

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY**

**Directing The Crucible**

**by**

**Darold Roles**

**A THESIS**

**SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS**

**DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA**

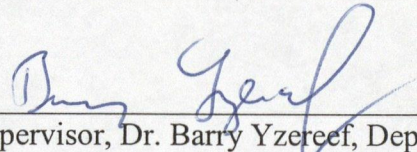
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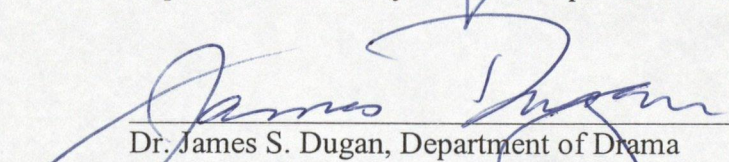
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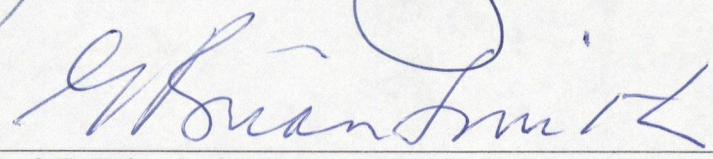
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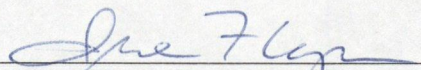
UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
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## **Abstract**

This thesis outlines the directorial journey I embarked on which led to the production of Arthur Miller's The Crucible presented by The University of Calgary's Department of Drama at the University Theatre from October 22 to November 2, 2002.

The first part of the thesis summarizes my initial production concept for the play and explores my rationale for choosing the play and the style that I explored. It should offer the reader a stimulating insight into the look, sound and shape of my work. It is followed by some of the extensive research I did on the playwright and the intriguing events that inspired Mr. Miller in the writing of this classic. An overview of the production history and the critical response to the work is also included in this section, which was supported by research conducted at the New York Center for the Performing Arts Library in the summer of 2002.

The third major section of this writing is a daily journal where I summarized and evaluated the creative process from opening design discussions through to opening night. I conclude my educational and theatrical journey with a self evaluation of the process and product that is supported by audience and critical response, peer and professional advice and an in-depth analysis of the actor feedback I solicited through a formal questionnaire.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for helping to make this project possible: J. James Andrews, Dennis Baker, Joanne Barker, Kenton E. Biffert, Pam Clarke, Ruby Dawn Eustaquio, the Faculty Association of Red Deer College, Susan Farmer, Jessie Johnsen, Barbara Mah, Jacy Morissette, Lynne Mulder, Michael Peterson, Ron Schuster, Alan Reid, Judy Robins-Weir, Ron Woodward, and Lilly E. Visser.

I would also like to thank the New York Performing Arts Library for granting me access to their special collections and my supervisor Dr. Barry Yzereef for his positive energy and nurturing support.

I also gratefully acknowledge the support of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, as well as the support from the Department of Drama, that helped make my three years at the University of Calgary so enjoyable.

I heartily applaud my staff and faculty in the Performing Arts at Red Deer College who endured my periodic absences and supported my learning and professional growth during this time.

An additional note of thanks goes to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts for the research-related Project Grant awarded to me in the spring of 2002.

**Dedicated to the ones I love...and you know who you are!**

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## **CHAPTER ONE: THE CRUCIBLE'S FIRE: A Production Concept**

When I first heard that I would be taking on the direction of Arthur Miller's classic The Crucible as a Masters of Fine Arts thesis project I experienced feelings that were daunting, exhilarating and at times intimidating. Let me explain: it is after all a classic. It is a classic by a man highly regarded as one of the most important playwrights of the twentieth century. Take note that I was an experienced director whose accolades and successes lay more in the musical theatre vein versus the drama, and to add just a sprinkle more pressure, The Crucible was enjoying a vibrant and celebrated revival on Broadway at the time. I had chosen my challenge well. It was my intent to prove my enthusiasm and willingness to meet this challenge. By providing you with my initial directorial vision and an overall production concept of my ideal creation of The Crucible that was to play on the University Theatre Stage at the University of Calgary, I hope to whet your appetite and stimulate your further reading of my ultimate directorial journey. It is interesting to note that many of my original ideas actually came into fruition, and thus, I offer the reader a strong indication of what the final production actually looked and sounded like.

### **The Celebrated Play and Playwright**

As a celebrated playwright Arthur Miller's work is performed and studied around the world. There is no shortage of resource material on the man to inform and entice a director. In fact, in Arthur Miller: A Reference Guide, author John H. Ferres lists one-thousand, one-hundred and ninety-six documented writings about Miller that were published between 1944 and 1977. They include articles, reviews, books, and academic presentations. This at first glance was overwhelming, and doesn't even begin to account

for the information available from 1977 on, which includes the beauty and ease of the Internet as a resource. There are Arthur Miller fan clubs, official Arthur Miller societies, conferences, worldwide web sites and more. Thankfully, my project was a more practical thesis and to direct the show I sifted through the wealth of material for sources that cultivated my vision and progressed my understanding and appreciation of the text as it related to my actors, my designers and my audience.

Not only had I chosen a world renowned playwright, but I discovered that The Crucible is chronicled as one of Miller's most popular works. In The Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller, Thomas P. Adler informs us that: "Although it initially ran for only 197 performances when it opened on Broadway, The Crucible has become Miller's most frequently produced play" (90). Right from the opening night the play was praised as a stellar piece of theatre. Richard Watts, Jr. wrote in the 1953 New York Post that: "[...] 'The Crucible,' which opened at the Martin Beck last night, is a drama of emotional power and impact." To further confirm my choice of play and my challenge, Beck discusses how: "The result is a hard-hitting and effective play that demands and deserves audience attention" (Martine 73). Subsequent reception to revivals on Broadway and abroad affirm its greatness and longevity. In John Gassner's Miller's The Crucible as Event and Play he documents how: "[...] the excitement [...] proved distinctly serviceable when the play was given an off-Broadway revival in 1958, after McCarthyism had subsided as an issue. The later production proved that the play could hold its own without the support of topicality" (Ferres 28). While it has been clearly documented that the impulse for the writing of the play was the events of the McCarthy witch-hunt, its real importance surfaced later and continues to impact audiences



everywhere. Yes, The Crucible is about witchcraft in Salem in 1692, and as Miller himself admits it was inspired by the social and political climate in the United States in the 1950's. Scholars don't believe that those specific historical events alone account for the play's continuing popularity around the world. Without a broader message, the play might have perished a long time ago. The play embraces themes and underlying universals which have proven to transcend both time and place. The structure and tone has the vehemence of good social protest. The message, style and structure of the play are potent and something I anticipated exploring in great detail. It was this potential for stirring an audience with a relevant, dramatic message and the contemporary appeal of the drama that attracted me to this piece. In discussing the importance of this work in The Crucible: Politics, Property and Pretense, James J. Martine echoed my passion for this play: "[...] Miller had touched truths of the human spirit. The play continues to be produced because it addresses matters that are of continuing concern to intelligent men and women" (15). From my initial research it became clear to me that The Crucible had come to be recognized as a masterpiece in the modern literary tradition. I looked forward to further research and in-depth analysis of the play and the author which would give me valuable insight into Miller's use of dramatic technique, the effect of McCarthyism on theme, characterization, the use of language, etc. For now let me discuss how the first contact with the abundance of Miller studies impacted my thinking and inspired three sets of challenges for my production.

### **My Challenges**

My first and foremost reason for choosing the play is quite simply that it is a good play. Scholars and audiences reaffirm that it is not merely a good play, it is a great play.

As directors we must be strong storytellers. It doesn't hurt then, to be aligned with a very strong story. The Crucible is a play filled with clear action and suspense. In Henry Popkin's Historical Analogy and The Crucible (Ferres 85), he affirms that the work keeps our attention by: "[...] furnishing exciting crises, each one proceeding logically from its predecessor, in the lives of people in whom we have been made to take an interest." On a basic level, if the answer to the question: "What makes a good play?" is simply that the audience cares about what happens next, it follows unequivocally that The Crucible is a riveting play. The choice of the play and its ultimate production served to challenge me personally, the actors and the audience. It is with these three challenges that I began my director's journey.

As mentioned above, to direct a drama was somewhat outside of my safe zone. I had enjoyed numerous successes in the musical theatre and dance worlds but I had less experience at a hard-hitting drama such as this, particular one of this size. The language was also a challenge for me, as my past experiences in drama have been more in the contemporary field. The historical flavor in the language, with its quality of poetic prose, was interesting to explore and to make natural for the actors and the audience. Gassner describes Miller's ambition in this area succinctly: "The poetry in The Crucible was a sort of prose-poetry rather than verse, and the seventeenth-century historical context in which it was employed justified a degree of formality and biblical austerity" (Ferres 27). If we are to be true to the time and place of the setting (as I proposed), we needed to be true and eloquent to the inherent sounds of the speech.

The play also attracted me for the opportunities and acting challenges it afforded the young actors of The University of Calgary Drama department. This epic opened the

doors for numerous powerful roles, (ten men and ten women), and presented actors with rich, multi-dimensional characters that have deep psychological roots to explore. It also served up the confrontation of playing age, with passion, truth, vulnerability, and intensity. I demanded strong ensemble work and risk-taking to enable these young actors to nurture and develop their craft.

