

## EMPAC STAFF

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empac.rpi.edu  
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*Fri + Sat*  
*Nov 11 + 12, 2011*  
*8 pm*

PERFORMANCE

***Dionysia***  
**Poor Dog Group**

CURTIS R. PRIEM EXPERIMENTAL MEDIA AND PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

EMPAC

## Quote Unquote: Experiments in Time-Based Text

# *Dionysia*

Based on text by Euripides

Created by Poor Dog Group

Directed by Jesse Bonnell

Half man and half horse, the wild and badly behaved satyrs were legendary companions of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and theater. Poor Dog Group brings together ancient satyr drama, imagery, and lore to reinvent the term “satyr play.”

Based on fragments of satyr plays found at Oxyrynchus—many by Euripides—and imagery on ancient clay pots, *Dionysia* delves into the ritualistic, unstable, and sometimes hilarious behavior of satyrs. *Dionysia* also retells the myth of Thyestes and Atreus, exposing the social and sexual politics of the late fifth century BCE.

These premiere performances of *Dionysia* follow a three-week production residency at EMPAC with the entire cast and crew.

Curated by H  l  ne Lesterlin

Friday + Saturday, November 11 + 12, 2011

Duration: 90 minutes with 15 minute intermission

Please join us for a talk back with the artists after Friday night's performance.

## Company

in alphabetical order

Jonathon Ahmanson [Steve, Silenus]

Brad Culver [Dionysus]

Jessica Emmanuel [Oracle]

Andrew Gilbert [Mark]

John Kern [Thyestes/Jim]

Jesse Saler [Bill/Atreus]

Catherine Ventura [Susan, Aerope]

With a guest appearance by Clara Anderson

## Production

Itamar Stern [Producer]

Andrew Gilbert [Music Director]

Brad Culver [Sonic Admiral]

Xander McMahon [Adjunct Composer]

Jesse Bonnell [Text]

Efren Delgadillo Jr. [Set Designer/Co-Lighting Designer]

Justin Sachs [Lighting Consultant]

Grant McDonald [Video Designer]

Chris Kuhl [Lighting Consultant]

Caitlyn Conlin [Vocal Coach]

Angel Eads [Lighting Board Operator]

Jessica Rupert [Backstage Manager]

William Fritz [Rigger]

This production was originally commissioned by the J. Paul Getty Trust through The Getty Villa Theater Lab. It has been further developed and commissioned at the Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center as part of the Quote Unquote series. This performance is supported, in part, by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Arts Commission and the UCLA Department of World Arts and Culture.

## POOR DOG GROUP would like to thank:

H  l  ne Lesterlin, EMPAC Humans, Norman Frisch, The Koffler Family, Yung Jin Kim, Jaffe Fund for Experimental Media and Performing Arts, Yoav Stern, Sarah Torney, Elizabeth Stahlmann, Pablo Molina, Adam Haas Hunter, Mary Ann Hart, Violet Murphy (daughter of Ren  e McAllister and Jason Steven Murphy), Kobe Bryant, Nikola Burcar (daughter of Jillian Burcar), Thomas Falk (son of Zhenelle and Thomas Falk), Makayla Desir (daughter of Stephanie Desir), James Brucker (son of Melissa and Eric Brucker), and Richard Foreman.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Over the past three years, Poor Dog Group has been working towards a stronger understanding of our past with our sights firmly set on the future of contemporary theater. This play attempts to channel the biological power of our past, the barbaric to the beautiful, the visible and invisible, as an incantation of the world that exists before death, a vortex into a time where law and natural order can reverse – the world of Dionysus.

We are very grateful to H el ene Lesterlin and the entire staff at EMPAC for the opportunity to explore this complex and exciting material.

## NOTES ON CREATIVE PROCESS

EMPAC's Quote Unquote series focuses on artists who create performance and art, sparked by a passage of words. This existing text can be part of a larger research process, as it was here, with Poor Dog Group's *Dionysia*.

Visit the Quote Unquote Context Space just off the lobby to check out texts, videos, and other materials related to *Dionysia* and other Quote Unquote productions.

## DIONYSIA: IN DEVELOPMENT

By Jesse Bonnell, Artistic Director, Poor Dog Group

For our latest work, *Dionysia*, we started with lost and fragmented satyr plays found at Oxyrinchus, predominately written by Euripides. During a three-week workshop at UCLA, the ensemble crafted sections built on singular lines of text and meaning. We attempted to draw together the common relationship between what was represented by the plays and the type of ritualistic performance that occurred between 7th and 5th Century BCE as represented on several pots displayed at the Getty Villa. Our study focused on the behavior of the demi-gods and followers of Dionysus, the satyrs. In an effort to remove the common conception of altered states of consciousness due to intoxication or physical lust, we spent time working on physical and mental ecstasy generated by simple proximity to the omnipotent power of Dionysus.

