

## Slaves – Greek performance in Poland



### SLAVES

#### PRESENTATION SCENE

SOSTRATA: Hey where did you all come from? I thought I was alone. To tell you the truth, I have no idea where I am or how I got here...I was dead, that's the last thing I remember, an unfair and inglorious, just like my life has been. Why should you die in a different way from the way you have lived? You know ...while I was alive I used to be a slave

VOICE: Slave: a person who has been deprived of their personal freedom and belongs to another person

SPSTRATA: You keep on looking at me...I think that you are listening to me...Are you interested in my story? Forgive my not being able to believe it but while I was alive my thoughts and feelings were of interest for nobody. I used to be a useful object, a..tool...

VOICE: Tool: ever mechanism or object whose use makes the life of people easier.

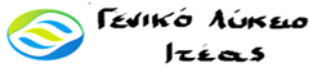
SOSTRATA: I am tempted to talk to you. The way you're looking at me makes me feel important for the first time in my life...A whole room full of people. Perhaps it's my chance to tell my story and somebody to listen to me. Yes, I will do it! I will tell you my story, maybe I don't remember every detail –it's been hundreds of years since things happened. I hope you don't care so much about details...

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CHORUS

VOICE 1: Well, which names come to your mind when you hear the words “ancient Greece”

Pericles

Aristotle

Aeschylus

Alexander the Great

Sophocles

VOICE: was any of them a slave?

Noooo!

VOICE; the pyramids, the Parthenon, all the vessels we see in museums, have you ever wondered how many slaves it took to be made?

Or the conditions under which they used to work?

VOICE: in the farms of the Greeks there were slaves doing all the work

VOICE In the well known mines of Lavrio there were slaves working in narrow holes under the ground in the dark

VOICE in the houses of the Greeks female slaves did all the housework they did the shopping, they cooked, they raise the children, they washed the clothes and they helped the lady of the house to get bathed, combed and dressed

VOICE the slave had to work nonstop because if he dared to stop for a moment the whip of the supervisor brought him back to reality

VOICE if he dared to grab something to eat they tied him on a pole all naked and they beat him

VOICE just a few moments before he died though they stopped because nobody wanted to lose a slave

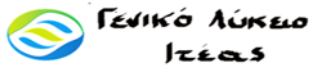
VOICE There was a law in Athens which forbade the killing of slaves

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VOICE You see, the city earned money from slave trade which they taxed

VOICE: However, many owners killed their slaves if they got too annoyed by them

VOICE the punishment was not big at all!

VOICE The killer went to the temple with a new born piglet

VOICE the priestess sacrificed the little pig and let some blood roll on the culprit's hand

ALL VOICES: to have the killer's hands washed with clean water

VOICE then the guilty man could return home and go on with his life as nothing had happened

VOICE All things we know about slaves were not written by them.

VOICE So, let's see this meeting with Sostrata as an opportunity to see the lives of the slaves through their own point of view!

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## JOINT PERFORMANCE SCENE

AMFITHOI (a female slave) Even when the slave has a relatively easy life, their biggest dream is always to get their freedom. So take advantage of this relationship with Kleomantis, your owner to achieve some better conditions of life and maybe he helps you with your liberation

SOSTRATA: Are there such cases?

AMFITHOI: There are quite a lot! But I am going to tell you the story of two female slaves, Andromahi and Isidora. I heard it from someone else but I guess it's true.

*The first story comes to life*

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ANDROMAHI: Cassandra, things are not very good at home. The master is trying to take me to his bed...

KASSANDRA: What can I tell you? On the one hand, I feel sorry for you because it's awful to be treated as an object and force you to an intercourse. But on the other hand, isn't it nice to be wanted by the master?

ANDROMAHI: of course not! There's nothing about it. Somebody exerts their power on you, that's all!

KASSANDRA: Isn't there somebody in the house to help you?

ANDROMAHI: No, the younger master, Visarion, is better but he is also untamed and a womanizer. My sister Isidora is in love with him and she thinks he might marry her. I have told her a hundred of times that marriage between a slave and a free man is forbidden in Athens by law.

KASSANDRA: get a slave to marry soon before you both get in big trouble!

ANDROMAHI: I know. The other day I caught her talking to another slave about a magic spell which will make Visarion fall for her. If our mistress finds out, she will sell at the bordel

KASSANDRA: tell her to be careful. I know that slaves are always trying to improve their lives and I don't think that your sister is in love with Visarion. She just thinks that relationship with him will help her have a better life. But masters don't get carried away by emotions. And if she gets caught she will be punished severely!

