

such as *Le homosexuel ou La difficulté de s'exprimer* (The Homosexual or The Difficulty of Self-Expression, 1971) and *Le Frigo* (The Fridge, 1983). The Soviet theatre, reflecting its society, has diligently avoided the subject; productions of Williams' *Streetcar* and Ronald Harwood's *The Dresser*, for instance, cut all allusions to homosexuality. In Italy, on the other hand, the fashionable theatre and opera have been dominated by elegant director-designers like Luchino Visconti and his disciple Franco Zeffirelli (b. 1923). They were responsible for introducing Williams and Albee to Italy, but their flamboyant wielding of high style was often vitiated by a penchant for garish melodrama and maudlin sentimentality.

The AIDS crisis has spawned a number of nonce dramas, modern versions of the problem play, where the message is more important than the medium: Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart*, William M. Hoffman's *As Is*, Rebecca Ranson's *Warren*, Robert Chesley's *Night Sweat*, and the Theater Rhinoceros' dramatic collage *The AIDS Show* (all 1985). They affected the audiences that sought them out, but when they entered the repertory of regional theatres, subscribers often stayed away, refusing to confront the problem of "others." AIDS also had an impact on the theatre by decimating its ranks, its victims including Ludlam and the director-choreographer Michael Bennett (1943-1987), along with dozens of rank-and-file members of the profession. The glaring gaps left in the performing arts by these deaths reveal how dependent they have been on homosexual talent.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Stefan Brecht, *Queer Theatre*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978; Kaier Curtin, *We Can Always Call Them Bulgarians': The Emergence of Lesbians and Gay Men on the American Stage*, Boston: Alyson, 1987; Terry Helbing, *Gay Theater Alliance Directory of Gay Plays*, New York: JH Press, 1980.

Laurence Senelick

## THEBES

Site of the Mycenaean citadel of Cadmus (legendary personification of the Semitic peoples of the East), Thebes was the capital of Boeotia in central Greece in classical times.

The Theban cycle, celebrated by Sophocles and other writers, offers several salient erotic themes. Cadmus' descendent Laius, warned by an oracle that his son would slay him, forewent sex with his wife Jocasta. Unaware of the danger and frustrated, she got him drunk, had intercourse with him, and in nine months produced the infant Oedipus, whom he ordered to be exposed. Laius was then exiled to the Peloponesus. Exclaiming "nature compels me," he then raped Chrysis, his host's 12-year old son, causing a curse to follow him to his Thebes when he returned. Oedipus, saved by a shepherd, grew to manhood, slew his father whom he did not recognize in distant parts, and came to Thebes. Here he ended the plague, married the widowed Jocasta, and sired children by her to begin a new round of tragedies including the execution of his daughter Antigone by her uncle Cleon for burying her rebel brother.

After Crete and Sparta, from which institutionalized pederasty was imported about 600 B.C., Thebes became the place Greeks most often named as the locus for the formalized of pederasty. In Plato's *Laws*, the Athenian declares that in Elis and Boeotia (including Thebes) they practiced pederasty uninhibitedly, each adult male living together with the boy he loved. The greatest pederastic poet, Pindar, resided in Thebes. When Alexander the Great destroyed the rebel city, he left Pindar's house standing to demonstrate his love of culture. After Sparta and Athens exhausted each other in the great Peloponnesian War, Pelopidas and Epaminondas, in exile in Athens, formed an aristocratic conspiracy to liberate their city.

Bravely surprising the Spartan garrison, they organized the Sacred Band

(later copied by the Carthaginians) of 300 pairs of lovers, which defeated Sparta at Leuctra (371 B.C.) and Mantinea (362 B.C.) and liberated Messenia, ending Spartan hegemony. Epaminondas was slain at Mantinea with his second *eromenos* (beloved) bravely falling at his side. During the three-cornered struggle that ensued between a leaderless Thebes, a crippled Sparta, and an Athens that had not fully recovered from the Peloponnesian War, Persians interfered and Macedonians encroached. The Greeks were defeated at Chaeronea in 338 B.C., when the Sacred Band died fighting to the last man, and even Philip of Macedonia, the victor, paid tribute to their valor: "Let no man speak evil of such heroes."

Plutarch, a hereditary Theban noble who held a priesthood at Delphi, recorded the careers of notable pederasts in his *Parallel Lives of Famous Greeks and Romans*, and his *Dialogues on Love* debated the relative merits of women and boys.

The ancient city of Thebes possessed two *gymnasia*, one dedicated to Heracles, the other to Iolaus, often regarded in classic times as his *eromenos*. At the latter place pairs of male lovers were accustomed to pledge their troth. About three miles outside the city lay the Kabeirion, the shrine of a mystery cult revolving around the god Kabeiros and his Pais ("boy"); here modern archeologists have found votive offerings depicting a man and a boy, who is often portrayed holding an animal—a traditional courtship gift.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Nancy H. Demand, *Thebes in the Fifth Century*, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982.

William A. Percy

### THEOCRITUS (CA. 301—CA. 260 B.C.)

Hellenistic philologist and poet.

A native of Syracuse, he sojourned in southern Italy and Cos, but having failed to win the patronage of Hiero of Syracuse,

he finally won that of Ptolemy II, the founder of the Museum and Library that together with his munificent patronage made Alexandria the intellectual center of the Hellenistic monarchies. In the famous controversy about the Argonauts, he sided with Callimachus against Apollonius of Rhodes, both of whom resided in Alexandria and sang of pederasty.

Though set in Sicily, his bucolic poems were written after he moved to the east, perhaps while he tarried on Cos. He composed his mimes mostly in Alexandria. Like most other Hellenistic poets, he preferred short, polished, erudite, contrived poems. He often chose exotic or at least novel themes and made fresh observations and descriptions. Besides pastoral heterosexual love, he dramatized the love of Heracles for Hylas. Eight of his thirty *Idylls*, the authorship of two of which is uncertain, treat boy love exclusively.

Theocritus used two archaic terms: for lover *eispnelas* (inspirer), employed in Alcman, and for beloved the non-Dorian Thessalian *aites*, (inspired), employed by Alcman to mean "pretty girl" in the feminine. The idyll on Hylas (XIII), Heracles' beloved, gave Theocritus an opportunity to express his personal feelings on boy-love. It is not just mortals, but the immortals as well, who suffer the pangs of love. Heracles is determined to educate the curly-haired boy with whom he is enamoured, to make a brave and renowned man of him, and to bring him up as a father would his son.

In Idyll XXIX Theocritus gives advice to a boy that follows strictly the lines earlier drawn by Theognis: the youth is urged to be faithful to his lover, not to play the coquette or exploit his admirer in a venal manner. Youth is fleeting, but with manhood love will yield to a solid and enduring friendship. Idyll XXX depicts a man who has reached the age that disqualifies him for conquests in love, but cannot suppress the passion that he feels for a boy who, while not particularly handsome, has undeniable personal charm. This