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1. Context and Setting the Play:

Aristophanes, the Greek playwright, wrote *Lysistrata* in the context of the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta. The play was also written for the annual festival of Dionysus, and was originally written as a comedy. In the text of the play, which is also set amidst the war, the main character, Lysistrata decides to end the ongoing war that has continuously taken many men away and only brought home a few of who left. In order to do so, she and all the other women in Athens with the help of one Spartan woman, Lampito, make a pact to withhold sex from their husbands until the two factions make peace. They will spread the news throughout Athens and Sparta so that all the women are in agreement. They also enact a plan to seize the Parthenon and prevent any funds from aiding the war. Throughout the play, the audience sees women as strong and refusing to acquiesce to men. After seizing the Parthenon, the magistrate tries to smoke the women out, however in response, the women simply put out the fire with water. Even though the women hold strong in their plan, one by one they begin to make up excuses to run home to their husbands. One in particular, says that she is very pregnant and must return home quickly. However Lysistrata fires back that the woman was not with child the day before, and points out that the woman merely put Athena's sacred helmet under her dress. One character Myrrhine, seduces her husband, and seems to acquiesce to him, but ultimately stands strong and leaves him wanting more. These contrast the cultural view of women at the time, which mainly sees women as secondary to men, and that they have an inability to get anything done without men, let alone contrive a whole plan to end the ongoing war. However, the scene where the women begin to come up with excuses shows the pattern that ultimately women do not have the power or stamina to go against their husbands. Women were also not allowed to attend theatre at this time the play was written, so it should be noted that men were the audience. Because the women succeed in the end of the play, this clearly fits the genre it was meant for as a comedy. The play examines the idea of women not only going against their husbands, but on top of that succeeding. This would be seen as completely ridiculous and nothing but a joke to men at the time.

The setting for my production will be in Mississippi, during the American Civil War. The themes and conflicts will fit nicely into a parallel to that of when it was written. The city of Athens will become a southern town amidst the chaos of Confederate soldiers leaving their homes, and families to fight against the union. Because of the close proximity from southern plantations to the battlefields, occasionally the soldiers will have the opportunity to come home and in Myrrhine's case try to seduce their wives. Lysistrata and the other Athenian women will be southern Confederates, while Lampito and the other Spartan women, who are scarce in the play, will be women from Missouri, a state

that at the time was split between the Union and the Confederacy. At the end of the play, the two sides surrender and end the war. For putting it in terms of the Civil War, the end of the play can happen when General Lee surrenders in 1865. The names will not be changed, even though they could blend into the time period and context better, because I want to keep the text the exact same. Due to the fact that they are in the South however, all the characters except those from the North will have southern accents. It also should be specified that the accents should be from Mississippi, and not another southern dialect such as Texas. Lastly, for the overarching theme, of gender stereotypes of the play, women during the Civil War were either nurses or did not aid the war cause. Because of this, the helpless without men, naïve, and compliant view of women will carry into the context of 1860s United States.



Themes:

Some themes of the play that I noticed throughout the first read were: standing for what you believe in, the idea that women are helpless and useless without a man, and that wars leads to pain, suffering and destruction.

Throughout the play, Lysistrata holds true to her crusade by urging the women to stay on track, and refusing to acquiesce to any of the men who try to put her in her place. She stays focused in her goals and does not waver in what she believes to be right and wrong. In the end of the play, she ultimately succeeds showing that if one stays true to yourself, you will ultimately win. In my production, I want to focus on the fact that Lysistrata, being a woman, succeeds in her path of going against the men, and breaking the standard for the ideal stereotypical Athenian woman. This will emphasize for some, the inner power of women, and on a deeper level will reiterate that the only time society thought it plausible that a woman could succeed would be in a comedic play.

Along the same lines of gender stereotypes during the play, when the other women in the play begin to make excuses to go be with their husbands, they are reaffirming the idea that they cannot do anything without men. They have the need to be swept away by and

serve the men in their lives, proving that their lives would be lost without the purpose of waiting on their husbands, and doing as their husbands see fit.

The entire basis of the play is prompted by the fact that men are leaving for war and not returning. The devastation and impact on the town and specifically its women have sparked this newly found determination to end the fighting. Because the war and its increasing death toll, Lysistrata and her fellow Athenian women begin their crusade.

2. My Artistic Responses, Creative Ideas, and Explorations and My Own Experiences of Live Theatre as a Spectator

First Impressions:

After reading the play, I was happy with the outcome that, despite the social order of the era, the women succeeded in ending the war, and the men acquiesced to them. When the Spartan men come to make peace, they quickly end the war. This makes the conflict simple and clear cut, instead of being complicated and intricate.

