

The "Stage" in Menander.

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"The advocates of the high stage have clearly seen that they can make headway only by the sacrifice of the dramatic chorus..... From these facts [i.e. the apparent curtailment of the chorus in fourth century plays] it has been declared that at the close of the fifth century or early in the fourth the chorus was either given up altogether or "its functions were merely those of a modern band," or "of mere interlude singers". Accordingly it has been argued that the actors at the end of the fifth century stood upon a low stage (which for the kind of plays then exhibited was only less impracticable than a Vitruvian stage) and that they were suddenly elevated to the full height of the proscenium before the close of the fourth century. It must be added that even among those who accept Dorpfeld's theory for the fifth century there is a tendency to go over to Vitruvius for the period represented by the Lycurgus theatre at Athens."

The most cursory examination of the text of Menander is sufficient to show that the role of the chorus had by that time undergone a change which had robbed it of its former structural and functional importance in developing the complications and the denouement of the plot. The cause of this decline has been attributed to retrenchment in the matter of

1 Flickinger The Greek Theatre p. 92
Cf. Peterson "Die Attische Tragödie als Bild-und Bühnenkunst", 1915: p. 539. Also Frickenhaus' leanings toward the theories of Puchstein for whose views, according to Mr Allen, he "evinces a lively sympathy". Review by Allen of "Die Altgriechische Bühne": A. Frickenhaus: Class. Phil. xvii 1922; p. 167. Indeed, the adherents to the Puchstein theory seem, strangely enough, to have had some

the cost of productions, and (a point which seems a little strained) to the fact that in the fourth century legislative measures reformed the traditional satiric freedom of Old Comedy. The increasing irrelevency of the choral odes to the movement of the plot which A ristotle criticized in Euripides had its logical outgrowth in Agathon. Flickinger suggests that the use of $\chi\omicron\rho\omicron\upsilon$ in the Menander fragments had its precedent in Agathon, who, on account of this irrelevency did not publish his odes but marked their appearance in a dramatic representation by the word $\chi\omicron\rho\omicron\upsilon$ in the manuscript. "Does not the very word which Aristotle uses ($\epsilon\mu\beta\omicron\lambda\iota\mu\alpha$) support this interpretation?.....in Agathon's MSS... there were gaps indicated between acts. In actual performance suitable odes were "thrown in". " 2 Whatever the cause, the fact remains that in the comedies of Menander the part of the chorus has suffered a dimunition of importance. And in an examination of the text for evidence which may point to the sort of stage upon which the comedies were acted, the nature and extent of the role of the existing chorus is of the greatest importance. An

encouragement from the results of the conclusions of Mr Allen in his book "The Greek Theatre of the 5th Century before Christ". Cf. Flickinger, "Problems in Scenic Antiquities", Phil. Quarterly (Iowa) vol.v, 1926:p.111: "If Allen is right in his placing of the wooden proscenium of the Lycurgus theatre and in his contention that this structure closely reproduced the Aeschylean theatre of about 460 B.C. then Vitruvius' diagrammatic scheme for Greek theatres fits these buildings with considerable exactness provided we assume that he defined his tangent and inscribed square in terms of an orchestra-terrace or great circle as determined by the lowest row of seats instead of in terms of the orchestra marked off by the gutter; and Vitruvius' words in his description of the Theatrum Latinum (orchestra inter gradus imos quam diametron habuerit, etc; V. 7,9.) render

intimation, as Professor Capps suggests³, of the decline of the chorus may be seen in the fragment of Menander which begins:

" ὡς πρὸ τῶν χορῶν
 οὐ πάντες ἔδουσ', ἀλλ' ἀφ' ὧν δι' οὐοὶ τινὲς
 ἦ, τρεῖς παρ' ἐστὶ καὶ πέντε ἔρχονται
 εἰς τὸν ἀριθμὸν..... "

And, indeed, Menander's choruses might almost be called

"Mere numbered dummies"

since, in the extant manuscripts there are no lines attributed to them, and their function is intermezzic, to separate the play into acts, and perhaps to provide entertainment during these divisions. However, there was a chorus⁴ and at least in two instances there is indication from the text of contact between actors and chorus, and, too, the chorus is used to motivate the withdrawal from the stage of the actors. Thus, in "The Girl Who Gets Her Hair Cut Short", the following speech of Davus comes just before the word χορῶν in the manuscript, so that χορῶν here evidently indicates his withdrawal and the end of the act:

παῖδες. μεθουσὶα μείρακια προσέρχεται.
 παμπόλλ' ἐπαινῶ, διαφώρας κεκτημένην.
 εἶδω πρὸς ὑμᾶς εἰσάγει τὴν μείρακα.
 τοῦτ' ἐστὶ μήτηρ. ὁ προφίλος Σητήριος
 ἔκρινεν γὰρ αὐτὸν τὴν ταχίστην ἐνθάδε
 εὐκαίρην εἶναι φαίνεται, ὥς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ.

