

Proscenium's 75th Anniversary

George Woollands and Margaret Rendle founded Proscenium in 1924. The company's first production was the now little-known *The Tide*, by Basil McDonald Hastings. Since then the company has performed nearly two hundred and fifty plays, using Harrow as a base since 1945. In this time Proscenium has built up a strong reputation for performing challenging plays (both classic and contemporary) to a high standard. Our 75th anniversary in 1999 will be marked with a number of events, including publication of a commemorative brochure, a summer party for current and past members, and a gala dinner towards the end of the year. As we enter the new Millennium, we look forward to our next quarter of a century!

Our Next Production

A Midsummer Night's Dream

By William Shakespeare

Although it is set in Athens, this is one of Shakespeare's most English plays. Its created world is based on the environs of Stratford-on-Avon, and the characters – whether tradesmen, lords and ladies, folk-lore creatures like fairies and Robin Goodfellow – are those which surrounded him as he grew up. It is a play about love and aspiration. About romance thwarted by opposition. About youth and age. About comedy and confusion. The theme of how all of this comes together is one of concord..the harmony which permits the existence of diversity. The play is a symbol of the possibility of a unity which is not sameness, an agreement that can include disagreement. Apt!

At the Travellers Studio, Harrow Arts Centre, May 26th-29th 1999

For further details contact

Proscenium Box Office 0181 954.7169

In accordance with the requirements of the Council:

"Persons shall not be permitted to sit or stand in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any of the other gangways."

PROSCENIUM

Lysistrata

of Aristophanes

in a version by Dudley Fitts

March 24th –27th 1999

Travellers Studio, Harrow Arts Centre

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Lysistrata

of Aristophanes in a version by Dudley Fitts

Lysistrata	Isabelle Cartwright
Kalonike	Clare Wooster
Myrrhine	Emma Davies
Boiotian Woman	Rachel Barnett
Lampito	Christina You
Athenian Commissioner	Colin Hickman
Kinesias	Tim Taylor
Spartan Herald	Paul Davis
Chorus Leaders	Kathleen Jones
	David Watkins
Men's Chorus	Morris Suckling
	Jim McDonald
	Sam Thornton
Women's Chorus	Evelyn Moutrie
	Jeanne Hawkes
	Linda Hampson
Directed by	Roderick Jones
Stage Manager	Crystal Anthony
Assisted by	Anne Gerrard
	Janet Suckling
	Jenny Glover
Special Props by	Jenny Glover
Set designed by	Colin Tufnell
Lighting designed by	Colin Tufnell
Lighting operated by	Peter Wilton
Dance arranged by	Susi Thornton
Costumes	Evelyn Moutrie

The action takes place in Athens in 411 BC

There will be one interval of fifteen minutes between Parts One and Two.

Poster image used by kind permission of the Victoria and Albert Museum

Old Comedy

..*Old Comedy* was the comedy of Athens in her prime, and is represented now by the first nine plays of Aristophanes. These plays often baffle the modern reader, who is disconcerted by their lack of plot, and by their extreme topicality. *Old Comedy* is the most local form of drama that has ever reached literary rank; it was, to speak very roughly, a national “rag”, in which anything prominent in the life of the city, whether persons or ideas, was unsparingly ridiculed; it was a unique mixture of fantasy, criticism, wit, burlesque, obscenity, parody, invective, and the most exquisite lyricism...

Oxford Companion to the Theatre

Director's Note

First produced in 411 BC in the depths of the Peloponnesian War, *Lysistrata* voices concerns which still disquiet us today, in Ireland, in the Balkans and throughout the world.

During the Second World War it was often said that, if only countries were led by women, the mothers, wars would never happen. It is however noticeable that during the last fifty years powerful women such as Golda Meir, Indira Gandhi and Margaret Thatcher have not proved remarkable as pacifists. We must therefore be all the more admiring of Dr Mo Mowlam in her quest for a final settlement of the “Irish Question”, and it is to her and her team that I respectfully dedicate this production.

