

Mythbusting the Ancient Theater

Presented by the Workshop in Ancient
Mediterranean Studies



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4:00pm in Curtin Hall 866**

It is often asserted that the Greek theater was in decline in the postclassical period. This model assumes that Roman cultural influence drove drama off the stages of the Greek world, while pantomime (a silent, masked dance) "replaced" spoken drama. This paradigm of the trajectory of the ancient theater was developed in the early modern period, and continues to exert a surprising level of influence today. In this talk, Dr. Skotheim will "bust" this myth about the ancient theater, tracing the reasons for the early modern reconstruction of ancient theater history, and showing how consideration of the material evidence can change our perspective on the role of drama in postclassical Greek and Roman society. Documentary sources, such as inscriptions, show that Greek theater flourished in the postclassical world, with festival performances of Greek drama lasting into the 3rd century CE. This radical revision of the traditional narrative of Greek theater history invites us all, students, teachers, and scholars, to examine the assumptions and biases of our fields, question how they came to be, and consider how to be "mythbusters" ourselves.

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