

# St. Mary's Actors Stage Powerful 'Lysistrata'

By Sophie Braccini



The "Lysistrata" actors rehearse with director Daniel Larlham (front left) and Kentaley McCurdy (front) playing the title character. Photo Sophie Braccini

Aristophanes' "Lysistrata" is a subversive comedy that has inspired directors and actors across centuries and borders, from ancient Greece to the present day. St. Mary's College's version is nothing like you have seen before, infused with the energy of youth and with the creativity of director Daniel Larlham.

This refreshing and fun take on a classic is for adults and will open at the Lefebvre Theater on April 14 and play through April 24.

Aristophanes wrote "Lysistrata" in 411 B.C. in Athens during the Peloponnesian Wars, its three-decade clash with Sparta. The idea is simple: women in both city-states get tired of the war and decide to stop the conflict using one deadly weapon: withholding sex from their husbands.

In a time where women were not regarded as equal and had no right to vote, this unique anti-war comedy supports conventional thinking of the time about women. Women were, in essence, feeble and over-

emotional creatures. But this is transcended by the figure of Lysistrata, a common woman, who proves herself unwavering and powerful.

"This is a challenging show, but the students understand it very well," says Larlham. "We have added a lot of things, and it is quite exciting."

Larlham has been teaching at SMC for over a year and enjoys directing the students in plays. "I feel more and more that I don't have to have a clear conception of how a scene should be set, until we are on rehearsal," he says. "My job is to magnify potential I see in students. They are not fully formed yet and they can let strange things flow through; sometimes it is wonderful, and I structure it into the show."

The SMC troupe is working from an adaptation by Ellen McLaughlin, which makes the language easy to understand and removes the contextual aspects that were familiar to Athenians 2,400 years ago but would be totally obscure today.

"We have added two big choreographic scenes, the first darker to begin the show, to convey some of the expression of women suffering in a war zone, then we turn the knob toward comedy," Larlham says. "The second is an interlude in the middle of the show that came from an improvisation students did during audition. It blew my mind, it was so creative and powerful."

Songs have also been added, some of them created by Larlham and arranged by the students. One scene was inserted to symbolize the Peloponnesian Wars, as a physical and rhetorical competition between Athenians and Spartans.

"(The director) is very inclusive and opened to our ideas," says Kentaley McCurdy, who plays Lysistrata.

McCurdy, who will graduate this year with a major in theater, says that she was amazed when she discovered a play so old talking about civil rights and feminism.

"This woman is so powerful and so strong, this is so easy for me," says the young actor, who exudes a powerful presence naturally. "And she is also so funny, I immediately connected to her."

Two-thirds of the 20 students in the play are also majoring in theater.

The students had the benefit of a talk with Professor Emily Klein, who recently published "Sex and War on the American Stage: Lysistrata in Performance 1930-2012," that examines staging of this play in the U.S. over the past 80 years.

Klein teaches at SMC and will be part of a pre-show talk at 7 p.m. on Friday April 15. More information and tickets can be found online at [www.stmarys-ca.edu/Lysistrata](http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/Lysistrata).

# Moraga Women's Society to Hold Fashion Show

Submitted by Susan Sperry



From top left: Ellen Beans, Teresa Onoda, Fiona Marlow, Sally Whipple, Ginny Ruble. Bottom row from left: Lizette Legaspi from Draper's and Damons, Elsie Mastick, Linda Borrelli and Judy Ayres. Photo provided

When the Moraga Women's Society was formed in 1967, the group sponsored many community based events, like the pre-incorporation mayoral race, the annual September Artist Faire at the Commons and the biannual Christmas House Tour. This month, MWS is presenting "Couture for Moraga," a fashion show and luncheon from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Monday, April 18, at the Trinity Cultural Center, 1700 School St., Moraga. Fashions are provided by Draper's and Damon of Walnut Creek.

Going back to their roots, this event will highlight nine prominent organizations in Moraga who will provide models: Ellen Beans, Moraga Citizens Network and 2012 Moraga Citizen of the Year; Edy Schwartz, New Rheem Theatre director of community marketing and 2010 Moraga Citizen of the Year, and past-president of the Moraga Chamber of Commerce; Teresa Onoda, Mor-

aga Town Council member and California Plein-Air artist; Ginny Ruble, president of the Moraga Garden Club; Fiona Marlow, a board member of Board of Friends of the Moraga Library; Judy Ayres, membership chair of Moraga Women's Society; Linda Borrelli, past president of Moraga Movers, board member of Rescue One Foundation of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District; Elsie Mastick, Moraga Historical Society ex-officio board member and archivist; and Sally Whipple, co-president of the Moraga Educational Foundation.

