

'The Bacchae' spotlights this weekend

Katisha Hayes
Pendulum Reporter

Violence, exotic women and a struggle for power are what makes, "The Bacchae" unique. The Department of Performing Arts presents the play starting on Friday at 8 p.m. in McCrary Theatre.

"It's an exciting production that is vibrant and active," said Director Fred Rubeck.

"The Bacchae" is a Greek tragedy that tells the story of two gods, Dionysus, played by Chris Patterson, and Pentheus, played by Justin Roller. The play also shows their battle for power in the city of Thebes, the setting of the play.

"The central action happens in front of a Greek palace," Rubeck said. "The play explores how the will of man is in conflict with the will of God.

"It's about our own determination versus our natural instincts."

The title of the play is derived from the name of a group of characters in the play called the bacchae, who are followers of Dionysus and are put under his spell.

"They are enchanting and mysterious women who give their lives to him," said Alyssa J. Cartwright and Natasha Suran, who are both part of the bacchae.

Other characters in the play include Teiresias, played by Jamal Green and a messenger, played by Christian Taylor.

"Teiresias is a blind prophet who warns the king that if he doesn't follow Dionysus and accept him as a true god, he will kill him," Green said.

"The messenger acts as a sort of advisor to the king," Taylor said.

The background of this Greek tragedy begins when Dionysus' mother, Semele, finds out she is pregnant by Zeus, the King of the gods. Zeus' wife, Hera, learns of this and is angered by this behavior. She goes undercover and goes to Semele, who persuades her to go to Zeus in order to convince him to disclose his true self to her.

Zeus appears as a lightning bolt and kills Semele. He keeps the unborn child until it is ready to be born. Dionysus is then raised and protected by goddesses of the mountains, called nymphs.

The play picks up when Dionysus comes back to the city of Thebes after 18 years. He is fol-

lowed by the bacchae, who have come with him from Asia. While in the city, he tries to convince the citizens that he is a god, and demands the worship of all of them.

The new King of Thebes, Pentheus, angry at Dionysus's boasting, denies that he is a god and forbids the citizens to worship him.

"The king is very authoritative and power hungry.

"He is new to the throne, loves the power and doesn't like to be threatened," Roller said about his character.

This angers Dionysus and he casts a spell over the women of the city, which makes them act wild

"They are very sexual, almost eerie," Heather A. Dearden said. "They are possessed by him and

movements and good acting," Rubeck said.

Immediately after auditions, Rubeck began matching the strong voices, expressive body actors with the characters. Rehearsals began in mid-February.

As director, Rubeck helped the actors prepare different scenes and develop their characters through a variety of activities and exercises.

"Before each rehearsal, the actors did body and voice exercises that turned their attention on the play," Rubeck said. "During rehearsal they also did a series of activities in relation to the characters in the play."

Chris Patterson, who plays Dionysus, said it was fun playing

inhibitions go," Cartwright and Suran said.

"The help of costumes and music helped them get into character as well," Dearden said.

Not only did Rubeck help the actors get into character and develop the scenes, his job also included coordinating the efforts of everyone so that everything fell into place, he said.

"Everything sort of happened at the same time," he added.

Rubeck worked with the set designer, the lighting designer and the technical director in a collaborative effort to make it all happen.

"You figure out how you want to do it and you bring the script to life," Rubeck said.

Dale Becherer, scenic designer for the theatre department, said the key element was communicating clearly with one another. The production process for the set began when Becherer worked on a paper design.

"I did sketches and then a ground plan," Becherer said. "The ground plan is a key element because I arrange the space on stage for the movement of the actors that helps facilitate the telling of the story."

Once the design was finished, building of the set began. Bill Webb, lighting designer and technical director, handled the superior construction of the set and incorporated music and sound effects into the play.

"There are 12 people that you never see helping make the magic happen," Rubeck said.

In addition, Rubeck said that the setting and lighting make the play exciting.

"The actual process has been really well developed, from beginning to end," he said. "It's amazing how they were able to have all the elements together at the right time."

Performances of "The Bacchae" are Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m., and Sunday at 2 p.m. in McCrary.



Crystal Paper/ The Pendulum

The Bacchae cast rehearse this week

maybe even obsessed with him because they are motivated by this obsession."

Pentheus is angry that Dionysus is being worshipped and orders him to be captured. Dionysus is caught and held captive. This enrages him and all hell breaks loose, literally. He destroys the palace by an earthquake and sets up Pentheus, which leads him to trouble.

As with any Greek tragedy, a tragedy does in fact happen. You will have to wait until tonight to find out the fate of these characters.

Production began almost six weeks ago with open auditions and casting.

"I was looking for people with

a god, but was also awkward.

"In daily life I would interact with them normally, but during rehearsal they were treating me like a god and they were my subjects," Patterson said. "The balance of power was difficult."

As Pentheus, Roller said he had to find ways to make himself look bigger and more godlike.

"I worked on things like my posture and how I carried myself," he added.

The group of women playing the bacchae had the opportunity to be more relaxed and let their guards down while in character.

"We let ourselves and our

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