece is the Acropolis where the theatre of Dionysus is also located. Moreover, providing additional footage about the historical significance of the theatre of Dionysus in this documentary would not have been so much appreciated by a scholarly audience since it is already familiar with the classical theatres of the Hellenistic period and particularly with that of Dionysus. The theatre of Dionysus has been extensively
researched by many scholars worldwide so any kind of analysis on that theatre will repeat what it has already been said about its historical and cultural significance.

The documentary project Seeing the Seeing Places manages to add something new and valuable to the historical inquiry of theatre and Greek drama by relating three of the very first performing spaces-based on their size, shape, and location-that are almost unknown to the general public. Therefore, it increase people’s perception of how Greek dramas function in relation to their very first formal performing spaces.

4 The central market in the ancient city of Athens used for public assemblies and discussions.
V. Director’s Notes

**Video Documentary Format:**

I decided to present the patterns that the theatres of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia share in a video documentary format because I realized that this way I could better focus on these performing spaces by juxtaposing their common characteristics visually. Moreover, a video documentary format is particularly helpful to an audience which is not familiar with a theatrical terminology to better comprehend the different parts that constitute an ancient theatre, the peculiarity that these theatres present, and their relation to each other. A written thesis would not have had the same impact on viewers because the combination of pictures with a written text would probably have been distracting and confusing to follow. Furthermore, the images of the theatres and their location accompanied by flute music allowed viewers to witness the atmosphere and the tranquility that existed in these performing spaces.

**Interviewing Scholarly People:**

I decided to interview only scholarly people in the documentary because they were the primary sources for this topic and basically the only people who were familiar with such old performing spaces.

The first person I interviewed was the archaeologist Dr. Mary Ikonomakou who is in charge of the theatre of Thorikos and responsible for the excavations that took place in Thorikos’ area. Dr. Ikonomakou provided me with many important detailed information about the historical significance of Thorikos’ theatre, the theatre’s irregularity in terms of
size and shape, and its uniqueness compared to other Greek theatres. She also gave me
evidences that supported the theatre’s old age dated to the 6th c. BC.

The second scholar I interviewed was Dr. Savas Gogos, the professor of ancient Greek
theatre at the University of Athens in Greece, who was the best person to talk to about the
origins of ancient Greek drama and the history of the very first performing spaces that
were built in Greece. Dr. Gogos was very familiar with the theatre of Thorikos and
Makynia and he also provided me with detailed information about the peculiarity of these
theatres and their relation to each other.

The third scholar I interviewed was Dr. Howard Blanning, professor of theatre at
Miami University in Oxford Ohio who had extensively researched small theatres and
particularly the theatre of Thorikos which he also had presented at national conferences.
Dr. Blanning had frequently visited the theatre of Thorikos and many other ancient
theatres in Greece. He was also aware of the theatre of Lato as well and he gave me
some historical and critical sources of both theatres.

Moreover, Dr. Kostas Georgousopoulos – P.h.D. in theatre at the University of
Athens, Greece and also president of a theatre organization in Athens, Greece – gave me
much valuable information about the historical significance of small performing spaces
for the development of Greek drama and the function of smaller performing spaces in
contrast to the bigger and younger Hellenistic-type theatres that followed. Specifically,
he talked about the way the sun approaches the mask of an actor on stage while
performing in a small space (Thorikos’ theatre) or in bigger spaces as, for example, in the
theatre of Epidaurus, which is one of the biggest, most popular, and most complete
Hellenistic-type theatres.
Furthermore, Lydia Koniordou, one of the most well known actresses in Epidaurus theatre, has also been interviewed in this documentary. Mrs Koniordou expressed her appreciation for Epidaurus’ theatre as the most complete Greek theatre that has been survived almost entire in our contemporary times. However, she also showed excitement and much interest in smaller performing spaces such as Thorikos’ theatre that carry significant value on them for the developing of ancient Greek drama and performance.

Finally, I had the privilege and the honor to meet and interview one of the most distinguished Greek postwar playwrights, Iakovos Kambanellis. Even if his playwriting experience is related to contemporary theatre he seemed to be very knowledgeable in the history of ancient Greek drama in terms of staging and performance. The roots and themes of some of Iakovos Kambanellis’ plays (e.g. *Odysseus Return Home*) can be traced back to the antiquity and the ancient myths of Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

Specifically, Iakovos Kambanellis talked about his plays that revived ancient myths but only the parts where he gave a historical background of Greek theatre in terms of staging were selected and used in this documentary.

