

Suzuki Company

Friday through Sunday, November 30 – December 2, 2001
Zellerbach Playhouse

Dionysus

This performance will last approximately 70 minutes, and includes no intermission.

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and the Zellerbach Family Fund for their generous support.

Cal Performances is supported, in part, by the National Endowment for the Arts,
a federal agency that supports the visual, literary, and performing arts to benefit all Americans,
and by the California Arts Council, a state agency.

Dionysus

Based on Euripides' *The Bacchae*

Directed and designed by Tadashi Suzuki

Performed by members of the Shizuoka Performing Arts Center

CAST

Cadmus	Kosuke Tsutamori
Pentheus	Yoichi Takemori
Agave	Ellen Lauren
Priest 1 (Dionysus)	Tsuyoshi Kijima
Priest 2	Masaharu Kato
Priest 3	Kiyosumi Niihori
Priest 4	Keita Mishima
Priest 5	Atsushi Takita
Priest 6	Kenji Nagai
The Bacchae	Toshiko Takeuchi
	Momoyo Tateno
	Chisako Aiba

STAFF

Stage Manager	Kenichiro Iwasaki
Assistant Director	Antony Sandoval
Lighting	Michitomo Shiohara
	Bunichi Ito
Sound	Shinji Isobe
Costumes	Tomoko Nakamura
	Kana Tsukamoto
Surtitles	Yoko Narushima
Administration	Ikuko Saito

Kazuko Ishikawa

At a time when there are many questions about the relevance of art and the artist's ability—or responsibility—to confront contemporary issues, the work of Tadashi Suzuki offers some compelling replies.

At its core, Mr. Suzuki's work conveys a fundamental belief in art as an irreplaceable human heritage and in theater as a context for expression and communication. He has long plumbed the body for its energy and expressive qualities as he has done with great theater texts from cultures around the world. For Mr. Suzuki, theater is as socially and spiritually crucial in today's world as it was for ancient Greeks or for the followers of Zeami.

Japan Society is proud of its long association with Mr. Suzuki and his company. He is a theater visionary whose work illuminates the obvious as well as the obscure. We have had the privilege of presenting his work several times in New York, and are pleased to have organized a national tour that brings his company not only to New York but to cities across the country. We are grateful to the Suzuki Company for coming to the United States at this time with visions of doubt and hope that its theater artistry can reveal.

—Paula S. Lawrence
Director, Performing Arts, Japan Society

Director's Message

Owing to the global development of information and communications systems, people can now easily learn about and become highly familiar with cultures other than their own. Compared with earlier times, when people experienced everything first-hand and cultivated a wisdom for co-existing with others, our world is permeated by something completely new. It is possible now to know and understand things without actually "being there." This change has been brought about by means of a thorough exploitation of "non-animal" energy, such as electricity, oil, and nuclear power. This tendency will undoubtedly continue to grow in the future.

It is dangerous, however, to place too much trust in this "non-animal" energy, which claims to connect people with unprecedented speed, for it can lead to neglect or loss of the rich possibilities of the "animal" energy stored in our individual bodies. Through the refined uses of "animal" energy, human cultures have blossomed and borne fruits in a variety of ways. It is precisely in this way that performing arts, such as theater, dance, and opera, have become a cultural heritage of humankind, irreplaceable by such media as television or film.

The same holds true for sports. Both performing arts and sports provide the ground for better understanding of and deeper caring for human beings by bringing people together to the same spot at the same moment. No matter how enormous and necessary the communications systems based on "non-animal" energy may become for our daily life, it would be suicidal for humankind to forget or ignore the values embodied in performing arts and sports.

Needless to say, the way people train, refine, and enjoy their "animal energy" varies from nation to nation and from place to place. But it is those very differences that preserve and assert the cultural identity and *raison-d'être* of each nation. The greater the amount of "non-animal" energy, which tends to reduce our lives to uniformity, the greater the contribution which performing arts will make to the quality of human life in the future. The significance of cultural projects in these highly technological times lies in the fact that they make it possible for us to experience similarities and differences inherent in various nations.

—Tadashi Suzuki

Director's Note on Dionysus

Lead me, guides, where my sisters wait, poor sisters of my exile. Let me go where I shall never see Cithaeron more, where that accursed hill may not see me, where I shall find no trace of thyrsus. That I leave to other Bacchae.