The challenge for the audience was the ultimate drive for me as I embarked down the road to Salem and beyond. When a play has such biting resonance for social change and examination of personal mores and values as The Crucible does, I am engaged into high speed at full throttle. It has been discussed that the piece is still timely to audiences and this is the backbone of its success. While timeliness is potent in the mix, what really packs the punch for me is the message itself. In the interview Eyre Supply by Gerard Raymond, the celebrated director of the 2002 Broadway revival of The Crucible, Richard Eyre speaks to the everlasting pertinence of the play and praises that it dares to take on “an entire social fabric” (1). The examination in the play of how intolerance and hysteria can intersect and tear a person and a community apart is sadly repeated again and again in modern history. Literal witch-hunts in Salem in 1692, as well as social witch hunts in the late 1940s and early 1950s (American government investigations of alleged Communist subversion in the country), echo clearly the events of the Holocaust, the Matthew Shepard case, and most recently, the events of 9/11 and its aftermath. These are some of the famous modern witch-hunts which one local production of The Crucible could not hope to alter. However, what of the smaller ones at home in our own community or schools? A striking example of what has been termed a local witch-hunt in the late twentieth century deals with charges of mass child abuse on

the part of churches and schools, especially day-care centers. In Understanding The Crucible, Johnson and Johnson presented evidence where modern day cases of “serious magnitude” have developed into mass hysteria arising from “dubious cases and spurious charges” (205). Ironically they list several real-life parallels to the witchcraft trials of Salem including, children as accusers, convictions being determined almost solely on the basis of the children’s testimony, and charges being instigated by adults who held grudges against the accused, to name but a few correlations. So, as a society we may have learned little from the famous Salem trials or from their famous contemporary parallels. Yet, it was my goal, my vision, and my drive that my production would awaken these themes, messages and mistakes. The production had to move the audience, to think, to feel, and to possibly re-examine their own personal values. If even one person was moved to take action on even a small scale, then I will have succeeded. It is with this ambition that I present my initial production concept to you.

### **A Production Dream**

The audience settles in the University Theatre. They have been exposed (subtly) to a soundscape lightly playing in the background. The music is from a virgin forest, mixed with the sounds of a farmhand toiling in the fields and other day-to-day life noise in the village of Salem. Layered, oh so finely into the soundscape, is a blend of contemporary witch-hunt propaganda from throughout the ages, (including the McCarthy trials, accusations by Hitler, modern cries of “terrorist”, etc.). Visually the same twist occurs: the set and lights add to the overall mood of Salem in 1692. It is not literal but suggestive using wood and warm colors. On a large screen built into the warmth of the design a slide slowly changes from mellow, warm visuals to pictures of Ethel Rosenberg,

McCarthy, Hitler, children pointing, 9/11 shots, etc. Again, the differences are subtle but they are present. It presents an aura of warmth and safety, yet with a strange feeling that something may be wrong. As the house lights go to black, the pitch of the soundscape grows in volume and into danger. The audience is surrounded by dramatic action incorporating abstracted movement. Laughter, childlike sounds and sensual figures fill the space. The OVERTURE begins. It is a swift cinematic-like sequence, suggestive of what might have happened in the woods the night before the play's action opens. Young girls dance and spin in the woods. Burning embers glow from a fire and witchcraft may be afoot. A revolve on the stage spins the scene into a frenzy while the background action is splattered with other modern witch-hunt images. The frenzy climaxes with an earth shattering scream (the girls have been discovered and they flee) and then the lights flash on. We are in the simple bedroom in the home of Reverend Samuel Parris. It is spring. Reverend Parris is kneeling deep in prayer and his young daughter, Betty, is lying motionless on the bed. The silence is in deep contrast to the moment before. It is 1692, we are in Salem and we will remain there until the final moments of the play.

This OVERTURE was used to set the tone for the scene changes of the play and was book-ended with a similar presentation of a blend of the witch-hunts of yesterday and today, thus suggesting the cyclical nature of human mistakes. While the time and setting (and look) of the play would be historically accurate, I hoped to revolutionize the scene changes utilizing the revolve for speed, sleekness and repetition of theme. Using the milieu of the OVERTURE, each scene change took place with necessary set changes occurring in a blur. The formula was composed of the last fifteen seconds of each act being re-enacted through abstract movement and then transitioning into an abstraction of

the first few seconds of the upcoming act. The new act then came to life in instant replay with realistic action. This formula also allowed for smoothly flowing scene changes while still maintaining or increasing dramatic tension. In addition, it achieved the effect of foreshadowing upcoming events in the play as well as foreshadowing or commenting on the twist in society. The FINALE or CREDITS was the only other non-realistic moment where, as the final drum roll was crashing, the revolve rotated again to present abstracted images of the innocents who have been hung in our society throughout the ages. The modern, abstracted cinematic scene changes, OVERTURE and CREDITS, were in contrast with the historical look and realistic playing style which served to reinforce that the themes and message of the play fit this and any time period.

Now you may have a strong idea for what the bookends and transitions in the production were to have felt like and why. Let us turn to the core of the production. What of the dramatic action, the characterizations, the setting and overall production style? To clearly answer this I created a dominant image: *Like burning embers of a fire about to explode into flame*. Using this metaphor for the production I hoped to evoke images in the audience of heat, sensuality, trouble brewing, lies that burst into an inferno, the devil, witchcraft, adultery and condemnation. This metaphor was to be the guide for the action, direction and designs. The overall look and style of the show was in fact inspired by this metaphor and was brought to life through psychological realism in the acting and direction. I feel this approach in style lends itself well to the writing and serves to highlight the psychological intensity of the play. Miller has been credited with a flair for creating characters that are deeply rooted in their psyche. In his introduction to Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Crucible, John H. Ferres offers an important



quote from Miller himself regarding the structure of The Crucible: "...the central impulse for the writing at all was not the social but the interior psychological question...of the guilt residing in Salem which the hysteria merely unleashed, but did not create" (19).

Richard I. Evans echoes this sentiment in Psychology and Arthur Miller, "[...] some of the greatest insights into human personality have come, not from the discipline of psychology, but from the humanities, art, etc. [...]". He adds that Miller's plays are "a superb example of this kind of perceptiveness" (xiii). Dr. Evans was a Professor of Psychology at the time of the writing and his book is a fascinating read where he interviews Arthur Miller and provides an opportunity for Miller to express his views of how he, "[...] as a creative writer, develops his characterizations in his play [...]," and explores with him the "[...] 'theories' of personality that he applied in this process" (5). This attention to detailed psychological motivation in character development was intriguing to me and lends itself beautifully to the acting style I fostered. It was thrilling to explore this with the actors.

There is an interesting connection to the burning ember metaphor I chose, this inner psychological motivation driving the characters and the title of the play itself. After I chose the production metaphor and investigated my fascination with the psyche of the characters I stumbled across a definition of a crucible.

"A crucible is a severe test or a hard trial. More pointedly, the term also refers to a container that can resist heat and is used for melting and calcining ores; [...]. The title obviously, then, refers to the test or hard trial that Proctor undergoes. With all the concealment melted down, the product – Proctor's moral constitution-is of higher quality" (Martine 13).

With this interesting connection I anticipated a play that served to challenge people, (my audience), through an exposé of a struggle of man against man, (the psychological turmoil), in a production that used a burning ember as a metaphor.

### **A Burning Ember**

The burning ember was utilized to fuel the designs in all areas. Thus the use of wood or straw or other flammable elements in the set was to be explored in a stage that was raked or allowed for a multitude of levels. I was interested in a skeletal setting that permitted fluidity in the blocking and allowed us to see into the backbone or background of the community (through holes or slashes in walls). Texture and color that relate to the metaphor was important in a look that I desired to be suggestive of the environment but not necessarily literal. The set pieces and furnishings would be simple and functional and tie into the color and textural theme of wood and fire. The props for the play would also be simple and visually connected to the metaphor, but it is interesting to note their significance in some cases. Several key props gave insight into character and theme. The heavy books that Reverend Hale is loaded down with on his entrance are as Hale notes: “weighted with authority” (36). John Proctor’s rifle, the cider he drinks and the whip he uses to intimidate Mary Warren (59), all offer clues to his inner personality. Martine in The Crucible: Politics, Property and Pretense, acknowledges the power of the poppet and needle by which Abigail “dupes Mary Warren into entrapping Elizabeth and indicating to the authorities her implication in witchcraft [...] “ (30). While perhaps simple on the surface, the props presented special challenges and were integral to the production.

The costumes were historically accurate, and they too could explore the color scheme of browns, reds, oranges, etc. I challenged my costume designer to incorporate the burning ember theme in a manner which would also give subtle insight into the deeper psyche of each character without being blatant.

To “paint the set with lighting” is my favorite phrase to offer a designer. With the openness and negative space, this would be achievable. The lighting was to be lush, dramatic, and enhance the themes, metaphor, and action of the play. It was rich and intense with deep hues to augment the overall texture of the piece. Light cues were choreographed to add to the climactic build and subtext in each act. The lighting was designed to be a composite piece of a unified whole.

I have referred to a soundscape in the abstracted OVERTURE, CREDITS and scene changes. The sound design did carry on in some scenes as an underscoring to the acting. Through recorded and live sound created by the actors’ voices, I used sound to intensify some moments. This was never to be imperious (other than in the OVERTURE) but to create a sensual dimension to the power of the show. Sighs, moans, dissonant whimpers, wind, fire crackling and soft, evil laughter - all had a spot in the overall experience.

