

Euripides' "Bacchae" in Detroit, Michigan

On Saturday, October 25, 2008, the people of the Detroit Metropolitan Area had the pleasure of enjoying a great theatrical performance of the Bacchae, sponsored by a variety of Greek and Cypriot Government agencies, and locally, by the *American Hellenic Congress* and a number of private sponsors.

The Bacchae is one of Euripides' most profound plays, one of the most powerful plays ever written, and it was presented for the first time in ancient Athens shortly after the poet's death in 406 B.C. However, its meaning and ideas remain most relevant today, particularly in front of the troublesome issues that challenge our humanity in the present, both personally and collectively.

The god Dionysus, the most ambiguous and mysterious Greek god, is the main character of this play; and through the way the human characters interact with him, Euripides explores and illuminates many eternal themes of our humanity like race, gender, power, intelligence, military superiority, religion, cultural understanding, ignorance, and above all the meaning of wisdom in the face of all these.

The play's production was excellent, under the masterful guidance of the brilliant director and producer Leonidas Loizides. It was presented in both Greek and English, and the audience was assisted in understanding both languages by up-titles projected by light over the stage.

Mr. Loizides, who is a prolific Greek Cypriot director, studied in the Tisch School and the Drama School of Sonia Moore in New York, and has directed and produced a variety of cinematic and stage performances in co-operation and with the support of the best names in the fields of Film and Theater. His work has been presented with great success in more than ten countries, including Greece, Cyprus, England, France, and the United States of America.

In staging Euripides' Bacchae, Mr. Loizides saw his dream of ten years realized, and he gave his audience the opportunity to tune in to the didactic purposes of the Ancient Greek Theater, and at the same time, the opportunity to connect with the genius, innovative mythmaking of Euripides. Mr. Loizides' production was equally inventive in spite of its simplicity. Inspired by the powerful choral odes of the Bacchae, the enthusiastic female devotees of the god Dionysus, he chose to produce the play with a cast consisting exclusively by women. In so doing, he completely reversed the practice of the ancient Greek Drama, in which only men performed even in the female roles; but he did so without diminishing in the least the powerful experience of the Euripidean poetic brilliance.

The creative choreography, the simplicity of the stage presentation, the talent of the women in the cast, the oriental tones of the music, composed by the gifted musician Dimitris Katis, the religious anachronisms which so powerfully conveyed the holiness and mystery of the Dionysiac ritual, everything, contributed in making Mr. Loizides' staging of the *Bacchae* an unforgettable experience for his audience, and for this we are all to his dept.

He expressed his desire, in the near future, to return to us with another production of Greek Drama, this time Euripides' *Trojan Women*. Based on what we witnessed in his presentation of the *Bacchae* we could all concur in saying that no date set would be too soon for that. So we are all awaiting his next production with great anticipation!

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