

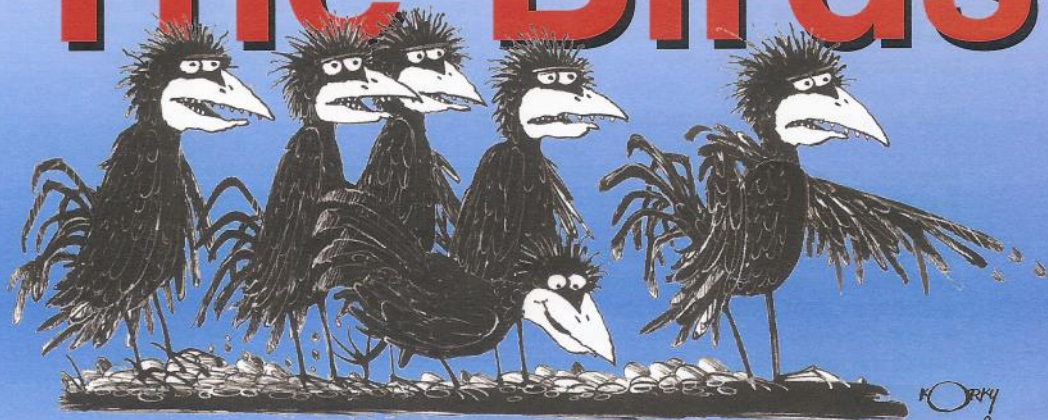
Youth
MASQUE
Theatre

Presents



Aristophanes' timeless comedy

The Birds



Translated by Kenneth McLeish
with music by Fiona Brice

Illustration © Korky Paul
Aesop's Funky Fables
by Vivian French (Penguin)

***Book now for your flight...
... to Cloud-Cuckoo-Land!***

Thursday 24th to Saturday 26th April

7.30 pm (Matinee Saturday 26th at 2.30 pm)

The Cripps Hall, Billing Road, Northampton

Tickets £5 and £4 (concessions)

available from The Cripps Hall Box Office

Tel/Fax: 01604 258666

also from the Tourist Information Centre, Guildhall Road
or Masque Youth Theatre 01604 406246 and Masque Theatre 01604 401193

It's all Greek to me!!



All the best to "THE BIRDS" Birdie & blues

SYNOPSIS

Two young Athenians, Peithetairos and Euelpides (let's call them Pete and Eric) decide to exchange city life, with its politicians and lawyers, for a peaceful life in the country. They come to a remote mountain top to seek advice from King Tereus, a human who was turned into a hoopoe as a punishment by Zeus, King of the Gods. Suddenly, Pete gets an idea - why not build a new state right where they are, a bird kingdom between mortals and gods, a city in mid-air, complete with visas and taxes? Tereus is enthusiastic, and summons the birds so they can vote on the idea. At first the birds are hostile to these two asylum-seekers, but Pete gradually wins them over, first by recalling their mythology and former status, and then by reminding them how badly they are treated by humans. As Pete and Eric are taken into Tereus' nest to acquire wings (by nibbling wing-wort) the birds try out their new role as lords of creation and rulers of the earth.

On his return, Pete begins to take over. He chooses a name, decides on the city emblem (a cock), organises the building of a perimeter wall and sets about conducting the necessary rituals. But the first of a stream of visitors interrupts the proceedings: a poet wanting a commission, followed by a fortune-teller on the make, an estate-agent, civil servants and a lawyer. All are sent packing by the increasingly authoritarian Pete. The birds discuss how they will deal with humans when they are in charge, and a messenger comes to report that the wall is finished. But there is panic when news comes that one of the gods has slipped through security - war is imminent! Iris, Goddess of the Rainbow, appears and demands that the usual sacrifices to the gods are made, but she too is dismissed by Pete.