After several readings of the play, some exploratory research, and some initial creative thinking, I created a *wordscape*. I shared this with my designers so that we could all begin working on the same page. Using the *wordscape* as our guide, prominent themes, motifs, symbols, properties, and actions ultimately appeared in the production:

- Candle
- Rosary
- Bible
- Cross
- Hard-work
- Predilection for minding other people's business
- Suspicions
- Madness
- Danger
- Mystery
- Salem = the New Jerusalem
- Persecution
- Social disorder
- The tragedy of Salem developed from a paradox (i.e. – religion unites the community to keep it from its enemies)
- Repression
- Confession (contrition)
- Sweat
- Child
- Hatred and vengeance
- Lust hidden as morality
- The Devil
- Unnatural things
- Witchcraft
- “danced like a heathen”
- “conjured spirits”
- Fire
- Hell
- “flying spirits”
- Corruption
- Murdering witch
- “Mercy danced naked”
- Conjured from the grave
- Drank blood
- Leaves
- Sins
- Hypocrites
- Lust
- Heat
- The devil as a weapon to whip people into shape

- Hell
- Political party = the moral right
- Sex, sin and the devil are always  
linked together

I also used this *wordscape* to create a Crucible Box, a presentation that was a visual and visceral collage of what the production might have looked like. As it was a compilation of the important images and themes and the aura of what the show meant to me, I shared it with my designers and actors as a motivational and inspirational tool for them. The above descriptions are based on my initial thoughts that were ultimately combined with the creativity of the designers and the production team and should give the reader a vision of the final product on stage. It was a simple, yet richly designed show that was unified by the burning ember metaphor. While the unity of the designs and staging were important, ultimately what mattered is that we created a piece that impacted the audience into thinking, feeling and possibly cross-examining themselves. The play packs a powerful message - a message supported with detailed, vulnerable characters who have their very names and their souls at stake - a message that may be more alive today than when it was first produced. Richard Eyre, in an interview featured on the Crucible On Broadway production website stated that: "One of the purposes of fiction must be to oblige us to confront the moral choices in life that we avoid by luck or by cowardice, as Arthur Miller puts it, 'the stuff that you didn't dare or want to look at before.' Questions like these: Could I have behaved better? Would I have behaved worse?" (2). This simple questioning by the viewer is something I hoped my production could achieve. Richard

Watts Jr. closes his review of the original Broadway production with the statement that: “[...] ‘The Crucible’ is not easily to be forgotten” (Martine 74). This too was something I hoped my production could achieve. These were my goals as I embarked down the path of The Crucible.



## **CHAPTER TWO: Arthur Miller: The Man, His Career and His Crucible**

Arthur Miller is heartily acknowledged as one of the leading playwrights of the American theatre. His artistic and academic position in the history of American drama (and probably in the world) is solid. He has enriched Broadway and world stages for decades. As a multi-award-winning playwright he continues to be active. He is popular, yet controversial. Regarding the heart of his work, his critics are often perplexed or divided.

“Some dismiss him as little more than a disciple of Ibsen: others cite him as a penetrating critic of American society and an important innovator in the theatre. Some critics call his work ‘bloodless’, while others admire the subtlety of his characterization. There is disagreement, too about whether Miller’s dramatic vision is profound or superficial, clear-eyed or sentimental.” (Carson p.1).

Whatever your stance is you cannot deny the fact that Arthur Miller is one of the most produced and most distinguished playwrights alive today.

### **The Playwright (Beyond Death of a Salesman)**

Miller was born and raised in New York City in 1915, the son of a prosperous businessman who lost his wealth during the Great Depression. Although he was a mediocre high school student he went on to study at the University of Michigan, where two of his plays were produced in 1934. Upon graduation in 1934 he earned employment with the Federal Theatre Project and wrote radio plays for CBS and the Calvacade of America. These college years of playwriting and his radio work served as a formidable apprenticeship for Miller. The Man Who Had All the Luck was his first produced Broadway play in 1944. Luck, unluckily lasted only four performances but the play won a Theatre Guild Award and served to establish Miller as an important young playwright. In 2002 it enjoyed a successful Broadway revival. His first real success occurred with

All My Sons (1947: film, 1948), which was the winner of the Drama Critics Circle Award. Two years after this success Miller came out with his most famous and well-respected work, Death of a Salesman. Winning both the Pulitzer Prize and a Drama Critics Circle Award, the play ran for more than seven hundred performances. Shortly after this phenomenon the play was translated into over a dozen languages and made its author a millionaire. It changed the life of Mr. Miller and the American theatre fabric forever. The keen social conscience evident in his first successes manifested itself again in his next hit. The 1953 Tony Award winning The Crucible explores the witch-hunts of colonial Salem, Mass. but was readily comparable to the McCarthy congressional investigations that were then in progress. His other plays include A View from the Bridge, After the Fall, The Price, The Creation of the World and Other Business, The American Clock, The Ride Down Mount Morgan and Mr. Peters' Connections. Miller's writings outside the theatre have also been fruitful and certainly varied. He has written several novels and screenplays including Focus (1945) an ironic tale of anti-Semitism, The Misfits (1961) and the 1997 Academy Award nominated screenplay adaptation of The Crucible. He also wrote the unique travel text for three books of photographs by his wife, Inge Morath, and penned Salesman in Beijing, a diary of the first Chinese production of Death of a Salesman. His most recent works are also distinguished including the memoir Timebends, Echoes Down the Corridor: Collected Essays 1944-2000, and On Politics and the Art of Acting.

On March 7, 2002 another revival of The Crucible opened on Broadway for a special limited run. This celebrated production earned six Tony Award nominations including Best Revival of a Play. In the Virginia Theatre PlayBill for this production the

credits of Arthur Miller in the “Who’s Who...” section top them all. His impressive list of honors and awards include winning the Pulitzer Prize, three Tony Awards, an Obie, a BBC Best Play Award, an Olivier Award for Best Play, a Gold Medal for Drama from the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the John F. Kennedy Lifetime Achievement Award and a 1999 Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement. At the ripe age of 87, Arthur Miller was still going strong.

### **History of The Crucible (The Good, Bad and Ugly)**

The writing and production history of The Crucible is as eclectic and controversial as the playwright himself. James J. Martine in The Crucible: Politics, Property and Pretense affirms that “The Crucible has now reached the status of an American masterwork, as both literature and drama. It is produced, read, discussed and examined in American colleges and universities. [...], the play has developed a large and appreciative audience.” (p. 16). Critical praise generally echoes the sentiment that it is a masterpiece. It was not always this way. Miller himself recalls in Timebends how the American playwright Clifford Odets (a fellow dramatist) denigrated the play with a comment that it was “just a play about a bad marriage” (236). When The Crucible opened on Broadway on January 22, 1953, it received mixed reviews and response. The scholar, A. Peter Foulkes, offers one memory of the play’s opening as: “The first-night audience received the play tumultuously and enthusiastically, according it 19 curtain calls and insisting that the author appear on stage to accept in person the shouts of ‘Bravo’ which echoed throughout the house. An auspicious beginning indeed.” (93). This is not quite the way Arthur Miller himself remembers it. While the play had received this level

of enthusiasm and support in Wilmington, Delaware, on its first public performance prior to Broadway, Miller's recollection of the opening in New York is:

"I have never been surprised by the New York reception of a play, and opening night in the Martin Beck ...was no exception. I knew we had cooled off a very hot play, which therefore was not going to move anyone very deeply... What I had not bargained for ...was the hostility in the New York audience as the theme of the play was revealed: an invisible sheet of ice formed over their heads, thick enough to skate on. In the lobby at the end, people with whom I had some fairly close professional acquaintanceships passed me by as though I were invisible." (Timebends, 347).

In Martine's overview of the critical reception of this initial production he discusses how the major critics were basically kind to Miller but there was a case of "great expectation". After the success of Death of a Salesman, "...they expected every one of his plays to be a masterpiece and their reviews indicate as much." (17). Other negative criticism was connected to or caught up with the contemporary parallels of the McCarthy situation. Many other critics, however, were "...unstinting in their praise of the play, considering it an unqualified triumph" (Martine, 17). "John Chapman in the *Daily News*, Robert Coleman in the *Daily Mirror*, and especially William Hawkins in the *New York World Telegram and Sun*, all taking the play on its own merits, saw the play as an important advance in Miller's oeuvre" (18). It ran for 197 performances, which was a disappointment to many when compared to the 742 performances of Salesman and the 328 performances of All My Sons. It is interesting to note that the play did win both the Antoinette Perry (Tony) and Donaldson awards as the best play of the year. Since its mixed icy opening, The Crucible has risen to be Miller's most-produced work around the world and has enjoyed four Broadway revivals

As a representative in the canon of great American dramas there is no shortage of praise for The Crucible from both contemporary critics and scholars. The major Miller

academic critic-scholars all begin with the assumption that, "...The Crucible is important and worthy of serious scholarly investigation" (Martine, 18). Gerald Weales in Introduction to The Crucible: Text and Criticism points out that "...anyone with a touch of conscience, a hint of political interest, a whisper of moral concern will be drawn to The Crucible" (xvii). Perhaps Sheridan Morley in his review of the National Theatre's 1990 revival of the play in London immortalizes the work best: "The Crucible has never in purely dramatic terms been Miller's best play, but it is perhaps his greatest attempt and claim to be the keeper of the American historical conscience in this century, and that alone explains the need for constant revival" (65).

