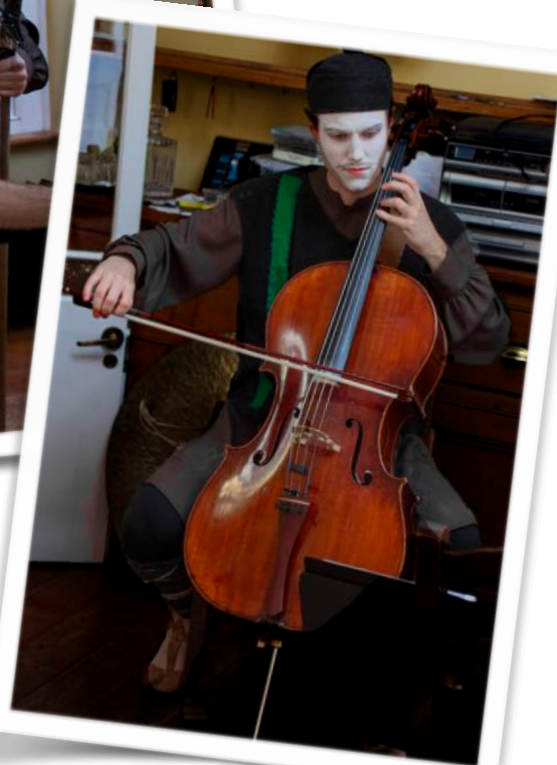


THIASOS PRESENTS

PLOUTOS

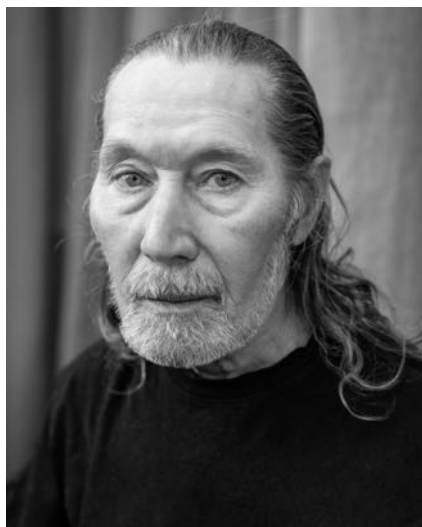
AN ARISTOPHANIC COMEDY





REHEARSAL SHOTS BY LMCD PHOTOGRAPHY

CAST



OENGUS MAC NAMARA / WEALTH & POVERTY

Oengus Mac Namara trained at The Drama Centre, London leaving in 1973. The rest of the decade was mainly centred Repertory theatre, Gate Theatre, Dublin, Glasgow Citz, Southampton and others. After that TV and theatre was evenly mixed. He worked many times with Ken Cambell, was a founder member of London Irish Theatre in the 90s and at the turn of the century a founder member The Godot Company. This last was created to play *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett under the aegis of one of his publishers, John Calder. He usually played Lucky but took an occasional break playing Vladimir, also many plays from the Beckett canon. The last 10 years have largely been occupied doing TV and Film. This is his second involvement with Thiasos.

CHARLES SOBRY / CHREMYLOS

Originally from Belgium, Charles moved to London in 2016 to study acting and devising at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, after finishing his drama training at the Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp. He's been alternating between acting (*Woyzeck*) and directing (*D22*) since his graduation in 2018 and made his most recent appearance on the stage in Hans Vercauteren's music-theatre *RAIN [Sarah]* and on the screen in Kieron J. Walsh' cyclist drama *The Racer*, which was released early September.



SALV SCARPA / CARION

Salv Scarpa is an actor, writer, voice-over artist and producer based in London but originally from Sardinia. He works in both Italian and English language productions in TV and Theatre, most recently acting in Hulu's adaptation of *Catch-22*. He is the co-founder and artistic director of Rooted Moon International Theatre & Arts Festival in Sardinia. This is his third involvement with Thiasos.



ALICE WOLFF-WHITEHOUSE / THE WIFE (UKULELE)

Alice is an actor and musician based in East London. With a BA from East 15 Acting School and an MA from Rose Bruford College she employs her diverse training in work across film, theatre and live music.

Alice manages new comedy- character company Mighty Mammal Theatre and facilitates workshops drawing from her practice combining musicianship, physical theatre and embodied character. Alice is currently developing her one woman show 'Swine of the Times' which premiered Feb 2020.

