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Aristophanic Comedy in American Musical Theatre, 1925–1969

Musicals feature song, dance and spoken dialogue that, on the one hand, are strongly enough integrated to present a coherent narrative or coherently themed revue but, on the other hand, are loosely enough integrated to allow diverse musical and theatrical materials. Different types of integration have come in and out of fashion in the musical's nearly 150-year history. For example, structural integration requires that song, dance and dialogue equally support the musical's storytelling; removing an element results in the collapse of the whole. Or, integration with regard to characterization demands that characters possess a unique voice that remains consistent across speech and song; lyrics and music need to arise naturalistically out of a character's spoken dialogue. Integration, however, is not always a primary goal. Musicals by their nature are composed of diverse elements that always create a certain tension within a show, and creators may exploit such tensions. An orchestra, for example, belongs to the real world of the audience but makes possible the fictional characters' singing.¹ Some stagings of musicals such as *Cabaret* exploit the orchestra's existence by bringing it into the show. *Cabaret* has some songs in which the orchestra is the band at the Kit Kat Club and thus is a character in the play, but other songs that arise naturalistically out of a character's dialogue and so make the orchestra an extra-dramatic element. As we will see in these pages, playwrights, composers,

lyricists, critics and scholars frequently distinguish musicals according to how they handle the question of integration.

This chapter studies musical adaptations of Aristophanes with special attention to the question of integration. Aristophanes has been frequently tapped as source material for musicals. All eleven of his extant comedies have been adapted. His comedies seem a ripe source for adaptation not only because they combine song, dance and dialogue but also because they strike a balance between integration and disintegration. Plots tell a story but with a loose, episodic structure. Songs, whether solos or choral odes, rarely advance plot or characterization. Characters—like the plays in general—possess what one scholar has called ‘discontinuity’: character change seems to happen by aleatoric sequence rather than rational consequence.² Adaptations have often embraced Aristophanes’ discontinuities but it has also imposed integration according to fashionable musical theatre trends. This chapter examines the structural and characterological qualities of three Aristophanic musicals produced in the U.S. In 1925–26, the Moscow Art Theatre (M.A.T.) Musical Studio toured the U.S. with a production of *Lysistrata*. In 1961, lyricist E. Y. ‘Yip’ Harburg adapted *Lysistrata* under the title *The Happiest Girl in the World*. In 1968–69, Al Carmines and Tim Reynolds’s version of *Peace* ran for over 200 performances in New York. These three productions have been selected because of their significantly diverse cultural origins and aesthetic features, not necessarily their artistic or commercial success. They are an avant-garde foreign import, a traditional scene-and-song Broadway musical comedy and a musically eclectic anti-war celebration. Each approaches the question of integration in significantly different ways; each thus also approaches Aristophanes

differently. They represent the spectrum of twentieth-century American reception of Aristophanes as well as the range of twentieth-century American musicals.

From *Acharnians* to *Lysistrata Jones*

Our three productions form a small part of a long history of Greek comedy productions in Anglophone North America.³ We have space here for only the briefest sketch of this history, done for contextualization. Although Aristophanes once appeared, reading one of his comedies, on a drop curtain before an 1859 musical adaptation of Dickens's *The Cricket on the Hearth*,⁴ the first production of one of his comedies occurred in Philadelphia in 1886. *Acharnians* was staged in Greek, with original music, by the faculty and students of the University of Pennsylvania.⁵ Thereafter, Aristophanes has never been long absent from American stages. University productions have been a mainstay: *Frogs* at University of the South, 1892;⁶ *Birds* at Harvard, 1901;⁷ *Birds* at Vassar College, 1902;⁸ *Birds*, the inaugural production at the Hearst amphitheatre in Berkeley, 1903;⁹ *Frogs* at Temple University, 1916;¹⁰ *Birds* at Randolph-Macon Woman's College (Lynchburg, Virginia), 1937;¹¹ *Birds* and *Peace* at Harvard, 1939 and 1941, with music by undergraduate Leonard Bernstein;¹² *Birds* at Catholic University, 1948, translated and directed by the future theatre critic Walter Kerr;¹³ *Lysistrata* at Brock University (St. Catharines, Ontario), 1969;¹⁴ *Birds* at Cleveland State University and *Clouds* at University of Massachusetts, 1970, both of which participated in the American College Theater Festival in Washington;¹⁵ *Lysistrata* at

University of Toronto, 1980;¹⁶ *Lysistrata* at East Carolina University (Greenville, North Carolina), 2010, directed by this chapter's author;¹⁷ and many, many more.

Professional productions began in the early twentieth century. Several productions of *Lysistrata*, *Thesmophoriazusae* and *Ecclesiazusae* were staged in support of the women's suffrage movement.¹⁸ The Moscow Art Theatre tour seems to have been the first large-scale professional production in North America. In 1930, the M.A.T.'s co-translator, Gilbert Seldes, produced a new *Lysistrata*. Its initial Philadelphia run was so popular that it toured New York, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Detroit and Los Angeles; in the last city, it was shut down by an overzealous police censor.¹⁹ Other notable productions have included a 1946 Broadway *Lysistrata* with an all-black cast;²⁰ a 1955 Off-Broadway *Thesmophoriazusae* under influential director Arthur Lithgow;²¹ an odd 1964 Off-Broadway musical called *The Athenian Touch*, in which Aristophanes, while writing *Lysistrata*, competes with Cleon for the affections of a courtesan;²² a 1966 *Birds* in an Ypsilanti, Michigan baseball stadium, starring comedian Bert Lahr;²³ a 1969 French-language musical *Lysistrata* entitled *Faites l'Amour, Pas la Guerre*, one of the inaugural productions of the Canadian National Arts Centre in Ottawa;²⁴ the unsuccessful 1972 Broadway *Lysistrata* starring Melina Mercouri and directed by Michael Cacoyannis;²⁵ the 1974 musical *Frogs* by Burt Shevelove and Stephen Sondheim in the Yale swimming pool, later revised by Nathan Lane for a Broadway bow in 2004 (the only American adaptation to receive significant scholarly attention);²⁶ a curious 1985 musical *Lysistrata*, 'set in 2085 on Alpha Centauri, a "blue-collar planet"' and performed at the Cleveland Zoo;²⁷ competing 2002 musical versions of *Lysistrata* by theatre bigwigs Robert Brustein and Galt MacDermot, on the one hand, and Alan Menken,

David Zippel and Larry Gelbart, on the other hand;²⁸ and most recently, *Lysistrata Jones*, a 2011 Broadway musical that transposed Aristophanes' story onto a university basketball court.²⁹

In this brief survey, we should not neglect Menander. In 1954, an enterprising teacher mounted a professional production of three fragmentary Menandrian works under the title of *The Girl from Samos*.³⁰ More recently, a musical production of *Samia* was staged in New York and Washington (1990) and a *Dyskolos* was seen at the New Jersey Shakespeare Festival (2002).³¹ Finally, a musical adaptation of *Dyskolos* under the titles *Wild Goat* and *The Girl, The Grouch and the Goat* has played in Chicago (twice); Lawrence, Kansas; Anaheim, California; and Orem, Utah (2004–2010).³²

This is not an exhaustive list of Menander productions, but its scale in comparison to the previous two paragraphs is an accurate representation of the difference in popularity between Menander and Aristophanes. One major reason for the difference must be the quality of scripts available. Even apart from the paucity of stageable Menander translations, no complete Greek script was even available until the 1959 publication of *Dyskolos*, discovered on an Egyptian papyrus. The 1954 production mentioned above had to be constructed out of fragments culled from other, smaller papyri. More importantly, Aristophanes has political and aesthetic advantages for American audiences. While Aristophanes is notoriously difficult to adapt because of chronologically specific political references, it is easier to construct parallel political satire than to adapt Menandrian social mores. It is no coincidence that *Lysistrata* has been the most popular Aristophanic play on modern American stages. Its protofeminist and antiwar themes have found easy homes during years that saw advances in women's rights and nearly constant warfare. Even when the setting remains ancient Athens, as it does in both *Lysistrata*

adaptations studied here, the political themes resonate strongly in the modern theatre. Aesthetically, ancient New Comedy like Menander's can be successful on the American stage.³³ Fifty years after it first opened, the Plautine concoction *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* remains one of the most produced American plays of the twentieth century.³⁴ Like Plautus's plays—and Menander's—it is a tightly plotted comic romp, so well constructed that it cannot fail to please audiences. Therein, however, lies the challenge for any potential adapter of Menander. If almost any scene or character is altered, the entire play needs to be rewritten.³⁵ In contrast, Aristophanes' comedies possess great plasticity. If Kinesias becomes Lysistrata's husband instead of Myrrhine's, as happens in both the M.A.T. *Lysistrata* and *Happiest Girl*, the dynamic of Aristophanes' play will be altered but the core plot will remain intact. The present study focuses on such structural and characterological issues. Since the three shows considered here approach integration in significantly different ways, they will serve as useful signposts along the road from *Acharnians* to *Lysistrata Jones*.