Along with its abundance of praise the work has its share of denunciation. It is interesting to note, however, that for every negative criticism by academics about the play, there were equal amounts of rebuttals in support of the writing. George Jean Nathan in The Theatre of the Fifties brings to light the four principal charges that in one form or another have been brought against the play repeatedly by critics. Philip G. Hill debates these charges in an in-depth and intelligent article, The Crucible: A Structural View. Hill not only accurately summarizes the common complaints about the writing (as suggested by Nathan) but he speaks concisely to what he thinks the critics have missed or are missing. Nathan's first grievance is that the power of the play is all internal. He implies that the power of the piece is not communicated to an audience. While one can agree that a great deal of the action occurs within the mind and soul of the protagonist, Hill is quick to point out that many other great masterpieces of drama also follow this form. He also reports that there is little empirical evidence to support the allegation that The Crucible does not communicate any power to an audience. Since the "failed"

Broadway opening, most theatres report long lines at the box offices and previous attendance records being broken for their Crucible productions. Experienced theatregoers "...testified that they had enjoyed one of the rare and memorable theatrical experiences of their lives" (2). This reporting hardly describes a play without power.

The second charge by Nathan against The Crucible and "...one that is almost universally pressed by those dissatisfied with the play, is that it suffers from poor character development" (2). While Hill agrees with this in regards to certain characters he argues that the principal power of The Crucible does not need to lie in character development. He maintains, and I agree, that the characters are entirely adequate for Mr. Miller's design and no law dictates that every play must depend upon characterization for its success. In a later discussion, I will probe further into what is more at the heart to the play's success. Suffice it to say, I feel that this criticism of character development is an arguable one.

The next point in Nathan's criticism is one that was expressed a great deal by the critics at the time of the play's original production. It was largely attacked in 1953 as being too propagandistic, being too isolated to a specific phenomenon of the time, and thus, it was a play for the immediate times and not for all time. Hill has discovered with time that this criticism has lost much potency since the McCarthy era has passed into history. The thinking here is that the play pushed too hard the parallels of the witch-hunts in Salem, 1692 with the McCarthy investigations in Washington and New York of 1952. It is important to remember, this was a time when theatre and film luminaries were being watched and were therefore already uncomfortable with the topic. The continued success of the play long after this time proves that it does not depend at all upon such



parallels. Hill confirms this when he speaks to the themes of "...a powerful indictment of bigotry, narrow-mindedness, hypocrisy and violation of due process of law" all being couched in evil and politics. While one can argue that this may or may not still be timely, the McCarthy issue itself is buried and the play still has a meaningful effect on its audiences. Having seen several productions in recent times, I can attest to its longevity and potent audience impact. Current events in our society also make it difficult for any critic to disagree with the repetition of themes and political topics the play manifests.

The fourth charge against the play, and the one that Hill feels is perhaps brought on the most by more serious and insightful critics, is an attack against the basic structure of the play. Critics claim that it "draws up its big guns" too early in the play, and that by the end of the courtroom scene there is really nowhere for the audience to go but down. The debate against this is that these critics have misunderstood the heart of the play. If you agree that the central action of the play is for John Proctor "to find his soul" versus to merely free his wife, then certainly the action does not stop after the courtroom scene. Hill supports this thinking with a reference to the real central action of Oedipus. Oedipus is not just looking for the killer of Laius. The themes and objectives, like those in The Crucible are deeper and richer. With this thought, the structure of The Crucible can be clearly analyzed in terms of the familiar elements of the well-made play. While I intend to dissect this in my future research and analysis I can assure the reader that the journey of the play does not fall dramatically after the courtroom scene. I have experienced powerful productions of the play where the audience and I were gripped with the action of John Proctor's struggle with his soul in the final act, right up until the curtain went down. This phenomenon was also clearly evident in the audience reaction to my own

production. Philip G. Hill reaffirms the thinking here in his conclusion where he reminds us that plays are written to be performed on a stage, and "...the ultimate test of their success is their effectiveness under production conditions. The Crucible stands up very well to this test" (6).

Having proven that The Crucible has indeed stood the audience test of time, I will now briefly examine recent mainstream productions of the play in two very different but very popular forms. In 1996 Hollywood opened its doors to John Proctor and company, and in the spring of 2002 a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary production appeared on Broadway to critical acclaim.

The recent Nicholas Hytner film of The Crucible is not the first cinematic version of the play; however, it is significant that Hollywood finally courted the play after its shutting out Miller in regards to his suspected communist activities. A French film entitled Les Sorcieres de Salem initially brought the Miller epic to the screen. It was directed by Raymond Rouleau and the screenplay was adapted from Miller by Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre was credited with a valiant attempt at breathing new life into the work but he was "in 'his Marxist phase' at the time, according to Miller, and his Sorcieres indeed brings class wars to Salem" (Weales, p. 1). In his 1997 movie review for American Theatre, Gerald Weales discovered that Sartre not only provided a Marxist take on the witchcraft trials, but he turned the John-Elizabeth-Abigail story into a very French triangle. This fleshing up of Abigail's love-obsession with John proved to be "instructive" to Miller. Weales highlights how many of Miller's own 1996 screenplay adaptations appear to be drawn from Sartre's treatment, the most obvious of which is the advancement of the love triangle. The new Hollywood treatment, according to Weales, is

effective, providing us with a film "...for the late 1990s, inviting the audience to find its own analogies, to recognize the ways that greed and lust and envy can wear the mask of public weal" (2). The film is worthy, according to Weales, of a Review Grade of "A." Other major writers and papers awarded the film an "A" or "four stars, out of four." In fact, of the dozen or more film reviews that I scoured, only one reviewer rated it as a "B" while the rest gave it top grades. Accolades such as "powerful" and "potent" resounded amongst critics. Newsweek calls it "passionate" and credits Hytner with revving up the emotional pitch from the outset (1). People Weekly describes it as "...engrossing and invigoratingly intelligent" and advises us that, "Audiences can attend this movie and enjoy the rare sensation of being treated with respect by the people who made it" (December 2, 1996). I also found the movie to be powerful. It gave new insight into the characters and their motivation and provided a rich visual image of the life and times of the village. The drama and acting are superb (yes, even Winonna Ryder rises to the talents of Daniel Day-Lewis as Proctor and to the accomplished Paul Scofield as Danforth). It is a gripping movie. Randy Nelson in his video review of the film for Sojourners, (July-August, 1997) notes that despite the strong performances and many laudatory reviews "the movie did not achieve the anticipated critical or commercial success." He also illuminates the fact that within two months of its release, it was handed down to bargain theatres and then quickly on to video. He offers some interesting answers to the question of "Why did a story so powerfully told have such a short life among us?" (1). While Nelson credits Miller for actually making the story more accessible to contemporary audiences he cites that audience indifference to movies with a historical base to them and/or a disinterest in the subject of witches accounts for part of

the movie's quick downfall. He also suspects that with the way the movie industry operates today movies in general are rarely given a chance to succeed. If a new release doesn't catch on immediately the movie disappears and it isn't allowed to build any resonance. The other major factor for the short life of the movie lies in the current tastes of the movie-going public. "The Crucible does not rely on the two things the movie industry and audiences seem to value most today-special effects and explosive action" (Nelson 2). While The Crucible was not a high earning escapist movie, and was neither a flawless dramatic film nor a flawless play, I must certainly agree with Mr. Nelson's conclusion about this film:

"This summer, after you have had your fill of the special effects spectacles and the explosive action extravaganzas, go to your local video store and rent The Crucible. Then, along with Arthur Miller and a superb cast, ponder what it might mean to live with honesty, dignity and integrity in a society too often looking primarily for quick fixes, painless solutions, or escapist entertainment" (3).

This sentiment accurately resonates with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Broadway production that I attended in June, 2002. After I had enjoyed a feast of spectacular, Broadway musical extravaganzas and some exciting, new alternative plays the Broadway revival, starring Liam Neeson and Laura Linney proved to be a grounding and compelling evening of theatre.

There was a buzz of excitement in the air as the lights dimmed in the Virginia Theatre. Here was the celebrated revival of Arthur Miller's Crucible, directed by world-renowned artist Richard Eyre with Miller himself having been part of the casting and rehearsal process. Here was a gallery of stage and film stars about to bite into what critics had hailed as amazing, riveting and enthralling. Here was I, with my scrupulous soon-to-be director's eye, and the same exhilarating buzz of excitement, about to

experience one of the final shows of a successful, yet limited run. Mr. Miller, Mr. Eyre and their outstanding cast and crew did not disappoint me. Right from the start the production grabbed me. The set struck my attention immediately. It featured a massive wooden structure with appropriate angles and twists that moved into a variety of positions for each act, thus succinctly suggesting each locale. The design, by Tim Hatley, proved to add to the coarseness and raw dramatic pulse of the play. The tone (which was maintained throughout the evening) was fast-paced and laced with passion and mystery. The stakes were high throughout and although, in a few instances, this came across as melodramatic (for some minor characters), the cast quickly settled into a journey where lust, love and the Lord were at risk. The production was full of strong moments and lush designs. The design elements that impressed me the most, and that I considered for my own production, included: an abundance of open space in the sets which allowed for some gorgeous stage pictures throughout; a lighting effect under the floor which glowed in climactic moments as if the floor was on fire (or to suggest that hell was not far below the action); and the use of a hazer from above which served to enrich the lighting cues with its smoky aura as well as to enhance the overall mood of somberness. It was the acting that impressed me in this Crucible experience. Overall it was exquisite. Liam Neeson as Proctor and Brian Murray as Governor Danforth were powerful pillars in the production. Their speaking voices, sub-text and very presence were sublime. While Laura Linney, as Elizabeth Proctor, also had a strong aura and potent inner monologue I felt she was directed too small (from the middle of the house her actions and reactions barely read) or she was too used to a film style of acting. These leads were supported by a stellar ensemble that all rose to the challenge of a fiery evening of drama.

