

Lysistrata Brings Bawdy Humor to the Stage at Providence College

□□ Long sick of the Peloponnesian war, Lysistrata convenes a meeting with the women from neighboring Greek city states with the aim of putting an end to it with a novel scheme: withholding sex. It takes a little doing, but the women soon come around to Lysistrata's argument and join forces. The menfolk are incensed, but there is little they can do about it and before long turn to groveling and begging.

All this would be an impressive statement of how women wield enormous power in the affairs of men, unfortunately it's not entertaining to watch a play for the sole purpose of a statement. Aristophanes understood this well, which is why he loaded it with dick jokes and innuendo. Consider this exchange: CLEONICE: And why do you summon us, dear Lysistrata? What is it all about? LYSISTRATA: About a big thing. CLEONICE: And is it thick too?

Saucy humor and exchanges such as this underscore gender roles and expectations. However, Mary G. Farrell's direction never commits itself to the bawdy fun of the material.

Many of the innuendo-laden lines are flatly delivered or underplayed in a sea of competing voices. At one point, Lysistrata engages in a playful rhyme banter with Cleonice that peaks with Lysistrata shouting "Shucking!" What should have been a moment that elicited an audience giggle, instead falls flat.

In another scene, Cleonice retorts to a Magistrate that she'd rather go "sit on an icicle" than hook up with him. The sting of the insult is taken away by an orchestra rim shot and a chorus of harrumphs from the soldiers.

However, while the direction may be lacking here, the cast is game for the on-stage antics. If you're in for a night of college revue-style humor, this may do it for you, but if you're looking for something more, this may not be for you.

Lysistrata runs through April 13 at Angell Blackfriars Theatre. Visit providence.edu/theatre/Pages/whats-playing.aspx for tickets and information.