Roderick Jones

The Rise of Athens

The Delian League was the alliance of Athens and her allies (neighbouring coastal states and islands) designed to protect Greece from further invasion from Persia. The arrangement of the League was such that the allies could either give money or ships. However, as Athens excelled at building ships, it was more practical for the allies to give money to the League.

Athens became leader of the League for two main reasons. Firstly, Sparta, quite possibly the stronger of the two cities, backed down; secondly, Athens had a large and experienced navy and this was essential as the League was made up almost entirely of coastal and island states.

As leader of the Delian League, Athens had many advantages; she was strongly influential in the policy and strategy of the Delian League; she gave the most ships and men to the League; and as permanent leader she had executive powers. All these factors contributed towards the League turning into an empire with Athens at the head by the middle of the fifth century.

The Spartans had set up the Peloponnesian League in the south of Greece at the end of the sixth century but by the fifth century this was not as strong as the Delian League. Unlike the Delian League, it only collected money in times of war; it also tolerated wars between its members, resulting in a weaker unit. In the early fifth century, relations between Athens and Sparta began to break.

Themistocles, a brilliant and innovative leader of Athens in the fifth century, was particularly anti-Spartan and after his expulsion from Athens, he began to spread propaganda about Sparta throughout the Peloponnese. This contributed to the weakening of the Peloponnesian League as Sparta, the leader, lost prestige amongst her allies. Sparta then faced a revolt, at the same time suffering the effects of an earthquake. Athens sent aid which Sparta rejected, greatly humiliating Athens. The alliance with Sparta broke, and, adding more insult to injury, Athens joined with Argos, Sparta's traditional enemy.

In 469 BC the island of Naxos tried to leave the Delian League. The rebellion was quelled and Naxos forced to pay tribute to the League. Other towns attempting to leave received the same treatment, resulting in a number of states reduced to the status of 'subject', forced to pay tribute to Athens. This practice soon spread to nearly all of the states.

Around 454 BC the League treasury was moved from Delos to Athens. The congress ceased meeting around 453 BC and around the same time the money became part of Athens' own treasury. Incidents followed where Athenians used League funds for their own interests without first consulting other states.

From this moment on Athens' power began to increase at a dramatically faster pace. All the states now had to swear oaths of loyalty to Athens promising that they would not revolt against her, would pay tribute to her, and would 'be obedient to the Athenian people.' Athens also began to control the law. By forcing Athenian law courts to be used in any political case, they could control their empire, using their democratic regime. Another measure the Athenians used to increase their power was the enforcement of the use of Athenian coinage, weights and measures. They also controlled the trade routes, a necessary factor in growth of the power of a city.

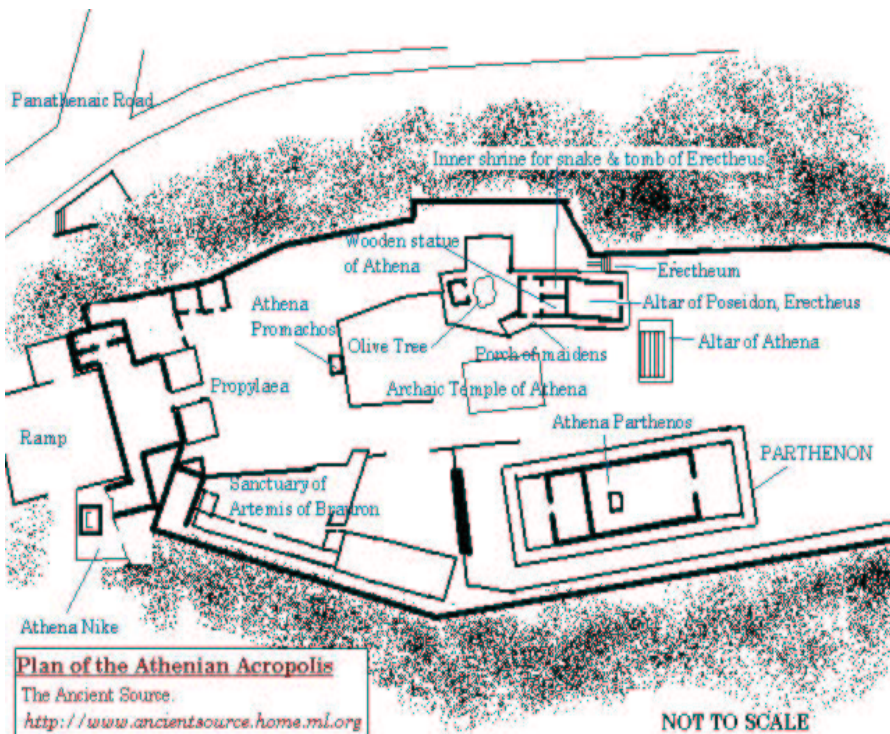
In 448 BC Athens made peace with Persia, allowing Athens to concentrate on becoming leader of an empire without worrying about an impending invasion from the East. With the settlement there was no longer a reason for the Delian League, but the Athenians were yet more determined to hold on to their empire and to exploit the financial advantages it provided them.