I made several observations of the production that I took into consideration when I embarked on my own Crucible trek. These included my criticisms of lighting, which was often too dark and full of ineffective shadows, a large concern for the accents (i.e. they were inconsistent or too affected in this production and not always clearly heard or understood), and a question as to why the production often didn't emit a true aura of the period (despite authentic costumes and sets). The answer to this is perhaps connected to the acting style of some cast members, (e.g. 21<sup>st</sup> century film acting or the actor not doing some of his or her research?). At intermission I felt that while the pacing of line delivery had an effective urgency the first Act took too long to really get going. This was possibly due to the large amount of exposition and the introduction of a great number of characters that must occur. It suggested to me that it would be important to direct this Act with an attention to the central conflict in the community and the rising tension between Elizabeth and John, from the onset. A good example of this is when John first arrives home to greet his wife. In Eyre's production a tentative, almost shameful, welcome-home kiss between the husband and wife proved to be a searing gestic moment, where the inner turmoil surrounding his past affair with Abigail was still haunting them. The production had a riveting climax and was met by a rousing standing ovation that was genuine and sincere. As the audience left the theatre I was swept up in their feelings. They had been moved and were reflective and appreciative. Mr. Miller had his revenge from an icy opening in 1953 to a bonafide Broadway hit in 2002.

Other research in New York City afforded me access to the Performing Arts Library at the Lincoln Centre. Here amidst rare recordings and books was a small treasure of videotapes of Miller interviews and previous Crucible productions. I was



attracted to the video recording of The National Arts Theatres production of The Crucible at the Belasco Theatre on December 18, 1991, directed by Yossi Yzraely and starring Martin Sheen as Proctor. Keeping in mind that it was only a video of a live production, (a process which typically doesn't fare well) I found this Broadway baby to be melodramatic and extremely inconsistent (e.g. accents coming and going, level of talent ranging from professional to amateur, etc.). Martin Sheen in particular was certainly over-the-top, often playing the jokes instead of the dramatic text. It made me feel like I was watching a situation comedy for many of his scenes. But then magically in the final Act, he landed and was believable, reverent and actually moving in his struggle to find his soul. Other aspects of the production were much richer including a striking set that was simple with a mysterious forest in the background and a chilling sound design complete with dissonant, disturbing violin music. While I enjoyed some interesting textual discoveries in viewing this production it paled in comparison to live Broadway in 2002. Despite my criticisms of viewing this video, the recorded audience afforded the production the same zeal and appreciation as the audience from my previous night at the Virginia Theatre. An enthusiastic standing ovation greeted the cast on the footage confirming yet again that Arthur Miller had conquered Broadway then and now.

### **Inside Arthur Miller**

Having reviewed the path of the production history of The Crucible and its significant contemporary impact it seemed fitting to examine the man himself. What makes Arthur Miller tick? What has truly influenced his writing? While many scholars and critics have surmised and researched the answers to these questions, the truth lies within the man himself. Through a review of countless interviews, essays and the

autobiographical Timebends we can discover the inner workings of the man and his writing.

In the 1989 special recorded video, Spotlight: Interview with Arthur Miller and Edwin Wilson, Howard Urman speaks with Mr. Miller about the playwright he was and is. Miller identifies that for him, “A play that’s all words is deficient...it’s all flash.” He elaborates that his typical work calls for a genuine and deep conflict or else it fades. This echoes a previous dialogue in Arthur Miller and John Stix at the Library and Museum of the Performing Arts, (1981) where he believed that “Drama is conflict between people and within them and is brought out by action.” This is certainly the case in The Crucible and is a repetitive motif in most of his dramatic structures.

Miller also has an intriguing discussion with Urman regarding the nature of the audience of the time and its influence on a writer. The playwright points out that the nature of an audience has changed from the 1950s and 60s. Back then, Miller cites having a “rough coherence” with the audience, whose members were highly representative of the middle class. Thus as a playwright of that time, he knew where he was. Now he claims that with the cultural revolution of the Sixties there is an “atomization of the audience.” A young playwright now must juggle between the younger audiences (who are attracted to more alternative theatre) and the Broadway or commercial audience who are middle-aged and often upper class. This phenomenon is heightened by the rise of theatre prices over the years.

Miller thus feels that theatre has become an art form for a smaller segment of society. Playwrights must now face different financial concerns if they want their work produced. Miller refers to The Crucible as a perfect example of this dilemma. “The

Crucible is an adult play with a large cast. Plays of this dimension are falling between the cracks...commercial theatre won't support it." Young playwrights of today must decide if they can afford to do plays of importance (which was the reverse up until the mid-sixties). Miller maintains here that commercial theatre has trivialized writing.

These issues were not a concern for Miller when he wrote, and thus, we can identify a hallmark of all his writings in the addressing of serious subjects in deep conflict. In Spotlight, Miller clarifies that, "I don't write about social problems. I write about people caught in dilemmas which have application far beyond themselves." This passion to write theatre that resonates beyond the personal and has an application to society as a whole is also a trademark of Arthur Miller's. He is adamant about this in his Spotlight interview where he speaks of his writing and how it examines the individual's conflict within society, and how this then presents a social and moral consciousness for us all. "Every businessman, dentist, plumber, taxi driver, knows it...every social problem creeps into his bedroom, his family, his children." For Miller this social conscience is the fundamental item - the "core" to his writing. There is no question that this core is steeped in The Crucible and his other works.

When asked by Stix, "Should a play teach?" Mr. Miller is quick to respond, "They all do whether they intend to or not. It teaches you a different viewpoint than you have." He adds that "...it's alright if it teaches you, as long as it teaches you with passion!" Thus Miller emerges as a realistic playwright in the American tradition who wants to create "psychologically valid characters with whom audiences can identify directly" within situations that ultimately matter to them personally. In Arthur Miller: Overview, critics Gerald Weales and Lisa C. Harper concur with this and identify him as

a “playwright of ideas” (3). In the American Scholar Bruce Bawer confirms that “...his autobiography reveals that ‘the majority of his plays, by his account, did not grow out of characters, situations, or voices, but out of hankerings to make bold public statements.’” (Weales and Harper, 4).

While we may have a good sense as to what propels Arthur Miller in his writing I now turn to the compelling essay by Miller himself, Why I Wrote The Crucible: An Artist’s Answer to Politics for some final insights on the work. It is no secret that McCarthy's power in the 1950's to stir up fear of Communism and the resulting trials fueled the explosive themes in The Crucible. It is interesting to revisit with Mr. Miller his journey in taking on the issue and the steps that led him to his ultimate destination of Salem. In his essay on Why he acknowledges that, “The Crucible was an act of desperation. [...]The Red Hunt, led by the House Committee on Un-American Activities and by McCarthy was becoming the dominating fixation of the American psyche” (2). It soon became a fixation and almost an obligation for Miller to speak about it through his writing. He remembers that, “In those years, our thought processes were becoming magical, so paranoid, that to imagine writing a play about this environment was like trying to pick one's teeth with a ball of wool: I lacked the tools to illuminate miasma. Yet I kept being drawn back to it” (2). Recalling his reading of the Salem witchcraft trials in College and being moved by a book published in 1867 --which was an immense study by Charles W. Upham, who was then the mayor of Salem--Miller was inspired to write about that period. The work took only seven months to write, and the playwright's journey was steeped in historical research. In the spring of 1952 Miller immersed himself in the courthouse of Salem where he pondered over thousands of documents from

the actual trials. Mr. Miller's interest was piqued by one suspicious discovery in an simple entry made by Reverend Samuel Parris, who was one of the chief instigators of the witch hunt. Miller remarks, "In this remarkably observed gesture of a troubled young girl, I believed, a play became possible" (3). He was referring to a recording of Abigail damning Elizabeth Proctor by a simple human touch in the court that seemed hesitant at first and then Abigail cried out that "her fingers burned." Through the subtext of this and other entries the playwright drew the conclusion that John Proctor had bedded Abigail, and suddenly a motive and a spine for the play was born.

While Arthur Miller was drawn into using the Salem witch trials as a powerful metaphor for his drama he was also skeptical, at the time, of being criticized for skewing history for a mere partisan purpose. However the more he read into the Salem panic, "...the more it touched off corresponding ages of common experiences in the fifties: the old friend of a blacklisted person crossing the street to avoid being seen talking to him; the overnight conversions of leftists into born-again patriots; and so on. Apparently, certain processes are universal." (4). Miller speaks in this arena to examples of Jewish people being trucked off in Hitler's Germany and of their Gentile neighbors quite naturally turning away in fear and thinking "...well they must have done *something*". He summarizes these historical experiences with a statement that is at the root of The Crucible and of so many other real human tragedies over time; "Few of us can easily surrender our belief that society must somehow make sense. The thought that the state has lost its mind and is punishing so many innocent people is intolerable. Consequently, the evidence has to be internally denied." (4). The Crucible chronicles a social panic and its aftermath. It speaks to a society that was not making any sense, and it is an artist's

answer to the politics of that time. It speaks to what has become the trademark of Arthur Miller - a man with a social conscience.

