Both these texts appear to report the results of contests in which the only competitors are actors, in the case of SEG XXVI 208 certainly with revived plays. According to [Plu.] Vitae X Orat. 841f, Lycurgus (prominent in Athenian politics from at least 338 to 307/6 BCE, and deeply interested in the dramatic festivals) εἰσήνεγκε δὲ καὶ νόμους, τὸν μὲν περὶ τῶν κωμῳδών, ἀγώνα τοῖς Χύτροις ἐπιτελεῖν ἐφάμιλλον ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ καὶ τὸν νικήσαντα εἰς ἄστυ καταλέγεσθαι πρότερον οὐκ ἐξόν, ἀναλαμβάνων τὸν ἀγῶνα ἐκεῖ πρῶτον ("introduced various laws, one of which concerned the comic actors, that they were to give a competitive performance in the Theater during the Chutroi festival, and that the winner was to be added to the list for the City Dionysia, which had previously not been allowed, thus reviving this event, which had been abandoned"). But whatever we make of the supposed performances at the Chutroi and their significance for the actors at the Dionysia, the contests referred to in these fragments are not restricted to comedy and in fact include a category (satyr drama) that represents not a new set of contestants but an unexpected second event for tragic actors. Individual revived tragedies and comedies were added to the program at the Dionysia in 387/6 (IG II\(^2\) 2318.1010–11) and in 340/39 BCE (IG II\(^2\) 2318.1564–5), respectively, apparently as exhibition events and with no indication of how the plays or the actors who put them on were chosen. An exhibition satyr play is part of the program in 341/0 BCE (IG II\(^2\) 2320), and while it appears to have been written by one of the poets who staged a set of tragedies that year, it is not difficult to believe that the event was eventually converted into another revival. The most likely conclusion would thus appear to be that, by the late 3rd century at least, a qualifying event for actors in each of the three dramatic genres was held early every year, with the winner in each genre allowed to put on the play he had chosen at the Dionysia, and that SEG XXVI 208 and perhaps IG II\(^2\) 2324 as well are fragments of the records of those preliminary competitions.\(^3\)

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1 The passage is discussed by Rohde (1883) 276–7, and O’Connor (1908) 54–5 (arguing that an official list was kept of actors eligible to compete at the great city festivals, and that taking the prize in the actors competition at the Chutroi represented an alternative way to have one’s name added to it). For the actors list for tragedy, cf. Suda ν 170 νεμῆσις ὑποκριτῶν· οἱ ποιηταὶ ἔλαμβανεν τρεῖς ὑποκριτὰς κλήρῳ νεμηθέντας ὑποκρινομένους τὰ δράματα, ὧν ὁ νικήσας εἰς τοῦποι ἀκρίτος παραλαμβάνεται ("allotment of actors: The poets used to get three actors, who were awarded to them by lot and who acted in the plays. The victorious actor was passed on to the next year without any further examination").

2 For dramatic performances at the Chutroi, cf. also Hippolochus of Macedon ap. Athen. 4.129d, 130d; D.L. 3.36.

3 Some scholars, most recently Summa (2008), have understood these fragments as presenting results from a putative contest of old plays at the Dionysia. The starting point for this interpretation are a number of Athenian honorary decrees dating to the very end of the 4th century BCE and later (e.g. SEG XXVIII 60.93–4; see Pickard-Cambridge (1988) 82 n. 2, for additional examples), which record that the relevant honors are to be announced during the Dionysia. References in these decrees to a contest of new tragedies, before which the honors will be announced, have been taken to imply the existence of a contest of old tragedies as well. The earliest such references, however, are not to a contest of new tragedies, but to τραγωιδῶν τῶι ἀγῶνι τῶι καινῶι ("the new contest of the tragedians"). In the late 3rd century BCE, the formula changes to a reference to "new tragedies" (with no mention of a contest), which need mean nothing more than the point after the revival of a satyr play and a tragedy but before the production of new tragedies. Regardless of how the references in the decrees are understood, interpreting SEG XXVI 208 as results of contests of revivals at the Dionysia means that the revival contests included not only tragedies, but also comedies and satyr plays, the latter of which seem already to have become restricted to an exhibition event by the mid-4th century BCE. The inclusion of all three genres requires that at least
one full day was added to the Dionysia, an expansion to the festival for which we have no other evidence. More tellingly, the official records for comedy at the Dionysia use precisely the same formula both before (IG II² 2323a) and after (IG II² 2325) the contest of revivals was supposedly introduced. The demonstrable absence of any trace of such a contest in the official records, despite the inclusion of the exhibition of old plays, seriously undermines the hypothesis. Finally, Summa’s conclusion that IG II² 2319–23a were inscribed as part of her suggested expansion of the festival is based on the erroneous assumption that the inscriptions were part of the same structure on which IG II² 2325 was inscribed.