

Lysistrata

A scene from *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes
Translated by C.A.E. Luschnig

Adapted and Directed for the Symposium by Dante Albertie¹ and
performed by the Bronx Repertory Company

The Company: Kathy Adely, Chaunce Chapman, Dawn Clarke,
Chris Cole, Elle De Amor, Laurie Degen, Dan Jackson, Henry Ovalles,
Ken Ross, Victoria Soyer, Susan Soetaert, Damaris Spivey

Costumes - Susan Soetaert

Lighting - Laurie Degen

Technical Director - Ken Ross

Kathy Adely as **Lysistrata**

Chaunce Chapman as **Myrrhine**

Elle De Amor as **Calonike**

Henry Ovalles as **The Magistrate**

Damaris Spivey as **Lampito**

Description: *Lysistrata* is a comedy with a serious message that has a particular significance in our violent age. *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes was first presented publicly in 411 B.C. The women of Athens, tired of the Peloponnesian war, devise a plan with women of the other warring states to withhold the pleasures of the flesh from their men until they stop fighting. While it may seem slightly chauvinist of Aristophanes to suggest that the only bargaining chip the women possess is sex, taken in context the play deals with the empowerment of women and, of course, gender issues. The play is also considered an anti-war play. The *Lysistrata* Project organized readings around the world to protest the war in Iraq.

Kathy Adely as **Lysistrata** is a strong-willed woman who is not afraid to speak her mind. She is tired of the war and the ways of men. Chaunce Chapman as **Myrrhine** is also tired of the war, but it would never occur to her that she could do something about it. She is quite blasé about the whole issue and is known to never be on time. Elle De Amor as **Calonike** is the sex-starved member of the group. To her, everything is an innuendo. Her role is as Lysistrata's chief henchman and to provide comic relief.

Henry Ovalles as the **Magistrate** is a male chauvinist pig who knows that a woman's place is in the kitchen. Damaris Spivey as **Lampito** the enemy, joins forces with the women of Athens to bring the men home. The Athenians considered the Spartans savage but Lampito is as strong as an ox, as we see when the Magistrate tries to manhandle her.

The actors take the stage...

It is 411 B.C. and the Peloponnesian War rages between Athens and Sparta and the other Greek city-states.

CALONIKE: The war has scarred Athens, the center of culture and commerce and Aristophanes clearly wants it stop.

MYRRHINE: He writes *Lysistrata* as a comedy, making women the butt of his jokes, but also empowering them with courage and reason...

LAMPITO: The women see the futility and absurdity of war and embark on a plan to stop it.

CALONIKE: Women were considered the lowest form of life in those ancient times, they had no money or resources but they had a secret weapon...

LYSISTRATA: And it was between their legs. (*All exit except Lysistrata.*)

LYSISTRATA: (*waiting at her door, looking up and down the street*) Where can they be? If they had been invited to a Bacchanalia or a Saturnalia or Genitalia, you'd have to push your way through the chanting mobs. Now there's not a woman in sight. Oh, there comes my neighbor Calonike. Over there, Calonike.

CALONIKE: Good morning. Lysistrata. Now what's eating you? Don't frown, dear. You'll get wrinkles.

LYSISTRATA: Wrinkles are the least of my worries. I'm just so angry, and ashamed of our women. Men already think we are useless and up to no good...

CALONIKE: And by God they're right...

LYSISTRATA: They were asked to meet here to consider matters of the utmost importance. And nobody shows!

CALONIKE: Thanks a lot. What about me?

LYSISTRATA: Great. What do you want? A medal? You live next door.

CALONIKE: They'll come, honey; you know how hard it is for women to get out of the house. Either you're bending over for your husband or

waking up the slaves or putting down the baby, or washing it, or feeding it.

LYSISTRATA: But nothing is as important as this.

CALONIKE: What is it, Lysistrata? Why did you call us all here? Is it something big?

LYSISTRATA: Big is an understatement. It's enormous.

CALONIKE: (*showing a lascivious interest*) Oh my...is it long and hard?

LYSISTRATA: Yes and it might even hurt a little.

CALONIKE: And nobody is here!

LYSISTRATA: (*frustrated*) Pull your mind out of the gutter. It's not what YOU think. Then they would all be there with bells on. No, it's something I've wrestled with night after night after night and it keeps getting harder....

CALONIKE: (*still on the subject of bedroom adventures*) Ooh, that sounds like fun.

LYSISTRATA: It's not fun; the survival of Greece is in our hands.

CALONIKE: In the women's hands. We're doomed.

LYSISTRATA: Our city's affairs depend on us or it's the end of the Spartans....

