

A group of diverse young people are gathered in front of a brick wall, creating a protest scene. Thick red smoke fills the air. In the center, a young man in a blue pinstripe suit and red tie looks forward. To his left, a young woman with long blonde hair looks off to the side. In the foreground, a young man in a grey sweatshirt shouts into a megaphone. To the right, a young woman with glasses and a black jacket also shouts. Other people in the background are holding cameras, phones, and a wooden stick. One person on the right is wearing a grey hoodie and a black balaclava. The overall atmosphere is one of intense protest or civil unrest.

WHITGIFT

THE BACCHAE

By Euripides | Translation by Kenneth McLeish and Frederic Raphael

20–22 March | 7pm | PAC



THE BACCHAE

DIRECTOR'S NOTE



The Bacchae is one of the last plays Euripides wrote before his death in 406BC. It premiered at the Theatre of Dionysos in 405BC after his passing. Despite Euripides writing this play nearly two and a half thousand years ago, he was able to capture an understanding of human nature that is still pertinent today.

Through wine and revelry, Dionysos bewitches his Bacchae, a group of women, into a state of euphoria and adoration. He then leads them to commit abhorrent crimes of violence for his own personal vengeance. In reimagining *The Bacchae* to be relevant for today, I was drawn towards one of today's catalysts of mass manipulation and radicalisation: social media.

Social media platforms have become a source of acceptance, validation, community and entertainment for many, from all demographics. Simultaneously, they provide platforms for businesses, influencers, celebrities and politicians. However, with a platform comes a moral responsibility, or at least one would hope. Unfortunately, we have seen some abuse the power of their platforms, reinforcing one community's sense of belonging over another's in a ploy to gain traction and eventually influence their followers into a state of blind devotion. This, coupled with real-time news, live-streamed diatribes and biased algorithms, has the capability to conjure mass discrimination, mob mentality, insurrections and civil wars.

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At times, it is a challenge to feel hopeful in this world with ongoing wars; an ominous climate-change crisis; the uncertainty around the growing power of AI; a pandemic of social media addiction and the anticipation of elections on the horizon. However, *The Bacchae* is a Greek tragedy we can learn from. In its darkness it provokes us to question the external forces we are subjected to and reflect on the balance between civilisation and order versus our innate, natural and human instincts. In unpredictable times, in times of chaos and doubt, we can remain grounded, focused and hopeful if we listen to inside – to our instinctual kindness, connection, spirituality and love.

*'In its darkness it provokes us
to question the external forces
we are subjected to'*

It has been an honour to work with this company of performers, and the creative team, in bringing *The Bacchae* to Whitgift.

EO Spedding

Director



THE BACCHAE

THE COMPANY

<i>Dionysos</i>	Alex Braglewicz
<i>Pentheus</i>	Luke Ward
<i>Teiresias</i>	Ethan Hamilton
<i>Kadmos</i>	Otto Monge
<i>Cowherd</i>	Bakari Leon
<i>Attendant</i>	Felix Warren
<i>Agave</i>	Evie Constantinou
<i>Chorus of Bacchae</i>	Flora Stevenson Raf Cianfarani Nicholas Seal Grace Binacchi Nissi Ofoborh Tom Bennet Joel Gulliford Joe Hill Elsa Clements Ariana Mohammadi Solomon Marks Kobi Watson

All other parts are played by members of the company

CREATIVE TEAM

<i>Director</i>	EO Spedding
<i>Producer and Stage Manager</i>	EM Wells
<i>Projection Design & Lead Technician</i>	AJ Hill
<i>ASM, Costumes, Hair & Make-up</i>	CO Aluko
<i>Hair & Make-up assistant</i>	HI Macgregor
<i>Sound Design</i>	Lucian Ng Reuben Karas
<i>Technical Director</i>	DP Jenkinson
<i>Stage Technician</i>	D O Olufowora
<i>Scenic Artist</i>	L Crestani
<i>Lighting</i>	Magnus Tibbalds
<i>Stage Crew</i>	Matthew Tsui
<i>Stage Crew</i>	Matthew Tsui

Photography by AJ Hill



DEPRAVED NEW WORLD?

