

Elysian Theater

Elysians greatly enjoy theatre. It is thoroughly ingrained in their culture in myriad forms, and Elysians on the whole routinely find excuses to spend a day simply watching the antics of actors and jesters (the latter are, of course, shunned by stately Patricians). Though all castes enjoy some aspects of theatre, Plebians have, as one may expect, developed a fair number of theatrical arts that Patricians find entirely distasteful. As such, we will divide theatrical arts into “high” and “low” theatre. One should also note that theatre is likely the single most common pastime partaken by Elysians on holidays and off-days.

High Theatre

Orchestral Theatre (“Distante”) The most well-respected and well-established of Elysian theatrical arts, Orchestral theatre - or Distant - consists of silent actors playing dramatized roles as a story is told entirely through instrument and hymn. Motions of actors are slow, shifting, and with an exceeding focus on grace - a dance with some unmistakable similarities to Noh. The main point of Orchestral theatre, however, comes from a focus on the expressions of individual actors: a talented Distant actor can portray as much with a shift of the lip, a flash of the eye, as an orator can with a finely-crafted sentence. A full range of classical Elysian instruments are used in Distant, and compositions for Distant scores are every bit as intricate and soulful as the most masterful of Elysian symphonies. The themes of Distant plays are usually extremely dramatized romances, though one particular noted play, “Autunno” (Also called “Autunno di Consalazione”), is the story of a Patrician who's hubris leads him to defy social tradition, to the detriment of those around him, and to his eventual death.

Oratory Theatre (“Poesia”) Oratory theatre, called Poesia, is another highly respected theatrical art, reliant on clever wordplay and metaphorical poetry. Actors are not expected to be so expressive as in Distant, and motions are less dramatized, more natural. Grace is still a greatly respected quality in a Poesia actor, but the lack of definitive choreography in the style results in a more relaxed approach to such things. Music has some place in Poesia, typically glissando scores on Elysian harps to add particular emphasis to powerful lines. Most Poesia plays are of a fiercely political nature - and there is, as well, a Poesia version of the famous “Autunno”.

Shadow Theatre (“Grazia”) Shadow theatre, known as Grazia, is a dazzling, exhaustively choreographed dance theatre. Music is minimal, with only occasional use of Kleayo and Manlaey found. Additionally, there are no lines from the actors. Occasionally, there is narration, but this is rare, as many Patricians consider it to be an insult to their intellect that a composer believes his work needs to be spoon-fed. The dance of a Grazia play is agile and acrobatic, with extensive use of the wings. The stage is brightly lit from every angle, and stage and backdrop are all stark white - allowing the shadows of the dancers to provide as stunning a show as the dancers themselves. Fierce drumming is used for tense sequences, with Kleayo leading into pivotal moments. Grazia is the only style of “high” theatre which routinely shows combat; always dazzlingly choreographed and stylized. Actors wear bright, flashy costumes and extensive amounts of makeup, dramatizing skin tone into metallic shades. Most Grazia plays tell stories of the children of God and their struggles to aid the Elysian people on the path to greatness. Grazia, like most styles, also has its own interpretation of “Autunno”.

Low Theatre

Puppet Theatre (“Burattino”) Burattino puppetry is an art common among Plebians, and it is looked down upon immensely by Patricians. Typically performed by two artists, Burattino puppets are simple devices which can be controlled with a single hand by a skilled puppeteer. Though occasionally elaborate and very artistic, the puppets are more often than not crude representations of unpopular political or military figures, and the mainstay of Burattino consists of intense mockery of government. Sometimes, a third artist will also stay backstage, to play an instrument - usually a Kleayo, which is used to cue punchlines. Even among Plebians, Burattino is not terribly popular, its relatively crude workings preventing it from gaining too much sway.

Street Theatre (“Realita”) Realita street theatre is, as the name suggests, practiced by Plebian actors in public venues, typically well-trafficked streets. It is unified by the common theme of high-brow satirization of famous Distant and Poesia plays - especially, as one may imagine, the satirical renditions of “Autunno”. Realita artists tend to be every bit as cynical as the scripts they perform, and many Realita troupes make a point of drawing the audience into intensive political discussion by the end. It should be pointed out that Patricians occasionally enjoy Realita as well, particularly those who began as Plebians, due largely to the dispassionate, ironic look it takes at the flaws of Elysian society. Despite its cynicism, Realita usually reinforces the belief that Elysian society is superior to others, often with snide comments slipped into the writing about the promiscuity of Yamataians or the boorish idiocy of Neplesians.

Dance Theatre (“Vortice”) Vortice differs from the “high” dance theatres in one major way: it is entirely ad-lib. Due to this, it is often much more chaotic and difficult to follow than the dazzling, but exhaustively patterned Grazia, or the precise, slow-moving Distant. Performers wear heavy makeup and sparkly clothing, making the chaotic dance almost seizure-inducing to watch. Vortice dancers spend countless years in practice before they ever attempt performance, the consequences of slight missteps often being catastrophic medical bills, and not even the most disdainful of Patricians deny that Vortice produces very talented dancers. However, the lack of a musical or storytelling aspect in the art has prevented it from gaining any sway among Patricians, who would otherwise likely find it wonderful and involving. Plebians and Caelisolans, often simply seeking a pretty sight to round out a difficult time in work, flock to Vortice more than any other style of theatre.

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