Satyrs and Maenads on the Attic Vases
The theater at Epidaurus in its present state dates to ca 350 BCE.
The theater at Delphi as it is now seen dates to the 2nd century BCE, but, as in the case of the theater at Epidaurus, the general form has changed little since the 5th century.
The theater of Dionysos at Athens occupies the site of a 6th century theater. It got a face lift in 330 BC when stone seats replaced wooden ones (the new seats included special seats for the priesthood, 14 of which remain in place).
A tragic chorus (left) dances before an altar. A tragic actor holds a mask while a 2nd actor dances (below, left) and a mask lies on the ground before an actor who is securing his boot (below, right).

Right: a mask sits on top of an upended amphora.
4th century attic vase representing Orestes and Electra at the tomb of Agamemnon. Hermes (left) wears stage boots.
Comic actors, perhaps in a performance of Aristophanes’ “Birds” – the vase dates to ca 415-410 BCE.
Theater of Dionysos at Athens

Stage, marble paving in the orchestra, and supporting sculpture (satyrs) belong to the Roman period.
Theater of Dionysos at Athens

Stone seat for the Priest of Dionysos faces the center of the orchestra where there was an altar to the god.

Lying on the ground near the theater are various sculptures (Roman) including this beautiful satyr.
Coregic Monumnet dedicated by Lysikrates 334 BCE (he financed and trained the chorus for the victorious satyr play that the mt. commemorates).

The Lysikrates Mt was preserved as part of a monastic retreat (illustration of 1830)

The play was about the capture of Dionysos by pirates whom the god turned into dolphins (drawing of 1762)
Chorus of Aged Satyrs
Pronomos Vase
C 400 BCE
(Naples)
A satyr-play about Dionysos and Ariadne (the two central figures, left).
A satyr as Perseus (above)

Perseus, carries off the head of Medusa

A satyr as Hermes
Above: Oedipus and the Sphinx (500-475 BCE)

Right: Satyr imitating Oedipus before the Sphinx (425-420 BCE).
Red figure satyrs, more apparently than black figure satyrs, imitate the everyday world of men – satyrs are not only playful but great mimics.

Above left, a satyr plays the part of an Athenian craftsman (he is fluting a column). Notice the wine skin hanging behind him on the wall. Above, right, a true Athenian craftsman makes a helmet.
Above (left), a satyr-citizen

Above (right), a satyr as pedagogue.

Below (right): compare the real Athenian pedagogue (he is seated to the right) who waits while his charges have writing and music lessons.
A satyr, offering a rabbit as a love gift, courts a young man.

A satyr makes an offering at a religious shrine. The deity is a “herm” – a pillar with the head of Hermes and a prominent phallos.
Satyr as warrior armed with phallos spear

Satyrs as warriors in chariots (and as the horses that pull them).
Above (left) satyr as parent

Above (center) satyr as athlete

Below (center): satyr as musician
Satyrs are not only great mimics, but as part of their playful nature, they are also extremely curious. On the left, a satyr investigates the contents of a lidded box.

Also consistent with their playfulness, satyrs are ever bold in their quest for an altered state of consciousness. On the right, a satyr has all but fallen into a large wine-storage jar (a “pithos”).
Once inebriated, satyrs are capable of amazing feats!
Hermes brings baby Dionysos to Silenos

Phiale Painter Vatican Mus. 559
Red figure satyrs approach maenads with plainly sexual intent, but the moment of consummation is never shown.

Here the satyrs assault a sleeping maenad on two sides of a kylix by Makron (480 BCE)
As during the 6th century (on the black figure vases), red figure satyrs continue to engage maenads playfully – e.g., the game of blaind-man’s bluff (left). Satyrs also continue to carry off maenads without any Indication of resistance. This coin is from the Island of Thasos, 465-450 BCE.
Red Figure satyrs and maenads continue to dance in celebration of the god, Dionysos – again, without any sign of tension.
Vases like this amphora by the Kleophrades Painter (500-490 BCE) show satyrs dancing in harmony with their female counterparts.
In the 6\textsuperscript{th} century, on the black figure vases, satyrs are commonly autoerotic as on the aryballos by Nearchos, 570-555 BCE (left).

