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Designing Lysistrata: Reconciling Aristophanes and the Twenty-First Century Audience

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Designing *Lysistrata*:

Reconciling Aristophanes and the Twenty-First Century Audience

by Yannick Godts

a senior thesis in Greek and Roman Studies
submitted May 21, 2013

Vassar College
Poughkeepsie, New York

Acknowledgements

According to my mother, it was she who forced me to take Latin class in sixth grade and, later, suggested that I join theater tech crew in high school. I do not remember either of these events. But, there can be no doubt that I must thank her for putting me on the path that eventually led to both designing *Lysistrata* and writing this thesis about it, as well as for her undying love and support.

I must also profusely thank my major/thesis adviser, Barbara Olsen. Her guidance, criticism, and general advice have been invaluable to my completion of this project, as well as her understanding of the insanity that tends to comprise my life. Finally, my deepest appreciation goes to Stephen Jones, professor, mentor, boss, and friend in all things concerning theatrical design.

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Introduction

One of the most enduring questions of working with an a classical Greek or Latin source in the modern world is that of faithfulness to the text in its language of composition. Is it important to be faithful at all? What is lost or gained in using a translation or other adaptation? When using a translation, how does knowledge of the original language inform one's work?

Any translation inherently imposes a single interpretive lens on the text in question. In using a translation without considering its source, one risks losing the subtlety and specificity present in the original language, which no translation can completely capture. Our bold interpretations and reinventions of Greek and Latin sources risk losing the integrity and the creative beauty of their composition. If we have no investment in faithfulness to the text at its moment of origin, we lose access to much that no translation or commentary can capture or recreate.

I have had the opportunity to explore the relationship between faithfulness and interpretation through my work with the Vassar College Department of Drama on their December 2012 production of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*¹. I was offered the opportunity to design lighting for the play when the Department of Drama announced their season for the coming year at the end of the 2011-2012 academic year. As part of that season, the department invited Vassar alumna Ianthe Demos, class of 2000, to return for the 2012-2013 academic year as a guest artist. She would direct *Lysistrata* in the fall, using a translation by Patric Dickinson, and Sarah Ruhl's *Eurydice* in the spring.

¹ The Department of Drama's complete record of the production may be obtained by contacting the Experimental Theater's Director of Theater or the Vassar College Archives and Special Collections Library.

Ilanthe² is Greek herself and has made theater from or about Greece—classical, modern, or mythological—a specialty of hers in her career. Upon her graduation, she and several other Vassar alums founded One Year Lease Theater Company, of which she is currently the artistic director. She has directed many plays from antiquity or inspired by Greek myths with her own company and with others', and any project of hers tends to have an unconventional, experimental quality to it. *Lysistrata* would prove to be no different.

My position as a member of the *Lysistrata* design team was unique in several ways. As a designer with the ability to read classical Greek, I approached the project with detailed knowledge of Greek theater practice and the ability to draw not only from our chosen translation, but also from Aristophanes' original text when designing. I also had the opportunity to closely observe the process of producing a Greek play today from the perspective of a student of Greek and Roman Studies who was in the rehearsal room with the directors and actors for much of the process.

As a lighting designer, I discovered that I could use the medium of light as a mode of negotiating the tension between the Greek text, Dickinson's translation, and the design team's conception. Light functioned as a workable middle ground between the original and the new, enabling me to preserve the particular intent of Aristophanes' language while still responding to our broader concept and themes. By integrating my knowledge of the ancient source into my own concept and, eventually, final design, I could ground the production in an accessible reality without inhibiting the grander interpretive steps we took.

² Since all participants in the production of *Lysistrata* referred to Ilanthe Demos by her first name during the process, I will be doing the same here. The same is true of designers and Professors of Drama Stephen Jones and Kenisha Kelly, and so I shall refer to them by their first names throughout as well.

This thesis will survey the process by which I accomplished this. I will devote one chapter to a discussion of the choices that the director and other designers made in their work on the Experimental Theater's production. This will survey the broad thematics and concepts behind the direction and design, both in regards to the themes we brought out from the text and what was added through movement and choreography. I will then focus on specific moments in the staging that were unusual in our interpretation of them or that we made into significant points in the play.

In the second chapter, I will discuss my own choices as lighting designer and the process by which I arrived at my design. To understand the text fully, I began with a close reading of the play in Greek, from which I wrote my own translation of it. Any design in theater originates from a study of the text being performed, but this translation enabled me to search the original composition of the play for indicators that would inform my design that might have been lost in translation. I found many such points in my work with the play, as well as numerous other features of Aristophanes' writing that, sometimes, presented a very different picture of his characters than the text we used in our staging. My direct involvement with the original text and my responses to it in designing ultimately created an odd juxtaposition between my own work and the other aspects of production that did not concern themselves at all with the original text.

Finally, I will consider the Experimental Theater's production critically in the context of a larger performance history of *Lysistrata*. This must, of course, begin with a brief analysis of how lanthe's choices altered the meaning and message play compared to its original staging from 411 B.C.E. I will then discuss how her direction relates to trends in the production of the play in the modern world. Three monumental stagings from Germany, Russia, and England in

the early 20th century established the early modern performance trend shortly after *Lysistrata* first reappeared on the stages of Europe. For contemporary views, however, I will look mainly at productions and staging concepts from the Middle East in the last decade. There is a trend in these contemporary ideas that differs vastly from more traditional interpretations of the play, and it is these that provide the most informative venue for understanding Ianthe's more radical choices.

These three chapters create three critical lenses through which I can examine questions of faithfulness versus adaptation of this creation of Classical Greece. My involvement in the rehearsal and design process of one specific production gives me insight into how those staging Attic comedy in the modern day see the source material their work is derived from. As a student of Greek, I can speak to the nature of Aristophanes' text and how the knowledge of that informed my own process of designing for a contemporary production. My close reading of the Greek has also revealed things to me about specific choices the translator made that then, unknowingly to them, influenced the director, actors, and designers in their treatment of the play.

The assembly of a performance history, general though it is, lets me then put our own relationship to Aristophanes' Greek in a broader context. The trends of other theatermakers in their departures from and reimaginings of the text create a backdrop against which to understand generally how one can be faithful to the original and the richness and beauty that can be accessed when one is.

Note on the translation of the play

In translating *Lysistrata*, I have attempted to preserve the literal meaning of Aristophanes' text to the greatest extent possible. To translate any text exactly word-for-word is of course impractical, as rendering every single word into its equivalent in the new language would produce in an incredibly cumbersome, inelegant result with problems far greater than those that result from inexact translation. Instead, I mean that with my close reading of the Greek, I have written this translation with an eye toward preserving Aristophanes' turns of phrase and choices of diction to the best extent that I can while still writing in fluid English.

I have eschewed any impetus to render the text into a specific dialect beyond standard modern American English. The exception is, of course, the Spartans' speech. For their dialect, I have unapologetically borrowed from the vocabulary and vowels of former Governor of Alaska and vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin. To an extent, it may even be more accurate to assign credit for my rendition to comedian Tina Fey for her devastating parody of the candidate. Fey's portrayal, which barely even qualified as an exaggeration and had to do very little to turn imitation of Palin into absurdity, swiftly became better known than anything Palin had ever done or said herself and thus is useful as a reference for popular opinion of her. I believe use of her peculiar accent would resonate with my probable audience of educated, liberal-minded people most likely from the Northeast in the same way Aristophanes' parody of Spartan dialect would have resonated with the Athenian audience. That is, it makes it readily apparent that the speaker comes from somewhere far away, but still a part of the same people, and creates a distinct impression of backwardness and lack of education.

Their dialect is the only major place where I have deviated from my effort to be faithful to the original Greek text, but even in this I think I have captured the same effect as Aristophanes' Spartan dialect would have had. In some points in the Spartan characters' lines, I have opted to render the Greek particles—otherwise often left untranslated—as specific idioms like Palin's quintessential "You betcha!" or "Goshdamnit." Otherwise, I have rendered particular Greek idioms that do not lend themselves to translation with idioms or adages common to modern American English that have the same import.

As far as Aristophanes' humor goes, I have tried to leave all the sexual and scatological humor intact: Attic Greek is extremely frank and explicit in these matters, so there is no reason to be less than frank in English³. I have treated the other jokes in varying ways. Wordplay I attempt to recreate in the equivalent in English, but humor derived from mockery of specific Athenians I leave untouched, unless context, not reference alone, is what creates the humor. One certainly could adapt the referential jokes into a form appreciable by a modern audience, but to do that—i.e., to single out contemporary figures with whom the audience is familiar—would require adapting the rest of the play to a modern setting as well, which is not my intent in this translation.

As a final remark, I must distinguish between the use of my own translation and the use of Patric Dickinson's translation in this thesis. When I refer to the Greek to comment on Aristophanes' diction or grammar, I will cite the Greek text and supply my own translation alongside it. If I am referring to a specific line in the text as a point of reference when

³ It is to be expected that the older translations produced in the Victorian or otherwise Early Modern eras would attempt to tame Aristophanes' raw sexuality, as the topic still remained taboo at those times. However, even in the modern day of 2013, there are few translations of *Lysistrata* that preserve both the sheer frequency and the forthrightness of Aristophanes' sexual humor. This is disappointing both because the sexual jokes are, in my opinion, hysterical in the Greek and because I would like to hope that we as an audience can be trusted to handle explicit sexual dialogue onstage nowadays.

discussing the Experimental Theater's production, I will simply quote Dickinson's translation and cite it accordingly.

Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*
translated by Yannick Godts

- LYSISTRATA. Well! If someone had invited them to the feast of Bacchus,
or to Pan's shrine, or Genetyllis' at Kolias,
you wouldn't be able to get through them and their tambourines!
But now there's not a single woman around.
5 Except for my neighbor, she's coming out.
Hello, Kalonike!
- KALONIKE. And you too, Lysistrata.
What's been troubling you? Don't look angry, my dear,
it doesn't suit you to furrow your brows.
- LYSISTRATA. But, O Kalonike, my heart is blazing,
10 and I'm just furious about us women,
because, according to men, we're believed
to be all kinds of mischievous—
- KALONIKE. And by god we are!
- LYSISTRATA. —but when the word's been put out that
we're going to be planning no small matter here,
15 they're asleep and haven't come.
- KALONIKE. But, dearest,
they *will* come! Getting out and about is hard for women.
One of us is bending over backwards for her husband,
another's waking her slave, another's putting
the baby to sleep, another's washing it, another's feeding it...
- 20 LYSISTRATA. But there's another business more useful to women
than those.
- KALONIKE. What is it, Lysistrata my dear,
whatever this thing is on whose account you called us women together?
What's the matter? Something large?
- LYSISTRATA. Big.
- KALONIKE. Surely not thick, too?
- LYSISTRATA. Oh, by Zeus, it's thick.
- KALONIKE. Then why on Earth aren't we all here yet?
- 25 LYSISTRATA. It's not *that*—we would have gotten together very quickly then.
But I've been examining the matter,
tossing it about for many sleepless nights.
- KALONIKE. Well, is it quite fine now, since it's been tossed about like that?
- LYSISTRATA. Yes, so fine that the salvation of all Greece
30 is in the hands of the women!
- KALONIKE. In the hands of the women? It's held up by very little, then.
- LYSISTRATA. Thus, the business of the city is in our hands,
whether there should be no Peloponnesians any longer—
- KALONIKE. Nothing would be better, by Zeus!
- 35 LYSISTRATA. —and the Boeotians utterly destroyed.

KALONIKE. Not all of them, seriously, at least spare the eels.

LYSISTRATA. Now, about the Athenians, I will say
no such thing, but you get what I mean.

40 But if the women get together here,
the Bœotians and the Peloponnesians
and us, together we will save Greece!

KALONIKE. But what could women do that's wise
or magnificent, we who sit around painted like flowers
dressed in saffron and all made up,
45 wearing Cimberic dresses and shoes?

LYSISTRATA. Yes, those very things are what will save us, I think,
little yellow dresses and perfume and slippers,
rouge and see-through slippers.

KALONIKE. And what ever is this way?

LYSISTRATA. The result will be that not one
50 of the men will take up a spear against the rest—

KALONIKE. Why, by god, I'll dye my dress yellow myself!

LYSISTRATA. Nor take his shield—

KALONIKE. I'll dress in Cimberic!

LYSISTRATA. Nor a knife.

KALONIKE. I'll buy myself slippers!

LYSISTRATA. Anyway, aren't the women supposed to be here?

55 KALONIKE. No, since they ought to have positively flown a long time ago.

LYSISTRATA. Well, my friend, you'll see they're all too Athenian;
everything they do, they should have done yesterday.
But there's not even one woman here from Paralia,
nor from Salamis!

KALONIKE. Oh, but I know that *they've* been
60 coming astride their horses since dawn.

LYSISTRATA. Not even the ones whom I was expecting, and thought
would be here first, the women of Acharnae,
have come yet.

KALONIKE. Well, Theogenes' wife, I'm sure,
already went off to visit Hecate's shrine.

65 But here, some of your women are showing up!

LYSISTRATA. And here come some more!

KALONIKE. Oh—*oh*—
Where are they from?

LYSISTRATA. From Anagyrus.

KALONIKE. My god.

It does seem like something disagreed with them.⁴

MYRRHINE. Surely we aren't late, Lysistrata?

⁴ Literally, "it does seem to me like someone disturbed Anagyros," a pun on the foul-smelling herb sharing a name with the city.

105 LAMPITO. And mine, if he ever packs up and comes home from the command,
 he flies off again with his shield strapped on his back.
 KALONIKE. Our lovers haven't even left behind ashes to warm us.
 Since the Milesians defied us,
 I haven't even seen an eight-inch dildo,
 110 which would have been a *slight* help.
 LYSISTRATA. Well, if I were to find a means, would you want
 to end the war with me?
 KALONIKE. Yes, by the gods,
 I would, even if I had to sell this very
 dress and drink up the proceeds⁵ this very day.
 115 KALONIKE. And I would too, even if I had to cut myself
 in two like a flounder and give away half!
 LAMPITO. And I, too, would climb up Taygetus
 so I could look upon Peace!
 LYSISTRATA. Then I would say it: I do not need to disguise my words.
 120 For, O women, if we are really going
 to force the men to make peace,
 we must give up—
 KALONIKE. What? Tell us!
 LYSISTRATA. Will you do it, then?
 KALONIKE. We *will* do it, even if we have to die!
 LYSISTRATA. We must, then, give up *penis*.
 125 Why are you turning away from me? Where are you going?
 You lot! Why are you all shaking your heads in silence?
 Why do you furrow your brows; why are there tears falling from your eyes?
 Will you do it or won't you? Oh, what *will* you do?
 KALONIKE. I couldn't; let the war crawl on!
 130 MYRRHINE. Nor I. By Zeus, let the war crawl on!
 LYSISTRATA. *You're* saying that, Mrs. Flounder? Why, didn't you just
 say that you'd cut yourself in half?
 KALONIKE. Oh, oh, whatever you want. If it were necessary, why, I'd want
 to walk through a fire. That rather than the penis—
 135 Nothing's like it, Lysistrata my dear.
 LYSISTRATA. And you, then?
 FIRST WOMAN. I'd like to go through the fire, too.
 LYSISTRATA. Oh, our race is lewd through and through, all of us!
 It's not for nothing there are tragedies about us;
 we're nothing but Poseidon and a skiff.
 140 But, my good Spartan—if you alone were
 with me, we might still save the situation—
 cast your vote with me!

⁵ One must understand some kind of object with ἐπιπνιῖν to specify that she is drinking up what she got for the dress – i.e. wine bought with the money the dress sold for.

LAMPITO. By the Twin Gods, it is difficult
for women all alone at night without a shaft, goshdarnit.
But it's all the same in the end. For we need peace the most.

145 LYSISTRATA. Oh my dearest, you're the only real woman out of them all!
KALONIKE. But if we really did abstain like this, from what you say—
may it not be so!—would peace really come about
because of it?

LYSISTRATA. Very much so, by the gods.
For if we lazed around inside with our make-up on,
150 and went about nude but for see-through dresses,
and our hair all trimmed into a triangle,
and our husbands got hard and wanted to fuck us,
but we didn't go near, and stayed away,
they would make a peace treaty fast, I know that much!

155 LAMPITO. Menelaus, you know, when he saw Helen all
naked, he threw down his sword, I think!
KALONIKE. But what, dear me, if our husbands don't notice us?
LYSISTRATA. In Pherecratus' words: skin the skinned dog.
KALONIKE. These imitations are just silly.

160 And if they take us and drag us into the bedroom
by force?

LYSISTRATA. Hold on to the doors.
KALONIKE. And if they hit us?

LYSISTRATA. Then allow the vile deed, but be as vile as you can:
for they get no pleasure by using force.
And make them hurt in other ways, too; and don't you worry,
165 they'll soon surrender, for there's no way a man can enjoy
himself if his wife isn't.

KALONIKE. If this seems right to you too, we agree.
LAMPITO. And we will persuade our men also
to make peace, justly and without deceit;
170 but how will anyone convince the rabble
of Athens not to run amok?

LYSISTRATA. It needn't concern you; we'll convince them on our own.
LAMPITO. No, not as long as your ships have oars
and your money is in the keeping of the Goddess.

175 LYSISTRATA. Ah, but this has been well provided-for too:
we shall seize the Acropolis this very day.
For the old women have been assigned this as their task,
while we make our pact,
to seize the Acropolis by pretending to be making a sacrifice.

180 LAMPITO. That covers everything. And you said it well, too!
LYSISTRATA. Indeed, Lampito, why don't we make our allegiance
right away, so that it will be unbreakable?
LAMPITO. Then reveal the oath that we'll be swearing.

KALONIKE. And never willingly shall I be persuaded otherwise by my husband.
 225 LYSISTRATA. "If he should compel me by force, against my will—"
 KALONIKE. If he should compel me by force, against my will—
 LYSISTRATA. "I will be sullen and not respond to him."
 KALONIKE. I will be sullen and not respond to him.
 LYSISTRATA. "I will not raise my Persian slippers up to the ceiling."
 230 KALONIKE. I will not raise my Persian slippers up to the ceiling.
 LYSISTRATA. "I will not lie like the lioness on the cheese-grater."
 KALONIKE. I will not lie like the lioness on the cheese-grater.
 LYSISTRATA. "If I abide by these, may I drink from the cup—"
 KALONIKE. If I abide by these, may I drink from the cup—
 235 LYSISTRATA. "But if I should transgress, may the cup be filled with water."
 KALONIKE. But if I should transgress, may the cup be filled with water.
 LYSISTRATA. Do you all swear this?
 ALL. By Zeus.
 LYSISTRATA. Then I'll dedicate the cup!
 KALONIKE. Only your part, my friend,
 so that we all know we're friends from the very start!
 240 LAMPITO. What was that shouting?
 LYSISTRATA. Just what I was telling you about—
 the women have already taken over the Acropolis.
 But, oh my Lampito,
 you go off and take your lot for your part,
 but leave these women behind as your pledge.
 245 Now, let us go off into the city and
 join the other women who are barricading the gates.
 KALONIKE. Don't you think, though, that the men will band together
 against us right away?
 LYSISTRATA. They concern me little.
 They won't come at us with threats or fire
 250 so great that they'll be able to open these doors,
 if we don't say they can.
 KALONIKE. By Aphrodite, they'll never! Otherwise we women
 wouldn't be renowned as such unbeatable scoundrels.

MEN'S LEADER. Go on, Draces, lead the way, even if your shoulders do hurt
 255 from carrying such a heavy olive trunk!
 CHORUS OF OLD MEN. Oh, there are many unexpected things in a long life—
 whew!—but who would ever expect, Strymodorus, to hear that
 260 the women, that blatant terror we raised in our very homes,
 have seized the sacred image
 and taken our Acropolis
 and, my god, made fast the gateway
 265 into the temple with beams and crowbars!
 MEN'S LEADER. Now, as quick as possible, let's hurry to the city, Philourgos,

and pile these logs in a circle around them,
 they who started this ordeal and then went through with it,
 and let's build up a fire with our own hands
 270 and vote together to burn them all, and Lycon's wife first!
 CHORUS. No, by Demeter, they won't scoff at me while I'm still alive;
 not if Cleomenes, who captured the Acropolis first,
 275/6 got off unscathed, though he breathed Spartan all the same.
 He gave up his weapons to me when he left,
 wearing only a small little cloak,
 hungry, dirty, unshaven,
 280 unwashed for six years straight.
 MEN'S LEADER. I laid siege to the man this way, roughly,
 sitting before the gates in seventeen ranks.
 But these women, enemies of Euripides and all the gods—
 will I stand by and *not* oppose such daring?
 285 There wouldn't be a single trophy in the Tetrapolis, then!
 CHORUS. All that's left of this road
 for me is the steep bit
 up to the city—that's what I'm eager for!
 Now how on Earth are we going to get it up
 290 without an ass?
 These two logs are crushing my shoulders!
 But all the same I must go on,
 I must feed the fire,
 I can't let it go out unnoticed
 before journey's end!
 295 Phew, phew, oh, the smoke!
 Oh, how terrible, Lord Heracles,
 it fell out of the bucket and right onto me
 just like a rabid bitch biting my eyes!
 And this fire is Lemnian
 300 in every way;
 or else it wouldn't have torn at my eyes with its bite!
 Hurry, up toward the city
 and bring aid to the Goddess!
 Will we ever help her more
 305 than now, Laches?
 Phew, phew, oh, the smoke!
 MEN'S LEADER. The fire's awake, thanks to the gods, and lives on!
 Then, if we put down these two logs here first,
 and dip the light of our torches into the bucket
 and ignite the door and attack it like a ram,
 310 and if the women don't open the gates at our call,
 we'll just have to burn down the door and press them tight with smoke.
 Now, let's put down our load. Phew, the smoke, goodness!