The Moscow Art Theatre Musical Studio *Lysistrata*

First staged in Moscow in 1923 under the direction of Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, *Lysistrata* was part of an attempt to find a middle ground between the realism on which the M.A.T.'s reputation had been built and the newest avant-garde trends in Russian theatre. In the U.S., the production opened at Jolson's 59th Street Theatre in New York on 14 December 1925, the first offering in the M.A.T. Musical Studio's repertoire. It was performed entirely in Russian, but English translations (from the Russian, not the Greek) were available to audiences.³⁶

American critics praised many of the production's uniquely Russian artistic pretensions, but they also described it in terms appropriate to mid-1920s New York musical theatre.

The Moscow Art Theatre was founded by Nemirovich-Danchenko and Konstantin Stanislavsky in 1897.³⁷ Their purpose was to build on artistic trends in realism and create an ensemble-based repertory company dedicated to meticulous training in acting skills, in a search for authenticity on the stage.³⁸ Authenticity included careful attention to historical accuracy in set construction and stage properties as well as an acting style grounded in the actors' psychological exploration of their characters' motives. Although they began their collaboration with a common vision, the co-founders had always had their different approaches. Nemirovich-Danchenko, himself a playwright, brought strong literary knowledge to the director's chair, while Stanislavsky approached productions with an actor's eye. By the time of the October Revolution in 1917, with significant artistic differences having existed for over a decade, they were largely pursuing their artistic goals independently.³⁹ Stanislavsky had begun experimenting with new symbolist ideas, but when he took the M.A.T. on an international tour, visiting Germany, France and the United States in 1921–24, the repertoire was decidedly conservative, with productions dating back to 1904 and earlier.⁴⁰ Our concern, though, is with Nemirovich-Danchenko. Theatre historians pay him less attention than his more famous partner,⁴¹ but it is clear that Nemirovich-Danchenko was imbibing the avant-garde trends of Moscow and Petrograd while maintaining his interest in psychological realism. Many experiments were undertaken in his newly founded Musical Studio. The aim of the Studio, as Nemirovich-Danchenko specified, was to present a 'new, simplified and intensified art'. He explained, 'The Russian revolution has necessitated a revolution of the stage, new plays, new

productions, a new realism. . . . The old conception of realism has been abandoned and everything now is concentrated to bring out the realism of the soul'.⁴² The new stage required realism, but no longer bourgeois authenticity. And so when Nemirovoich-Danchenko took the Studio on an international tour in 1925, he unlike Stanislavsky took new works. The repertoire included Lecocq's *The Daughter of Madame Angot*; Offenbach's *La Périchole*; a new version of Bizet's *Carmen*, under the title *Carmencita and the Soldier*; and a ribald musical production of *Lysistrata*.⁴³

The theatrical revolution involved Nemirovich-Danchenko in trends known as constructivism and synthetic theatre. Constructivism was an artistic movement that entered the theatre primarily in the realm of scenic design, though it also influenced costuming. Arising out of cubism and futurism in the 1910s, constructivism highlighted the study of the artistic object as an object, particularly a three-dimensional object, with its lines, shapes, colors and interstitial space. Especially after the Revolution, the movement's artists found themselves in strong sympathy with Bolshevik ideology. They depicted themselves as workers, or experimenters and producers of artistic objects. Their art rejected traditional, bourgeois painterly or sculpted representation. Instead, it took on a decidedly utilitarian and even technological character.⁴⁴ Constructivists came to work in concert with non-representational trends in theatre, such as director Vsevolod Meyerhold's 'emphasis on the movement of the actor and not on the historical, emotional or thematic value of the spectacle'.⁴⁵ As a result, Russian theatre saw a decline in the naturalism and historical authenticity that had been particularly associated with the M.A.T.

Nemirovich-Danchenko was not left behind. *Lysistrata's* set design, by Isaak Rabinovich, adhered to the principles of constructivism (fig. 1).⁴⁶ There was no historically authentic backdrop depicting the Acropolis or Parthenon. There were no reconstructions of stoas or temples. Instead, against a simple blue background, there arose five sets of white columns, each set a different height, some stretching high over the actors' heads, and each set placed in an arc with an unadorned cornice delineating its curvature. The columns were placed upon a rotating stage so that the audience could view scenes from multiple perspectives, as if in a cubist painting.⁴⁷ Such manipulation of space is the aim of the constructivist set. The curved sets of columns disrupt the audience's expectation of rigid, classical right angles. The columns' immense height brings the playhouse's upper reaches into the performance space. The play is no longer performed *on* the stage, on its two-dimensional floor; it is played in a three-dimensional space.⁴⁸ Its tridimensionality is emphasized by the stairs and platforms placed among the columns. One photograph shows the women's chorus pouring their water jars on their male counterparts. Some of the women confront the men face-to-face, but others stand on platforms above them. The attack comes from multiple directions and multiple heights. Another photo shows a moment in the confrontation between Lysistrata and the Proboulos [*sic*]. Here, Lysistrata stares down at the Proboulos, who can only peer up at his vanquisher.⁴⁹ Nothing in the text necessitates the vertical distances. It seems that Nemirovich-Danchenko has used his constructivist set to create gendered spaces on his stage. In a play that depends on the women's entrance into male public space,⁵⁰ Nemirovich-Danchenko uses his non-representational set to reconceive how the women control space.

The second avant-garde trend, synthetic theatre, was a movement associated principally with the director Alexander Tairov, the head of Moscow's Kamerny Theatre. The term incorporated several meanings. First, Tairov's actors were required to excel in all dramatic modes: acting, singing, dancing and even circus performing and pantomime. Beyond this, Tairov sought to integrate all the design aspects of drama, including lights, costumes, sound and scene, into a unified representation of the dramatic world. Finally, Tairov's dramaturgy occupied a middle ground between Stanislavsky's representational theatre, in which dramatic illusion was meant to be complete, and Meyerhold's presentational theatre, in which theatrical artifice was dominant. Tairov aimed at a more dynamic interaction between stage and audience, an interaction by which 'neither aesthetically pleasing empty forms nor moving but formless emotionalizing was fully competent'.⁵¹

Although Nemirovich-Danchenko frequently mentioned its importance in interviews, it is difficult to understand from available sources precisely what role synthetic theatre played in *Lysistrata*. The production incorporated multiple artistic disciplines, including original music by Reinhold Glière. The published translation gives occasional indications of song and dance via the stage directions,⁵² but does not detail what is sung. Reviews praise the music, but it is not clear what role the music played in the show.⁵³ Reviews also briefly mention acrobatics and clowning, but without detailed description.⁵⁴ Probably more indicative of Nemirovich-Danchenko's synthetic approach—and indicative of his continued belief in M.A.T. traditions—are script revisions designed to make characters psychologically realistic. We know that actors had to perform in numerous artistic disciplines. Careful psychological motivation, the trademark of the M.A.T., would allow the actors to integrate all aspects of their performances.

In the M.A.T. production, Kinesias is Lysistrata's husband, not Myrrhine's. The change has two significant effects. First, from the character's perspective, Lysistrata is given a stronger reason to desire peace—bringing her own husband home—a motivation lacking in Aristophanes' text, which does not define Lysistrata's marital status.⁵⁵ Now, the M.A.T. production does not emphasize Lysistrata's marriage. In Act I, Lysistrata only speaks in the ambiguous first person plural, as in Aristophanes (e.g., 120–22: 'we must abstain', 507–8: 'we endured what you men did'). It is only with Kinesias's mid-Act II entrance (p. 49) that we learn Lysistrata is married. The payoff is significant. Act II opens with Lysistrata's women trying to escape, plans which Lysistrata quickly foils (pp. 43–47 = ll. 718–761). She then exercises her authority over the women by producing an oracle promising their victory (pp. 47–48 = ll. 762–780). A few moments later, in Aristophanes, Lysistrata spots Kinesias approaching, summons Myrrhine and instructs her to give him everything except what her oath requires (839–41). In the M.A.T. version, those instructions are now Kalonike's to Lysistrata. Lysistrata proves worthy of her own oath by never surrendering to her husband's sexual temptations, temptations that Aristophanes' Lysistrata never had to face. The scene thus becomes a complement to the oracle scene. There, Lysistrata demonstrated control over the women; now she demonstrates control over herself. With the revision, the actor playing Lysistrata (Olga Baklanova) also has greater psychological motivation for her performance. In Aristophanes, because Lysistrata is not identified as a wife, the modern actor is left to search for extra-textual motivations for Lysistrata's desire for peace. The M.A.T. revision gives Lysistrata a realistic motivation. The actor in true Stanislavskian fashion can think of herself standing in solidarity with the other women when she laments, 'We have long been deprived of love's caresses' (p. 8).

The oath becomes more personal when she recites, 'I'll grant no joys of my own free will' (p. 14). Because of the revisions, the actor is able to give a richer psychological performance. We can only assume that this extended to whatever other performance disciplines she had to use, including singing. Her performance can achieve a greater dynamic resonance with the audience, one of the goals of Tairov's synthetic theatre.⁵⁶

American critics recognized the innovative nature of the M.A.T.'s constructivist set design and synthetic theatre, though perhaps not their nuances.⁵⁷ They gave high praise to the set design and how the actors utilized the unusual space. The set, says the *Christian Science Monitor*, is 'a veritable theorem in solid geometry' that in its non-representationality is 'the Athens that Pericles built' and yet 'nothing but a windlass'.⁵⁸ Another critic says it bears the mark of the 'Greek ideal of simplicity', for 'every square foot of the scenery contributes something essential to the projection of the play', enabling groups of actors to create 'the single impression of rhythmic motion against the blue sky'.⁵⁹ Others find that the set and costumes 'proclaim the strong pulse, the almost savage originality' of the play, and praise the 'fairly majestic' set as 'simplicity itself'.⁶⁰ Although they betray no knowledge of the artistic movement or political implications behind Rabinovich's design, they at least recognize its innovation and its integration into the overall production.