CALONIKE: That's a great idea!

LYSISTRATA: And the extermination of the Boiotians.

CALONIKE: Good riddance, but please save those succulent Boiotian eels.

LYSISTRATA: I won't mention Athens, but you get my drift. Still, if we all come together now, the Boiotians and the Spartans and the Athenians, too, united we will save Greece!

CALONIKE: But how will women accomplish anything so sensible and heroic? We just stay inside, trying on our gowns, making up our faces, flouncing around in sexy negligees and harem slippers.

LYSISTRATA: Yes, and that is exactly my point. Our survival lies in these saffron gowns and perfumes, and slippers, and lipstick, and see-through dresses.

CALONIKE: Really?

LYSISTRATA: Yes. Not a man will raise his spear against his enemy...

CALONIKE: I'm off to get some saffron dye.

LYSISTRATA: Or pick up his shield

CALONIKE: I'll put on my best dress.

LYSISTRATA: ...or draw his sword.

CALONIKE: I'll get myself some new slippers.

LYSISTRATA: Then shouldn't the women be here?

CALONIKE: By God, they should have sprouted wings and flown here an hour ago.

LYSISTRATA: My dear Calonike, you'll see. That's the Athenian way: we do everything after it's too late. Where is everybody?

CALONIKE: I'm sure they'll be here (*aside*: Actually I'm not sure, but she's very upset.)

LYSISTRATA: I counted on the Acharnian women being the first to arrive. Nobody is here.

CALONIKE: Mrs. Theagenes will be here, once she has sobered up. Oh, look. Here come some women, and more are behind them. Whew! Where are they from?

LYSISTRATA: They must be from the south.

CALONIKE: Yes, it smells like all the garlic in the world is coming our way. (*Myrrhine enters.*)

MYRRHINE: Are we late, Lysistrata? Oh, come on. Don't give us the silent treatment.

LYSISTRATA: I'm disappointed with you, Myrrhine, being late for something so urgent.

MYRRHINE: I couldn't find my girdle in the dark. I had to yell at the slaves and feed the kids or was it yell at the kids and feed the slaves? Anyway we're in Athens, so nine o'clock means slightly after ten, which means I'm five minutes early here, so what's up.

LYSISTRATA: No, let's wait for Lampito to get here.

MYRRHINE: Fine with me. Uh, oh, lookout, here she comes now. (*Lampito enters.*)

LYSISTRATA: Lampito, my dear Spartan friend, hello. You look great. I wish I had your complexion. Have you been working out? You could strangle a bull.

LAMPITO: Yes, I do believe I could. I do my exercises religiously, and practice my belly dancing.

CALONIKE: (*peeling into Lampito's robe/blouse*) And what gorgeous breasts!

LAMPITO: Careful, honey. I'm not a prize heifer.

CALONIKE: Oh, don't be modest.

LAMPITO: Who is it that's mustered all us ladies together here?

LYSISTRATA: I have.

LAMPITO: Well, do tell us what you want us for.

CALONIKE: Yes, please tell us! What is it that's so urgent?

LYSISTRATA: I'd tell you. But first I need you to answer one teensy little question.

CALONIKE: Whatever you desire.

LYSISTRATA: Don't you miss your husbands at the front? Don't your children miss their daddies? I'll bet not one of you has a man around the house.

CALONIKE: You're right about that, mine has been gone the last five months. He's in Thrace guarding his genitals. I mean his general.

MYRPINE: Mine's been in Pylos for seven whole months. I'm sure he's forgotten what I look like.

LAMPITO: If my man even does come home, he gets on his gear and is gone again like a shot.

LYSISTRATA: And there's not even a whiff of a lover left. Ever since the Milesians deserted us, not so much as a measly five-inch dildo is available to provide us with some small comfort. (*The women sigh.*) Now tell me, if I come up with a scheme to stop the war and bring our guys back home, would you go along with me?

CALONIKE: By God, I will. Even if I have to pawn this dress [*aside*: And drink up the profits the same way.]

MYRPINE: Me, too! I'd even fillet myself like a flounder and give half to you.

LAMPITO: Y'all can count on me. To see peace, I'd climb to the top of Mt. Taygetus.

LYSISTRATA: Then I'll tell you everything. No need to keep it secret. We women, if we are going to force the men to come to terms, we will have to give up...*(pauses)*

CALONIKE *(interrupts):* Give up what? Tell us.

LYSISTRATA: Will you do it then?

MYRRHINE: We will. Even if it's the death of us.

LYSISTRATA: All right then, what we have to give up is SEX. *(They begin to withdraw in horror)* Wait. Where are you going? Why do you run away? *(to one)* This one has fainted! Get up! *(to another)* Are those tears I see? Will you do it? Answer me yes or no.

