

Two Thousand Years Later: Lysistrata Debuts in Shanghai

SHANGHAI, MIDLOTHIAN, CHINA, May 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- More than 2,000 years after it first appeared on the stage of ancient Athens, Lysistrata has made its mainland Chinese debut. The production opened this April at the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre after its presentation at the Hong Kong Arts Festival, marking the first major Chinese staging of Aristophanes' anti-war comedy.

Directed by Katerina Evangelatos, the production reads the classical text through a contemporary feminist lens while keeping its political satire and comic force intact. Written in 411 BC, Lysistrata follows women who organise a sex strike in an attempt to force men to end a war. More than two millennia later, its themes of gender, power and collective resistance still land strongly with modern audiences.

The production arrives at a moment of clear change in Chinese theatre. In recent years, work focused on women's experience and institutional critique has become more visible on major stages, especially among younger urban audiences. Productions such as Prima Facie by Suzie Miller and The Welkin by Lucy Kirkwood have achieved strong commercial and critical success in China, pointing to a growing interest in contemporary feminist narratives.

Behind this shift is also a new generation of theatre translators whose work goes beyond straightforward linguistic transfer. Among them is Yifan Wu, the translator of the Chinese version of Lysistrata and a theatre maker working across writing, directing, dramaturgy and translation between the UK and China.

Wu previously worked on the Chinese translation of The Welkin, which was also produced by the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre and became one of its most widely discussed international productions in recent years. In addition to theatre translation, Wu was a co-translator of All



Lysistrata Poster

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Their original work as a playwright and theatre maker has been staged and recognised in both the UK and China. Choking Game was presented in London, including at the Bloomsbury Festival and Omnibus Theatre, while other original scripts have received awards and festival productions in China. The work often moves between cross-cultural adaptation, bilingual performance and the circulation of contemporary theatre across different linguistic and political contexts.

Beyond individual productions, Wu is a co-founder of Wordtide Theatre and serves as review editor at [Showtalk](#). These platforms connect translation, criticism and theatre production networks between the UK and China, reflecting how more practitioners are working across borders rather than within a single national system.

The debut of Lysistrata in mainland China points to more than the arrival of a classical text. It also shows how translation has become part of the creative infrastructure of contemporary Chinese theatre, shaping how international work is received, adapted and understood on local stages.

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