WILLIAM HASTINGS / BLEPSIDEMOS

William trained with the National Youth Theatre, Shanghai Theatre academy and graduated from East 15 in 2015 with a First Class Honours. William has since worked both nationally and internationally and in venues from cruise ships and abandoned manor houses, to London theatres and various festivals. This is William's second theatre show during the lockdown, following a stint as Dame Wendy Miller in an open air performance in Sydenham. Previous Credits include: *Sanditon* (The Other Palace), *The Merchant of Venice* (Rainbow Shakespeare), *The Trial of Le Singe* and others. On the small screen William has been seen in various adverts. This is his first production with Thiasos.

Twitter: @WillHastDrama Instagram: @WilliamHastingsUK



BIRTE WIDMANN / THE OLD LADY (FLUTE)

Birte Widmann is an actor, musician and mover from Germany. In *Ploutos* she takes on the role of Old Lady and plays the flute. This is Birte's second production with Thiasos Theatre, after being part of the chorus in *The Bacchae* in Oxford and Gardzienice (2017/2018). She studied at East15 and RCSSD, from where she graduated with an MA in Music Theatre in 2017. In 2018 she was part of Emma Rice's first School for Wise Children. Some of her work includes Ishtar in *Gilgamesh* (2017, directed by Ray Shell), Musician at the RA Lates (Klimt/Schiele exhibition 2019) and Caliban in *The Tempest* (Carcrash Productions 2019). She is also a voiceover artist, and can be heard as Young Kay in the award winning Game *Sea of Solitude*. Between productions Birte trains in stage combat and dance, composes and works on her own projects, such as *Stories from Home* - a music and storytelling event with live drawing by Chris Riddell, which first took place in April 2019.



OLIVIER VAN DEN HENDE / THE YOUNG MAN (CELLO)

Olivier Van Den Hende is a performing artist and cellist based in London. After graduating from the MA Theatre Lab at The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, he co-created the experimental theatre company Sturz. With a laboratory tradition, they devised and performed pieces at Dartington Hall and The Bloomsbury Theatre Festival. Olivier has collaborated on numerous occasions with New Public, a London based theatre company - bringing their work to RADA Festival and Mira Festival in St. Petersburg.

His work experience on screen includes collaborations with acclaimed film director Adam Kalderon and Deadbeat Films.

JAMES JACK BENTHAM / THE JUST MAN (VIOLIN)

James graduated from East 15 and has since worked on stage and screen as an actor and musician. Credits include *Macbeth* and *A Christmas Carol* by 1616, *Cinderella* by PlayRight Theatre and Jeff Conaway in *Autopsy*, a documentary for ITV.

James is thrilled to return to Thiasos after performing in Oxford and Gardzienice for their last production of Euripides' *Bacchae*, as Cowherd and assistant MD.

James is interested in Ancient Greek and intercultural theatre and also performs as a traditional Morris dancer.



DAVID WESTGATE / THE SYCOPHANT (CLARINET & PERCUSSION)

David Westgate graduated with honours from BA World Performance at East 15 Acting School in 2020 and is a graduate of the Cert HE foundation course in 2017. He also studied at GITIS in Moscow in 2019.

He is an aspiring film maker and musician along side his main journey as an actor.

David is also currently working with Foot Five co. on an array of online video performances and collaborative projects for the end of 2020 and early 2021.





JAMES LITTLE / HERMES

James Little graduated from East 15 in 2016 and since then has been involved in all manner of performance styles with a focus on improvisation and storytelling. He is in the companies Acaprov, Spinning Yarns Theatre and Extreme Improv and does a number of gigs as a freelance creative. His current interest is improvised musical theatre, which combines his favourite art forms, and he hopes to bring that essence to this performance. James has been referred to as a “shapeshifter” and a “charismatic performer.” This is James’ first outing with Thiasos and he is excited about working with a diverse cast of talented individuals with similar training and a passion for theatre.

CLEMENTINA ALLENDE IRIARTE / THE CHILD (PERCUSSION)

Clementina graduated from East 15 Acting School in 2019. She has utilised her training in World Performance to work primarily in directing Latin American theatre in London over the last year including; *White Latina* and *Invisible Museum*.

