

The Season

October 21- 24

Saturday, Sunday, Monday

by Eduardo di Filippo
Travellers

This production assisted by
Heriot Catering

January 13 - 16

Amadeus

by Peter Shaffer
Elliott Hall

March 24 - 27

Lysistrata of Aristophanes

a version by Dudley Fitts
Travellers

May 26 - 29

A Midsummer Night's Dream

by William Shakespeare
Travellers

Company contacts

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Proscenium is affiliated to Harrow Arts Council and is a registered charity - no 283141

PROSCENIUM

75th SEASON

1998 - 1999

PROSCENIUM

Lysistrata

of Aristophanes

in a version by Dudley Fitts

March 24th -27th 1999

Travellers Studio, Harrow Arts Centre

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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.

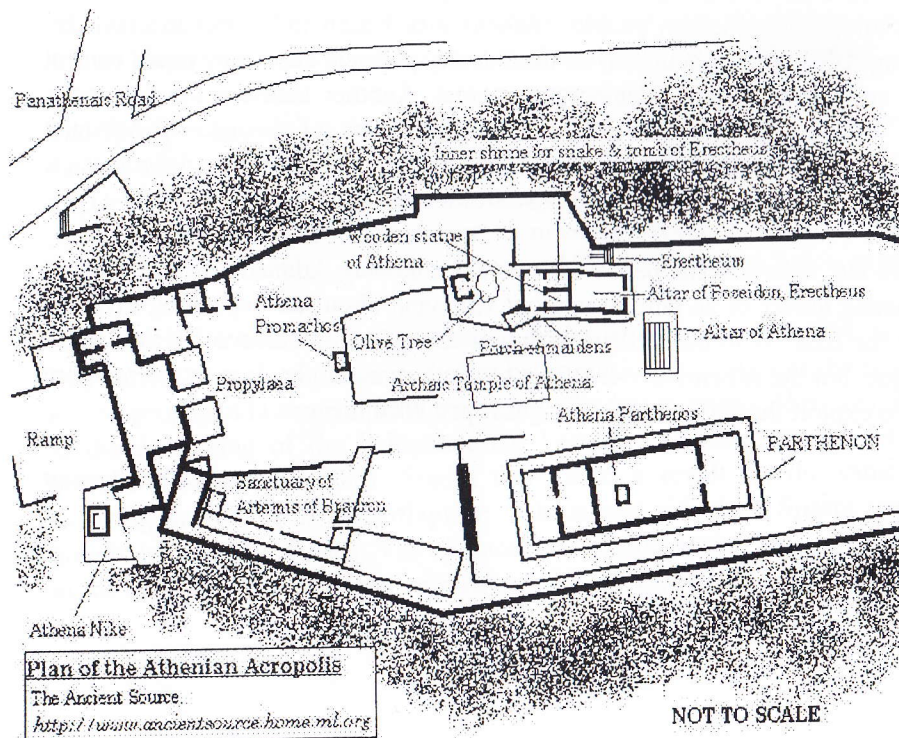
In 448 BC Athens made peace with Persia, allowing Athens to concentrate on becoming leader of an empire without worrying about an impending invasion from the East. With the settlement there was no longer a reason for the Delian League, but the Athenians were yet more determined to hold on to their empire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



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

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."