Sam Sperry, first vice president of the Kiwanis Club of Moraga Valley, and SIRS branch No. 174 Little Sir Bill Lund will assist during the event. All proceeds benefit Moraga schools, library and parks and recreation. Tickets are \$45 and are still available. Call 925-376-3187 for reservations.

## Family Focus

# Surviving the Sandwich Generation

By Margie Ryerson

New York actor and writer John Jiler's one-man show, "RIPE," begins with a man on the phone with a pharmacist, from whom he is ordering three boxes of diapers. One is for his infant son and two are for his aging parents. Jiler created the perfect metaphor for finding oneself in the middle of the generational sandwich.

As life expectancy rates continue to increase, more of us are finding ourselves sandwiched between generations who depend on us. Along with our aging parents and their various physical, emotional and financial needs, we may have children at home and/or adult children who still look to us for support. Additionally, more and more of us are grandparents who are assuming a larger caretaking role for our grandchildren. So it is possible for some of us to be sandwiched between our parents, our children, and our grandchildren — a tight squeeze to be sure.

I asked a few friends and neighbors what they find hardest about providing care for several generations. Here are some of their responses:

"I feel a lot of guilt because I don't think I'm doing enough for my elderly father, who is lonely. I try to see him once a week, but I have two small children, a husband and a part-time job."

"Since my parents moved close to us three years ago from the Midwest, I have gained 30 pounds. They didn't know anyone out here, and I spent most of my extra time with them the first year or so. Even after they were more settled, I stopped going to the gym. I have no time between working and caring for my kids and my parents."

"My mother lives in assisted living now, but we are helping her financially along with our daughter in college. My wife and I both work, but we are concerned about our financial future."

"My relationship with my two brothers has deteriorated since my mother has needed more assistance. They each live in the area but expect me to do the bulk of the work.

I have three children and a busy schedule, while one of my brothers is single. I have asked both of them very nicely to do more, but they just don't come through for my mom or me. It's very frustrating."

Worry, guilt, resentment and accompanying physical symptoms such as exhaustion or stress-induced headaches are potential byproducts of caring for several generations. You may also be very sad at times watching your parent decline. Many adults who are "sandwiched" experience anxiety, depression, resentment and emotional depletion as well. When you love many people who depend on you and you feel like you are constantly performing triage, it can take its toll.

It is natural to have a variety of feelings when your life feels more out of control than you would like. Your time, energy, preferences and outside relationships are limited. Negative feelings that inevitably accompany lack of control make it even more difficult to feel happy and fulfilled.

Often there is sorrow that your role is reversed with your parent, and that now you are the one who needs to be a caretaker. You may feel sad for your parent who has lost so many abilities, and also sad for yourself that you no longer have a parent to lean on.

How can you help yourself through this difficult and challenging time? It helps to have a considerate, helpful partner and other family members, but largely you are the one who needs to look out for yourself. A common analogy is when flying with children and the oxygen masks come down and need to be used. You first need to put on your mask so that you can help your children or others with theirs.

Here are a few suggestions for coping when you are pulled in many directions:

- Be accepting and supportive of your own feelings. One of the most common problems I see is having expectations of oneself that are too high. After all, there has only been one Mother Teresa. Be aware that any negative, resentful

feelings you experience are natural and human. You are not a terrible person for having them.

- Set boundaries for how much you can do for your family. Become more comfortable with saying "no" at times. Admit to others that you can't do as much as you would like. Sometimes, family members say that they didn't think to offer to help because it looked like others were handling everything just fine.

- Enlist help from other family members, paid caretakers or babysitters.

- Find others that can listen to you vent when you need to and offer compassion and support — your partner, friends or a therapist.

- Commit to finding time to take good care of yourself by exercising, eating healthfully (well ... there will be moments for sure, but making good choices for the most part), getting adequate sleep, moderating alcohol intake, and planning some fun activities. I'm a big believer in escapism for getting our minds off our problems. People report that it is difficult to concentrate if they are too stressed. Give yourself permission to watch mindless TV or movies at times. One friend, a high-powered attorney, reads trashy romance novels as relief from everyday stress. Try to pay attention to your instincts about what you want and need.

- Know that you are a wonderful person for giving so much of yourself to your family. Give yourself lots of praise for all that you are doing, and try to let go of guilt for the inevitable times you can't be there for them.



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