“There are only two industries that call their customers ‘users’: illegal drugs and software” – Edward Tufte

Your data is not being sold off by technology companies.

Every interaction you have with any product of any one of these companies is tracked, monitored and fed to an algorithm that then decides what content to show you. This, among other things, is done to keep you engaged. Engagement means views. Views mean revenue. Revenue means profit.

Your email may attempt to be as aesthetically pleasing and user-friendly as possible. Your maps service might recommend restaurants. Your search engine shows you predictive results. Every click you make on your devices feeds the algorithms that run these services, which are often interlinked and have very little human supervision. Our every movement is noted, every communication catalogued, and every thought tracked. All your information is fed through a grinder to create a version of you that can be predicted, analysed and marketed. We are not being supported by technological advancements anymore – we are the ones supporting them. We create the new models today, that tomorrow will be used

upon us, to entertain us, to connect us, and most vitally – inform us.

Your data is not being sold off by technology companies – *you are*.

The human being has become one of the most marketable – and thereby profitable – commodities of our time. We increasingly rely on the technology that keeps us connected. More and more companies are switching to digital and remote workspaces. When we come to rely so heavily on a computer to keep us linked to society, we place ourselves in a perilous position. We give more and more of our attention to technology, and if it

can be held, we can be sold many things. Products, services, and most terrifyingly – lies.

Increasingly, the information superhighway is dying, and being clogged with both mis- and

disinformation. A terrifying prospect for future elections. Indeed recently, videos of US President Joe Biden surfaced, in which he told New Hampshire Primary voters “Save your vote for the November election”. These videos were of course, produced by AI – epitomising the threat that these technologies pose to our democracies.

The true threat to democracy and politics in our times is not those who wish to

‘When we come to rely so heavily on a computer to keep us linked to society, we place ourselves in a perilous position’

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undo them. Instead, it is the availability of the tools with which that task is made easy. There have always been those who would try to unpick democracy at the seams, with the aim of installing themselves at the top of government. The problem is, now they stand a chance of winning over the public and getting elected.

Former US President Donald Trump has repeatedly used social media to spread misinformation about the validity of the 2020 Presidential Election, even inciting a mob of his supporters to storm the US Capitol on Wednesday 6 January 2021

in an attempt to stop the results being ratified. This demonstrates the clear and present danger posed by technology, as misinformation on this scale is difficult to counter effectively and is, as a result, highly pervasive.

If a company or organisation can buy our time and attention, buy a model to predict us, then we are all at risk. Massive harm can be done to us, as well as society, for a comparatively minimal cost. Every thought can be influenced, every action curated, every decision swayed. The worst part of this? Little can be done immediately. Legislation and regulation take time, and these technologies move faster than we can believe, adapting in real time, constantly vigilant. We have entered a world where people are influenced for profit, and we will see the consequences of this in upcoming elections.

Your data is not being sold off by technology companies – *Democracy is.*

Joel Gulliford
Lower Sixth Form

THE BACCHAE

THE ORIGINS OF THEATRE AND THE EVOLUTION OF GREEK TRAGEDY

Today, an excursion to the theatre with family and friends is a treasured event, but in the grand theatre of the City Dionysia in ancient Athens, theatre was fundamentally a religious celebration, a competition between the finest playwrights, and a civic festival with a booming atmosphere. As Storey called it, “a combination of Mardi Gras, the gathering of the faithful in St Peter’s Square on Easter Day, the crowds that throng the Mall on the Fourth of July, and the hype of Oscars night.”

The origins of theatre can, according to ancient historian Herodotus, date back to the C. 7th BCE with the creation of the Dithyramb. This was a choral dance consisting of singing and dancing in the city of Corinth performed in honour of Dionysos. However, theatre in ancient Greece as many are familiar with developed in C. 6th BCE under Cleisthenes (leader of Athens) and Athenian Thespis who dressed in mask and costume, impersonating different characters from the Dithyramb and took part in dialogues with the chorus singing about mythological stories and acting them out. Thespis came to be known as the first actor. Aristotle commented on this burgeoning form of performance: “Tragedy – as also comedy – was at first mere improvisation”. However, it is important to note that the story of Thespis is an instance of mythologising. There were many innovators of Greek theatre.