### **CHAPTER THREE: Text Analysis for The Crucible**

Great work has been done over years analyzing the structure, make-up and breakdown of The Crucible. I read through numerous analyses of the script, the characters, and the theme and explored the techniques that make the drama so powerful. Several outstanding scholarly texts that informed me include Brodie's Notes on Arthur Miller's The Crucible, The Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller and Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Crucible, to cite but a few. Rather than offering a more traditional overview, it was suggested that I offer the typical text analysis and preparation that I personally go through when approaching a play. I leapt at the opportunity. As a director, I was attracted to this, as it served as a check for me on the validity and integrity of my process. I hope that the documentation of this process will give the reader a better insight into my style and approach, and will also illustrate a sampling of what has proven to work for me and my actors.

The Crucible has all the makings of a well-made play. It offers a traditional cause-and-effect flow for unity (where, one thing happens causing the next event and so on) versus using character or theme for its primary unification. In fact the play is full of what is termed an *if only*. Miller uses this *if only* effect beautifully to craft a tragedy that maintains our interest with a multitude of plot twists and rich character development. The characterizations are deep, multi-faceted and dynamic. This is all enhanced with the many brilliant *if onlys*. *If only* John Proctor hadn't slept with Abigail, *if only* the girls hadn't danced in the forest, *if only* Proctor had used a lawyer instead of speaking for himself in court and the biggest one, *if only* the woman who could never tell a lie, hadn't lied. I count on many things to help me in my analysis of a script when going into

production. This includes several readings of the script, pertinent research and clarifying definitions or sayings that are foreign to my instincts, my actors and me. Yes, I include my actors in the research process. I am not the type of director to walk in and spoon-feed actors with all my discoveries. I love to discover with them and through them. So I may very well have an abundance of information to share with actors, but I am selective about what I tell them or force on them. I prefer a journey where we both explore, dissect the material and make informed decisions together. To this extent, I do my homework and they are expected to do theirs. Therefore, when I cast a show I am attracted to actors who are comfortable making strong choices and who make informed choices. In some instances it is difficult to make informed choices if you haven't done any research. This process should be also blended with action based on impulse and instinct. My role is to help shape these in a safe environment.

Part of the actor's homework (analysis) that I did assign included a character biography where they looked to the script and their own imagination and creativity to shape the structure of where their character is coming from. I encouraged speaking with other actors whose character is in a relationship with them and therefore must have a mutually agreeable background (e.g. how long have a husband and wife been married). I also had them look for animal and color metaphors that inspired their choices and lend subtle characteristics to their voice, movements and attitudes. All of these had to be informed and supported by the text. Actors were also expected to come to all rehearsals having clarified for themselves what their character's super-objective in the world of the play was, and what goal they were after in each unit or scene that took them on a journey towards trying to achieve their super-objective. For example an actor might decide that



John Proctor's super-objective is to discover who he really is, (i.e. his core, his name).

Another important tool I gave the actors is a standard character chart that they had to fill out. This is where the actor lists from the actual script, what the character says about himself, what other characters say about him and what he says about others. I then have them decide if what is said is true or false. This bookwork has the actor delve deeply into clues that the playwright gives him about his character and his relationship and attitude to others. I found it was a great starting point for them.

After we had all read the play several times, on our own and as a group, we engaged together in a round table discussion about general themes, issues, symbols and messages. For me, the central action in the play is John Proctor searching for his soul. The dominant theme then, is to let no man judge you, let your own conscience be your judge and your guide. Miller reinforces this in an article by Thomas Adler where he clarifies that the real and inner theme of The Crucible is about "the handing over of conscience to another, be it woman, the state, or a terror, and the realization that with conscience goes the person, the soul immortal, and the name" (Bigsby, 99). Other themes or universal ideas explored in the text include guilt, intolerance, hysteria and reputation. The motifs or literary devices that Miller uses to explore and develop these themes include empowerment, accusations, confessions, sexuality and legal proceedings. If you are looking for a symbol in the play, look no further than the actual paranoia of the McCarthy trials as the embodiment of the play's action and events.

With seeming oppositeness, the language of the play is both lyrical and rough as well as both gushing and simple. Miller used his hard research into actual trial documents to capture the language of the people and the times with a poetic, image filled

richness. When looking at language it was important for the actors and I to understand any foreign words, places or the language of the locale. The Crucible is filled with colloquial sayings and I thank the Brodie's Notes for the following definitions:

### Scene 1

SALEM, City and county seat of Essex County, Massachusetts, USA, on the North coast of Massachusetts Bay, 15 miles N.E. of Boston. Founded in 1626, it is the oldest town of the State.

MEETING (\*MEETINGS), prayer-meetings.

SHOVELBOARD, now called shove-halfpenny: a game played by pushing disks or coins along a smooth board marked with transverse lines. One can readily gamble on the scoring system.

JAMESTOWN, Named, of course, after James I, this was a town of Virginia, the first permanent English settlement in America. It was founded in 1607. The site is preserved as an historical relic.

VIRGINIA, One of the 13 original states of the USA, named after Elizabeth I, "The Virgin Queen" of England. James I granted its original charter: it became a crown colony in 1624, seceding with the southern states in 1861. Here slavery began in the original thirteen states and on this basis it became a rich tobacco-plantation state.

THE TIMES . . . OUT OF JOINT, See Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, end of Act I, Scene v.

LUCIFER, Name attached to Satan, the fallen archangel (as in Milton's *Paradise Lost*) and thus to the Devil as the principle of evil.

BARBADOS, Most easterly of the West Indian Islands, first settled by the English in 1627.

HEARTY, fit and well.

BEVERLY, A town of Essex County, Massachusetts, situated on an inlet of the Atlantic opposite Salem.

GOODY PROCTOR, 'Goody' was short for 'Goodwife' (the feminine of 'Goodman') and was used as a title, among religious and agricultural communities, for the mistress of the household.

FORKED AND HOOFED, Like the Devil, usually represented in medieval times with a cloven foot and a forked tail. The origins of this representation are obscure and much debated.

NARRAGANSETT, On Rhode Island, the smallest of the states of the USA, settled in the sixteenth century. All the early colonists and pioneers had naturally to contend with and defend their occupation from the local American-Indian tribes. There is a suggestion here, too, of the strength of the 'ex-serviceman' group (called "veterans" in the USA): many of these rallied fervently to the patriotic calls of Senator McCarthy.

UNBAPTIZED, because they had not lived long enough for the religious, ceremonial "bathing".

SUCKING MOUTH, She is wasting away as if some devilish influence is draining her life away, preying upon her.

BOSTON, Capital city of Massachusetts, first settled in 1630 by Puritans: the name came from the English town of Boston in Lincolnshire whence many of its original settlers emigrated.

POINTY, sharp.

REDDISH, bloody.

POSH, Exclamation of derision and impatience.

*'going up to Jesus'*, No true psalm can contain a reference to Jesus, and indeed there were very few hymns in use before 1696: while the phrase is untraceable, the dramatic effect is sound.

WARDENS, churchwardens, the principal officers of the church.

HARVARD COLLEGE, Founded in 1636 and named after John Harvard (1607-38) and English emigrant to Massachusetts who left much of his fortune and library to found the college.

QUAKERS, Members of the Society of Friends, founded in the middle of the seventeenth century, with no definite creed and no regular ministry.

INQUISITION, A court set up to inquire into offences against Roman Catholicism, fully established by 1229. The Dominican Order of monks were the general administrators, and used torture to obtain recantations. It was particularly active in Spain.

OLD BOY, the Devil, familiarly and jocularly.

LUTHER, Martin Luther (1483 – 1546), German religious reformer who became the founder of what may be called ‘Protestant Civilization’ by denouncing the Papacy. He survived a trial for heresy and being excommunicated for his challenge to orthodoxy.

ERASMUS, Desiderius Erasmus (1466 – 1536), Dutch scholar and theologian: a great humanist.

SUCCUBI, devils supposed to assume a female body to consort with men in their sleep. Here, more of a fearsome diabolical ‘nightmare’ of a belief.

RED HELL, Soviet Communist ideology.

*klatsches* (\**klatches*), The general meaning of this German word is “gossip”, “tittle-tattle”, “scandal-mongering”. The use here would suggest that this could have been the immediate, but not the only or final reason, for the secret meetings.

DIONYSIAC, Of dionysus, the Greek equivalent of the Roman Bacchus. The nocturnal festivals in his honor were apparently characterized by drunkenness, debauchery, and general licentiousness to the point of orgy.

AMERICAN BAPIST, The Baptists are a Protestant sect, with immersion of the body in water (for adults and children) as a fundamental principle, symbolising the washing away of sin, and their spirituality and adherence to Scripture. In the USA are the largest of the Protestant groups: in Rhode Island in the seventeenth century there was established the first modern state in which the control of religious matters was taken entirely out the hands of the civil government by the Baptist church.

INCUBI, the masculine equivalent of “succubae” above: used also of a nightmare in general.

IN NOMINE SOMINI SABOTH SUI FILIIQUE ITE AD INFERNOS, The Latin may thus be translated: “In the name of the Lord of Hosts, and of his son, go to the infernal spirits”

KETTLE, cooking pot.

TRUCK, meddle; bargain.

## Scene Two

POPPET, doll.

CLAPBOARD, thin boards used in covering wooden houses.

*Long needle*, This sticking of pins or needles into small models was relic of the “sympathetic magic” of classical witchcraft: this was to provoke comparable results on

the living characters they represented, and is not unknown today in primitive communities in Europe and Asia.

