
Lysistrata: An Ancient Greek Comedy

Lysistrata is an ancient Greek comedy by Aristophanes that was originally performed in 411 BC in classical Athens. It's a woman's "comic" account of their mission to end the Peloponnesian War between the Greek states by refusing all the men of any sex as it was conveyed that this was a Greek man's main desire. The main message of the play is that war is a negative situation however it's deeper than that and signifies other important issues such as gender and empowerment. During the play the humour is innuendo due to the nature of the play.

Lysistrata convinces the women of the cities at war to withhold and deny men their husbands and lovers of any sexual happenings in the hopes that this would force the men to make peace with the opposing cities, an idea however that provokes the gender war. Lysistrata is an Athenian woman who is fed up with how women in Athens are treated and gathers the other women of Sparta and Athens to try and fix it. Lysistrata is the least feminine of the women in either city and this helps her when attempting to gain respect among the men. The name 'Lysistrata' means 'Disbander of Armies' which 'reflects her main goal' according to- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TB9mjxrzTOQ&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR2RYAN6xsq43zWcVVPV7kqFljtKR422RrZh2XMH0Q3a-qbiU-5R4AFOK3U>.

Lampito is a spokeswoman for Spartan women. Lampito is a well built woman who brings the Spartan women into Lysistrata's plan. Myrrhine is the second strongest woman in Lysistrata. Myrrhine is able to seduce her husband just to deny him at the last moment. Kinesias is Myrrhine's husband and is the first man to struggle with the new sex strike.

The Koryphaios of Men is a grouchy fellow who leads the Chorus of Old Men. The Chorus of Old Men is a group who go around Athens trying to keep the women in line and are a comedic element to the play. Toxic masculinity is also a feature in the chorus of old men.

The Koryphaios of Women does the same job as the Koryphaios of men and leads the Chorus of women to a successful capture of the Acropolis and always outwits the men. The Chorus of old Women captures and protects the Acropolis from the men and fights to the end against the men and finds victory.

Aristophanes plays are the main source of information people have about him and his life. It was regularly known in Old Comedy for the Chorus to speak as the author during what is known as the 'parabasis' and this is where some biographical facts can be found. However, the facts more relate his dramatist career and his plays contain only few clear hints of his personal life and beliefs. Aristophanes was a comic poet when it was usual for the poet to assume a teacher position and even though this focused on his training of Chorus in rehearsal, it also hinted at his relationship with the audience as an exponent of important issues.

Aristophanes was a comedy playwright born in Athens in c. 446 BC and died at the age of 60 in Delphi in c. 386 BC. He was the son of 'Philippus, of the deme Kydathenaion (Cydathenaemum in Latin)'. He was known as both 'The Father of Comedy' and 'The Prince of Ancient Comedy' and it's no secret that Aristophanes is noted for 'recreating the life of ancient Athens more convincingly than any other author.' Between the ages of seventeen and twenty-three,

Aristophanes began submitting his comedies for Athens annual contests.

His active years were 427 BC- 386 BC and some of his known work includes 'The Clouds' (423 BC), 'The Wasps' (422 BC), 'The Birds' (414 BC), 'The Women at the Thesmophoria festival' (411 BC) and 'The Frogs' (405 BC). Out of Aristophanes 40 plays, only 11 survived.

Aristophanes won second prize at the City Dionysia (festival) with 'The Banqueters', his first play, in 427 BC. This play is now lost. He won first prize with his next play, which is also now lost, 'The Babylonians'. This play inflamed some problems for the Athenian authorities because it portrayed the cities of the Delian League as 'slaves grinding against a mill.' Some citizens, including Cleon, saw the play as 'slander' and possibly took legal action against Aristophane. The details of the trial, however, are unrecorded. It was conventional for 'foreign dignitaries' to attend the City Dionysia. His play 'The Clouds' was also seen as slander.

Greek tragedy was a predominant form of drama that was popularly performed in theatres in ancient Greece from the late 6th century BCE. Some of the most famous playwrights of Greek tragedy were Sophocles, Aeschlyus and Euripides and a lot of their works were still performed many centuries after the initial viewing.

Greek tragedy formed Greek comedy and these combined to create the foundation that all modern theatre is based on. What the exact origins of tragedy are, are debated amongst intellectuals.

Some associate the uprise of the genre, beginning in Athens, to the 'lyrical performance of epic poetry'. Others made a connection with it to the 'rituals performed in worship of Dionysos' including the sacrifice of goats, a song ritual called 'Trag-?dia' and wearing masks. Dionysos was then known as the 'God of theatre' and one can also link acting to the 'drinking rites' in which the worshiper would become another person and lose control of themselves, which is a lot like acting and/or performing. The music and dance of the ritual 'Dionysiac' is the clearest in the chorus role and the music from an aulos player.