Would one of the generals at Samos like to help us with this wood?
 At least it's stopped crushing my back.
 315 This is your job, bucket, to rouse up the embers,
 and provide me with a kindled torch.
 Lady Victory, assist us in winning a trophy over
 the present madness of the women at the Acropolis!
 WOMEN'S LEADER. I think I see fire and smoke, oh women,
 320 as if someone were kindling a fire—we must hurry faster!
 CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN. Fly, fly, Nikodike,
 before Kalyke catches on fire
 and Kritylla is blown about
 by the grievous winds
 325 and old men bringing ruin!
 But I am afraid of this; surely I'm coming too late to help?
 For indeed now I could scarcely fill up my pitcher at the fountain
 at dawn, because of the crowd and the din
 and the clatter of pots,
 330 jostling with the maidservants
 and slave-women. I lifted it up
 eagerly, bringing
 water to help
 my fellow citizens beset with fire!
 335 For I heard that there are some old
 dotards running wild, carrying logs
 like they were worth three talents
 and going up to the city like to the baths,
 screaming the most terrible things,
 340 that "We must burn these abominable women with fire!"
 Oh Goddess, may I *never* see them set ablaze,
 but rescuing Greece and its citizens
 from war and madness!
 For these very things, Golden-Crested
 345 Guardian of the City, they occupied your shrines.
 And I call on you as an ally, O
 Tritogenia, if any man
 sets them aflame,
 to bring water with us!
 350 WOMEN'S LEADER. Hold on, oh, what is this? Wicked, evil men—
 for truly, no man good or pious would do this to a shrine!
 MEN'S LEADER. Now this is an unexpected issue, what's come up here—
 this swarm of women at the gates is helping them!
 WOMEN'S LEADER. Are you afraid of us? Surely we don't seem to much for you?
 355 And truly you're only seeing just one thousandth of us!
 MEN'S LEADER. Phaedrias, will we let such women chatter on?
 Shouldn't someone smite them and shatter a log upon them?

WOMEN'S LEADER. Yes, let's put our pitchers down on the ground, so that,
 if someone lays a hand on us, they won't be in the way.

360 MEN'S LEADER. By Zeus, if someone had hit them in the teeth two or
 three times, like Bulapus, then there wouldn't be a sound!

WOMEN'S LEADER. Well, here I am—someone hit me! I'll take it standing up,
 and then no other bitch will ever take you by the balls!

MEN'S LEADER. If you don't shut up, I'll pluck your old age right out of you!

365 WOMEN'S LEADER. Come over and touch Stratyllis with even one finger—

MEN'S LEADER. And if I pound her with my knuckles, what then? What horrors will befall
 me?

WOMEN'S LEADER. I'll tear your lungs to shreds and reap up your innards.

MEN'S LEADER. There's no man wiser than Euripides, as a poet:
 no creature is as shameless as a woman.

370 WOMEN'S LEADER. Let's take up our pitchers of water, Rhodippe.

MEN'S LEADER. And why, you enemy of the gods, did you come here with water?

WOMEN'S LEADER. And why do you have fire, you burial mound? To burn yourself down?

MEN'S LEADER. Me? To roast your friends in a bonfire.

WOMEN'S LEADER. And me, to put out your fire with *this*!

375 MEN'S LEADER. You'll put out my fire?

WOMEN'S LEADER. You'll see it with your own eyes.

MEN'S LEADER. I don't know, I'll scorch you with a torch if I've got one!

WOMEN'S LEADER. If you've got soap, by chance, I'll prepare a bath for you.

MEN'S LEADER. You, give *me* a bath, you rotten fish?

WOMEN'S LEADER. Yes—one fit for a bride.

MEN'S LEADER. Are you hearing this insolence?

WOMEN'S LEADER. I'm a free woman!

380 MEN'S LEADER. I'll stop your shouting right now!

WOMEN'S LEADER. But you're not on a jury.

MEN'S LEADER. Light her hair on fire!

WOMEN'S LEADER. Oh Achelous, that's it!

MEN'S LEADER. Oh, how horrid!

WOMEN'S LEADER. It wasn't too hot?

MEN'S LEADER. *Hot?* Won't you stop it? What are you *doing*?

WOMEN'S LEADER. I'm watering you, so that you'll grow.

385 MEN'S LEADER. But I'm already dry and trembling!

WOMEN'S LEADER. Well, you have a fire there, you'll warm up.

MAGISTRATE. Has those women's wantonness flared up again,
 complete with drums and excessive shouts of "Sabazios!"
 and this Adonian whatnot on the rooftops,
 390 which I heard even though I was inside the Assembly?
 Demonstratus was saying we ought
 to sail to Sicily, even while his wife danced and
 said "Oh, oh Adonis!" And Demonstratus
 said to enlist soldiers from Zaknythia,
 395 but his wife was up on the rooftops

crying "Beat your breasts for Adonis!" And he kept going,
that enemy of the gods, that filthy raging Buzyges.
Such licentiousness—it's because of the women!

MEN'S LEADER. Such indeed, when you've learned about *their* hubris!
400 They're being outrageous in still more ways, and washed
us out of pitchers, and we've had to shake out
our clothes as if they'd been pissed on!

MAGISTRATE. By Poseidon, King of the Sea, that's right!
When we ourselves help them be wicked,
405 and teach them wanton luxury,
these sorts of schemes are what comes to light!
We who said things like this at the tradesmen's shops:
"Goldsmith, that necklace you made, well,
when my wife was dancing last night,
410 the pin fell out of its hole.

Now, I have to sail off to Salamis—
if you've got some spare time, come by this evening
and stick the pin back in there with all your skill."

And someone else said *this* to a shoemaker,
415 a youth, but *not* with a youth's cock:
"Shoemaker, there's a strap squeezing the
little toe of my wife's foot;
it's tender there—how about you come by at noon
and loosen it up, so that it's wider?"

420 That kind of shit is what's led to such a state,
when I, as a Magistrate, have provided material
to make oars, and the necessary funds,
am locked outside the gates by the women!
But standing won't do anything. Fetch the crowbars,
425 we'll make use of them against this arrogance.
Why are you gaping, you wretch? And what are you staring at?
You're getting as much done as a tavern full of guardsmen!
Will you or won't you throw those crowbars under the gates
430 and pry them open? I'll start prying over here—

LYSISTRATA. Don't bother prying,
I'm coming out on my own. Why do you need crowbars?
You certainly don't need *crowbars* as much as a mind and some sense.

MAGISTRATE. Is that so, you foul creature? Where's a policeman?
Take her and tie her hands behind her back.

435 LYSISTRATA. By Artemis, if he touches me with just the tip
of his hand, he'll be locked up, public servant though he is!

MAGISTRATE. Are you afraid, then? You, grab her waist,
and you, tie her up with this, fast as you can!

FIRST OLD WOMAN. Put just one hand on her, by Pandrosus,
440 and you'll lie trampled and bleeding out a river!

MAGISTRATE. I think it's you who'll be bleeding. Where's another policeman?
Tie *her* up first, this one who's jabbering away!

SECOND OLD WOMAN. By Phosphoron, if you touch her with even the tip
of your hand, you'll soon be begging for a cup of water!

445 MAGISTRATE. What is this? Where's that policeman? Grab her!
I'll stop *one* of you on this sortie!

THIRD OLD WOMAN. If you even go near her, by Tauropolus,
I'll pluck out your hair and make you squeal!

MAGISTRATE. God damn it, we've run out of policemen!
450 But we can *never* be beaten by women—
come together, all of you Scythians,
and form ranks against them!

LYSISTRATA. Oh, by the two Goddesses, you'll soon
find out that in our number, too, there are four whole regiments
of fighting women standing at arms inside!

455 MAGISTRATE. Scythians, twist these women's arms!

LYSISTRATA. O women, my allies, out from within!
Seed-sellers, egg-vendors, market-women with your vegetables,
hostesses selling garlic bread,
won't you drag them, smite them, knock them down,
460 rail at them, run shameless all around!

A battle ensues.

Stop! Fall back, don't strip them *raw*!

MAGISTRATE. No, no, we've fared just awfully!

LYSISTRATA. Well, what did you think would happen? Did you think you'd
come up against some slave girls, or did you not think that women
465 had gall in them?

MAGISTRATE. Oh, by Apollo, I did know that,
and all the more if there's a sale going on nearby.

MEN'S LEADER. You've used up all your words, O Magistrate of the land—
why are you getting yourself into an argument with these beasts?
Don't you know what sort of bath they just gave us
470 right in our clothes, and that without any powder?

WOMEN'S LEADER. My dear, you need to not just lay hands on your neighbors
needlessly; if you do, you're sure to get a black eye.
I just want to sit around safely like a girl,
annoying no one there, not moving a thing,
475 unless someone annoys me—then I'm like a wasps' nest.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN. O Zeus, whatever are we going to do with these monsters?
480 This here is truly intolerable; now you need to investigate
this grievance with me—
what were they planning to do
when they took Kranaus's citadel, atop which
lies the great, stone, inaccessible Acropolis,
the consecrated temple.

MEN'S LEADER. Now ask her again and don't give in and put all her accounts to the test—
485 how shameful it'd be if we let such a business go unsolved.
MAGISTRATE. And indeed, this I want to learn first from them:
 what were you hoping for when you locked up the gates of the Acropolis?
LYSISTRATA. So we could take control of the money and, by that, not fight the war.
MAGISTRATE. It's because of the *money* that we're fighting?
LYSISTRATA. Yes, and why everything else got messed up too.
490 Pisander and everyone else seeking a higher office were always
 stirring up rumblings so they could steal from it. And then, because of that,
 they planned whatever they wanted: now they'll never take money from here
again.
MAGISTRATE. But what are you going to do?
LYSISTRATA. You're asking *me*? We will manage it.
MAGISTRATE. *You'll* manage the treasury?
LYSISTRATA. Why do you think that's so awful?
495 Don't we manage all the goods at home for you folk?
MAGISTRATE. That's not the same!
LYSISTRATA. How isn't it the same?
MAGISTRATE. That isn't for fighting a war!
LYSISTRATA. But we don't have to fight one in the first place.
MAGISTRATE. Then how else will we save ourselves?
LYSISTRATA. We'll keep you safe.
MAGISTRATE. *You?*
LYSISTRATA. Us, yes.
MAGISTRATE. Shocking!
LYSISTRATA. You'll be kept safe, even if you don't want to!
MAGISTRATE. You're talking crazy!
500 LYSISTRATA. Does it annoy you? It must be done all the same.
MAGISTRATE. No, by Demeter, it's wrong!
LYSISTRATA. You must be protected, good sir.
MAGISTRATE. Even if I don't need it?
LYSISTRATA. Because of that, much more.
MAGISTRATE. And what do war and peace even matter to you?
LYSISTRATA. We will tell you.
MAGISTRATE. Say it quickly, so you don't end up broken.
LYSISTRATA. Then listen up, and *try* to hold back your hands.
MAGISTRATE. But I can't, it's *hard*—
510 to restrain them because I'm so angry.
FIRST OLD WOMAN. Then you'll be hurting all the more.
MAGISTRATE. Croak that to yourself, old hag!—You, talk to me.
LYSISTRATA. I'll do it.
 For a long time in the past, we've born it patiently in silence,
 thanks to our modesty, no matter what you did:
 for you didn't let us grumble—and nor did you ask.
510 But we understand you well, and often, when we were inside,

we listened to whatever kind of great deeds you were planning (poorly):
though we were suffering inside, we'd ask you with a smile:
"What have you decided about writing a treaty in stone
in the assembly today?" "What is it to you?" my husband would say—
515 "Won't you stay quiet?" And I was silent.

FIRST OLD WOMAN. But me, I'd never be silent!
MAGISTRATE. And you would have been crying if you hadn't!
LYSISTRATA. Therefore I stayed silent, yes.
But another time we learned of some even worse idea of yours,
and then we asked "How, my husband, are you doing this so foolishly?"
And right away he glared at me and said, if I didn't spin my thread,
520 my very skull would cry out—"War is a concern for the men."

MAGISTRATE. By Zeus that man spoke rightly!
LYSISTRATA. How was it right, you poor wretch,
if it was impossible for us to suggest it to the ones planning so poorly?
And when we already heard people saying openly in the streets:
525 "There isn't a man in the country!"—"By Zeus, there isn't," said someone else—
after this it seemed we just *had* to save Greece,
all of us women together. For how could we wait?
Then, if you'd listen to the useful things we say
and were quiet like us in return, we'd set you straight.

MAGISTRATE. *You set us straight?* That's dreadful, I won't tolerate it!
LYSISTRATA. Shut up.
530 MAGISTRATE. *Me* shut up for you? You abomination—and this from a woman
wearing a scarf around her head? I couldn't live with it.

LYSISTRATA. Ah—if the scarf's a problem,
take this scarf from me,
and put it around your head,
and *then* shut up.

535 FIRST OLD WOMAN. Yes, and this little basket!
LYSISTRATA. Now hitch up your skirts and card wool
and munch on some beans,
and war shall be the business of women!

WOMEN'S LEADER. Get yourselves up, women, away from those pitchers,
540 so that we can do our part to help ourselves and our friends!

CHORUS OF WOMEN. Yes, I would never tire of dancing,
nor would some pesky fatigue weary my knees.
I want to face everything
with these women, on account of their virtue, who have
545 strength, grace, courage
and wisdom, and virtue
patriotic and intelligent!

WOMEN'S LEADER. Now, O most courageous of grandmothers and prickly mothers,
550 go forth in anger and don't go soft; you still run with the wind behind you!

LYSISTRATA. If only Cyprian Aphrodite

would breathe desire into our breasts and thighs,
and engender the men with pleasurable stiffness and blows of the club,
then I think one day we shall be called Disbanders of Battle among the Greeks!

MAGISTRATE. Thanks to *what*?

555 LYSISTRATA. First, if we stop people from going to the market wearing weapons
and raving mad.

FIRST OLD WOMAN. Yes, by Aphrodite of Paphos!

LYSISTRATA. For even now, they're walking around the market like Corybants,
going armed to the potters and vegetable-sellers alike!

MAGISTRATE. By Zeus, one has to be manly!

LYSISTRATA. And it's just laughable, truly,
when someone carrying a shield with a Gorgon on it buys blackfish!

FIRST OLD WOMAN. By Zeus, I just saw a long-haired fellow, a cavalry captain,
mounted on his horse, throwing pea soup he got from an old woman into a
bronze "cup"! And another, a Thracian, shaking his shield and spear like Tereus,
scared the fig-seller and positively *drank* the ripe ones down!

565 MAGISTRATE. How then will *you* be able to stop and undo all this tangled
business across the lands?

LYSISTRATA. Quite easily.

MAGISTRATE. How? Show me.

LYSISTRATA. Just like a skein of wool, when it's tangled: we take it like this,
dragging it out with our spindles this way and that,
and thus will we undo the war, too, if anyone would let us,
570 taking it apart by embassies, this way and that.

MAGISTRATE. Do you truly think that you will stop this terrible ordeal
with wool and skeins? How senseless!

LYSISTRATA. Yes, and if someone in your lot
thought at all, you'd run the city like our wool, in every way!

MAGISTRATE. How indeed? Say it, then.

LYSISTRATA. First, just like a fleece, it would be necessary
575 to wash out the sheep-manure of the city in a bathtub, beat out
the scoundrels and the burrs on a couch,
and card out and pluck off the heads of those who clump together
and press themselves up to the rulers;
then, card it into a basket of common good will and work
580 them all together, the metics and any foreigner who's a friend of yours,
and anyone who owes money to the treasury, then work them all in.
And the cities! By Zeus, yes, as many as are our allies,
don't you see, they're just like bits of wool, each one separate,
and by taking a bit of wool from all of them,
585 drive them together here and gather them in one place, and then
make a great ball of wool and weave a cloak for the city out of it.

MAGISTRATE. Isn't it terrible that these women are beating and winding this up,
when they have no share in the war at all?

LYSISTRATA. Truly, you evil beast,

we have more than double a share. First we bear children
 590 and then send them off as soldiers—
 MAGISTRATE. Be quiet! Don't bring up evils past!
 LYSISTRATA. And then, when we ought to have been enjoying ourselves and our youth
 we go to bed alone thanks to the army. And I'll allow this about our fate:
 I'm pained to think about girls growing old in their wedding chambers.
 MAGISTRATE. Don't men grow old too?
 LYSISTRATA. By Zeus, we're not talking about the same thing!
 595 For when *he* comes back, even if he's grey, he'll have married a young girl
 real fast; but the time of a woman is short, and if she doesn't seize hold of it,
 no one wants to marry her; she sits around looking for good omens.
 MAGISTRATE. But whatever man can still get aroused—
 LYSISTRATA. *You*—why won't you understand and drop dead already?
 600 Here's a grave, go buy a coffin;
 I'll knead you a honeycake,
 you take this and buy a funeral wreath.
 FIRST OLD WOMAN. And take these from me.
 SECOND OLD WOMAN. And take this garland.
 605 LYSISTRATA. Need anything? What more do you want? Go to the ship,
 Charon is calling you,
 and you're keeping him from setting sail.
 MAGISTRATE. Isn't it just terrible that I have to suffer this?
 By Zeus, I'm going straight to the other magistrates
 610 to show them how I've fared.
 LYSISTRATA. Surely you won't accuse us of not laying you out?
 We'll perform the burial rites
 on the third day hence at dawn precisely!
 MEN'S LEADER. No need for any free man to be sleeping!
 615 Men, let's strip for action for this disaster.
 CHORUS OF OLD MEN. Already this seems to me to stink
 of more and greater troubles.
 I can smell the tyranny of Hippias especially
 620 and I'm afraid that certain Spartans
 will come together here at Cleisthenes'
 and rouse these women, enemies of the gods, with trickery
 to seize the public funds and jury pay,
 625 which I live off of!
 MEN'S LEADER. It's awful, you know, that they're already warning the citizens
 and chattering on about bronze spears – even though they're women!
 And they're reconciling with the Spartans on our part,
 who can never be trusted, no more than a ravenous wolf!
 630 But this thing they're weaving against us, men, is just tyranny!
 But they won't reign tyrant over me, if I'm on my guard,
 though they're saying "I will carry my sword in a sheath of myrtle!"
 and I *will* go to market in arms right next to Aristogeiton,

and stand beside him just like that, that way
 635 I'll finally get to hit those enemies of the gods right in the jaw!
 WOMEN'S LEADER. Your own mother wouldn't recognize you back at home.
 Let's put down our garments first, though, my friends.
 CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN. For, all you citizens, we'll begin wit
 a few words of wisdom for the city:
 640 and fittingly so, since she raised me in splendid luxury
 ever since I was a grain-grinder for the Foundress when I was ten,
 and then I lost my saffron skirts to be a bear at Brauronia,
 and, back when I was a pretty little thing, I carried the basket
 wearing a necklace of figs.
 WOMEN'S LEADER. Shouldn't I give some good advice to the city, then?
 I was born a woman, yes, but don't begrudge me for it,
 650 if I can come up with something better than our current predicament!
 I give a damn about our commonwealth – I'm the one who bears men.
 But you miserable old lot don't at all, since you used up
 the spoils that you got from your grandfathers
 and didn't pay property taxes to replace it,
 655 but now we run the risk of bankruptcy because of you.
 What is there for you to grumble about? If you bother me at all,
 I'll smack you in the jaw with this rawhide boot.
 CHORUS OF OLD MEN. Isn't this just extreme hubris?
 660 And it seems to me like it's only going to get worse.
 Any man with balls must avert this disaster!
 MEN'S LEADER. Let's strip off our tunics—a man must smell
 like a man through and through, not show off his trappings.
 CHORUS OF OLD MEN. Come on, Whitefeet,
 665 we're the ones who went against Leipsydrión
 back when we were something,
 now we must be young again and take flight
 670 and shake off this old age from our bodies!
 MEN'S LEADER. If any one of us gives even a small foothold to these women,
 they won't be lacking a thing for their hands' slick work.
 They'll even build ships, and then they'll try
 to fight naval battles and sail against us like Artemisia!
 675 And if they turn to horsemanship, you can write off the cavalry—
 a woman is the *best* at straddling and riding things,
 and even on a rough ride she won't slip off. Look at the Amazons,
 whom Mikon painted fighting men on horseback.
 680 But we must grab all their necks
 and lock them in the stocks!
 CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN. By the two goddesses, if you provoke me,
 it's a mad cow you'll be dealing with, and I'll make you
 call your fiends for help this very day, like a shorn sheep!
 WOMEN'S LEADER. But even us, O women, let's strip down,

690 so that we smell like women fed up to our teeth!
 CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN. Now, let a man at me, and
 he'll never eat garlic
 or black beans again!
 Speak one bad word to me and I'll explode, yes,
 695 I'll be the beetle to your eagle's eggs!

