

Greek Pantomime

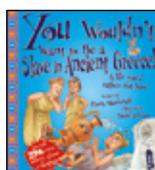
Greek Theatre was very important in ancient Greece. Most Greek cities had a theatre in the open air, some with room for more than 15,000 people in the audience. Pantomime comes from the Greek pantomimos meaning “actor” (literally “imitator of all”). Pantomime today is a comic stage production with songs and jokes, for family entertainment. It was developed in Britain and is still popular, mainly in the Christmas and New Year season.

Parts:	Helenella	a poor Greek slave girl
	Fabiola Kebab	her wealthy Greek mistress
	Donna Kebab	Fabiola’s spiteful daughter
	(played by a boy, as a pantomime dame)	
	Narcissa the Nymph	a Greek goddess-mother
	Ajax	a dashing Greek hero
	Pacifico	a Greek slave boy

ACT ONE

Helenella is exhausted, after scrubbing the floor and cleaning pots all day.

- Helenella: This is such hard work and I am so tired. This is a life I’d rather not have. If only I hadn’t been kidnapped and sold when I was little. No one wants to be a slave in Greece in these times of Alexander the Great. I will never be free (*breaks down sobbing*).
- Fabiola: (*Enters, looking very fierce*) Stop that snivelling and collect the firewood. Then make my porridge and bake the bread. Collect three sacks of salt and six of sand and use them for scrubbing all the floors. They must be spotless.
- Helenella: Yes, madam. I shall do my best to make everything spotless.



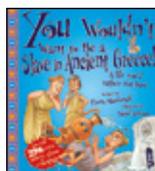
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- Donna: *(Bustling on, looking scary)* You won't make me look spotless, Helenella. I paid good money to have a beauty spot tattooed on my cheek. Aren't you jealous of how gorgeous I look?
- Helenella: It looks.... amazing, miss.
- Donna: It matches the wart on my nose beautifully, don't you think? I am sure to be the talk of the banquet tonight at the Acropolis. It's the best night club in Athens. I may even dance with that dashing nobleman Ajax. He's got the body of a Greek god.
- Fabiola: Your father had one of those – but he had to take it back. Now his body is the shape of a Greek urn.
- Helenella: What's a Greek urn?
- Fabiola: Just a few drachmas. In your case, Helenella - nothing.
- Donna: Helenella is so poor she will never afford to buy her freedom. That means she can spend the next ten years making me look beautiful. Soon I shall look more stunning than Helen of Troy.
- Helenella: Yes, myth. I mean, yes MISS.
- Fabiola: I am going for a lie down. While I am resting, Helenella must unload fleeces from the mule delivery. You will spin the wool and weave cloth to make my new clothes, a rug, cushions and a blanket.
- Donna: Be careful when working the loom. Daddy got caught up in it and was badly hurt.
- Helenella: Is he all right now?
- Donna: Oh yes – he's completely re-covered!



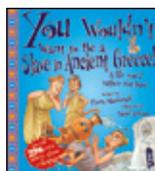
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- Fabiola: Helenella, you will need to do the laundry, go shopping, cook our supper, fetch the water and oh, yes, make more olive oil, make cheese, collect the eggs, pick the fruit and milk the goats. I've left a list of other jobs for this afternoon.
- Helenella: (*Unrolling a very long papyrus scroll and looking horrified*) But all this is impossible, madam.
- Fabiola: True - I was forgetting you can't read. It's all Greek to you.
(*Exits*)
- Donna: But firstly you need to get me ready for tonight, Helenella. You must give me a massage, a bath, dress me, arrange my hair, cut my toenails and make me smell beautiful. I have a lovely new perfume called 'Essence of Cat'.
- Helenella: Is that because it makes you purr with delight, miss?
- Donna: No, but it keeps away the mice. Come to think of it, it keeps everyone away – apart from next door's ginger tom.
- Helenella: I shall do my best to make you beautiful, miss.
- Donna: I know that's difficult for someone so plain as an ignorant slave girl like you. If you can't even read, why do you have the Greek letter pi tattooed on the back of your hand?
- Helenella: (*Sobbing*) It is the first letter of my twin brother's name. My mother marked both our hands in case we were ever parted. But alas, we have never seen each other since we were kidnapped when we were just six years old. I miss him so much.
- Donna: Unlucky. I'd hate to have pi on my hands. I'd rather have my hands in a pi! Do you get it? Apple pie, rhubarb pie, cherry pie – I love them all.



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- Helenella: Yes, I know, miss.
- Donna: How dare you! You think I'm fat, don't you? And you think I'm ugly. You've upset me now and you will be punished. I shall go to my room, where you will come to attend to me. Then, while I am out dancing with the gentlemen of Athens falling at my feet, you will be scrubbing the floors with salt and a toothbrush. Just you upset me again and you'll be beaten and locked in the cellar, Helenella. *(Exits dramatically)*
- Helenella: *(Falling to the floor and sobbing again)* I am so unhappy. This is turning into a Greek tragedy. However can there be a happy ending to such a dismal plot? How I wish I could go to the Acropolis. How I wish....
- (A flash of light, music and a crashing cymbal as Narcissa the Nymph appears)*
- Narcissa: I heard you wish, so I appear...
Fear not, Helenella, for I am here.
Now don't look shocked, I'm not that scary...
I'm Narcissa the Nymph, a good Greek fairy (goddess-mother, actually)
I heard you cry, so with a swish,
I popped along to grant your wish!
- Helenella: Narcissa the Nymph? Narcissa the Nymph? You must know Alexander the Great!
- Narcissa: No, but we've got the same middle name.
- Helenella: But how will you be able to help me, Narcissa?
- Narcissa: I'll wave my wand and now appears
A gorgeous dress, so dry your tears.