CALONIKE: I couldn't do it. Let the war go on.

MYRPHINE: Me neither; let the way go on.

LYSISTRATA *(to Myrrhine):* How can you say that, Miss Flounder? A minute ago you were ready to fillet yourself for the cause.

CALONIKE: But...but anything you want. I'll walk over burning coals, give up anything, but not SEX. Lysistrata, there's nothing like it.

LYSISTRATA *(to Myrrhine):* And what do you have to say?

MYRRHINE: I'm with them. I would rather jump for the top of the Parthenon.

LYSISTRATA: completely useless, that's what we women are. No wonder they write tragedies about us. We're nothing but bed and babies. But, my dear Spartan friend, if you are with me maybe we can still save the cause. Can't I count on your support?

LAMPITO: It is awful hard for a woman to sleep alone without her man. Still we must have peace.

LYSISTRATA: You're the best! You are the only WOMAN here.

CALONIKE: But, God help us, if we do give up...what you said, will it really bring peace?

LYSISTRATA: Of course, it will! All we have to do is wait at home wearing something comfortable, make it see-through and red! Be sure you're well plucked. We greet our guys. Instant erection. Then we just say NO! There'll be peace in no time.

LAMPITO: Ooh, yeah, just like when Menelaus got a peek at Helen's boobs, he put up his sword.

CALONIKE: But what if they just pack up and leave us?

LYSISTRATA: Then, as the saying goes, it will be hands-on work for us.

CALONIKE: As the saying goes, you're piling it on with a trowel. But what if they drag us kicking and screaming into the bedroom?

LYSISTRATA: Grab the door and don't let go.

CALONIKE: But what if they hit us?

LYSISTRATA: Then you have to give in. But lie there like a rock. There's no pleasure when they have to try so hard. And there are other ways to hurt them. They'll give up soon enough. A husband can't get satisfaction unless his wife is helping.

CALONIKE: Okay, if you are so sure about it, sign us up.

LAMPITO: I do declare that we Spartans are peace-loving and will be able to convince our boys to make an honest-to-goodness truce: but what about you all? You Athenians got the war fever. We are for peace, but not the PAX ATHENIANA.

LYSISTRATA: Not to worry. We will hold up our end.

LAMPITO: Not as long as you all have your battleships and your goddess has a bottomless bank account.

LYSISTRATA: We're way ahead of you. That little problem is under control. Today we will take over the Acropolis. Right now there's a ladies auxiliary sit-in while we are planning our strategy. Everybody thinks the old gals have gone up there to pray, but their real job is to seize the Treasury.

LAMPITO: Great plan! I can smell the sweet scent of victory.

CALONIKE: Are you sure it's not garlic?

MYRRHINE: What did you say?

LYSISTRATA: Quick, Lampito. We must swear an unbreakable oath.

LAMPITO: Lead on and we'll follow.

LYSISTRATA: Into the breach! This is the day that will turn the tide!

MYRRHINE: Lysistrata, what oaths are you going to have us swear?

LYSISTRATA: You know, the one from Aeschylus where they sacrifice a sheep and let the blood flow into a shield.

MYRRHINE: You can't take an oath for peace over a shield, Lysistrata.

LYSISTRATA: What do *you* think it should be?

CALONIKE: How about we find a white horse and sacrifice it and then swear by its testicles.

LYSISTRATA: Where'll we find a white horse?

CALONIKE: Oh, yeah. So what oath will we take?

LYSISTRATA: I've got it! We'll put a large wine bowl on the ground and sacrifice a jug of Thasian red and swear over the bowl not to add any water. (*She exits.*)

LAMPITO: Wooeee. I can't tell you all how much I like this oath.

CALONIKE: Me, too. If we're not having sex, at least we can get drunk.

LYSISTRATA: Here is the bowl and jug...

MYRRHINE: Oah, girls! Look at the size of that bowl.

CALONIKE: That's the sort of bowl anybody would like to get her hands on.

LYSISTRATA: Ahem! Put the bowl on the ground. Mighty goddess. Persuasion, and wine bowl, symbol of joy, receive these sacrifices and turn your heart in kindness toward women.

CALONIKE (*as Lysistrata pours the wine into the bowl*): This blood has a good, strong color and look how nicely it flows.

LAMPITO: By Castor, it has a splendid bouquet.

MYRRHINE: Oah, please, let me swear first!

CALONIKE: No, by the goddess, not unless we draw straws.