this assumption not at all unreasonable. The protagonists will, of course, not be slow to assert that, if Vitruvius' ground plan is to be accepted for the Athenian theatre in the times of Lycurgus and of Aeschylus, then his statements about the Greek stage and its elevation must also be accepted for these periods." 2.R.C. Flickinger "χορῶν in Terence's Heauton": Class. Phil. vii, 1912; p. 33. 3. "The Chorus in the Later Greek Drama": Am. Jour. of Arch. x (1895) 287 ff. "But", he adds, "this may refer to the dithyrambic chorus." 4. "For instance, the appearance

So, too, in "The Arbitrants", Chaerestratus to Simmias:

ἰωμεν, ὥς καὶ μετὰ κυλλίων ὄχλος
 εἰς τὸν τόπον τις ἔρχεθ' υποβιβρῶν,
 οἷς μὴ ἐνοχλεῖν εὐκαιρὸν εἶναι μοι δοκεῖ.

The word which Chaerestratus here uses and which is translated "to interfere with" is ἐνοχλεῖν. If usage be considered, the word seems to mean merely to trouble, annoy, inconvenience, and not in any sense to imply physical molestation. Thus in Xenophon, Cyropaedia V iv 34, Gadatus speaks of the advantages of having an estate near a big

city, but far enough away so that its annoyances could be escaped:

".....ὅσα δὲ ἐνοχλεῖσθαί, οἴκαδε δεῦρ' ἄπιοντες
 τούτων ἐκποδὼν ἤμην..."

".....but as soon as we were worried, we could straightway come back home..." 5

And, for later usage, see Theocritus xxix:36

"αἱ δὲ ταῦτα φέρην ἐνέμοισιν ἐπιτρόπῃς,
 ἐν θύμῳ δὲ λείχῃς τί μὲν δαίμονι, ἐνοχλῇς;"

"But if you should cast my words to the winds, and say in your heart,

"Sir, why do you trouble me?!..." and Aeschines, "Against

Timarchus," 58, "ὅτε δὲ αὐτοῖς ἠνώχλει...." of

Pittalacus' constant visits to the house of Hegesandrus, a source of annoyance to the latter.

It seems hardly likely that even a group of intoxicated, pugnacious, and highly irascible youths (and there is no indication in the text that this was other than a band of slightly tipsy merrymakers) would be so inconvenienced by the presence of Chaerestratus on a stage twelve feet above them that they might resort to physical violence. And Menander

in the MS of ΧΟΡΩΝ proves conclusively as Körte has pointed out, the employment of the chorus..." "The Three Actor Rule in Menander" Kelley Rees; Class. Phil. V. 1910. 5. Cf. also Cyropaedia viii: 56.

assumes the possibility of violence when the motivation of Chaerestratus' nervous and discreet flight is accomplished by the entrance of the chorus. Surely the timorousness of Chaerestratus in withdrawing into the house merely because his presence may be distasteful to the roisterers would pass the bounds even of theatrical probability were they in the orchestra twelve feet below him. And had there been, as has been suggested, steps or ladders from the orchestra to the stage, the successful scaling of these by the revellers, would, surely, considering their condition, do violence to lifelike verisimilitude. It is apparent, then, that this contact between chorus and actors (a contact implicit in the word $\lambda\omicron\chi\lambda\acute{\alpha}\nu$ ¹) would be impossible if the actors were playing on a raised Vitruvian² stage and the chorus were in the orchestra. And since the interrelation of chorus and actors was the criterion by which the raised stage was judged to be impossible for fifth century drama, here too, in the comedies of Menander such a stage would be impossible and ludicrous.

It seems, too, from the text of Menander's plays, that an adequate staging of them would require a space larger than the one which Vitruvius has described, or at least a space large enough to allow a certain amount of sometimes violent action and at the same time to secure the actors from falling off into the orchestra. There is in Menander action which would seem at times to require a stage of Elizabethan depth and breadth to do justice to its robust character. A fist fight on the

1. "Also eine grosse Zahl trunkener Junglinge zieht ein und zwar offenbar auf gleichem Boden, denn nur hat das Wort einen Sinn." Die altgriechische Bühne: August Frickenhaus; p. 66
 2. "...pulpitum quod $\lambda\omicron\chi\lambda\acute{\alpha}\nu$ appellant, idio quod eo se tragici et comici actores in scaena peragunt reliqui autem artifices auas per orchestram praestant actiones... eius logei altitudo non minus debet esse pedem decem, non plus duodecim." Vitruvii De Architectura, 7, 2 f.

stage requires more space than one in real life, for here one must consider the theatrical conventions, the necessity that the audience shall not miss any of the action, that the fight look convincing but yet not injure any of the participants. The high narrow Vitruvian stage seems singularly ill-adapted to meet these demands. Such a scene is the one in "The Girl From Samos" in which Demeas ~~defends~~ his wife Chrysis from Niceratus his enraged neighbor who thinks that Chrysis has cheated him. The action necessary here is that Chrysis should come running from the house of Niceratus who is pursuing her. Demeas sees her and endeavors to engage Niceratus in order to give Chrysis time to get into her house. The two men evidently come to blows:

Demeas: "What! You'll hit me?"

Niceratus: Yes, sir!