The critics also paid keen attention to Nemirovich-Danchenko's claim that he employed 'singing actors'. Throughout 1925, in anticipation of the December visit, notices described the Russians as a 'remarkable young company of actors who can sing' or 'an acting company which can sing as well as act'.⁶¹ While the critics thus paid tribute to the concept of synthetic theatre, several of the articles suggest a further, specifically American level of understanding. American

musicals, as we have said, are often defined and judged by their level of integration. This criterion was fundamental in the mid-1920s, as creators of the newly popular operettas sought to distinguish their plays from the more loosely organized revues and musical comedies.⁶²

Oscar Hammerstein II, co-author of the operetta *Rose-Marie*, which had opened in 1924, championed the integration of song and story. In a published essay, Hammerstein wrote,

Here was a musical show [*Rose-Marie*] with a melodramatic plot and a cast of players who were called upon to actually sing the music—*sing*, mind you—not just talk through the lyrics and then go into the their dance.

Hammerstein placed *Rose-Marie* within the broader context of musical theatre history, from John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* through Gilbert and Sullivan operettas to his own work:

The history of musical comedy has passed through a variety of phases, but the type that persists, that shows the signs of ultimate victory, is the operetta—the musical play with music and plot welded together in skillful cohesion.⁶³

Hammerstein's language is reminiscent of Nemirovich-Danchenko's interviews published the same year. Both men emphasize that their actors sing well and that the singing actor is a necessary component of their artistic vision. The *raisons d'être* of the singing actor, however, differ. For Hammerstein, the actor must sing in order that music and plot may be 'welded together in skillful cohesion'. For Nemirovich-Danchenko, the actor must sing (and dance and mime, etc.) in order that all theatrical disciplines (acting, music, lighting, etc.) may be fused together into a coherent whole. There are thus two complementary and easily confused types of 'integration' at work. On the one hand, there was a Russian *artistic* synthesis of the various theatrical disciplines; on the other hand, American writers were formulating a *structural* synthesis of music, lyrics and book.

A *New York Times* essay shows how a critic could combine these two understandings of ‘synthesis’. The author, H. I. Brock, begins by drawing a parallel between the M.A.T. repertoire (including Lecocq and Offenbach as well as *Lysistrata*) and older operetta. He writes that, ‘in a way [Nemirovich-Danchenko] undertook to do to the lyric stage of this time what Gilbert and Sullivan did to the lyric stage of their time—to put life and *sense* into it’ (emphasis added).⁶⁴ Like Hammerstein, Brock places 1925 theatre into the history of operetta. His evaluations of the Lecocq and Offenbach productions are instructive. Of Lecocq, he writes that Nemirovich-Danchenko’s revisions make the operetta ‘both lyric and dramatic’, as if the integration of the actors’ disciplines causes the structural improvement of both ‘lyric’ song and ‘dramatic’ story. (Cf. Hammerstein’s ‘melodramatic plot’ above.) The changes to Offenbach, he says, ‘improve the composite effect’ so that ‘the thing held together’, as if, again, artistic and structural synthesis go hand in hand. In short, they make ‘sense’. Brock speaks of synthetic theatre in the same way that critics—and in fact Rodgers and Hammerstein themselves⁶⁵—would speak of the innovative *Oklahoma!* eighteen years later: as an organic whole. The seed that theatre historians would find in operettas and that they would see blossoming in *Oklahoma!* Brock sees already growing in the M.A.T.’s work. And he sees it flourishing in *Lysistrata*, not just because Nemirovich-Danchenko turned it into an operetta but also because Aristophanes left a ‘libretto belonging to the original synthetic theatre. . . . Undoubtedly “*Lysistrata*”, like all the other satiric works of Aristophanes, was originally a lyric drama—an operetta—even a musical comedy, if you choose to look at it that way’.⁶⁶ He hesitates about which musical theatre genre Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata* belongs to, but he cannot help reading the M.A.T. production in contemporary Broadway vocabulary.

The Happiest Girl in the World, 1961

Stephen Sondheim has described lyricist E. Y. 'Yip' Harburg as a 'maverick, pointedly socio-political and heavily whimsical'.⁶⁷ Harburg, the moving force behind the 1961 adaptation of *Lysistrata* called *The Happiest Girl in the World*,⁶⁸ proved his sociopolitical concerns and his whimsy repeatedly throughout his career. From his iconic anthem, 'Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?' to musicals like *Bloomer Girl*, *Finian's Rainbow* and *Flahooley*, Harburg frequently employed his art for social critique.⁶⁹ At the same time, lyrics from 'Follow the Yellow Brick Road' and 'Somewhere over the Rainbow' (*The Wizard of Oz*) to 'Look to the Rainbow' and 'Something Sort of Grandish' (*Finian's Rainbow*) show Harburg's masterful use of rhyme, wit and wordplay to create characters who long for an idealistic life without lapsing into simple sentimentality. In the late 1950s, this political and whimsical craftsman undertook an adaptation of *Lysistrata*.⁷⁰ He collaborated with living book writers Henry Myers and Fred Saidy,⁷¹ but set his lyrics to the nineteenth-century music of Jacques Offenbach.⁷² The combination could have produced a musical both entertaining and politically astute. It didn't. It ran from 3 April to 24 June 1961 for a total of 97 performances.⁷³ Although critics appreciated the talents of lead actors Janice Rule and 'the one and only Cyril Ritchard',⁷⁴ they found the story uninteresting and the jokes flat. Walter Kerr complained that Harburg's adaptation only went halfway; it is 'a slightly apologetic bit of 1961, a not too confident bit of old shoe'.⁷⁵ Howard Taubman found the book 'tame and heavy-handed', while Richard P. Cooke joined Kerr in complaining about the superficial politics but at least found some redeeming qualities: the musical may have 'had

some intention of being a serious lampoon upon the follies of 1961. But this aspect is no more than the poppy seed upon the cake, which is filled with other goodies'.⁷⁶

The critics were appropriately judging *Happiest Girl* according to the standards of the fully integrated musical, then in its heyday after the triumph of the Rodgers-and-Hammerstein model in musicals such as *Oklahoma!* (1943) and *Carousel* (1945). The techniques of integrated musicals had always come naturally to Harburg. *The Wizard of Oz*, for example, shows expert use of extended musical scenes.⁷⁷ *Happiest Girl* too is well integrated. Its songs arise naturally from the dialogue.⁷⁸ Songs and dance advance the action. It is admittedly strange to recycle Offenbach operetta for a new musical comedy, but the music is not poorly suited to the show.⁷⁹ The melodies are well-chosen to suit their dramatic scenes and through good orchestrations they were made to sound like mid-twentieth-century show tunes.⁸⁰ The lyrics, though perhaps not Harburg's finest, are first-rate.⁸¹ In short, the musical possesses excellent structural integration. But if songs are going to arise coherently from dialogue, the story containing the dialogue must create coherent characters and action. Here the play fails. The story devised by Harburg, Saidy and Myers crams Aristophanes' plot into a standard Broadway tale of romance and intrigue by subordinating Lysistrata and her troubles to a dispute among the gods. It thus treats her as the gods' pawn instead of a comic hero. It obscures its source's central character and central plot element to the point of incomprehensibility.

In brief: Pluto is on earth causing perpetual war between Athens and Sparta. The situation is intolerable to the Athenian General Kinesias, who announces a truce with Sparta so that he may return to his wife, Lysistrata. Before they can consummate their reunion, Pluto stirs up war again and Kinesias departs. Lysistrata prays to the gods and threatens that mortals will

destroy them unless peace arrives soon. The scene switches to Mt. Olympus, where Jupiter confirms that the gods will die if mortals stop believing in them. After a fruitless meeting with Pluto, Jupiter agrees to listen to a proposal from Diana: war will end if women deny themselves to their husbands. The gods rejoice in the plan, and Jupiter dispatches Diana to earth, warning that she will be subject to human emotions there. Dancing around a sleeping Lysistrata, Diana puts the idea in Lysistrata's mind and the sex strike is enacted. Diana stays on earth in the guise of her own priestess. Pluto develops two lines of attack against Diana's plan: first, he tries to convince the women that they will miss sex too much and, second, he works to make Diana fall in love. His first plot fails, but the second succeeds, creating a strange love triangle among Diana, Lysistrata and Kinesias. Eventually, Diana renews her virtue and ends her claim to Kinesias. Lysistrata appears in disguise as a Persian courtesan and effects reconciliation with her husband along with an end to war.

Pluto and Diana are the play's main characters. The setup fits *Happiest Girl* into the mold of many contemporary musicals that featured two couples, one that carried the main action and one that provided comedy or romance. Thus, *Oklahoma!* has its main lovers in Curly and Laurey and its secondary couple in the comic Will Parker and Ado Annie. The lead couple need not be lovers. *The King and I* features the King of Siam and Anna Leonowens who are not romantically involved; the romance is left to Lun Tha and Tuptim. The title character need not even be part of the main couple. In *Bye Bye Birdie*, the main couple is Albert, the manager to rock 'n' roll star Conrad Birdie, and his secretary Rosie. It seems Birdie himself will be a member of the secondary couple, paired with high school student Kim, but in the end she chooses her schoolmate Hugo. *The Happiest Girl in the World* follows this same pattern, with Pluto and Diana

(Ritchard and Rule, who received top billing) as the primary couple, and Lysistrata and Kinesias (Dran Seitz and Bruce Yarnell) as the secondary couple.

