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The Crucible
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The Crucible

By Arthur Miller
Directed by Yaël Farber

Teaching Resources

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Further details of this production
oldvictheatre.com

ARTHUR MILLER: HIS STORY

Personal Life

Arthur Asher Miller was born on 17 October, 1915 in New York City. He was the second of three children to his Jewish parents; Isadore and Augusta Miller. His father owned a successful clothing company, however like many businesses it was hit by the 1929 Wall Street Crash and subsequently closed; following this the family relocated to Brooklyn.

Miller studied at The Abraham Lincoln High School and after graduating undertook a number of jobs to support his further education. After two failed attempts he was finally offered a place at the University of Michigan to study Journalism, before later transferring to English. Whilst there he won a number of awards and his interest

in writing developed. It was also there that he met Professor Kenneth Rowe (who became a great influence on his early work and a lifelong friend) and wrote his first plays *Honours at Dawn* and *No Villain*.

Upon graduating Miller moved to New York and joined The Federal Theatre Project (FTP); one of the five arts-related projects established under the Works Progress Administration. The primary objective of the FTP was to offer employment to out of work artists but it closed in 1939 as it was felt that it had become too political and overly left wing.

In later years Miller's writing as well as the liberal company he kept led him to

appear before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, (HUAC). HUAC was set up in 1938 to investigate 'the extent, character, and objects of un-American propaganda activities in the United States.' (Knight:2003) Later this developed into an investigation of Communist activities and in 1947 attention was turned towards those working within the arts. In 1956 Miller was questioned in reference to meetings he attended years before but refused to name names of others in attendance; he was noted to have said 'I could not use the name of another person and bring trouble on him'. He was convicted of contempt of Congress in 1957, a conviction which was overturned the following year.

Relationships

Miller married college sweetheart Mary Glace Slattery in New York in 1940. They had two children together before divorcing in 1956, with Miller marrying Marilyn Monroe a few months later. In later years of their marriage Miller had a strained relationship with Monroe. In 1961 Miller turned his hand to movies penning *The Misfits* starring Monroe. It is widely recognised that the production period was

full of troubles for both Miller and Monroe and shortly before the premiere the pair divorced.

The following year Miller married an Austrian-born photographer, Inge Morath, who worked on the set of *The Misfits* as a photographer. They later had two children together; Rebecca and Daniel, who was born with Down Syndrome and committed

to an institution. Morath died of cancer in 2002. Miller didn't re-marry but after Morath's death struck up a relationship with abstract painter Agnes Barley, 55 years his junior. The pair announced their engagement in 2005 but the marriage didn't go through as Miller became seriously ill and died a month later.

ARTHUR MILLER: HIS STORY

Works

In 1945 Miller had his first Broadway production *The Man Who Had All the Luck* which, despite winning him the Theatre Guild National Award, was not received well, running for only four performances. Miller said of it, 'They (the reviewers) came down on me like a ton of bricks for that one, it was faulty, all right. It couldn't have succeeded because it was not a resolved play' (Miller in Roudane: 1987). His next production, *All My Sons*, was far more successful – receiving two Tony Awards and the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award. Miller's writing career continued to be a great success, but it was two years later when his production of *Death of a Salesman* opened in New York at the

Morosco Theatre that Miller began to be recognised as, 'one of the most influential American dramatists ever' (Roudane: 1987). The production won him a further six Tony awards and he was also awarded the 1949 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. In 1953 *The Crucible* opened on Broadway at the Beck Theatre. The play is widely viewed as one of Miller's most popular works, commenting on both the Salem Witch Trials of 1692 and the 'Communist witch hunts' of America in the 1950s.

The Crucible was followed by *A View from the Bridge* in 1956 which opened on Broadway in a double bill with one of Miller's lesser-known plays, *A Memory*

of Two Mondays. The following year, *A View from the Bridge* was rewritten as a two-act prose drama, which Peter Brook directed in London. Later works of Miller's included, *After the Fall*, which was based on Miller's relationship with Monroe, although Miller denied any similarity between the play's central character, Maggie and his ex-wife. Miller continued to write several more plays as well as an autobiography, *Timebends – A Life* late into his life. His most notable later works included *Broken Glass* and his final play *Finishing the Picture* which saw a return to the theme of his marriage to Marilyn Monroe and its breakdown during the filming of *The Misfits*.

Awards

During his impressive career Arthur Miller was awarded the Avery Hopwood Award for Playwriting at University of Michigan in 1936. He twice won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, received two Emmy awards and three Tony Awards for his plays, as well as a Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement. He also won an Obie award, a BBC Best Play Award, the George Foster Peabody Award, a Gold Medal for Drama from the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the Literary Lion Award from the New York Public Library, the John F

Kennedy Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Algur Meadows Award. He was named Jefferson Lecturer for the National Endowment for the Humanities in 2001. He was awarded the 2002 Prince of Asturias Award for Letters and the 2003 Jerusalem Prize. He received honorary degrees from Oxford University and Harvard University and was awarded the Prix Moliere of the French theatre, the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Lifetime Achievement Award and the Pulitzer Prize.

ARTHUR MILLER: LIFE & WORKS

1915	17 October: Arthur Miller is born in Harlem, New York City	1949	10 February: <i>Death of a Salesman</i> opens at Morosco Theatre, directed by Elia Kazan and starring Lee J Cobb, Mildred Dunnock, Arthur Kennedy and Cameron Mitchell	1972	<i>The Creation of the World and Other Business</i>
1932	Miller graduates from Abraham Lincoln High School			1977	<i>The Archbishop's Ceiling</i>
1934	Miller enters the University of Michigan to study Journalism			1980	<i>The American Clock</i>
1936	Writes <i>No Villain</i> in six days and receives Hopwood Award in Drama. Transfers to an English degree		It wins the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best Play	1987	<i>Timebends: A Life – an autobiography</i>
1937	Miller writes his second work, <i>Honours at Dawn</i> which also receives a Hopwood Award	1953	22 January: <i>The Crucible</i> is first performed at the Martin Beck Theater on Broadway receiving a Tony award for best play. The cast include Arthur Kennedy, Walter Hampden, Beatrice Straight, EG Marshall, Jean Adair, Joseph Sweeney and Madeleine Sherwood	1991	<i>The Last Yankee</i>
1938	Miller graduates, receives a Theatre Guild Award and joins the Federal Theatre Project (FTP)				<i>The Ride Down Mt Morgan</i>
1939	Miller is offered a contract with Twentieth Century Fox but turns it down	1956	Miller divorces Slattery and on 25 June marries Marilyn Monroe	1993	Miller is awarded the American National Medal of the Arts
1940	Miller Marries college girlfriend, Mary Grace Slattery	1957	Miller is found guilty of contempt of Congress. He is sentenced to a \$500 fine or thirty days in prison, he is also blacklisted and has his passport withdrawn	1994	<i>Broken Glass</i>
1944	<i>The Man Who Had All the Luck</i> , directed by Joseph Fields, opens at the Forrest Theatre, but runs for only four performances			1995	Miller is awarded the Laurence Olivier Theatre Award
1947	29 January: <i>All My Sons</i> opens at Coronet Theatre, directed by Elia Kazan, and starring Ed Begley, Karl Malden and Arthur Kennedy	1958	Miller divorces Monroe	1996	A film of <i>The Crucible</i> , starring Daniel Day-Lewis is produced
		1961	<i>The Misfits</i> – screenplay	1998	<i>Mr Peter's Connections</i>
		1962	Miller marries third wife Inge Morath	1999	Miller wins a Special Tony Award: Lifetime Achievement Award
		1964	23 January: <i>After the Fall</i> opens at the Anta Theatre on Washington Square, starring Barbara Loden, Jason Robards Jr and Faye Dunaway	2002	<i>Resurrection Blues</i>
					Miller's third wife Morath dies
				2004	<i>Finishing the Picture</i>
				2005	Miller dies on 10 February, 2005, aged 89 at his home in Roxbury