WOMEN'S LEADER. You wouldn't bother me one bit, if my Lampito's alive
 and my noble Theban girlfriend Ismenia.
 You've got no power over us, not if you vote on it seven times,
 you wretch, you who've earned the hatred of all, even your neighbors.
 700 Why, yesterday, while throwing a feast for Hecate,
 I invited another one of my neighbors for my little girls,
 a lovely good eel from Bœotia.
 But they said she couldn't come because of *your* laws.
 And you won't stop making those laws, not until
 705 someone grabs your leg and breaks your neck and drags you off.—
 O mistress of this deed and strategy,
 why have you come out looking so gloomy?

LYSISTRATA. Wicked women and their female hearts—
 it's making me lose all hope and pace up and down.

710 WOMEN'S LEADER. What is it, what is it?
 LYSISTRATA. The truth of the matter is...
 WOMEN'S LEADER. What's so terrible? Tell us, your friends!
 LYSISTRATA. It's *shameful* to say, but too grievous to stay silent.
 WOMEN'S LEADER. Whatever evil we've suffered, don't hide it from me.

715 LYSISTRATA. We want sex, it's plainest to say!
 WOMEN'S LEADER. Oh Zeus!
 LYSISTRATA. Why "Zeus"? That's how it is.
 I can't even keep them from running after
 their husbands any longer; they're running off everywhere.
 720 I caught the first one broadening the hole
 down by Pan's Grotto,
 and another crawling down the crane,
 another just deserting; and then one more
 on a sparrow, already trying to fly away
 725 to the land of Orsilochus when I dragged her off by the hair.
 And they bring up *every* excuse they can
 to go home—why, here comes one of them.
 You there! *Where* are you rushing off to?

FIRST WOMAN. I have to go home!
 My Milesian wool's at home, see,
 730 and it's getting just torn to shreds by the moths!

LYSISTRATA. The moths?
 Back inside!

FIRST WOMAN. But I'll be back quick, by the Two Goddesses,

I've only got to spread it out on the couch!
 LYSISTRATA. No spreading, nor going out *anywhere*!
 FIRST WOMAN. But must I let my wool be ruined?
 LYSISTRATA. If that's what's necessary!

735 SECOND WOMAN. Dear me, dear me, my flax,
 I left it unstripped in my house!
 LYSISTRATA. And another one,
 going off to her unstripped flax.
 Get back here!

SECOND WOMAN. But by Phosphoros,
 I'll come right back once I'm done stripping it!

740 LYSISTRATA. No stripping, none! If you start it,
 the other women will want to do the same.
 THIRD WOMAN. O Mistress Hileithya, hold back the baby
 until I can get some place more proper!

LYSISTRATA. What on *Earth* are you raving about?
 THIRD WOMAN. I'm going to give birth *right now*!

745 LYSISTRATA. You weren't pregnant yesterday.
 THIRD WOMAN. But I am today!
 Just send me home to the midwife, Lysistrata,
 as quick as can be!

LYSISTRATA. What are you saying?
 What's this hard thing you've got here?

THIRD WOMAN. It's ... a boy!

LYSISTRATA. By Aphrodite, it's clearly *bronze*
 750 and *hollow*, I can see it.
 Oh, how absurd! Are you trying to say you're pregnant
 with the sacred helmet?

THIRD WOMAN. But, by Zeus, I am pregnant!

LYSISTRATA. Then why have you got *this*?

THIRD WOMAN. So that if the birth catches me by surprise
 still in the citadel, I can give birth right in the helmet
 755 here, like doves do!

LYSISTRATA. *What?* Excuses, all of you, it's obvious!
 You can stay here for the naming day of your... helmet!

FIRST WOMAN. But I can't sleep a wink in the citadel,
 ever since I saw the guardian snake one time...

760 SECOND WOMAN. And I'm just miserable, I'm wracked from sleeplessness,
 because of those hooting owls!

LYSISTRATA. Oh *marvelous*, stop your shenanigans.
 You're all longing for your husbands; don't you think
 they're longing for you? I know quite well
 765 they spend their nights restless. But hold out, good women,
 and endure this still for a little longer.
 There's an oracle that spells victory for us,

if we don't split ways. And here it is right here!
 THIRD WOMAN. Tell us what it says!
 LYSISTRATA. Be quiet, then.
 770 "But when the swallows all roost in one house,
 fleeing the hoopoes and their phalluses,
 it will be the end of evils, and high-thundering Zeus shall
 change the low for the high—"
 FIRST WOMAN. We'll be lying on top?
 LYSISTRATA. "—but if the swallows argue and fly up
 775 on their wings out of the holy temple, it will seem
 that there is no bird more depraved, then."
 SECOND WOMAN. By Zeus, by all the gods, the oracle's clear!
 LYSISTRATA. Now, let's not give up, though we're in such distress.
 Let's go back in. It would truly be shameful,
 780 my dearests ones, to betray the oracle.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN. I'd like to tell you a certain story, one that
 I heard myself once, when I was a child.
 There once was a young man named Melanion,
 who hated marriage and went off into the wilderness
 and lived in the mountains.
 And he had a dog
 790 and hunted rabbits
 and wove nets
 and never went back home because of his hatred.
 So much that man hated women—
 795 and we, since we are wise, hate them
 no less than Melanion.

MEN'S LEADER. I want to kiss you, old lady—
 WOMEN'S LEADER. Then you shouldn't have had onions!
 MEN'S LEADER. —and lift my leg and kick you!
 800 WOMEN'S LEADER. You're showing a lot of bush, you know.
 MEN'S LEADER. Myronides was prickly there,
 too, and black-bottomed
 to all his enemies.
 805 And so was Phormion!

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN. And I'll tell you a tale too,
 right back at your Melanion!
 There once was a certain wanderer named Timon, his face
 810 enclosed by an impassable thicket, an offspring of the Furies.
 This Timon, then,
 went off because of his hatred
 to a wild place,
 815 raining curse upon curse on wicked men.
 So he always hated the wickedness of men

right alongside us,
 820 and was most dear to women.
 WOMEN'S LEADER. Want me to punch you in the teeth?
 MEN'S LEADER. Not one bit! I'm terrified!
 WOMEN'S LEADER. Shall I kick you in the leg?
 MEN'S LEADER. You'll be showing off your mansack!
 825 WOMEN'S LEADER. Yes, and all the same, old woman
 though I am, you wouldn't see
 any hair there—clean-shaven
 and waxed.
 LYSISTRATA. Look, look, women, come to me quick!
 830 WOMAN. What is it? Tell me, what's going on?
 LYSISTRATA. A man! I see a man coming towards us, all in a frenzy,
 taken by the passions of Aphrodite.
 O Mistress of Cypris and Cythera and Paphos,
 you keep right on that road you're going down!
 835 WOMAN. But where is he, whoever he is?
 LYSISTRATA. At the shrine of Chloe.
 WOMAN. Oh by Zeus, there he is. Who ever is he?
 LYSISTRATA. Behold! Any of us know him?
 MYRRHINE. I do. It's my husband, Kinesias.
 LYSISTRATA. It's your task, in that case, to roast and turn him on a spit,
 840 utterly deceive him, love him but not love him,
 give him everything he wants except what you swore to the wine cup.
 MYRRHINE. Don't worry. I'll do it!
 LYSISTRATA. And I, meanwhile,
 will stay right here and help you deceive
 and roast him. But get going!
 845 KINESIAS. Oh, oh, I'm miserable, what spasms, what stiffness
 has gotten hold of me; it's like being tortured on the rack!
 LYSISTRATA. Who goes there, standing inside our perimeter?
 KINESIAS. I do!
 LYSISTRATA. A man?
 KINESIAS. *Obviously!*
 LYSISTRATA. Then won't you get out?
 KINESIAS. And who are you to throw me out?
 LYSISTRATA. The day watch.
 850 KINESIAS. In that case, by all the gods, call to Myrrhine for me!
 LYSISTRATA. Well! *Me*, call Myrrhine for you? Who are you, anyway?
 KINESIAS. Her husband, Kinesias of Pæonidæ!
 LYSISTRATA. Oh, hello, you dear. Your name's hardly unknown
 among us, nor lacking glory to it.
 855 Why, your wife always has you on her lips.
 If she picks up even an egg or an apple, she says
 "This is for Kinesias."

KINESIAS. Oh, by the gods!

LYSISTRATA. And oh, by Aphrodite, if some conversation or other turns
to men, right away she's already pronounced
860 that anything but Kinesias is nonsense.

KINESIAS. Call her here now!

LYSISTRATA. Why? What will you give me?

KINESIAS. By Zeus, if you want it, I'll—
here, I have this; whatever I've got I'll give you!

LYSISTRATA. Very well, I'll come down and call her for you.

KINESIAS. Quickly now!

865 Oh, how little happiness I've got in life, truly,
from the day she went away from the house;
but now I've got pains everywhere and everything
seems empty to me, and I get no happiness
from eating food—because I'm *hard!*

870 MYRRHINE. I love him, how I love that man! But he doesn't want
me to love him. Oh, don't call me down to him!

KINESIAS. Oh my little Myrrhine, my sweetest, why are you doing this?
Get down here!

MYRRHINE. By *God!* I won't go there!

KINESIAS. You won't come down when I'm calling you, Myrrhine?

875 MYRRHINE. You call me, but you don't need me at all!

KINESIAS. Don't need you? I'm being tortured!

MYRRHINE. I'm leaving.

KINESIAS. No! At least listen to the baby,
you here, won't you call your mommy?

BABY. Mommy, mommy, mommy!

880 KINESIAS. You—what's the matter with you? Don't you pity the child,
unwashed and unfed for six days?

MYRRHINE. Truly I pity him; but his *father* doesn't care.

KINESIAS. Get down here to your child, oh by the heavenly powers!

MYRRHINE. What a thing it is to have a child. I must go down to him.

KINESIAS. Oh, what else could I do?

885 She seems like she's both gotten younger
and looks more tenderly at me;
and whatever anger she shows, however she struts about,
that's what crushes me with longing!

MYRRHINE. Oh, you sweetest little baby—even if your father's evil.

890 Come, let me kiss you, mommy's little sweetheart!

KINESIAS. You wicked woman, why are you doing this and obeying
these other women? You're making me hurt, too,
and just hurting yourself!

MYRRHINE. Don't lay a hand on me!

KINESIAS. You're handling our household pretty badly—
895 my things *and* your own.

MYRRHINE. They're no concern to me.
 KINESIAS. It's no concern to you that your weaving's being pecked apart
 by the chickens?
 MYRRHINE. By Zeus, none.
 KINESIAS. And the holy rites of Aphrodite so long uncelebrated by you.
 Won't you come home?
 900 MYRRHINE. By Zeus I won't, not unless you make a treaty
 and stop this war.
 KINESIAS. Very well, if it's what's right, we'll do this.
 MYRRHINE. Very well, if it's what's right,
 I'll leave this place too, but for now I've sworn not to.
 KINESIAS. Won't you lie down with me for a little while?
 905 MYRRHINE. Certainly not! Though I'm not saying I don't love you.
 KINESIAS. You love me? Then why won't you lie down, Myrrhie?
 MYRRHINE. Oh, how ridiculous, in front of the baby?
 KINESIAS. By god, take the boy home this instant, Manes!
 You see, your child's out of the way now.
 910 Will you not lie down?
 MYRRHINE. But where, poor thing, could we do it?
 KINESIAS. Where? Pan's Grotto is nice.
 MYRRHINE. But how would I go back to the citadel pure again?
 KINESIAS. Oh, easily, for sure, by washing in the Klepsydron!
 MYRRHINE. Then I should break the oath I swore? You wretch!
 915 KINESIAS. I'll take the blame, you needn't worry about the oath one bit.
 MYRRHINE. Come, I'll get a bed for us.
 KINESIAS. Never,
 the ground is enough for us!
 MYRRHINE. No, by Apollo, though you're
 manly for sure, I'd never lay you down on the ground.
 KINESIAS. She loves me, it's clear as can be.
 920 MYRRHINE. Hurry up and lie down, and I'll undress.
 But oh, how awful, I must fetch a mattress!
 KINESIAS. What sort of mattress? None for me, no!
 MYRRHINE. But by Artemis,
 it's dreadful on the cords.
 KINESIAS. Then come kiss me!
 MYRRHINE. There.
 KINESIAS. Oh my. Come back quickly now!
 925 MYRRHINE. Here's a mattress! Lie back down now and I'll undress for real.
 But oh, it's ghastly, you don't have a pillow!
 KINESIAS. I tell you, I don't need one!
 MYRRHINE. But my god, / do!
 KINESIAS. What, is my cock Heracles waiting for his dinner now?
 MYRRHINE. Get yourself up! Now, do we have everything?
 930 KINESIAS. We *already* had everything! Now come here, my treasure.

MYRRHINE. I'm undoing my brassiere. Now remember:
 don't deceive me about making that treaty.

KINESIAS. May Zeus destroy me!

MYRRHINE. Oh, but you don't have a blanket!

KINESIAS. But by *Zeus*, I don't need one! I just want to fuck!

935 MYRRHINE. Don't worry, I'll be right back and we will.

KINESIAS. She'll ruin me with her bedclothes!

MYRRHINE. Get up.

KINESIAS. I've been up already!

MYRRHINE. Would you like me to put some perfume on you?

KINESIAS. No, by Apollo, not on me!

MYRRHINE. Yes, by Aphrodite, whether you want it or not!

940 KINESIAS. Then let the myrtle flow, O lord Zeus!

MYRRHINE. Hold out your hand, take some, rub it on!

KINESIAS. Oh, by Apollo, this perfume isn't sweet,
 it doesn't smell like a wedding night, it's full of delays!

MYRRHINE. Dear me, I brought the Rhodian kind!

945 KINESIAS. Good! Let it be, you blessed woman!

MYRRHINE. You're raving.

KINESIAS. Oh, perish the bastard who first distilled perfume!

MYRRHINE. Take *this* jar⁶.

KINESIAS. I've got one myself, thanks!
 Now lie down, you tease, and don't get me anything more.

MYRRHINE. Yes, yes, by Artemis.

950 I'm slipping off my shoes! But, oh my dearest,
 do be sure you vote for that treaty.

KINESIAS. I'm going to!—
 Oh, she's destroyed me, totally ruined me,
 and she's skinned me alive and left!
 Alas, what can I do? Whom shall I screw,
 955 when I've been deceived by the fairest of them all?
 How can I raise this one up on my own?
 Where's Kynalopex?
 Rent me a wet-nurse!

CHORUS OF OLD MEN. You poor wretch, of course you're in distress,
 960 betrayed in such an act of evil.
 But I do feel sorry before you. Alas!
 For what gall would it take,
 what a soul, what balls,
 what loins, what an ass,
 965 to be stretched out on the rack
 and not get a morning fuck?

KINESIAS. O Zeus! What awful spasms!

⁶ the Greek specifies that this is a long jar; the prop is obviously phallic.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN. Now, truly, *she* did this to you,
 that detestable, utterly disgusting woman.

970 KINESIAS. But by Zeus, she's a dear, she's totally sweet!
 CHORUS OF OLD MEN. Sweet? *How?* She's filthy, filthy!
 KINESIAS. Filthy, filthy indeed, O Zeus, Zeus
 if only you'd come and snatch her up
 like grain in the gale of a typhoon
 975 and hurricane, twist and
 roil her all around, then let her go
 and send her back to earth,
 and all of a sudden
 land her right astride my hard-on.

980 SPARTAN HERALD. An' where's that all assembly in Athens?
 Or the Prytanies? I've gotta tell them some news.
 MAGISTRATE. And who are you? A man or a Konisalus?
 SPARTAN HERALD. I'm a herald, you young'un, by the Two Gods;
 I'm here from Sparta to talk about the treaty!

985 MAGISTRATE. So you've come with a spear under your cloak?
 SPARTAN HERALD. No! By Zeus, I haven't!
 MAGISTRATE. Then why are you turning away?
 Come on now, why are you throwing your cloak around? Are you all
 swollen because of the road?
 SPARTAN HERALD. By Castor, the guy's insane!
 MAGISTRATE. You vile thing, you're *hard!*

990 SPARTAN HERALD. No, by Zeus, it's not like that, don't be talkin' crazy!
 MAGISTRATE. Then why have you got *this?*
 SPARTAN HERALD. It's a... Spartan walking stick.
 MAGISTRATE. Is that so? Then this here's a Spartan walking stick too.
 Now tell me the truth, since I've found you out.
 What's going on with you in Sparta?

995 SPARTAN HERALD. All us Spartans, we're all upright, and all our allies
 too; we need Pellana!
 MAGISTRATE. And who brought this awful fate upon you?
 Was it Pan?
 SPARTAN HERALD. No, it was Lampito who done started it, goshdarnit,
 and since then all our womenfolk in Sparta
 1000 kept the men off their ladyparts
 like it was a race or somethin'!
 MAGISTRATE. And how's that going?
 SPARTAN HERALD. We're sufferin'; we're bent over double
 like we're carryin' lamps around town.
 The women won't even let us *touch*
 1005 their little berries 'til all of us
 make a treaty with the whole rest of Greece!

MAGISTRATE. Then this whole business, everywhere, was devised
 by the women—now I understand it fully.
 But go, quick as you can, tell them to send
 1010 ambassadors here with full authority to make treaties,
 and I'll tell the assembly to choose ambassadors
 of our own—once they see this cock of mine!
 SPARTAN HERALD. I'll fly! That's the way to go, you betcha!

MEN'S LEADER. There's no beast more untamable than a woman,
 1015 not even fire, no leopard's so ferocious.
 WOMEN'S LEADER. Yes, yes, you've understood this, so why are you still fighting us,
 when you could have kept the bond of friendship with us, you wicked man?
 MEN'S LEADER. I'll never stop hating women!
 WOMEN'S LEADER. You will when you want to. For now, I won't see you
 1020 going about all exposed like this. Look at you, you're a laughingstock!
 But even so, I'll come over and put your tunic back on you.
 MEN'S LEADER. By Zeus, that's no mean thing you did there;
 I was just so angry, I ripped it off.
 WOMEN'S LEADER. There! You look a man already, you're not so ridiculous any more.
 1025 And if you hadn't been tormenting me, I'd have taken out
 that beast in your eye—ha, it's still there now!
 MEN'S LEADER. That's what's been scratching me! Take this ring
 and dig it out, and show it me once you've gotten it.
 My god, it's been biting at my eye for ages.
 1030 WOMEN'S LEADER. I'll do it, even though you're so cantankerous. .
 By Zeus, that's a huge mosquito you've got there!
 See? Isn't it just Trikorysian?
 MEN'S LEADER. By Zeus, that's a help, he's been digging at me for ages now.
 He left a hole so big my tears are just flowing out now!
 1035 WOMEN'S LEADER. Then I'll wipe you clean, though you're just wicked,
 and I'll kiss you.
 MEN'S LEADER. *Don't kiss me.*
 WOMEN'S LEADER. *Whether you like it or not!*
 MEN'S LEADER. May you come to a bad end! You're so coaxing by nature,
 that saying's true and doesn't do a bad job of it:
 "Can't live with them, can't live without them."⁷
 1040 But now I'll make peace with you, and never in the rest of time
 will I do anything bad to you, nor suffer at your hands.
 Let's form ranks together and begin our songs!
 CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN. We're not preparing, men,
 to say anything
 1045 bad about a citizen—

⁷ Literally, "neither with what's destructive, nor without what's destructive," but our English idiom has the same effect.

just the opposite!
 To say good things and do
 good deeds, for the present
 evil's quite enough.