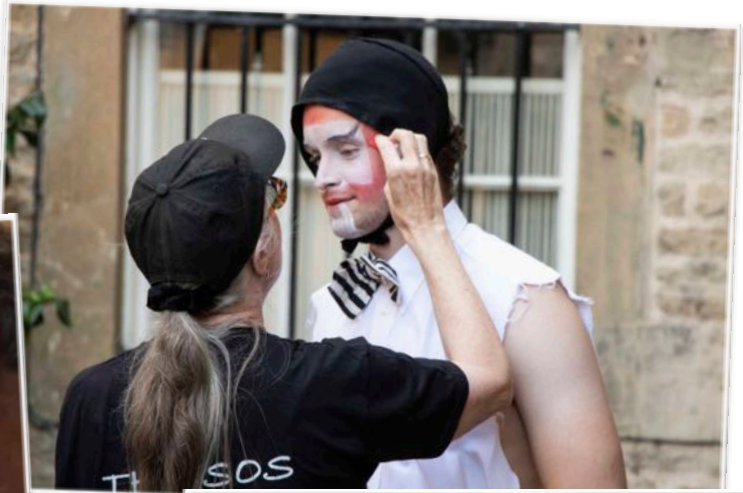
Her acting credits since graduating include; *VICE* (The Etcetera Theatre) and *Black Sails* (UK Tour, The Turbine Theatre). This is Clementina’s first time working with Thiasos.



MATTHEW JAMESON / PRIEST OF ZEUS

Matthew is a London based theatre-maker and the Artistic Director of award-winning theatre company The Heretical Historians. With the Historians he has created shows including: *We Own Everything*; *The Trial of Le Singe*; *Dear Mister Kaiser* and *The Greatest Stories Never Told*. As an actor recent credits include: *For King & Country* (Colab Factory); *The Monkey’s Paw* (the Space & Old Red Lion); *Man Versus Morphy Richards* (Old Red Lion & Camden People’s Theatre); *Pighead* (RADA Studios) and playing Orson Welles/Adolf Hitler in a series of readings of plays by Tom McNab.

BTS PHOTOGRAPY BY MAX MOORE



MUSIC



MANUEL JIMENEZ / MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Dr. Manuel Jimenez has studied World Music for almost 20 years, and taught it for over 10 years. He specialises in Balinese music (particularly gamelan jegog), but has also studied and taught genres such as Javanese gamelan, Korean SamulNori, Chinese silk-and-bamboo, Zimbabwean mbira and Thai mahori.

This is his third involvement with Thiasos having been musical director for *Hippolytos* in 2016-17 and *Bacchae* 2018.

FAITH ELLIOTT / ACCORDION

Faith studied classical piano, composition and percussion before completing a performance degree (BMus) in Cuban Piano and Ethnomusicology at SOAS. She was awarded the Winston Churchill Research Fellowship to study styles of Serbian Roma music at its source - which lead her to focus on this for the next 10 years. She been awarded 3 Arts Council Grants, and a PRS 'Women Make Music' Grant to work with Romani Musicians on a variety of compositional, musical, social and recording projects in the Balkans. She has been musical director for Giffords Circus; composed and performed in shows with Bristol Old Vic Theatre and Live Theatre; toured Australia and New Zealand several times with Faith i Branko and run World Music workshops. She teaches piano, piano accordion, basic percussion and violin.



TRANSLATION

DAVID WILES is a historian of the theatre, someone who wants to understand the present, because it is the past that has made each of us who we are. He has been Professor of Theatre at Royal Holloway, the University of Exeter (where he was also department chair) and, now retired, is a member of Wolfson College, Oxford. His main historical areas of specialism have been the theatres of Greece and Elizabethan England, and important themes in his work have been performance space, masked acting, festival, and the function of theatre in society, on which subjects he has published widely. He has recently completed a book on 'rhetorical acting', which is leading to his next project: an examination of theatre in its relation to democracy, public speaking and the inescapable necessity of theatricality.

DIRECTORS

YANA ZARIFI & MJ COLDIRON

Yana Zarifi and MJ Coldiron met as doctoral students at Royal Holloway and, discovering they shared interests in both ritual and classical Greek theatre, they began working together on Thiasos in 1998 with their production of Euripides' *Hippolytos*. Over the last 20+ years they have co-directed productions of Euripides' *Hippolytos* and *Bacchae*, Aeschylus' *Persians* and Aristophanes' *Peace* and *Wealth*. Both have published on intercultural theatre, the Greek chorus, masks and dance. Thiasos have taken workshops and productions to indoor and outdoor venues in the UK, Cyprus, the US and Poland. In their spare time, Yana is Honorary Associate of the Archives of Performance of Greek and Roman Drama and Jiggs is Deputy Head of the BA in World Performance at East 15 Acting School, University of Essex.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SPENCER LLOYD PEET

ABDEL KADER FARRAH / DESIGNER

Born in Algeria, Abd'Elkader Farrah (1926–2005) was a self-taught painter who later became an important theatre designer. He undertook freelance work in France before collaborating with director Michel Saint Denis in 1960, famously designing Saint Denis' production of *Oedipus Rex* at Sadlers Wells. The following year, Saint Denis introduced Farrah to the Royal Shakespeare Company, where he stayed for thirty years as the resident associate designer and as honorary associate artist thereafter.