EUROPEAN SETTLERS TO THE COLD WAR: AN AMERICAN HISTORY

1565	First permanent European settlement in North America. North America is already inhabited by several distinct groups of people who go into decline following the arrival of settlers	1808	Atlantic slave trade abolished	1941	Japanese warplanes attack US fleet at Pearl Harbour in Hawaii; US declares war on Japan; Germany declares war on US, which thereafter intervenes on a massive scale in World War II, eventually helping to defeat Germany
1600s-1700s	People from Africa are transported to American colonies and sold into slavery to work on cotton and tobacco plantations	1854	Opponents of slavery, or abolitionists, set up the Republican Party	1945	US drops two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; Japan surrenders and World War II ends.
1607	Jamestown, Virginia is founded by English settlers, who begin growing tobacco	1861-65	American Civil War	1947	US makes a policy of giving financial aid to nations it deems threatened by Communism in what became known as the Truman Doctrine; Cold War with Soviet Union begins
1620	Plymouth Colony, near Cape Cod, is founded by the Pilgrim Fathers, whose example is followed by other English Puritans in New England	1865	Confederates defeated; slavery abolished under Thirteenth Amendment. Lincoln is assassinated	1948	America's programme to revive ailing post-war European economies - the Marshall Plan - comes into force. Some \$13bn is disbursed over four years and the plan is regarded as a success
1627	Salem, Massachusetts is first settled by Europeans led by Roger Conant, a London fisherman who originally came over as part of the Plymouth Colony	1917-18	US intervenes in World War I, rejects membership of League of Nations	1950-54	Senator Joseph McCarthy carries out a crusade against alleged Communists in government and public life; the campaign and its methods become known as McCarthyism. In 1954 McCarthy is formally censured by the Senate
1692-1693	Salem witch trials result in the execution of twenty people, mostly women	1920	Women given the right to vote under the Nineteenth Amendment		
1775-1783	American War of Independence	1920	Sale and manufacture of alcoholic liquors outlawed. The Prohibition era sees a mushrooming of illegal drinking joints, home-produced alcohol and organised crime		
1787	Founding Fathers draw up new constitution for United States of America. Constitution comes into effect in 1788	1924	Congress gives indigenous people right to citizenship		
1789	George Washington elected first president of USA	1929-33	13 million people become unemployed after the Wall Street stock market crash of 1929 triggering what becomes known as the Great Depression. President Herbert Hoover rejects direct federal relief		
1791	Bill of Rights guarantees individual freedom	1933	President Franklin D Roosevelt launches New Deal recovery programme which includes major public works.		Whilst this is where McCarthyism ends, the Cold War and fear of what's known as 'the Red Terror' does not end until 1989, almost 40 years later.
			Sale of alcohol resumes		

THE CRUCIBLE AT THE OLD VIC



Richard Armitage
John Proctor



Harry Attwell
Thomas Putnam
U/S Reverend Parris
& Judge Hathorne



Samantha Colley
Abigail Williams



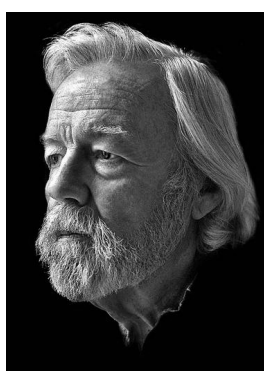
Marama Corlett
Betty Parris



Jack Ellis
Deputy Governor Danforth



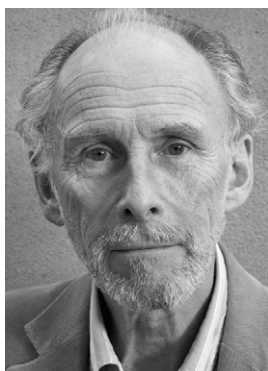
Ann Firbank
Rebecca Nurse



William Gaunt
Giles Corey



Natalie Gavin
Mary Warren



Christopher Godwin
Judge Hathorne



Hannah Hutch
Ensemble, U/S Betty Parris
& Susannah Walcott



Lauren Lyle
Ensemble, U/S Elizabeth
Proctor & Abigail Williams
& Mercy Lewis



Anna Madeley
Elizabeth Proctor



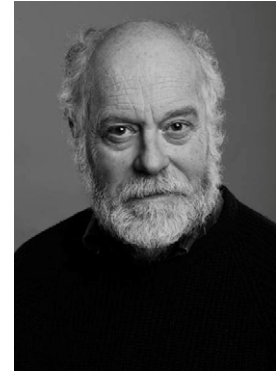
Paddy Navin
Sarah Good
U/S Ann Putnam
& Rebecca Nurse



Sarah Niles
Tituba



Tom Peters
Marshall Herrick
U/S John Proctor
& Hopkins



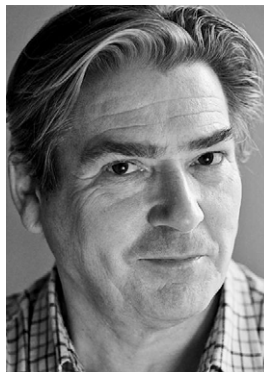
Neil Salvage
Francis Nurse
U/S Giles Corey



Rebecca Saire
Mrs Ann Putnam



Adrian Schiller
Reverend John Hale



Michael Thomas
Reverend Parris



Alan Vicary
Ezekiel Cheever
U/S Reverend John Hale
& Thomas Putnam



Daisy Waterstone
Susannah Walcott
U/S Mary Warren



Matt Weyland
Hopkins, U/S Deputy Governor
Danforth & Francis, Nurse &
Ezekiel, Cheever & Marshall,
Herrick



Zara White
Mercy Lewis

SYNOPSIS

The Crucible by Arthur Miller uses the Salem witch trials, which occurred in 1692, as an allegory for exploring the impact of McCarthyism on Cold War America. Both these historical events were periods of mass hysteria in which many innocent people were accused of witchcraft (in the case of the witch trials) and Communist or 'anti-American' activities (in the case of McCarthyism). This term gets its name from Senator Joseph McCarthy, whose anti-Communist vendetta gripped America from 1950-1956, leading to political repression, fear campaigns and even a 'Hollywood blacklist' that included Arthur Miller himself.

