Chinese Theatre

* Started as Interpretive Dance which was a dramatic ritual and part of religious activities
	+ Only the Emperor, Priest, and Court could participate/watch
* Almost 3000 years later… Emperor Ming Huang created a school for actors in his garden
	+ The school was so successful that Chinese actors are called “Children of the Pear Tree Garden”
	+ The theatre style was highly formal and centered on three main themes
		- Ancestor Worship
		- Military Glory
		- Faithfulness to a husband
	+ Written in classical Chinese
		- Only the most well-educated could understand it
* Changed w/ Mongolian invasion
	+ Added action/ acrobatics/songs/dances
* 1949 – Communists rewrote many of the classical plays and used them to preach government policy
* Peking Opera
	+ Westerners gave Chinese Theatre this name because Chinese drama features chanting/singing/music
		- Exotic to west and has influenced western writing
			* Thorton Wilder’s *Our Town*
	+ Most acting done by men – even female characters
	+ Acting in Chinese theatre is considered a “life study”
	+ Movements/poses are highly symbolic, done with gracefulness, and have specific meaning
		- Sleeve over the eye – WEEPING
		- Red umbrella with white paper falling from it – SNOW
	+ Elaborate costumes and thick makeup
		- Colors represented personality
			* Red – FAITHFUL
			* Blue – CRUELTY
			* White – EVILNESS
* Greatly influenced Japanese theatre

Japanese Theatre

* Noh plays
	+ used formal language and were only for the aristocrats
	+ the plays are still performed today almost the same as they were originally
	+ short plays; considered serious/philosophical studies
	+ poetry with dance and music
	+ Costumes: ornate silks (regardless of character’s class or status)
		- Cut of fabric and makeup showed class representation
		- Major characters wore carved wooden masks w/ stereotyped (emotional) expressions
	+ Kyogen plays provided a comic interlude between Noh plays (to provide relief from serious nature of Noh dramas)
		- Did not use music or masks
		- Usually 5 Noh plays were performed mixed in with 3 Kyogen plays
* Bunraku – doll theatre
	+ Featured 4 foot tall dolls – carved in detail with moving eyelids, eyebrows, mouths, and fingers
	+ Dolls dressed in elaborate costumes
	+ Narrators read dialogue with music
	+ Doll attendants dressed in black with gauze masks manipulated dolls
* Kabuki Theatre
	+ Drama for the common man
	+ Singing/dancing
	+ Melodramatic and sensational
	+ Range of subjects:
		- Heavy/tension filled drama featuring historical tragedies including
			* Suicide/murder/torture
		- Unspoken dance dramas with demons
		- Domestic love triangles

Hindu Theatre

* Most drama was for the upper class
	+ Took place in palace garden or playhouse (small theatre) on palace grounds
* Plays were very intimate/delicate/restrained
	+ Meant to be pleasant entertainment
		- Always had a happy ending
* Used a Green Room
	+ Place for actors to relax and change
	+ Almost every theatre and TV station today has a green room
* 1st to permit women onstage as actors