

Utopia Parkway

They keep on dancing: Jan Decorte's 'Bakchai'



It's great to have seen a lot of performances. It's nice to be familiar with someone's history. But sometimes I wish I could erase it all. That was what I was thinking, yesterday, while I was watching the première of [Bakchai](#), the new play by the acclaimed and slightly eccentric Flemish actor/theatre director **Jan Decorte**. What would I have made of it, if this would have been my first Decorte ever?

Almost no decor at all. A reduced version of a classic play. A Greek tragedy brought to you as if it were a fairy tale. Actors behaving as if they were children. One of them running around naked. That funny version of the Flemish language. Five minutes after the lights have gone up on *Bakchai* (Decorte's version of Euripides' [The Bacchae](#)), you know exactly where you are: in Decorte country. With Mr. Decorte ('*you ugly Apache!*') reading his lines from a book on a stand.

I've seen him do this many times before. And he still charms me with his unique approach. The ritualistic aspect to it. But yesterday I couldn't help wondering: is it really enough? Am I not letting him get away with it, too easily? I left the theatre (Brussels' Kaaiteater) feeling a bit let down. There's nothing wrong with a good summary, but if your summary is really brief, is it a proof of your intelligence or of your idleness? Or was I just thinking this, because I've seen that many of his plays, already?



But to balance all of this, there were the usual flashes of genius. I will till the end of days be going to Mr. Decorte's new plays just to see Sigrid Vinks act. She keeps on amazing me, combining in her unique way the naive charm of a young girl and the calm wisdom of an older woman who has seen it all. That naked Dionysos (Benny Claessens) sure was a funny sight. And those two scenes at the very end (no, I won't give away the details) took my breath away.