The arrangement destroys the fabric of Aristophanes' story by reducing Lysistrata to secondary status.⁸² Like Lun Tha and Tuptim in *The King and I*, she and Kinesias fill the slot of the romantic subplot while Pluto and Diana provide the main conflict. The play defines Pluto as the protagonist immediately. Act I opens with messengers carrying a message from Kinesias. Before we discover its contents, Pluto interrupts the action by entering as a narrator. He is dressed in disguise as the Athenian Chief of State—for he will step into the scene to receive Kinesias's message—except for a plumed hat that he will otherwise wear as Pluto (1-1-2). The disjunction, together with his direct address to the audience, mark him as controlling the play's action, a metatheatrical director—doubly appropriate since Ritchard was the musical's real director. In the scenes that follow, Pluto controls not only the war but also its general when Kinesias is pulled away from his wife by a threatening message 'intercepted' from the Spartans but in fact written by Pluto. After Kinesias leaves, we get some sense that Lysistrata might take over as a leading character, but that impression is quickly dispelled. She threatens the gods with annihilation, an act of control straight out of Aristophanes' *Birds*, but instead of following the bold example of Peisetaerus, she falls asleep. We then meet Pluto's complement, Diana, who introduces the idea for the sex strike and inspires Lysistrata to pursue it. Within the first four scenes, then, we see both Pluto and Diana assuming their authoritative places and manipulating their human counterparts. What appeared to be Lysistrata's claim to agency proves to be only the opportunity Diana needs to assert her own initiative.

As a result, the secondary plot takes on several strange and self-defeating characteristics. In order for Pluto's power to be demonstrated, the musical begins with Kinesias concluding a truce with Sparta. He wants to be with his wife, not at war. In other words, the final goal of Aristophanes' plot is reached in the first three minutes. But only in this way can Pluto send Kinesias back to war. Moreover, before he reaches home, Lysistrata tells her maid that Kinesias hasn't come home for a medal; she knows 'his real objective is this boudoir' (1-3-11). Yet in an immediate reversal, she proclaims her frustration that he is taking too long, and so when he finally does arrive she greets him coolly (1-3-12-13). Since Lysistrata and Kinesias have been reduced to a sweet romantic couple, we need tension between them in order to have a reunion at the end. More importantly, we need to see her frustration so that she will be willing to put Diana's sex strike into action. After she does so, the playwrights give us the famous striptease scene, played (as in the M.A.T. *Lysistrata*) between Kinesias and Lysistrata. Again, Kinesias arrives for the purpose of being home with his wife. They reminisce about their honeymoon and sing the most beautiful song in the score, 'Adrift on a Star', which ends 'wherever you are / In this star-sprinkled dome / If there's love in your star / You're home / You're home' (1-6-48-49).⁸³ It is the perfect reunion. They kiss deeply and Kinesias carries Lysistrata toward the bedroom. Only then does Lysistrata deploy her delaying tactics. Kinesias outwits her by serving wine supplied earlier in the scene by a surreptitious Pluto. When an inebriated Lysistrata is on the verge of giving in, Diana appears and shoots her with an arrow. Lysistrata screams, comes back to her senses, hands Kinesias his sword and orders him out of the house. The M.A.T. rewrote this scene to prove Lysistrata's total control over the plot and herself. *Happiest Girl* rewrites it so that Pluto and Diana can continue manipulating the secondary characters.

Lysistrata has lost all claim to control over anything. And so, in the finale, it may be less shocking to hear Lysistrata ask a hesitant Kinesias, 'Let me be yours! I don't want to sit on a conquered throne and be a Queen—but to rest here at home in your arms, and feel like a Queen' (2-3-30). She wins by being possessed, initially by Diana and now by Kinesias. By introducing the gods as primary characters, the authors constructed an integrated musical, but they also turned Lysistrata into a manipulated possession. Such was the fate of 'the happiest girl in the world'.

Peace, 1968–69

The third musical on our program differs radically from *Lysistrata* and *Happiest Girl* by embracing and celebrating a lack of integration. *Peace*, with music by Al Carmines and book and lyrics by Tim Reynolds, played 1–5 and 8–12 November 1968 at the Off-Off-Broadway Judson Poets' Theatre. A revised production opened 27 January 1969 at the Off-Broadway Astor Place Theatre, where it ran for 192 performances. The musical follows Aristophanes' highly episodic plot in broad outline: Trygaeus flies to heaven on a dung beetle, rescues the goddess Peace, brings her back to earth and celebrates peace. Multiple reviewers refer to the production as camp, which Susan Sontag famously described as 'the sensibility of failed seriousness, of the theatricalization of experience'.⁸⁴ It is an aesthetic that prizes artifice and style, and usually possesses an air of frivolity. *Peace* is undoubtedly campy, but it is much more. It is a dramatic and musical collage whose artifice enables seriousness and whose theatricality closes the gap between theatre and experience. As Bolshevik theatre rebelled against its bourgeois past by rejecting M.A.T.-style naturalism, Carmines and Reynolds work by jettisoning the integration

exemplified in *Happiest Girl*. But like Nemirovich-Danchenko using synthetic theatre and revised operettas to retain a certain M.A.T. sensibility, Carmines and Reynolds retain enough of the form and even mine the form's history to recreate the musical as an unintegrated, discontinuous romp that is undeniably an American musical. Its lack of integration can be seen in three aspects: first, its transience, which is reflected in the conflicting evidence we now possess; second, the mismatching of story and song; and third, its use of three different temporal and geographical settings, which has particular implications for its reflections upon American race politics thanks to minstrel scenes set in the pre-Civil War U.S. that featured actors in blackface makeup.

Peace originated at the Judson Poets' Theatre, one of the most influential of the 1960s Off-Broadway movement. It was located at the Judson Memorial Church on Greenwich Village's Washington Square, a Christian church with a racially and socioeconomically diverse congregation devoted to social activism.⁸⁵ In 1961, the church hired a new clergyman named Reverend Al Carmines, 24 years old and freshly graduated from Union Theological Seminary. One of Carmines's first actions was to found the Poets' Theatre, a place 'where experimentation and process would be more important than results'.⁸⁶ Through the next 20 years, Carmines was celebrated as an original and magnificently talented composer. During his career, he composed about 80 musicals, operas and oratorios. His work was marked by a deft ability to combine musical styles into an eclectic mélange that lifted sometimes pedestrian plays into realms of artistic excellence.⁸⁷ *Peace* was called, in several reviews, his best work to date.⁸⁸ Yet the play and the composer are largely forgotten today.

The oblivion is partially due to the transience of 1960s Village theatres. The movement featured nontraditional performance spaces. Plays, which often focused on issues of class, gender, drugs, sexuality and race, often promoted values anathema to the mainstream middle-class patrons of uptown theatres. Because the practitioners rejected not only the aesthetic but also the commercialism associated with Broadway and even Off-Broadway theatres, the movement became known as Off-Off-Broadway.⁸⁹ The rejection of commercialism went hand-in-hand with a lack of concern for posterity. Off-Off-Broadway was a theatre for the present. It typically presented plays as performance-centered events, not as text-centered dramas. Theatre historians have thus had a difficult time describing and assessing the movement, having to rely on participants' aging memories where written and audiovisual records are few. For Judson, we are fortunate to have an archive located at New York University's Fales Library,⁹⁰ which includes photographs, programs, clippings and an incomplete rehearsal script from *Peace*.⁹¹ The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts archive holds more *Peace* materials, including photographs, programs and clippings. Outside these archives, our knowledge of *Peace* comes from newspaper reviews, a cast recording from the Off-Broadway production,⁹² and a rare though extant published script from the Off-Broadway production.⁹³ Problems for the scholar arise because neither the cast recording nor either script corresponds precisely to the performances described in the reviews.⁹⁴

While reasonable guesses about what took place onstage are possible and will be hazarded below, we should first note how Off-Off-Broadway's transient nature impacts our understanding of *Peace*. The contradictions in the evidence are not a historical accident. They are an inevitable result of practitioners' aesthetic, (anti-)commercial and political choices. The script

and cast recording were not published until the more commercial Off-Broadway production. Both were whitewashed with the result that potentially offensive elements of the production, most notably the use of blackface in the minstrel scenes, do not appear in the published materials. The published script retains the play's obscene language but apologizes for it and asks potential producers to keep an open mind. It even grants permission to alter language to make it less offensive, if necessary. The sanitized published materials efface not just the musical's blackface and obscenity, but the reasons for them: the disconcerting clash of obscenity with the cultural cachet of a 'Greek play', the clash of the Aristophanic setting with the American settings, the clash of blackfaced actors with a mid-twentieth-century stage—in short, the liberating lack of integration in the theatrical event. The further uptown *Peace* went, the closer it approached middle-class values. The contradictions of the historical record reflect both this uptown movement and the original disconcerting lack of integration that made mainstreaming revisions necessary.