*Isidora comes in*

ISIDORA: I heard you! But you are making a big mistake about me!

ANDROMAHI: Isidora! Cassandra and I just want the best for you!

ISIDORA: I know my position very well. Slaves have no rights, they must accept the master's violence as something normal and do whatever they are asked to without objections.

KASSANDRA: You speak the truth

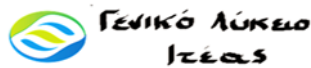
ISIDORA: I am trying to accept my faith as a slave but it is not easy. I am human and as a human I want to live some moments in my life...

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ANDROMAHI: my dear Isidora, you' re right. But when you accept your fate you can live your life without much trouble...

ISIDORA: I know that Visarion will never love me nut I want to fill my heart with love. It's my way to resist the violence, my own way to protest against violence

*The scene comes back to Sostrata and Amfithoi*

SOSTRATA (*ready to cry*) Oh how much I sympathize with Isidora...

AMFITHOI: There are many stories of slaves who fell in love and did amazing things out of love. But sexual abuse and exploitation by their masters was an everyday reality

SOSTRATA: Isidora was right. Love is a strong feeling which helps feel you're human. But wouldn't it be more realistic to fall in love with a slave?

AMFITHOI: Surely. But don't you think that love between slave was an easy case either. At the end of the day, it was the master again who had to give his approval

SOSTRATA: I'm sure you have a story about it too!

AMFITHOI: Of course I have! it's the story of Afroxilanthi and Ermotimos, two slaves who were in love and their cruel master didn't allow them to be together!

*The scene comes alive. Yard of a house*

AFROXILANTHI: I just finished the washing-up and I rushed here to meet you! I want tio talk to you just for a minute, this gives me strength to go on with my day chores

ERMOTIMOS: I can't stand it anymore! We must persuade the master to give us the permission to be together

AFROXILANTHI: He is strict and cruel he will never accept it! But his kids are more polite and sensitive, Maybe they can help us....

ERMOTIMOS: Pericles and Afrodite?

AFROXILANTHI: Yes, and mostly Pericles ....because he is a boy and he father may listen to him...

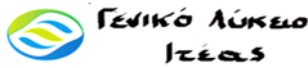
ERMOTIMOS: You' re right, and the master loves him because he's his firstborn. We must talk to him the soonest possible!

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AFROXILANTHI: Shhh, be quiet, they'll hear us!

ERMOTIMOS: Don't worry! The master is at the market at this time of day. He is philosophising with other Athenian citizens

AFROXILANTHI: Why shouldn't he? They have us to do all the chorea so they have plenty of free time to talk and philosophise....

ERMOTIMOS: Stop talking like that! Someone might hear and think that you are getting rebellious....

AFROXILANTHI: I don't speak but this does not mean I can't think, Ermotimos. I have realized that they need us badly. We do everything! If it wasn't for us no work would be done. It's us who build their temples and their citadels, we build the ships which carry them to the far away places and they trade, we extract the metals they need to make their statues and the vessels they need to carry the products that we grow on their farms!

ERMOTIMOS: Stop! You saw what happened in the coal mines in Lavrio where the slaves rebelled not being able to stand the hard working conditions. They achieved nothing! The masters have the means to make us shut up....They are holding the whip Afroxilanthi....

AFROXILANTHI: At least we have each other and this makes our lives more bearable...And there is always the hope to escape some day....

ERMOTIMOS: This does not work, we have heard so many stories about slaves who ran away and they got caught and punished in the hardest ways. Androcles was thrown to the lions to be eaten and Euklia was mutilated and thrown to the dogs . So they serve as examples for the rest so as not to dare to run away....

AFROXILANTHI: Yes but there are success stories as well...Despite the risk numerous slaves escape. Do you remember Ermon the fisherman who ran away because he couldn't stand his hugely demanding master? He was never caught! Helped by networks he is now living in Rhodes and lives as a free man! Free! What a beautiful word! I can't stop saying it! Free!

ERMOTIMOS: Yes, but the relationships of love among us are a way for slaves to feel strong and find meaning in their lives.

