

Phallegoria March 2024, Jo Lashly – Attachment A

Official Web Site with videos: <https://phallegoria.gr/en/home/>

In early 2020, Sarah Thomason sent me a video of an Athenian festival revived in 2014 – the Phallegoria! Those of you who teach Greek Theatre, particularly the comedy, will know very well the hilarity of explaining to your students that the actors and chorus of a 5th Century BC Athenian comedy wore large phalleges as part of their costume. I showed the promotional video to my A level class saying that when I retired I was going to go to see it. This year I finally did, and as it coincided with my husband's birthday – I suggested a birthday trip, and 'oh yes, there's this festival on the Saturday evening ...'.

It did not disappoint. It is possible to hire masks etc. and take part, but we had not got ourselves together enough for that, and to be honest, I preferred being a watcher. The participants



assembled on the steps by the Odeon of Herodes Atticus and there was a lovely atmosphere as dancers stretched, and bagpipers and drummers limbered up. A crowd began to assemble, and the representation of Dionysus was set up on the steps. It reminded me of the figure of Dionysus on the red figure stamnos by the Dinos Painter which is one of the prescribed texts for OCR's Greek Theatre paper in Classical Civilisation. You can see the satyr in the picture and the grey sky, though Zeus only threatened to rain.

This statue of Dionysus was later carried ahead of the procession all the way past his theatre and through the packed shopping streets at the foot of the Acropolis, to the Kerameikos.

Before the procession there were prayers, invocations to Dionysus and dancing from the Maenads. It was all beautifully choreographed and to the insistent beat of the drum and bagpipes which continued for the full two and half hours of the procession.

With a couple of stops along the way to light torches and possibly to allow the crowd to catch up we reached Monasteraki where there was a longer stop as a larger crowd gathered to watch the maenads dancing. Then we were off again past the restaurants on Odos Adrianou next to the agora where tourists were mostly amused, and sometimes bemused, by the noisy and bizarrely dressed dancers. 'Welcome to Greece!' shouted one masked bacchant as he waved his thyrsus (and other bits of costume) at the diners.



Our arrival at Kerameikos, or just outside, was the signal for more frenzied drumming and general dancing for a good 10-15 minutes before there more prayers to Dionysus and the priest sent us on our way. Such fun!



The Phallephoria in this form was revived in 2014 and is held on the Saturday preceding Clean Monday (Καθαρά Δευτέρα) which marks the beginning of Orthodox Lent. I believe that is 3rd March in 2025. See you there!

Jo Lashly