The Crucible is set in the strictly religious and isolated town of Salem, Massachusetts. The play follows the story of the witch trials and explores the hypocrisy, suspicion and mass hysteria of the local community over the course of several months.

The action is sparked by a group of young girls from the village being caught dancing (possibly naked) in the woods. Afterwards several of them are taken mysteriously ill in that they sink into catatonic states or become hysterical. This sparks rumours of witchcraft amongst the suspicious and feudal community. Particularly under attack is Reverend Parris, an unpopular man with an important leadership role as the town's church leader. This is because his daughter Betty, niece Abigail (who lives with him) and slave Tituba all seem to be at the centre of the scandal. Desperate to keep hold of power, he questions the girls on their involvement and sends for a nearby minister and renowned witchcraft expert to investigate.

One by one the girls all claim to have been possessed by spirits sent by women in the community or to have seen various people in the village 'with the Devil'. This sparks

mass hysteria in the town and the girls become chief witnesses in a hastily set-up court to decide which of the 39 accused are to be convicted of witchcraft. Those who don't confess are to be hanged, those who do confess will have their lives spared but will become social pariahs.

Gradually more and more members of the community (mainly women) are accused of witchcraft as old rivalries, family feuds, hypocrisy and local politics fuel the fire. The main voice of protest is John Proctor, a local farmer with a reputation for fairness, honesty and loyalty. When his own wife is accused of witchcraft by Abigail, the 'witness' with the most influence over the group of girls who claim to be witnesses, he must risk ruining his reputation to save his wife from outcast or execution.



Yaël Farber

ACT BREAKDOWN

Act I

A bedroom of
Reverend Parris' house

Reverend Parris' daughter Betty has been struck down with a mysterious 'illness' after being caught by her father dancing in the woods with her cousin Abigail, his Barbadian slave Tituba and various other young women from the village. Parris is a man with an important role as a leader of the community but he is greedy, weak-willed and has enemies that would relish his downfall. This kind of incident would greatly damage his reputation and the village is already buzzing with rumours that Betty has been involved in witchcraft.

Parris' niece Abigail was also dancing in the woods but seems unharmed, whilst another local girl has also been taken mysteriously ill. Reverend John Hale, renowned for being an expert in witchcraft, is called into Salem to assess the situation.

John Proctor, a respected local farmer, arrives to discover what's wrong with Betty. Whilst he and Abigail are left alone it becomes obvious that the two of them have had an affair that John has ended. Abigail cannot accept that it's over and becomes angry and upset when he rejects her.

Hale questions Abigail and Tituba. Abigail accuses Tituba of conjuring spirits and tormenting her dreams. Tituba, under fierce questioning, in turn claims that the Devil came to tempt her to kill Parris, and that with the Devil were Sarah and Goody Osburn, thereby passing the blame on to them. This sparks off Abigail, who claims to have seen other women in the village 'with the Devil'. Betty then awakes from her mysterious illness and joins in the chant.

Act II

Around a week later in the
'common room' (kitchen/living area)
of John Proctor's farmhouse

John Proctor and his wife Elizabeth discuss the growing hysteria regarding witchcraft in Salem. 39 people, mostly women, now stand accused of being witches. The only thing that will save them from being hanged is confessing to all the crimes they're accused of. Abigail, Tituba, Betty and the other girls from the village are now in a great position of power as they claim to know who they've seen with the devil and react as if demonised when they come across someone 'guilty' of witchcraft.

John knows this is all a fraudulent act from his conversation with Abigail in Betty's room. Elizabeth tries to persuade John to go to Salem and tell the court it's all a fraud. However, John is reluctant which upsets Elizabeth as she is aware of the affair and thinks that John is trying to protect Abigail from being convicted of perjury (lying in court). Their servant Mary Warren returns from her role as 'court official' and breaks the news that Goody Osburn, an impoverished local woman, is to hang for refusing to confess to witchcraft, whereas Sarah Good confessed so her life will be spared. Mary also says that Elizabeth's name has been mentioned as a possible witch.

Elizabeth then realises that Abigail wants to replace her as John's wife and tries to convince him to go to Abigail directly to stamp out this fantasy and to force her to end the deceit. The three are still arguing when Mr Hale arrives. He is more drawn and anxious than when he first arrived in Salem and questions John and Elizabeth on their church attendance and theological knowledge to see if there may be any truth to the rumours of Elizabeth being involved in witchcraft.

John Proctor's friends Giles Corey and Francis Nurse arrive to tell Proctor that their wives have been arrested. At this point the jailer Ezekiel Cheever arrives to arrest Elizabeth. He finds false evidence planted by Abigail in their house and despite all John's efforts Elizabeth is taken away in chains. The others leave, John promising Giles and Francis that the three of them will come up with a plan to liberate their wives the following morning. With Proctor and Mary left alone in the house, he commands Mary to go to court and testify against Abigail, as they both know that she is acting fraudulently. Mary breaks down and we are left wondering whether she will summon the courage to confront Abigail.

Michael Thomas



Anna Madeley



Rebecca Saire, Ann Firbank and Harry Attwell



Act III

The Vestry room at Salem meeting house – now anteroom of the 'General Court' which has been set up to trial those accused of witchcraft.

There is a disturbance coming from the court in the adjacent room. Giles Corey has interrupted the cross-examination of his wife Martha in her defence and is subsequently bundled out of the court into the vestry room by Marshal John Herrick, followed by Deputy Governor Danforth, jailhouse keeper Ezekiel Cheever, Reverend Parris and Judge Hawthorne. Danforth and Herrick try to reason with Giles but to no avail. Francis Nurse arrives and tries to convince the judge that he has hard proof that the girls acting as 'witnesses' are in fact lying. John Proctor and Mary Warren then arrive and Mary offers her testimony.

Danforth breaks the news to Proctor that Elizabeth is claiming that she is pregnant, and that if this is true he would be willing to keep her alive until she delivers on the condition that John drops his charge of fraud.

Although this is a tempting offer John remains loyal to his friends Giles Corey and Francis Nurse, whose wives remain at immediate risk of execution. He agrees to testify before the court that the witnesses are false and also presents a petition signed by 91 members of the local community proclaiming the innocence of Rebecca Nurse, Martha Corey and Elizabeth Proctor. Parris is agitated as he stands to lose his reputation and demands that all 91 are arrested for questioning.

At this stage Hale objects and argues that the court has become corrupted and unjust. This is a great turning point for him given his original zeal for sniffing out possible witches.

On the strength of Mary's testimony the group of girls who are acting as witnesses are brought in for questioning. They start shaking and screaming that Mary has 'sent her spirit' on them. Under this accusation, Mary breaks down and without warning Proctor attacks Abigail, accusing her of being 'a whore'. He confesses to their affair before the court and says that this is the reason Abigail wants Elizabeth dead.

