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Wednesday, 12 September 2018 02:31

# The Getty Villa and SITi Company Present "Bacchae"

Written by [Samantha Simmonds-Ronceros](#)  
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Photo by Craig Schwartz.

**“Bacchae” is now playing at The Getty Villa. Written by Euripides. Directed by Anne Bogart. Translated by Aaron Poochigian.**

**Sitting in the amphitheatre at the gorgeous Getty Villa in the sweetly scented cool night air it’s easy to time travel a bit and imagine you are in ancient Greece, especially if you have the time to tour the villa before the performance.**

**It’s absolutely one of my favorite places in the city and a dream of a performance**

## Theatre Reviews



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space.

"Bacchae" opens with the chorus parading silently from the museum's slowly opening double doors, their long staffs tapping lightly in unison. Ancient Greek exhibits brought to life to perform for us one of Euripides' most beloved plays -the notoriously complex, misunderstood and often stuffily staged "Bacchae." The origin story of Dionysus the god of wine, theatre and transformation is Euripides only surviving tragedy specifically honoring the god and it was first performed a year after the famous poet playwright's death in 405 BC, to great success.



Photo by Craig Schwartz.

How could a play written over 2500 years ago possibly have any relevance today? Well, that's the beauty and the magic of the classics. From Shakespeare to Euripides, everything is cyclical and the tragedies and twists of human egos, frailties and fate always remain stingingly the same.



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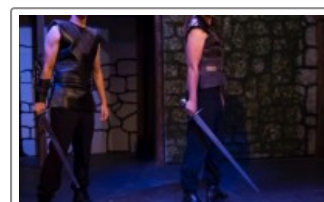
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Dionysus returns to Thebes, his birthplace, only to find himself ridiculed and dismissed as a god and betrayed by his aunts who deny his father is Zeus. In revenge, Dionysus bewitches the women of the city and sends them into the surrounding mountains to worship him with wild and violent dancing and song, the beginnings of the cult of Dionysus. Pentheus, the King of Thebes, angry and jealous of all the fuss, imprisons Dionysus in an attempt to stop the worship and bring the women home. But Dionysus is a god and locking up a god is never a good idea...he tricks Pentheus into climbing the mountain dressed as women to spy on his newly created cult. The women, enraged by his thinly veiled disguise fall on him and rip him to shreds. One of the women is his mother, Agave, who brings his severed head down from the mountain thinking it is the head of a lion and presents it to her father Cadmus. Once brought back to her senses by Cadmus, she gives a spellbinding and heart-wrenching lament. In this production, Agave is played by Akiko Aizawa speaking only in her native Japanese. There is a translation in the program, but her performance is so pure and powerful that we sit breathless watching her, feeling her horror and despair as she stumbles, holding her son's head in her arms.

the-porters-of-hellsgate-presents-the-two-nobel-kinsmen)

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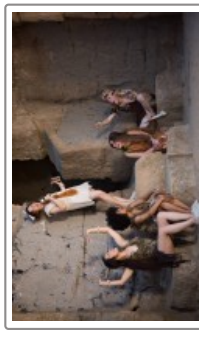
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**Foothill Performing**





Photo by Craig Schwartz.

The gorgeous setting of the Getty Villa's outdoor Barbara and Lawrence Fleischman Theater imbues the production with the authenticity that only a Greek theatre could and creates the best possible world for these quite brilliant actors to play their parts. Each of them flit effortlessly from role to role and chorus and back again with a thoroughly necessary agility for this continuously metamorphosing play. The rhythms and the rhymes of Euripides never give us long to relax before they evolve from comedy to drama to violence, irony and heartbreak.

**Arts Council Presents "Firebringer"**  
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**The Whitefire Theatre Presents "Vixen DeVille Revealed"**  
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Ellen Lauren is absolutely stunning as Dionysus and brings to the role a wily androgynous “Man who Fell to Earth” vibe, charming and dangerous as only a rock star god could be. She shimmies and slithers and struts around the stage, a perfect foil to the bloodbath, she even coolly mops up the mess dressed as a janitor at one point, which is both hilarious and disturbing.