LYSISTRATA: Lampito and Myrrhine, put your hands on the bowl. And you, Calonike, for all the rest repeat after me. Then you will all solemnly swear to the same terms. I WILL HAVE NO LOVER OR HUSBAND....

CALONIKE (*reluctantly*): I WILL HAVE NO LOVER OR HUSBAND...

LYSISTRATA: NOT EVEN HIS BONER WILL WIN ME OVER (*pause*) come on, say it!

CALONIKE (*shaking, nearly fainting*): NOT EVEN HIS BONER WILL WIN ME OVER. Oh! Lysistrata, my knees are shaking!

LYSISTRATA (*not feeling her pain*): I WILL STAY AT HOME WITHOUT MY BULL

CALONIKE: I WILL STAY AT HOME WITHOUT MY BULL

LYSISTRATA: DRESSED TO THE NINES AND ALLURING
CALONIKE: DRESSED TO THE NINES AND ALLURING
LYSISTRATA: SO MY HUSBAND WILL BURN WITH DESIRE
CALONIKE: SO MY HUSBAND WILL BURN WITH DESIRE
LYSISTRATA: I'LL NEVER FREELY GIVE IN TO HIM
CALONIKE: I'LL NEVER FREELY GIVE IN TO HIM
LYSISTRATA: AND IF HE TRIES TO TAKE ME BY FORCE
CALONIKE (*warming up a bit*): AND IF HE TRIES TO TAKE ME BY FORCE
LYSISTRATA: I'LL LIE THERE STILL AND COLD AS A CORPSE
CALONIKE: I'LL LIE THERE STILL AND COLD AS A CORPSE
LYSISTRATA: I WILL NOT POINT MY TOES TO THE CEILING
CALONIKE: I WILL NOT POINT MY TOES TO THE CEILING
LYSISTRATA: NOR WILL I CROUCH LIKE A DAMASCENE LIONESS
CALONIKE: NOR WILL I CROUCH LIKE A DAMASCENE LIONESS
LYSISTRATA: IF I KEEP THIS OATH I MAY DRINK THIS WINE.
CALONIKE (*more enthusiastically*): IF I KEEP THIS OATH I MAY DRINK THIS WINE.
LYSISTRATA: IF I BREAK MY OATH MY BOWL WILL BE FILLED WITH NOTHING BUT WATER.
CALONIKE: IF I BREAK MY OATH MY BOWL WILL BE FILLED WITH NOTHING BUT WATER.
LYSISTRATA: Do you one and all take this oath?
ALL: In the name of Zeus, we do.
LYSISTRATA: Then I will proceed with the rituals. (*She takes a swig.*)
CALONIKE (*reaching for the bowl*): Just your share, my dear, we all need to bind ourselves in friendship. (*They pass the cup around; everyone takes a big swig. A loud noise offstage.*)
LAMPITO: What was that noise?

LYSISTRATA: That's what I was just telling you. The women have taken over the Acropolis. [*All shout, hurray, power to the women.*] Now, Lampito, you go back home and organize your women. We will go up to the Acropolis and join the others to keep it safe under our aegis. Let's go!

THE SCENE IS NOW THE ACROPOLIS.

CALONIKE: Now that we have the Acropolis, don't you think the men will send reinforcements to attack us?

LYSISTRATA: Let them come after us with threats and fire. These gates, like our legs, will be opened only on our terms. (*Exits into temple.*)

CALONIKE: You're right. We are women, hear us roar!!! *They enter the temple. (A Magistrate enters.)*

MAGISTRATE: The word in the streets is that a bunch of women have taken over the Acropolis. Athens has sunk to a new low. The chickens have taken over the barnyard. They have locked themselves inside the great temple and they won't come out? We'll see about that! I didn't make Magistrate of the month on my good looks. I'll set the crowbars under the locks and force them open. I'll show these women who's boss! I'll send them back to the kitchen where they belong!

LYSISTRATA (*opening the gate and walking out*): No need to break down the doors. Here I am. We don't need bolts or battering rams. What we need is some common sense.

MAGISTRATE: I will pay you for your impudence with the back of my hand, woman! (*He runs into Lampito who has stepped in front of Lysistrata, protecting her.*)

MAGISTRATE: How dare you assault an officer of the law. Make way, Spartan wench, or you'll be sorry!

LAMPITO: If you want to get to her, you'll have to go through me...

MAGISTRATE: Try and stop me! (*He runs into Lampito again.*)

MAGISTRATE (*picks himself up and addresses the audience*): They're growing them big in Sparta, nowadays. Maybe diplomacy is the answer. All I ask is one simple question: why have you locked us out of our city hall.

LYSISTRATA: We plan to cut off your funds so you won't be able to go to war.