FAMILIAR SPIRIT, Usually called “familiars”, these were low-ranking demons, generally in the shape of a small domestic animal, advising the witch and performing small malicious errands: the witches of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* (I.1) respond to the calls of their familiars: “I come, Graymalkin” (a grey cat) and “Paddock calls” (a toad).

PONTIUS PLATE, The Roman governor of Judea, A.D. 26 – 36, who ordered the crucifixion of Jesus. See *Matthew*, 27. xxiv.

#### Scene Four

MARBLEHEAD TO LYNN, Marblehead is a seaport of Massachusetts, settled by Englishmen in 1629: it is about six miles from Lynn, another seaport.

RAPHAEL . . . TOBIAS, In the book of the Apocrypha, *Tobit*, 5.ii-viii.

*ipso facto*, by that very fact (Latin).

AUGUR BIT, Properly “auger”: a boring tool fitted into a carpenter’s brace.

I HAVE KNOWN HER., This is a Biblical expression for having had sexual experience of a person.

#### Scene Five

ANDOVER. A town of Essex County, Massachusetts, on the southeast side of the Merrimac valley.

#### Unit Breakdown, Subtext and Action

A major step for me in the analytical process was taking the cast and spending several days doing an in-depth play analysis. This process involved reading through the play unit by unit. I divided the play into units of action that were typically based on new entrances and exits or new actions (i.e., a character does or doesn't get what they want in the scene and then they go after something new). Together, we scrutinized each unit and discussed what we thought was happening on the surface of the play, what was really happening underneath and how this propels the story, the theme and/or the characters. I

divided The Crucible into fifty-seven units and assigned each unit a title. The unit title suggested to the actors and designers what I thought that unit was really about either on or under the surface. Often if you just read through the list of my unit titles it gives you a skeletal view of the rise and fall of the action with clues to what the play is really about. What follows is my unit breakdown and the initial scrutiny that I took into my first rehearsal to discuss with the actors. It is noteworthy to mention here that I did not force these ideas on the actors, but rather I shared these with them after I had heard their own thoughts, ideas and responses to the unit. During this process my ideas changed and were built upon. Thus, we arrived at a richer place in the understanding and appreciation of the text. Note that in each unit breakdown I had listed what the main action is that takes place (on the surface). Then I bolded the subtext, inner workings and what I term as an *ah ha*. This is a light bulb going off for me or a juicy textual clue to the action that I had discovered or had an intuition for. These bolded sections were a starting point for what I saw happening underneath the surface. This kick off was a valuable textual analysis that I used to stimulate my actors with, so that together we could unearth even deeper subtext and action.

### Unit Breakdown

#### Unit 1            page 5            *The Overture*

A distorted but distinguishable movement sequence where the key players of the ritual dance in the forest, are tossed and tangled across the stage. **The characters traditionally reveal this as exposition in the first Act. It will be created as a non-traditional opening number or Overture to create mystery and suspense for the audience, as well as to titillate their senses. The audience will be disturbed and instantly engaged. It will mirror the wild freedom and sensuality the girls and Tituba experienced and ultimately explode with their discovery by Parris. They have broken the codes of the community and the religion. They have ignited the fuse for drama.**

#### Unit 2            pages 5-6            *Not Goin' Die*

The next morning. Spring of the year, 1692, in Salem, Massachusetts. Reverend Parris is discovered praying over his afflicted daughter Betty, who is motionless in bed. Tituba enters, concerned for Betty and is haughtily dismissed by him. He sobs to God for help and prays for Betty to stir. **The action sets up for the audience that something is very wrong and that Parris is disturbed with Tituba. We are introduced to the high religious values of Parris and to the servant and master relationship of Tituba and him. The mystery and turmoil begins.**

Unit 3            pages 6-7        *Unnatural*

Abigail and Susanna enter to deliver the news that the Doctor can find nothing in his books related to Betty's illness and that it may be due to unnatural causes. Parris is adamant that this isn't possible and that they should speak nothing of it in the village. **It is interesting to note here that despite his protests to the girls, Parris informs them that he has already sent for Reverend Hale who can confirm that nothing unorthodox is afoot. This foreshadows his guilt and worry that his very own daughter has involved herself in something that could further blacken his image. Ah-ha: Is Parris is more concerned about his own personal reputation vs. the real health and safety of his daughter? This question provides interesting clues to his character.**

Unit 4            pages 7-8        *Enemy of the People*

After Susanna leaves, Parris and Abigail discuss what he really saw happening in the forest the night before. He describes rituals, dancing and other forbidden and questionable activities, which she tries to downplay. **Close examination of the unit reveals that he repeatedly returns to his concern for what his enemies will do with this information and thus clearly answers the question posed above. We discover that Parris is an enemy to many people in the community and he has perhaps some secret guilt of his own. In this unit we are introduced to the question of Abigail's innocence. She must affirm to him that there is "no blush on her name" when he questions her character and the reason that Goody Proctor dismissed her. Character flaws for both of them are revealed or intimated.**

Unit 5            pages 8-10        *Victims of the Spirits*

Ann Putnam adds to the tension by rushing in with her concerns that spirits are afoot in the Village. We discover her daughter is also ill. She sparks Parris' fear of spirits further. Once again he charges Abigail that she dabbled with spirits and to protect herself she points the finger at Ruth and Tituba. This confirms for Parris and Putnam that spirits have invaded their community. **The finger pointing has begun.**

Unit 6            pages 10-11        *Let's Pray*

On the surface this brief unit appears to be about Parris and Putnam in discussion about calming the neighbors with prayer. **Abigail and Mercy's actions expose that they are really concerned with getting rid of the two adults so they can share the gossip and fear that their sport in the woods has caused.**

Unit 7            page 11            *We Danced*

The girls try to wake Betty and Abigail informs Mercy of what Parris saw. It is not bad enough that he saw them dancing but he saw Mercy dancing naked.

**The action lets the audience in on their secret and their motives for what fuels the fire to follow.**

Unit 8            pages 11-12            *We Just Danced*

Mary, the naïve girl in the group joins them. We are privy to more exposition and the actual truth of what happened the night before. Betty springs to life when Abigail announces that she told the adults everything. Betty attempts to fly out the window and goes into a frenzy with the memory that Abigail drank blood (a charm to kill Goody Proctor). Abigail slaps her and warns all the girls to say that they just danced. She reminds them of her power for vengeance and strength of will.

**Here we are introduced to the pecking order of the girls and the potential for evil in Abigail. It is significant that this scene starts out with the other girls mimicking and mocking Mary's whining. This is their learned, juvenile way of socializing with her. However, later, in the climax of the court scene they use this mimic strategy to convince the court that Mary is evil and ultimately turn her around to take their side again. Here is a *childish* action (to mimic and make fun of her), used in an *adult* court of law, which sends people to the gallows! Past play analysis has taught me that children are often used to foreshadow the future in plays. Miller uses it dramatically here.**

Unit 9            pages 12-13            *Get Home*

Proctor enters and reprimands Mary for leaving home after he forbid it. While only a few lines transpire, we discover he is a powerful man. Arthur Miller adds to the subtext with his side notes. In brackets he advises us that Mercy exits titillated, being aware of the relationship between Abigail and him, and that Abigail stands wide-eyed and absorbed with him. **We are swiftly introduced to Proctor and the forbidden steam between him and the adolescent Abigail.**

Unit 10            pages 13-14            *In Heat*

Abigail and Proctor are alone. She begs him to return to him and he attempts to make clear that their illicit affair is over. **Several "ah-ha's" jump out at me in this unit. While John Proctor strongly tells Abigail it is over between them he has a weak moment and confesses that he has indeed looked at her window (she says she has felt the heat).** In this unit Abigail speaks and acts like an adult woman versus the child we have seen up until now. She has a "flash of anger" when he calls her a child and the action builds to a strong climax with her passion for him raging. She has not forgotten the physical and emotional things he has taught her. **It gives credence for the fury she later drives in the play. Here we discover a person that quickly changes from a spoiled child to a sensual woman, wanting and needing a man.** It will be interesting to explore with the actor playing Betty what really wakes her up and sends her screaming in this scene. **Is it really the sound of the name of Jesus sung downstairs or the**



uncomfortable, highly sexual frenzy that the scene builds to, which she isn't supposed to be able to hear?

Unit 11      pages 14-16    *Calm Down*

The adults rush in and try to calm down Betty. Corey, Putnam, Ann and Parris are almost as hysterical as Betty is. They are convinced she is witched. John Proctor and Rebecca are the focused and calm ones ultimately trying to calm down the adults and reason with them. **There is powerful irony here. Rebecca and Proctor are the calm ones in the adult society. They are the ones that express the notion of witchcraft as foolish, yet by the end of the play, they are the ones that go to the gallows for dealing in witchcraft.** Rebecca also provides some potent insights and clues to the audience in this unit. Her *ah-ha's* include spotting that the children are just being "silly" (she understands what is really going on) and foreshadows the finger pointing that's to come based on land lust. "This will set us to arguin' again..." lets us know there have been past conflicts in Salem and that tension has been brewing. This is an important detail as I believe it sets the stage for the girl's hysteria, (which is merely created to protect themselves from the punishment of dancing in the forest, etc.) to turn into the whirlwind that it does.