All these scholars provided me with very valuable information about the historical significance of the very first small performing spaces of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia built in Greece at the time of Aeschylus. I consider there scholars as the six pillars that were very helpful and critical for my documentary. Furthermore, I consider myself of having been in a privileged position of linking these six scholars, sharing, and even carrying the research between them.
Approach, Form, and Style:

*Seeing the Seeing Places* concentrates on the historical and cultural significance of the theatre of Thorikos in relation to the theatres of Lato and Makynia. All three theatres share the same characteristics in terms of size, shape, location, and function which are very important for our understanding of the performance of tragedies in formal seeing places. In order to emphasize the uniqueness, the intimate circumstances they create, and the important role of the very first performing spaces that were built in ancient Greece, the film looks particularly at the origins of Thorikos’ theatre (theatre of Lato) and its cultural impact on other performing spaces (theatre of Makynia). Thus, the film includes footage of all three theatres, Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia, and seeks to bring them together by shedding light on their common characteristics. This also reconfirms the assumption that tragedies were originally performed in small seeing places in front of a small number of people.

*Seeing the Seeing Places* follows an expository mode to introduce the small theatres of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia to its audience and at the same time to shed light on their contribution to the development of Greek drama in terms of staging and performing in smaller spaces. The documentary adopts a voice-of-God commentary (voice of male narrator) and a voice-of-authority commentary (tour guide) to advance the argument that small performing spaces and theatres create the sense of intimacy between the audience and the actors. Thus, the plays performed in such small spaces affect the audience more than if performed in bigger spaces, like in the theatre of Epidaurus, for example, where the spectators were not able to see the eyes of an actor or to even witness a slight gesture which was important for an audience to grasp the deeper meaning of a Greek tragedy.
Seeing the Seeing Places relies upon the rhetorical argument and perspective about the function and the intimate circumstances of these three theatres carried by a common-sense narration that small theatres are realistic spaces and more intimate for an audience. The narrator’s commentary is of a higher order in this documentary. The various shots of the theatres, the interviews with people that are knowledgeable in this topic, the graphics of the theatre’s shapes, the big selection of pictures and photographs of tragedians, poets, and theatres serve to support what is said in the narration. The fact that the interviewees support every single argument the narrator makes about the historical importance of the function of small theatres in terms of staging and performing, creates the sense of honesty and objectivity in the narration. However, as it is well known, in documentary filmmaking it is very difficult to erase the filmmaker’s or editor’s point of view; there is always something in the documentary to reveal their subjectivity and opinion on a particular topic. On the one hand, I consider Seeing the Seeing Places partly as a promotional documentary of small performing spaces and particularly of the small theatre of Thorikos. On the other hand, I think that this documentary is based on common sense and objective opinions carried by the words of scholarly people who would do their best to remain objective since they deal with historical issues. One of the goals in this documentary is to be objective, and credible towards the historical subjects (theatre history and religiosity) that comes along to present the significance of all three theatres.

However, Seeing the Seeing Places follows a poetic mode as well. The documentary begins with various shots of the ancient Agora, the theatres of Epidaurus, Thorikos, and Lato accompanied with flute music. The poetic mode seeks to place the viewers in the tranquility of the environment that existed at the time of Aeschylus in ancient Greece and
to move, affect, and evoke the audience’s emotions. The poetic mode is adopted in other parts in my documentary as well, for example in the part where I decided to give a chronological order of all theatres using various shots of all performing spaces accompanied with harp music. However, the expository style, creating a continuity of the logic carried by the spoken word of the narrator and the tour guide, remains the predominant style in this video documentary.

The duration of this documentary project is no more than 26 minutes, because its goal is to inform, attract the viewer’s attention, and challenge the scholarly audience to further extend this research on the theatres of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia.

**Equipment and Cost:**

A professional camcorder (Canon GL1), a tripod, a shotgun microphone, mini DV videotapes, and professional lighting have been used in this documentary.

The total cost of this documentary including flight-tickets to Greece and to different shooting locations, tickets to archaeological sites, expenses for graphic designs, ancient Greek music and mini-DV tapes, is approximately $2400.

