

Bakkhai Audition Packet

Who?

Director: Tomás Fuchs-Lynch

Producer: Abby Asmuth

Stage Manager: Sadie Lee

Please contact abby.asmuth@yale.edu with any questions

What?

Bakkhai is a dynamic translation of an ancient Greek tragedy that tells the story of the young god Dionysos' revenge on his own family for denying his divinity. The women of Thebes, driven mad by the god, have fled to the mountains to worship him as maenads. The hot-tempered young king of Thebes (and Dionysos' cousin), Pentheus, clashes with a disguised Dionysos, who eventually convinces him to dress as a maenad to discover what's happening on the mountain. This powerful moment of gender transformation reveals a new side of Pentheus' character, but before he has the chance to fully embrace it, we hear from a messenger that he has been killed by his own mad mother on the mountain. Dionysos finally reveals himself as a god, but the audience is left questioning the justice of his actions.

When?

Auditions: February 11-12

Callbacks:

Rehearsals: February 20-March 10; March 27-April 26

Shows: April 27-29

Time Commitment

We want this to be a low-stress, fun, and efficient process for everyone to be a part of. You'll have rehearsals for approximately 2-3 hours a week, with the exception of tech week (April 23-29). Over spring break, we won't have any formal meetings (we want you to get a real break!) but will expect that you're solidifying line memorization.

Content Warning

Descriptions of violence and death

Character Descriptions

Dionysos: Young, androgynous. God of wine, ecstasy, release, theater, and rebirth. Ambiguous in every sense of the word. Child of Zeus and Theban Semele (**Kadmos**' daughter), he is returning to Greece from Asia in order to take revenge against his non-believing family and introduce his rites to Greece. He takes the form of the Lydian Stranger in order to trick **Pentheus**, his cousin.

Teiresias: Old man. A blind priest and seer of Thebes. Friend of **Kadmos**.

Kadmos: Old man. Founder and previous king of Thebes, father to **Agave**, grandfather to **Pentheus** and **Dionysos**.

Pentheus: Young man in his late teens. Authoritarian king of Thebes who condemns the cult of **Dionysos**, but hides a part of himself behind his fanatical devotion to order. Grandson of **Kadmos**, son of **Agave**, cousin of **Dionysos**.

Guard: Older than **Pentheus**. Follows the king's orders, but does not always agree with them.

Herdsmen: On the older side. Encounters the Maenads on Mount Kithairon and tells **Pentheus** about it.

Servant: Any age. Servant of **Pentheus**. Is loyal to and grieves for **Pentheus**, but reveres the gods (including **Dionysos**).

Agave: Middle-aged. Mother of **Pentheus**, daughter of **Kadmos**. Claimed **Dionysos** was not Zeus' son and that the story was invented to cover up Semele's affair. Driven mad by **Dionysos**, she now leads the Maenads on Mount Kithairon.

Bakkhai (chorus): Femme, any age. Followers of **Dionysos**. In states of ecstatic frenzy, they praise the god with song and dance.

Audition Expectations

Please familiarize yourself with one or two of the audition sides below. No need to memorize! We may ask you to read sides you didn't prepare to hear you read a different character. You

may be given notes and asked to re-do a side—this is nothing to worry about! We want to see you try different interpretations of the characters and get a sense of how you take notes.

For sides with more than one character, a reader will be present in the room to read the other characters' lines.

Auditions will be 10 minute time slots. Please try to arrive a few minutes before your slot time to check in and pick up copies of your sides if you need them.

Auditions will be held in person. If you require any sort of accommodations (video audition, etc.) please reach out to abby.asmuth@yale.edu and we will be more than happy to figure something out.

Audition Times and Locations

10 minute time slots:

Saturday, February 11, 3-6pm in WLH 003

Sunday, February 12, 2-5pm in WLH 003

Audition Sides:

Pentheus/Dionysos

Pentheus: So are we the first place you've brought your new *daimon*?

Dionysos: Oh no, people are dancing for Dionysos pretty much everywhere else.

Pentheus: Foreigners all lack sense, compared to Greeks.

Dionysos: Well, there's more than one kind of sense. It's true they enjoy different customs.

Pentheus: And are your mysteries performed at night or in the day?

Dionysos: Mostly at night. Darkness is serious.

Pentheus: Yes it is, seriously corrupting, for women.

Dionysos: Can't corruption be found in daylight too?

Pentheus: Oh stop being clever! There's a penalty for that!

Dionysos: Stop being superficial. You slight the god.

Pentheus: I can't believe your arrogance, you casuistical Bakkhic little show-off!

Dionysos: And there's a penalty for that? What? *Scare me.*

Pentheus: First thing would be a crewcut.

Dionysos: But my hair is holy, I grew it for the god.

Pentheus: And hand over that stupid thyrsos.

Dionysos: Take it yourself. It belongs to Dionysos.

Pentheus: Then I'll put you in jail.

