

in Israel: *LYSISTRATA*, *PEACE*, *ACHARNIANS*, and *KNIGHTS*. All these productions were in times of war (either between Israel and the Arab states or between Israelis and Palestinians), and their scripts were adaptations that accentuated social and political issues concerning the perpetual wars, the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and the relationship between Jews and Arabs.

*Lysistrata* is by far the most popular. It was first performed in 1958 at the Habima Theater, under the direction of MINOS VOLANAKIS. Nissim Aloni, a prominent Israeli playwright, director and translator, turned Dudley Fitts' English version into vibrant modern Hebrew, introducing the rapid rhythm of Israeli speech and a partly poetic language. Volanakis' production transformed the sex strike into a celebration of a life of peace and freedom for all humankind, a message that the Israeli public was happy to embrace at that time. The same translation was adapted for a production at the Cameri Theater in 1969, after Israel's victory in the 1967 war; it again reasserted Israel's wish for peace with its neighbors. *Lysistrata 2000* is the first feminist ADAPTATION of Aristophanes in Israel; written by Anat Gov and directed by Edna Maziah, it was performed at the Cameri Theater in 2001 and voiced the growing protest of the Women in Black movement against the occupation of Gaza, Judea, and Samaria. Most recently, in 2013, a musical adaptation of *Lysistrata* by Eli Bijaoui was staged by Udi Ben-Moshe at the Habima Theater, against the backdrop of the failure of the latest round of Israeli–Palestinian talks.

*Peace*, adapted and directed by Arieh Sachs, was performed at the Cameri Theater during the 1969–70 War of Attrition, a particularly turbulent period in Israel's history. Sachs made the play a libretto for a contemporary satire against the "Greater Israel Movement" and against the occupation; using Aristophanes' comic strategies he hoped to open Israeli audiences to a deeper reading of the political situation and to prepare them to accept the necessity of negotiations and eventual concessions.

*Acharnians* served as the basis for *The Chosen*, a radical adaptation, written by Yaakov Shabtai against the background of the Yom Kippur War (October 1973), the establishment of the "Gush Emunim" movement (February 1974), and the initiation of settlement activity in Judea

and Samaria (Sebastia, the first settlement, was established in July 1974). *Knights* was used as one of the subplots of *Fighting for Home*, a multilayered satire that also included narrative fragments from *Acharnians* and *Lysistrata*; written by Ilan Hatzor and directed by Michael Gurewicz at the Khan Theater in Jerusalem in 2002, it was performed in the atmosphere of despair after the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995, the disintegration of the Oslo Accords, and the outbreak of the second intifada (Palestinian uprising) in October 2000.

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NURIT YAARI

**productions, modern (Italy)** Renaissance Italy was famous for its performative culture: while the d'Este court at Ferrara held the first staging of PLAUTUS' and TERENCE'S comedies (1486–1502), ARISTOPHANES, too, had his first modern performances in Italy: *WEALTH* was first staged in Greek around 1450–1500, while in 1512 the Medici hosted the performance of Eufrosino Bonini's *Comedia di Giustizia* (*The Comedy of Justice*), an ADAPTATION of the first part of *Wealth*, in which Fortune regained sight thanks to the Medici (Perrotta 1954, 871). No other performance is known until 1781, when *CLOUDS* was staged at the Collegio de' Nobili di Parma, in a Latin TRANSLATION by Coriolanus Martirani (1556) accompanied by an Italian paraphrase. In the nineteenth century performances are attested only for *Wealth*: an adaptation by Giovanni Franceschi was staged at the Teatro Manzoni in Milan in 1882 (Suess 1911, 217) and a translation by Augusto Franchetti at the Teatro Politeama in Florence in 1898 (Chirico 2014, 739 n. 69). Thus the only plays known to have been produced in Italy until the twentieth century are *Clouds* and *Wealth*—not surprisingly, as they had been the most widely known and translated Aristophanic plays in Europe since the Renaissance.

Since 1914 the Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico (INDA) has organized performances of classical drama in Italy, especially in the Greek theater of Syracuse. Yet Greek tragedy has been much more popular than comedy. Aristophanes was staged only four times in Syracuse in the twentieth century: *Clouds* (1927), *Frogs* (1976), *Clouds* (1988), and *Acharnians* (1994). *Knights* was planned in 1924 but was replaced by *Seven Against Thebes* and *Antigone*, which were perhaps considered more suitable for an audience that included Benito Mussolini (Treu 2014, 950; but see Pedersoli 2004, 57–58 and 68 (IV.8)). Beyond INDA, Aristophanes enjoyed some popularity in the twentieth century, *Birds* and then *Clouds* being the most popular. The sponsorship of most Italian performances of Greek drama by INDA (a state-financed institution) has often limited the “freedom” of Aristophanes’ staging; thus Ronconi’s *Frogs* (2002) was censored for its political satire of Berlusconi’s government and Aristophanes has been generally staged with an “archeological” attitude, which stifles political and contemporary interpretations (see CENSORSHIP, MODERN). Directors attempting to adapt Aristophanes have often focused on the comic, not political aspects of his plays, developing the musical component or using *commedia dell’arte* techniques as well as different Italian accents and dialects associated with specific comic traditions. The most innovative twentieth-century Italian productions have consisted of ADAPTATIONS combining different plays, which have at least avoided such “archeological” attitudes: Giorgio Prosperi’s *Aristophanes’ Women* (1969), Luca Ronconi’s *Utopia* (1975), Aldo Trionfo’s *Long Live Peace!* (1988), and Tonino Conte’s *Birds and Other Utopias* (2000).