**VI. Questionnaire for all interviewees:**

1. Why are the theatres of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia not well known to the general public?
2. Are there any doubts that the theatre of Thorikos is not the very first stone theatre that it was built in Greece?
3. What are the factors for an archaeologist to judge the origin, function, and date of
4. If the theatre of Thorikos is not chronologically the first ancient Greek theatre, which is the first ancient theatre that it was built in Greece in the archaic times?

5. In what factors is the unusual elliptical plan (the irregular shape of the orchestra) of the theatre of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia based on? What explanation can we give for this unusual shape?

6. Is there any other theatre in Greece whose orchestra resembles that of Thorikos’ theatre?

7. Do you think that any dramatic plays written by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides could be better performed in small theatres like Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia rather than in bigger theatres like the theatre of Epidaurus or elsewhere?

8. How is the theatre of Thorikos related to the theatres of Lato and Makynia? Why are these theatres so important for the development of Greek drama? What’s the historical significance of all three theatres?

9. How can we explain the fact that beside or nearby the theatres of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia is a temple of an ancient God? Is this some sort of indication that these theatres might have served other purposes besides the performance of Greek dramas?

10. The theatre of Epidaurus is the most well preserved and well known ancient theatre in Greece. Compared to the theatres of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia, do you think that the theatre of Epidaurus reflects the history and evolution of Greek drama in a much better way?
11. Do you think that the acknowledgement of the historical significance of the theatres of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia and the cultural linkage between them will increase the audience’s perception of how Greek dramas function in relation to their very first performing spaces?

12. Do you think that the tragic poets always took under consideration the capacities of a performing space while they were writing their plays? What role did the space play in the writing of their plays?

13. Are there any differences in performing in an elliptical or semi-rectangular stage rather than in a common circular stage like that in Epidaurus theatre or those in other Hellenistic-type theatres like the theatre of Dionysus or the theatre of Herodus Atticus?

14. Do you consider Epidaurus’ theatre as the only Greek theatre that represents the development of Greek tragedy? Do you think that bigger spaces serve the staging of the plays in a better way than in smaller performing spaces?

15. Do you think that smaller performing spaces create the sense of intimacy between the actors and the audience?
Appendix

*Seeing the Seeing Places*

**Script and Breakdown**
Script and Breakdown

Introduction:

**Video**

- MS of blue sky and zoom into the ancient Agora
- MS of the ancient Agora from a different angle
- Picture of the ancient Agora with public

**Audio**

- Harp music

**Narrator:**

Your wisdom is brilliant and will grow, indeed, though you’re young, it shone forth brilliantly and became famous two days ago before more than thirty thousand Greeks.

(Harp music in the background)

**Narrator:**

So did Socrates address

Agathon reading his dramatic triumph at the theatre of Dionysus.

(Harp music in the background)

**Narrator:**

Such comments as these and the grandiose form of Hellenistic theatres like Herodus Atticus, or the so well known theatre of Epidaurus, lead people to the conclusion that Greek drama was originally intended for big spaces.

However, the intentions of Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles, who lived and
wrote their dramas during the 5th c.BC, may not have been to see their plays performed in such great spaces. The way their tragedies were written, the strategies they employed could have been strongly related to the characteristics of smaller performing spaces that existed in their time, such as the unusual little theatre at Thorikos which, with a capacity of only 2500 spectators, would seem almost intimate by later standards.

Indeed, the small theatre at Thorikos poses many questions: about its ancestry, its use, and even its progeny: for it is the only known theatre on the Greek mainland—the only one—that existed at the time of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Not only does this tempt a new perspective on the plays of the Golden Age of Athens, it invites a new a new look, and perhaps a new consideration of such a strange old space. more smaller, much less perfect but much more intimate than any other Greek theatre.

(Flute music in the background)

Flute music.
II. Main Body

**VIDEO**

MS of the theatre of Thorikos

MS of harbor

MS of Sounion

MS of Laurion from a distance

MS of Velatouri hill

MS of sea-route and harbors

MS of the view of the sea from *Koilon*

**AUDIO**

**Narrator:** The small provincial theatre of Thorikos in Attica, located on the E coast about 10 Km N of Sounion and beyond Laurion, is recognizable at a distance of the high hill named Velatouri that marks it. It’s a strategic point between two harbors, Franko Limani to the N and Porto Mandri to the S, and it has a magnificent view of the sea.