Everyone is truly excellent. There is a beautiful variety of humanity on stage in all their glory, bringing individuality to the chorus and subtle uniqueness to every synchronized chant and harmonized line. There is a syncopation to the performances and a clear separation of god and everyone else that just works. It’s very much “us” vs “god.” A kind of “be careful what you wish for” mixed with “do as you would be done by” and a dash of “The Shining.”

Taking an ancient work, maintaining the classical yet somehow giving it a modern edge so it seems fresh without messing it up is hard to do. The translation by Aaron Poochigian is the quiet hero, coupled of course with Ann Bogart’s inspired and magical direction. Although this version is apparently slightly abridged, it certainly doesn’t feel like it at all. It’s fluid and full, and utterly mesmerizing. The language and the skillful shaping of the story is crisp and clear and makes perfect and visceral sense. The actors use their wonderful compelling voices, their bodies and the simple, stunning setting with cleverly choreographed movements and gestures to give the story even more form and even deeper meaning.

I’ve seen a few productions of Euripide’ works over the years and while they were very good, luckily, this production of “Bacchae” is something totally apart. Fresh, brilliant, fascinating and surreal. This “Bacchae” is about obsession, fame, narcissism and the search for meaning in a world well beyond our control. What we do

[presents-vixen-deville-revealed\)](#)



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**Garry Marshall Theatre Presents "THE SPITFIRE GRILL"**  
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in the name of religion or politics or sometimes even family has, throughout history, provoked our most diabolical and darkest of deeds...and herein lies the relevance. We should all learn from Pentheus' youthful arrogance as well as Dionysus' psychopathic ego and Agave's lust for freedom. In the end we all take responsibility for our own choices, our hate and our loss of control...consequences are real and they usually last forever, let's hope we don't all have to hold a head in a bag to learn from ours.

I absolutely loved and highly recommend "Bacchae" at The Getty Villa. I may even go again...It's only on for a few weeks so I urge you to get your tickets right away and to take in the beauty of the museum before the show. We are so lucky to live in a city with such incredible performance spaces!

<http://www.getty.edu/museum/programs/performances/o>  
(<http://www.getty.edu/museum/programs/performances/c>

Running from September 6 - 29 Thursday - Saturday  
at 8pm

**The Getty Villa, 17985 Pacific Coast Highway, Malibu**

### **Cast**

Akiki Aizawa - Agave

Ed Araiza - Soldier

Eric Berryman - Pentheus

Gian-Murray Gianino - Second Messenger

Leon Ingulsrud - First Messenger

Ellen Lauren - Dionysus



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(</theatres/theatre-rentals/item/5682-the-sherry-theatre>)



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Barney O'Hanlon - Tiresias

Roshini Shukla - Chorus

Samuel Stricklen - Chorus

Stephen Duff Weber - Cadmus

Creative Team

Anne Bogart - Director

Aaron Poochigian - Translator

Brian H Scott - Set & Lighting Designer

Darron L West - Sound Designer

Erik Sanko - Composer

Ellen M. Lavaia - Production Stage Manager

Alyssa Escalante - Assistant Stage Manager

Nana Dakin - Assistant Director

Joey Guthman - Assistant Set & Lighting Design

Lena Sands - Associate Costume Design

Kelly Maurer - Choral Consultant

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## **Samantha Simmonds-Ronceros**

**(/theatres/theatre-reviews/itemlist/user/1591-samanthasimmondsronceros)**

### **Samantha Simmonds-Ronceros**

Writer, Filmmaker, Musician. Samantha has Produced over 60 short films and Written and Directed 20. She is the co-creator of 52 Films/52 Weeks and The Cinema Tribe Collective. She has written over 400 LA Theatre reviews and is partners in Xpress Records a Music Publishing Company in the UK. This year she will be directing her first feature film which she also wrote, developing several others and is writing a children's book.



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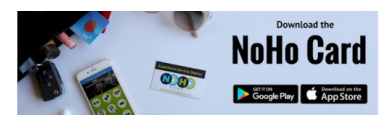
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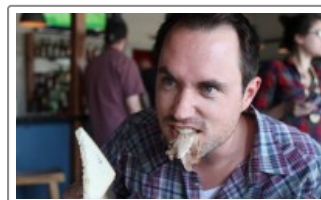
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