MAGISTRATE: Is it money that makes war?

LYSISTRATA: War and all the other messes' men get themselves into. They buy their way into office just so they can steal. But we are not going to let you get your hands on one more Euro.

MAGISTRATE: What are you going to do?

LYSISTRATA: Glad you asked. We are going to run the treasury ourselves.

MAGISTRATE: You?

LYSISTRATA: Why not? We keep the household budget.

MAGISTRATE: That's not the same thing.

LYSISTRATA: What's that supposed to mean?

MAGISTRATE: We need to pay for the war.

LYSISTRATA: That will be our first order of business: NO MORE WAR!

MAGISTRATE: What about homeland security?

LYSISTRATA: We will take charge of it.

MAGISTRATE: You?

LYSISTRATA: Yes, the very same!

MAGISTRATE: Since when is war and peace any business of yours?

LYSISTRATA: Let me explain.

MAGISTRATE: Spit it out. Or else....*(he threatens the women who scare him off)*

LYSISTRATA: Listen to me and try to control yourself.

MAGISTRATE *(in impotent rage)*: Control myself? [*Women threaten him. He simmers down.*] Go on then.

LYSISTRATA: Gladly. All these years of the war you debated, you deliberated, you decided all your urgent business, while we had to keep our mouths shut. If we so much as asked "How did it go in the Assembly, sweetheart? Any chance of peace?" You'd say "What business is it of yours?" We'd hold our tongues until we'd hear that you had approved an even more idiotic and dangerous strategy, and venture to ask "Have you lost your mind, dear?" You'd go, "Shut up and stick to your weaving. War is man's work." Just like Hector. You say we don't carry the same burden you do. We've given our sons. We've grown old waiting for husbands. Now there's not a man left in Athens, so it's *our* turn. We have made common cause to bring peace and prosperity out of your disasters. Listen to us and we will fix it all up. We'll even balance the budget.

MAGISTRATE: And how do you expect to restore peace and order all over Greece?

LYSISTRATA: The same way we work our wool: untangle it, clean it, sort it, card it, wind it and weave it. **Politics is exactly like weaving!**

MAGISTRATE: What a disgrace: weaving up a foreign policy! You women are out of your minds! I'm off to find reinforcements!

LYSISTRATA: Bring them on! Tell them the girls at the Acropolis say Hi! Ladies, let us read the manifesto of the city of Athens!

CALONIKE: Whereas: We are the women of Athens; The city gives us life and brought us up;

MYRRHINE: We made the cakes for Athena's temple; We were little bears for Artemis in Brauron;

LAMPITO: We were basket carriers in the Panathenaia; We pay our taxes and contribute to the common good;

LYSISTRATA: We supply the city with sons;

CALONIKE: Whereas: You men contribute nothing; You have wasted our blood and treasure;

MYRRHINE: You have squandered the surplus your predecessors amassed, the ancient treasure from the Persian Wars though you swore to hand on the homeland not less, but bigger and better;

LAMPITO: Because of you we risk destruction and defeat; And all you can do is grumble;

LYSISTRATA: And whereas: We have the best advice for the city;

ALL: Therefore: We pledge ourselves to save the homeland and cure all its woes.

THE END

About The Company

The **Bronx Repertory Company** is a professional theatre company comprised of emerging theatre professionals from the Lehman College Theatre program, augmented with seasoned professionals from the New York City theatre community. The goal of the company is to provide a professional working environment for the young Lehman actor (both alumni and current students) and to provide a theatre company The Bronx can call its own. The company focus is on new work by emerging playwrights as well as provocative work by established authors that resonates with our sophisticated, urban audience. The Bronx Repertory Company is dedicated to improving the quality of life in the borough by providing theatre productions of the highest quality at an affordable price to our underserved community.

Note

¹ **Dante Albertie** is the Director of Lehman Stages at Lehman College. He is also the Founding Artistic Director of The Bronx Repertory Company, a professional theatre company in residence at Lehman College. at Lehman College. Prior to joining Lehman, Albertie was the co-founder and Artistic Director of the Belmont Playhouse (1991-2001). Directing credits at the Belmont include: *A Stone Carver* by William Mastrosimone (NYC premiere), *Over The River And Through The Woods* by Joe DePietro, *Behind The Counter With Mussolini* (Cable Ace Award/Off-Broadway run) the world premiere productions of *Little Victories* by Stephanie Stowe and *In-Betweens* by Bryan Goluboff, which moved Off-Broadway to the Cherry Lane Theater. Albertie recently directed the world premiere production of *Yardbird* by Stephanie Stowe at the Bank Street Theatre in NYC.