Greek comedy was a popular theatre form of theatre performed across ancient Greece from the 6th century BCE. Some of the most famous works come from Aristophanes and Menander and those who mocked/ pointed at politicians, philosophers and other artists. As well as a comedic touch, the plays also indirectly gave an insight into Greek society, the Greek government, political and legal institutions and systems, religious practices, education and the Hellenic world warfare. The plays also show indications to the audience's identity and convey just what humour the Greeks had.

The exact origins of Greek comedy are actually lost in prehistory but it is said that men dressing as and impersonating others 'must go back a long way before written records' according to https://www.ancient.eu/Greek_Comedy/. An example of this activity in the Greek world is 'in pottery where decoration in the 6th century BCE represented actors dressed as horses, satyrs and dancers in over exaggerated costumes.' Another example of comedy originating further back is the poems of Archilochus in 7th century BCE and Hippianax in 6th century BCE which contain crude and explicit humour. Another example of comedy, cited as such by Aristotle, is represented in the worship songs which were sung during Dionysiac festivals.

The role of chorus in Classical Greek Drama was a group of actors who commented on and

described the story of the play with a song, dance or declamation. The contrast between the apathy of the chorus and the pursuit of the actors is a strong influence to the creativity of the Greek tragedies. Greek plays always included a chorus that gave background and overview information to prevent the audience from getting confused and help them gain a better understanding of the play. It's argued that the chorus was considered to be an actor and the chorus also provided the other characters with important insight a lot of the time.

We started rehearsing with movement. We did this by walking onto the stage consecutively and creating an individual still image of how we felt a soldier would convey emotions such as distress, sadness, fear and/or anything else that can be seen as negative. We came onto the stage to the song 'Gimme Shelter' by the Rolling Stones. Once the cast were on stage, one of the members of the class, Gabe, stood up, took the role of the chorus and spoke 'once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more'. The rest of the class followed in pairs to create a V shape and each pair would start saying the same quote as Gabe. We used the technique of volume when practicing this section as we gained volume each time a pair was added up to the point where we projected the line at the highest level of volume we could.

The role of movement as a chorus was used again when we separated into groups of male and female. The males would create an image to signify power, where the females would create an image to indicate vulnerability. Some of us then recited quotes that were all related to war. The chorus role was shared between most of the class and used movement, singing and music in some sections including the LBJ part and the announcement of 'Lysistrata'. For the LBJ section, we used a cheer like movement piece while reciting 'Hey, Hey, LBJ, How many kids did you kill today' I personally felt that the contrast between the context of the quote and the context of the routine was significant because it brought out the idea that just because someone is cheering and smiling, doesn't mean the nature of what they're doing it for/about is positive.

When I thought about set design I pictured a simple background with props and subtle touches that represent Greece. To do this, I imagined a colour scheme of colours such as gold, blue and red and the props could include statues with accents that relate to that colour scheme and use architecture that people associate with Greece, Athens and Athena.

For costumes, I had a couple of ideas, but the two I fixated on most were camouflage clothes to represent the army, and loose white or brown clothing with sandals or basic shoes to represent Greece. I imagined that there would be costume changes and for the beginning section, where it is predominantly based around war, the cast would be dressed in camouflage and wear shoes such as Doc Martins or some form of black boots. However, the girls tops, they would be slightly cropped so the audience will notice the subtle difference in the characters. For the rest of the scenes that we had to represent Greece in, we would wear baggy robe- like clothes as that is what people tend to associate classic Greek fashion with.

When researching and thinking about what music should accompany the play, I found myself listening to modern songs that associate with war, power and love. We used songs such as 'Gimme Shelter' by The Rolling Stones to accommodate this. For lighting I felt that we should use basic and light colours for most of it but have others when appropriate. An example of where different lighting would be appropriate is using blue to represent grief in the quote that comes from the grieving mother talking to the war memorial. For the scene where Myrrhine seduces Kiniseas, we could use red lighting to symbolise love and passion then when she denies him, the lights quickly change to represent indecisiveness.

While rehearsing the play and reading the script I felt that the best use for sound effects in the introduction, is to use the sound of bombs going off, gun shots, swords clashing, bomb alarms, rain and thunder to help the audience identify the sounds with war. Other sounds that could be used could be war cries and screams to depict how hard war hit a lot of people. For the parts of the play where Lysistrata gains another win, we could use pre-recorded sounds of women cheering to give the illusion that Lysistrata had many, many women backing her.