1050 Let every man and woman announce
 whether he or she needs
 to borrow a little money, two or three minas;
 it's all inside and we've got our purses.

1055 And if peace ever comes,
 anyone who borrows money from us now,
 whatever he takes, he needn't give back!
 And we'll soon be entertaining
 certain guests from Karystos,

1060 men brave and good.
 There's thick soup, and a
 suckling pig for me, the one
 I gave for the sacrifice: and now
 it's become good and succulent.

1065 Come, then, to my home today; but make sure
 you do it early and bathe
 yourself and your children, then walk on in,
 don't ask anyone's permission,
 but go right ahead,

1070 like you'd stride confidently into your own home—
 since the door will be locked!
 MEN'S LEADER. And look, here come the ambassadors from Sparta, dragging
 their beards, like they had pigpens around their waists!
 Men of Sparta, first of all, hello from me!
 1075 Now tell us how you're holding up.

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR. You really gotta ask that?
 You can see how we're holding up!
 MEN'S LEADER. My, it seems awfully tight for you—
 and it's just gotten even more heated!

1080 SPARTAN AMBASSADOR. Unspeakable! What could one say? Come on,
 someone make a peace treaty for us, we'll sign it!
 MEN'S LEADER. And now I can see our own citizens coming,
 holding their cloaks out from their stomachs
 like wrestlers do—so much that it's starting

1085 to look like some athlete's disease!
 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. Who can tell us where Lysistrata is?
 We're men with just that affliction.

MEN'S LEADER. It's a sickness in line with the others'.
 Do you get cramps at cock's-crow?

1090 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. By Zeus yes, we're utterly rubbed out by them.
 So much so that if someone doesn't make a treaty soon,

there's no way we won't be fucking Cleisthenes!
 MEN'S LEADER. If you've got any sense, you'll wrap yourself in your cloaks—
 what if one of the Herm-choppers saw you?

1095 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. By Zeus, you're right!
 SPARTAN AMBASSADOR. You betcha,
 by the Twin Gods! We've gotta get dressed!
 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. Greetings, Spartans! We've been suffering abominably.
 SPARTAN AMBASSADOR. My dear man, we've suffered somethin' terrible too!
 If any man had seen us so... well, so frustrated...

1100 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. Come on, Spartans, we must discuss each and every thing.
 Why have you come?
 SPARTAN AMBASSADOR. As ambassadors for peace!
 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. Well said; we're here for that too.
 Why don't we call upon Lysistrata, then?
 She's the only one who can make a settlement between us!

1105 SPARTAN AMBASSADOR. By the Twins, get Lysistratos if you like!
 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. But we don't need to call her at all, it seems—
 here she comes herself, it's as if she heard us talking!
 CHORUS OF OLD MEN. Hail, O bravest of all women! Now, it's imperative, you must
 be harsh, and be soft, noble and crass, haughty and mild, ready for anything.

1110 The highest men of all of Greece have come together,
 seized by your spell, and have turned over their disputes to you as one.
 LYSISTRATA. But this is no difficult task, not if you haven't been caught
 aroused and trying each other out;
 I'll soon know that. Where is Reconciliation?

1115 Take the Spartans first and bring them here,
 not with a harsh hand, nor overbearing,
 not like our husbands used to do so ignorantly,
 but as is appropriate for a woman, all homely.
 And if he won't give you his hand, take him by the cock!

1120 Go and bring these Athenians too,
 whatever *they* offer you, take it and bring them here.
 Men of Sparta, stand close by me,
 but you, there, and listen to my words.
 Though I am a woman, I've got sense,
 and I'm not bad in my own judgement, no.

1125 And I've heard many speeches from my father
 and the assembly—I'm not poorly educated.
 But since I've got you here, I want to rebuke you
 justly. Together, you who sprinkle on the altars

1130 from one cup like kinsmen,
 at Olympia, at Thermopylae, at Pythos—and how many
 others could I add if I went on?—
 when enemies and barbarian armies are at hand,
 you go on destroying Greek men and cities!

1135 There, that's one of my points finished now.
ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. Oh, I'm ruined, I'm bursting open!
LYSISTRATA. *Then*, you Spartans, I'll turn to you now,
 don't you know how Pericleidas the Spartan came here once
 and sat down as supplicant to the Athenians,
1140 sat at our altars, pale in his red cloak,
 begging for an army? And then when Messenia
 attacked you and the gods forced you back?
 Then Cimon came with four thousand soldiers
 and saved all of Sparta!
1145 Having experienced *that* at the hands of the Athenians,
 you've ravaged our lands, when you've experienced such good?
ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. They're guilty, by Zeus, Lysistrata!
SPARTAN AMBASSADOR. We're guilty, yeah, but I can't even tell you how fine her ass is...
LYSISTRATA. Do you think I'm going to let you Athenians off?
1150 Don't you know how the Spartans, when you
 were wearing sheepskins, came in their turn with spears
 and destroyed the Thessalians,
 and many other allies of Hippias,
 all alone that day and threw them out?
1155 And they freed you, and instead of sheepskins
 they clothed the town back in cloaks!
SPARTAN AMBASSADOR. I've never seen a prettier woman.
ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. Nor I a prettier crotch!
LYSISTRATA. Why, then, when you've started so many good turns,
1160 are you still fighting and not stopping your grievances?
 Why won't you reconcile? Come on, what's stopping you?
SPARTAN AMBASSADOR. Golly, we wanna, if anyone wants to give us back
 that round thing—
LYSISTRATA. *What* round thing, dear sir?
SPARTAN AMBASSADOR. That Pylos,
 the very thing we've needed and fondled over for a long time...
1165 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. No, by Poseidon, you'll never!
LYSISTRATA. Give it to them already!
ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. But then who can we screw over?
LYSISTRATA. Ask for something else in return.
ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. Well, that's smart. Then give us, first of all,
 Echinous here and the Malian gulf behind it
1170 and the legs of Megara...
SPARTAN AMBASSADOR. Oh by the Twin Gods, you can't have everythin'!
LYSISTRATA. Let them! Don't argue about the legs.
ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. Oh, I want to strip naked and plough already!
SPARTAN AMBASSADOR. And I wanna fertilize mine early in the morning!
1175 LYSISTRATA. When you've made a settlement, you can.
 But if it seems right, make plans and

go confer with your allies.
 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. What sort of allies, dear lady? We're hard up!
 Won't this seem right in our allies' minds—
 1180 to have sex again?
 SPARTAN AMBASSADOR. Ours will for sure, by the Twins!
 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. Yes, for the Carystians will too, by Zeus.
 LYSISTRATA. Well said. Now then, see that you purify yourselves,
 so that the women can host you
 in the Acropolis with what we've got here in hampers,
 1185 then give each other our vows and faith.
 And then each of you can take his wife
 and go back home.
 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. Then let's go as fast as we can!
 SPARTAN AMBASSADOR. Wherever you want!
 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. By Zeus, yes, quick as can be!
 CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN. Those finely-woven tapestries,
 and mantles and robes
 1190 and little gold pieces, as many as I have,
 I'll provide without grudge
 to everyone to give to
 their sons, and whenever
 your daughter serves as basket-bearer.
 1195 I say to all of you, now, take
 anything of mine that's inside,
 and let nothing be sealed so well that
 you can't rip through the seal,
 1200 and carry off what's inside!
 But you won't see anything, if you don't
 look more sharply than me.
 If any of you don't have food,
 but you need it to feed your slaves
 and many small children,
 1205 there's fine wheat to take
 at my house—and
 a loaf made from a whole pound
 looks big indeed!
 Anyone who's poor who wants to, let him come
 1210 to my house with sacks and bags,
 so he can take the wheat. My
 slave will fill them up for him.
 I'll announce it publically, though,
 not to walk up to my door:
 1215 beware of the dog!

MAGISTRATE⁸. Open the door, you! You ought to be gone.
 You lot, why are you still sitting there? Am I going to have to burn you
 with this torch? How vulgar a place this is!
 I wouldn't do it, but if I really have to—
 1220 I'll tough it up and do you all a favor!
 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. And we'll tough it up with you!
 MAGISTRATE. Oh get out, won't you? Or you'll be crying when I grab your hair!
 Get out, so the Spartans can come out in peace
 when they're done with the feast!

1225 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. I never saw such a party!
 The Spartans truly were gracious,
 but as for the wine—we were the best at drinking!
 MAGISTRATE. Rightly so; when we're sober, we aren't healthy.
 If I can persuade the Athenians to do it, when I see them,
 1230 we'll always go on embassies drunk!
 Why, when we go to Sparta nowadays,
 since we're sober, right away we look for whatever we can do to stir up trouble;
 and then we don't hear whatever it is they're saying.
 And what they don't say, we make up,
 1235 and none of us ever reports back the same things as the rest.
 But this time, everything was pleasant; and so if someone
 sang about Telamon, when he had to sing about Kleitagora,
 we'd praise him and swear he'd sung the right one.
 But those slaves are coming right back here again!

1240 Keep away, won't you? You ought to be whipped!
 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. By Zeus, they're coming out already!
 SPARTAN AMBASSADOR. Good lad, get the pipes,
 so I can dance and sing a pretty little song
 to the Athenians and our own folk!

1245 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR. Yes, get the pipes, by the gods,
 since I do enjoy seeing you dance!
 SPARTAN AMBASSADOR. Rouse up this lad,
 Memory, your Muse,
 1250 who knows about me and the Athenians!
 When they struck out against the timbers
 at Artemision like gods,
 and were victorious over the Medes;
 and Leonidas led us
 1255 like wild boars sharpening their tusks, oh,
 and foam blossomed from our jaws
 and ran all the way down our legs.

1260 For there were no fewer Persian
 men than grains of sand.

⁸ I am following J. Hilton Turner's helpful breakup of this problematic scene.

O shining huntress, come,
 O virgin goddess,
 for the sake of our treaty
 1265 and be with us for a long time: now
 let friendship be easy and constant
 in our agreement, and make an end
 1270 to our crafty foxiness.
 O come here, come here,
 O virgin huntress!
 LYSISTRATA⁹. Come! Since all the rest has been done now,
 you may lead off these women of yours;
 1275 and let husband stand beside wife and wife
 stand beside husband, and then, for our good fortune,
 let's dance to the gods and take care
 never to make these mistakes again for all time!
 CHORUS. Strike up the dance, and call on the Graces
 1280 and call on Artemis,
 and her twin as well, Apollo the good-hearted,
 and Dionysus, whose eyes
 flash bacchic among the Maenads,
 1285 and Zeus resplendent with flame, and his
 blessed wife, the powerful,
 and all the other divinities, whom we'd invoke
 as witnesses not forgetful
 of our lofty Peace,
 1290 which the goddess Cypris wrought.
 Alalai, ai, Paian!
 Rise up, iai!
 Up to victory, iai!
 Evoi, evoi, evoi, evoi!
 1295 MAGISTRATE. Now Spartans, sing a song, a new song!
 SPARTAN AMBASSADOR. Come down again from lovely Taygetos,
 come, come, Spartan Muse, renowned to us,
 celebrating the god of Amydus
 1300 and the mistress of the bronze temple,
 and the good sons of Tyndareus,
 who play beside the Eurotas
 Come, come in quick,
 O come and jump lightly,
 1305 as we sing a hymn to Sparta,
 where the dancers care for the gods

⁹ Though these lines are traditionally assigned to the πρῦτανεῖς or one of the ambassadors, I have given them to Lysistrata as Patric Dickinson does to afford greater agency to Lysistrata in the denouement of the play, which is otherwise male-dominated.

and the thud of feet,
and girls leap about
like foals beside the
1310 Eurotas, stirring up dust
with their feet
and shaking their hair
in the way of Bacchants waving wands and playing.
And the child of Leda leads them,
1315 a chorus-leader pure and becoming.
But come! Tie your hair up with a ribbon in your hand,
leap to your feet,
just like a dear, and strike up a beat
to lead the dance,
1320 and sing to the goddess of Victory,
she of the bronze temple!

Chapter 1: *Lysistrata* at the Experimental Theater of Vassar College

The Experimental Theater's *Lysistrata* was produced in the format typical of main stage¹⁰ productions with the Drama department, devised to give students the opportunity to learn from hands-on experience working in a professional setting. Directed by a professor or visiting artist, a mainstage show is cast with students receiving academic credit for their work and designed by a team of professors and students. As part of the Drama department's philosophy of education, the goal of the course is to learn from work with a professional in one's relevant field. For students of design like myself, one can participate as a member of the design team either as an assistant to a design professor or as a designer him- or herself working alongside professional designers.

For *Lysistrata*, the design team consisted of three professors and faculty members and two students. Stephen Jones, professor of lighting and scenic design, designed the set; Kenisha Kelly, professor of costume design, designed costumes; and Paul O'Connor, Technical Director of the Drama department, designed the props. Sound was designed by senior Drama major Christopher Campbell-Orrrock, class of 2013. I was offered the opportunity to design lighting for the play following my previous work with the Drama department: in my junior year, I had served as assistant lighting designer to Stephen Jones in the fall and had designed lighting for a senior project in the spring.

In this chapter, I will discuss lanthe's treatment of the play overall, from the broad themes that she wished to work with in the text to her specific choices in individual scenes. I

¹⁰ As opposed to senior project productions, collaborations among groups of senior Drama majors serving as their thesis works, which are smaller-scale and smaller-budget than the mainstage shows. Underclassmen often fill design or performance roles not filled by members of the senior project group; before designing *Lysistrata*, I designed lighting and collaborated on the scene design for Paula Vogel's *The Baltimore Waltz*, a senior project produced by the Experimental Theater in April 2012.

will also analyze the approaches that she and the rest of the design team took to some of the most historically problematic scenes in the play.

i. Approaches to the Play

In her approach to the play, lanthe began by identifying the overarching trajectory of the piece and a method by which to explore that. The main movement of the play, she determined, was one that went from what she referred to as “the stoic” to “the carnal.” This was accompanied by an underlying movement from public to private and from private to public. Despite *Lysistrata*’s unusual purpose in calling the assembly of women, the play begins in a place of order, propriety, tradition, and cooperation. As the action progresses, however, propriety is abandoned, normally public actions are suddenly done in private, and private things like sexual desire and ritual are displayed in public for all to see. The play becomes more and more publically debauched and desperate, climaxing in the men slobbering over the body of Reconciliation.

Despite this movement, lanthe saw a circular structure in *Lysistrata* and its relationship to war. Though *Lysistrata* and the women secure a peace treaty, they have not stopped war forever, and in this lanthe saw the real tragedy of the play. Even if we manage to end one war, another will inevitably arise and lead to the same horrible situation as the women faced in the first scene. This became a source of frustration for *Lysistrata*’s character, whom lanthe decided was intent not on ending merely the Peloponnesian War, but all war across humanity, a striking character choice very different from most portrayals of her. We conceived of the final few vignettes in the play as a failure for *Lysistrata*, not a victory: although the men agree to peace, they never really listen to *Lysistrata*’s message of embracing their commonality. Thus, they are doomed to go to war again—which she knows will happen.

lanthe made another radical departure in choosing the eternal struggle against war as a much more important message than anything about the two sexes. She was emphatic that the play was rather about humanity as a whole and our tendencies toward violence and war, not about women triumphing over men. This was not an attempt to erase the gendered conflict of the play, of course. Instead, her point was to use the battle of the sexes as a vehicle to tell a larger story, the story of humanity and war. The women and the men would be on equal terms throughout. True to Aristophanes' writing, neither side comes off flatteringly in their conflict, but lanthe expanded this to a more modern concept of equality where both sexes were equally capable in physical combat as well as their repartée.

The equality of the sexes extended to their numbers as well. lanthe had originally planned to cast the play more traditionally, with a large ensemble comprising the choruses of men and women; the major named roles were to be singly-cast. However, after an unusually small amount of people auditioned for the Experimental Theater's fall season, lanthe completely reworked her concept for the play overnight. She decided instead to cast the bare minimum of characters needed onstage at once, in equal amounts of men and women. This resulted in the casting of four women as *Lysistrata*, Kalonike, Myrrhine, and Lampito, and four men as the Magistrate, Kinesias, and the Spartan and Athenian Ambassadors, all of whom doubled as the choruses and the few miscellaneous other roles.

Once she had her cast assembled, lanthe set about building a basis for the use of movement and intense physicality in the play. Movement always plays a heavy role in lanthe's work; for *Lysistrata*, she focused on dance as a part of the choruses and wrestling as a physicalization of war. In the first week of rehearsals, the actors worked with New York City-based dancer Natalie Lomonte to develop an extensive vocabulary of movements that

encompassed the world of the play. lanthe and the cast would come to weave these dance-like movement sequences into the performance as they worked through the text in rehearsal. She decided to incorporate wrestling as a means of addressing the key thematic of war after finding a note she had scribbled to herself: "if *Lysistrata* were a sport, what would it be?" Her answers: "wrestling...and ping pong." In turn, the cast also learned basic wrestling moves from Ethan Slater (class of 2014), a Drama major with a background in wrestling.

Despite the gravity of the topics she focused on, however, lanthe wanted to be certain that we did not lose sight of the play's comic nature. We treated the text as a comedy with serious moments and a serious ending. *Lysistrata*, always completely sincere and true to her purpose, gave weight to the messages we wished the audience to come away with, while the uncontrollable gaggle of women and the comically inept men provided humor in contrast to her. lanthe and the cast played with both physical and prop comedy on top of the hilarity of the text, including the use of oversized prop phalluses, which I will discuss at more length in my survey of Kenisha Kelly's costuming choices.

In her treatment of the humor, lanthe took a very contemporary approach. The physical comedy and certain spins on characters' lines assumed a distinctive twenty-first-century flavor of sexuality, focusing occasionally on breasts and hinting at lesbianism, a very different beast from the sexual humor of Attic comedy. Our humor often came from the introduction of very modern props into the scene, otherwise time-nonspecific. And yet, tellingly, no attempt whatsoever was made to engage with what might have been the funniest part of Aristophanes' writing to his original audience: the references to goings-on in Athenian society and politics that were down-to-the-week timely when he wrote them. The text of *Lysistrata* is littered with jokes funny to a citizen of Athens in 411 B.C.E. who knew the names

and reputations of public figures and surrounding cities¹¹, but lanthe chose not to engage their humor or make it accessible for a modern audience. Perhaps this was for the same reason as I declined to recontextualize referential humor in my own translation. Whatever her reasoning, it meant that the comedy of our production came, for the most part, from a very different place than Aristophanes' original.

lanthe was also very interested in challenging the traditional role of the audience in the theater. She came into Martel Theater intent on completely breaking down the divide between audience and stage, an idea which evolved through many forms over the three-month design and rehearsal process. The entire theater would be the actors' playing space. Performers entered and exited through the aisles, climbed the architecture into the parterres¹², clambered through rows of the audience. The audience was a part of the action, not simple spectators to it. Generally, they were the crowds massed in public spaces with the rest of the characters; the actors singled out audience members, flirted with them, begged them for their help at various points in the play.

Many of lanthe's wilder ideas about the audience and their role did not blossom into fruition, however. Some of her earlier concepts involved segregating the audience by sex before the play began and seating them separately, either at different times or in different halves of the theater. She imagined at one point that some of the columns present in the set might even lower into the house. Until a mere two weeks before the play opened, the plan was to bring some of the audience onstage during Myrrhine and Kinesias' scene as a way of

¹¹ Though Dickinson's translation glosses over many of these, he preserves reference jokes at 36, 92, 270, 391-394, 725, 957, 1090, to name only some of the key ones.

¹² The elevated far right and far left sections of the audience, situated directly beneath the wings of the balcony. These are so called after the French parterre, "on the ground," because they are at ground level, whereas the rest of the house slopes down to be lower than ground level.

intimately inserting them into the action. The idea was only abandoned after my assistant lighting designer and I were dragged up to the stage during a rehearsal and found the experience and the view more awkward and confusing than anything else. Consequentially, the unity of stage and audience was left to the lighting and to the actors and their insertion into the audience's space. Though the divide was certainly bridged, I do not know whether members of the audience ever truly felt that they too were a part of the play.

ii. Scenic and Costume Design

In our work as a design team, we decided with Ianthe that the play would be set in Greece, but not in any specific time period, since we wanted it to speak to the universality of the cycle of war and peace in human history. We arrived at a design concept that began with the presentation of an image of classical Greece, which we then subverted over the course of the play. This was our response to the play's movement from stoic to carnal, the gradual unravelling and breaking down of this classical façade and the subversion of the audience's expectations of a Greek play.

