The Bangtan Sonyeondan [Bangtan Boys, BTS]

Dionysus

South Korea (2019)

TAGS: Council of the Gods Dionysus / Dionysos Iliad Odyssey

We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Dionysus
Studio/Production Company	Big Hit
Country of the First Edition	South Korea
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	Korean
First Edition Date	2019
First Edition Details	BTS Live performance of “Dionysus” at Melon Music Awards on 1st December 2019, 37 min.
Running time	37 min
Format	Live theatre performance
Official Website	BTS Official Website (accessed: October 20, 2022).
Available Onllne	*BTS (□□□□□) Intro: Persona + □□□(Boy In Luv) + □□ □□□ □□ □(Boy With Luv) + □□□ + Dionysus @ 2019 MMA* available at Bangtantv YouTube channel (accessed: August 12, 2022).
Genre	Live performance*
Target Audience	Crossover (teenagers, young adults, adults)
Author of the Entry	Nanci Santos, OMC Contributor, nancisantos@hotmail.co.uk
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Creators

The Bangtan Sonyeondan [Bangtan Boys, BTS] (Music Band)

The Bangtan Sonyeondan, also known as the Bangtan Boys or BTS for short, are a K-pop group, formed in 2013. This group is made up of 7 members – Jin, Suga, J-Hope, RM, Jimin, V, and Jungkook. Having started as a hip-hop group, the group has become famous in South Korea and gradually became known worldwide, having performed in 2017 throughout Europe and USA, in the “Love yourself” tour.

BTS (Bangtan Sonyeondan/ Bangtan Boys)

- Jin (Kim Seok-jin) (born 1992)
- Suga (Min Yoon-gi) (born 1993)
- J-hope (Jung Ho-seok) (born 1994)
- RM (Kim Nam-joon) (born 1994)
- Jimin (Park Ji-min) (born 1995)
- V (Kim Tae-hyung) (born 1995)
- Jungkook (Jeon Jung-Kook) (born 1997)

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Additional information

Casting

BTS (Bangtan Sonyeondan/ Bangtan Boys):

- Jin (Kim Seok-jin),
- Suga (Min Yoon-gi),
- J-hope (Jung Ho-seok),
- RM (Kim Nam-joon),
- Jimin (Park Ji-min),
- V (Kim Tae-hyung),
- Jungkook (Jeon Jung-Kook).

Summary

The Melon Music Awards (MMA) is a major annual music awards show held in South Korea, celebrating South Korean music. In 2019, the Bangtan Boys, also known as BTS, held a 37-minute performance, with songs from their mini-album “Map of the Soul: Persona”.

The performance starts with the album’s opening track, followed by “Boy in luv”, a throwback to one of their earliest albums, and contrasting with their newer song “Boy with luv”. Next comes the performance of the song “Mikrokosmos”, which also takes the Ancient Greek philosophical concept of Micro- and Macro-cosmos, prior to a short, solo performance from each BTS member as an introduction to the song “Dionysus”.* In this set of solo performances, each member dances along to a different, re-imagined, old BTS track along with a theme.

V enters dancing in an archway to the backdrop of Greek columns and with a set of acrobatic performers.** Next, Jin arrives on top of a large horse pushed by a group of dancers dressed in more warrior-like outfits. Jimin then conducts a solo dance performance, dressed all in white to a black backdrop. After that, Suga performs to the backtrack of “Fire”, heavily contrasting the soft and calm song that went before. Next on the stage comes Jungkook who does a dance performance with water on the stage, dressed all in black. J-hope comes on next, dancing in darkness to a set of laser beams. Finally, RM appears on stage with a remixed “Dionysus”, grabbing a thyrsus covered in vines.

The show then moves on to the main song itself, “Dionysus”. The song itself is an ode to Dionysus, and the celebration and partying, with lyrics such as, in English translation:

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"Thyrsus (grippin') Grape (eatin')

(…) Just get drunk like Dionysus

Drink in one hand, Thyrsus on the other

(…) From my mic made of ivy and rough wood"***

A giant inflatable panther appears on the stage and then a group of women, dressed in light-coloured flowing dresses, throwing flowers at the camera, whilst the screens in the background display an array of Greek columns being struck with lightning. The stage is set up with a large number of dancers and horses being pulled to the stage. The columns move to uncover the band sitting in a row, at a table, surrounded by people either playing the harp or fanning a large fan, whilst the group observed the events. In the background was what appeared to be the entrance to a temple, with marble statues on either side, and a pediment seemingly inspired on the pediment from the Temple of Zeus, with the lying figures on either side and what appeared to be Zeus sitting on a throne at the centre.