Rachel Barnett

The Play and the Acropolis

..The play's background is one of profound pessimism, both at home and abroad, of traumatic loss leading to a fear of total collapse. Perhaps this is one reason why the entire action takes place in front of the Propylaea, a continual reminder of the city's past greatness, and upon the great rock with which all of Athens' triumphs and beliefs were so closely bound up. Characteristically one of the main complaints leveled against Lysistrata and her associates by the chorus of Athenian men is that they have seized the goddess' sacred image, the olive-wood totem. The oath taken by Lysistrata follows an appeal to Peitho, goddess of persuasion, who shared a shrine with Aphrodite Pandemos on the south-west corner of the Acropolis... Aristophanes deploys the whole of the western end of the Acropolis as a familiar backdrop, one that each member of his audience must have seen clearly in his mind's eye. The here and now are never far below the surface in *Lysistrata*. Behind the erotic high jinks lurks the threat of imminent revolution – and only a few months after the first production, fantasy was eclipsed by fact..

The Parthenon, Peter Green



Lysistrata in Context

Aristophanes (?440-?380 BC) wrote *Lysistrata* in 412 BC, and produced it early in the following year at the Lenaia, the great Athenian festival of Dionysos. It is the last of the three comedies which the poet devoted to the subject of the Peloponnesian War; and in spite of its almost unexampled ribaldry, it has a sombre depth that we do not find in the other two plays, the *Acharnians* and the *Peace*. And rightly; for *Lysistrata* was composed less than a year after Athens had learned of the failure of the great Sicilian Expedition which (as even Aristophanes could not see) meant the end of Athenian civilisation.

Dudley Fitts

Chronology

c. 5000 BC	Neolithic settlements on and around the Acropolis
c.1600-1100	Palace built on Acropolis
480	Persian invasion; Spartan stand at Thermopylae; Persians sack Athens; older Parthenon destroyed; Persians defeated by Athenian fleet off Salamis
479	Sack of Athens by Persians; Persians defeated at Platae
479-449	Reconstruction of Athens; Athens organises anti-Persian league
449	Peace with Persia; Pericles initiates Acropolis temple-building programme
447-438	A new Parthenon rises on the Acropolis
431-404	Peloponnesian War pits Athens against Sparta; flowering of tragedy and comedy
430-429	Plague destroys a third of Athens' population
415	Athenian expeditionary force under Alcibiades and Nicias invades Sicily, laying siege to Syracuse
413	Complete destruction of Athenian force at Syracuse
411	Conservative revolution in Athens; Aristophanes' <i>Lysistrata</i>
404	Total defeat of Athens by Sparta; occupation by Spartans under Lysander; Long Walls of Athens leveled
403	Spartan withdrawal; restoration of democracy