Much of the design team's concept, in fact, blossomed from our discussion of what the audience might expect when attending a production of *Lysistrata*. Should the stage be set radically differently from what they would expect of a Greek play—or should it be exactly what they would expect? Ianthe leapt on the idea of giving the spectators exactly what they would think they'd see, because it presented the opportunity that then became central to our designs: setting the stage for a typical Greek play meant we could then invert and otherwise undo that image.

Even in our various subversions, though, we decided that a generally Greek-inspired aesthetic spoke to us all very strongly after seeing several of Stephen's initial concept sketches.

He drew various images of a stage filled with floor-to-ceiling¹³ columns, offering innumerable entrance, exit, and hiding points for the actors. This rough design concept also involved building a thrust¹⁴ onto the edge of the Martel stage. Ianthe saw opportunities to break down the divide between stage and house in both the columns and the thrust. The thrust would obviously help to bring the action of the stage out into the audience, but she quickly wondered if the columns could transform over the course of the play. Perhaps some of them could descend to the ground to become the banquet table for the final scene, she proposed, or even lower into the house itself.

Ultimately, the columns never transformed the way she first envisaged them, like many of her ambitious concepts pertaining to the audience. Nonetheless, Stephen's initial concept provided a direction for the rest of the play and for other designers to work with. Kenisha began exploring the qualities of classical Greek attire, Chris researched the sound of the chorus as it would have been performed in the ancient world, while I found images of Greece at dramatic moments of light and shadow in temples and looked into the bright colors found all around modern Greek buildings.

In Stephen's first concept of the thrust stage, he presented the design team with two possibilities – either the thrust into the audience would come to a point, perhaps with a walkway extending out from the point, or the thrust would be a semicircle. He eventually decided to use the semicircle (with the other half of the circle drawn onstage) because it struck a balance between the feminine shape of the circle and the masculine, phallic nature of

¹³ "Ceiling" here meaning the apparent "roof" of the stage space defined by the proscenium arch, not the literal ceiling of the theater.

¹⁴ A stage configuration in which the performance space is surrounded by the audience on three sides, not just the downstage.

the columns. A triangular thrust, we concluded, would simply have made the stage too masculine-dominated of a playing space. Meanwhile, along with lanthe's ideas about wrestling, Stephen and Paul O'Connor began looking into ways to make the stage floor a material similar to a wrestling mat. They ultimately decided to make the thrust circle downstage out of several layers of foam, allowing us to highlight the moments of wrestling front and center.

As lanthe and the actors worked with movement, however, Stephen understood that what the play required was a set that would let that movement flow naturally. In his words, he "needed to get out of the way of this play," and so he did: the intricate colonnade became instead a series of floating columns, suspended over the actors' heads and cut off diagonally midway to the stage. This would allow the actors freedom to move across the entire stage, as they had been doing in their workshops, and the columns' position gave the set the abstractness it needed to work as any place in Greece at any point in time. To counter the abstraction of the floating columns, the set remained grounded in reality thanks to a ten-foot wall upstage of the action, effectively the Greek *skene*. Two steps of eight inches each led up to it and the wall had a series of rectangular panels recessed into it.

Though the columns never transformed in the end, Stephen preserved the idea of subverting the classical image by changing the set at the climactic moment of the play. When Lysistrata summoned Reconciliation to make peace between the men, the hitherto austere and imposing *skene* broke apart at the center, and the center portion of the steps slid all the way downstage to become a long runway through which Reconciliation entered. After the play had so far devolved from classical Greek propriety into raw sensuality, modern humor, and abstract dance, the breaking of the set effectively became the moment of release at the play's climax.

In her costuming choices, Kenisha drew heavily from the vibrant color palette typical of clothing, especially women's clothing, in ancient Greece. Her impulse was to evoke Greece through the use of classically draped fabric in her costumes as well. This ended up doubly effective as the play moved more in the direction of dance, since costuming for dance generally requires loose clothing allowing for freedom of movement.

Kenisha's design to subvert the Greek image ended up in a different form from that of the set, lighting, and action of the play, however. Unlike the other design elements, which began with a Greek image and then deconstructed it, the costumes remained essentially the same throughout the play. Her original idea had been that perhaps the characters would start with very Greek costumes and then take them off to reveal something more modern and subversive. Ultimately, she was able to preserve the idea of subversion with the specific costume pieces she designed. The loose, open pants worn by all of the cast had the appearance of a single long piece of fabric at first, reminiscent of the Greek *chiton*, but which was then revealed to be two separate pant legs when the actors moved around. What began as a Greek silhouette thus transformed into a much more modern piece of attire, despite its classical stylings.

In terms of coloring, the costumes broadened slightly from the classical red-orange palette to include purples and soft blues as well. The women's costumes were two-toned, with their tops bound by a sash at the waist and two ropes that wound over their shoulders. The men's were made entirely of a single color, their tops hanging loosely over their torsos. Lysistrata was distinguished by a costume of rich golden yellow to differentiate her from the other characters and their red-orange-violet palette. Each woman's costume had a rough analog in one of the men's in its color, otherwise. Lysistrata's was not so; her yellow contrasted

boldly from the deep, royal purple of the Magistrate. Instead, Lysistrata's costume matched that of Reconciliation, her truest ally in the play: when the *skene* split open to reveal Reconciliation, she was dressed only in an artfully draped piece of the same yellow fabric. In the fashion of Greek and Roman statuary, her slight adornment fell from her shoulder across her waist, leaving one breast exposed, and then fell to the ground behind her in a moderate train.

The final costume piece we brought to the production was the addition of phalluses for the men and enlarged feminine body parts for the women. lanthe, Kenisha, and the rest of the team decided to experiment with phalluses early on in the process, in response to the convention of stage phalluses in Attic comedy. In using them, lanthe saw the potential both for great comedy as well as to emphasize the carnality of the latter half of the play, which she achieved by having first Kinesias and then all the other men afterwards enter with newly erect phalluses. The women's exaggerated body parts, though also hearkening to the costuming of Greek comedy, came about through a different means. Early on in the process, lanthe and the actors decided that the character of Kalonike had a maternal quality, which they decided to bring out by giving the actor playing her a pregnancy belly and altering her physicality accordingly. Eventually, lanthe wondered what would happen if she gave the other women similar feminine aggrandizements, enlarging body parts of their own to match the men's exaggerated phalluses. She and Kenisha decided to play on tropes of female beauty and give Myrrhine comically oversized breasts and Lampito padded buttocks, which left the question of what Lysistrata would have. Briefly, lanthe considered shoulder pads in the fashion of a woman's suit jacket, but then decided that Lysistrata would remain unadorned: the only "realistic" character in a sea of raucous comedy and sensuality.

iii. Staging

Despite lanthe's grand visions of how the audience might be inducted into the Martel Theater when they came to see *Lysistrata*, few came to fruition. Though the audience entered traditionally, not segregated by gender or through unusual points of entry, what they walked in on was certainly unexpected. As the audience entered, they saw a pair of male actors engage in a series of wrestling scrimmages on the thrust stage, a sort of play-fighting or wrestling practice, while the other two male actors lurked in the dark stage beyond the circle. After a few minutes, the one pair would get up, shake hands, and leave the circle, to be quickly replaced by the other. This carefully choreographed sequence continued until Lysistrata entered in the shadows and watched, marking the formal start of the play.

After the last scrimmage, Lysistrata explored the space, looking out into the house and around the stage, keeping an eye out for the women she had summoned for their assembly about peace. Behind her, the men fell into a movement exercise called "lanes," each one walking back and forth in his own narrow horizontal segment of the stage and periodically grunting or shouting and striking a martial pose. lanthe used this movement sequence as an abstracted representation of war, turning the backstory of the play into a literal backdrop for the figure of Lysistrata, standing and waiting for her chance to end the conflict. After her opening lines, she beat the wrestling mat once like a giant drum and went to join the men in their movement. There, she occupied a lane of her own and threw herself in frustration against the proscenium arch at either side of the stage.

Eventually, Lysistrata left the lanes and saw Kalonike, who entered from the top of the left aisle in the house. She entered eating a pickle, and their entire first conversation up until

the classic “Something big. —Is it really pressing?¹⁵” moment took place as Kalonike walked down the aisle toward the stage. Meanwhile, behind Lysistrata, the men slowly left their lanes and congregated at one end of the upstage platform, as if they were sitting on the steps of a building.

Myrrhine, who was played as the most sexual and flirtatious of the women, entered through the group of men, teasing them and striking sexy poses while they wolf-whistled at her, before she actually addressed Lysistrata. Lampito entered taking huge, overexaggerated steps that shook the whole stage, making the men fall off the steps and the women almost lose their footing. She proceeded to demonstrate her Spartan strength and prowess through a creative interpretation of her line “Just watch me do the fling¹⁶”: Lampito picked up the only semi-willing Myrrhine and flung her over her shoulders to the floor, a move the actors learned in their wrestling workshop.

According to Lysistrata’s comments at Myrrhine and Lampito’s arrival, the two women show up each with a large flock of women in tow, something made impossible by the small size of the cast. Instead, she addressed “But look, here are some women, they’re simply piling in¹⁷” to the audience at large. Several lines down, where she would normally ask about individual actors onstage as the girls from Boeotia and Corinth, Lysistrata instead pointed to specific women in the audience, solidifying their place as simply an extension of the action happening onstage and around them.

As Lysistrata bewailed the current state of Greece and its women, the male actors became a physical reminder of what so many women have lost through war. The two halves of

¹⁵ Dickinson 4.

¹⁶ Dickinson 7.

¹⁷ Dickinson 6.

the cast stood and faced each other across the stage as the women spoke about their absent husbands, the women walking slowly closer to the men. Finally, at “Not even a ghost of a lover’s been left us women¹⁸,” the men stepped through the line of women and left the stage to go sit around the house, as the women turned to watch them leave.

However, the women would soon scatter similarly, once Lysistrata revealed that they’d have to abstain from sex. Lampito panickedly retraced the steps of her entrance to try to get away; Kalonike sat down on the lip of the stage, head in her hands; Myrrhine simply threw up her arms and went off into the right aisle to go flirt with the male actors and various members of the audience. Once she wrangled them back onstage, Lysistrata had Lampito fetch the wine-jar they would swear upon from behind the skene. Paul O’Connor had designed and built the prop to be as over-the-top and absurd as possible: rather than a jar or a wine bottle, it was for all intents and purposes a penis and testicles with a handle. It was entirely unsubtle why the women were so eager to swear an oath and drink from it all of a sudden.

During the oath, the men came back onstage and started vocalizing a drone underscoring Lysistrata and Kalonike’s lines. This began quietly and rose steadily in volume until Lampito finally shouted “What’s that hullabaloo?¹⁹” over them and the noise cut immediately. Ostensibly, the horrible din the men had just made was the sound of the fighting that had just been taking place at the Acropolis; when the women exited, the men finally left their role as representation of background action and entered their role as the chorus. This first men’s chorus took the form of a series of abstracted movements much like their initial lanes. The four men moved together back and forth across the stage horizontally, as in the

¹⁸ Dickinson 9.

¹⁹ Dickinson 17.

lanes, but this time as a single group. Based on the text, they performed motions of carrying heavy weights, struggling uphill, or being driven back by smoke from their fires, representing the men's chorus abstractly rather than by means of props.

The other choral dances and interactions between the men's and women's choruses fell into much the same style. In the fire-and-water fight of the men's and women's choruses, lanthe again chose to perform the fight abstractly and through movement rather than use the props the text calls for. The closest the actors came to using props was the women miming carrying jars of water, which lanthe used to frame the women in a tableau against the battle-ready men. The fight proper alternated between direct if abstracted performances of conflict, such as one woman kicking a man in the crotch, and indirect moments of conflict where the women pulled the men's hair or hit them with their hips from across the stage with no physical contact.

The fire-and-water chorus led into several of the most purely comic moments of our staging. After the women cried "Water, to your work, water!"²⁰ and mimed dousing the old men (while straddling them), they started doing a sexy dance and teasing the men, resulting in cheesy music and flashing lights filling the stage around them as if they were in a dance – or strip – club. We let the moment drag on excessively to build the humor, until, finally, the Magistrate drove onstage in a golf cart.

lanthe devised the Magistrate's entrance as a summation of his character: the impotent, lazy, and wealthy politician, an image particularly influenced by a political cartoon she found of a politician stuffing his face with bills eaten off a dinner plate. He enters railing about the behavior of the women and bewailing his gender's foolhardiness in letting things

²⁰ Dickinson 23.

come to such a state, but never makes any real effort to fix the situation himself. Instead, he keeps throwing officers at the women until there are none left, pawning off his problems onto others because he is too lazy to deal with them himself.

Consequentially, lanthe had the inspired idea to have him enter through some means of transportation that emphasized his laziness. After a succession of other ideas including a moped and a Segway, Paul O'Connor suggested a golf cart and eventually found a way to rent a battery-powered one. The vehicle was invented for transporting people across distances that one could easily walk. Its name and primary use are for a sport that iconic for its association with wealth, leisure, and the massive spending required to maintain it—everything lanthe wanted to showcase about the Magistrate.

He ended up driving onstage, chewing on a turkey leg, while the women were still dancing. He drove past them, backed up, and honked to clear them off the stage until, very reluctantly, the women left, the music stopped, and the lights returned to normal. For the next scene, the men wearily piled onto the golf cart as the Magistrate monologued, until he ordered them out to hunt—unsuccessfully—for crowbars and Lysistrata appeared. Throughout the scene prior to her entrance, Lysistrata and the women of the chorus had been watching from above the back wall of the set: two from a platform built for this purpose, Lysistrata from one of the lifts²¹ owned by the Drama department (which she ascended while the Magistrate backed up the golf cart, using its beeping to cover the noise of the lift rising).

A second lift made an appearance as the Magistrate was sending his officers off to deal with the men: this time, Myrrhine shouted through a megaphone as her lift went up,

²¹ These small, easily-maneuverable lifts are standard in theater and normally used to hang and focus lighting instruments. As is the origin of many of her ideas, lanthe looked at it backstage one day and wondered how she might put it to use in the play.

leaving everyone onstage mystified as to where her voice was coming from until she slowly rose over the wall.

The general *mêlée* that followed was again somewhat abstracted—at least, no one onstage fought in a traditional way. The only two characters left in front of the wall were Lysistrata and the Magistrate, who launched into a wrestling match; otherwise the fight took place entirely upstage of the wall. Battleaxes, swords, severed limbs, helmets, and a chicken flew up into the air and fell back behind the wall in a cloud of smoke (with the exception of one memorable rehearsal when the chicken landed downstage of the wall). When the *mêlée* finally ended, the men's and women's choruses came back onstage, the women smug, the men looking considerably worse for wear.

The audience again became a more direct part of the play as Lysistrata and the Magistrate engaged in their verbal fight to follow their physical one. Their dialogue spanning lines 486-613 was one of the clearest inversions of public and private motifs in the text. Lysistrata's declaration of the plight of women and why they are best suited to untangling the city's political mess is the sort of pronouncement one would make in a public square for all to see, and so we interpreted the audience as the crowd that would have gathered around Lysistrata and the Magistrate to hear their argument. However, as their discussion goes on, it turns to matters of the home that would normally be reserved for a discussion in the house, and finally to the women's adornment of the Magistrate in garlands and a crown. Unlike the traditional performance of this scene as the chorus dressing the Magistrate in women's clothes and sending him packing that way²², Ianthe interpreted it as a symbolic burial ritual—one of the most private contexts of all. Here, again, we eschewed props in favor of a grander gesture.

²² Ewans 237.

One of the women threw a flower at the Magistrate as he cowered on the steps of the platform, resulting in a cascade of flowers falling from the column hanging above his head, literally burying him in them.

Treating the Magistrate's scene as a burial differs radically from the traditional interpretations that end the scene with him wrapped up in a cocoon of women's clothes. However, lanthe's interpretation does find support in the text, just a different portion of it. Stagings typically take lines 530-538²³ as a cue for costuming and props, in which the women swaddle the Magistrate in various womanly items from their own costumes. lanthe took Lysistrata's emphatic "You put my veil on your head and be QUIET!"²⁴ as a cue for Lysistrata to fling the Magistrate to the ground and walk away, and instead waited until lines 599-607²⁵ to humiliate him. Here, there is a strong focus on funereal language and items for burial—the coffin, the funeral wreath, honeycakes for the ritual—and then direct reference to Charon, ferryman of the River Styx. In this context lanthe's unusual choices make sense, despite her avoidance of the conventional means of humiliating the Magistrate.

²³ ΛΥΣΙΣΤΡΑΤΗ. ... παρ' ἐμοῦ τουτὶ τὸ κάλυμμα λαβῶν
ἔχε καὶ περίθου περὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν,
κᾶτα σιώπα.

ΓΥΝΗ Γ. καὶ τοῦτον τὸν καλαθίσκον.

ΛΥΣΙΣΤΡΑΤΗ. κᾶτα ξαίειν ξυζωσάμενος
κυάμους τρώγων:
πόλεμος δὲ γυναιξὶ μελήσει.

²⁴ Dickinson 32.

²⁵ ΛΥΣΙΣΤΡΑΤΗ. σὺ δὲ δὴ τί μαθῶν οὐκ ἀποθνήσκεις;
χωρίον ἐστὶ: σορὸν ὠνήσει:
μελιτοῦτταν ἐγὼ καὶ δὴ μᾶξω.
λαβὲ ταυτὶ καὶ στεφάνωσαι.

ΓΥΝΗ Α. καὶ ταυτασὶ δέξαι παρ' ἐμοῦ.

ΓΥΝΗ Β. καὶ τουτονογὶ λαβὲ τὸν στέφανον.

ΛΥΣΙΣΤΡΑΤΗ. τοῦ δεῖ; τί ποθεῖς; χῶρει 'ς τὴν ναῦν:
ὁ Χάρων σε καλεῖ,
σὺ δὲ κωλύεις ἀνάγεσθαι.

"... take this scarf from me,
and put it around your head,
and then shut up.

Yes, and this little basket!

Now hitch up your skirts and card wool
and munch on some beans:
and war shall be the business of women!"

"You—why won't you understand and drop
dead already? Here's a grave, go buy a coffin;
I'll knead you a honeycake,
You take this and buy a funeral wreath.

And take these from me.

And take this garland.

Need anything? What more do you want? Go to
the ship, Charon is calling you,
and you're keeping him from setting sail."

Coming out of this moment of privacy, the audience found themselves not only involved in the play, but surrounded. During Lysistrata's speech, the men's chorus had taken up positions in the parterres, and there they beat out a warlike rhythm on the theater's architecture underneath their lines. The women, still onstage, contributed to the soundscape with a vocal drone of their own, until the men stormed onstage at the end of their chorus and the women threw them down.

The choral exchange that followed was the most dancelike of the choruses in our production. It evolved out of an evening the cast spent playing with an addition Kenisha had made to the women's costumes: the pair of long rope belts that wound in an X across the chest, over the shoulders, and then tied again at the waist. As the women and men spoke about their youth in years gone by, they acted out the roles of their genders in a slow and carefully choreographed dance. At first, the women caught the men in their ropes, wrapped them around the men's torsos, and drew them in close, ensnaring them. But when the men's chorus began to dominate, the roles reversed, and the men wound the ropes around the women's arms and forced them to their knees. Finally, the women broke free and regrouped together at the center of the stage, surrounded by the men but united in solidarity, until they scattered and the action paused briefly.

We marked the break in time at line 706 with Lysistrata pacing anxiously in a single lane of light, which then broadened into the new scene with Lysistrata trying desperately to keep the women in line and in the Acropolis. In this case, all of the women's escape attempts took them off the stage and into various parts of the house. The first, so desperate to get

home to her wool and “spread it out on the couch²⁶,” ran across the stage behind Lysistrata and climbed up a ladder into the right parterre, where Lysistrata ran to confront her. The second, bent on going home to strip her flax, made it halfway up the left aisle before Lysistrata caught her and called her out. Finally, the woman supposedly pregnant with Athena’s sacred helmet rolled across stage on a skateboard and was trying to climb down into the house when Lysistrata caught up with her.