The second noteworthy aspect of *Peace*'s lack of integration is its structure. It can best be summarized in its composer's description of the 'sort of communal way' his shows were put together:

'We got together as a group of actors and dancers and for two weeks simply sat and read the play through. Somebody would say, "I want to do *that* line the next time," and he would. A dancer would say, "I want to choreograph *that* part." And when I felt some lines should be sung, I wrote music. The result was that everybody chose moments in the script that had to do with their own personalities, and created characters, dances or songs that were very personal to them. It's a wonderful way of eliminating the traditional approach in which you press the part on the person, as if you are stamping him with a cookie cutter. It allows for a very strong evocation of the person beneath the performer.'⁹⁵

The Judson's practice is opposite to the M.A.T. or Rodgers-and-Hammerstein conception of character. Traditional psychological realism required actors to suppress their own identities. To be sure, the actors could be asked to find events in their own past to infuse the characters' emotions. The emotions, however, were to be transferred wholly to the character. Carmines expects the actors' personalities to be mixed with the character.⁹⁶ The construction of the musical is dictated as much by the actors' choices as by the characters' choices.

Without better knowledge of the actors themselves, it is difficult to see the creativity in action. We can, though, see what Carmines did when he 'felt some lines should be sung'. Carmines crafts his lyrics directly from Reynolds's dialogue and so there is a close relationship between book and lyrics. The accompanying music, however, keeps the songs from being fully integrated into the book. The song 'Plumbing' is a fine example. This Act I scene is an adaptation of Aristophanes' episode in which War seeks a mortar and pestle to grind the Greek *poieis*. In Carmines' *Peace*, War comes on with a giant toilet bowl and pours the 'essence' of various cities in (apparently some sort of liquid from a vial). The toilet malfunctions and War sends his sidekick Disorder to search for a plunger. When he cannot find one, they sing a hilarious song about the glories of modern plumbing. The lyrics, repeated endlessly, state, 'Plumbing has been raised to such an art that they don't need plungers any more' (Carmines and Reynolds (1969?), track 5). The music is an impeccable pastiche of a Handel fugue.⁹⁷ The combination of Handel and a clogged commode is absurd; more to the point, it is incoherent with the dramatic situation. Any composer writing a song meant to arise naturally from this situation would have struck an angry tone, even in a comic mode. (Think of 'Just You Wait'

from *My Fair Lady*.) With Carmines' adoption of a jaunty Handel fugue, the actors cannot move seamlessly from book into song.

Not all the songs are as dramatically disconcerting as 'Plumbing', but Carmines' eclectic score keeps the show from having what one theorist calls a single musical 'voice'.⁹⁸ Thus, in a show like *Happiest Girl*, it is no surprise that songs as temperamentally different as 'Vive la Virtue!' and 'Adrift on a Star' come from the same musical. There is a musical consistency to them so that they form a coherent score. (What is surprising is that Harburg and his orchestrators were able to create a single voice from different Offenbach operettas.) In *Peace*, the next song is always a musical surprise. Mother explains her 'Excessive Concern' about her 'Baby Trygaeus' in a torch song, as she sits on the piano. The Chorus pleads, 'Don't Do It, Mr. Hermes', in a Charleston-like frenzy. The cast celebrates peace by singing 'Just Sit Around', a minstrel song worthy of Stephen Foster. The musical ends with a beautiful resetting of 'America the Beautiful', sung by the entire cast (as one critic put it) 'not wholly ironically'.⁹⁹ The songs all sound like Carmines compositions, but only in the sense that songs from *Company* and *Sweeney Todd* sound like Sondheim compositions. Sondheim's songs possess the composer's trademark qualities, but are evidently from different scores. In Carmines' case, though, they are disconcertingly from the same score.

The third level of incoherence in *Peace* is its intermingled settings. The play moves among ancient Greece (including the trip to the gods), the 19th-century American South and the contemporary (1960s) U.S. When the play opens (in the Off-Off-Broadway production), the audience is immediately plunged into a world of contradiction. As in Aristophanes, Greek gods are mentioned by name (Reynolds (1968), 4), and Trygaeus cites Aesop as his inspiration (10).

Yet Aristophanes' slaves have become American black slaves named Rastus and Liza. We are also in the pre-Civil War South. The slaves use plantation dialect when they refer to Trygaeus as 'Massa' (2, 6) and compare the dung beetle's frenetic arms to 'a whole fiel' ob cottonpickers' (3). To make matters more complex, the slaves are white actors in blackface, straight out of the nineteenth-century minstrel show. The creators did not use blackface without understanding its offensiveness.¹⁰⁰ Some critics did complain, but most understood it as part of a larger project. The blackface, then, takes this strange mixture of settings and heightens the strangeness so that the audience cannot but consider it a campy, stylized artifice. The musical's joy is a celebration of *Peace*, not peace.

In the revised Off-Broadway script, the slaves are gone, replaced with Trygaeus's Mother and Father, although the Southern setting has been kept.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, a campy atmosphere is achieved by the absurd juxtaposition of the elderly, genteel Mother and Father with their task of preparing the 'shitcake' for the beetle. Most startlingly, when Mother turns to address the audience directly, as one of Aristophanes' slaves does, she leaves the stage and lounges across the grand piano in the pit, which was played by Carmines himself. She sings a number ('My Baby Trygaeus / Through Excessive Concern') that starts as a torch song but morphs into a chaotic, neurotic patter, culminating in a plea to God to prevent 'these cretins' from pushing 'the buttons' (Reynolds and Carmines (1969), 3).

The point is reinforced when the beetle and his owner are finally seen. In Reynolds's original script, Trygaeus is said to be dressed in 'a cowboy suit, chaps, sombrero, etc.' (5). By the time of the Off-Broadway production, for which we have photographic evidence (fig. 2), Trygaeus (Reathal Bean) wears a white, threadbare sweater and a fur-lined, aviator-style hat

with earflaps and an attached chinstrap. The beetle itself is an enormous conglomeration of found objects, with clear plastic hemispheres as eyes, a jug as a nose, and football helmet face guards as pincers. If the audience has any expectation of a gentlemanly plantation owner, those expectations are quickly destroyed by Trygaeus's entrance. In contrast to the stereotypes of Liza and Rastus, his character defies stereotype. He engages in slapstick when the beetle's flatulence knocks him over, but he also claims that his actions are 'heroic . . . for the sake of all the Greeks' (7). At once, his appearance and behavior point to a campy absurdity, but his singularity and even earnestness make him fit uncomfortably in the campy world.

The musical runs up against the limits of camp. The tension between artificiality and Trygaeus's earnestness persists into the next section of the play, when Trygaeus rides the beetle to heaven. The musical becomes dominated by references to the Vietnam War era and its real toll, spoken primarily by a chorus of 1960s Americans who have no particular business being in heaven. It seems strange to produce *Peace* and have important contemporary references be potentially undermined by artificiality.¹⁰² In fact, Carmines and director Lawrence Kornfeld said they think of their musicals not as camp, but as grotesque. They did not want to be associated with camp's unseriousness. Carmines said, 'we took the grotesque very seriously'.¹⁰³ There are, to be sure, campy elements in the play's central section. When Trygaeus flies to heaven, he meets a flamboyantly homosexual Hermes, whose own exaggerated stereotype mirrors Liza's and Rastus's.¹⁰⁴ Overall, however, the play abandons its self-referentiality and creates a realistic sensibility. The realism is not tragic. It remains always comic, as in the aforementioned 'Plumbing' scene. The scene strikes a different tone than in the absurd plantation scene. Instead of camp or even grotesquerie, it seems comic relief. It mocks the pretentiousness of War and his

delight in destruction. Foiled from flushing, all he can do is turn his energy into musical melismata. His failure enables the play to celebrate peace, not *Peace*.

After the more earnest central scenes, in which Peace is rescued, it is surprising to return to the world of minstrelsy in order to celebrate the effects of peace. The reviews attest that, in both productions, the second act was staged as a full-fledged minstrel show, with numerous actors in blackface, portraying traditional minstrel characters, including an interlocutor.¹⁰⁵ The performance recalls the traditional minstrel show's final act, which was usually set on a plantation and featured a skit about the happy lives of the estate's slaves, in no way (it was implied) in need of emancipation. It is not clear what the content of *Peace*'s second act was. One Off-Off-Broadway review describes that production's act as 'a kind of minstrel show, in which nothing happens and the actors merely comment at large'.¹⁰⁶ An Off-Broadway review says that the act is 'never adequately worked into the evening's context';¹⁰⁷ another says that it was about 'civil rights',¹⁰⁸ but there is no indication of specific content. There was music. The slave chorus (in the early script, at least) sings Stephen Foster's minstrel standard 'Swanee River', with new lyrics in which the slaves, 'his faithful darkies', wish Trygaeus good luck (83). The act had at least two Carmines songs, 'Just Sit Around' and 'Summer's Nice'.¹⁰⁹ The singers celebrate their rest after a long day's work, and they do so in a manner characteristic of the stereotypical lazy slave of the minstrel tradition.