Danforth summons Elizabeth from the jailhouse to testify but Elizabeth, unable to talk to her husband first and seeking to protect his reputation, denies that John had an affair. To John's despair she is sent back to jail.

Abigail and the other girls become hysterical again claiming that Mary's spirit has become a bird in the rafters that's trying to tear their faces. Mary cracks under the pressure and accuses John Proctor of being 'the Devil's man'.

The court accepts the accusation and John is arrested. In protest Hale quits the court and the witchcraft trials altogether, but it is too late.

Daisy Waterstone



Sarah Niles



Act IV

A jail cell in Salem the following autumn.

It's the early hours of the morning and Hale has returned to Salem to try and convince those who are scheduled to be hanged that morning to sign a confession and thus save their own lives.

Abigail Parris and Mercy Lewis have disappeared from Salem, breaking into Parris' strongbox (security safe) -leaving him penniless. The Salem community have begun to turn on Parris who has even received a death threat. He is terrified that now the initial hysteria has passed, the community will outcast him for being responsible for the hanging of well-respected, popular citizens such as John Proctor and Rebecca Nurse.

Hale and Parris try to convince Danforth to hold off on hanging the accused until Hale has had longer to try and win them round to confessing. Danforth is reluctant but nevertheless calls for Elizabeth Proctor, (who is still in jail but safe for now as she is pregnant) as she may be able to convince John to confess. Elizabeth agrees, John is brought in and the two are reunited for the first time since their imprisonment.

Elizabeth's pregnancy is now visible and both she and John are emotional at the sight of each other. Elizabeth breaks the news to John that his friend Giles Corey is dead, 'pressed to death' (a method of execution where heavy stones are placed on the victim's chest until they're crushed or asphyxiated).

Proctor decides that he will confess, to the relief of Hale and Parris. They send for Rebecca Nurse to watch him sign his confession in the hope that it will sway her to do the same. Proctor reluctantly signs the confession document but when Danforth tries to take it to nail to the church door as a message to the whole community, John refuses and tears up the confession. He is then led out to the scaffold to be hanged. The play ends with Elizabeth watching from the barred window.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

Ezekiel Cheever

The clerk of the court during the witch trials. It is his job to arrest those who have been issued with a warrant.

Giles Corey

An older man and friend of John Proctor. His mention of his wife's interest in reading leads her to being one of the accused. He immediately tries to overturn this but is unsuccessful in his quest. His actions lead to him being charged with 'contempt of court,' and he subsequently suffers a painful death – being pressed to death with large stones.

Martha Corey

Giles Corey's wife. Martha's reading habits lead her to be arrested and convicted for witchcraft. When tried she refuses to confess.

Judge Danforth

The deputy governor of Massachusetts, he is overseeing the witchcraft trials. He considers himself to be a fair and level-headed man who is being guided by God.

Reverend John Hale

A young minister. As a reputed expert on witchcraft he is called to Salem to examine Betty Parris when she falls ill. Throughout the play we see his confidence in his belief and ability begin to falter as the trial spirals out of control.

Judge Hawthorne

A second judge who oversees the witch trials alongside Judge Danforth.

Herrick

A marshal of Salem. It is his job to oversee the accused.

Mercy Lewis

A servant to the Putman's and friend of Abigail. She supports Abigail's accusations throughout and when Abigail flees the town she goes with her.

Francis Nurse

A wealthy and well respected man within the town. When his wife is accused of witchcraft he adamantly denies it and tries his best to have the case over-turned. Friend of John Proctor.

Rebecca Nurse

Francis Nurse's wife. She is a religious, kind and gentle older woman who is well respected within the town. She is accused by the Putman's of witchcraft after being involved in the delivery of Ann Putman's children – seven of whom were stillborn, for which Ann believes there must be a paranormal reason involved. She refuses to confess.

Betty Parris

Reverend Parris's young daughter. She falls ill after Abigail and the girls are caught dancing in the forest with Tituba. Her sickness results in the offset of the witch trials.

Samantha Colley, and Richard Armitage



Reverend Parris

The minister of Salem's church. He's power hungry and disliked by many of the community. He is keen to exert his authority and build his position within the town-his actions are determined by a desire to uphold his reputation.

Elizabeth Proctor

John Proctor's wife. Like her husband she holds strong moral values and is considered to be an extremely honest woman. Because of Abigail Williams' jealousy and desire for revenge she is accused of being a witch and faces trial. Her husband tries to support her by demonstrating her good character to the court but his quest fails.

John Proctor

A farmer in his mid 30s who is married to Elizabeth Proctor. John is a proud and generally upstanding gentleman in the community. However he carries a secret which has devastating consequences – whilst Abigail Williams was a servant in his house a brief affair took place – which his wife found out about and fired her. Abigail's jealousy for Elizabeth lead her to become one of the accused.

Ann Putnam

Thomas Putnam's wife. She is an angry and mentally unstable woman who has lost seven of her eight children. She is convinced that there must be a paranormal reason for this and blames Rebecca Nurse – who was present at the births – for their deaths.

Ruth Putnam

The Putnam's lone surviving child out of eight. She is one of the girls found dancing in the woods with Abigail and like Betty Parris falls into a strange state afterwards.

Thomas Putnam

A wealthy, influential citizen of Salem, Putnam holds a grudge against Francis Nurse for preventing Putnam's brother-in-law from being elected to the office of minister. He uses the witch trials to increase his own wealth by accusing people of witchcraft and then buying up their land.

Tituba

Reverend Parris's slave from Barbados. She is with the girls in the forest and, reportedly performs black magic (on Abigail's request) to conjure up the dead spirits of Ann Putnam's children.

Mary Warren

A servant to the Proctors. She is a timid, impressionable girl who gets wrapped up in the mass hysteria and was part of the group of girls who were dancing in the forest with Abigail. She becomes part of the court in the witch trial and on John Proctor's insistence testifies against Abigail in court, however she doesn't manage to go through with it for fear of being accused of witchcraft herself.

Abigail Williams

The niece of Reverend Parris; an orphan and unmarried. At the beginning of the play she is living with Reverend Parris but she had previously been a servant for Elizabeth and John Proctor. Whilst working for them she had an affair with John Proctor, which Elizabeth discovered and subsequently fired her. Abigail is key to the witch trials, as her and her allies are key in giving information about suspected witches – one of whom is Elizabeth. She is driven by revenge, jealousy and power and is cunning and manipulative. But she is also deeply in love with John Proctor and in a precarious social position as a young orphaned woman who's had an affair with a married man.

Members of the company in rehearsal



CLIMATE OF FEAR

Written as a reflection of a deeply troubling episode in American history, *The Crucible* has lost none of its allegorical potency, as Sharon Monteith uncovers.

In 2003 Arthur Miller told the BBC that *The Crucible* remained all too relevant 50 years after its first performance. If the Salem witch trials of 1692 were the allegorical subject of Miller's first historical play, his observation was a reminder that while his dramatic trigger was Senator Joseph McCarthy's purging of suspected communists in 1950s America, other witch hunts continue to be illuminated by his 1953 drama. During the US civil rights movement, for example, leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr were denounced as communist or accused of associating with 'Reds'. In support of the 1963 March on Washington, demonstrators in London protested being victimised by a 'colour bar' (No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs) with banners declaring 'End McCarthyite Witch Hunt.'

