

ON LYSISTRATA

LEADING THE CHARGE



I HAD NO IDEA WHEN I ACCEPTED THE role of Lysistrata in this year's festival that the experience would be so much fun, and yet so grueling. By setting this adaptation on a military base in Afghanistan, Sheila Daniels[†] takes this uproarious Greek comedy and gives you a blow to the guts with it.

It's so easy to forget that we are a nation that has been at war for more than ten years. Here, the old adage holds true: out of sight, out of mind. But there are those who cannot forget, because war is their day to day, and their very lives depend on them remembering. They are our American soldiers. And doing this show for them, changed so much for me. It raises so many questions. What is the cost

of freedom? How do we use entertainment? How do we respond to our fears? Nothing excites me more than when the political collides with the personal.

Our first day of rehearsal was I'm sure a fraction of what new recruits encounter on their first day, but there we were – standing at attention, dropping to do push ups, sweating, collapsing into the floor. That was the first day, and the beginning of our journey.

It's no small feat rehearsing two or three plays at a time, either. But, that's nothing compared to holding up a country that doesn't always remember that you're there.

—SHONTINA “TINA” VERNON

IN THE MILITARY, THE TERM "THEATER" IS WHERE WARFARE EVENTS OCCUR . . .

IT'S ALMOST GUARANTEED THAT A service member will face a deployment in their military career. During a deployment, outside communication is cut off in order to maintain operational security. When I left for basic training, I did not know how often I could maintain contact with my friends and family. There is no internet or phones. Snail mail is unreliable. You pack whatever you can fit or don't mind losing in case things go wrong. Some of my comrades seriously relied on their Xbox, DVDs, iPods, and laptops for companionship. I should also mention that it's a privilege, according to your rank, department, and job designation that determines how often you communicate with the outside world. Being

in the lowest rank, isolation can feel indefinite, but I got lucky in my second deployment.

My department head, also known as the MO, knew that I would sing to myself to pass time during and after working hours. He decided to start a band and recruit me as the female vocalist. He mustered a bass guitarist from the mess decks, two info-systems tech guys to play drums and keyboard, and an airman from the fuels division for lead guitar. The MO also played a mean guitar and held on to a wide range of vocals. Together, we made up the ship's unofficial band, *Midwatch*. Now, because of limited space, the only place we were able to rehearse was in the ship's morgue.

We pulled ourselves together though, putting aside our ranks, rate, and chain of command—not to mention the morbidity of rocking out next to a human refrigerator. This is where I found my outlet from the stress of combat operations, daily procedures, and being away from my family. The ship became my place of work, home, and play. Our mission in the band was to entertain the men and women we served with, giving them all a sense of home, and I'd like to think we did.

—CAROLE LYNN CASTILLO,
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