It seems clear that we have returned to the artificiality of the opening scene. The extreme stereotypes and the clear allusions to a discredited theatrical tradition may lead the audience to interpret the events as theatre artifice and nothing more. It may be, again, a celebration of *Peace*, not peace, even as the personified Peace is on the stage. Yet the theme of civil rights, mentioned

by one reviewer, and the final, not wholly ironic 'America the Beautiful' point to a privileging of peace over *Peace*. Neither reading is wholly satisfactory. Rather, both readings are likely justifiable. It is a fitting conclusion about a musical whose success depended on its ludic rejection of mainstream Broadway theatre and Broadway's neatly integrated structures.

Conclusions

For all that we cannot say about Carmines and Reynolds's *Peace*, we can say with certainty that it bears a significant dissimilarity to the M.A.T. *Lysistrata* and *The Happiest Girl in the World*. Those two shows sought integration in their productions. *Lysistrata* found it in the synthesis of artistic fields, although American critics saw a structural integration. *Happiest Girl* found it in the integration of book and songs. Although neither show can be called simply realistic, for both realism is an important component. *Lysistrata*'s constructivist set prevents the audience from seeing the action as taking place in historical Athens, but the psychological motivation of the characters is consistent with real human experience. No one—the classic complaint about musicals—breaks into song in real life, as the *Happiest Girl* characters do, but Harburg, Saidy and Myers's words blend seamlessly from book to lyric and back again so that the songs become not realistic expression but expression of realistic thoughts and feelings. *Peace*, in contrast, rejects realism and integration. Although it contains acting, singing, dancing and so forth, synthesis is not an artistic priority. *Peace*'s rejection of integration and realism link its aesthetic world closely to Aristophanes'. Although Aristophanes' comedies are not campy, their discontinuities inhibit movement toward realism. One of the reasons we have trouble pinning down the second act of the musical *Peace* is probably because the second half of Aristophanes'

Peace is so unnaturalistic. Reynolds's early script started with a faithful translation of all the intruder scenes, but the scenes' logically loose relationship surely enabled the adaptors to experiment more freely. *Peace* exploits Aristophanic discontinuity and lays bare the seams in its construction. The M.A.T. *Lysistrata* and *Happiest Girl* work hard to hide the seams.

Peace's aesthetic proximity to Aristophanes cannot be straightforwardly attributed to authors who wished to remain faithful to Aristophanes' spirit. Like the other musicals studied here, *Peace* began with Aristophanes but was a creature of its own time. This survey of musicals from three different periods in theatrical history has demonstrated how Aristophanes' comedies fit into multiple theatrical traditions. They have given birth to a campy romp like *Peace*, but also realistically motivated heroes like M.A.T.'s *Lysistrata*. They have spawned integration and its lack, realism and absurdity, camp and political activism, feminism and Bolshevism, constructivism and *Oklahoma!*ism. Although these musicals have not been the most prominent or successful productions of their day, each is a significant window into how Aristophanes has been adapted into the various influential strains of American musical theatre.

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¹ Discussed on a theoretical level by McMillan (2006), 126–48. McMillan's book is a fine theoretical reflection on the limitations of studying musicals from the perspective of coherence and integration.

² On Aristophanes' discontinuity, see Silk (2000), 136–152, 207–55. On similar methods of characterization in musicals, see McMillan (2006), 54–77. Given (2005) is a comparative study of characterization in

Aristophanes and musicals. Silk (2000), 268–70, also compares Athenian comedy to American musicals. Cf. Silk (2007), 293–303, where he describes his own involvement in a production of *Frogs* that used Tin Pan Alley tunes for setting Aristophanes' lyrics.

³ Only one attempt has been made to write a history of Aristophanic (or Menandrian) reception in the Americas. Day (2001) offers a good starting point for a history of Aristophanic reception in North America. Her Ph.D. research included significant archival work, and she lists 185 productions up to 1999 (pp. 198–214). The main discussions, though, while uniformly excellent, are limited to a small handful of the many significant productions. Scholarship on European reception of Aristophanes has fared better: e.g., Hall and Wrigley (2007); Van Steen (2000).

⁴ *New York Times* (1859).

⁵ Day (2001), 13–50; Pearcy (2003). Contemporary notices: Dale (1886); *New York Times* (1886); *Philadelphia Inquirer* (1886).

⁶ Day (2001), 198.

⁷ *New York Times* (1901).

⁸ *New York Times* (1902).

⁹ Birdsall (1904); Day (2001), 148–49.

¹⁰ *Philadelphia Inquirer* (1916).

¹¹ *New York Times* (1937), an article which includes a fine photograph of the costumed actors in the outdoor amphitheatre. *Birds* had already been staged at RMWC in 1926. The Greek Play tradition is still alive today, under the direction of Amy R. Cohen. See 'The Randolph College Greek Play': http://web.randolphcollege.edu/greekplay/about_us/rplays.asp, accessed 19 June 2012.

¹² *Christian Science Monitor* (1939); *Christian Science Monitor* (1941).

¹³ Coe (1948).

¹⁴ *Toronto Star* (1969).

¹⁵ Coe (1971a); Coe (1971b).

¹⁶ Pashley (1981).

¹⁷ I have written about this production in Given (2011a).

¹⁸ *New York Times* (1913); Day (2001), 159–76.

¹⁹ Review of Philadelphia performance: Atkinson (1930a). Atkinson's preview of the New York production (Atkinson (1930b)) compares it to the musical political satire *Strike Up the Band* by Morrie Ryskind, Ira Gershwin and George Gershwin. New York reviews: Atkinson (1930c), Bowen (1930), Fergusson (1930), Hammond (1930), Leonard (1930). The *Los Angeles Times* covered the censorship and trial of the *Lysistrata* cast extensively in 1932. A good retrospective of the events, based on *Times* archives: J. Smith (1980).

²⁰ Reviews: Atkinson (1946), Cooke (1946).

²¹ Atkinson (1955) complained that the play was not successfully adapted for a modern audience. Ads for the production urged theatergoers, 'See it! Don't say it!', since the title was nearly unpronounceable. In the same vein, fifty-six years later, ads for *Lysistrata Jones* provided a phonetic guide for pronouncing its title.

²² Reviews: Bernheimer (1964), Cooke (1964), Funke (1964). It closed after one performance. Despite its short run, the show produced a cast recording, which is available on CD: Straight and Eddy (1994).

²³ According to the reviews (Kauffmann (1966), C. Smith (1966)), the production highlighted Lahr's expert clowning rather than political satire. The play was staged at the East Michigan University baseball stadium in repertory with the *Oresteia*, in the hopes of establishing a Greek theatre festival, but the effort did not pan out. One article (Esterow (1966)) mentions that a Classics professor from the University of

Michigan in neighboring Ann Arbor walked the streets with her students to collect donations for the festival.

²⁴ Review: Cohen (1969).

²⁵ In the *New York Times*, Clive Barnes (1972) called it a 'gloomy comedy . . . purporting to be by Aristophanes'.

²⁶ Scholarship: Beye (2004), English (2005), Gamel (2007), Given (2011b), Mendelsohn (2004), Stein (2004).

²⁷ Review: Evett (1985). Quote from *Wall Street Journal* (1985).

²⁸ A review of the controversy at Taylor (2002).

²⁹ Reviews: Brantley (2011), Given (2012).

³⁰ Review: Atkinson (1954). Atkinson's words are worth quoting not only for their pathos but also as a representation of the uphill climb faced by those who would stage ancient dramas: 'Infatuated with certain obscure dramas, [Ida Ehrlich] saves as much money as she can from her income as a teacher, and when she has enough she puts on a production. She hires Equity actors and pays them herself. She provides the script, makes the costumes by hand, attends to the direction, sends out the publicity and waits patiently in the miniature box office, hoping that someone will come. At the Monday evening performance the audience outnumbered the actors by two. Mrs. Ehrlich is a bright, cultivated woman with mild manners and a shy obsession with a few unusual plays that she knows and likes. So far the public has taken no interest in what she is doing. She is alone.'

³¹ *Samia*: advertisements in *New York Times* (11 March 1990, p. H6) and *Washington Post* (11 March 1990, p. G4). *Dyskolos*: see Beckerman (2002) and Klein (2002).

³² The various iterations of this show are described at: *Chicago Sun-Times* (2004), States News Service (2008), Morgan (2009), Hansen (2010).

³³ On the characteristics of New Comedy (Menander, Plautus and the tradition that followed) as opposed to Old Comedy (Aristophanes, and the lost comic poets of the classical period) see, e.g., Ireland (2010).

³⁴ At the time this chapter was completed (30 June 2012), the Music Theatre International licensing agency was listing some three dozen upcoming productions of *Forum*.

³⁵ *Forum* provides a good test case. Most of its songs do not advance plot or character and could be removed without being missed. Similarly, the choral songs of Menander and Plautus have been lost, but their absence from the plot is not missed. Change a single scene of *Forum*, though, and the entire farce would be destroyed.

³⁶ The English translation is published in Seldes and Seldes (1925), 1–78. Contemporary reports state that the Russian text was unexpurgated (Fineman (1925a)—a review with a Moscow dateline). The English translation lacks all but the mildest obscenities, but it is significantly more faithful to the Aristophanic spirit than the bowdlerized translation Benjamin Bickley Rogers produced for the Loeb Classical Library, also in 1925. Unfortunately, I have been unable to find a copy of the Russian text, nor is Russian among my languages.

³⁷ On the early history of the Moscow Art Theatre, see Benedetti (1999), 254–66; Nemirovitch-Dantchenko (1968), 79–222; Stanislavsky (2008), 158–201; Worrall (1996).

