THE 2022 SEED PROJECT:

ARISTOPHANES' "THE BIRDS"

BY BRIAN RENO AND GABRIEL VEGA WEISSMAN

DIRECTED BY DUSTY MERRELL

FEATURING:

MIRANDA DEAN
KEVIN HAMMOND
NICO MONTALVO
LANIE GULLETT
CY BRYAN
NIC SEARS
SHAMEKA SOLIS
DANI HOLDER
MASON BOWLING
DANIELLA DE LA ROSA
MADISEN PIONTKOWSKI

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
CORPUS CHRISTI |
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE & DANCE
Dedicated to Shirley Robinson Wakemen
Directors Note

The heart of this production focuses on representing what being an artist here in Corpus Christi means for each individual. This production provided the opportunity to test what it means to make a production successful and entertaining. By examining the history we are living through along the way, the company had the chance to adapt the script to our current cultural influences. In a time where voices are being silenced far too often, I see this production as a way to uplift the voices of this department and to shine a light on the artists who have helped shape TAMUCC’s Department of Theatre and Dance.
Written nearly 2500 years ago, The Birds is a classic example of Old Comedy. You may be wondering, what does that label mean: “Old Comedy”? Even as far back as Ancient Greece, people divided plays up into genres. The difference between tragedy and comedy seems obvious, but they were even more specific than that. They divided comedy up into “Old,” “Middle,” and “New.” New Comedy looks familiar to any of us who have watched sitcoms: it concerns itself with domestic situations like love, family, and neighbors. It is the comedy of everyday life. Unfortunately, due to the ravages of time (e.g., decaying papyrus, zealots who like to set libraries on fire), no examples of Middle Comedy have lasted to this day, and there is only one Old Comedy writer whose work has. That writer, though, is a doozy: Aristophanes.

The Old Comedy of Aristophanes is, in a word, bonkers: over-the-top zaniness; supernatural events; scandalous political satire; crude scatological and sexual humor. Perhaps his most famous play is Lysistrata, in which the women of Athens pledge to
withhold sex from their husbands until they end the Peloponnesian War. The Birds is another such Old Comic masterpiece. These Old Comedies feature a loose structure, organized not so much around a coherent plot, but more around a happy idea. This happy idea is so bizarre (using sex to stop war; leaving society to join the birds in Cloud-cuckoo-land) that the characters debate it and test it out in a series of scenes that doesn’t follow logic so much as it riffs on a theme. Fourth-wall breaks abound as the Chorus talks directly to the audience. Plus, Aristophanes was a master of topical insults and cultural allusions. Reading one of his plays today requires myriad footnotes to explain all the people he was making fun of, many of whom he knew would be in the audience watching the play! If you can imagine how confused people two thousand years from now would be watching last week’s episode of Saturday Night Live, you get the feeling of the original The Birds.

That brings us to today’s show. Playwrights Brian Reno and Gabriel Vega Weissman have written an adaptation of Aristophanes’ original, complete with updated pop culture references. Further, they have encouraged anybody who wants to stage this script to
tweak it to their own tastes, utilizing jokes and quotes that are as up to date as can be. So, while you wouldn’t have heard Britney Spears and Baby Yoda references in ancient Athens, you will hear them tonight, very much in the spirit of that wily Old Comedy master, Aristophanes. The poop jokes were in the original, though. Poop jokes are always funny.
THE CAST

Matt
Dillon
Chorus Leader/King
Chorus 1
Chorus 2
Chorus 3
Chorus 4
Chorus 5
Chorus 6
Chorus 7
Chorus 8

Miranda Dean
Kevin Hammond
Nico Montalvo
Mason Bowling
Dani Holder
Nic Sears
Madisen Piontkowski
Shameka Solis
Lanie Gullet
Cy Bryan
Daniella De La Rosa
Production Staff

Director
Stage Manager
Scenic Designer’s
Costume Designer
Lighting Designer
Sound Designer
Hair & Makeup
Properties Designer
Technical Director
Lighting/Sound Faculty Advisor
Costume Supervisor

Seed Project Advisor
Lead Stitchers

Wardrobe, Hair, Makeup Run Crew
Light Board Operator
Sound Board Operator
Scenic Construction Crew
Marketing/Photographer
Photographer
Box Office Faculty Supervisor
Front of House Student Workers