The Crucible explores civil rights, specifically the persecution, detention and trial of demonised groups when evidence against them is shadowy – or, indeed 'spectral' as the Salem court allowed it could be – and where the accused are found guilty by inquisitors whose very questions violate their civil rights. Miller was writing in a climate of fear: during the Cold War, communist infiltration of US culture was pathologised as a virus that could kill the body politic. It was evidenced in Congressional hearings (the menacing question, 'Are you, or have you ever been, a communist?'); loyalty checks and oaths (government workers, professors, teachers, librarians and church ministers fired); and spy trials (the imprisonment of Alger Hiss as a Soviet spy and the sentencing to death of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg for supposedly delivering the secret of the atomic bomb to Russia). Espousing civil rights at home and opposing communism abroad, as many liberals did, did not keep them safe from McCarthy's witch-hunts.

Writers and intellectuals gravitated to communism during the 1930s Depression either hoping its precepts could lead to social reform, or as a way to protest America's isolationism, specifically the nation's neutrality in the Spanish

Civil War. In a period of right-wing paranoia, they became McCarthy's scapegoats. The US Senate's Subcommittee on Internal Security and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) rounded up suspects from Washington DC to the Hollywood Hills. The Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals invited HUAC to Hollywood in 1947. Press coverage fuelled a moral panic and when McCarthy focused on motion pictures and television, lives were destroyed and careers left in tatters. Screenwriters, actors, directors, producers and musicians faced the prospect of being blacklisted, barred from employment in the motion picture industry, and in some cases passports were held to stop those charged finding work abroad.

Russia had fought with the Allies in the Second World War and the positive light in which the nation was viewed was apparent in two films Hollywood released in 1943, *The North Star* and *Mission to Moscow*. Post-war, films previously thought to be patriotic and democratic were rendered suspiciously pro-communist. Even seven times Oscar-winning hit *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946) was charged with valuing communist-style collectivism. Ayn Rand, whose *Screen Guide for Americans* was published in 1950, declared 'the common man' to be politically dangerous. An eight-year-old actor meanwhile was deemed 'politically unreliable' and failed to be 'cleared' for television roles, tainted it is assumed by the industry's 'Red Channels' check on her parents.

Writers in particular were identified as being responsible for inserting communist propaganda into film scripts, despite filmmaking being a studio-led enterprise. Of the first 19 people subpoenaed, a group known as The Hollywood Ten was found guilty. Eight were screenwriters, with Dalton Trumbo and Ring Lardner Jr best known. Edward Dmytryk was the lone director and Adrian Scott the sole producer because they made *Crossfire* in 1947. A serious critique of xenophobia, it lost at the Academy Awards to

Elia Kazan's *Gentlemen's Agreement*, another film exposing anti-Semitism. Broadway director and filmmaker Kazan was Arthur Miller's close friend.

In January and April of 1952, Kazan, a communist in the 1930s whose work was renowned for its social conscience, first withheld and then submitted names to HUAC because he decided that secrecy only 'serves the communists.' Kazan collaborated with Miller, directing *All My Sons* (1947) and *Death of a Salesman* (1949), but if Miller tried to talk him out of talking to HUAC, he failed. Kazan even placed an advertisement in the *New York Times*, extorting others to follow his lead in denouncing not only communism but also the 'specious reasoning' of liberals who argued that by naming communists 'you are attacking the right to hold unpopular opinions and you are joining the people who attack civil liberties.' Miller and Kazan's friendship fractured – the two men did not speak for 15 years. In a paranoid moment in US politics they faced each other on opposing sides.

In the aftermath, Miller took a trip to Salem, Massachusetts, to read the transcripts of the witch trials. In what he described as an act of desperation, he hoped to discover the kernel of a story he could tell about fear, alien conspiracy and the hunt for 'Reds' in America. HUAC he

believed was 'a band of political operators with as much moral conviction as Tony Anastasia,' the mobster who, with brother Albert, controlled the New York waterfront. Miller explored corruption at the docks in a play called *The Hook* that he and Kazan had agreed to make into a movie. They never did. Instead the Brooklyn docks would be the inspiration for another allegory for the McCarthy witch-hunt: Kazan's film *On the Waterfront* (1954) has been read as a direct response to *The Crucible* and the director's justification for cooperating with HUAC as a 'friendly witness.'

On the Waterfront was based on Budd Schulberg's story and, like Kazan, the screenwriter had named names, alleging that communists in Hollywood tried to dictate what he wrote. In the film Terry Malloy testifies before the Waterfront Crime Commission ('I'm glad what I done') and the informer is made a hero – especially with Marlon Brando taking lead role. Miller identified a gloomy logic behind Kazan's decision to name 'fellow travellers' and he went on to conceptualise that 'calamity' by imagining the web of complex and self-serving motives that coalesce in *The Crucible*, a copy of which he sent to Kazan. In *A View From the Bridge* (1955) Miller would return to the theme of betrayal.

Samantha Colley, Lauren Lyle, Zara White, Hannah Hutch



There are no witches to be uncovered in *The Crucible* and Miller's sharp critique of McCarthyism could be safely folded into the historical past. When playwright Lillian Hellman in answer to HUAC said, 'I cannot and will not cut my conscience to fit this year's fashions,' she epitomised John Proctor's bitter observation – 'Is the accuser always holy now?' Miller chose his title carefully; while McCarthyism is an epithet for a zealous disregard for truth, 'the crucible' is a potent metaphor for the severe trial of one's beliefs, especially those forged against pernicious ideologies (white supremacy forged in the crucible of slavery, violent expansionism shaped in the crucible of colonial wars, or virulent anti-communism honed in a period of Cold War containment). John Proctor is a victim of greed for land and money, as much as Abigail's desires, and for Reverend Hale, the expert witchfinder, the courtroom becomes the crucible of understanding that power should be leavened by knowledge.

Had Kazan and others rebutted HUAC, it is doubtful the purge could have continued but the attack on civil liberties that Miller protested in his play settled on left-leaning actors such as John Garfield and civil rights socialists like Paul Robeson, whose passport was confiscated in 1950. While many refused to testify and left for Europe (Joseph Losey, Jules Dassin, Sam Wanamaker), blacklisted writers sometimes continued to work in Hollywood uncredited. If McCarthy sought to cleanse the industry, it fought back by hiding writers such as Dalton Trumbo behind the front of false names. For actors, it was obviously more difficult and they often faded from the screen.

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 2001 in New York, George W Bush harnessed the same well-worn language: people were either 'with us' or 'with the terrorists,' as if just punishment should be enacted upon all those outside a newly imagined moral community. When Deputy Governor Danforth warns, 'We burn a hot fire here; it melts down all concealment,' it is difficult not to reflect on those Muslims held without trial at Guantanamo Bay on evidence of terrorism that is flimsy or nonexistent. And

the playwright himself has spoken of the play's sudden popularity in countries where 'a warning of tyranny on the way or a reminder of tyranny just past' requires sounding.