One of the few actual cuts lanthe made to the script was in the following scene, the chorus between the very old men and women. After working extensively with the actors on their physicality as the old men and women, and figuring out a slowed-down sort of fight between the two groups, lanthe decided that the scene as a whole simply wasn’t working. She realized that the two speeches the choruses deliver at each other—the men’s story about Melanion and the women’s story about Timon—weren’t telling the audience anything they hadn’t already heard earlier in the play, and so simply cut them out. In terms of the themes lanthe worked with, it made sense that this would be a scene to cut. Having eschewed other cultural references and attempted to make the play timeless, a scene written to make fun of the veterans of Marathon, the cultural pride and glory of wartime Athens in 411, did not directly serve her intent with the play.

Cutting the scene immediately made the sequence of action more streamlined and worked more easily in the context of an ensemble production. Instead of having to change into three different old women characters, the women Lysistrata left on the Acropolis simply turned around to deal with a single old man approaching them, a precursor to the arrival of Kinesias.

²⁶ Dickinson 40.

As I have mentioned previously, the Kinesias sequence was originally supposed to be the moment that the audience actually left their seats and joined the ensemble in watching the action. Myrrhine's teasing interaction with Kinesias was one of the private-turned-public moments that lanthe wanted to highlight, in this case by actually bringing a massive crowd onstage to surround the lovers during their spat. Even with that idea struck out, the scene still went through a number of transformations. We originally wondered if Myrrhine could pull a bed out from the platforms of the set, and then threw in the idea of her possibly handcuffing Kinesias to it.

As lanthe and the actors incorporated props into the scene, however, it took a different form: that of Myrrhine conspiring with the other women to keep Kinesias in suspense. She stood aloof in the parterres with Lysistrata at first, resisting Kinesias's pleas, but after she finally went to be with him and their baby, the women who had been watching from above the wall started aiding and abetting her. Instead of running offstage to get all her various accoutrements, Myrrhine distracted Kinesias and then went to motion to the women for what she needed. Lysistrata handed her a folding bed from the parterre, two of the women threw a mattress and then a pillow over the top of the set wall, and then came down onto the deck to give her a blanket and later two bottles of perfume, as well as a little red wagon full of sex toys. To make her getaway, she draped a feather boa over Kinesias's eyes and then picked up the wagon and marched back behind the wall of the set.

The Kinesias scene also marked, in lanthe's conception, the irreversible turn of the play away from stoicism and toward carnality. Kinesias was the first man to walk onstage with a phallus—a new element to the play that immediately drew all the women's attention and that he displayed to the entire audience with great prominence by parading it literally in their

faces. His phallus almost became a character of its own in the scene with Myrrhine, who took to addressing some of her lines to the phallus instead of to Kinesias's face, and also occasionally grabbed it and pulled him around the stage by it, making him go crazy for her. However, the decision to have him enter wearing the phallus also presented us with an unexpected dilemma, as Kinesias is supposed to enter with his and Myrrhine's baby in tow. We dismissed the idea of an attendant slave entering with him early on, but did not want him walking on with an erect phallus and a baby in his arms at the same time, for obvious reasons. We eventually avoided that awkward juxtaposition by having him pull the baby behind him in a little red wagon, which he simply pushed offstage when Myrrhine acted appalled at making love in front of it. Incidentally, the very same wagon returned a few minutes later filled with sex toys.

After Kinesias, all the men had phalluses, which became increasingly difficult to conceal. The Magistrate and the male chorus both walked into the back of the house wearing their phalluses, and the Spartan herald entered onstage phallus-first, briefly wagging it from behind the proscenium before he actually entered. Seeing the Magistrate in the house and another man (who, moments ago, had been Kinesias) lying on the ground, he tried to hide it under his costume. The Magistrate ordered the other man to jump on the herald and find out what he had hidden under his cloak, a scuffle that ended with the man grabbing the herald by the phallus and then jumping away, apparently appalled.

Ianthe and the cast devised a creative solution to the strange mosquito scene that follows. In their interpretation, the female chorus makes up the lines about "that fly that's

milling in your eye²⁷” as a sympathetic cover for the male chorus crying from having had an erection for so long. In that context, his response of “So *that’s* what has been aggravating me²⁸” easily became sarcasm—since, wearing a phallus, what had actually been aggravating the male chorus was readily apparent.

From here on out, the carnal state the play had turned to became more and more apparent. The men showed their carnality through their phalluses; the women’s became apparent when they—literally—sang their next chorus as if wildly drunk, stumbling around stage and taking swigs from a massive wine-jar. When the Spartan ambassador showed up, he had a phallus so large that it touched the ground and he was actually using it as a walking stick. (Indeed, the prop had a walking stick concealed inside it for that purpose.) The men only got a grip on themselves once the Athenian ambassador reminded them all of what had happened to the *hermai*, making the men all take off their phalluses in an attempt to be more presentable to summon Lysistrata to make peace for them – an attempt that failed utterly once they caught sight of Reconciliation.

The character of Reconciliation evolved enormously throughout the design process and ultimately became one of our most radical departures from the Greek concept. Originally, it was left open who would play her part, whether she would be one of the four actresses in the cast or a sort of guest appearance by another actress who had previously worked with the Drama Department. Ianthe and Kenisha discussed conceiving of her as what she represented on a literal level, the territories of Greece that the Peloponnesian War was fought over and which the men refer to while ogling her. To represent that, Kenisha suggested either putting

²⁷ Dickinson 60.

²⁸ Ibid.

her in a wrap dress that could be unwound to reveal a map of Greece, or perhaps a unitard covering her entire body with Greece printed on it.

As our process progressed, we discussed the sculptural quality of our treatment of many moments in the play, and how Reconciliation was a sort of sculpture herself. She was a physical representation of ideals, a perfection, far more than literal territories. To the women, Reconciliation personified the ideals of peace and reunification that they were seeking in trying to end the war, and her appearance onstage was the means by which they would finally force the men to make treaties with each other. To the men, however, Reconciliation was nothing more than the embodiment of physical and sexual perfection, who stood before them radiating everything that the women had been denying them and that they wanted back.

She became a semi-to-wholly divine figure as well as the *deus ex machina* character of the play. In line with her representation of ideal beauty, and her sculptural nature, lanthe was very interested in having Reconciliation appear onstage nude or at least partially nude. In turn, she also decided that it was important that Reconciliation not be played by one of the actors in the cast. She was a figure larger than life, on a different plane than any of the other characters the ensemble played, and so it was necessary that she be an entirely new person walking onstage, not just another ensemble role. To fulfill both of these ideas, lanthe contacted junior Drama major Olivia McGiff, class of 2014, a designer and actor who also had experience with nude modeling for classes in figure drawing. She agreed to take on the role.

With Reconciliation settled as a semi-divine figure, we approached her entrance as a total change to the world in which the play had been taking place. The skene wall split at the center, one of its panels swinging open in two to reveal a radiant world filled with glowing mist. Reconciliation arrived into the scene from this world, apparently motionless: by careful

timing and movement, she was able to conceal the few steps she needed to take in the simultaneous forward motion of the runway that extended before her. The result was that she maintained the appearance of a living statue throughout her time on stage, her only substantial movement a subtle turn of the head to smile at Lysistrata.

Her entrance gave Lysistrata the leverage she needed to force the men to come to terms with one another as she reminded them of their mutual ties and old loyalties. However, it rapidly became apparent that Lysistrata could not make the men make peace for peace's sake: their lust for and attempts to grab hold of Reconciliation made Lysistrata see that, despite all her efforts, the men would only end the war so that they could have their wives back sexually, not for the sake of peace. As a divinity, the men could never actually touch or harm Reconciliation: every time they lunged for her, her runway retreated slightly, forcing them to understand that they could not have their wives unless they reconciled first. Lysistrata, in turn, had no ability to force the men to listen to her actual message about mutual ties and the imperative of peace. All she could secure was the bargain that the men would make a treaty if it meant they could have sex with their wives again.

Lysistrata and Reconciliation's inability to secure eternal peace led lanthe to the only other cut she made in the text: the scene before the final chorus where – varying with the translation – two youths, a guest to the celebrations, and a porter sit commenting on the peace proceedings. The scene is highly comic and, besides simply not fitting with the dark tone that the end of the play had assumed, lanthe saw that it also did not tell the audience anything that furthered the story at that point.

The final women's chorus, though dealing with the celebration of peace, was delivered with a tone of resignation to their fate as a result. They understood what had come

to pass: a temporary peace at best, not a permanent one, whatever the men would say to the contrary, and it also meant that they would be forced to submit again to their husbands. With the removal of the youths-and-guest scene, the serious tone carried over into the invocation of Artemis for peace. Three of the men reunited with three of the women and each couple walked in a circle, Lysistrata with Reconciliation, in a gesture symbolic of a headlock, and after their last turn Reconciliation exited back into the misty world she had come from.

Accordingly, we treated the final chorus as an indication of future wars to come. The last member of the male chorus ran onstage and did a handspring onto the thrust, then beat on it like a drum as he spoke, gathering the ensemble around him. All eight men and women formed a circle on the disk, taking turns to step into the center and perform a gesture of preparation for battle: lacing up boots, striking a stance to throw a punch, donning a helmet, strapping on gauntlets. All ended with the final war cry to Athena.

The play's ending returned us to the same place of conflict as its opening. Our intent was to remind the audience that war would happen again, despite the peace that had just been proclaimed. It underscored our treatment of the play as a broad statement about humanity's propensity for conflict, rather than ending the play on a note that made a point about women or men. Both sexes suffer equally badly at the hands of the play, to lanthe's vision: neither escapes being brutally stereotyped at some point, and so the play could not be about one sex truly triumphing over the other. Instead, we treated it as one slice out of a larger cycle that perpetuates itself throughout time, a cycle of violence and Reconciliation that cannot stave off future violence forever. All of humanity is affected by this cycle, and this was what lanthe saw as the greater relevance of the play, and why it was essential that it be timeless instead of set in a specific time or place.

Chapter II: Lighting *Lysistrata*

The inherent challenge in designing lighting for any Greek play lies in the fact that theatrical lighting of any sort was completely absent from the original staging. In ancient Greece, all drama was performed in open air in broad daylight—all light came from the sun and sky. European theater moved indoors in the sixteenth century, but it was not until the mid-twentieth century that lighting design had established itself as a distinct discipline of the theatrical arts²⁹. In the early twentieth century, design theorists first recognized the capacity of light to be expressive and to create form onstage as effectively as the scenery. Architect Stanley McCandless became the most influential in organizing stage lighting schematically, and his student Jean Rosenthal was among the first to receive the new credit of “Lighting designed by” for her work in the 1930s³⁰.

Today, the role of the lighting designer encompasses far more than simply illuminating the stage. Lighting forms a vital part of the creation of the stage environment, the so-called “world of the play” that the creative team paints onstage to support the action and dialogue of the performance. The light onstage works in concert with the scenic design, costumes, sound, and, nowadays, occasional projection to set the atmosphere at any given moment. As the stage picture shifts in mood, emotion, location, quality of movement, et cetera, the light changes to respond to those shifts.

The process of design begins with an examination of the text: what has the author written about the quality light onstage? Do the characters mention the light around them? Beyond direct references, one must consider the setting of each scene and what quality of

²⁹ Essig 3.

³⁰ Essig 4.

light such a location would have, what the atmosphere of every environment in the play is. What time of day is it, is the light natural or artificial, is the setting meant to be realistic or abstracted? Once one understands the text, the director and his or her creative team can then impose their own interpretation onto it—sometimes flying in the face of the playwright's meticulous instructions.

With an overall creative concept solidified, the designers can then research images and other historical or conceptual documents to illustrate and inform their own choices for the play. Through meetings with the design team, discussions in rehearsals, and experimentation, the designers and other producers move from initial concept to reality and the incorporation of technical elements into rehearsal. For a lighting designer, this means the selection of color and the placement of light sources according to the atmospheres the play requires, whether that means washing the stage with light to reveal everything or narrowing to focus on very specific areas and play up the contrast of light and shadow.

When approaching a Greek play as a designer, there are no stage directions, and so one might consider the conventions of Greek theater at the Dionysia as a starting point (and then, of course, decide whether one will adhere to said conventions or not). The scenic designer may look to the skene and its decoration, the costume designer to such options as masks and phalloi; even the sound designer may consider the phonic effect of the choruses, so different from our modern conceptualization of a Greek chorus. However, no such conventions exist even to be considered as far as lighting goes. Light on the ancient Greek stage was the one aspect of the performance untouched by human hands.

Consequentially, any attempt to design lighting for a Greek play must begin differently than looking to the text for light cues. (Unless, of course, the director has decided to be very

traditional and actually perform the play outdoors in the afternoon, as Professor Rachel Kitzinger did when staging her translation of Oedipus at Colonus with the Experimental Theater in 2007.) One's design must originate from the concept behind the staging devised by the director and design team; the close reading of the text for mood and atmosphere follows.

As a student of Greek, however, I had the unique opportunity to look to Aristophanes' original text as a source for my designs. My close reading and translation of the Greek let me become extremely familiar with the original language and diction of the play; this both gave me the background to understand every one of Patric Dickinson's choices as well as a broader basis for my own designs. I endeavored to understand the text as thoroughly as possible, which would become essential to my work as a designer and as a dramaturgical voice in the rehearsal room.

The concept for my lighting design originated from our discussions in the initial design meetings about the inversion of public and private spaces, the effect of war on a population, and the gradual descent of the play from a place of stoicism to a place of carnality. Our decision to set the play in a timeless Greece led me to research public spaces in Greece: cafes, streets, open-air markets both ancient and modern, and public parks. I looked to images of the street markets of Athens, Corfu, Plaka, Rhodes for an idea of the feeling of public space in Greece. I found numerous photos of ruined temples, especially colonnades, from the modern day and looked into reconstructed images of how light would have fallen in them—especially in the Acropolis, as part of the play takes place there—when they were intact.

My research led me to discover the vibrant color palette that characterizes Greece, both in the modern day and in ancient times. Simultaneous to this, Kenisha brought in research

of her own of paintings of women and men from Classical Greece, to show the vivid reds, maroons, and oranges of their clothing, as well as several distinctive yellows that echoed the "saffron skirts" that the women talk about at several points. From my research and Kenisha's color scheme for the costumes, I arrived at the rough concept of my own palette: vivid oranges, yellows, and pinks, saturated blues like the Greek sky, alongside more muted colors to light shadows or focus on more intimate scenes.

Besides its vivid color palette, my design would also have to be able to shift from broad public spaces to the various narrow, intimate moments of the play, sometimes in the course of a single scene. In the absence of set changes to denote shifts in location, it fell to the quality of the light onstage to indicate what space a particular scene was in. This is typical in abstract theater, where the set is static, simplified, or abstracted from any realistic representation of the environment. The lighting designer for such a performance may go in either of two very different directions: he or she might use realistic light to ground the scene when the set does not represent its location, or the designer might make the lighting similarly abstract to emphasize tone or ambiance over location.

Since several lines in *Lysistrata* are very specific in locating the scene, I was first inclined toward realism in my lighting scheme, but it rapidly became apparent that the play was making no attempt to be literal. The set was evolving to be more abstract, and the cast's movement work had become far more representational than literal. The men's chorus was making motions of strenuous effort without carrying anything, the choruses engaged in an all-out battle with no physical contact—hardly the place for realism. As a result, my design had to become more abstract, to match this new, abstracted choreography.

The emphasis on movement in lanthe's direction made me decide to light the play as if it were dance. Very separate conventions exist for the lighting of drama and dance in the modern world, an interesting dichotomy considering that in the culture of ancient Greece, dance and drama were inseparable. Today, lighting for drama focuses on highlighting the face and places the sharpest emphasis on the head and shoulders, since so much of an actor's performance comes from his or her facial expressions. Dance, by contrast, emphasizes the sides of a figure in order to showcase movement by defining the edges of the legs and arms.

Dance performance is traditionally lit from the sides, with light sources placed at shin-level, knee-level, and head-level. In drama, light generally comes from sources higher than the actor's head, which replicate the effect of light from the sun, the sky, overhead lamps, et cetera. The unusual and generally unnatural low angle of light used in dance automatically makes dance lighting more abstract than drama. Thus, my choice to incorporate conventions of dance lighting into my design gave me not only the abstraction that the play needed, but also the ability to visually sculpt the moments of movement and dance that lanthe and her cast were creating.

In the end, I chose the colors of my side light again in response to the palette of the costumes. At shin-height, I used a pale rosy pink, to strengthen the reds in many characters' costumes; at knee-height, I chose a pale lavender that matched the color of Myrrhine's top and brought out the deeper purples of the Magistrate's and Lampito's costumes. I used a light blue-teal at head-height partially to accentuate the blue fabric of Kalonike and the Spartan Ambassador's costumes, but also in order to light Reconciliation and her scene as if she were walking down a fashion runway.

An additional challenge for my lighting design came from our discussion of the role of the audience and our use of the house as a playing space. Since we were treating the entire theater as a single playing space, it was important that the audience understand that during the performance. For the actors performing in the aisles and clambering through the audience to read as part of the same world as the stage, it was essential to light the house with the same vocabulary as the stage. It also had to be apparent that the entire space was one world from the outset: the audience would have to understand this fact from the moment they set foot in the theater.

My simplest solution to this was the basic fact that the house light never went out, or, indeed, even dimmed during the entire performance. The audience simply walked into a dimly-lit house, and when the action began, the lights became much brighter onstage or on specific portions of the house. As well as tying the two spaces of stage and house together, this constant level of house light meant that the audience was always aware, at least unconsciously, of the rest of the audience around them. Characters appearing beside and behind them would not be jarring to an audience that was already slightly aware of the other people sitting around them thanks to the dim illumination of all their neighbors.

The light on the audience began heavily textured, a jagged series of lines and grates cutting across the seats. Kept dim and slightly reddened, the texture evoked a feeling of grittiness and tension drawn from images of modern war-torn zones in the Middle East. For the first few scenes, most the house light stayed this way, altered only by specials lighting particular moments of action in the aisles. Once the Magistrate entered, and he and Lysistrata had their series of large, public debates, the light in the house became more open and changed to the blue of a full sky, transporting the audience into the public square with them.

I had originally conceived of a third look that the house light could assume: when the action shifted to the women trying to escape from the acropolis, the audience would find themselves in broad lanes of light and shadow. The effect was intended to make the audience feel as if they, too, were sitting in the shadow of the colonnade on the Acropolis. However, when I created the look during our tech process, lanthe felt that the glare of the individual lighting instruments used to create it was too distracting from the rest of the scene happening onstage and in the house. As a result, I cut the change entirely, and the audience remained under an open blue sky until Kinesias entered and the house light shifted back to being close-knit and more intimate.

The preshow and opening of the play were a unique opportunity in the design process, as a chance to design purely based on our own concepts rather than from the text at any specific moment. We chose to use the preshow environment to establish a context of war for our audience, as the Greek audience would have been aware of innately. The sharp, gritty texture I used for house light was inspired by a similarly gritty, dissonant piece of music that Chris Campbell-Orrrock had experimented with; that and the low level of the house light immediately thrust the audience into an atmosphere of uncertainty and tension. I lit the pairs of wrestlers with a single spotlight on the padded disk, heightening the drama between them and also bringing their action closer to the audience, to unify the two spaces. (Figure 1.)

The progression of lighting from the preshow through the first few scenes established a ring composition to my design, which I employed to emphasize the cyclical nature of the play. I found it particularly important to tell the story of this cycle through lighting, since it was one of lanthe's boldest interpretations of the text, not an element normally seen in the play. Her blocking and choreography of the beginning and ending already had assumed a rough

ring composition, since the play both began and ended with representations of war. To help with the message that war would happen again after Lysistrata's peace, I used the story of my design to make the last few scenes an inversion of the first few, incorporating the descent from stoicism to carnality into the progression from current war from future war.

When the men fell into their lanes exercise, the lighting changed from the single spotlight to simple, dim dance light, outlining the characters and giving them the appearance of floating on the stage to continue the abstract representation of war. At Lysistrata's break from the lanes and delivery of her first lines, the lighting shifted toward realism, the light of early morning as she waited for the rest of the women to arrive. (Figure 3.) This particular setting was one taken literally from the text, at various women's mentions of early morning. Kalonike says the women from Salamis have been riding *ἄρθρῳ* (60)³¹; Myrrhine: *μόλις γὰρ ἠὔρον ἐν σκότῳ τὸ ζώνιον* (72)³². For both those lines to make sense, the lighting would have to indicate that the action of the play was taking place early in the morning. After that was established, things could become more abstract without losing the context of time of day.

The same sequence of designs happened in reverse at the end. As the play opened at dawn, it would close at evening: specifically in the context of the celebratory banquet between the Athenians and the Spartans ending the war. Lines 1214-1247 are replete with description of the richness of the feast and of drink flowing freely: *οὔπω τοιοῦτον συμπόσιον ὅπῳπ' ἐγώ* (1225)...*ἡμεῖς δ' ἐν οἴνῳ συμπόται σοφώτατοι* (1227)³³. Though lanthe cut that particular scene, the text there was very useful for grounding the sense of carnality that she wanted to bring out at the end of the play: lush, rich, abundant, verging on orgiastic. From

³¹ "Since dawn."