In the twenty-first century Aristophanes is enjoying a new revival with INDA (his plays were staged at Syracuse in 2001, 2002, 2003, and then every year between 2010 and 2014) as well as with other companies. In particular, “women’s comedies” have been popular: INDA produced *THESMOPHORIAZUSAE* in 2001, *Lysistrata* in 2010, and *ECCLESIAZUSAE* in 2013 and the Teatro delle Albe *Lysistrata* in 2009. Recently Aristophanes has also been staged with a more engaged and political agenda (Treu 2014, 958–63): for example, in *To Hell! A Fresco from Aristophanes* (1996), an adaptation of *Wealth*, Marco Martinnelli tackled immigration problems by casting

poor Senegalese immigrants as main characters, while in *Peace at Scampia* (2005–6) he worked with children from a very poor district in Naples.

Since the discovery and publication of his texts, MENANDER has not been very popular on stage. Yet Italy saw the first RADIO performance of *DYSKOLOS* broadcast on June 16, 1959, while Luigi Squarzina directed the first Italian *Dyskolos* at the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza on September 4, 1959 (Garzya 1960, 418). The most famous stagings of Menander are those by Mario Prosperi, who used masks based on the terracotta miniatures found by Luigi Bernabò Brea on Lipari; Prosperi himself also translated and even supplemented the papyrus text in order to prepare a script for his staging (*Samia* in 1979 and 1981; *Epitrepontes* in 2009 and 2010).

Archival material (used also for this entry) on Italian performances of Greek comedy can be consulted at the Archivio Fondazione Inda, Siracusa.

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FRANCESCA SCHIRONI

**productions, modern (Middle East and North Africa)** According to *APGRD*, the first modern productions of Greek comedy in the Middle East and North Africa region appear to have been five stagings of plays by ARISTOPHANES in modern Greek, for the Greek community of Alexandria, between 1900 and 1934. The first such production in Arabic was probably that of *Braksa aw Muskilat al-Hukm (Praxa or The Problem of Ruling)*, an ADAPTATION of Aristophanes *ECCLESIAZUSAE* by Tawfiq Al-Hakim (1898–1987); it was originally written in 1939 and produced in Damascus in 1960. Since then there have been about fifteen other productions, mostly of *CLOUDS*, *FROGS*, and *Ecclesiazusae*, but also an adaptation of *LYSISTRATA* by Lenin EL-RAMLY and a RADIO version of *PEACE*. The majority of these productions have been in Egypt, but others have taken place in Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, and Syria.

The reception of Aristophanes' comedy in the Arab world often challenges elements of POLITICS and SEXUALITY, which are key themes of OLD COMEDY and a major source of its laughter. Elements of verbal and visual sexuality are often reduced or even omitted in the Arabic versions, to suit the tastes of a rather conservative audience (Pormann 2014, 46). Aristophanic comedy has sometimes been used to comment on contemporary politics. Al-Hakim's version of *Ecclesiazusae* appeared in French translation only two years after the Egyptian Revolution of 1952, which overthrew King Farouk and established a republic; El-Ramly's *Lysistrata* adaptation, *Salam el-Nisaa*, was produced in reaction to the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003; the 2013 Iraqi production of *Ecclesiazusae* heavily criticized the corruption of politicians in contemporary Iraq.

Early Arabic productions were often staged in a fairly traditional fashion, with masks, costumes (without the PHALLUS), and a CHORUS; more recent productions have sometimes been more innovative.

Playwrights and theater practitioners dealing with Aristophanic comedy in the contemporary

Arab theater face challenging tasks: it remains an open question to what extent Arab theater can accommodate Aristophanic comedy and recast it to so that it can be effective in modern Arab culture and can confront contemporary issues. These challenges are highlighted by Ahmed Etman in his play *Tawfiq Al-Hakim Does Not Follow the Common Crowds* (based on Al-Hakim *Praxa*), in which Etman brings together Aristophanes and Al-Hakim, trying to answer the question whether Aristophanic comedy can be successfully performed for modern Arab audiences.

See also ADAPTATIONS (TWENTIETH TO TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES); TRANSLATIONS (TWENTIETH TO TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES)

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MOHAMMAD ALMOHANNA

#### **productions, modern (Netherlands and Belgium)**

The history of Greek drama in the Dutch-speaking countries of Europe (i.e. the Netherlands and the Flemish part of Belgium) is mainly a history of the reception of tragedy, not comedy. The first performances of Greek comedies took place against the background of the newly gained popularity of Greek drama from the late nineteenth century. During the interwar period, Amsterdam students occasionally performed plays such as ARISTOPHANES' *BIRDS*, *FROGS*, and *CLOUDS*. These productions were mainly intended as drama exercises for students and did not constitute actual efforts at reviving Old Comedy for the