MS of Thorikos area

MS of washeries, houses, workshops

MS of the theatre

CU of its orchestra and *koilon*

CU of its orchestra

Diagram of Thorikos theatre

It’s orchestra is not circular but irregularly oval. It forms a rectangular space with rounded corners and the ends of the parallel rows of seats in the *koilon* curve to enclose the theatre’s orchestra. There is no *skene* or *proscenium* built in front of the orchestra like in the Hellenistic type theatres but there is an archaic temple probably of Dionysus, a small house for dressing or stage properties, and a skenotheke at the sides of the orchestra.

(Harp music in the background)

**MS of archaic temple**

**MS of small house**

**MS of skenotheke**

**MS of Thorikos theatre**

Dated around the late 6\(^{th}\)c. BC
Thorikos is unchallenged in its position as Mainland Greece's oldest theatre: Older, even, than Aeschylus.

Flute music in the background.

**Ikonomakou:** What we have already discovered refers to a construction that is very old. In the publications of the Belgian school it is mentioned that Belgian archaeologists have actually found indications of ceramic art on the ground where Thorikos theatre is located and dating to the 6th c. BC. It is very possible for the theatre to be that old. So, we can either relate the use of this theatre to performances of ancient dramas or to public assemblies and other activities of Thorikos’ municipality.

Narrator: But though Thorikos may be the oldest theatre in Greece, it is not the oldest performing space. The arched gate at the back entrance of Thorikos theatre confirms the fact that Thorikos was originally a Mycenaean city, itself influenced by the Minoan culture. The theatre of Lato on the island of Crete dates to the 7th c. BC, and was an intentional performing space, reminiscent of the theatres in the Minoan palaces.

(Flute music in the background)

**Blanning:** The information that has been really fascinating me about Lato is that it did turn into a theatre similar to Thorikos. Lato was originally a Minoan venue. Oscar Bracket refers to those as performing spaces. We cannot call them theatres because we do not know what went on them. We assume that
there were performances of dance, ritual, certain things connected with either religion or festivals of the calendar. We date theatre towards the end of the 6th c. BC and we know that these spaces are much older.

(Harp music in the background)

Narrator:
Lato is a tiny casual seeing place cut into the rock, with straight rows of steps on the east side 15m long, which could sit about 350 people, beside an open-air exedra, with a bench around the walls. The steps faced north towards a platform that served as a stage, with an altar on the west. A similar irregular shape and size was followed for the construction of Thorikos theatre. Lato makes us believe that Thorikos was a natural development. Lato is a small performing space and Thorikos is a small theatre as well. This makes us believe that small theatres were realistic spaces. (Flute music in the background)

Gogos: I believe that Thorikos was first used not as a theatre where performances of dramas were taking place. Even if the term “theatre” or else “theasomai” (to see) was still existing during the time when Thorikos was built (3rd to 6th c. BC), the audience was not probably watching performances of Greek dramas but other kind of shows such as rituals and festivals that worshiped gods or heroes.

Ikonomakou: In the excavations of the Belgium School there was a fragment of a table without inscription which referred to a vote
of Thorikos municipality concerning the sponsoring (choregia) of performances. This means that there were people donating money for plays to be performed and thus performances were given in that theatre. There is another fragment inscribed with the letters D and E. Those letters indicate the word public or public use and operation of the theatre. Thus, it is certain that performances of ancient dramas were taking place at Thorikos theatre.

(Flute music in the background)

Narrator: Any kind of performances or rituals that were taking place at the small stage of Thorikos theatre must unquestionably have been exquisite. The small size of the koilon in relation to the elliptical shape of the theatre’s orchestra created the sense of intimacy between the actors and the audience. (Flute music in the background)

Gogos: The shape of Thorikos theatre differs from the regular shape that we see in other Greek theatres morphologically and practically because it is oval. However, this shape may also be compared to other Greek theatres with similar but not exact shapes like the theatre of Lato in Crete.

Narrator: Due to the irregular shape, the theatre of Thorikos does not actually surround morphologically the entire theatre, but only half of the circle of the orchestra. Its orchestra is oblong and it defines the one side of the theatre. On Thorikos' stage you are never too far from the audience. You
can see the audience’s eyes. You have a shared intimacy and everybody in the audience feels privileged. (Flute music in the background)

Blanning: In terms of performing…there are differences between performing in an elliptical shape rather than in a circular shape. You do not have the same assistance in the part of the physical stage to present the same balance or synchronized choreography. You can still accomplish most of that by the chorus itself. They can give meaning to the shape in a different fashion. (Harp music)

Georgousopoulos: The closer an audience to an actor is, the more different its reaction should be. The way a circular stage functions is totally different from the that of a semi-circular or an elliptical stage like those of many theatres that were later built and whose shape was elliptical.