³⁸ On the M.A.T. and contemporary artistic trends, see Marsh (1999).

³⁹ Benedetti (1991) collects and translates important correspondence between the M.A.T. co-founders. On their artistic differences, see especially letters #265–267, from June 1905.

⁴⁰ Benedetti (1999), 273.

⁴¹ Unfortunately for our purposes, Nemirovich-Danchenko's own memoir (Nemirovitch-Dantchenko [*sic*] (1968)) trails off during the 1920s. He does not discuss the Musical Studio.

⁴² Quoted in Brown (1923).

⁴³ Sayler (1925a) provides a contemporary account of each production as they were seen in Moscow.

⁴⁴ I have found the following overviews of Russian Constructivism most helpful: Gough (2005), Henry Art Gallery (1990), Lodder (1983).

⁴⁵ Bowlt (1977), 64.

⁴⁶ Besides fig. 1, good photographs, drawings and descriptions can be found in Sayler (1925a).

⁴⁷ Sayler (1925a), 98–99 attests the rotating stage in Moscow. A rotating stage was announced for the New York production (*New York Times* (1924)), but a review of the New York production (*New York Times* 1925e) mentions that the actors turn the set about, implying that the stage was not mechanical.

⁴⁸ The designer, Isaak Rabinovich, seems to have been influenced by the set designs of Lyubov Popova, especially her work on Meyerhold's 1922 production of *The Magnanimous Cuckold* in Moscow. See Lodder (1983), 170–72. For more on Rabinovich and his background in the Moscow Jewish Theatre, see Zivanovic (1975).

⁴⁹ Both photos appear between pp. 100 and 101 of Sayler (1925a).

⁵⁰ With the proviso articulated by Foley in her now classic article (1982) that private and public space are not mutually exclusive in the play.

⁵¹ Kuhlke in Tairov (1969), 29.

⁵² Seldes and Seldes (1925), 17, 64, 67, 68.

⁵³ E.g., Gabriel (1925); Gordon (1925).

⁵⁴ One review from the pre-U.S. production in Berlin mentions 'acrobatic tricks': *New York Times* (1925c). A review of the New York production describes 'rowdy humors, clowneries, buffonnade, even burlesque' (*New York Times* (1925e)).

⁵⁵ In my 2010 production, using an unpublished translation by Peter Green, we gave Lysistrata motivation by dressing her in black to denote her as a widow. Cf. Henderson (1987), xxxvii–xxxviii, on the implications of Lysistrata not being identified as a housewife or an elderly woman.

⁵⁶ Worrall (1989), 40, helpfully distinguishes the differences between Nemirovich-Danchenko's and Tairov's approaches to synthetic theatre: 'Both directors were up in arms against clichéd tradition, although Tairov defended his emphasis on "convention", where Nemirovich sought to approximate the comic opera to real life, discovering subtle psychological approaches for the actors. Tairov was not interested in the logic of character but in the logic of the genre'.

⁵⁷ Journalists who did understand the M.A.T.'s nuances include the anonymous Moscow correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor* (1925), who describes the Musical Studio as judiciously influenced by experimenters such as Meyerhold and Tairov, and Frances Fineman (1925b), who in a letter to the *New York Times* editor offers insightful praise for the innovations of set designer Isaak Rabinovich and stresses (without using the term 'constructivism') his conservative streak in the face of the more daring designs championed by Meyerhold.

⁵⁸ Tryon (1925).

⁵⁹ *New York Times* (1925e).

⁶⁰ Gabriel (1925); Gordon (1925).

⁶¹ Daly (1925); *New York Times* (1925a). Cf. 'singers who can act' (Sayler (1925b)); 'singing actors' (*New York Times* (1925c)).

⁶² The New York theatre listings from December 1925 show how popular all three genres were. By way of revues, one could see the long running series *George White's Scandals* (*Ziegfeld's Follies* being on temporary hiatus) as well as Frank X. Silk in the *Silk Stocking Revue*. December 1925 musical comedies included Al Jolson in *Big Boy*, the Marx Brothers in *The Cocoanuts* (music and lyrics by Irving Berlin, book by George S. Kaufman), George M. Cohan in his own *American Born*, and the international hit *No, No, Nanette*. *Lysistrata's* operetta contemporaries included Rudolf Friml's *The Vagabond King*; *Rose-Marie* by Friml, Herbert Stothart, Otto Harbach and Oscar Hammerstein II; and Sigmund Romberg's *The Student Prince*,

the longest running Broadway show of the 1920s, which moved from Jolson's Theatre to the Ambassador so that the M.A.T. could use Jolson's.

⁶³ Hammerstein (1925), 14, 70.

⁶⁴ Brock (1925).

⁶⁵ To quote Hammerstein again: 'The songs we were to write [for *Oklahoma!*] had a different function. They must help tell our story and delineate characters, supplementing the dialogue and seeming to be, as much as possible, a continuation of the dialogue. This is, of course, true of the songs by any well-made musical play. . . . What we aimed to do was to write in our own style and yet seem "in character" with the background and substance of the story' (Hammerstein (1943), 2).

⁶⁶ The anonymous reviewer at *New York Times* (1925e) also notes how the ancient Greek chorus was essential to a synthetic theatre.

⁶⁷ Sondheim (2010), 99.

⁶⁸ Incredibly, *Happiest Girl* was one of five different musical adaptations of *Lysistrata* that were being written in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but the only one that seems to have reached production. Besides *Happiest Girl*, the other four projects were: (1) Composer Georges Auric and lyricist Ogden Nash were employed by producer Norman Bel Geddes to write an adaptation. Geddes had directed the Gilbert Seldes *Lysistrata* in 1930. The show seems to have been abandoned after Geddes' sudden death in May 1958. See Zolotow (1958a). (2) A long-gestating show called *All's Fair*, with book, music and lyrics by Hans Holzer, who would later become famous as the parapsychologist associated with the Amityville Horror. See Gelb (1958a), Zolotow (1960). A website, *lysistrata.com*, has recently appeared, claiming the Holzer piece will finally see the stage in spring 2013 under the title *Lysistrata the Musical*. (3) *Listen to Liz* by composer Bernie Wayne. See Calta (1958). (4) *Lizzie Strotter*, music and lyrics by Martin Kalmanoff. See Gelb (1958b).

⁶⁹ Meyerson and (Ernie) Harburg (1993) is a fine biography of Yip Harburg. Details of his contributions to *Bloomer Girl*, *Finian's Rainbow* and *Flahooley* are summarized on p. 221.

⁷⁰ Keating (1961), 3, reports that Harburg was inspired to write *Happiest Girl* when he read about the M.A.T. *Lysistrata*.

⁷¹ Harburg had collaborated with Saidy on *Bloomer Girl*, *Finian's Rainbow*, *Flahooley* and *Jamaica*.

⁷² The script of *Happiest Girl* remains unpublished. I quote from a bound typescript preserved at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts archives (Saidy, Myers and Harburg (1961?)). The script is undated, but it corresponds to the character list and song list in the Broadway opening night program (also preserved at the NYPL-PA). The page numbers, as typed in the script, denote act number, scene number and page number. Curiously, the typescript's cover is imprinted with the title *The Ladies and the Devil*, a title I know from no other source. (It is attested that, during the show's gestation Harburg was calling it *Five Minutes of Spring*, the title of another of the show's songs: Zolotow (1958b).) A cast recording was made and has been released on CD: Offenbach and Harburg (2002).

⁷³ Norton (2002), vol. 3, p. 108. Its competition did not help its business. *Happiest Girl* ran concurrently with some of the most celebrated musicals and stars in Broadway history: *Bye Bye Birdie*, *Camelot* (with Richard Burton and Julie Andrews), *Do Re Mi* (with Phil Silvers), *Fiorello!*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Music Man*, *The Sound of Music*, *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*, and *Wildcat* (with Lucille Ball).

⁷⁴ Coleman (1961). Ritchard, who also directed *Happiest Girl*, had established his persona on Broadway as 'the overripe, foppish pirate chief' Captain Hook in *Peter Pan* (1954). Quote from Haun (2012), 4, in a description of Christian Borle's portrayal of Captain Hook (known here as Black Stache) in *Peter and the Starcatcher* in 2012.

⁷⁵ Kerr (1961).

⁷⁶ Taubman (1961); Cooke (1961).

⁷⁷ The sequence after the Wicked Witch of the East's death (from Glinda's 'Come Out, Come Out' through 'Ding Dong! The Witch Is Dead' to 'Follow the Yellow Brick Road') and the sequence upon entering the Emerald City are two of the earliest examples of the type of musical scenes that would become popular with Sondheim and his epigones.

⁷⁸ E.g., Kinesias—again Lysistrata's husband—assures her that he only wins medals as 'part of my campaign to make you the most famous woman in the world. And the happiest' (p. 1-3-14), a line which leads directly into their title duet, 'The Happiest Girl in the World'.

⁷⁹ Mandelbaum (1991), 217, blames the show's failure on the use of Offenbach's 'old' music, but contemporary reviews generally praised the music as one of the shows redeeming qualities. Research into Offenbach's music was performed by Harburg's former collaborator Jay Gorney, the composer of 'Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?'. Selections came from across Offenbach's oeuvre. For example, 'Adrift on a Star' is the barcarolle ('Belle nuit, ô nuit d'amour') from *Les contes d'Hoffmann* and 'How Soon, O Moon' is 'La mort m'apparaît' from *Orphée aux enfers*.