Whether persecution is religious, political, or both, *The Crucible* resonates in myriad contexts. It is revelatory of the dangers of demonising and dehumanising groups of our peers. Take the controversial British law known as 'joint enterprise,' which many lawyers and campaigners condemn as so dangerously ambiguous that it renders courts all too capable of producing unjust verdicts. A legal tool that allows the prosecution of multiple defendants for the same crime, it ensured in one recent case that Ijah Lavelle Moore could be imprisoned for 14 months awaiting trial. Moore was eventually exonerated, released in June 2013 with no charge to answer. Prosecutions for association, whether assumed or spurious, echo *The Crucible* as, from a Brechtian distance, Miller makes us observe. Injustice spirals out of control and the contagiousness of hysteria derived from supposedly 'signing one's name in the Devil's book' becomes a frightening reality when translated into death on the gallows by a judge so assured in his righteousness that the possibility of being wrong about individual guilt is deemed less important than punishing as many as possible.

HUAC was officially wound up in the mid-1970s but McCarthy was seen off in June 1954 by Joseph N Welch, counsel for the US Army (also on trial), when he described him as cruel and reckless to thunderous applause: 'Senator, you have done enough. Have you no sense of decency, sir?' The US Senate condemned McCarthy of conduct unbecoming a senator. While the film adaptation of *The Crucible* was in production in 1996, Miller pointed out in an essay that guilt is made immaterial in his play; he had learned in the 1950s that 'actions are as irrelevant during cultural and religious wars as they are in nightmares.'

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INTO THE WILDERNESS

Drawn from his autobiography *Timebends*, Arthur Miller recalls the fateful meeting in the woods that sent him burdened with anguish to Salem Village.

My decision to attempt a play on the Salem witchcraft trials was tentative, restrained by technical questions first of all, and then by a suspicion that I would not only be writing myself into the wilderness politically but personally as well. For even in the first weeks of thinking about the Salem story, the central image, the one that persistently recurred as an exuberant source of energy, was that of a guilt-ridden man, John Proctor, who, having slept with his teenage servant girl, watches with horror as she becomes the leader of the witch-hunting pack and points her accusing finger at the wife he has himself betrayed. The story's lines of force were still tangled, but instinct warned that as always with me, they would not leave me untouched once fully revealed. And so, in deciding to make an exploratory trip up to Salem, Massachusetts, where the original court records of the witch trials were still available, I was moving inward as well as north, and not without a certain anxiety in both directions. The day before I was to leave, [Elia] Kazan phoned and asked to see me.

Since he was not a man to idly chat, at least not with me, and since this was his second or third such call in the past few weeks, I began to suspect that something terrible had come to him and that it must be the [House Un-American Activities] Committee. I drove into a dun and rainy Connecticut morning in early April 1952 cursing the time. For I all but knew that my friend would tell me he had decided to cooperate with the Committee. Though he has passed through the party for a brief period 15 years before, as he had once mentioned to me, I knew that he had no particular political life anymore, at least not in the five years of our acquaintance. I found my anger rising, not against him, whom I loved like a brother, but against the Committee, which by now I regarded as a band of political operators with as much moral conviction as Tony Anastasia, and as a matter of fact, probably somewhat less.

The sun briefly appeared, and we left his house to walk in the woods under dripping branches, amid the odour of decay and regeneration that

a long rain drives up from the earth in a cold country forest. He was trying, I thought, to appear relieved in his mind, to present the issue as settled, even happily so. The story, simple and by now routine, took but a moment to tell. He had been subpoenaed and had refused to cooperate but had changed his mind and returned to testify fully in executive session, confirming some dozen names of people he had known in his months in the Party so long ago. He felt better now, clearer about everything. Actually, he wanted my advice, almost as though he had not yet done what he had done. Confirmation was what he needed; after all, he had no sympathies with the Communists, so why should he appear to be withholding his testimony?

But as much as the issue itself mattered, it was our unreality that I could not grasp. I was never sure what I meant to him, but he had entered into my dreams like a brother, and there we had exchanged a smile of understanding that blocked others out. Listening to him now, I grew frightened. There was a certain gloomy logic in what he was saying: unless he came clean he could never hope, at the height of his creative powers, to make another film in America, and he would probably not be given a passport to work abroad either. If the theatre remained open to him, it was not his primary interest anymore; he wanted to deepen his film life, that was where his heart lay, and he had been told in so many words by his old boss and friend Spyros Skouras, president of Twentieth Century Fox, that the company would not employ him unless he satisfied the Committee. It would be easy, I thought as he spoke, for those with less talent to sneer at this, but I believed he was a genius of the theatre, where actors and scripts were concerned a seer who worked along an entirely different trajectory than other directors. To be barred from his *métier*, kicked into the street, would be for him like a nightmarish overturning of the earth itself. He had always said he came from survivors and that the job was to survive. He spoke as factually as he could, and it was a quiet calamity opening before me in the woods, because I felt my sympathy going toward him and at the same time I was afraid of him. Had I been of his generation, he



Image by Stephen Long

would have had to sacrifice me as well. And finally that was all I could think of. I could not get past it.

That all relationships had become relationships of advantage or disadvantage. That this was what it all came to anyway and there was nothing new here. That one stayed as long as it was useful to stay, believed as long as it was not too inconvenient, and that we were fish in a tank cruising with upslanted gaze for the descending crumbs that kept us alive. I could only say that I thought this would pass and that it had to pass because it would devour the glue that kept the country together if left to its own unobstructed course. I said that it was not the Reds who were dispensing our fears now, but the other side, and it could not go on indefinitely, it would someday wear down the national nerve. And then there might be regrets about this time. But I was growing cooler with the thought that as unbelievable as it seemed, I could still be up for sacrifice if Kazan knew I had attended meetings of Party writers years ago and had made a speech at one of them. I felt a silence rising around me, an impeding and invisible wash of dulled vibrations between us, like an endless moaning musical note through which we could not hear or speak anymore. It was sadness, purely mournful, deadening. And it had been done to us. It was not his duty to be stronger than he was, the government had no right to require anyone to

be stronger than it had been given him to be, the government was not in that line of work in America. I was experiencing a bitterness with the country that I had never even imagined before, a hatred of its stupidity and its throwing away of its freedom. Who or what was now safer because this man in his human weakness had been forced to humiliate himself? What truth has been enhanced by all this anguish?

As I got into my car to leave, Molly Kazan came out of the house into the drizzle that had begun again; she could tell, I suppose, that it had not gone well. It was impossible to keep looking into her distraught eyes. History prints certain lines directly on the mind that stay there into the grave. She was a rather moralistic woman who had, as I've said, an analytical talent for spotting where a play's theme had managed to slip out of sight or the author's exuberance had led him away from the central conflict. She had repeatedly pressed me, long before the *Salesman* rehearsals began, to eliminate Uncle Ben and all the scenes in the past as unnecessary in the strictest sense. It was, I thought, an amazing example of the 'nothing-but' psychoanalytical reductionist method of peeling away experience only as far as its quickly recognisable conventional paradoxes, in the misconceived belief that colour, tone, and even longing in themselves do not change fate.