***‘In ancient Athens,
theatre was
fundamentally a
religious celebration’***

Just like tonight’s performance, the City Dionysia took place in late March. It was the largest of three main theatrical festivals with roughly 17,000 open-air seats (the theatron – where the audience sat). The festival, which came to embody the golden age of Classical Greece, ran for five days, and included processions, sacrifices, choral competitions and represented growth, the harvest, and the celebration of Dionysus. As you will see, Dionysos is the primary focus of the drama, violence, and conflict on stage tonight.

The choral dance of the Dithyramb remained fundamental with the reorganisation of the City Dionysia in 501BCE and the introduction of the tetralogy. A playwright would compose a tetralogy which consisted of three tragedies followed by a satyr play. A tragedy was a ritual performance about the downfall of a great man. The word itself comes from ‘Tragos’ meaning goat (the traditional prize to the winner) and ‘ode’ meaning song. The Satyr (meaning ‘goat-like’) was a play which parodied tragedy and consisted of a chorus playing Satyrs.

There were three extremely influential innovators of tragedy, the legendary playwrights of the C. 5th BCE. First was Aeschylus (the father of tragedy) who lived from 525-456 BCE. Aristotle tells

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us that Aeschylus introduced a second actor on the stage, a radical development allowing dialogue between two characters. The second was Sophocles who lived from 495-406BCE and is credited with introducing many innovations to tragedy. He introduced a third actor, increased the number of chorus members from 12 to 15 and made the set more atmospheric by enhancing the look of the skene (a shed used for actors to change costumes). The third was Euripides who lived from 480-406 BCE. His style is distinctive as his plays were more innovative and philosophical exploring the behaviour of the gods more than other playwrights. You will see this in tonight's performance of *The Bacchae* by Euripides profoundly with the arrival of a new god, Dionysos, to the city of Thebes.

The mechanics of theatre innovated performances greatly. The introduction of the crane – 'mechane' – was a device used to raise an actor above the skene. In tragedy a god might be elevated to make an appearance at the end of the play to sort out human affairs. This is where

we get 'deus ex machina' ('a god from the machine'). Famously this was used to dramatic effect in Euripides' *Medea* to hoist Medea in a chariot escaping punishment for killing her children. Another vital innovation was the stage platform (ekkyklema – 'something wheeled out'). This showed scenes that occurred off stage or an indoor scene.

Theatre began and evolved in ancient Greece and, as Aristotle put it: "Having passed through many changes, it found its natural form, and there it stopped."

Charles Richmond and Jack Dillon
Lower Sixth Formers

THANK YOU...

Mounting a theatrical production in such a busy school requires the help and goodwill of a great number of people. We would like to thank: the Headmaster and the Governors for their support; Mr Osborne for his support of Drama; subject teachers for their patience and good faith in helping the performers to balance their studies with rehearsals; the Marketing team for compiling the programme and advertising the show; the Catering team for providing dinners during show week and for organising interval refreshments; Ms Pennicott for managing the box office; cleaning staff for cleaning up after long rehearsals and finally the parents of the cast and crew for supporting their sons and daughters through line learning and rehearsal attendance.

Free WAVPA Workshop



Saturday 23 March from 3pm to 5pm.

The Performing Arts Centre, Whitgift School, South Croydon.

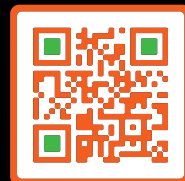
This free workshop will provide 2 hours of **DRAMA**, **DANCE** and **THEATRE** training and is an ideal taster session for 8 – 18 year olds thinking about joining a Saturday performing arts programme.

For more information, visit www.whitgift.co.uk/wavpa

To reserve a place, please scan the code below to **pre-register**:

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