Now a second messenger appears, to report that mortals are flocking to Cloud-Cuckoo-Land and advises stocking up with wings. As the welcoming choir rehearse, first a teenage yob arrives, followed by a pop star and then a crook. When Pete finally gets rid of them all, and has a moment to himself, a mysterious figure appears. It is Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods and suffered a terrible punishment from Zeus. He advises Pete to stand his ground when the gods come to negotiate, and to secure absolute power by marrying Sovereignty, Zeus's personal assistant. As Tereus and Eric, now reduced to the role of Pete's servants, prepare the wedding feast, the peace delegation appears: Poseidon, (God of the Sea and brother of Zeus) Herakles (son of Zeus by a mortal mother) and Biggun (a primitive, pre-Olympian god). Pete wins the vote and is given Sovereignty. He goes to prepare for his wedding, and Eric warns the audience about plausible dictators. The birds all re-assemble to celebrate their new god-king, his bride and their weapons of mass destruction.

Note *The Birds* was first produced in 414 BC, when it won second prize at the Spring Dionysia. Athens was engaged in a long and damaging war with Sparta, and two years previously had attacked the island of Melos for wishing to remain neutral. When the Melians finally surrendered, the entire male population was put to death, the women and children sold into slavery, despite a dignified appeal from the Melian ambassadors. It was an atrocity that appalled many Athenians, including Aristophanes. "This is a serious comedy, a play of ideas whose heart may be in the heavens but whose feet are still in the trenches" (J. Michael Walton)

CAST

Euelpides (Eric)
Peithetairos (Pete)
Secretary Bird
Tereus, a hoopoe
Priest
Poet
Oracle Seller
Meton, an estate agent
Her assistant
Inspectors
Lawyer
Builder
Watchman
Iris, goddess of the Rainbow
Messenger
Yob
Kinesias, a pop star
Informer
Prometheus
Poseidon, god of the Sea
Herakles, demi-god
Biggun, a primitive god
Commentator
Sovereignty
Chorus of Birds

Stewart Revell
Daniel Blundell
Katie Greaves
Susie Attwood
Sidney Smith
Maria McColgan
Alex Rex
Rebecca Carpenter
Thom Harvey
Laura Hemming, Heather Isaksen
George McCutcheon
Jack Hook
Joe Richardson
Dee Townsend
Eleanor Toone
William Morgan
Helen Jenkinson
Katharine Dowsett
Tom Pinny
Robert Morgan
Rupert Ackroyd
Jack McCutcheon
Emily Downing
Terri Denham
Rupert Ackroyd, Lydia Adams,
Dawn Anderton, Emma Britten,
Alicia Brown, Rebecca Carpenter,
Thomas Churms, Georgia Coleman,
Jessica Coleman, Terri Denham,
Emily Downing, Katharine Dowsett,
Katie Greaves, Ben Hardingham,
Laura Hemming, Grace Henwood,
Miranda Hicks, Simon Hoggarth,
Jack Hook, Heather Isaksen,
Helen Jenkinson, Maria McColgan,
George McCutcheon, Jack McCutcheon,
Arooj Mehmood, Angeli Modha,
Robert Morgan, William Morgan,
Melanie Revell, Alex Rex,
Joe Richardson, Gina Round,
Joanna Skinner, Amy Smith,
Sidney Smith, Eleanor Toone,
Dee Townsend, Nicola Wilson
Fiona Brice
Amv Cambell

Keyboard
Flute

Directed by	Ursula Wright
assisted by	Joan Walding, Brian Wright
Musical director	Fiona Brice
Choreography	Dee Townsend
Set design	Ellie Davies, Karl Kirk, Gemma Robson
Bird costumes made by	Dorothy Granger, Kathryn Blundell
additional costumes	The Works
Millinery	Alison Dunmore, Pam Manning, Ursula Wright
Lighting design	Marc Nicholson
Lighting desk	Marc Nicholson, Tom Pinny
Stage Manager	Thom Harvey
ASM	Martin Winsley, Scott Bradley
Set built by	Gemma Robson, Thom Harvey
Prompter	Joan Walding
Box Office	Tracy Dyer, Mary Greaves, Rosemary Revell
Front of House Manager	Jerry Hardingham
Dressers	Linda Downing, Eileen Jenkinson, Odette Townsend
Photographs	John Hendy
Poster design	Tony Janney

The action takes place in Greece, a long time ago. Or anywhere else, not so long ago.
There will be one interval of twenty minutes. Refreshments are available in the bar.