This way, the dramatic action was much more closer to the spectator meaning that the acting and the technical organization were completely different. Since all the performances were given with masks, there is much difference between the relation of the actors with an audience that is closer to them than with a distant one. Even the angles from which the masks are lighted are different since we take it for granted that all the plays were performed in daylight. The way the sun approaches a mask which is much more closer to an audience is different from when an audience sees the mask from a distance. I have
MS of Dr. Georgousopoulos talking

Thorikos theatre from a high angle

MS of actress and audience in Thorikos theatre
MS of a person in the orchestra
MS of Thorikos from a different angle
Pan in the scenery of Athens city and the Agora

MS of the theatre of Dionysus

Narrator: The theatre of Thorikos not only serves all the Greek plays, it also makes those plays more intimate: the difference between slight gestures is more visible. But why didn't Thorikos copy the theatres of Athens, the birthplace of tragedy, in their size and structure: the theatre of Dionysus for example? (Flute music/dramatic climax)

Narrator: It’s because Athens didn’t have a theatre at that time. The performance of Greek drama first started in the Athenian Agora, an open square which served as the civil center and the central market place, where Greeks were having public assembles and discussions. (Flute music in the background)

Tour Guide: This is the general view of the ancient Agora, which was the commercial and civic center of the ancient city of Athens. The first orchestra was situated in the northwest part of the Agora which is where the small grove of trees is now. It was in this area where the first plays of Chyrilos, Pratinas, and Aeschylus were produced. We don’t know exactly the form of the orchestra but we know from ancient authors that the spectators could watch the performances sitting at wooden benches that were supported by wooden scaffolding. The ancient
MS of Dionysus’ theatre’s *koilon*

Greeks called these constructions *ikria*. It was during a contest between Aeschylus and Pratinas that part of those scaffoldings collapsed, because they were old and because of their burden. Then the ancient Athenians made the decision to move all the theatrical place during the Great or City Dionysia to the sanctuary of Dionysus Eleuthereus where already a circular orchestra was existed where the Dythirambic dances were performed. *(Harp music in the background)*

Pan to the right in the ancient Agora

MS of Dionysus’ picture
MS of the theatre of Dionysus
MS of theatre’s orchestra

Tour Guide: Here you can see the remains of the retaining wall of the first orchestra that was built in the sanctuary of Dionysus Eleuheres. In this orchestra only choruses of the Dythiramb they were given and produced that means songs and dancing in honor of the god Dionsysus with subjects taken from the myth and the life of Dionysus. They were performed in groups of 50 men or children and they were part of the competition during the great festival of Dionysus, the *Great or City Dionysia* which were introduced in Athens by the tyrant Peisistratos in the second part of the 6th c. BC. This way, Peisistratos wanted to centralize the cult of Dionsysus and at the same time to cultivate the support of the masses especially the people from the agricultural areas of Attica who were his supporters. *(Flute music in the background)*

MS of the tour guide and the remains
MS of the theatre’s orchestra
MS of Dionysus
MS of the theatre’s *proscenium*

Pictures of tragedies

Kambanellis: First of all, let’s not forget that ancient theatre, the notion of theatre, the theatrical dramatic action didn’t start in an indoor theatre. It started with the festivals
of Dionysus outside in the agora, on the streets, in the fields and the orchards, and remained outdoors. Then the theatres where invented which were not made of marble at the beginning but there were slopes of some hills and used as seats for the audience and spaces for the actors. Then, they became wooden like in the theatre of Dionysus, for instance, and later on they became marble. (Harp music in the background)

Narrator: Such small spaces were used for the performance of Greek tragedies by the time of Aeschylus. It is well known that in the 5th c. BC the tragic poets were also directors of their plays which means that they knew exactly the dynamics of the space where tragedies would be performed. The small size and the irregular shape of Thorikos theatre was not a coincidence. Tragedies were intentionally written for such small spaces like Thorikos. (Flute music in the background)