⁸⁰ The two orchestrators, Hershy Kay and particularly Robert Russell Bennett, were among a small group of orchestrators who created the orchestral sound that we still associate with classic show tunes. See Suskin (2009), 24–32 and 48–54, on their techniques and influence. (Ibid., 416–417, catalogues which orchestrator worked on which songs.)

⁸¹ E.g., his usual wit shines through when Diana coyly convinces the Olympians that the sex strike will work because 'Each new tot / That is begat / Cannot be got / Without that 'that' / Whatever that may be' (1-4-28).

⁸² I have written about the importance of divine absence in Aristophanes for promoting extraordinary human agency in Given (2009).

⁸³ In an interview, Harburg explains that this lyric is a love song for a post-Einsteinian and post-Freudian age (Keating (1961)). That may be, but it's not a love song for this dramatic situation.

⁸⁴ Sontag (1991), 106.

⁸⁵ Cf. Moody (1969), an archived document from the church detailing its progressive social and political agenda. The church still operates a theatre today in its gymnasium. It is the site, coincidentally, where the 2011 adaptation *Lysistrata Jones* made its New York debut before moving to the Walter Kerr Theater on Broadway. The church also remains politically active today. When I visited recently (June 2012), it was displaying a prominent running tally of casualties in the American wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

⁸⁶ Crespy (2003), 101.

⁸⁷ Carmines's music was widely praised by critics, and often named as the best aspect of the Judson productions. He was noted for his ability to write in multiple musical voices, not as pastiche, or not simply as pastiche, but in disparate fragments that betrayed 'a fresh and beguiling original art' (Rich (1972)). Cf. Barnes (1968), Barnes (1971), DeMaio (1969), Hering (1969), Van Gelder (1969). By the end of his career, Carmines had written about 80 musicals, operas and oratorios (Martin (2005): Carmines's obituary).

⁸⁸ E.g., Gottfried (1969).

⁸⁹ The term is said to have been coined by *Village Voice* critic Jeffrey Talmer (Crespy (2003), 17). Bottoms (2004), Crespy (2003) and Stone (2005) provide good histories of the early Off-Off-Broadway movement.

⁹⁰ Reynolds (1968). Let me take this opportunity to thank Marvin J. Taylor and the entire staff of the NYU Fales Library. Their efficient professionalism made my visit not just productive but pleasurable.

⁹¹ The archive in fact possesses two undated typescripts, but they are two copies of the same script, one of which is bound. They are identical except for handwriting in the bound copy (including a missing page 25 in both copies). The bound copy was the rehearsal script of cast member Jeffrey Apter, whose name is handwritten on the cover sheet. The scripts lack most of the musical's lyrics. Apter's copy is marked

throughout with revisions, cuts, cues and stage directions, all in the same hand. The folder in which they are kept is labeled 'November 1968', the date of the Judson run, but the missing lyrics and handwritten revisions indicate that the scripts do not represent the show as performed at Judson.

⁹² Carmines and Reynolds (1969?). The recording lacks a date but the liner notes name the 1969 Off-Broadway production and the cast list matches the *dramatis personae* in the Astor Place program. The recording exists only on vinyl LP; it has never been released on compact disc.

⁹³ Reynolds and Carmines (1969?). The script, published by Metromedia Onstage, is undated, but its title page references the 1969 Off-Broadway production and its lyrics match those heard on the cast recording. The script also contains vocal selections for several of the musical's songs.

⁹⁴ Some source criticism may be included here. The greatest differences between the two scripts are: the new lyrics that appear in the published script, the elimination of most second act material, and the elimination of blackface conventions. Many of the new lyrics are Carmines's adaptation of Reynolds's original words. On Carmines's compositional methods, see Burke (1969). The earlier script contains all of Aristophanes' intruder scenes (the priest Hierocles, the military industry representatives, etc.), but to judge from reviews these were cut entirely before the Off-Off-Broadway premiere and are absent from the published script. Causing particular confusion is *Peace's* usage of conventions from the minstrel tradition, including blackface makeup. Blackfaced characters, including two stereotypical Southern slaves named Rastus and Liza, mainstays of nineteenth-century minstrel shows, appear in both acts of the earlier script, which is explicitly set in the antebellum South. Their language and movement clearly mark them as minstrel stereotypes. The stage directions describe Liza as 'a greatly exaggerated Aunt Jemima' and Rastus as 'a greatly exaggerated blackface fieldhand, wooly poll, much given to footshuffling and head-scratching' (p. 1). Their words are close translations of Aristophanes' text into the stereotypical black dialect of the minstrel tradition. Lines 1 and 2 are translated in this way: Liza: 'ANUDDER SHITCAKE FO'DE BEETLE!', Rastus: 'Hyar she am. An' I sho' hopes dat ugly mutha never git no better'n dat too' (1). In the published script, the Astor Place program and the cast recording, the slaves disappear altogether. They are replaced by Trygaeus's Father and Mother, but played by the same actors who had played Rastus and Liza (George McGrath and Julie Kurnitz). Yet it is clear from the reviews (e.g., Bunce (1969)) that the blackface and the Southern setting were not eliminated. Most reviews state that the second act followed minstrel show conventions, including blackface, and a few even mention Rastus and Liza by name. I proceed with the following not completely justified working assumptions: The Judson production was explicitly set in the South throughout the play although the script used was probably revised—and indeed truncated—from the extant typescript. I shall nevertheless use the extant script as a tentative guide. For the Astor Place production, I again use the published script and cast recording as tentative guides, keeping in mind that, even though they avoid describing it, the second act was staged in blackface as a minstrel show. According to the script, the characters of Father and Mother still exist in act two—they are addressed as such, and call Trygaeus 'son'—but their blackface also transforms them into Rastus and Liza.

⁹⁵ Carmines quoted in Burke (1969), 7.

⁹⁶ Here is another reason for the disjunction between what the reviews report and what the rehearsal and published scripts print.

⁹⁷ To me, it sounds more like Mozart than Handel, but Carmines says it's Handel: Burke (1969).

⁹⁸ McMillan (2006), 68–69.

⁹⁹ Oliver (1969). In the extant script, the song comes earlier in the play (p. 52 out of 115), but it is in last position on the cast recording and the review here cited states that it occurs in the finale.

¹⁰⁰ Carmines makes clear in an interview that he was not naïve about racism: 'I'm from the South, and when I was a kid, I played the piano for a lot of minstrel shows. I saw that by adding the minstrel form to

“Peace,” we could make those odes entertaining, and comment on racial tension at the same time. Let’s face it: the minstrel show Negro is the Negro that still walks around in the heads of most white people. And rather than repress this, I thought, why not be absolutely open about it? Why not say, “Look, this is the stereotype that inhibits your unconsciousness, and it’s high time you did something about it”” (Burke (1969)).

¹⁰¹ The published script’s stage directions describe Father as having ‘the exaggerated manner of a southern gentleman’ (Reynolds and Carmines (1969?), 1). A newspaper profile puts the show in ‘the archaic American south’ (Burke (1969)).

¹⁰² Gottfried (1969) makes this point forcefully. He recognizes the usual goodness of the Judson’s typical ‘refreshing scorn for serious points’, but argues that such scorn is not welcome in such a politically relevant play. He also recognizes that Carmines’s musicals are deliberately derivative. ‘The irony is that this outlook is so very close to Aristophanes’, far more so than the sobriety of a classical production. It was a real chance for easy-going, legitimate Greek comedy. Instead, it is just another Judson’s musical — the best I’ve seen, but still the same business’.

¹⁰³ Quoted at Bottoms (2004), 159.

¹⁰⁴ The reviews fervently praise David Vaughan’s performance as Hermes. One writer even notes that he plays the god ‘with overtones of [*Happiest Girl* star] Cyril Ritchard’ (Novick (1969)).

¹⁰⁵ In the early script, Reynolds translates Aristophanes’ episodic plot directly, including the scenes with the intruders Hierocles and the Arms-Dealer. The chorus of black slaves divides the episodes with song. The handwritten comments, though, suggest that much of this material was later cut. The published script gives no indication of minstrelsy conventions. Unfortunately, neither the cast recording nor the reviews nor the liner notes make clear what replaced these episodes, if they were in fact cut. Reviews of both productions (Barnes (1968), Jeffreys (1969), Oliver (1969), Seligsohn (1969)) attest that the second act was staged as a minstrel show, but give no information about content. For a good overview of the history and conventions of the minstrel show, see Stempel (2010), 57–60.

¹⁰⁶ Barnes (1968)

¹⁰⁷ Bunce (1969). Brennan (1969) reports that Aristophanes was abandoned altogether in the minstrel show; Novick (1969) more specifically says that the arms-dealers and the children of warmongers have been eliminated.

¹⁰⁸ Oliver (1969).

¹⁰⁹ The cast recording’s liner notes state that they were sung by Mother and Father. This is almost certainly wrong. ‘Just Sit Around’ sounds like a pastiche of a minstrel song that morphs into a blues number. It is a song whose music and content demand black or blackface singers. It is highly unlikely that Mother and Father sing it. The voices on the recording do not help because, according to the programs, the same actors played Mother and Liza, on the one hand, and Father and Rastus, on the other hand.