Crafting a contemporary satyr play that follows the structure that would have been used by its original poets was a challenge for a company that in many ways rejects traditional forms of dramatic literature as the singular language of theater. *Dionysia* retells the myth of Thyestes and Atreus, and subverts not only the action of the narrative but also the fundamental structure of theater itself by dismantling Aristotle's notion of theatrical drama. As Artistic Director of PDG, I felt that the myth of Thyestes and Atreus provided us with the proper platform to discuss the political, social, and sexual politics of the late 5th Century while supporting the physical transformation between the bestial qualities inherent in our contemporary world.

The Getty Villa's Exhibition on Ancient Greek Theater informed our process almost more than the fragmented texts. As a direct visual representation of ancient theater during this expansive period of time, the group latched onto several pots that seem to pulse with the unknown power of our past. The fusion between what is represented, the real and the unknown all collide in these masterful works of art. One could say that *Dionysia* is, in many ways, performance by ancient appropriation and at the same time scholarly speculation.

## SATYR: A WORKING DEFINITION

By John Kern, member, Poor Dog Group

Satyr territory is 'the eternal' and yet they are not immortal. They are also not human. They are part of a primitive inhumanity; leftover from the time before man---god's time---they exist as a residue produced in providence by those most comprehensive beings. Their faculties are god-like, born of Dionysian gratuity. They possess a total vision: every particularity of the world and the sum total of time are the ineradicable inhabitants of their memory. As a result, they are incapable of general, platonic ideas so they appear to us as disinterested, remote and godforsaken. The satyrs are the face and knowledge of God cast in outrageous semi-human representation. Herein lies their humor: they perceive with the capacity of gods as they stumble about in horse/human soma. Their dance is an irreconcilable confrontation with chaos, one that maintains the same *raison d' tre* as was practiced in the rites. If Dionysus is the alpha of that pre-performance era then they are surely its omega.

## POOR DOG GROUP

Poor Dog Group is a Los Angeles based collective of like-minded performance and media artists committed to nurturing a distinctive aesthetic through adventurous collaboration. Our mission is to develop original theatrical expression through the creation of new work and radical reexaminations of existing texts; to redefine, educate and expand our own perceptions of performance and theatrical form; to have an accessibility for a new audience; to use experimental methods of the body, text and technology; to craft new American theater; and to develop the cultivation of a limitless and periodic space.

Poor Dog Group [PDG] was founded in late fall of 2007 by recent graduates of California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). We celebrated the opening of our 6,100 sq.ft. performance warehouse in downtown Los Angeles in January 2009. During our yearlong occupancy, PDG Performance Warehouse was witness to ambitious programming initiatives including visual arts exhibitions, dance shows, music concerts, and original PDG performances. In 2009, we toured throughout Eastern Europe performing in over a dozen cities in Croatia, Poland, and Serbia. Funding for this tour was provided by Theater Communications Group, The Foundation for Contemporary Arts, The Grotowski Institute, The United States Embassy, and private donors. In 2010, we co-presented the world premiere adaptation of Gertrude Stein's *Brewsie & Willie* with CalArts' Center for New Performance. This project received significant support from the National Endowment for the Arts and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Last summer, *Brewsie & Willie* was re-mounted in Los Angeles as part of the inaugural International theater festival *Radar L.A.* This past fall, PDG traveled to Europe for a three week residency in The Netherlands. This residency was made possible, in part, by the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, Cultural Exchange International Fellowship Program.

For production history, videos, and more information, please visit:  
[poordoggroup.com](http://poordoggroup.com)

## EMPAC SERIES

### Quote Unquote: Experiments in Time-Based Text

Taking an existing text as a starting point, artists explode the concept of script and bring to life works that imbue music, film, theater, dance, interactive sculpture, and talks with the essence of the text. With such varied sources as diaries of polar exploration, science fiction, ancient Greek play fragments, and an essay on shadows, this series focuses on the process of creating performance and art, sparked by a passage of words.

Arrive early before each performance to explore texts, videos and other materials related to Quote Unquote productions in the Context Space off of the Main Lobby.

### UPCOMING QUOTE UNQUOTE PRODUCTIONS:



Photo by John Londono

### Japanther

Friday + Saturday, December 2 + 3, 8 pm | Studio 1 - Goodman

An analog story of grand scale utilizing performance, live music, and animation, inspired by Walt Whitman's *The Mystic Saxophonist*.