Dionysos: The god will let me out.

Pentheus: Sure, whenever you call him I suppose.

Dionysos: He's already here now.

Pentheus: Where? I don't see any god.

Dionysos: Right where I am. You don't see because you aren't serious.

Pentheus [to Guards]: Seize this man! He mocks me! He mocks Thebes!

Dionysos: I warn you, don't do it.

Pentheus: I'm the one who gives the orders here.

Dionysos: You don't know what your life is, nor what you're doing, nor who you are.

Pentheus: I am Pentheus, son of Agave, son of Echion!

Dionysos: That is the saddest name I've ever heard

Dionysos

Just between you and me,
I had a bit of fun with him and his ropes.
He thought he tied me up you see, but he hadn't laid a hand on
me —

he got hold of a bull that was stabled there,
poor creature trying to eat its dinner.
That's where the ropes went,
he wrapped that bull from stem to stern —
hard work! he was panting and sweating and biting his lip.
I sat by and watched quietly.

It was just then Bakkhos shook the house
and sent up a flame on Semele's tomb.
Pentheus panicked,
fancied his house was on fire,
started running back and forth shouting orders
about buckets and water,
put every servant to work,
total waste of time.

Then it suddenly struck him I might escape.
He dropped his bucket,
grabbed a sword
and raced inside.

Where,
as it seems to me,
but this is just one man's opinion,
Bromios fashioned a simulacrum of me.
Pentheus leapt upon it, stabbing the air,
slaughtering me.

Then Bromios added injury to insult —
he did bring down the house!

Dashed it.
Smashed it.
Disarticulated it.

To bits.
So much for trying to put me in jail.

Teiresias

The facts are,
this *daimon* is a prophet and you should by no means slight him.

Yes,
Bakkhic states of mind are laced with prophecy:
when the god enters your body you're suddenly speaking the
future.

He plays a vital part in warfare too — that shock of fear
that runs right through an army before battle,
that shock is Dionysos.

Or that flash across the peaks of Delphi
tossing like a great wild spark from crag to crag
with a pine torch in each hand,
that's him.

But you,
Pentheus,
put too much emphasis on forcing your way:
do you really think
violence
is the only way to influence people?

Think again.

Accept this god.

Pour his wine, dance his dances, say yes!
Dionysos does not compel women to go mad for sex,
their own natures determine that.

Pure at heart is pure in life.

But admit this,
you love it when people throng your gates
and call your name.

He loves it too.

He wants respect, that's all.

So go ahead, ridicule Kadmos and me,
dressed up in our ivy
and tossing our old white heads.

We intend to dance for Dionysos, yes.

It's the right thing to do.

You must be out of your mind to go to war with a god like this.

Agave

Agave:

What a fresh bloom he is,
just a kid, just a calf —
here, see the down on his cheek,
the long soft hair.

Bakkhai:

That long hair
does give him an animal look.

Agave:

Our Bakkhos is wise,
is he not,
a wise hunter.
How wisely
he drove the maenads upon this beast!

Bakkhai:

Oh yes he's a hunter.

Agave:

Do you praise me?

Bakkhai:

Oh yes I praise you.

Agave:

And soon the men of Thebes —

Bakkhai:

not to say Pentheus your son —

Agave:

—will praise his mother
who caught this wild thing,
this lion cub.

Bakkhai:

Extraordinary catch!

Agave:

Extraordinary experience.

Bakkhai:

So you're happy?

Agave:

I'm overjoyed.
It was magnificent —
the day, the hunt, the spectacle —
magnificent!

Bakkhai:

Show your prize to the people,
then, show your catch, poor woman.

Agave:

O citizens of beautifully-towered Thebes,
come see my catch!
We daughters of Kadmos hunted and caught
this wild animal,
not with javelins,
not with nets,
just the slender fingers of our own white hands!
What are they worth now,
your boasts, your useless weaponry?
We took this beast barehanded!
We tore it limb from limb!
Where's my father, where's the old man?
Let him approach.
And Pentheus my son, where's he?
I want him to set up a ladder against the house

and nail this head to the roofbeam:
my trophy.
My lion.
I won it myself.

Bakkhai

O Thebes! garland yourself
in all the green there is —
ivy green,
olive green,
fennel green,
growing green,
yearning green,
wet sap green,
new grape green,
green of youth and green of branches,
green of mint and green of marsh grass,
green of tea leaves, oak and pine,
green of washed needles and early rain,
green of weeds and green of oceans,
green of bottles, ferns and apples,
green of dawn-soaked dew and slender green of roots,
green fresh out of pools,
green slipped under fools,
green of the green fuse,
green of the honeyed muse,
green of the rough caress of ritual,
green undaunted by reason or delirium,
green of jealous joy,
green of the secret holy violence of the thyrsos,
green of the sacred iridescence of the dance —
and let all the land of Thebes dance!
with Dionysos leading,
to the mountains!
to the mountains!