



# Prometheus Firebringer

by Annie Dorsen  
project press dossier: Fall 2023

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# **Prometheus Firebringer** by Annie Dorsen

## **Short Description**

“What shall I do?” is a question at the heart of every Greek tragedy, observes philosopher Simon Critchley. When there are no good options, when every course of action comes with unbearable costs, how do you choose? This question inspires a new lecture-performance by Annie Dorsen, which continues her exploration of the ambiguous impacts of technology.

In ancient Greek mythology, Prometheus stole the gods’ fire to give to humans—sparking sudden and dramatic advances in technology and the arts, and dramatic new sources of conflict. His story is told in the 2500-year-old *Prometheia* trilogy attributed to Aeschylus, of which only *Prometheus Bound* remains in full.

In *Prometheus Firebringer*, Dorsen uses the predictive text model GPT-3.5 (the same model that runs ChatGPT) to generate speculative versions of the missing story. Each night a chorus of AI-generated Greek masks performs a different iteration, while Dorsen engages the audience in reflections on power, knowledge, and doubt.

Although the explosion of artificial intelligence technology into our daily lives feels unprecedented and new, Dorsen asks if we have been here before. She reflects openly on her influences, standing in contrast to how the black box of AI operates. How do we decide to act when we can’t trust our sources? And who do we become in the face of a technology controlled by a select few, especially when its workings remain a mystery?

## **Artistic Team**

Writer/Director/Performer: Annie Dorsen

Sound Design: Ian Douglas-Moore

Video and Systems Design: Ryan Holsopple

Lighting Design / Technical Direction: Ruth Waldeyer

Voice Prints: Okwui Okpokwasili, Livia Reiner

3D Artist: Harry Kleeman

Dramaturgy: Tom Sellar

Producer: Natasha Katerinopoulos

## **Performance History**

Bryn Mawr College (Bryn Mawr, PA)

Jan 26-28, 2023

Chocolate Factory (Long Island City, NY)

May 11-13, 2023

Theatre for a New Audience (Brooklyn, NY)

Sept 15 - Oct 1, 2023

## Co-Producers and Funders

Original support for *Prometheus Firebringer* was provided to Bryn Mawr College by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, Philadelphia. *Prometheus Firebringer* is supported in part by commissions from New York Live Arts' Live Feed Residency Program with additional support from Partners for New Performance, and Media Art Xploration's MAXmachina laboratory funded in part by Science Sandbox. The piece was developed with the support of the Eureka Commissions program created by Onassis Foundation, and the Mercury Store.

## Video

Lecture-performance video: click [here](#)

Password: Firebringer\_CF

Filmed at the Chocolate Factory Theater, May 13, 2023

## Press

*"Quietly stunning...dense and yet lucid...harrowing and playful... brilliantly constructed."*

- Sara Holdren, *New York Magazine*

See full article [here](#)

*"Dorsen's lecture is forcefully beneficial as an examination of our obeisance to technology."*

- Laura Collins-Hughes, *The New York Times*

See full article [here](#)

*"Prometheus Firebringer" is a battle royale over how to create (apparent) meaning. ... Annie Dorsen... is warm and thrilling... She predicts the rise of the soulless art product—and handily demonstrates its defeat."*

- Helen Shaw, *The New Yorker*

See full article [here](#), under Theatre

*"Intellectually stimulating, and terrifically clever. "- New York Theater*

-Jonathan Mandell, *New York Theater*

See full article [here](#)

## Artist Publication

["The Dangers of AI Intoxication"](#), *American Theatre*, August 30, 2023

## Touring Details

### Personnel: Five (5) people

3 New York based: Director/Performer + Sound Designer + Producer

1 Chicago based: Video / Systems Design

1 Berlin or New York: Lighting Designer / Technical Direction

### Shipping

Freight travels in two (2) crates and one (1) carry on suitcase. Details on request.

### Space

Proscenium, black box, or flexible space. Capacity of 75 – 200 seats.

A full **Technical Rider** is available.

For **Touring Fees** please contact Natasha Katerinopoulos

## Annie Dorsen Short Bio

Annie Dorsen is a theater director and writer whose works explore the intersection of algorithms and live performance. Her most recent piece, *Prometheus Firebringer* (2023) was presented at Theatre for a New Audience in September 2023. Previous performance projects, including *Infinite Sun* (2019), *The Slow Room* (2018), *The Great Outdoors* (2017), *Yesterday Tomorrow* (2015), *A Piece of Work* (2013), *Spokaoke* (2012), and *Hello Hi There* (2010), have been widely presented in the US and internationally.

Some of the venues where her work has been seen include Performance Space New York (formerly PS122), Le Festival d'Automne de Paris, The Holland Festival, BAM's Next Wave Festival, New York Live Arts, Kampnagel Summer Festival, Kaaitheater, and The New York Film Festival's "Views from the Avant-garde" series, along with many others. The script for A PIECE OF WORK was published by Ugly Duckling Presse, and she has contributed essays for *The Drama Review* (TDR), *Theatre Magazine*, *Etcetera*, *Frakcija*, and *Performing Arts Journal* (PAJ).

She has collaborated frequently with musicians and choreographers, including Anne Juren, Ethel, Questlove/The Roots, DD Dorvillier, and Sébastien Roux. She is the co-creator of the 2008 Broadway musical *Passing Strange*, which she also directed.

A retrospective of Annie Dorsen's algorithmic work was presented in 2022, at Bryn Mawr College with major support by the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage. The publication *Algorithmic Theater: Essays and Dialogues, 2012-2022* was created as a literary companion to the event, collecting a decade of writings by and about Dorsen, including dialogues with artistic collaborators in addition to provocative essays on theater and technology.

In addition to awards for *Passing Strange*, Dorsen received a 2019 MacArthur Fellowship, a 2018 Guggenheim Fellowship, the 2018 Spalding Gray Award, a 2016 Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grant to Artists Award and the 2014 Herb Alpert Award for the Arts in Theatre.