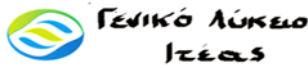
AFROXILANTHI: That's true! So we must persuade the master to approve of our relationship. Let's talk to Pericles....

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*The scene goes back to Sosrta and Amfithoi*

SOSTRATA: Did they make it?

AMFITHOI: I don't know, nobody knew for sure. But Ermotimos didn't live long after that. He got very sick during the winter and died....

SOSTRATA: What a pity. Their hopes for a more tolerable life didn't come true...

AMFITHOI: I once heard people talking about a slave called Ifigenia who had fallen in love with her master. And while there was no hope for them to be together, due to a strange twist of luck it was revealed that she wasn't a slave but the child of free people who had been turned into a slave by mistake!

SOSTRATA: It sounds like a fairytale! Tell me this story too, I have some free time!

*The third story comes alive*

ACHILES: Ifigenia, my love you're here! Oh, I missed you so much!

IFIGENIA: I missed you too my love! But my parents will never let us be together!

IFIGENIA: I don't care! I just want to be with you!

ACHILES" I'm worried. I heard they want to sell you. Maybe they suspect my feelings for you!

MIRSINI: Ifigenia, are you fooling around again? Come here at once! (to *herself*) hey say slaves are lazy and careless

IFIGENIA: You called for me, mistress?

MIRSINI: Yes, get ready to go to the market. We have guests for tonight. There comes a couple from Gela. I want everything to be perfect!

IFIGENIA (*bowing*) Yes, mistress!

VOICE: A banquet scene in the andron of the house where women take part too by exception. Ifigenia washes the feet of the guests according to custom and brings the food in special trays and the vessels full of wine. Then she plays the flute to entertain the guests

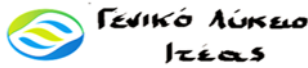
ANTIGONE: Oh this slave plays the flute so beautifully!

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MIRSINI: (proudly) Yes, she's a domestic slave who can play music. We are very careful about what slaves we allow into our house, you know and my beloved husband Theoklis is not stingy at all when it comes to buying slaves from somata

PERICLES: Come here, my girl. Take a seat at our table!

MIRSINI: What are you talking about? Don't treat slaves so nicely. They are ungrateful and extravagant by nature. If they are not aware of their position in the house, they don't obey their masters and they don't do their work properly...

PERICLES: Calm down, my dear Mirsini. I just want to take a look at her hands. I have heard people saying that musicians have very special palms...

*He holds Ifigenia's hand and sees her ring*

PERICLES: What is this ring she's wearing? It looks expensive. I know that slaves even if they work hard during their whole life they can never afford expensive jewelry!

MIRSINI: She used to wear it when we bought her. It was tight and we weren't able to get it out of her finger! My beloved Theoklis suggested our cutting her finger but then we thought she might have difficulty doing the house chores and so we let her have it. Of course, it drives me crazy that a slave of mine is wearing such a beautiful and costly ring, but I pretend I don't see .....

ANTIGONE: Pericles, isn't this similar to the one our little daughter was wearing when we lost her?

PERICLES: Yes, it was a gift from my mother before dying

ANTIGONE: Is this our child? Do you think gods were so kind as to let us find her?

PERICLES: Yes, it's our daughter Ifigenia. That's why I had a strange feeling the moment I heard her play the flute...

MIRSINI: What? My slave is your daughter? Gods save us!

ANTIGONE: She is indeed! Come here my love, let me take you in my arms!

*They hug each other*

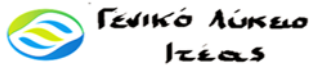
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SOSTRATA: I am wondering how Ifigenia treated her slaves after she became a mistress when she knew how hard the life of a slave is...

AMFITHOI: I don't know about that! But when the fate of the person changes their behavior changes as well. So Ifigenia might have been as hard as Mirsini with her own slaves...

SOSTRATA: This last story I heard with great pleasure Amfithoi, but to be honest with you I didn't believe a word!

AMFITHOI: What? You doubt my sources!?

SOSTRATA: Don't take it personally , I didn't mean to insult you! It was like a nice fairytale, like the comedies of Menander with the lost children who are finally recognized by their parents thanks to a jewel they were wearing. Stories that caress our ears and sweeten our souls for a little while. They make us forget the harsh reality...

AMFITHOI: You're right Sostrata, I can see your bitterness. But there are slaves who were able to gain a better life and maybe you are one of them! Don't lose hope!

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