Dustin Merrell
Malorie Mosley
Autumn Sharp, Kevin Loeffler, Jordan Bohl
Autumn Lutkenhaus
Rachel Havlice
Dustin Merrell
Autumn Lutkenhaus
Malorie Mosley
Jordan Bohl
Philip Johnson
Rosa M. Lazaro, Alexandra Shaw, Thomas Oldham
Marco Munoz
Monroe Verette, Jamie Grime, Adam Nombrano, AnnMarie Tapia, Daniella De La Rosa
Harper Lee
Issac Lopez
Mason Urias, Brandon Bankston
Alison Frost
George Miguel Salcido
Meredith Melville
Mason Todd, Shelby Clark, Kamryn Lewis, Nate Staggs

Special Thanks
Shameka Solis, Alison Frost, Meredith Melville, and everyone who donated recyclables for the set.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Favorite Role 1</th>
<th>Favorite Role 2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dusty Merrell</strong></td>
<td>Sulphur Springs, TX</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Director of Aristophanes’ The Birds</td>
<td>Stage Managing Aristophanes’ The Birds</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Malorie Mosley</strong></td>
<td>Longview, TX</td>
<td>Junior</td>
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<td>Aristophanes’ The Birds</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Miranda Dean</strong></td>
<td>San Antonio, TX</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Mother Abbess, The Convent</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Kevin Hammond</strong></td>
<td>Midland, TX</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
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<td>Dillon</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Nico Montalvo</strong></td>
<td>Conroe, TX</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Stage Managing DNA</td>
<td>Jules, Boom</td>
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<td>Dallas, TX</td>
<td>Freshmen</td>
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<td><strong>Dani Holder</strong></td>
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<td>Ester, Dryland</td>
<td>All of them</td>
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<td><strong>Nic Sears</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Madisen Piontkowski</strong></td>
<td>Keller, TX</td>
<td>Freshmen</td>
<td>Erica, Bright Half Life</td>
<td>Pam, Fat Men in Skirts</td>
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<td><strong>Shameka Solis</strong></td>
<td>Corpus Christi, TX</td>
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<td><strong>Daniella De La Rosa</strong></td>
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<td>Old Ruby, Ruby’s</td>
<td>Bertie,</td>
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<td><strong>Lanie Gullet</strong></td>
<td>Houston, TX</td>
<td>Junior</td>
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<td>Story</td>
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<td><strong>Cy Bryan</strong></td>
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<td>-Favorite Role: Open Defecator</td>
<td>-Favorite Role: Sofia, Dance Nation</td>
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<td><strong>Issac Lopez</strong></td>
<td><strong>George Miguel Salcido</strong></td>
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<td>-Favorite Role: Melvin P Thorpe, The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas</td>
<td>-Favorite Role: Angel, Jesus Hopped the A-Train</td>
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<td><strong>Rachel Havlice</strong></td>
<td><strong>Autumn Lutkenhaus</strong></td>
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<td>-Home: Lindsay, TX</td>
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<td>-Year: Junior</td>
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<td>-Favorite Role: Streaming Director, William Tribute Concert by Corpus Christi Symphony Orchestra</td>
<td>-Favorite Role: Costume Designer for Aristophanes’ The Birds</td>
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<td><strong>Adam Nombrano</strong></td>
<td><strong>Autumn Sharp</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Jamie Grime</strong></td>
<td><strong>Monroe Verette</strong></td>
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<td><strong>AnnMarie Tapia</strong></td>
<td><strong>Luke Jackson</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Julia Massey</strong></td>
<td><strong>Grace Beikirch</strong></td>
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FACULTY AND STAFF

Alison Frost, Department Chair of Theatre & Dance
Kevin Loeffler, Director of Theatre
Jilissa Cotten, Director of Dance
Philip Johnson, Professor of Theatre
Rosa M. Lazaro, Professor of Theatre
Alexandra Shaw, Costume Shop Supervisor
Kelly Russell, Professor of Theatre
Sarah Gonzalez, Assistant Professor of Dance
Meredith Melville, Assistant Professor of Theatre
Marco Muñoz, Assistant Professor of Theatre
Thomas A. Oldham, Assistant Professor of Theatre
J. Don Luna, Professor Emeritus of Theatre
Jordan Bohl, Technical Director
Lanie Gullet, Student Office Assistant
Mac McLendon, Student Office Assistant
Brandon Bankston, Student Shop Assistant
Daniella De La Rosa, Student Shop Assistant
Jamie Grime, Student Shop Assistant
Adam Nombrano, Student Shop Assistant
AnnMarie Tapia, Student Shop Assistant
Mason Urias, Student Shop Assistant
Monroe Verette, Student Shop Assistant

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