Throughout the play however, I also began to feel frustrated with the other women of the town, and confused as to why they caved so easily when their husbands came home. When Lysistrata must keep the women on task, and disprove any excuse for needing to go home, such as moths getting to their clothes, or suddenly being in labor, I found myself upset at the weak core of the Athenian women. I wanted something more from them, and instead Aristophanes showed their fickle nature.

I also felt frustrated towards the men of the town, who became so desperate that one in particular used his own child to tempt his wife to come home. Initially the men did not even take the women seriously, and once they began to, the old men chorus and Magistrate hurled insults at the women. This, dialogue between the men and women choruses shows the relationship between the two genders.

Techniques to Incorporate:

The play deals with the topic of gender relations and how women were treated and regarded during the time. Therefore, the plays' message, even if it was a joke when it was initially written, of showing the power of women will fit into the concept that women threaten men's masculinity. For my context, I want to focus on this as well, and with my context of the American Civil War, I want the men to see the Athenian women as helpless southern belles. The power and strength of Lysistrata will then be sudden and come as a shock to their society.

I also would like to incorporate simple sets and focus on the period costumes that truly represent each character, so that the audience's attention is not on the lavish sets, but on the people themselves.

Influences:

I recently watched a production of Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Winsor*, at the Oregon Shakespeare festival. It was performed in their Allen Elizabethan Theatre, which is a replica of the Globe Theatre. Because of the theatre's structure and permanent pieces, the set was created around and for the theatre. In a similar way, I would like to use the Allen Elizabethan Theatre for my production, and incorporate minimalistic sets such as chairs and tables for the production.

I also had the opportunity to see a production of *Waitress* on Broadway recently. With the story being in the South, the actors used southern accents and embodied their characters to the core. For my production I would also like to focus on the dialects and specific mannerisms and movements of each character and making sure that they align with the actor and their interpretation.

When I was little, I saw a production of *Wicked* with my family in Seattle and was blown away by the intricate costumes, hair, and makeup. I will also specifically spend time on making sure each costume is period appropriate, and as many women during the 1860s had big dresses with hoop skirts, I would like to add detail into the dresses and make each one different from the other. Even though the women chorus should have some conformity, I would also like to show each woman as a separate character and give them semi different looks.

3. My directorial Intentions and the Intended Impact on an Audience**Artistic Intentions:**

The main intention I have for this production is to share with the audience this classic piece of theatre and make them contemplate the different gender roles and relations throughout history. Although the original play was created quite a bit before I am setting it, the same issues will be easily incorporated into this time period, and therefore proving that the issues have still remained relevant and remain so today.

I want this production to be accessible to everyone, so I am hoping that the audience will be a mix of people from different paths of life, economic levels, and belief systems. The presentation of people overcoming their stereotypes and at the same time succeeding, will hopefully inspire the audience and make it relatable to every audience member.

I want the audience to feel and root for Lysistrata, and at the same time almost feel sympathetic towards Myrrhine, who almost falters in her convictions. I want them to feel attached to and see themselves in the characters. Even though they are female characters, I want them to be shown as simply human. I want the men in the audience to be able to relate to their struggle, even if it has nothing to do with the story's literal meaning. I want

the audience to recognize the humanity in each character and be able to feel, hate, and love each character.

The Set:

Since I want to use the Allen Elizabethan Theatre in Ashland Oregon for my production, there will be permanent installations that are already in the theatre. Therefore, my set will be able to use the inner above, inner below, heavens, and so on.



With the ramps on either side of the audience, the actors will be able to enter and exit through the audience, giving them more of a close and personal feeling with the story and the actors. This will be used for entering and exiting the stage towards Sparta or Missouri. For closer entrances, and exits to a house, or so on, I will use the doorways on stage right and left, which will allow the stage to act as Athens, or Mississippi.

My goal is with a staircase going up to the balcony on stage right, stage left will be open and not crowded. The actors will climb the stairs to the balcony, which will act as the acropolis. This will give the audience a feeling of separation from the acropolis, while at the same time, make the women be above and out of reach for when the male chorus tries to smoke them out.

The cave is another important aspect of the set that will need to be prominent. I want it to be secluded enough from the rest of the actors, and yet not so covered that the audience will need to strain to see the actors. I initially thought of using the inner below, however with the staircase going up to the balcony, I want Myrrhine, and Cinesias to be stage left with an uncomfortable set around them. I would like to have a wooden structure

covered on the top and three sides by cloth that will make it look almost as a tent. This will show the audience the crude and informal nature of this scene.

With the weather slightly unpredictable, all the sets will need to be waterproof, or at least have the ability to get wet.

