

A Workshop on the Aristophanic Parabasis:
Creating the persona and working the meter for LAFFS.

Like Spike Lee and Woody Allen, Aristophanes is known for showing his face in his own work. The poet creates a fantasy-world of peace and plenty, and then – most daring and self-indulgent fantasy of all – is seen by his audience to enter it. But the parabolic persona is not so much the citizen Aristophanes as a comic character in his own right, conforming closely to the norms of comedy, and as greedy for the poet’s pleasure of praise and recognition, as “Hungry Hungry Hercules” is for food, or the average war-battered Athenian citizen for peace. When the Athenian audience saw the tall, bald, and slightly smirking figure of Aristophanes stride on stage, and heard the formula introducing the parabolic monolog -- “[ἀλλ’ ἀποδύντες τοῖς ἀναπαίστοις ἐπίωμεν!](#)” (*Ach.* 626) -- they no doubt felt the same comfortable expectation that the world’s problems would soon all be put into humorous perspective, that an older generation felt on hearing Ed McMahon’s rousing “Here’s Johnny!” at the end of the theme music.

Taking the parabasis from Aristophanes’ *Knights* (Kn. 507-565) for an example, the parabolic persona will be explored. How does the poet develop his very real fears and hopes for his career into comic material that his audience can enjoy? How does he represent his contrasting impulses towards modesty and competition? Metrical analysis: exercises to get comfortable with the “Anapestic Sesquipentameter.” Why are some feet funny? How are pitch accents deployed incrementally to build up a whip-crack effect towards the end of the line?

This workshop will offer participants the opportunity to stride forth onto the comic stage themselves and charm their audience with their anapestic skills.