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* Savage, Mark, *Jung lovers: BTS delve into psychology on their album, Map Of The Soul*, at BBC.com (accessed: August 12, 2022).

** *BTS (□□□□□) Intro: Persona + □□□(Boy In Luv) + □□ □□□ □□ □(Boy With Luv) + □□□ + Dionysus @ 2019 MMA*, available at Bangtantv YouTube channel (accessed: August 12, 2022).

*** *BTS – Dionysus (English Translation) Track 7 on BTS – Map of the Soul: Persona*, at genius.com (accessed: August 12, 2022).

Analysis

In 2019, BTS released a mini album titled "Map of the Soul: Persona". This album formed part of a larger album, later released in February 2020, titled "Map of the Soul: 7". It is inspired by Carl Jung's *Map of the Soul* and discusses the ideas of personas and the different psyches one has. This Jungian inspiration appears to be portrayed in BTS' performance at the MMA awards in 2019, whereby they perform the mini album.

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Each BTS member has seemingly taken up a deity from the ancient Greek pantheon with V appearing to represent Apollo; while Jin represents Athena, Jimin represents Artemis; Suga represents Hephaestus, Jungkook represents Poseidon, J-hope is associated with Zeus and RM represents Dionysus.

The scene where the group members sit around a table, watching from a higher plane, above the dancers below appears to be a re-interpretation of the gods sitting in council as found throughout Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*.*

At the time of announcement of the album, Crystal Bell, in an article for MTV's website, discussed fan theories around what the album would be and an interesting theory linking Carl Jung's philosophy to the album, due to the title, and one of the songs named "Mikrokosmos". Bell also discussed the use of masks to hide one's persona. The song Dionysus fits quite well into that narrative, given that the song prior to it is "jamais vu" (trans. "Never seen"). Jamais Vu is about wanting "a remedy" and "to heal" from heartbreak and Dionysus would appear to fit the narrative well as hiding from the truth/using partying/drinking as a "remedy".** Also worth noting the song "Mikrokosmos" which in itself is also based on the Ancient Greek philosophy of parallelism between micro and macro universes, as can be observed in the MMA performance. This philosophy is, curiously, also discussed by Plato in his *Timaeus* as well as the notion of the soul and the world soul, linking microcosmos and the mapping of the world soul. It also links well with the performance at the MMA as a whole as they are not only showcasing the new album but also the narrative contained within the album, thus beginning the performance with a song from an earlier album, creating parallels between their younger/older selves, and when they started out, compared to how idolised they have become throughout the world.

Fans have taken to studying classical culture, following, firstly the teaser photoshoot, the release of the album, and the MMA performance; and include classical themes in fan art and fan fiction, including debates on which god each BTS member would be equivalent to.*** As a result of the show and the song, fans have created various pieces of fan art, re-imagining BTS members as certain gods, such as Jimin as Dionysus,**** as well as fan fiction where the band members are Greek gods.***** As a by product of this, fans are not only listening to songs and watching the shows but also researching and finding out more about the Greek entities, as well as

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	the Greek myths.

* *Iliad* 4.1–4; *Odyssey* 5.1–5.10.

** *Jamais Vu (English translation)*, at lyrictranslate.com (accessed: September 29, 2022).

*** *BTS fans go wild studying Greek mythology after Dionysos hint dropped for next album*, at neoskosmos.com (accessed: September 29, 2022).

**** *BTS Greek Gods art project: Dionysus*, at pinterest.com (accessed: September 29, 2022).

***** *High-Lows C4LI5S*, at Archive of Our Own website (accessed: September 29, 2022).

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Council of the Gods Dionysus / Dionysos Iliad Odyssey
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Art* Music* Pop culture references

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