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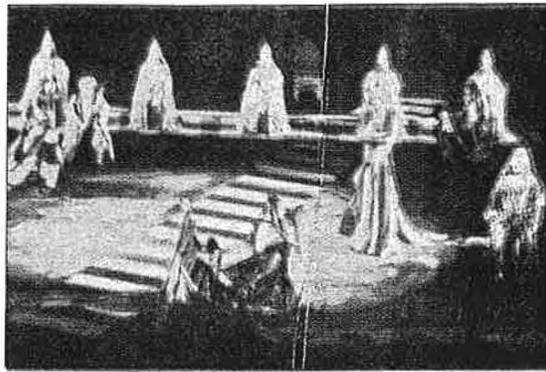
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The Suzuki Company's "Dionysus," coming to Zellerbach Playhouse next week, blends Noh, Kabuki and European techniques.

Theatrical thrillers coming to town

Bogart, Suzuki aim to electrify audiences

By Robert Hurwitz
CHRONICLE THEATER CRITIC

A good piece of theater you shouldn't be able to just walk on by," director Anne Bogart says. "It should stop you in your tracks. That's one of the biggest things I've learned from Suzuki."

Bogart, 50, has been stopping audiences in their tracks — inspiring, confounding and exhilarating them, sometimes all at once — with her New York-based SITI Company productions for 10 years. Fellow director Tadashi Suzuki, 62, has been having a similar effect on audiences since the 1960s, in Japan and all over the world.

In a cosmic coincidence, Bogart's and Suzuki's companies are coming here in the same week. SITI's "War of the Worlds" plays Stanford University's Pigott Theater from Wednesday through Dec. 1, presented by Stanford Lively Arts, before moving on to the University of California at Santa Cruz. Cal Performances brings the Suzuki Company's "Dionysus" to the University of California at Berkeley's Zellerbach Playhouse from Friday through Dec. 3.

Each piece has acquired new significance since Sept. 11. "Dio-

nyus" is a retelling of Euripides' "The Bacchae" — a grisly confrontation between a political leader and a fanatical religious cult — in Suzuki's concentrated, physically demanding, dizzying blend of Noh, Kabuki and European techniques with Eastern and Western popular culture. In "Worlds," Bogart re-creates Orson Welles' notorious 1938 radio broadcast that terrified thousands with news bulletins about a Martian invasion.

That's not to be confused with another "War of the Worlds" the SITI Company is also touring these days. "It is confusing," Bogart admits with a laugh over the phone from her Manhattan apartment. "They're very different. One is a huge production about the life and work of Orson Welles, written by Naomi Iizuka. This one, subtitled 'The Radio Play,' is the one Howard Koch wrote in 1938. You see a group of people, Welles and his Mercury Theatre cronies, in a studio, telling a story. And at a certain point, without any special effects, something changes. The Martians are there. It works. Lord knows how, but it does."

"We didn't start out to do two plays with the same name. While

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THEATER



JERRY TELFER / The Chronicle 1995

Anne Bogart
Good theater "should stop you in your tracks."

WAR OF THE WORLDS — THE RADIO PLAY

Anne Bogart's SITI Company performs the famous Orson Welles radio play Wednesday through Dec. 24 in a Stanford Lively Arts presentation at the Pigott Theater, Stanford University. Tickets: \$32. Call (650) 725-2787 or visit livelyarts.stanford.edu. The play will also be presented Dec. 3 and 4 at the Rio Theater, 1205 Soquel Ave., UC Santa Cruz. Tickets: \$13-\$23. Call (831) 459-2159 or visit www.events.ucsc.edu/artslects.

DIONYSUS: The Suzuki Company of Japan performs Tadashi Suzuki's interpretation of Euripides' "The Bacchae," presented by Cal Performances, Nov. 30 through Dec. 2 at the Zellerbach Playhouse, UC Berkeley. Tickets: \$30-\$46. Call (510) 642-9988 or visit www.calperfs.berkeley.edu.