³² "I could scarcely find my girdle in the dark."

³³ "I never saw such a party! ... but as for the wine—we were the best at drinking!"

Kinesias' entrance at 829 until the very last scene³⁴, I used a consistent thread of rich orange light of late afternoon or evening to tie the last sequence of scenes into a single narrative of carnality. The light of evening-time and feasting became a saturated, rich, darker inversion of the light of dawn from the first scene. Even the source of the dominant light reversed—the bright, pale dawn came from stage left, while the deep orange of evening came from stage right. (Figure 11.)

Once the very final chorus began, we snapped from the close of a single day in Greece to an abstract space. Dance lighting caught the cast as they converged on the thrust stage, taking them out of the specific circumstance of one war at one historical moment in order to speak broadly to humanity's tendency towards war. As they began performing their gestures of preparation for battle, the light shifted back to the single spotlight from the preshow, bringing the play full circle: it ended in the same atmosphere of conflict as it had begun. (Figure 12.)

Before the first men's chorus, the men onstage functioned as a sort of abstract background to the women's dialogue. Though no man speaks before the first men's chorus, lanthe had the men onstage almost the entire time, performing gestures or movements that complemented the women's dialogue. Sometimes they acted out the women's speech; at other times, they would lurk menacingly to remind the audience of the war occurring in the historical background. Accordingly, the light on them remained abstract, to contrast with the realism of the light on the women and separate the two groups into different spaces. As the light of dawn came up on Lysistrata and Kalonike, the men stayed in dance lighting even as

³⁴ Except for the entrance of Reconciliation; see below on the light in her scene and its break from the progression of the play.

they settled into sitting positions stooping on the upstage stairs. After Myrrhine's entrance, they appeared to be walking in shadow while representing the women's absent husbands away at war. The moment of the oath took the women briefly into an abstract space, one that was starker and more dramatic, as they followed Lysistrata around and reached for the phallic jar in slow-motion. This would become a recurring theme—playing up the humor of exaggerated motion by making the light excessively dramatic.

Toward the end of the oath, the light on the men changed to anticipate the fiery tones of their first chorus. By making the drone-rising-to-a-scream that Lampito called the "hullabaloo³⁵," the noise of fighting as the women took over the Acropolis, the men became a physical representation of that conflict. As soon as their scream stopped, the lights cut out on them, taking away the audience's brief glimpse at what was happening in another part of the city, until the attention focused on the men for the first time.

The first series of choruses—men's, women's, and the fight between the two of them—set up the theme of representing with lighting what the text calls for in props, as well as the interpretation of the choruses as movement pieces. The male chorus walks on *χλωρᾶς φέρων ἑλάας* (255), or *πρέμνα* (267)³⁶, two of the various ways they refer to the tree-trunks they are ostensibly holding. However, these were completely absent from our staging, represented only as gestures of hauling weight and lifting a heavy burden on one's shoulders. The light on them came from low in the wings, catching their faces as they stooped low to the ground, while their backs were lit with a bold orange setting up the men as fire in the fight to come. As they spoke about the fire burning in 295-305, the blaze of low light filled in all

³⁵ Dickinson 17.

³⁶ "Carrying olive-trunks" or "logs."

around them, peaking at *τουτὶ τὸ πῦρ ἐγρήγορεν θεῶν ἑκατὶ καὶ ζῆ* (306)³⁷: as if they were surrounded by a blazing fire. (Figure 4.)

In answer, when the chorus of women appeared and talked about *ἐμπλησαμένη τὴν ὑδρίαν* (327)³⁸, the focus shifted to them in a wash of blues and teals. This branded the women as the element of water, as they pantomimed holding pitchers and bowls. When the two choruses spotted each other, the whole stage filled with their opposing colors: on one side, orange and rosy pink; on the other, vivid blue and teal. (Figure 5.) Throughout the fight between the choruses, whichever side was winning determined which set of colors was more intense, until finally the women threw the men to the ground and blues dominated from every side.

At this point, to match the inspired decision to have the women essentially give the men a lap dance, the lighting and sound responded accordingly. Extremely cheesy nightclub music began playing, as whole stage filled with pulsing and flashing lights.

Into this drove the Magistrate in his golf cart, the lights settled and broadened into the wide wash that would characterize the next series of scenes of arguing—and more—between the Magistrate and his men and Lysistrata and the chorus of women. (Figure 6.) Here the text grounds the scene firmly outside the gates of the Acropolis, at least to start with, as the Magistrate calls for crowbars and Lysistrata declares *ἐξέρχομαι γὰρ αὐτομάτη* (431)³⁹: thus they must be standing in the public space before the Acropolis, visible to all who pass by. This played with lanthe's emphasis on this series of scenes as the large, publically-held debate that then turns incredibly private at its end.

³⁷ "The fire's awake, thanks to the gods, and lives on!"

³⁸ "Filling up the pitcher."

³⁹ "I'm coming out on my own."

Though the hue and tone of the lighting varied throughout, the entire stage remained washed with light up until the Magistrate's burial, while the house light changed to its broad blue to frame the scene as a crowd in public. After Lysistrata and the Magistrate's wrestling match and the battle behind the wall, however, the lighting became more expressionist. Faced with his own defeat, the Magistrate's face became shadowed, with less and less light on him and more and more on Lysistrata as he was made irrelevant by her speech on war as women's work and her plan to disentangle the Peloponnesian War. (Figure 7.)

As the women began to perform their traditional dance in the background, dance light caught them and the stage grew darker and narrower, marking the change from a public humiliation of the Magistrate to a private one. Here was one point where, interestingly, our performance diverged significantly from the tone of the text. The women's chorus is full of vitriol—*αἰρώμεθ' ὧ γυναῖκες ... ἀλλ' ὧ τηθῶν ἀνδρειοτάτων καὶ μητριδίων ἀκαληφῶν, χωρεῖτ' ὀργῆ καὶ μὴ τέγγεσθ'*: ἔτι γὰρ νῦν οὔρια θεῖτε (539, 549-50)⁴⁰. And yet in our version the scene was solemn, a resignation to their duty rather than a vivacious call to arms. This fed into lanthe's conception of 599-614 as a symbolic burial rather than dressing up the Magistrate in women's clothing, ultimately. As one of the most private moments in the play, it was one of the most isolated in lighting: a small area far upstage lit only enough to catch the rain of flowers falling onto the magistrate.

The second battle of the choruses continued the theme of movement and dance taking the place of the literal content of the text, in this case the elaborate dance with the women's belts as a representation of the two choruses stripping for action. Stripping for battle

⁴⁰ "Get yourselves up, women! ... Now, O most courageous of grandmothers and prickly mothers, go forth in anger and don't go soft; you still run with the wind behind you!"

does not lend itself to association with a color like fire and water do, and so for this chorus I had to adopt a different strategy in my design. Instead, I drew on the women's talk of their pasts, hearkening back to several lines from the first scene as well. At various points, the women talk about saffron-colored dresses in the contexts of fond memories of the past: *κᾶτ' ἔχουσα τὸν κροκωτὸν ἄρκτος ἢ Βραυρωνίους* (645)⁴¹ in this scene; at the opening of the play, Kalonike describes women as *κροκωτοφοροῦσαι* (44)⁴² as one of the quintessential features of womanhood.

This association between identity as a Greek woman and the hues of saffron—the red of the flower, the yellow of the powder—led me toward the bold yellow-orange I used in my design and the appearance of this chorus. Here the women sing proudly of their childhoods and their strength as women and love for their country. As such, my design for it brought that out by emphasizing the color they most associate with themselves—a strong emphasis on that yellow-orange with other warm tones to bring out the reds in so many actors' costumes. (Figure 8.) The result was the creation of a space that, even as power changed hands between the women and the men and back, supported the women and all the history of the women before them.

Once they all dispersed, Lysistrata was left onstage alone, pacing in a single lane of light, to mark the passage of time, which also restored the broad realism of the scene at the acropolis as the women attempted to escape. For this scene it was especially important to light the house in the same way as the stage, since the place to which the various women were

⁴¹ "And then I lost my saffron skirts to be a bear at Brauronia."

⁴² "Dressed in saffron."

running off was the house—one climbed into the right parterre, another halfway up the left aisle, with Lysistrata chasing them all over.

Little changed as they moved into the drastically shortened chorus of old men, but once Kinesias entered, the lights joined the play in its downward spiral toward all-consuming carnality. We were interested in creating as narrow a space as possible, lighting-wise, for the scene between Kinesias and Myrrhine, as one of the most ostensibly intimate scenes of the play—and yet displayed in public for all to see. The warm, romantic palette of the previous scene became darker and more sensual and erotic. Despite the challenge of creating a narrow, intimate space out of a scene that moved around the entire stage, I was able to achieve this by limiting the light sources I used to a small few—deep orange from one side, dim yellow from the other, with a hint of pink hitting the actors' heads and shoulders. The dark shadows running down the center of each figure meant that the scene still felt like it was taking place in a small, intimate space. (Figure 9.)

Interestingly, our conception of Myrrhine and Kinesias actually flew completely in the face of the one point specified in the Greek text. When Lysistrata interrogates Kinesias as he approaches, and he demands to know who has the right to ask him, she answers that she is the *ἡμεροσκόπος* (849)⁴³. Besides simply knowing that the scene takes place, again, just outside the gates of the Acropolis, her line specifies that we still ought to be in broad daylight in the Greek. Patrick Dickinson's translation simply renders the word as "The officer of the watch"⁴⁴, however, leaving our staging room to leave realism entirely and render the scene purely as our own interpretation.

⁴³ "The day-watch."

⁴⁴ Dickinson 47.

The lighting on Myrrhine and Kinesias set up a visual theme of the rich orange as a representation of the degradation into carnality. Over the course of the next few scenes—the arrival of the Spartan Herald, the tricky mosquito scene, and the last argument of the choruses of men and women—the light slowly morphed into the lush, saturated light of evening that accompanied the banquet at the end. The orange remained throughout all of them, but the yellow faded and was slowly replaced by soft blues and purples filling in the shadows—interrupted only by the arrival of Reconciliation.

As discussed above, Lysistrata's invocation of Reconciliation completely changed the world the play existed in. In our conversations about Reconciliation, we came to see her as a sort of sculpture herself, which informed much of how I treated her scene. The idea of a living sculpture meant I would light her in backlight and side light, to outline and shape her figure. As the ideal image of feminine perfection, entering down a long runway, I saw her as similar to a fashion model walking down a runway—a very modern idea that led to my use of the brilliant blue-teal to light the scene. The last piece to complete the image was a burst of the rich yellow to make the fabric she was wrapped in radiant. (Figure 10.)

The use of side lighting on Reconciliation, besides sculpting her, also had the effect of removing the scene from reality. Instead, the men were transported in her presence to a place beyond earthly reality, matching the semi-divine status of Reconciliation. Once they finally agreed to Lysistrata's terms, and left the stage, the lighting settled back into reality: but a reality of fully-fledged debauchery and carnality.

In my design for Lysistrata, I faced the same challenge as any lighting designer does: the potential for conflict between the vision of the designer and the vision of the director. In such cases, the vision of the director takes priority, though one hopes that one can resolve

such a conflict to a point where both parties are satisfied with the result. I was fortunate in that I had a very easy time working with lanthe. One of her preferred modes of approaching any text is to simply play with it: anything done in the rehearsal room or design process is playing, until one finds something that works. The approach requires a willingness to suddenly change things drastically if the group discovers something new—sometimes, to throw out a very large idea if it just doesn't work, or to create something huge from scratch.

I found in working with lanthe on this process that I was able to use lighting as a subtle reinforcement of the themes that I had found in the Greek text, even when the concept we were working with for a particular scene had gone in a very different direction than the original. At some times, this meant I was working on two separate levels, one of our collective concept for the production, and one of my own specific interpretation, which occasionally collided with lanthe's thoughts.

As I have already mentioned, one such idea was to light the audience as if they were sitting among the colonnade on the acropolis, which lanthe decided did not work for the scene. Beyond the simple distraction that the lighting fixtures were in the audience's eyes, the idea was one of my most literal interpretations of scenes, a concept that did not blend well with the abstraction of the rest of the play. However, I felt that another concept that did not come fully to fruition was the unity between stage and house. Although I believe I achieved it at certain points, like *Lysistrata's* speech about women ending the war, there were other moments that I had thought would be even more effective that were cut. I had planned originally for the preshow look to wash the entire theater, not just the house, with a gritty texture. Because the pattern in question is so full of angles and sharp lines, it is useful for blurring or dissolving the edges between shapes—in this case, between the stage and the

audience. Without that unifying wash, I was left unsure how connected the audience would feel to the stage.

Ultimately, I was able to use the lighting as a sort of bridge between Aristophanes' text and our modern interpretation. My work with the Greek text enabled me to take our abstract concept and, effectively, ground it back in a slightly more real world derived from my research and reading of the Greek. There is a certain irony to this: though there was no manmade lighting on the Greek stage, I used lighting partially to keep our interpretation faithful to Aristophanes' original intents.



Figure 1. The men's chorus wrestles during the preshow.



Figure 2. Lysistrata (Kelly Schuster '15) enters.



Figure 3. Kalonike (Clare Redden '14), Myrrhine (Sarah Traisman '15), and Lampito (Meropi Papastergiou '15).



Figure 4. The first men's chorus (Benjamin Olneck-Brown '15, Rex Huxford-Hernandez '13, Steven Woolf '14, and Ben Morrow '13). Lysistrata and the other women sit in the foreground.



Figure 5. Fire and water: the men's chorus and the women's chorus prepare to do battle.



Figure 6. The Magistrate (Ben Morrow, in purple) and the men's chorus prepare to break down the gates to the Acropolis.



Figure 7. Lysistrata explains how the women of Athens would put an end to the war.



Figure 8. The second battle of the choruses, played out through manipulation of the rope belts worn by the women's chorus.



Figure 9. Myrrhine and Kinesias (Benjamin Olneck-Brown); a woman from the chorus watches from above the skene.



Figure 10. The skene splits open and Reconciliation (Olivia McGiff '14) enters on the runway extending downstage.



Figure 11. Husbands and wives are reunited in the light of evening following the peace treaty.



Figure 12. End of the play. The united men's and women's choruses prepare for war while chanting a prayer to Athena.

Photographs in figures 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 11, and 12 are by Elena Gaby and included courtesy of the Vassar College Box Office. Photographs in figures 2, 5, 7, 8, and 10 are by Stephen Jones and included courtesy of the photographer.

Chapter III: Critical Context

Due to my background in classical philology and my close reading of the Greek text, I occupied a unique position among those working with the Experimental Theater to understand how our production related to the performance tradition of *Lysistrata*. Certain subtleties of the Greek text are completely lost in translation; conventions of Greek theater may be entirely irrelevant to a director's choices. A critical analysis of the performance history of the play allows us to understand what our approach lost or gained compared to the meaning and humor of the original. Consideration of the modern performance tradition, as well, reveals how Aristophanes' work is understood today and may enlighten us about lanthe's more challenging interpretive choices.

After antiquity, *Lysistrata* experienced a lengthy but unsurprising dark age on account of its risqué nature. The play became virtually unknown and indeed almost lost entirely except to scholars of Greek. (Instead, Edith Hall remarks, it became a commonly-held private fascination to young scholars of Greek⁴⁵.) Aristophanes' other comedies began to reappear on the stage, in either translated or freely adapted form, primarily towards the end of the nineteenth century as stagings in academic contexts⁴⁶. These performances, however, made use of a slew of recently-published translations using modernized language pointed toward radical protest and social critique. *Lysistrata* fell into this context at the very end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, opening in London in 1910 with a translation geared towards forwarding the agenda of the women's suffrage movement.

⁴⁵ Hall 86.

⁴⁶ Hall and Wrigley 18.

More recently, the first decade of the twenty-first century has seen a host of productions and readings spurred on by the Lysistrata Project, a movement to stage readings and productions of *Lysistrata* all around the globe in protest of the United States' impending invasion of Iraq in 2003. Ianthe Demos' conception of the play, so different from the Greek original in many ways, finds much in common with the themes of global struggle against war shared between the fruits of the Lysistrata Project.

Let us begin, then, by considering the original staging in 411 B.C.E. *Lysistrata* was unusual among Aristophanes' plays in several ways. It was the first of his comedies to have a heroine rather than a hero in its leading role, and thus the first of his works to put gender on the forefront as a topic of comedy. The concept of gender, of course, could hardly be a more different thing in the modern world from what it was in classical Greece. The theme and humor of the battle of the sexes has endured as a trope of comedy, but Aristophanes' point in using that trope was to ridicule the men of Athens by saying that even women, for goodness' sakes, could figure out how to end the Peloponnesian War, so why couldn't the politicians? Setting aside the exhaustive amounts of ink that have been spilled over whether Aristophanes was a proto-feminist or not, the point of *Lysistrata* then was not about female empowerment or liberation, as it is so often played now. It was instead an absurd mockery of the ineptitude of the politicians of Athens by taking the most powerless population of Athens and placing them on top of the men (all double-entendres intended).

What Ianthe did preserve from the role of gender in Attic comedy was, interestingly, most closely tied to costuming. As all roles then were played by men, the gender of the characters had to be indicated by means other than just the gender of the actor: actors playing female characters wore padded breasts and hips; actors playing male characters

sported traditional comic phalluses. For different reasons than the Greek necessity of differentiating gender, Ianthe and Kenisha's designs eventually incorporated both these features, as discussed above. Kalonike, Myrrhine, and Lampito all wore aggrandized features of the female sex, and the men acquired phalluses as the play went on and became more publically sexual. All these features, for us, were props to aid the comedy of the play. The enlarged body parts of the women contrasted them to Lysistrata, the only principle actor with nothing exaggerated, making her the serious "straight man" figure with a real goal and the other women the comic, unruly gaggle she desperately tried to wrangle in. Though the men's phalluses were there largely for sheer comedy, they were also somewhat shocking to the audience in their raw sensuality, unaccustomed as most viewers are today to seeing a phallus—of any sort—onstage. In that way, adhering to the trope of Greek comedy was a double-edged sword, very much intentionally: when Kinesias entered with the first erect phallus, much of the audience burst into uproarious laughter, while others remained still and visibly uncomfortable.

On the note of costuming, the choice not to have the women change costume at all meant that the intention of a small ensemble cast playing all the named characters, the choruses, and the various other small roles was entirely lost on the audience. There was no way to tell that Kalonike, Myrrhine, and Lampito were different from the women of the chorus and different still from the women trying to escape from the Acropolis, because there was no costume signifier of such (as would be typical in abstract ensemble theater).

If anything, the men might have read slightly better as the chorus versus the Magistrate, Kinesias, and the Ambassadors. For one thing, the men first appear onstage and speak as a chorus, with no individual identities. It is much easier for an audience to see an actor

first as part of a group and then have him assume a specific identity when he leaves that group than the other way around. The men also did have some, if minor, costume signifiers of their changing identities: each man began shirtless or wearing a tank top and only put on his costume top when he had exited and re-entered as a specific character, as the Magistrate, then Kinesias, and then finally the Athenian and Spartan ambassadors.

In terms of gender, we must also consider the drastic differences between our conception of Reconciliation and her depiction in 411 B.C.E. Some features have remained the same: now as she did then, Reconciliation is a visual representation of female beauty and perfection, and the Ambassadors salivate over her as lasciviously as ever. But the intent of having her appear onstage, and how she appears, has changed dramatically.

There are two schools of thought on how Reconciliation and other silent, ostensibly nude or exposed female characters were portrayed on the classical Greek stage. One is that they, like all other female characters, were played by male actors dressed in comically exaggerated costumes, only with exposed breasts and pubic regions. The other is that they were played by nude *hetairai*, thus the only actual women onstage⁴⁷. The proposition that *hetairai* would have been drafted into performance onstage seems more logical to me. As Zweig points out, the point of bringing Reconciliation onstage, like Peace, Harvest, and Festival in Peace, is to show something desirable beyond compare⁴⁸. To the male Athenian spectators, a young, provocative *hetaira* evokes real desire in the audience far more than a male actor in overstuffed, comically grotesque padding would have. These women would also have been

⁴⁷ Zweig 77-80 provides a useful history of this discussion. See Wilamowitz (1958) and Walton (1928) for their original proposals.

