

Theater of the Heavy Clouds

ARISTOPHANES stands in makeshift toga next to table covered with multi-colored cubes. Off to side is a garment rack with glittering evening gown hanging.

CHORUS' lines appear on projection screen at appropriate time behind ARISTOPHANES.

ARISTOPHANES

Dry delivery.

Hello. Thank you very much for having me here tonight. I am Aristophanes, author of the play The Clouds, the first Greek comedy on record. I'm very excited to for the opportunity to discuss my work with you here tonight. The fact that The Clouds has been awarded third place at the Athens Drama & Playwrighting Festival is very humbling. This honor is thanks to you, the audience.

And so, audience, tonight I'm going to ask something of you, those of you who are gracious enough to stick around and stick with me through this thing. This thing has the potential to explore, to become the utopian experience we have longed for...to create a model of society that rewrites any code we know. That's exciting right? I don't want to lose you here, I'm doing my best, so just bear with me for a moment.

Brings both fists up to mouth, elbows out to sides, eyes open wide.

I'm going to give you a very small place of responsibility if you don't mind...if it's ok I'm going to ask you to participate in a minor way...its a small part, but there aren't really only small parts, there are also big parts.

Arms extend outwards at 45degrees from body mid-level. Fingers splayed stiffly.

Your part is that of the CHORUS. When you see something like this, that identifies you as the CHORUS, let's say it all together, can we? Let's try.

CHORUS

CHORUS' lines appear on projection screen behind ARISTOPHANES.

Together we are trying to achieve something by doing.

ARISTOPHANES

Hands draw together over heart, fingertips together forming triangular form. Elbows out.

Wonderful. I'm going to talk to you today about you and my work for the record. The record includes a rewritten script, revised and not approved...this document is somewhat hazily re-created, and that is what I'm here to present today. I'll do my best, there are some parts I have to make up as those fragments are missing or I can't remember them.

Again arms spread apart, fingers splayed stiffly. As ARISTOPHANES speaks, arms bend at elbow with hands towards heart, then left arm extends forward. Fingers remain stiff. Hold this position while CHORUS speaks.

The unity of the archive is first and foremost imposed by ownership. A bourgeois archive embodies the power inherent in accumulation and collection as well as that power inherent in the command of language.

CHORUS

Any archive that is not a complete mess establishes a hierarchy among its contents.

ARISTOPHANES

Left hand moves back to abdomen while back quickly arches and left leg draws up at knee towards abdomen. Hold for two beats. Reach out with left hand again, back straightens. Repeat drawing in motion w/leg & back.

It was not the original production of *The Clouds*, but rather the second or third edition, that won 3rd place at the Athens Festival Fair Biennial...a feat I'm very proud of, a deed that is glorious, to be sure – an act by which the very gods themselves should know my name, and through which I have established my identity once and for all.

Bring left leg down and out to side, knee engaged. Head also turns left. Left arm swings out at elbow to left, right arm shoots straight up w/fingers stiff.

In fact, this glory has brought me a great deal of recognition, fame, even dare I say a bit of celebrity notoriety (which I certainly don't encourage, but it's nice to be known on the streets)...yet with greatness comes a heavy responsibility. For with greatness, one is compelled to acknowledge all those who aided one in reaching these lofty heights. Who among us hasn't succeeded upon the back of another?

(MOVE INTO THANK YOU SPEECH – MORE EMOTIONAL)

Arms relax to sides, while legs spread a bit more than shoulder-width.

And so I am forced to recognize...forced to see those without whom I wouldn't be here today...of course, there's the wise and pragmatic Strepsiades, as well as his lazy, dullard of a son Pheidippides. Really, if it weren't for Pheidippides, none of this would have happened.

Arms spread out 45 degree angle from body at shoulder-level. Upper arm remains in place while arms bend at elbow, hands down.

For it was Pheidippides who entered those hallowed halls, that great philosophical institution, that paragon of intellect and reason, the temple of rationality known as the THINKERY. It is at the THINKERY where we first encounter the person who must be recognized above all others, that seminal figure of discourse, S-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-crates!

Yes, Socrates can talk the shit out of some mess...but I've heard it said that despite all his argumentality that it does my bank account little good...I never did learn his money-making strategies...

ARISTOPHANES begins stacking and restacking the multi-colored cubes scattered around the table. Formations include pyramid, rectangle, tall singular stack of cubes, long horizontal row.

After horizontal row, ARISTOPHANES reorders cubes several times in horizontal row.

What's that? You say that my award-winning play actually contributed to the imprisonment of Socrates? Say that last part again...without the somewhat slanderous treatment Socrates received in my play, he wouldn't have been thrown in jail and subsequently executed by poison?

ARISTOPHANES knocks the horizontal row of blocks out of order.

Oh, now I've lost my place.

ARISTOPHANES abandons blocks at table and moves to address audience again.

In fact, it could be argued that any fame or notoriety Socrates has is because of his appearance in my play...that in fact, he owes his celebrity status to me.

ARISTOPHANES removes glittering gown from hanger and pulls it on, dropping toga to ground from under gown.

Why, even the oracle at Delphi asked if there was anyone wiser than Socrates. Socrates could find no one.

CHORUS

Alienation ensues, like the infant seeing its own image in the mirror for the first time.

ARISTOPHANES

Arms bent at elbow out to sides, hands up, palms facing ears & fingers splayed. Draw fingers together, bring hands down while keeping upper arm extended. At the same time bend at the waist and spin around, bringing arms back up to clap overhead as spin is completed.

Alienation...yes, its lonely at the top. Its hard to be recognized as a leader when there are so many haters biting at your heels. Its one of the burdens a true hero must bear.

Picking up large, glittery cube award. Holds aloft, then holds to the side.

And so I'm really left speechless. I don't know what to say. Being awarded third place certainly creates a distinguished and exclusive environment. I want to thank so many people who made this possible. My ancestors, my manager, my agent, my representation, my icon and my image...without you this wouldn't be possible. ah...To know that you see me seeing you...This is so gratifying, to be recognized for all the hard work, the blood, sweat, tears, late nights that become early mornings...um...and all the time spent locked in your room...alone...here I stand, alone...knowing that I have only myself to blame. I did this, and now I have to accept the consequences. Of which there are many...consequences. One of which is staring me in the face right now. The gap between you and me...hoping against hope that you are with me...but knowing you are not me. I need you, yet I resent you.

CHORUS

Drifting on a memory...day will make way for night. Smoother than a gentle breeze, flowing through my mind with ease. We could sail together in and out of mystery. Paradise I have within. This I see. Usin' words to try and say what I feel. I might as well sign my name on a card that would say it better.

ARISTOPHANES

Sniffs, wipes tears.

I would read that card.

Clasps hands in front of body, elbows out.

Well, by use of the Scientific Method one may observe that I am doing my best here. Please know that. I don't know what else I would do if it weren't for this. This is it. This is what I'm doing. Judge me, not on my gilded tongue, but upon this action here. This action here.