



BATTLE OF THE SEXES: (left to right) Patti Murin, Josh Segarra and the cast of *Lysistrata Jones*.
Photo: Joan Marcus



Theater Review

Lysistrata Jones one of best musicals of 2011

LYSISTRATA JONES

Book by Douglas Carter Beane

Music & lyrics by Lewis Flinn

Directed & choreographed by Dan Knechtges

Walter Kerr Theatre

219 West 48th Street

(212-239-6200), www.LysistrataJones.com

By David NouNou

It is no secret that the musicals that were offered this fall/winter season were from hunger. With the exception of a brilliant revival of *Follies*, which is unfortunately closing way too soon, the pickings have been mighty slim. From the abysmal revival of *Godspell* to the disastrous *Bonnie & Clyde*, there has been nothing as fresh, delightful and entertaining as *Lysistrata Jones*. Finally, a musical that can be enjoyed for the holiday season and beyond has arrived just in time.

Based on Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, Douglas Carter Beane has updated the storyline and set it in a modern-day gymnasium where the Athens men's basketball team has lost every game for over 30 years. *Lysistrata Jones* comes to the university and takes it upon herself to create a cheerleading squad to urge the boys on to victory. Upon losing the game, that is when Lysie and the girls decide to withhold sex from the players until they will finally win a game. Thus

begins the complication and the fun. Playwright Mr. Beane has written a delicious book for this musical, full of wit and genuine humor. (We at StageZine.com never reveal any of the funny quotes in a review because we feel it is a spoiler alert, and they are best enjoyed when hearing them fresh within the context of the show.). Believe me, Mr. Beane knows how to write funny, crisp dialogue. After all, he wrote the stage hits *Xanadu*, *Sister Act*, *The Little Dog Laughed*, and *As Bees In Honey Drown*.

On par with Mr. Beane's writing is Lewis Flinn's score. It is lively, energetic and high-spirited, blending hip-hop, soul, pop, and beat. The sounds are fused beautifully to form a satisfying score. The score gives the show its buoyancy, and thanks to Dan Knechtges' expert direction and clever choreography, the action is nonstop and makes a cast of 12 look like a multitude of people.

The cast as a whole is a delight. They work beautifully as an ensemble. However, the four leads that stand out include Patti Murin as Lysistrata, who is cheerfully adorable and possesses a big voice. Liz Mikel, as Hetaira the head goddess, who is also the madam of the town, is a show stealer with every movement and facial expression. Josh Segarra (Mike), the head basketball player, plays the jock who is a poet at heart deftly and convincingly. The gem of the night is Lindsay Nicole Chambers (Robin), the smart, geeky girl that no one wants, but ultimately gets what she wants, is Kathy Griffin perfection. Had bigger names been cast for marquee value, one can almost envision the cast of The 2007 Broadway spoof of *Xanadu*: Kerry Butler, Mary Testa, Cheyenne Jackson, and special guest appearance by Kathy Griffin in the four major roles.

Although it was conceived as an Off-Broadway musical and the evidence is there, and the ending becomes a little pat, do not let it put you off. It is a delightful, fun-loving, eager-to-please musical, with an often-hysterical script, bouncy score, expert choreography, and a talented cast. What more do you need from a musical? I urge our readers to go see *Lysistrata Jones*, and you will have a fun and enjoyable time. Happy Holidays.

Edited by Scott Harrah

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