I was half inside the car when Molly came out and asked, unforgettably, if I realised that the United Electrical Workers union was entirely in the hands of Communists: standing in the drizzle there, a woman fighting for her husband's career, she seemed to have been lashed to this frantic question, which in a calmer time would have made her laugh at its absurd remoteness from the dilemma before us. I muttered that I had heard about the UEW many years ago. Then she pointed out toward the road and told me that I no longer understood the country, that everybody who lived on that road approved of the Committee and what had been done. I didn't know what to say anymore across the crevasse widening between us. In the awkward pre-departure moment, after I had said that I could not agree with their decision, she asked if I was staying at my house, half an hour away, and I said that I was on my way to Salem. She instantly understood what my destination meant, and her eyes widened in sudden apprehension and possibly anger. 'You're not going to equate witches with this!' I told her I wasn't at all sure I could write the play but I was going to look into the stuff they had up there. We all waved rather grimly as I pulled away.

Once on the road nosing the car north, I thought she was probably right about the people in the comfortable homes I was passing, and felt myself drifting beyond the pale. The strangeness was sharper because as usual I was carrying several contradictions at the same time, my brother-love as painfully alive in me as it had even been, alongside the undeniable fact that Kazan might have sacrificed me had it been necessary. In a sense I went naked to Salem, still unable to accept the most common experience of humanity, the shifts of interests that turned loving husbands and wives into stony enemies, loving parents into indifferent supervisors or even exploiters of their children, and so forth. As I already knew from my reading, that was the real story of ancient Salem Village, what they called then the breaking of charity with one another. The grey rain on my windshield was falling into my soul.

This excerpt from Arthur Miller's *Timebends: A Life* is published with kind permission of The Arthur Miller 2004 Literary and Dramatic Property Trust.

THEMES

Hypocrisy

Miller gives us an introduction to life in Salem when he writes in *The Crucible*, 'they had no novelists – and would not have permitted anyone to read a novel if one were handy. Their creed forbade anything resembling a theatre or "vain enjoyment". They did not celebrate Christmas, and a holiday from work meant only that they must concentrate even more on prayer'.

Dancing would have been absolutely forbidden, especially somewhere as supposedly dangerous as the woods outside of the village. In such a strict theocracy (society where a deity is regarded as civil ruler and any official policy-makers are believed to be divinely guided) being seen as a strict moralist is of utmost importance.

Many people in Salem use the witch trials as a moralistic guise to bring down rival families, settle old feuds and make power plays. For example Mr Putnam persuades his daughter, one of the 'witnesses' to accuse a man who, if found guilty, will be forced to forfeit all his land.

Mass hysteria

Historically, both the Salem witch trials and the McCarthy era are famous cases of the phenomena known as mass hysteria. Mass hysteria is often 'due to repressive political and social systems' and 'occurs amid an atmosphere of accumulating long-term group stress. It is prevalent in intolerable social situations such as strict school or religious settings where discipline is extreme. Symptoms include trancelike states [and] melodramatic acts of rebellion known as histrionics' (Bartholomew: 2001).

Evidence indicates that mass hysteria tends to occur in groups low in the hierarchy of a repressive society, such as women or young people. This can then lead to 'a rapid spread of false but plausible beliefs that gain credibility within a particular social and cultural context' (Bartholomew: 2001).

In Salem we see a group of disenfranchised young women show symptoms of mass hysteria that then brings an entire community to its knees. Similarly, McCarthyism and fear of Communism in America during the Cold War gave rise to a climate of fear, suspicion and accusations.

Rumour and reputation

The action of the play is fuelled by rumour and the desire of each character to retain their reputation. Details that may seem insignificant to the outsider gather greater meaning as they could be seen as a black mark on someone's reputation. When Abigail says she saw a frog near the soup kettle when they were dancing in the forest Parris despairs at the apparent implications of this; a childhood toy found in the Proctors' house is taken as evidence against Elizabeth; Goody Osburn is convicted of witchcraft for 'mumbling'. Rumours of unorthodox behaviour lead members of the community to make unsubstantiated accusations in an attempt to ruin the reputation of another. In cases such as Abigail's, she combats this by in turn stirring suspicion against others so the town's judgement is passed on to them. The cycle inevitably spirals out of control, leading to the mass conviction and execution of innocent people.

Manipulation and power

At the centre of *The Crucible* is the story of a group of young women who would at the time have been at the bottom of the social pecking order. Women's opinions and lives were entirely subordinate to men at this time. Some of the young women involved were also disempowered by the community for other reasons. For example: Tituba is a black slave in America. She had no rights and would likely have suffered terrible treatment. Abigail is a young woman who had an affair with a married man. As the unmarried woman, she is at risk of being ostracised by her whole community. She's also an orphan, which means she has no financial or family resources to give her social status.

Faced with a life of repression, servitude and rejection, these women try to assert themselves through manipulation and deceit. By twisting the truth, playing on the superstitions of the local community and by accusing other women of being witches, they gain a political hold over the whole village and bring powerful men such as judges, law enforcers and church leaders under their influence.

MARK MAUGHAN

Assistant Director

What was your initial response to the play?

When I first read the play what occurred to me was the title. For me, it's about putting people in a crucible and pushing people to the absolute extremes to see how we react under those circumstances. Putting that on stage is a really exciting thing and ultimately the overriding attraction to *The Crucible*.

What is the role of the Assistant Director?

It depends on the project and the people; a two hander is very different to 25 actors. You can do everything from assisting the artistic vision by giving notes, sharing thoughts and taking smaller groups of actors to run things. It can also be practical with scheduling and meetings. I am also the link between the director and the production department throughout. Additionally, I look after the understudies. All of the understudies, apart from one actor, are in the play each evening so if someone is ill there is a waterfall affect. I have to sit down with stage management to work that out but also have it in my head at all times.

What attracted you to this particular production?

I am absolutely intrigued by the way Yaël creates the atmosphere on stage. She has a style to her work that is quite distinctive and I think it's creating something incredible. I'm really enjoying working with a British cast, a director from somewhere else and a play that's from another continent!

How are you finding staging the large cast?

There is no secret formula. You learn terms like 'banana-ing' which is rather than walking in a straight line you walk in a curve. The key is movement, to keep it circling and the energy going. On a practical level, it's trial and error! When we're in the rehearsal room we have a mark-up of the stage, so there's a circle to scale in the middle of the room, which we've been using since week two. That enables a body awareness in the actors which is fantastic for the production and keeps everyone that bit more on their toes!

You have worked with Old Vic New Voices previously, it would be interesting to hear you experience of that and your progression since then.

