

GREED

The Bacchae Project

by **Local 116 Ensemble**

directed by **Enrique Pardo**

texts by **Aida Croal**

created May 20th 1999

at the Horace Mann Theatre
New York

Director's Programme Notes

The Star Wars Polemic : by Enrique Pardo.

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Local 116 Theatre Ensemble was founded by eight members of the graduating class of Columbia University MFA Acting program. **GREED: The Bacchae Project** is their premiere production.

Set design is by David Martin (The Tempest, Hampton Shakespeare Festival)
Lap Chi Chu (Shopping & F***ing, New York Theatre Workshop) and Elizabeth Gaines were responsible for light design.
Costumes by Rick Gradone (Ashes to Ashes, Atlantic Theatre).

GREED: The Bacchae Project features a cast including Maha Chehlaoui, Bridgit Evans, Joanna Falk, Alanna Medlock, Adam Reynolds, Margi Sharp, Sophia Skiles, Dario Tangelson and Andrew Welsh.

Honourary Chairs included Tony Award-winning actress Cherry Jones, Stage directors Andrei Serban and Robert Woodruff, writer/psychologist James Hillman, performer/author Agapi Stassinopoulos and artist Margot McLean.

Director's Notes

The piece is an enquiry into Dionysia today: how can we view the lore and obsessions attributed to Dionysus at the end of the 20th century? Where are the God's 'post-followers' at? How are we all coping with the hangover of all those parties (wine parties, political parties), where to be called "dyonisian" was the ultimate compliment: revolutionary and shamanistic, what more could one ask! Greed satiated! Yet, in Euripides' *The Bacchae*, Agave concludes: "never again!"

I used to feel like that, especially about *The Bacchae*. Dionysus calls for gurus, not theatre directors – and this until my dear epicurean friend and mentor, Charles Boer, nudged me along to follow Cadmus' last lines: "We failed to honour the God". I invited the cast to ask why, and ask how Dionysus and his divine creatures (bacchantes, satyroi, silenoi, pans) might be feeling about it all.

My gratitude to Charles Boer for his nudge, and to *Local 116 Ensemble* and Aida Croal for a fascinating venture.

Enrique Pardo

Star Wars Polemics

A Letter to the cast from the director, after he was invited by the actors to a midnight viewing of the latest George Lucas Star Wars film, just opened in New York

May 21st 1999

GREED

"OK lets take the kids gloves off" (quote from the performance): Star Wars IS the opposite of Dionysus, and SHOULD be the opposite of GREED. Last night's performance of GREED was a bit slack and some of us lost heart, lost timings, etc.

So here are my thoughts.

Star Wars is everything I fight against: it is puritanical medieval bigotry (Good against Evil), it is self-righteous piousness, a eulogy of Franciscan medieval monks! Their 'enemies', the Dominicans, were 'evil' because rich and cultured, and GREEDY. Or consider another such cultural reversal of evil: who is Count Dracula? Refined and aristocratic, he personifies pagan culture! Check his library! That is what all those Christian peasants down in the village fear so much! Their's is anti-cultural integristism (uneducated fundamentalism), under the guise, in Star Wars, of technological superiority.

I even felt - *colmo del colmo!* - ETHICAL about it! How untactfull, I thought, to release this film during the Kosovo war, at the very moment when high technology bombs are hitting (and missing) targets way down below the clouds in ex Yugoslavia. With the bombers' pride of "zero casualties". It is precisely these unconsidered technologically superior attitudes that inflamme the anti-american demagogues. This is where hate against the USA constellates - and I assure you that I am americanophile, and even get into trouble for it in Europe! - but you Americans must help a little: you cannot simply exult in this Star Wars simplistic catechism! It is these types of posturings and self-congratulatory moralisms that made Saddam Hussein almost sympathetic, as the WASPS came down to punish, once more, the whore of Babylone. Terrible. (The way Lucas attacks Bureaucracy and "the Senate" is SO questionable! Stupid cowboy anti-democratic posturing!)

And worse, and to complete the Christian bigotry, you get the genius *bambino*: that silly brat blonde Jesus-cum-Bill-Gates aged 10: David beating Goliath. It is disastrous idiocy to knock down the giants of culture, while unconsciously adopting their prestige with all that simili-Renaissance architecture in the film. And even worse: the teen-aged queen - the fake morality virgin. Despicable! With God the grand father as a green wise 'facilitator'. Rubbish!

And worse, once again, Dionysus and Pan get thrown down to Hell! How long are we going to keep buying this miserable Christian myth? It will KILL YOUR PERFORMANCE! The new red-faced, multi-horned Evil guy is Pan, quite simply. Who is going to start reverting things? The Adam's Family? Adam's Family! (note: Adam Reynolds plays the blind Dionysus in the performance). Can't you see you are emotionally caught in a cheap morality myth? Oh, dear. Its everywhere. Go see the massive statue in the public garden above Morningside - go see it ! There is Pan, decapitated by the "Force of Good" - a crab, of all choices, surrounded by gentle giraffes! Lower down in the park itself, another Pan has been safely infantilized (Peter Pan), carefully emasculated, like Lucas' imagination. RRRROARRRR !

"Evil IS Culture" is what I feel like saying to sum up my anger. "Education", etymologically even, is right there with "perversion". And your JOB is to uphold that performance, to keep the audience there, laughing, and ENTERTAINED (entertaining ideas!), while delivering the challenging thoughts. Yes, after Cindy Sebrell's quote: "I've never felt quite so sober after a performance (about Dionysus!)" - Rosemary Quinn gave us another great quote: "I was laughing and enjoying myself until a moment came - I was still laughing - when I jolted and realized I was being asked to really SMARTEN UP!"

You can certainly quote this; pin it up in the lobby. Go for it!

Enrique Pardo