On the red figure vases, satyrs are successful with mules and even with large amphorae (below)
Never, until this very late and unique example, does a satyr consummate his desire with a woman.

This detail is from a vase by the Jena Painter from about 390-380 BCE.
Maenads sometimes appear without their satyr companions, but most often maenads and satyrs appear together in Dionysian thiasos.
Above (left): satyrs crush grapes and store the wine for the festivities above their heads (Amasis Painter)

Above (right): satyr crushes grapes, another dances with a maenad as Dionysos, kantharos in hand, looks on (Amasis Painter)
Left: Maenads and satyrs dance around Dionysos and Ariadne in traditional Black Figure “thiasos” (Oakeshott Painter ca 550 BCE)

Right: satyrs accompany Dionysos in a Black Figure Return of Hephaistos (Oakeshott Painter 550-520 BCE)

Below: Return of Hephaistos on the Francois Vase (ca 570 BCE)
Satyrs and Maenads consort harmoniously during the 6th century on all the black figure vases. Above, they dance arm in arm. They may even be found in the rare instance face to face, lips puckered (frag “A” above, and also on the Dayton Painter’s vase, right, 530-525 BCE).

Satyrs are from the beginning playful (see frag, above, where they mimic the mule’s pose).
Satyr pursues maenad with amorous intent

Satyr’s pursuit ends in mid-air Collision – Dionysos looks on.
Marriage involved a public procession from the house of the bride to that of the groom …
... but, as in the vase representation of the warrior’s departure (right), so on many of the Attic grave stones (“stele”), the wife’s head and eyes are lowered before her husband.
Women are represented as playfully childish, juggling and playing ball...
... and in this instance, riding a tetter-totter.
She cared for the children (in well to do homes, she was assisted by female servants), and she did the cooking (below right).
Scenes from a cup by the Brygos Painter
The Kleophrades Painter’s vase introduces a group of vases, made between about 500-450, that suggest tension between the satyrs and the maenads.

The “thyrsos”, a vine tipped wand carried by nearly all red figure maenads, seems to be used in these scenes as a weapon directed at the satyr’s groin.

Above, the satyr seems to struggle with the maenad for possession of the “thyrsos”.
The horizontal tilt of the “thyrsos” seems to be no more than a compositional device in the friendly encounter at the upper left, but there are too many other scenes in which the maenad aims her wand at the satyr’s groin to be merely a function of the composition (all of these examples, are cups by the painter Makron c. 480 BCE).
There can be little doubt that on krater (detail above) by the Goluchow Painter (ca 500) real combat is depicted, and that on the cup (right) by Douris (500-490) that the satyr is genuinely terrified.
On the Pig Painter’s krater (460-450), the violence of the satyr’s pursuit is underscored by the overturned amphora beneath his feet, and the seriousness of the maenad’s defense is suggested by the snake she extends toward the pursuing satyr.
During the 5th century, many satyrs with erect phalloi pursue maenads, but, on many other vases like these, the satyrs become “gentlemen” where the scenes are not pursuits and the phalloi are not erect.

Both of these are probably scenes of ritual where the satyr replaces an Athenian male citizen.
Finally, on this krater by the Methyse Painter (ca 450 BCE), a diminutive satyr appears. He is clearly fearful as he looks up at the cold stare of the maenad who follows and he clings tightly to the leg of Dionysos.
This diminutive satyr (left) plays the part of a servant who props up a man too drunk to walk on his own. Following is an even smaller satyr carrying a torch (?) and a small jug.

The use to which the pitcher was put in the scene above may come to mind.
The dismemberment of Pentheus by maenads

Euphronios, late 6th century (right)

A vase in Berlin by an Unknown Painter