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SYNOPSIS

The Birds was exhibited at the Great Dionysia in the year 414 B.C. It was placed second of the three competing plays; the prize was awarded to the Revellers of Ameipsias, a play until then unknown.

When Aristophanes wrote "The Birds", the Sicilian expedition was in the full ride of success and was, apparently, on the point of obtaining a triumphant issue. Athens was full of the wildest speculations and yearned for far-reaching ambitions. These feelings are mirrored in the present comedy.

Two Athenians leave the city and go to sojourn with the Birds, whom they persuade to claim the sovereignty of the world and to build up an enormous wall in Mid-air, so that no sacrifices offered by men could henceforth reach the sky; and the Gods would be presently starved into submission.

Thus did Aristophanes caricature the high schemes and ambitions which were then being contemplated; not to encourage his audience, for his caricature is fantastic and ludicrous in the extreme, but neither to discourage them, since even his fantastic adventure is crowned with a brilliant success.
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Present

BIRDS

a comedy by

ARISTOPHANES

at the

GREEK THEATRE

ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE of EDUCATION

St. Julian's

Wednesday 20th August 1969 at 8.00 p.m.

Thursday 21st August 1969 at 8.00 p.m.

Friday 22nd August 1969 at 8.00 p.m.

Saturday 23rd August 1969 at 8.30 p.m. (Gala Night)

Sunday 24th August 1969 at 8.00 p.m.
ARISTOPHANES

This famous Greek playwright was born c. 450 B.C. Little is known of his life. His fame rests on the eleven comedies that have come down to us: ACHARNIAHS, KNIGHTS, CLOUDS, WASPS, PEACE, BIRDS, LYSISTRATA, THESMOPHORIAZUSAC, FROGS, ECCLESIAZUSAE and PLUTUS. The first nine plays date from the period of the Greek war between Athens and Sparta and contain much enlightening and satirical comment on the conduct of the Athenian affairs by the politicians and generals, though not all of these plays are concerned with current affairs, except indirectly. The Clouds is concerned chiefly with Socrates. Tonight’s play The Birds focuses on the make-believe land of Cloudcuckooland, where two weary Athenians hope to escape the miseries of war. It is very similar to the theme of The Frogs where Dionysus journeys to the underworld in search of a tragic poet — “SUNT lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt”.

These plays show the wit of Aristophanes exercised on philosophers, Empire builders and literary critics. Whether the plays are political in content or not, they all have strict reference to contemporary Athen. Some others are more cosmopolitan in tone where contemporary references have almost disappeared and the chorus has been reduced to vanishing point.

The plays, but especially the Birds, contain much that is witty, much sheer buffoonery at the expense of minor characters and much lyrical writing that is frankly beautiful in spite of the comic setting.
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PRODUCER'S NOTE

"Birds" has all the virtues and failings of Greek comedy at its most topical. The plot development itself is without logic. Aristophanic comedy is essentially a grave, humorous, impossible Great Lie, related with an accurate mimicry of the language and manners of the persons introduced. Aristophanes' work is famous for its topicality which makes him difficult to appreciate today.

The humble attempt of this production is to present Aristophanes and his "Birds" with all its virtues and failings sifted of as much glossary and contemporary allusions as possible, retaining the spirit of this highly imaginative comedy and above all its humour which is eternal and universal.

Aristophanes wrote for the stage, but the schoolroom has always been unsympathetic to his genius. To explain a joke is the surest way of killing it. This is not meant to excuse various drastic cuts, alterations and additions which were effected upon the original but to make it crystal clear that this production has catered for both the scholars, in as much as a debateable interpretation goes, and for the audience that enjoys the humour, which otherwise is lost because of the original's topicality.
CAST

Peisthetaerus ......................... ALBERT FENECH
Euelpides ................................ CHARLES THAKE
Hoopoe .................................. ALFRED MALLIA
Plover Page ............................. EMANUEL BEZZINA
Nightingale .............................. JANE MICALLEF
Priest .................................... JOE DELIA
Poet ....................................... ROBERT DIXON
Soothsayer .............................. MICHAEL SCIORTINO
Meton ..................................... PETER BORG
Iris ................................ ....... JANICE MARTIN
Youngman/Kinesias/Sycophant .......... JOE IZZO
Prometheus .............................. CHRISS WARREN
Neptune ................................ JOSIE E. AZZOPARDI
Hercules ................................. LINO FARRUGIA
Triballian ............................... JOSEPH DELIA
Goddess ................................ DORIS FALZON
Jackdaw ................................. GODFREY S. BARON
Raven .................................... CHARLES CARUANA

CHORUS

Marshbird Leader ....................... Emmanuel Bezzina

Marshbirds ............................. Denise Attard, Mary Borg, Monica De Bono, Joseph Delia, Marlene Dimech, Joseph Pace

