

ECU / LOESSIN PLAYHOUSE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ECU/Loessin Playhouse closes virtual season with "Lysistrata," featuring larger-than-life puppets

ECU School of Theatre and Dance will stream Ellen McLaughlin's adaptation of the Greek comedy "Lysistrata" April 30 and May 1 at 7:30 p.m. and May 2 at 2:00 p.m. Tickets are \$10 and available online at theatredance.ecu.edu or by calling the box office at 252-328-6829. Tickets for ECU students available for \$5 by calling the box office.

McLaughlin's fresh, post-modern adaptation of Aristophanes' classic Greek satire was first staged as part of the Lysistrata Project, a 2003 peace protest in which thousands of readings of "Lysistrata" were held around the world. Dramaturg Jen-Scott Mobley comments, "[This adaptation] reminds us that audiences have delighted in the 'battle of the sexes' since the dawn of comic drama."

During the planning period for the virtual spring season last fall, director Gregory Funaro thought "Lysistrata" would offer levity and humor during the coronavirus pandemic. "I think we could all use a good laugh, and 'Lysistrata,' certainly provides that," Funaro says.

In an effort to maintain social distancing and mask-wearing procedures, the ECU production has been staged using larger-than-life puppets, created by design and production faculty and students in the School of Theatre and Dance.

"The idea to use oversized puppets started as a way for actors to stay six feet apart," Funaro explains, "but as we moved forward, they began to illustrate the over-the-top nature of the show, adding an extra layer to the comedy."

"Designing costumes for puppets instead of typical actors has been an interesting process," says "Lysistrata" costume designer Delta Childers-Smith. "I had to think about the character, the puppet's size, and the puppeteer. They all collectively create this person in the story."

Instead of separating the costume from the puppeteer we decided to merge them, so, ultimately, the actor becomes an extension of the puppet's costume."

The build process for the puppets began in December and student performers have had access to rehearse with them in different stages of the process since rehearsals began.

Damaris Tooley, a senior professional acting major, plays Lysistrata in the production. "This experience was unlike any other theatre I have done," she says. The puppets and working with COVID restrictions have given me a new and creative outlook on my acting. Having to focus on the voice, controlling the puppet, and just memorizing the lines have been incredibly difficult."

Artistic Director of ECU/Loessin Playhouse Jayme Klinger Host, states, "Our faculty and students have handled the constraints around the pandemic with great innovation and creativity. The inspired set, puppet, and costume design layered atop the exceptional talent of our actors, will surely captivate our virtual audience."

This production contains adult content and language.