—Agave

The phenomenon of processing experience into stories or narratives has always played an important role in human life. Some stories exist within a group consciously as myths, legends, fairytales, etc., and their role in the society is relatively obvious. But it is possible to put more subtle entities, such as belief systems, ideologies, and even history itself, into the realm of story. A "story" in this sense is a configuration of information and feelings within a given community to justify the existence of the group.

Stories are the very element of cohesion bringing together and spiritually unifying individuals into communities. They can also give structure and form to rebellion against a community, and provide a way to deal with communal oppression.

The persistence of the story phenomenon has always found its strongest manifestations in the form of religion and totalitarian government throughout the history of mankind. Indeed, these uses of story have saved, or given hope to, countless people, but they can just as easily be turned into tools for suppression. Story can bind even unwilling individuals to

a group with spiritual chains. Story is a two-edged sword.

Both the attraction towards the comfort and cohesion offered by stories, and the will to rebel against the repression that results, are within us as individuals as well as within mankind as a whole.

In order to fulfill their function as the unifying element for a group, stories require a sacrifice or a scapegoat. Stories cannot hold themselves without such a victim. Euripides' *The Bacchae* shows the process by which individuals are "scapegoated" out of the narrative world. Agave, in the moment of realization, when she sees that the head in her hand is that of her son, perceives with devastating clarity that she and her son are the scapegoats. She leaves her world and begins a journey towards the opposite pole.

Although Euripides has Dionysus appear on stage and speak lines as a character, in my production of *Dionysus*, the god's words are assigned to a group of priests. The interpretation here is that the god Dionysus never existed as such; rather a group, with a communal need for unity and the will to spiritually influence the masses, created a "story" called "Dionysus." The conflict between Dionysus and Pentheus is not a battle between god and man, it is an altercation between a religious sect and a political authority. What we see is a drama of conflict between two communal value systems that exist on the same plane.

Synopsis

Dionysus, the god of wine, emerges represented in this production by six priests in Thebes to initiate the Greeks into his new religion. Pentheus, the king of Thebes, refuses to accept Dionysus as a god and intends to have him captured and executed. Dionysus begins to possess all of the women of Thebes and compels them to go to Mount Cithaeron. Among them is Agave, Pentheus' mother. Despite his attempt to arrest Dionysus, Pentheus is also dazed and possessed by the god. Dionysus lures him to the women's revelry on Cithaeron, where Pentheus is torn into pieces at the hands of the worshippers. Agave, still in a mind-controlled trance, returns from the mountain carrying the head of Pentheus. When her madness passes, Agave comes to face the death of her son, and for the first time realizes that she is a scapegoat sacrificed for the interest of the whole cult group.

—Tadashi Suzuki

Tadashi Suzuki is the founder and director of the Suzuki Company of Toga (SCOT); chairman of the Japan Performing Arts Foundation (JPAF); artistic director of the Shizuoka Performing Arts Center (SPAC); and the creator of the Suzuki Method of Actor Training. He organized the Toga Festival (Japan's first international theater festival) from 1982 through 1999, and formed the International Committee of the Theatre Olympics in 1993 together with Robert Wilson, Yuri Lyubimov, Heiner Müller, Wole Soyinka, and other world theater artists.

His works include *On The Dramatic Passions*, *The Trojan Women*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, and the opera *Vision of Lear*. Through the Toga Festival and the Second Theatre Olympics in Shizuoka, Suzuki has introduced a wide range of the world's foremost theater artists to Japanese audiences.

One of the world's foremost theater directors, Suzuki is also an important performance theorist. The Suzuki Method is a system of exercises designed to be a realization of his philosophy, the cornerstone of which is a belief that human beings possess the ability to tap into the expressive power of "animal energy," and that theater, as a context for this expression, is socially and spiritually crucial in the present-day global situation. Suzuki has articulated his theories in a number of books. A collection of his writings in English, *The Way of Acting*, is published by the Theater Communications Group.

