

NYC Theater

Dec 29 • Written By Gracie Rittenberg

Raving Reason Review

I recently had the pleasure of seeing **RAVING REASON**, a new play written by Penny Fylaktaki, conceived and developed by Ioanna Katsarou & Penny Fylaktaki, and directed by Ioanna Katsarou at the LaGuardia Center for Performing Arts. It was produced by Eclipses Group Theater NY. Inspired by Euripides' *The Bacchae*, the play explores our relationship to technology and how it affects our ability to connect with others and ourselves.



Photo by [Serafeim Salellariou](#)

This piece was a part of the Rough Draft Festival at the LaGuardia Center for Performing Arts, so I expected to see something that was still in process. The spare set, designed by Marina Gkoumla, was incredibly apt for this dystopian world. We are in the year 2050, when technology has taken over every aspect of our lives and areas of the natural world are restricted. In the opening scene, scientist Harmony Hunt (Anthoula Katsimatides) explains a new innovation in science—the Feel Pill, which will restore the five senses to young people whose senses have atrophied.

Her daughter, Luna Hunt (Rebecca Wood) will be the first to take this pill. Luna has lost three of her senses, so she sits around in the house all day, trying to feel pain, and talking to her unfortunate boyfriend Mike (Luke Wilcox). Mike tells her about an experience he had with Aisymnetes (Isaias Badilla), and Luna gets involved with him. She runs through the restricted forest with Aisymnetes, her senses fully restored. However, this comes at a price, and this is the moment we remember that we are in an adaptation of *The Bacchae*: Luna goes her mother apart while under Aisymnetes' spell. Luna's grandfather, Evan Hunt (Demetri Bonaros) tells her she will still take the pill. The play ends on an uncertain note, and we wonder if Luna will take the pill (restoring her feelings to average), or give into temptation of true chaos.

In my view, this play was perfectly timed. When I was listening to the opening speech about how young people have started to lose their senses, it was hitting uncomfortably close to home. I couldn't help but relive my experiences in the pandemic of endless scrolling, Zoom happy hours, and longing for connection. The technology in this play was really well executed, and the video and graphic designs (done by Polivios Serdaris) really added to the story. The eye of Tiresias (voiced by Chrysi Sylaidi) watched all of us, reminding us that we can never be truly free from surveillance. Badilla's physicality as Aisymnetes really heightens the stakes, and we believe that he is a true chaos agent who would make someone do crazy things. Wood's performance as Luna really ties the piece together as well—through her, we understand how crazy it must be to not even feel pain. When she regains her senses,

she doesn't shy away from playing the most extreme form of her emotions (which is needed for an adaptation of a Greek tragedy). Their chemistry really made me understand why Luna had to follow him—she was looking for someone to understand her, not fix all her problems like her mother did.

What I appreciated about this piece is that it didn't shy away from difficult questions. Would we all be better off if we eschewed technology? Possibly, but we would have different problems. The script brings up a lot of questions and ideas, and asks you to interpret them. The choreography was also excellent, and made the piece feel alive and tactile. I think the piece reminded me that one of the main ways to deal with

dulled senses and atrophied emotions is to get out and go to the theater—experience catharsis with a group of other humans. The excellent performances in the piece proved that we can't replace everything with technology—this is the only art form that has lasted for all of human history, and we will fight to keep it going.

Trailer Raving Reason by Ecl...



[See the show website here.](#)

Raving Reason premiered at the LaGuardia Center for the Performing Arts Rough Draft Festival, and ran from December 2nd-4th, 2022.

New York City • NYC Theater • Greek Mythology • Euripides • New Play • LaGuardia Performing Arts Center • Rough Draft Festival • Consulate General of Greece in New York



Gracie Rittenberg

Gracie is an actress, director, and very proud Brooklynite. She attended Reed College in Portland, Oregon, where she intended to be a Math Major. She switched after realizing that she was spending every night in the theater building instead of working on problem sets. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Theater in 2015. Her thesis was written about using physical theater practices in absurdist plays, and she directed a production of *The Lesson* by Eugene Ionesco. She trained at the Institute for Contemporary Performance with Portland Experimental Theatre Ensemble. She attended the Atlantic Theater Company's Professional Conservatory. Gracie is Bluebird Theatre Company's **Artistic Director**.

<https://www.gracierittenberg.com>