Our grateful thanks to:

Awards For All and Northampton Borough Council
 Northamptonshire County Council, for subsidised use of rehearsal premises
 Northampton School for Boys, for rehearsal facilities and support
 Phil Cave, for his patience, advice and invaluable technical assistance
 Korky Paul (illustrator) and Bill Oddie (actor/ornithologist) for their support
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 Weekes Baptiste (Royal Theatre) and Kark Kirk (UCN) for the loan of stage drapes
 Unusual Rigging, for the loan of a rope ladder
 B&Q, for the loan of a barbecue
 Global Surveys, for the loan of surveying equipment
 Patricia Coleman and Helen Jenkinson, for costume painting
 Martin Winsley, for help with transport
 NSB students, for manual labour during building and striking the set
 Masque Theatre, for help and encouragement in all Youth Theatre activities.
 Parents of Youth Theatre members for help, support and transport

ARISTOPHANES (c. 448 - c. 380 BC) is the oldest writer of comedy in Western literature. Although only eleven of his plays survive (he probably wrote about forty), his blend of slapstick, fantasy, bawdy and political satire gives us a vivid picture of Athenian society. *Wasps* is a lawcourt satire, *Clouds* a light-hearted look at education, *Frogs* a debate about theatre, *Birds* a search for the perfect society. Perhaps his best-known play *Lysistrata* deals with a group of women who refuse to have sex with their husbands until they bring to an end the war they are currently fighting. His plays were presented at the annual festival, the City Dionysia, attended by the whole city as part of their civic responsibilities, when three tragedies and one comedy were chosen to be performed on each day. At the end of the festival, there was the classical equivalent of the Oscars ceremony, when prizes were awarded for the best tragedy, the best comedy, the best production and the best actor (the first of these was called Thespis - hence our word for actors "Thespians"). In 414 BC, Aristophanes won second prize with *The Birds*.

KENNETH McLEISH's translations, of plays by all the Greek and Roman dramatists, Ibsen, Feydeau, Moliere, Strindberg and others, have been performed throughout the world on stage, film, TV and radio. His books include *The Theatre of Aristophanes*, *Guide to Shakespeare's Plays*, *The Good Reading Guide* and *Guide to Greek Theatre and Drama*. He was editor of the Drama Classics series for Nick Hern Books and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

FIONA BRICE was born in Northamptonshire in 1974 and grew up in Collingtree. She was a regular pupil at Northampton Music School, performing as a violinist with the County Youth Orchestra and the County Youth Chamber Orchestra from the age of 13. Fiona attended Roade School, where she wrote music for productions of 'Trelawny' and 'Oedipus Rex' and performed in various shows, notably in Sally Mackey's award-winning 1987 production of 'Godspell'. She graduated from King's College London and the Royal Academy of Music in 1997 with a BA Hons in Music and German. She studied composition under Sir Harrison Birtwhistle, Silvena Milstein and Robert Keeley. She now works as a professional composer and performer, of classical and independent rock music, recording and performing with major contemporary artists in the U.K. and all over Europe.

ALSO FEATURED:

ZEUS (Jupiter)	King of the Greek gods, ruler of men, the sky and the weather.
POSEIDON (Neptune)	Brother of Zeus, ruler of the sea and sea monsters
BIGGUN (Triballos) -	an outlandish god from 'beyond the stars', one of a Thracian tribe, regarded by the Athenians as uncivilised.
HERAKLES (Hercules)	Son of Zeus by Alcmena, a mortal woman. Renowned for his exploits (the Twelve Labours of Hercules) and his strength. Aristophanes presents him also as a glutton.
PROMETHEUS	A cousin of Zeus, he symbolizes the revolt of mortals against the gods. He stole a piece of fire from the sun, and gave it to mankind. For this he was punished by Zeus by being chained to a rock, where an eagle would each day tear out his liver, only for it to grow again the next day. He was eventually freed by Hercules.
IRIS	Rainbow goddess, messenger between gods and earth