Suzuki's concerns include the structure of the theater group, the creation and use of theatrical space, and the overcoming of cultural and national barriers in the interest of creating work with a universal basis. He has been engaged in a long-term collaborative relationship with celebrated architect Arata Isozaki, working with him very closely in the creation of eight theaters in Japan. The resulting buildings not only combine the theatrical arts with architecture, but also reach a level of independence as highly acclaimed modern art forms.

Suzuki's activities reflect a forceful approach to dealing with many of the fundamental issues of our time, both in his role as a director creating multilingual and multicultural productions, and as a festival producer bringing people from throughout the world together in the context of shared theatrical endeavors.

Ellen Lauren has been associated with Suzuki and both the SCOT and SPAC companies since 1983, when she first attended the international training program in Togamura, Japan, as a student. She recently returned to Toga this summer as the leading teacher for the Suzuki Training Summer Program.

She has performed the role of Agave in *Dionysus* at venues around the world since 1992, including the Toga International Festival, the Shizuoka Performing Arts Center, the Theatre Olympics at the Herod Atticus Theater in Athens, the Moscow Art Theater, the Istanbul International Festival, Art Carnutum in Austria, the Festival Mundial in Chile, the Toronto Festival, and the Teatro Olimpico in Italy. In addition, she has performed the role of Juliet in *Waiting for Romeo*, as well as conducting international workshops on behalf of Suzuki and his training method.

Lauren is the associate artistic director of The SITI Company, celebrating its 10th season and created under the direction of Tadashi Suzuki and Anne Bogart. Her SITI credits include *Room*, *bobraschenbergamerica*, *War of the Worlds*, *The Medium*, *Culture of Desire*, *Going Going Gone*, *Cabin Pressure*, *Miss Julie*, *Orestes*, and *Private Lives*. National and international venues include the Edinburgh Festival, BAM's Next Wave Festival, UCLA Performing Arts, the Wexner Center for the Arts, Actor's Theater Louisville, New York Theater Workshop, and the International Theater Festival in Bogota. Lauren teaches both nationally and internationally on behalf of SITI, as well as at the summer intensive offered each year in Saratoga Springs, New York. She has spent 14 years collectively as a resident company member of the Milwaukee Repertory, StageWest (MA), and the Alley Theater in Houston.

Lauren received the Kosovar Award for Excellence from the New York City Opera at Lincoln Center for *Seven Deadly Sins (Anna II)* under the direction of Anne Bogart. She has been on the faculties of Columbia and Fordham Universities, and is an ongoing faculty member at the Juilliard School of Drama, where she teaches the Suzuki Training Method.

The Shizuoka Performing Arts Center (SPAC), founded in 1995 by Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan, aims to provide a creative base for performing artists both nationally and internationally. The chairman of the board of directors is Yoshinobu Ishikawa, and the general artistic director is Tadashi Suzuki.

SPAC has facilities for performances, rehearsals, workshops, classes, lectures, and other activities, as well as accommodations and administration.

Shizuoka Performing Arts Park is located in the natural environment of Shizuoka and encompasses the Udo Open Air Theatre, Ellipse Theatre Daendo, a rehearsal studio, dormitories, guest houses, restaurants, and an administrative office. SPAC also operates the Shizuoka Arts Theatre, an indoor theater located in the downtown area of Shizuoka City.

SPAC produces and presents its own works. In addition, it offers educational programs as well as exchange and collaboration with artists and institutions from Japan and other countries. In 1999, SPAC hosted the Second Theatre Olympics, and since 2000, it has been organizing Spring Arts Festival Shizuoka, an annual international performing arts festival.

The Japan Society, founded in 1907, is an American institution with individual and corporate members, which promotes understanding and enlightened relations between the United States and Japan. It is a private, nonprofit, nonpolitical organization devoted to cultural, educational, and public affairs, and to discussions, exchanges, and research in areas of vital interest to both countries. The Society provides informative, innovative programming that is often available nowhere else in the country. It is funded by contributions, endowments, grants, membership dues, and revenue from functions and events. Further information is available at www.japansociety.org

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Japan Society's Performing Arts Program

brings the best of Japan's performing arts to the United States. Highlighting diversity and range, programs vary from traditional *noh*, *kabuki*, *kyogen*, and *bunraku* to cutting-edge theater, dance, and music. The department also commissions new works, organizes national tours, and develops and distributes educational programs.

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