

# THE FOLLOWERS; A RETELLING OF THE BACCHAE

A MediaGuide





## Michael J. Haverty, Director

As part of our mission, the staff of 7 Stages regularly travels internationally to seek out groundbreaking, breathtaking artists with which to collaborate on new productions. This has taken us from China to Serbia to the Netherlands, and most recently to Israel, where there is a strong contemporary performance scene. Ofir Nahari was our very first guest artist from Israel, and we are honored to have collaborated on this production with him, as well as playwright Margaret Baldwin, for over three years through support from the Israeli Consul and Kennesaw State University.

The Bacchae is a seminal piece of drama, concerning the Greek God of theatre himself, Dionysus. The palpably theatrical elements of magic and mystery in our source text inspired the wildly sensorial production we have created, with elements of opera, puppetry, dance, and clowning. Written in exile by Euripides, in the twilight of the Greek Empire, The Bacchae contains a sharp critique of Athens' political and spiritual leadership, as well as those citizens who blindly follow them to their own detriment. Can we take a lesson from this ancient text, and seek to know the true faces of our own leaders, so that we will not fall into a position of dependence and self-isolation which doomed the Greeks, and which even now props up the corrupt and immoral in our society who wish to manipulate the masses for their own ends?

History tends to repeat itself – but the arts are here to shine a light, to stop time for an evening, and allow you, the audience, to witness different perspectives on the most important questions. Do the gods control our lives, or are we the people responsible for our own fate? Lets have a glass of wine and consider.



## Margaret Baldwin, Playwright

In the introduction to his 1982 translation of *The Bacchae*, Michael Cacoyannis states, “For humanity still refuses to heed Euripides’ message—spelled out with prodigious versatility in *The Bacchae*—that all progress harnessed to the pursuit of absolute power engineers its own destruction” (xii).

Amid the pace of progress, power, and destruction in the 21st century—how do we as educators make a work like *The Bacchae*—one of the cornerstones of Western drama, live for our student-citizen-audience members? How do we, through the portal of this story of blindness, ambition, and vengeance—create the space and perspective to broach the seemingly insurmountable obstacles and conflicts that face our tenuous present?

In *The Followers*, we look at Euripides tale of following and the opposing forces of control and chaos through multiple viewpoints: that of Pentheus, a young, entitled ruler blind to his own ignorance and desire; of Dionysus, the wounded god/outsider caught between heaven and earth; of Agave—a mother trapped by the conventions of her day and blind to her own power. With our retelling, we wrestle with questions about the deep human need for faith, following and surrender, and what happens when the God – or the good – that we follow turns from ecstasy to vengeance. We ask “What is justice? What is wisdom?” Just like life, *The Bacchae* and our retelling, *The Followers*, leave us with more questions with answers. But the questions and resulting dialogue bring us to a richer understanding of what it means to be human.

## Books

The Eating of The Gods by Jan Kott

The Moving Body by Jacques Lecoq

Mask and Performance in Greek Tragedy by  
David Wiles

Greek Theatre Performance by David Wiles

The Bacchae by Euripides, translated by  
Paul Woodruff

The Bacchae, translated by Robin  
Robertson

The Bacchae, translated by Mark Griffith

Citizen Bacchae; Women's Ritual Practice  
by Barbara Goff

## Theatre on film

'Dionysus in 69' by The Performance Group, directed by Richard Schechner: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9MFd3Tgins>



**Pinterest board for avant garde masks, haute couture makeup and headpieces, greek masks and vases, and more:**

<https://www.pinterest.com/michaelhaverty1/the-followers/>



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