Props:

The main props needed for this show are the cot and mattress that Myrrhine must look for and bring during the cave scene. This will add to the effect of the informal and spontaneous nature of the scene. I will also need household items that are made of plastic or something that will not break as they are thrown at the men. Other props will include swords and shields for the soldiers that will communicate their strength and power, and Athena's helmet that one woman puts up her skirt to pretend to be pregnant.

The Presentation of Color:

With the stage being a dark brown, I would like the props and costumes to contrast and somewhat blend in with the stage. To stand out from every other character, Lysistrata will have a white cream dress. With the other characters wearing darker colors, the bright creamy white will emphasize the difference between Lysistrata and the other women and men in the town. Because the production is also set in the American Civil War, to add some historical significance to the piece, I would like the men in Mississippi to wear grey so to symbolize the Confederacy, while the men from Missouri wear blue to symbolize the Union.

Lighting/Sound:

For sound, I would like to have the same feeling of the lighting with a very simple and light feeling. There should be very little music throughout the show, as I would like the script to speak for itself.

With the outside stage, I want the lighting to be very simple. As the shows will start with the outside still light, to give a historical feeling, I want there to be very natural and bright warm light. As the show continues, I will still have a natural and simple look to it, but the lights will become more intense. The only change that I would like to have in the lighting is during the scene when the men attempt to smoke out the women chorus. I would like darker and grey scaled lighting that will help show the audience the smoke from the fire.



Costumes:

As mentioned above, the men will stand with their side of the war by either wearing blue or grey. In order to show their disapproval to the war, the women in both territories will wear varying colored dresses. The men’s costumes should be clean cut, simple, and masculine looking uniforms. Although they are on opposite sides of the conflict, I would like both sides to have very similar and even identical costumes with different colors. This will show the audience that inside they are ultimately the same with very few differences.



The women of both towns should have a similar effect on the audience, but differ from the men in that they have distinct details different from one another. The women in Mississippi being southern belles, will have faded, pastels colors. This will give them unique costumes that not only are different from one another, but also from the men, and Lysistrata. The women from Missouri, or the North will contrast this by wearing city colors. Although Missouri is on the fence of being Confederate or Union, and has a large agriculture industry similar to Mississippi, I want to distinguish between the women, giving them separate color palettes. With the darker city colors, the Northern women will not only contrast the southern belles, but also show the audience yet another difference between the two warring sides in terms of style and traits.



With Lysistrata, I would like her to be a part of the women by having a somewhat similar costume design, but stand out with a creamy white color. Not only will this have her stand out from the rest of the cast, but also this will give contrast to the idea that white symbolizes purity, since Lysistrata defies many female characteristics.



4. How I Would Stage one Moment of the Play (Women and Old Men Chorus/ Lysistrata and Magistrate)

The moment I chose to stage deals with the concept of gender relations and the stereotypical view of women during the play and its historical context on pages 24-45. In this scene, the chorus of women argues with the Magistrate and male chorus after ceasing the Akropolis. The audience should feel angry towards the old men chorus, and begin to understand the need for the end of war. As soon as the two choruses enter, there should be a shift in the atmosphere, a constant and never ending tension between the genders.

Women at the time are seen as demure and helpless. This scene will change that thought and baffle the male chorus. I want energy coming from both sides, but the men to have more of a malicious and derogatory tone in their voices. As they say, “O hit them hard and hit again and hit until they run away, and perhaps they’ll learn, like Bupalus, not to have too much to say,” I want the audience to see a distinct difference between the

genders' natures. (Aristophanes 27) The women should have more of a powerful nature as well, but still light air about them. All of their lines should have a recognizable force and strength that the audience should gravitate towards. Each chorus should also blend together to create a unifying effect that almost takes away their individuality and clumps them into one group. They are no longer separate characters, but one that represents the entire gender. The two groups being in a kind of a mob, with the Magistrate and Lysistrata at the forefront, will show this.

Along the same lines, the only time anyone should stand out is Lysistrata being forward to speak her truth. When this happens I want the audience to feel justice and sympathy or empathy towards the main female character. When Lysistrata says her line, "But we abolish war straight by our policy," (36) I want the men to be baffled and confused, as well as angry and stuck in their ways. The only man that should stand out is the Magistrate, and when he does stand out, the men chorus should feel a bit of relief that there will be order once again and that this will be set right.

This scene should show no signs of what is to come, in terms of Myrrhine, and I want the audience to feel almost hope that the women will not cave in, or back away from their crusade. As the section comes to an end, I want the tension between Lysistrata and the Magistrate to heighten as they argue. The Magistrate should say a line with wit and the idea that he is in the right, only to have Lysistrata come right back and get in his face. This should be a complete opposite of what is to be expected of her, and should make the audience not only feel for her, but also root for her and her cause.

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