⁴⁸ Zweig 79.

the only ones for whom it would be acceptable to appear naked, in public, and on a stage, since that was effectively their very profession in the first place.

With this in mind, our Reconciliation achieved a drastically different purpose. Ianthe's choice to have Reconciliation appear partially nude was not meant to evoke actual sexual desire in the audience, nor was Olivia McGiff's performance. Both sought to inspire reverence and evoke an image of untouchable power, the very opposite of the nude hetaira onstage, whose mere presence would be inherently degrading to the woman performing and intended to make all the men want to touch her (and do more than that). By elevating Reconciliation to semi-divine status, Ianthe transformed the role entirely into one of female empowerment and solidarity.

Our Lysistrata herself departed greatly in her demeanor from how Aristophanes had written her, I discovered when doing my close reading of the text. Aristophanes' Lysistrata, assertive though she is in her efforts to wrangle the women into shape, is polite, proper, and never as bawdy as the rest of the characters get. Though our Lysistrata too remained aloof from the general debauchery of the show, she was far more commanding and warlike herself—ironically for a pacifist—than her original incarnation.

The translation we used elides one of the most distinctive aspects of Lysistrata's speech in Aristophanes: her most forceful commands are phrased as negative questions instead of imperatives. She will give a simple order as an imperative, but anything more violent becomes a negative request. While egging the women on in the all-out brawl with the male

chorus, she shouts: οὐχ ἔλξετ', οὐ παίησετ', οὐκ ἀράξετε; οὐ λοιδορήσετ', οὐκ ἀναισχυντήσετε;⁴⁹ (459-461).

This loftier speech keeps Lysistrata elevated above the other characters in and of itself, an aspect lost in translations that render her polite requests as direct orders. But why should Aristophanes have had her speak this way? One explanation is that Aristophanes based the character of Lysistrata on a woman called Lysimache, the priestess of Athena Polias in the year 411, who would have been seated in the first row of the theater of Dionysus⁵⁰. Aristophanes had been able to get away with naming a brothel-owner Aspasia in *Acharnians* because the real Aspasia was not an Athenian woman and was already the subject of public scandal⁵¹. To make a priestess of Athena, a woman of Athens, into the leader of a sex strike would have been a very different matter, and so perhaps this language was his way of keeping her in a station proper to a holy priestess. The slight variation on Lysimache's name keeps Lysistrata just close enough for the audience to identify her for who she is, but distant enough that the identification is not offensive, unlike most of Aristophanes' references to audience members. Instead of a scathing mockery, Lysistrata-as-Lysimache works to double effect. She is humorous for doing all the things a priestess is forbidden from doing on the Acropolis⁵², but poignant for being effectively a mouthpiece for the goddess Athena advocating against war.

In the absence of such polite speech and the association with a well-known sacrosanct priestess, our Lysistrata was free to get down and dirty in her fighting onstage, verbal and

⁴⁹ Translated literally, "Won't you drag them, won't you strike them, won't you knock them down? Won't you rail at them, won't you be shameless all around?" This is so cumbersome in English that no one would ever write it into a battle scene.

⁵⁰ Wiles 68.

⁵¹ Loraux 179.

⁵² Loraux 181: it was forbidden for a priestess of Athena to occupy any room in the treasury or to cook anything in an oven; e.g. how Lysistrata 'cooks' the old men over their own fires.

literal. We preserved her loftiness of purpose compared to the other characters—out of the women, Lysistrata was the only one who remained devoted to her ideal of ending war and stayed above the debauchery the other women kept falling prey to. However, our Lysistrata had no qualms about enticing the women with a jar literally shaped like a penis. She became quite the opposite of the distant, politely-commanding figure in Aristophanes, viciously encouraging the women to fight and then singlehandedly taking down the Magistrate with her bare hands.

This created an odd irony in her conception as a character: if Lysistrata is seeking peace and an end to all war, why is she so violent and proficient in combat herself? Perhaps the answer can be found in framing her not as a pacifist *per se*, but as a fighter for peace. Our Lysistrata, then, must be understood as pragmatic through and through, since violence is not the only thing she engages in that she also advocates against. She knows how to get the women in line, even if it means tempting them with the very thing she wants them to resist; she knows how to force the men to listen to her, even if she has to engage in an act of war to make it happen.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of lanthe's concept of Lysistrata was her insistence that it not be a play about women versus men, but rather about humanity and its perpetual tendency towards war. To take a play based on the conflict of genders and make it into a story where gender is irrelevant would seem impossible and be, most likely, entirely lost on an audience unfamiliar with the thought process behind it—so why attempt it? Certainly the play is about the opposition to war; that meaning is easy to bring out. But why be so emphatic that it is not about gender when the humor of the text is inherently gendered?

lanthe attempted to make gender irrelevant to the overall point of the play by treating the characters of both sexes equally: neither received a more favorable treatment than the other in any way. Both genders were flawed, imperfect, neither a model of the ideal human being: the men were lascivious and inept, the women lustful and unruly. As far as war and human conflict were concerned, the entire ensemble was on equal ground in character and out of it. Every actor received the same training in wrestling combat, and within the play every character was as proficient at physical combat as any other. The moment most revealing of lanthe's point seemed to be the very ending of the show, when the chorus summoned all the cast to form a circle and make their gestures of preparation for war. Since men and women alike were gearing up and readying for battle, we were left to understand that this propensity for war transcended gender.

In that way, at least, she succeeded in making the message of humanity and war stronger than any message about gender, but it is impossible to separate the play from gender if one wants to play up both the tragedy and the comedy of the text, as lanthe did. That the comedy of *Lysistrata* is based on gender is one of its most universal points of resonance throughout the ages and societies it has been performed in. Had I not been part of the process of creating our production, I do not think our chosen theme of war would have superseded the play's inherent theme of the battle of the sexes.

And yet, most interestingly, the theme of gender has often been downplayed across conceptions of *Lysistrata*. lanthe's choices pertaining to the overall message of the play, as well as its ending, actually fall perfectly in line with recent trends in the performance of *Lysistrata*.

Let us begin by looking at three performances of *Lysistrata* from the early twentieth century that would become keystones of the modern performance tradition. As Aristophanes

reappeared onstage throughout the nineteenth century, his work had found a new purpose very similar to the old one: as a voice for the opinions of the politically dissident and those making social critique⁵³. *Wealth* and *Birds* had been used for a long time already to protest everything from censorship in the theater to British colonialism, *Assemblywomen* found itself used on both sides of the debate over social reform in Germany. At the same time, plays like *Frogs* were revived for the sheer sake of wowing audiences with a look at the “original” performance of Greek comedy.

Lysistrata came into play in force only after the turn of the century. This was only after the theatergoing public of cities like London had become accustomed to women in positions of power doing shocking things onstage, thanks to recent productions of *Medea* and *Agamemnon* and the less scandalous *Assemblywomen*⁵⁴. The taboo against *Lysistrata* could also only be lifted after a specific social movement had emerged for the play to support: female suffrage. Laurence Housman’s translation, published in 1911 after its performance at the Little Theatre in London in 1910, used the play as overt “feminist propaganda” to advance the cause of women’s suffrage through humor and, indeed, was well-received in reviews by a sympathetic press⁵⁵.

The performance, featuring Gertrude Kingston in its title role, found itself very much aligned with Aristophanes’ conception despite its repurposing for a new social movement. Following the trend of the time, the stage and costuming were quite Greek, again despite the modern agenda of the play. Kingston’s *Lysistrata*, interestingly, was as modest and proper as Aristophanes’ was, as I have discussed. In the opening of the play, surrounded by dozens of

⁵³ Hall and Wrigley 17.

⁵⁴ Hall 86-87.

⁵⁵ Hall 88.

other women in "bright hues and gaudy gold and silver designs," Lysistrata herself was in modest greys, and thus she displayed her authority through modesty in the midst of extravagance.

Two other performances central to Lysistrata's reemergence were Max Reinhardt's 1908 staging in Berlin, with a revival at the Grosse Schauspielhaus in 1920, and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko's in Soviet Moscow from 1923. Both were influential in establishing the interpretative tradition of *Lysistrata's* performance that continues to this day. Reinhardt's stagings, using an adaptation by Leo Greiner⁵⁶, eschewed the political side of the play in favor of heightening the sexual comedy (toned down though it was) and the Dionysian spectacle of the play⁵⁷. The production was critical to the performance trends of *Lysistrata* in its monumental scale, both in its cast and design aesthetic. The female chorus alone consisted of some sixty women flocking around Lysistrata, boldly costumed and matching the lurid, lively primary-color palette of the set⁵⁸. The set itself was massive and architectural, focusing on a colossal staircase leading up to the metal doors of the Acropolis, with an Athenian street scene before it. But despite its architectural focus, the design drew heavily from the contemporary avant-garde scene and exaggerated a Greek aesthetic for the effect of its comedy⁵⁹. Culminating in a joyous celebration of victory and peace, the performance was

⁵⁶ Kotzamani (1997) 98. Though Reinhardt staged the play twice in two very different venues, his concept behind the play was consistent between both, and so in these paragraphs I refer to his staging broadly unless one particular iteration is the subject of consideration.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 105.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 119ff. One might remark on the similarity of scene and costume designer Ernst Stern's color palette to the actual hues found in and on Classical Greek temples and statuary.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 117-119.

hailed critically as the grandest production of Aristophanes of all time⁶⁰, but at the expense of the biting satire and relatability of the original text⁶¹

Nemirovich-Danchenko's adaptation through the Moscow Art Theatre's Musical studio furthered the trend of adaptation to the contemporary aesthetic, but with a vastly different agenda. Produced six years after the October Revolution, Nemirovich-Danchenko saw *Lysistrata* as exclusively a political play, using a translation by Dmitry Smolin that cut or glossed over the sexuality almost entirely. In its place, Nemirovich-Danchenko hailed Aristophanes as a poet of the people⁶², seeing in the female chorus the voice of progressive change through the mobilization of the working class, fighting the conservatism of the male chorus. The set, meanwhile, was highly constructivist: an abstracted expression of Greek antiquity through four moving, semicircular colonnades, it was much like the Reinhardt set in its humorous evocation of antiquity. However, Nemirovich-Danchenko employed the image of Greek ruins in order to turn *Lysistrata* into a worker's play. The cast became "constructors, building the revolutionary theater" by physically constructing the new structure of the revolution onto the ruins of conservatism⁶³.

Despite their various adaptations to modern performance, these founding productions share the Aristophanes' fundamental purpose in the text: entertainment of the audience through spectacle and the success of the protest in the play to advance a real social cause. The original and these early modern stagings share the outcome of celebration,

⁶⁰ Ibid. 137.

⁶¹ Ibid. 136.

⁶² Ibid. 182.

⁶³ Ibid. 212.

jubilant in joyous victory, an outcome that has changed significantly in contemporary productions.

lanthe's seemingly unusual conceptions of the play—treating the text as a tragedy as much as a comedy; making the play about humanity, not women and men; the failure of the strike and a foreboding ending—all find precedent in stagings and conceptions from the last decade. The *Lysistrata* Project began in New York in 2002 by actors Kathryn Blume and Sharron Bower, who led a movement staging 1,029 readings of *Lysistrata* on March 3, 2003 to protest the American war under President George W. Bush against Iraq. The project led to readings in fifty-nine countries in many languages and many settings, ranging from traditional theaters to private homes, cafés, and subway cars, to name only a few. All had a common purpose of uniting citizens in favor of peace, some in order to raise funds for humanitarian peace organizations⁶⁴.

Out of this movement came a number of readings in the Middle East itself and, the following year, a project by Classical Greek scholar Marina Kotzamani to interview theater artists and playwrights from around the Arabic world specifically about their conceptions of the play, whether actualized or theoretical⁶⁵. These concepts, broadly speaking, complete the departure from Aristophanes' frivolous comedy that Nemirovich-Danchenko began, moving away from a lighthearted farce with a happy ending. Instead of a successful uprising that puts an end to war, whether a specific war or all the wars of humanity, the revolt in many Arabic interpretations ultimately ends in failure and turns the play into a dark, nihilistic comedy⁶⁶.

⁶⁴ *Lysistrata* Project: <<http://www.lysistrataproject.com>>

⁶⁵ Kotzamani (2006) documents this project in full.

⁶⁶ Kotzamani (2006) 14.

Two concepts by Hazem Azmy and Khaled El Sawy epitomize the interpretation of Lysistrata's initiative as a failure. Azmy reimagines the Acropolis that Lysistrata occupies as the headquarters of the Arab League, but decides to have her abandon her attempt, understanding that the real war is with the international media, not with men or any one government⁶⁷. El Sawy, though he would transform the play into a raucous musical comedy, has his version end with air-raid sirens and bombs exploding immediately after the peace is declared⁶⁸.

Likewise, the role of gender is almost universally transformed across the Arabic *Lysistratas*. To many artists, the gender of the revolutionary women becomes secondary, almost inconsequential to their purpose: they see the play as a universal people's movement that happens to be led by women. The women are antiwar activists first, whose gender does not matter in their struggle with global politics⁶⁹—very different from Aristophanes' world, where this political action by women was a revolutionary act in and of itself. Or, their gender becomes entwined with racial, national, cultural, or sexual minorities: the women staging the strike are representative of those in varying marginal statuses fighting against a larger, more powerful oppressor⁷⁰.

The parallels between these various Arabic concepts and Ianthe's own are self-apparent. But what is not immediately apparent is that much of our work on the Experimental Theater's production began by looking at the ways in which war affected women, in many cases specifically in the modern Middle East. Even in our very first design meeting, we began

⁶⁷ Ibid. 15, 30-31.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 15, 33.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 16.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 18.

with a discussion of *Lysistrata* as a battlefield, a war zone in and of itself despite its setting in a place removed from the site of conflict.

lanthe's first instruction to the cast and design team was to find images of the beauty in war and conflict, a contradictory concept that she felt was essential to understanding the play. In response, the ensemble members brought in examples of war photography, those beautiful compositions of tragic locales, art in protest of war, people affected by war, the strange aesthetic appeal of ruins and distressed textures. For my part, I sought out photographs from Baghdad and Kabul and specifically of women who lived in these war-torn regions.

The finalized performance barely invoked the visual impact of war at all; the closest we came to the harsh, gritty reality of war was our choice to make the preshow and its parallel finale combative and ominous. However, her focus on the reality and universality of war seems to have been significant in driving lanthe to the same place as these other contemporary interpretations of *Lysistrata*, where humanity is more important than women fighting men and any attempt to end war for good must fail.

Thus our staging falls broadly in line with the very same modern interpretive tradition established by the productions of Reinhardt and Nemirovich-Danchenko. Their works, in both performance and design, set the trend of adapting a story about the Peloponnesian War into a context which each particular audience can relate to. Though ours was not adapted to a specific moment in history like Nemirovich-Danchenko's was—and many Arabic conceptions—we approached the play and its design with a similar concept, abstracting a Greek aesthetic into a setting that could speak to universality.

However, the Experimental Theater's production has more in common with the modern iteration of that trend than with its early modern emergence. Those founding

productions, in their goals of the advancement of social movements and the desire to astound with their extravagance, strayed from Aristophanes' original point: to end war. Contemporary stagings exist almost solely for that very purpose, as protest plays or calls to mobilize for peace. Despite our own seemingly unusual choices in staging *Lysistrata*, our version has actually remained faithful to Aristophanes' intention.

Conclusions

Is there an element of any Greek play that simply cannot be accessed in the modern world? It would seem that, to some extent, the answer is yes. The choruses of any genre of Dionysian theater are so far removed from the modern conception of a chorus that performing them in the Greek manner would leave them incomprehensible and, perhaps, frightening to a modern audience. Meanwhile, there is much of Aristophanes' humor that is inaccessible to a modern listener, even an exhaustive scholar of fifth-century Athens, since so much of the comedy in his work is essentially Athenian pop culture. Jokes about well-known Athenians of the day, recent events in the city, or the reputation of nearby towns are all difficult if not impossible to appreciate without being part of that culture at that historical moment.

How does this inaccessibility affect the question of faithfulness to a Greek source? To be completely and exactly faithful to the text of *Lysistrata*, in this case, would present significant obstacles to the audience's understanding and enjoyment of the play. Directors are aware of this, and for this reason do not attempt to stage the choruses in the Classical Greek fashion, and either downplay or alter the comedy that originated from Athenian society contemporary to its writing. Modern and early modern translators and directors adapt Attic Comedy into a form that suits their own contemporary audience, updating the humor to modern references and generally setting the action in the present day or, as lanthe did, a timeless setting not far removed from the contemporary moment. In the context of today's conception of Greek comedy, true faithfulness would be a far more radical choice than the most outlandish reimagination.

We as theater spectators are accustomed to seeing wildly imaginative, modernized interpretations of Aristophanes and Euripides and Shakespeare and Molière onstage. But now, in the twenty-first century, few people set Greek theater in a historically accurate ancient Greece and costume their actors with masks and enlarged body parts. To her audience, the most daring part of lanthe Demos' *Lysistrata* was not when Lysistrata wrestled the Magistrate and threw him to the ground, but rather when the Spartan Ambassador entered using his three-and-a-half-foot-long phallus as a walking-stick.

Yet, despite the Classically accurate Greek exaggeration of body parts, I found in my work on our production that there was very little interest in the original text. Patric Dickinson, not Aristophanes, was the gospel voice in the rehearsal room. Occasionally, I was able to provide insight into the joke behind a particular name or reference thanks to my work with the Greek text, but otherwise what Aristophanes had actually written was irrelevant. When the cast had difficulty understanding the motivation for a particular line, they resolved it by discussing the line amongst themselves, not, as I would have done, by consulting the original source.

I must concede that this makes sense as the practice of directors and performers. The audience will hear only the text of the translation: the action onstage responds to what is said there and then, not what was written in a different language two and a half millennia ago. The translation, after all, is a complete text in and of itself, and can be performed and understood perfectly well without ever consulting the Greek. Dramatists and dramaturgs manage to produce Greek plays, and indeed any play performed in translation, all the time without delving into the original text.

It is certainly possible—but my experience in this process has been that the knowledge of the text that I gained from my close survey of the Greek was incomparably

enriching to my work as a designer. Naturally, I could have designed the play without ever looking at the Greek text, but because I explored the text in its original language, I was able to access images, colors, and tones embedded in the Greek that were completely absent in translation. The result was a design made rich by bringing subtleties to the Martel stage that had been lost in the departure from the original language. It is easy to imagine that the same process could be applied to other aspects of design as well; the Greek contains many specificities about the women's clothing, some of which I employed for my own design.

This knowledge also allowed me, as a designer, to bridge the gap between Aristophanes and our modern production. I used my reading of the Greek text to negotiate the tension between *Lysistrata* as written and our interpretation of it. I was able to play off of both the original intentions of the text and Ianthe's new concept of the play, and thereby find and bring out the harmony between them through the use of lighting. By subtly reinforcing the intrinsic meaning of the text, I used light to ground the play despite an interpretation that emphasized detachment from any historical moment and to connect the universality of our theme to the reality of the audience.

Indeed, I have found that it was this close reading of the Greek text that most enabled faithfulness to Aristophanes in my own work. Such intricate knowledge of the language allows a theatermaker in any capacity to truly understand the original intent and impact of the play. This way, one can bypass the translator and see in the author's own words what the motivations and histories of the characters are, what the quality of each scene is, free of the interpretive lens of translation.

This, I think, is perhaps the only way one can truly be faithful to an original text: by familiarizing oneself with the untranslated text and letting that knowledge inform one's work.

The inaccessibility of many conventions of Attic comedy make literal faithfulness difficult, because an attempt to recreate them exactly would alienate the unfamiliar audience. Perhaps, instead, the more faithful staging is the one that does not attempt to be literal, but rather adapts to make the play contemporary and accessible once again, whatever the means. Whether that should be through finding modern parallels for the cultural jokes or performing the choruses as musical numbers (our closest equivalent in modern theatrical conventions), I leave to the directors.

It is more important, I think, to capture the intent and the meaning of a text than it is to recreate exact conventions. Familiarity with the original source enables true faithfulness, because it allows a theatermaker—or any person working with an ancient source in a new language—to preserve the integrity of that original, no matter what new interpretation is given to it.

It is that very knowledge of the Greek that allowed me, as a designer, to achieve a reconciliation of my own between what Aristophanes wrote in 411 B.C.E. and what the audience saw at Vassar College in 2012 C.E. Ianthe Demos, Stephen Jones, Kenisha Kelly, Chris Cambell-Orrock, and the other creators and performers made *Lysistrata* relevant as a timeless story of war and peace; I used Aristophanes' language to underscore the story with the beauty and meaning it had in Classical Greece.

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