Farrah also taught theatre design at Strasbourg (1955-1961) and, as a guest, at the National Theatre School of Canada (1968-1969). In over three decades of designing, Farrah worked with some thirty directors on more than 250 productions which included designs for plays, operas, musicals, ballets around the world.

THE PLOUTOS OF ARISTOPHANES, KARAGHIOZI AND GREEKNESS.



Why use parody and laughter to portray the grimness of poverty, to show a political system in crisis and a society falling apart? Why the puppet-style of acting? why modern Greek folk costumes and music? why the painted faces?

The play we are performing whose Greek title Ploutos means 'Wealth', in both modern and ancient Greek, might equally have been entitled 'Poverty', as the plot revolves around a long time familiar dilemma between being either poor and honest or rich and dishonest, as also around the various conundrums arising out of the impossibilities of being both rich and honest.

THE STORY

The story kicks off as Chremylos, a farmer, accompanied by his slave Carion, is following a foul smelling blind old man.

Chremylos had just consulted Apollo's oracle at Delphi about his only son's upbringing: should he teach him to be honest and poor, or dishonest and prosperous? The oracle had mystifyingly replied that he should follow the first man he encountered and take him to his house. After much bullying and questioning, it turns out that the blind old man is the god Ploutos (Wealth) whom Zeus has struck blind so that he cannot discriminate between the deserving and the undeserving.

(It is not entirely clear in the play whether the distribution of wealth is indiscriminate or wilfully unjust)

Chremylos then has the brainwave of having Ploutos's sight restored at the shrine of Asclepios, the healer. This occasions a visit from the irate Poverty, who vainly pleads the cause of frugality and hardihood.

Ploutos' miraculous cure creates a wave of prosperity in which the just are rewarded while sycophants/informers find themselves unemployed, gigolos leave their ugly old mistresses and the god Hermes and priests defect from Zeus's service to follow the new god. This is shown in a number of short scenes in which each character—a just man, a sycophant, an old woman, a gigolo, Hermes and a priest enter and leave in quick succession. In the end, even Zeus himself (who does not appear in person) follows suit and the play's finale consists of a procession in which everyone participates with the exception of Poverty and the sycophant.



Ploutos

A. French

A TYPICALLY ARISTOPHANIC PLOT



This is a typically Aristophanic plot where a real problem finds its solution in fantasy. Humour bounces off often grim realities involving catastrophes and death or, as in the *Ploutos*, widespread poverty such as the poverty which followed the long drawn out Peloponnesian war in 431-404 BCE. (See Edith Hall's 'Seriously Funny' on this site)

The comedies of Aristophanes were performed for a democratic community which included all male citizens as part of a religious festival dedicated to Dionysos. The audience had a close connection to these comedies on several counts: first, they were regularly attended by the entire (male) community and so formed a common bond; secondly, unlike tragedy (which was set in the world of heroic myth) they related to the contemporary world and (unlike tragedy) acknowledged and ridiculed prevalent social tensions and divisions prevailing at the time of their performance; thirdly they were cast in a familiar traditional genre known as Old Comedy which licensed laughter arising from slander and mockery of harsh realities. In short, humour was communal and it was in the here and now.

We chose Aristophanes because of his ability to generate penetratingly critical thought through laughter; and we chose the *Ploutos* because, of all of Aristophanes' plays, it is the most allegorical—see for example the vivid personifications of Poverty and Wealth. Although the allegory and the humour rest in part on the assumption of a communality absent from a modern audience, we were able to extract a code from the ancient comic genre in general, and from the *Ploutos* in particular, and to recast the play into another comic genre so as to make it more accessible to our audience.

This other form is the shadow puppet theatre known as *Karaghiozi* which was inherited from the Turks and which flourished in Greece from around 1890 to the 1950s.



PARALLELS BETWEEN OLD COMEDY AND SHADOW PUPPET THEATRE.