Hoopoe Leader .......................... Lino Farrugia

Hoopoes ............................... Rose Cassar, Robert Dixon, Doris Falzon, Ann Fermoza, Francis Grech

Median Leader .......................... Mary Ann Scerri

Medians ................................. Maria Mangion, Michael Sciortino, Saviour Vella

Play Directed by ...................... ALBERT MARSHALL

For The MASK and University Players

Stage Manager ......................... MARIO PHILIP AZZOPARDI
Assistant Stage Manager ............. JOE BORG
Deputy Stage Manager ............... GLORIA BORG
Prompt .................................. WILHELMINA CARR
Set ..................................... GEORGE FAVA
ANGELA VARGAS
Crew ................................... PATRICK ATTADE
CHARLES MALLIA
ELIZABETH GALEA
ROSETTE SCERRI
Props ................................... MARIO AZZOPARDI
Costume Design ......................... ANNA FORMOSA
Wardrobe .............................. CONNIE SPITERI
MARY LOU AZZOPARDI
YVONNE CINI
MADALENE GREENE
JANICE MARTIN
Head Gears .............................. RICHARD WALBANCKE
Lighting Engineer ...................... ALAN MEADOWS
Assistants ............................. FRANK DEBONO
JOE DE BONO
Sound Engineer ......................... LINO FARRUGIA
Make-up Design ......................... MADALENE ATTARD MONTALTO
Executed by ............................ PAULU BUGEJA
ROSETTE SCERRI
JOHN SCHRANZ
MICHELLE CONTI
MARLENE PSAILA
LOUIS GALEA
House Manager .......................... JOSEPH DELIA
Publicity ............................... JOSIE E. AZZOPARDI
Programme ............................. ALFRED MALLIA
Box Office .............................. VICTOR ZAMMIT
Poster Design .......................... TONY PRECA
CAST

Peisthetaerus .................. ALBERT FENECH
Euelpides .................... CHARLES THAKE
Hoopee ....................... ALFRED MALLIA
Plover Page .................. EMMANUEL BEZZINA
Nightingale .................. JANE MICHELLE
Priest ........................ JOE DELIA
Poet .......................... ROBERT DIXON
Soothsayer ................... MICHAEL SCIORTINO
Meten ........................ PETER BORG
Ir’s ............................ JANICE MARTIN
Youngman/Kinesias/Sycophant .... JOE IZZO
Prometheus ................... CHRIS WARREN
Neptune ...................... JOSE E. AZZOPARDI
Hercules ..................... LINO FARRUGIA
Triballian ................... JOSEPH DELIA
Goddess ...................... DORIS FALZON
Jackdaw ...................... GODFREY S. BARON
Raven ........................ CHARLES CARUANA

CHORUS

Marshbird Leader ................... Emmanuel Bezzina
Marshbirds  ... Denise Attard, Mary Borg, Monica De Bono, Joseph Delia, Marlene Dimch, Joseph Pace
Hoopee Leader ..................... Lino Farrugia
Hoopees  .. Rose Cassar, Robert Dixon, Doris Falzon, Ann Formosa, Francis Grech
Median Leader .................... Mary Ann Scerrt
Medians  .......... Maria Mangion, Michael Sciortino, Saviour Vella

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Set ........................ GEORGE FAVA
Crew ........................ ANGELA VARGAS
Prometheus ................... PATRICK ATTARD
Neptune ...................... CHARLES MALLIA
Hercules ..................... ELIZABETH GALEA
Triballian ................... ROSETTE SCERRI
Goddess ...................... MARIO AZZOPARDI
Jackdaw ...................... ANNA FORMOSA
Raven ........................ CONNIE SPITERI
Youngman .................... MARY LOU AZZOPARDI
Sycophant .................... YVONNE CINI
Kinesias ..................... MADELENE GREENE
Marshbirds ......... JANICE MARTIN
Marshbird Leader ............. RICHARD WALBANCKE
Marshbirds  .......... ALAN MEADOWS
Marshbird Leader .............. FRANK DEBONO
Marshbird Leader ............. JOE DE BONO

Sound Engineer ................ MAJDALENE ATTARD MONTALTO
Make-up Design .............. LINO FARRUGIA
Make-up Design .............. MADELENE ATTARD MONTALTO
Assistant .................... PAWLU BUGEA
Assistant ..................... ROSETTE SCERRI
Assistant ...................... JOHN SCIRANGELI
Assistant ...................... MICHELLE CONTI
Assistant  .................... MARLENE PSAAILA

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A Special Thanks to Brother Charles, Principal of
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VICTOR ZAMMIT

Treasurer
JOE IZZO

Secretary
MARYLENE CAUCHI

P. R. O.
LOUIS GALEA

Members
JOE AGIUS
JOSIE E. AZZOPARDI
EMMANUEL BEZZINA
JOSEPH DELIA
LINO FARRUGIA
ALBERT FENECH
ALFRED MALLIA
THERESE MICALLEF
GLORIA WARREN
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