

COWS

THE PLAYERS

Adapted from *Peace*
by Aristophanes
Streaming on Amazon Prime





A Quick Summary of *Peace* by Aristophanes

by Todd Brian Backus

Much like *Cows of War*, Aristophanes' 421 BCE comedy begins with two people shaping mounds of dung. These two servants, enslaved by Trygaeus, a middle-aged Athenian, are working to make enough fuel to feed Trygaeus' gigantic Hermes remains, making some last-minute adjustments for the new tenant, War, a pestle to grind the Greeks with, having lost his two best ones (the at the time recently deceased pro-war leaders from Athens and Sparta). Trygaeus, realizing he only has a little time, entreats Greeks from all over to help him remove Peace from the cave she's been trapped in. Having freed Peace, Trygaeus returns to Athens to marry her companion, Harvest, and as the wedding approaches he meets with various farmers and merchants. Some are pleased that they will

and then after I moved to New York, I was working full time for NBC, and that's when Tina Howe started the MFA program at Hunter College and I applied and got in. And so I was able to go to graduate school. From 2005 to now I have these two thrusts: drama or adaptation of classical work, and the other is these hyper-modern dark comedies. Very different sort of channels that I switch between.

TBB: I actually wanted to ask you, because historical things come up so much in your work. What leads you down that path, whether it's period pieces like *Perseverance* or *Sofonisba* or, in this case, an adaptation of a classical text [*Peace* by Aristophanes]?

CK: I have done a couple of adaptations now, this one, *Cows of War*, based off of Aristophanes' play *Peace*; and I have written a play called *Lucrece and the Two Janes*, which is an adaptation of Shakespeare's narrative poem *The Rape of Lucrece*; and then I have three historical plays: *Sofonisba*, *Rush*, and *Perseverance*. So, yes! These are

An Interview with Playwright: Callie Kimball

down with playwright Callie Kimball (over Zoom) to discuss her career as a playwright and the life and iterations of *Cows of War*.

Todd Brian Backus (TBB): Now, while I know you very well, I was wondering if you could discuss your career as a playwright to the audience?

Callie Kimball (CK): I started writing when I was seven. I focused on poetry and did my undergraduate studies in Poetry. After college I was an actor in Washington DC, and that led to me dipping a toe in playwriting. I worked behind the bar in DC, and that went well and was the door that kept on opening, so I leaned in and decided, since I didn't think I'd be able to go to graduate school I sort of created my own graduate school and wrote three plays a year. I self-produced quite a bit of my work. I learned a ton that way,

TBB: I know you originally wrote *Cows of War* in 2008, and I know you changed it a bit for this production in 2021. Can you talk about what inspired you to write the play in 2008 and also what inspired the changes for this abridged version in 2021?

CK: Sure! I also updated it in 2016 for a production at Hunter College. So it seems that every four to eight years, alongside the presidential election there's a whole new conversation going on that the play responds to or tries to engage with. In 2008, Christopher Henley, the AD of what was at the time called Washington Shakespeare Company, had always wanted to do an adaptation of *Peace* and tie it to a presidential election. Going back to 2008, that was when in the Primaries Barack Obama was nominated and went on to win the election.

In the full-length version the actor playing Peace also plays Eirene (which is the word for peace in Greek), and she was played by a black woman. So she had this double role, she was the goddess Peace and also a militant vegan veterinarian student who was protesting Bovine Growth Hormone in the cows on the dairy farm where she worked. Darby, one of the farmhands, was having a dalliance with her; and Gralea, the farmer's wife, was leaning on [Eirene] inappropriately for support, service, and asked her to teach voodoo so [Gralea] could raise the dead. I wanted to put onstage the experience of microaggressions. With the Bowdoin production I had to cut the play by half, and some subplots had to go and I had to cut Eirene as a result.

So in 2008, racism and sexism were very important for me. Big questions I was putting onstage. And in the moment in Act 2 that the chorus is trying to convince Peace to return to Earth and hits her with all of these pop culture updates. The only thing in all three versions that makes her turn her head is a reference to violence against black people. In 2008 that was James Byrd, in 2016 that moment became a list of names because we had started to understand through Black Lives Matter and Say Her Name the importance of remembering and understanding who these people were that were killed. It became a larger moment and was what brought Peace back to Earth. In this production we had a list of names, but during

A Brief Timeline of Peace, or, more accurately, a Lengthy Timeline of War by Todd Brian Backus

Since World War II, America has very rarely been at peace. The following is a brief timeline of the United States of America has been involved in since the end of World War II. In the past 75 years the United States has been actively at war or involved in ongoing conflicts.

-1950-1953: The Korean War

US troops until an armistice is signed in '53.

-1955: Defense of Chinese Nationalists

The U.S. 7th Fleet helps Nationalist Chinese evacuate 25,000 troops and 17,000 civilians from China to Taiwan.

-1955-1973: Vietnam War

In 1955, US advisors were sent to Vietnam; in 1964 Congress authorized President Lyndon B. Johnson to "repel any armed attack" in the Gulf of Tonkin.

-1961: Bay of Pigs Invasion

A CIA-backed invasion of Cuba fails.

-1962: Anti-Communist Intervention

President John F. Kennedy ordered 5,000 troops to Thailand to support the right-wing Laotian government.

-1965: Dominican Crisis

Marines invade the Dominican Republic at the start of a civil war; troops withdraw in 1966.

-1975: Mayaguez Incident

A US merchant ship is rescued from Cambodians by US Navy and Marines off the coast of Cambodia.