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Fetch me a pumpkin, rat, and mice
And you'll be ready in a trice!

Helenella: I don't believe it – look outside!
A chariot and horses have arrived.

Narcissa: The banquet lasts till half past one
But you must leave before it's done.
Don't linger after twelve o'clock
Or else your shoes and lovely frock
Will change to rags, so just be brave
Or you'll end up back as a slave.

Helenella: Yay – this is epic! (That's Greek for... EPIC!)

ACT TWO

The Grand Banquet in Athens

Pacifico: Excuse me, sir – shall I serve the wine now?

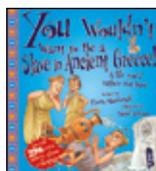
Ajax: Yes please, Pacifico. You're doing a great job. Everyone seems to be enjoying the party. You're a first class slave.

Pacifico: Thank you, sir. But you are not dancing tonight.

Ajax: No. I'm trying to keep away from Donna Kebab....

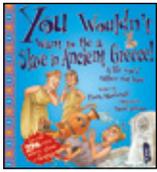
Donna: (*Enters – very over-the-top and dressed ridiculously*) Ajax, darling – where have you been? Why won't you dance with me?

Ajax: Er... I must meet some more guests, like... (*sees Helenella, looking stunning*) Why, whoever is this?



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- Donna: Just some plain girl – probably no more than a common barbarian. What do you think of my perfume, Ajax. Smell my wrists. It's Oil of Civet.
- Ajax: (*Wincing*) Excuse me – that reminds me, I must go and put the cat out. (*Exits, followed by Donna*)
- Pacifico: (*To Helenella*) Good evening, miss. Can I offer you some wine?
- Helenella: I don't think so, thank you. I've never tried wine before.
- Pacifico: Nor me. Slaves don't get the chance.
- Helenella: No, we don't.
- Pacifico: We? You can't possibly be a Greek slave!
- Helenella: Er... well, I'm just....
- Ajax: (*Rushing on*) I think I managed to give them the slip. Listen, the band is playing. Can I ask you to dance with me?
- Helenella: Me? But you are a famous Greek hero, so dashing and handsome, charming and gorgeous.
- Ajax: That's true. But please dance with me. It would make my evening...
(*As they dance, Fabiola and Donna look on, glaring and furious*)
- Donna: Who is she? It's outrageous.
- Fabiola: It's absurd. It's disgraceful. It's just 'not strictly'.
- Pacifico: It's midnight... (*Helenella runs off suddenly, leaving her shoe*)



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behind. Gasps!)

ACT THREE

(Back at Fabiola's house, Helenella is sobbing as she sweeps in the corner, now dressed as a slave again. Donna swoons as Ajax and Pacifico enter with 'the shoe')

Helenella: *(Sniffing)* I am so sad.

Ajax: *(Holds out shoe to Donna)* Try this. Is it yours?

Donna: *(She forces on the shoe)* It fits!!

Ajax: No, it doesn't.

Fabiola: Oh yes it does.

Ajax: Oh no it doesn't.

Donna: Oh yes it does.

Pacifico: Oh no it doesn't

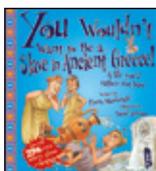
Ajax: What about your slave girl? She can try it on.

Fabiola: Don't be ridiculous. Anyway, she's not here.

Ajax: Oh yes she is.

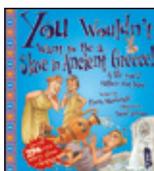
Donna: Oh no she isn't.

Pacifico: She's behind you!



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- Ajax: Pacifico, please take the shoe to her.
- Pacifico: Certainly, sir. *(To Helenella)* Let me help you, miss.
- Helenella: Aaah! Your hand!
- Pacifico: Sorry, I didn't mean to.... aah – and yours. You have the Greek letter pi on your hand. That is the first letter of my name.
- Helenella: And you have the Greek letter eta on yours. That is the first letter of my name.
- Pacifico: Helenella, my long lost twin sister!
- Helenella: Pacifico, my long lost twin brother! *(They embrace)*
- Donna: How sickening.
- Fabiola: Greek theatre isn't a patch on what it used to be!
- Ajax: But look – the shoe has fitted you perfectly.
- Helenella: Yes, it fits
- Donna: Oh no it doesn't.... aaaah it's impossible!
- Ajax: It fits perfectly. In that case... I love you.
- Helenella: And I love you.
- Ajax: Marry me.
- Helenella: Of course.
- Ajax: I'm so lucky.



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Helenella: I'm so happy.

Pacifico: I'm so amazed.

Donna: I'm so furious.

Fabiola: I'm so flabbergasted. My gast has never been so flabbered!

Donna: This is ridiculous.

Ajax: This is wonderful. I will pay for your freedom, Helenella. You will no longer be a Greek slave. Your long-lost Pacifico will also go free from this moment. What an epic epilogue to our Greek Drama!

Narcissa: *(Bursting on)*
Enough to say, it's all been splendid.
Our play is done. Our job is ended.
I trust you found Greek Drama magic;
A mix of comic with the tragic...
For this is how, in ancient Greece
The world of theatre did increase.
From roots like these came pantomime,
And still lives on through all this time.
So, while we hope our play endures,
We'll leave you with your own applause...
(All cast bow)

Pacifico: We now need you all to stay behind and scrub the stage with salt and plenty of elbow GREECE. Get it? Which all goes to show YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO BE A SLAVE IN ANCIENT GREECE... EVER!