The starting point of our comparison is that Old Comedy is not realistic. The plot is based on fantasy, on distortions of reality and illogicalities. The actors of comedy, (unlike the young men of tragedy), were probably mature men sporting limp phalluses attached to costumes that gave them a bulbous appearance. They also wore masks with coarse features and grotesque laughing expressions; the dances must have been correspondingly distorted/mis-shapen and movement would have been instigated as well as restricted by both mask and costume.

Unlike the lofty epic language of tragedy, comedy's 'language' relates to the body and its basic needs: sex and food. Obscenity figured prominently in Aristophanes' plays with the exception of the *Ploutos* where persistent hunger for food replaces raucous sex.

to be continued

Yana Zarifi-Sistovari

REHEARSAL SHOTS BY LMCD PHOTOGRAPHY

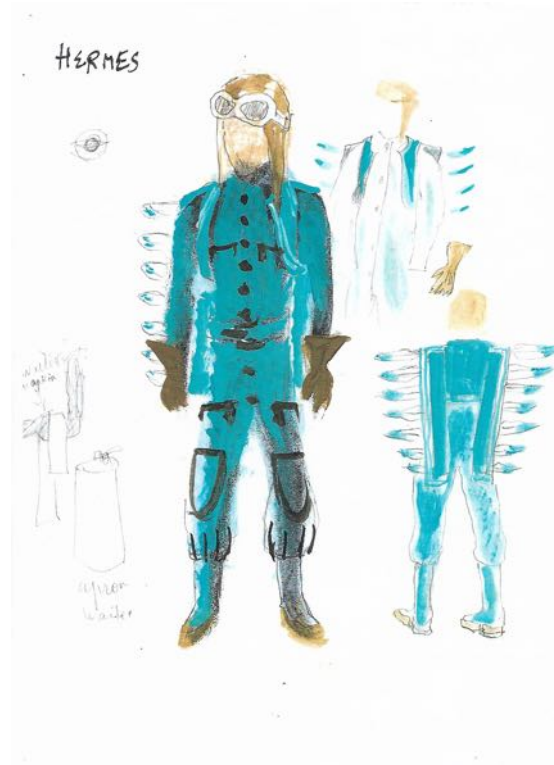


ASSISTANT PRODUCERS

THE SPACE MICHAELA GASTERATOU

Michaela is Greek-Ethiopian producer based in London. In 2018 she commenced the MA Creative Producing course at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. She produces new writing and disability-led work. Her work explores hidden disabilities/medical conditions whilst advocating cultural diversity.

In 2019 she had worked with Working Birthday's R&D *Lesbian Pirates!* (**Arts Depot**), *We Dig* (**Ovalhouse**), *East 15* and *Captain Breadbeard Productions* (national tour). She is currently the assistant producer at **Humblebee Creative**.



SARSDEN & POLAND EMI DEL BENE

Emi is a Japanese-Italian theatre maker. She co-directed political theatre company Backpack Theatre, created at East 15 Acting School, and produced their first two shows. She has worked in production roles at Sadler's Wells Theatre, 99 Comedy Club and with Dende Collective and Thiasos Theatre Company, and currently with contemporary dance companies Alexander Whitley Dance Company and New Movement Collective and production company Fabula Collective. She wrote and directed *Time Club*, a musical, which was workshopped at the University of Winchester earlier this year.

ALL DESIGN SKETCHES BY ABDEL KADER FARRAH

PLOUTOS CREW

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR YANA ZARIFI-SISTOVARI
DIRECTORS MJ COLDIRON & YANA ZARIFI - SISTOVARI
TRANSLATION DAVID WILES
DESIGN ABDEL KADER FARRAH
MUSICAL DIRECTOR MANUEL JIMENEZ
ORIGINAL MUSIC JAMIE MASTERS
WARDROBE SAÏO MOURATO
STAGE MANAGER CLEMENTINA ALLENDE IRIARTE
ASSISTANT PRODUCER (LONDON) MICHAELA GASTERATOU
ASSISTANT PRODUCER (SARSDEN, POLAND) EMI DEL BENE
LIGHTING DESIGN MAX TOPLISS
ASM CHARMI CAMLISH

SPECIAL THANKS

JOHN WHITE, ADAM HEMMING, AMANDA & RUPERT PONSONBY,

ROBIN LANE FOX, EDITH HALL, FIONA MACINTOSH,

CHRISTINA PAPAGEORGIOU, WŁODZIMIERZ STANIEWSKI,

JOSEPH MOURATO, VIKI ZARIFI

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