Years ago I applied to be a director for The 24 Hour Plays Old Vic New Voices and accidentally auditioned as an actor, I definitely didn't get through that round! Then I did the last 24 Hour Plays in 2012 as a director. I met some brilliant people some of whom I'm still working with. I've also been given an Old Vic New Voices Start Up and LAB space which was incredible. Through Old Vic New Voices I feel incredibly supported.

Finally, what would your advice be to someone thinking of becoming a director?

Go and see as much as you can but then do the extra bit no-one tells you about which is reflect on why it is that you did or did not enjoy something. As a theatre director you need to have an idea of what you want to do in the future. Increasingly, I'm being asked what work do I want to make and it's only through asking myself those questions that I'm taking steps forwards.

SOUTRA GILMOUR

Designer

What was your initial design response to this version of *The Crucible*?

I've known *The Crucible* for a long time it's a play I've always loved, always wanted to do and had never done. Yael and I didn't want to use imagery that felt like it had been overused in past productions such as wooden planks and simple furniture. We wanted people to have to re-evaluate it slightly in the context of their own lives. We were looking for things that allowed a possibility that you could totally believe it was now but equally that it was 1692 or even ancient Greece. The idea of ghosts was really important to us, this ghostly space with forgotten stories and forgotten statements of intent as we wanted a residue of those things in the space.

Another important thing is the architecture of The Old Vic because it is in the round. We wanted to enjoy that but also push back some of the decorative elements. We wanted the place to feel like an installation. We did this not by covering everything up but by being suggestive so the audience can join the dots. It's a mixture of languages and turning The Old Vic into a rather silent and perhaps bleak space that holds these stories and allows the characters to become more than just the people of Salem.

Have you designed in the round before?

Yes I have. You have to have a sparseness in the round whilst also facilitating the needs of the play as people do have to do things like sit on chairs and lie on beds. The Old Vic is interesting because although the stage is in the round the auditorium is like a lozenge so some people are much further away. You need something that allows both an intimate relationship to the stage as well as an epic one if you are at the back of the circle.

When you developed your vision, did you begin with one idea?

No, it was a bit messier than that. We had a short time frame and I threw lots of random things in to get us started and then by the process of elimination we started to create 'a language'. I then did some sketches within the model box of ideas. Personally I prefer working three dimensionally [within model boxes] because when you come to it you have to deal with the real space.

Finally, do you have a favourite part of the set or anything similar for us to look out for?

The interesting thing is the geometry because the floor is circular but I really wanted to play with two track lines. We have a very large company so part of my job is to make the stage feel a lot bigger. So we're stretching the space to have the size of scale of those epic, ancient theatres. Miller is doing something on that level, *The Crucible* is not a small domestic play; it's a play about mankind, how humans behave towards each other and that goes right back to Greeks and right forwards to now.

SAMANTHA COLLEY

Abigail Williams

What was your initial response to the play?

I was first introduced to *The Crucible* when I was 14; I actually played John Proctor because I went to an all-girls school. Abigail Williams is always the part that you're drawn to as an actor because it's so rich, she's such an exciting person. I think she can be thought of as the villain and I never have. She's had a hard life and I always thought she was misconstrued as this nasty piece of work but actually she's not that at all.

You've only just graduated from the Oxford School of Drama, how are you finding being at The Old Vic?

It's amazing; it's still not quite real. I turn up to stage door and go 'oh I'm allowed to go in here!' This was the first audition I ever did and since then it's been a whirlwind.

What are you enjoying the most so far?

Working with Yaël, the intellect and passion that she brings to everything. We sit down and discuss sources such as things we've seen in the news or a quote from Miller and I can feel myself expanding as a person and a performer.

How are you finding rehearsing in the round?

It's amazing. When I heard initially that it was in the round I was very scared. I did one production whilst I was at drama school in the round which was a restoration comedy and this is very different. The audience must feel drawn into us and they must feel part of *The Crucible* as well, so whatever I'm doing on the side I know they're seeing it. There's nowhere to hide, I love that and *The Crucible* demands it.

What has been the biggest challenge for you so far?

I see myself as an engine, which can be a good and a bad thing. The challenge of working at this level is feeling proud of myself and believing I've brought something of value to the production. There is such a standard on all areas of this production and I want to make sure that my Abi is as high and not let anyone down, I'm hopefully managing to do it!

What draws you in about your character?

She's heat. She has a power and truth about her which I don't necessarily have myself and I love that about her. All of the things Abi deals with in her life and what she deals with in the play, she deals with by herself and if I could deal with the same things with such power and conviction I'd be proud. As I say, she's misconstrued as a nasty piece of work who ruins people's lives and yes, she has a switch where that happens but I think at the crux of it she's an honest person.



Richard Armitage and Samantha Colley

Finally, as much as you are at the beginning of your career what advice would you give someone who's just starting out?

It's hard to have self-belief and I think that's the most important thing for someone just starting out to hear; it is possible if you just keep trying and giving the best you can. You will get an opportunity to prove what you can do and then the challenge is doing it.

MARAMA CORLETT

Betty Paris

You worked with Old Vic New Voices on our community production *Platform* in 2010; it would be great to hear about your experience on it and what you've been up to since.

Platform was great because it was a community project and it didn't matter what background you had. It was this huge group of people from all over England so it was very exciting to be a part of. The great thing is that everyone took it seriously and professionally. I am a huge believer in whatever you do will lead you on to something else, *Platform* did that for me. Being at The Old Vic now is a huge privilege. I walk up the stairs to go to rehearsals and think of the people who've gone in to that room to make everything happen, it's very exciting.

What was the appeal to you about *The Crucible*?

Arthur Miller writes so well; everything is so detailed that nothing can go over your head, you have to listen. The beautiful thing is that you can draw parallels to

what's happening in the world now. I found this quote from Miller 'All of the plays I was trying to write were plays that would grab the audience by the throat and not release them, rather than presenting an emotion which you could observe and walk away from' and I think that this play has his signature all over it. It's one of those plays that you're going to take back home with you and it won't let you go.

How are you finding working as part of an ensemble of actors, for example, being in the group of girls who are responsible for creating the mass hysteria within the town?

I think everyone is affecting each other; they tangle each other up. So what's happening with these girls? It's such a small community and it's an intense time with it being dominated by religion. That's a lot of pressure, especially if you're a child and have to grow up quickly with the responsibility of one day continuing this religion.

How are you finding working in the round?

I've never worked in the round. It's very interesting that it's a circle, I find circles very spiritual because there's no beginning or end. This group of people are in the middle of it and once you're in there you're wrapped in their world. As an actor you can't hide, you need to be brave. For the audience it's great to be in the round, for example in the cinema the camera directs where you look but with theatre you choose and now you have it 360°.

What advice would you give to someone with an interest in drama from school?

It's a tough one of whether you go in to training or not, you'll learn a lot whatever you do. With training, you have three years of intense concentration. I personally haven't trained and I do think you can learn on the job; it's just getting the job. There are things like Old Vic New Voices who help to guide you and open those doors. You need to be sure as well, if there's something inside you which says you want to do acting, be brave and go for it!



Marama Corlett

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