Demeas: Quick now! Curse you, in! Well, then, here is one from me, sir. Chrysis! He's the stronger. Run! You began it first and seized me. "

To add to the complications, Chrysis has a baby in her arms which is the subject of the dispute. Again, in the same play, Moschion and Parmenon come to blows:

Parmenon: "Moschion! What are you up to?"

Moschion: Quickly run, fetch what I tell you.

Parmenon: You have cut my lip in two!

Moschion: You! Still talking?"

Another type of scene which occurs frequently in the plays and which, too, seems to require more space for staging than the Vitruvian dimensions allow, is the one in which for the purposes of the plot, one of the characters is present on the stage, apparent to the audience but unseen by the other actors. Thus, in "The Arbitrants", Onesimus and Syriacus are on the stage for the length of six speeches during which time neither one knows of the presence of the other.¹ Thus, too, in "The Girl

1. The Arbitrants: v. 165 ff.

from Samos", the Caterer, unobserved, overhears the whole scene between Demeas and Chrysis¹, and in the same play, Moschion, unseen by Parmenon overhears his whole soliloquy². A similar situation occurs in "The Girl Who Gets Her Hair Cut Short", when Doris is unaware of the presence on the stage of Sosias.

There are no interior scenes in the extant plays of Menander, and there is little, if any, evidence in the text which might serve as a partial restoration of the settings. As far as one can gather these seem rather conventionalized: they appear to be closely related to the scenic backgrounds which were later used for the comedies of Plautus and Terence. Thus, a typical setting generally represents the exterior of two neighboring houses in front of which is a road.³ In "The Girl from Samos" there is the possibility that the door is opened into one of the houses to show the preparations for the wedding feast which are going on inside. Parmenon and Moschion are talking, one gathers, in front of the latter's house. "Look, in truth the wedding's on.", Parmenon says, and Moschion replies: "Hurry, bring me news about it."⁴ At this point the context suggests that Parmenon goes into the house to find out the news.

Frickenhauß suggests, accepting the restoration of the Proskenion with three doors, that a curtain may have been used to cover the third door since only two houses, and consequently two doors, were necessary.

1. "The Girl from Samos" v. 154 ff.

2. Ibid. v. 296 ff.

3. Selections from Menander W.G. Waddell: Review by R.C. Flickinger: "The statement that an actor entering from the spectators' right came 'from the town' needs to be qualified...The scene in New Comedy was usually laid in the middle of the city, which could thus be reached through either parados."
Class. Journal Oct. 1928: vol xxiv, p. 62

4. "The Girl From Samos" v. 336

This assumption he bases upon the relief at Naples of the comic scene in which there is represented a curtain and a door, and on the reference found in Harpocration to the famous courtesan Nannion who was nicknamed "Proskenion", "because outwardly she appeared more comely". Allen¹ quotes Athenaeus' explanatory note on this, using it as evidence for a Proskenion in the Lykurgus theatre: "Nannion was called 'Proskenion' because she had a pretty face and adorned herself with rich garments and ornaments of gold, but when she removed her garments she was most ill-favoured to look upon." Frickenhaus interprets it as a reference to a curtain: "So konnte er den Scherznamen für eine Hetäre abgeben, hinter derend schönen Kleidern anscheinend nichts dahinter war....."² But whether or not there was a curtain, it is obvious from the following quotations from Menander that there were doors which led into the respective houses of the characters, and that these doors opened and shut and banged in a convincing and realistic manner: Demeas, of Permenon who has apparently gone into the house, and who is now coming out:³

" ἄλλ' ἂν τὴν θύραν
 προῶν πεπληγχεν."

And further on in the same play:

Demeas: " δευρ' ἀπὸ τῆς θύρας
 ἔτι μικρόν."

At another place the Caterer evidently comes out of the house in search

¹ The Greek Theatre of the Fifth Century J.T. Allen; p. 16
² Die Altgriechische Bühne August Frickenhaus; p. 68
³ "The Girl from Samos" v. 82

of Demeas:
 "ἀλλ' ἄρα πρόσθεν τῶν θυρῶν ἔστ' ἐνθάδε,
 παῖ, Παρμένων;"

And again, of Demeas who has withdrawn in a state of agitation into the house:¹

Caterer: "νῆ τὸν Ποσειδῶ, μαίνειθ', ὥς ἐμὸι δοκεῖ.
 κέκραγες γούν παμμεγέθεις.....
τῇν θύραν
 πᾶπληγες."

In "The Girl who Gets her Hair Cut Short", the goddess Misapprehension thus describes the meeting of Glycera and her brother:²

"ὡς δ' ἐπὶ ταῖς θύραις
 αὐτὴν γενομένην εἶδεν, εὐθὺ πρόσδραμὼν
 εφίλσι, περιέβαλε."

Later in the same play, Moschion, who has sent Davus into the house, says to him before he leaves:³

"περιπατῶν δὲ προσμενῶ σε, Δάε, προσθε
 τῶν θυρῶν."

1. "The Girl From Samos" v. 148
2. "The Girl Who gets Her Hair Cut Short" v. 34ff.
3. Ibid. v. 109.

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