



brec presents **Bakkhai**



## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

*Bakkhai* was one of Euripides' final plays and is concerned with two apparently opposed sides of human nature, the rational and the instinctive. When these collide, in the forms of the rigid young ruler of Thebes, Pentheos, and the beautiful 'stranger' Dionysos, tragedy ensues.

This is an ancient play based on an even older myth, offering a robust foundation for a new version that presents original writing, dance, art and music. Sholto Spradbury's script is poetic and colloquial; we hear ourselves in it. Artists Sky River and Dan Rooney create visual images that respond to the setting 'Thebes of the South West', a place of the imagination reflecting both our home in the South West of Western Australia as well as the deep philosophical and cultural history of Western thought and art-making. Jacob Lehrer's choreography keeps a sense of humour, and Rachelle Rechichi's music offers the consolation of beauty. We embrace the sounds and images of the natural world in post-colonial Australia, with all of its complexities.

The play is notable for the unusual way in which the chorus is incorporated into the story, and our *bakkhai* display power and spunk as they lead us on a journey that starts in celebration and ends in horror. The heaviest burden rests on the character actors, and I thank them for their creativity and courage. Our *Bakkhai* is a translation across time and space and this cast allows ancient Greece to become relevant to us here and now.

— Vahri McKenzie, Director





## THEBES, CITY OF MYTH

In the many stories about Dionysos, god of wine, he wanders across the Mediterranean region, accompanied by a group of worshippers known as the bakkhai, bringing chaos and revolution to the places he visits.

Thebes is his birthplace, and he comes here not just to shake things up, but also to seek justice and retribution against his family who rule the city.

Thebes was founded by Kadmos, a great hero who arrives in Greece searching for his sister Europa, who was abducted by Zeus, ruler of the gods. Kadmos fights and slays a dragon on the site of his future city. Following the instructions of Athena, goddess of wisdom, he plants the dragon's teeth in the ground, from which sprout men who become the first inhabitants of Thebes.

Kadmos marries Harmony, daughter of Aphrodite (goddess of love), and Ares (god of war). Among their children are the sisters Semele, Agaïe, Ino and Autonöe. Agaïe later weds Echion, a nobleman of Thebes, and their son Pentheos (whose name means "Sorrow" in Greek), becomes King of Thebes after Kadmos' retirement.

Semele, like her aunt Europa, is also seduced by Zeus, but while pregnant with Dionysos she is accidentally killed by one of the god's lightning bolts. Devastated, Zeus takes the unborn child and sews it into his thigh. Yet when Dionysos emerges, twice-born, the royal family of Thebes refuses to recognise him as their kin or as the child of a god, and so he leaves the city to begin his wanderings.

— Sholto Spradbury, Scriptwriter





# THE COMPANY



**Vahri McKenzie:** Director, co-producer

Vahri is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Arts and Humanities at Edith Cowan University South West. She publishes research about the creative arts, writes short fiction and makes performance works. [vahrimckenzie.com.au](http://vahrimckenzie.com.au)



**Jacob Lehrer:** Choreographer

Jacob is a Perth-based choreographer who creates and works across multiple artistic domains. He has a long term collaborative relationship with Vahri and Sholto.



**Sholto Spradbury:** Scriptwriter, videographer

Sholto is a teacher who once dreamed of joining the circus but got a classical education instead.



**Sky River:** Costume designer, Bakkhai

Sky is a Margaret River forest wanderer who teaches drama, makes puppets, visits mountains and writes stories.



**Rachelle Rechichi:** Musical composer

Rachelle is a writer with an interest in making noise. This is her second stage creation using mostly 'found sound' and voice.



**David Skeatz:** Leather mask maker

Of Hot Goblin Studio Margaret River, Skeatz is a master craftsman with over 50 years leatherwork experience and countless magical creations.



**Nina Smith:** Pentheos, social media manager  
Nina is a local fantasy author who loves all things dark and strange.



**Michelle Aslett:** Agaue  
Michelle grew up in Albany and now lives in Leschenault with her husband Nigel and baby Edie.



**Siobhan Maiden:** Dionysos  
Siobhan's career in the Arts, Media and Education sectors has spanned Australia. A passion for storytelling is evident in her work as a filmmaker, ABC radio broadcaster, Drama & English teacher, screen and stage performer, and German translator.



**Andrew Robinson:** Kadmos, Herdsman  
Andrew is an actor, writer, and musician with more than 30 years' experience working in the theatre. He is excited to be working with this great team producing challenging original work in the South West.



**Kathy Boxall:** Ino, Rehearsal communications manager  
Kathy came from the UK in 2014 to work at ECU in Bunbury. The last time she was on the stage was in a school play in 1969.



**Cherie Fielder:** Autonoe, Servant  
Cherie has been involved in many local theatre productions since moving to Bunbury to work as a teacher.





**Chrissy Maddison:** Bakkhai

Chrissy lives in Balingup with her husband and two kids and a menagerie! She moved from England to Perth in 2004 and although music and theatre have always been a huge part of her life, this is her first time in a theatrical production since 2002.



**Millie Kitchener:** Bakkhai

Millie is a charismatic thirty-year-old and a mother to seven children.



**Bec Butterfly:** Bakkhai

Butterfly is a South West based vocalist, musician, and children's entertainer, trained in puppetry, and an animal carer who loves to travel.



**Luke Myers:** Bakkhai

Luke has been in the performing arts scene since the age of 4 at the Karratha School of Dance.



**Sarah Neale:** Bakkhai

Sarah is a recent graduate primary school teacher in the South West.



**Kelly Mitchell:** Bakkhai

Kelly grew up in many WA towns, and is currently enjoying every lifestyle benefit Bunbury has to offer.



**Izzy Wood:** Stage manager, director's assistant  
Izzy was born in Harvey and grew up in Bunbury. This is the first theatrical production they have been involved in.



**Marianne Folland-Myors:** Set dresser, hair & makeup  
Marianne has a passion for anything involving creativity and artistic expression.



**Lachlan Kelly:** Set dresser, social media  
Lachlan has been involved in theatre for the last six years.



**Gordon Nankivell:** Set construction  
Gordon is a dyslexic poet and writer from Brunswick.



**Aaron Lawrence:** Lighting Designer  
BREC's Technical Supervisor with over a decade of experience on high end productions.

**Dan Rooney:** Animator, percussionist, sculptor  
Local to the southwest, Dan is an amateur all-rounder.

**Sarah Mills:** Photographer

Additional photography by **Fangsmith**  
[www.fangsmith.com.au](http://www.fangsmith.com.au)



# FROM THE CO-PRODUCER

Nurturing an original theatrical performance to life - from the initial glimmer of inspiration to this moment when it meets its first audience - is often a long journey.

For an independent theatre maker it is also an all too rare opportunity, as it can take literally years to secure the resources to realise a production of this scale, assemble the right team and find the right audience. It requires both passion and resilience by the artist to hold onto their idea until they can eventually start rehearsals and then finally see it come to life onstage.

In 2015 BREC co-produced *Lysistrata* with Vahri and we are absolutely delighted to be working with her again now as co-producers of *Bakkhai*. Vahri has assembled a committed group of creative collaborators from Bunbury and surrounding communities to reinterpret this ancient story through their own lens for us. So I have no doubt that the performance we experience today will offer not only a rewarding night out but insights into our own lives and concerns here in the South West. I thank the team for trusting us with their vision and allowing us into their process.



Now, during this premiere season, all that is left is for you, our audience, to play your part! Thank you for joining us and please share your experience with us afterwards in the Skybar.

## Fiona de Garis

BREC Executive Director



Department of **Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries**

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