1979: Iran Hostage Crisis

A military mission to free American hostages in Iran fails.

1983: Grenada Invasion

US Marines and Rangers remove US medical students from Grenada.

1986: US War in Lebanon

US war in Lebanon ends.

6Yck inci Ñ'ÚbX'U[`cgUfmcZHYfa gUbX'XYUghUhi
come up within the play. If you're worried about
spoilers, feel free to skip this for now, and if you
think you might have missed a quick reference
(particularly when the chorus and Graleo are
catching Peace up on what she's missed) feel free to
come back and check.

Pg 5 - Methane from Cows - Flammable Gas and
Ecological concern

Flammable Gas: Methane is a colorless,
odorless gas that is a primary component of natural

Pg 22 - Wars

Vietnam: 3 Million people killed, estimated at least half of that number were civilians. After Vietnam was split in half by the Geneva Conference the Northern communist leader and the Southern anti-communist leader began hostilities in 1954. The United States, currently in a Cold War (or proxy war) with Russia, feared that Vietnam becoming communist would lead to a domino effect throughout South Asia that would disrupt a perceived balance of power and shift alliances. The US backed the anti-communist military in the south, and eventually got directly involved in 1965. The North and South in Vietnam fought an extensive war until 1973, however the war did not end in Vietnam until communist forces seized control of South Vietnam in 1975. During the war a strong anti-war movement began in the United States, in part because it was revealed to the public that US military forces had slaughtered civilians, tortured approximately 100,000 combatants, and had used the carcinogenic Agent Orange.

Russia: The Cold War was a war between Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the United States. While the two fought as allies in WW2, they became enemies in 1945. The Cold War was a period of geopolitical tension between the Soviet Union and the United States and their respective allies, the Western Bloc, that lasted from 1947 to 1991.

have vied for power. The UN has been reluctant to intervene, aside from offering some humanitarian aid, in some ways many people are hoping for the competing groups for that to happen easily.

Kosovo: Between 1998 and 1999 there was a the ethnic Serbians in Yugoslavia (which has since been dissolved, more on that later) that claimed about 13,000 lives. The Kosovo Liberation Army led attacks on Serbian police and politicians in the national attention when Yugoslavia attempted to reassert control over the area and atrocities committed by the police, paramilitary forces, and led a bombing campaign in Kosovo for 11 weeks to remove troops and cease the violence. In 2008 Kosovo declared its independence. The European Union recognized this independence, Serbia did not.

Congo: In the Democratic Republic of Congo are directly tied to the Rwandan genocide of 1994. More than 100 armed groups are believed to be currently active in the eastern DRC. With over 4.5 million people estimated as being internally displaced, , \$\$\$\$ FYZ [YYgk \c \Uj YÜYX H.Y.8F7 gBW H.Y.ÜMzUbX Ub Ygja UHYX" a]]cb'dYcd'Y _]YX]b H.Y.ÜM"6YMi g' H.Y.8F7 \Uga Ubm untapped mineral resources armies are able to fund themselves selling off mineral goods leading to many decentralized combatants and armed groups.

Pg 23 Malthusian: CZcf'fYUhb['hc H.Y.]XYUgcZ Thomas Robert Malthus surrounding population that suggests population increases faster than a society's means of subsistence, and unless restraint or disasters keep population in check the want of resources will result in widespread poverty.

Pg 23 - War "I pulled you miserable, wormy ingrates out of the Great Depression, and what thanks do I get?"
War taking economies out of the Depression:
A common story we tell about World War 2 is that it was necessary to pull the US out of the great

depression by maximizing output to make more boats, planes, and weapons for the War front. Unemployment dropped to record low numbers and citizens were restricted in their spending which led to an income equality that would last for forty years and an increase in demand for products that led to more investments in the private sector. Before the War America was well on the way to recovery, and some economists wonder whether spending on Public Works instead of the Military would have resulted in even more growth. In a counterpoint, The Afghanistan war is the only Modern American war that also coincided with tax cuts and therefore was economic growth War is talking about here.

Pg 25 - Acela: The Acela is an Amtrak line that connects Boston, New Haven, New York Cte s(en-US)MICID

Pg 36 - Hadron Collider: The Large Hadron Collider operated by CERN (The European Cf[Ub]n hcb Zcf Bi WUf FYg UfWk LjU'dUfh W' accelerator that speeds particles up to lightspeed

Pg 38 - Overpopulation: Theorists believe that the world is heading toward (or has already arrived at) a population level that is unsustainable with the resources available on the planet. Theorists have announced the world was overpopulated again and again from the early 20th century until today, but no such population apocalypse has happened. In fact many theorists now believe that the global population will begin to decline naturally in the next hundred years.

Pg 38 - A deadly pandemic: Clearly a reference to the 1918 influenza pandemic, which has been estimated to have caused 2.52 million deaths worldwide including 500,000 deaths in America.

Pg 38 - Kids in cages: The United States government has been detaining unaccompanied minors (or minors it decided were not with their



Pg 45 - *The Second Sex*: Simone de Beauvoir's essential masterwork is a powerful analysis of the Western notion of "woman," and a revolutionary exploration of inequality and otherness.

Pg 50 - Universal Life Church/Online Ministry: The Universal Life Church is just super chill about ordaining people online, it's really just an online form and a small fee and then you can perform most legal religious rites like marriage.

Pg 56 - Syllogism: a deductive scheme of a formal argument consisting of a major and a minor premise
For example: every virtue is laudable; kindness is a virtue; therefore kindness is laudable.
animals; all animals have four legs; therefore all dogs have four legs.