Gogos: In the earliest dramas like the Persians or Seven Against Thebes or the Danaides there is no indication of a skene in their texts. Therefore, the intention of the tragic poets who lived and wrote their dramas in the first half and the last forth of the 6th c. BC and also in the 5th c. BC was not to have their plays performed in big theatres. Instead, their always had in mind what was feasible in the theatre and this way they wrote their plays. For instance, in Persians the palace is not visible on stage because the queen always arrives riding in a horse and pretends
and she comes from the palace. Thus, the altar, Darius’ tomb dominates the stage. In Danaides we also have an altar and in Seven Against Thebes many altars. So we can say that the tragic poets wrote their tragedies for theatres that didn’t require a skene since a skene didn’t exist in that time. (Harp music in the background)

Blanning: We do know that Aeschylus and Sophocles were both actors. Aeschylus not only directed the chorus but also led it and performed in his plays. Combination of playwrights and actors/directors. So they should have had some sensibility of how the space relates to the audience and how the performance relates to the space. And here we’ve got Aeschylus…he’s all three. Aeschylus was writing the Oresteia for the audience whom he knew they would watch it. If the play was first performed in the Agora which is a small space it makes more sense for the second place to be Thorikos and not Epidaurus. (Flute music in the background)

Narrator: It is not until the 3rd c. BC that the great theatres would come. Epidaurus is one of the biggest: well known and well preserved. It deserves its popularity because of its magnificent architecture and perfect acoustics. The theatre consists of a complete circular orchestra, a skene and a symmetrically rounded auditorium, the koilon, with 12 sections and thirteen radiating staircases in the first diazoma and twenty-two sections with twenty-three staircases in the
Koniorou: It is the most complete theatre in the sense that it has been preserved almost entire besides the proscenium and the wall behind the proscenium, and thus all the dynamics that were developed in antiquity can also be developed nowadays. There are no parts missing in the theatre. There is plenty of space for the spectators and also an ongoing relationship between the dramatic action, the setting, and the audience. However I think that Epidaurus is not the only theatre with this kind of function. (Harp music)

Blanning: When we think of a Greek theatre in association with spaces like Epidaurus I think we do a disservice to the plays and to what the intentions of the playwrights might have been. Even if we know that Sophocles, Euripides, and Aeschylus did not write for Epidaurus we often have the tendency to associate that theatre with their plays. We know that the perfection of that theatre wouldn’t have existed at that time. (Flute music)

Gogos: If we take a look at the analogy between the size of the orchestra and the koilon in a common ancient Greek theatre like the theatre of Epidaurus which is approximately 1/10 since second diazoma. (Flute music in the background)
the koilon is ten times bigger than the orchestra in Thorikos the koilon is one and a half bigger than the size of the orchestra so they are almost the same size.

Narrator:
The entire theatre of Thorikos can fit into the orchestra of Epidaurus theatre. So, is Epidaurus theatre a proof that Greek theatres may have started small but eventually became big? (Flute music-dramatic Climax)

Narrator:
When big theatres were built drama was already a big celebration in Attica. The theatre of Epidaurus is perfect except Aeschylus never wrote a play for such a big space. Moreover, after Sophocles died the building of small theatres continued. The theatre of Makynia in Aetoloacarnania dating to the 3rd c. BC. was built after the theatre of Herodus Atticus or the great theatre of Epidaurus; Its small size and intimate circumstance was--like many other small performing spaces all over Attica--intentional. Flute music in the background

Narrator: The small provincial theatre of Makynia located in the ancient city of Makynia outside the town’s citadel and next to an ancient temple, is important because it repeats the notion of Thorikos.
Narrator: Makynia has the same features as Thorikos' theatre: the shapes of the Koiloi are similar, there is no skene, and a temple and an altar stand to either side. (Flute music in the background)

Blanning: It is a space that has an elliptical, rectangular stage rather than the perfect oval or half oval of a common ancient Greek theatre. There is no doubt that Makynia was intentionally built for that design. It wasn’t an earlier theatre. By the time Makynia was built drama was a hugely honored institution in Greece. (Harp music in the background)

III. Conclusion

Narrator: That’s why the small theatres of Lato, Thorikos, and Makynia together have a particularly interesting linkage. Lato suggests to us that a performing space was a proper thing to have in a city. Thorikos is unquestionably a theatre from the way it is constructed. We have a theatre that not only serves all the Greek plays but it also makes them more intimate by allowing the audience to see the eyes of Iphigenia rather than the mask of Iphigenia, and then Makynia repeats it. These three theatres represent the prehistory and future of what have been the size effort at the theatre in Greece at the time of Aeschylus. (Flute music in the background)

Flute music
Works Cited


