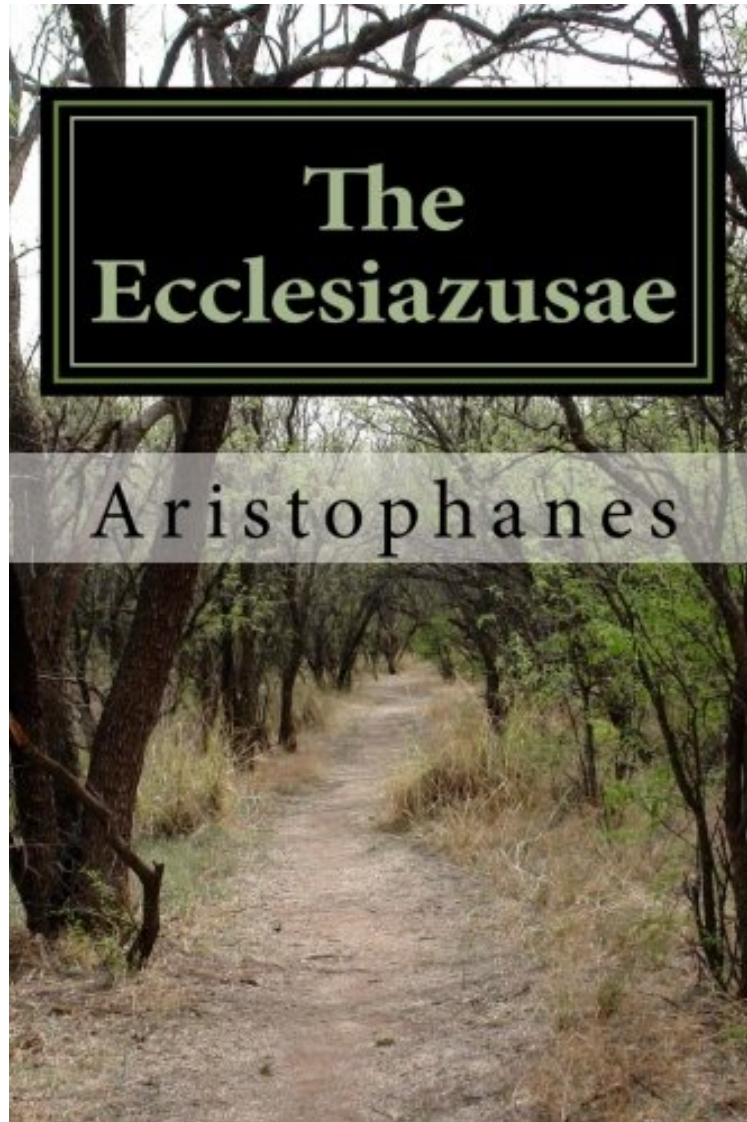




Aristophanes

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The Ecclesiazusae

Language NotesText: Greek, EnglishAbout the AuthorARISTOPHANES, the most famous comic dramatist of ancient Greece, was born an Athenian citizen in about 445 B.C. Forty-four plays have been attributed to Aristophanes; eleven

of these have survived. His plays are the only extant representatives of Greek Old Comedy, a dramatic form whose conventions made it inevitable that the author would comment on the political and social issues of fifth-century Athens. This Aristophanes did so well that Plato, asked by the tyrant of Syracuse for an analysis of Athenians, sent a copy of Aristophanes' plays in reply. His earliest play, the *Banqueters*, won the second prize in 427 B.C. when the dramatist must have been less than eighteen years old, since, as he notes in the *Clouds* (423), he was too young to produce it in his own name. Another early play, the *Babylonians*, criticized the demagogue Cleon, who responded by subjecting Aristophanes to legal persecution, and as the author charges in the *Acharnians*, Cleon had "slanged, and lied, and slandered and betongued me . . . till I well nigh was done to death." Nevertheless, in the *Knights* (424), he renewed his attack on the popular Athenian leader and won first prize in that year's contest. *Plutus* (388) was the last of the author's plays to be produced in his lifetime.