Unit 12      pages 16-19    *Picking at the Wounds*

The mud slinging begins. All of the adults in the room are fired up and take turns bringing up past faults of each other. They attack each other's characters and actions from the past year. **Ah-ha: The minor finger pointing of the adults starts here; they set the stage for the major damaging pointing that the children engage in.** We also discover several minor themes emerging in this section. Greed, the power of the church, and self-righteousness are all on fire here.

Unit 13      page 19      *The Expert Arrives*

Reverend Hale enters in the heat of the moment. He is the expert on witches and the like. On the surface it appears that introductions are made, compliments served and the concern for the ailing children are discussed. **Under the surface the theme of reputation is introduced. Hale praises Rebecca for he has heard of her "good soul" and with Putnam he feels he is in "distinguished company". It is ironic and sad that while he first compliments their reputation, some of his choices later aid in their very downfall. The books that Hale carries and makes a big deal about are strong metaphors for the expertise that is brought into Salem and which ultimately destroys so many lives. They are "heavy" and "weighted with authority". Also the simple action of Corey not leaving when invited to by Proctor is one of many "if onlys" in the play. If only he had left, as his character flaws of self-importance and being a little too nosey (thus staying), strike the chords that later dooms his wife.**

Unit 14      pages 19-21    *Wow!*

Hale is wowed by the news of Betty's affliction, the dancing in the forest and the other "strangeness" in town. The others are "enthralled" with his power, knowledge and aura. **Here is another "if only". If only Parris (in pursuit of prestige and protection in the community) had not called for Hale and then stated here that "...we will abide by**

your judgement." The adults in the room pass on the power to him and fuel the fire that flares up.

In this unit Parris and Rebecca open up the past sores in society and foreshadow the critical action of the play with their dialogue:

Parris: Why, Rebecca, we may open up the boil of all our troubles today!

Rebecca: Let us hope for that. I go to God for you, sir.

Parris: I hope you do not mean we go to Satan here!

Wow, and *ah-ha!* There lives all become hell after today, Rebecca does go to God at the end of the play, (heaven) and they certainly open up their troubles (greed, land-lust, lechery, etc.), today!

#### Unit 15      pages 21-23    *Frog Soup*

Corey discusses his concern with Hale regarding his wife reading strange books. Hale is suspicious of this and then engages in trying to get to the root of Betty's affliction. He is alarmed with the information that the girls danced around a kettle of "soup" with a live frog and that the Devil was called. **Three important things occur in this unit. Corey seals his wife's fate simply by his curiosity and his desire for prestige. With the clue from Miller that Abigail becomes hysterical "seeing Parris' look" we know that Parris saw a lot last night and that his daughter was in fact involved in the devil play. This will make him look very bad in a community that already questions and argues with him. Abigail knows she has done wrong and sets out to do anything and everything to protect herself. She begins her lies by accusing Tituba, lest she be held responsible.**

#### Unit 16      pages 22-23    *A Good Girl Sinking*

Hale puts immense pressure on Abigail asking if she drank the brew and if she has sold herself to Lucifer. Abigail further deflects the crimes onto Tituba. **In a deeper panic Abigail becomes frantic and jumps at anything to protect herself and her image. This speaks loudly to the incredible pressure the Salem society must have had on its members. Abigail is in frenzied state at the thought of being accused of dancing and witchery, etc. It is also important to note here that in this state, with this adult male she states that she is "...a good girl!" versus a few minutes ago when she was with Proctor she appeared as a grounded, sensual women.**

#### Unit 17      pages 23-26    *You Work For Me*

The arrows, accusations and threats are being flung all over the room as the Act builds to a climax. Tituba and Abigail passionately deny they specifically dealt with the devil. Parris and Hale drill them so hard that they starting naming names. It is others in the community not them that have conjured the Devil and his work. The outcome of the attacks is that Abigail and Tituba only want the life and love of God. **Tituba and Abigail are going all out to protect themselves. The force of the attack from Hale and Parris is so immense and they are so in shock with the thought of death and hell that false names of accused devil dealers trip off of their tongues. Close examination of the scene shows that Hale and Parris elevate the stakes dramatically (making the accusations and outcomes far worse than anything that really happened) to the point that the women must confess to something they didn't really do or point**

fingers in order to save themselves. *If only* Parris and Hale hadn't been so out of control themselves the situation wouldn't have escalated.

Unit 18      page 26      *I Saw...*

Act 1 ends in a state of ferocity. Betty picks up the naming of names in a trance. Abigail and her end the scene with a long list of people that they saw with the devil. Hale is ecstatic that their spell is broken and Putnam rushes to get the Marshall. All hell has literally broken loose. **Arthur Miller adds side-notes that indicate Betty names witches hysterically and with great relief, while Abigail does it with "great glee". This provides damaging evidence to what is truly behind their ritualistic finger pointing.**

Unit 19      page 26      *Scene Change*

As the revolve turns and the new scene is set up, abstracted movement or gestures will reinforce some of the action or subtext in a violent manner and then fade into Act 1, Scene 2

Unit 20      pages 27-28      *Tread Lightly*

On the surface John and Elizabeth, man and wife are making small talk (about the stew, a rabbit, a heifer, etc.). Miller's side-notes indicate there is tension between the two (e.g. For Elizabeth, *it is hard to say* and then John replies, *as gently as he can*). **These side notes and the short, monosyllabic answers in a discussion that seems meaningless offers clues that there has been some trouble between the two recently. It is very ironic when Elizabeth tells of the rabbit just coming into the house that John replies, "Oh, that's a good sign walkin' in." It certainly doesn't turn out to be a good day and therefore wasn't a good sign. When Elizabeth comments that "...it hurt my heart to strip her, poor rabbit", it packs a powerful punch, as Elizabeth herself (with the temperament of an innocent rabbit) gets stripped of her innocence and freedom on this very day. Finally we discover that Elizabeth is looking sad because she thought Proctor went to Salem today, a concern in her subtext that he was out to see Abigail.**

Unit 21      pages 28-31      *Lies*

The news of Abigail and the girls accusing and damning good citizens in the new proper court upsets both Elizabeth and John. She urges him to go to the court to reveal that Abigail confessed to him "...it had naught to do with witchcraft..." The twist is he confesses that he was alone with her and worries about who would believe him. Elizabeth is not pleased that he had previously lied to her about never being alone with Abigail. Her reactions to his lie enrages him. **For a unit with so many confessions, there sure a lot of lies also going around. In addition to reinforcing the theme of the power of lies in society an intriguing connection to the final scene and message of the play is foreshadowed here. In his anger John asks her to "...judge me not." And Elizabeth affirms to him, "I do not judge you. The magistrate sits in your heart that judges you." This is the boost to the journey John Proctor engages in where ultimately he must search his own heart for his "name" and his soul, without her judgment.**

Unit 22      pages 31-33    *The Cursed*

Mary returns home and is reprimanded by John for disobeying him and going to the Salem court. After the simple act of giving Elizabeth a gift, a poppet that she made, Mary breaks down and tells of the many witches that have been accused and brought to court. Some have confessed and some are sentenced to hang. Sarah Good was condemned because she was caught in a lie about her commandments. John is so angered that he goes to whip her. **We will eventually discover that the simple act of giving Elizabeth the poppet becomes a major *if only* in the play. Miller skillfully makes light of the action in this scene. The lies hiding in the commandments sets us up for the lie that John will soon attempt to hide in his commandments. The fact that so many innocent citizens are being sent to trial or to death based on "the good work of the good will of God" is the key to the tragedy of the play.**

Unit 23      pages 33-35    *She Wants to Dance on Her Grave*

Mary saves herself from a whipping by announcing that she saved Elizabeth's life in court that day. She was mentioned as a possible witch and Mary had it dismissed. After Mary retires John and Elizabeth get into a heated argument over the premise that Abigail means to accuse her and take her place as his wife. **The real magnitude of the tension between the two is revealed. Elizabeth comments that "she knew all week it would come to this", suggesting juicy subtext for the actor as to Elizabeth's state throughout the previous scenes. While John states that he cannot believe Abigail could think this; the side-note states, "He knows it is true". As Proctor gropes for words (so pained) he admonishes another *if only*, "...your spirit twists around the single error of my life, and I will never tear it free". *If only* he hadn't slept with Abigail. Elizabeth's response here confirms her love for him as well as her remaining distrust. The tension is high.**

Unit 24      pages 35-39    *The Ten Commandments*

Hale arrives to reaffirm that Elizabeth was mentioned in court, as well as Rebecca Nurse. He tests the Christian character of the Proctor house. In doing so he catches John unable to say all ten of his commandments, Proctor seems to forget about adultery! During this scene the dislike that Proctor has for Parris as his minister is further revealed. **Proctor makes somewhat light of his dislike for Parris but the subtext suggests that he actually hates him (to the point where he won't even have his child baptized by him). Proctor says for the second time in the play that his wife was sickly this winter, which perhaps accounts for one of the motivations for him embarking into an affair with Abigail. I find Miller's simple side-notes throughout this unit extremely powerful in lending deep insight into the character's subtext (e.g. "...as though a secret arrow had pained his heart" or "...thoughtfully and regretfully", etc.).**

Unit 25      pages 39-40    *There Are No Witches*

Elizabeth gets John to tell Hale that Abigail has confessed to him that there really were no witches; it was "all sport". After being challenged by Elizabeth that she believes witches don't exist at all Hale leaves with a sigh, apparently soothed that some of this

wrongdoing will be righted in court. It would appear that John was to begin his journey into the search for his soul and honor with his revealing of the secret information from Abigail. This may have happened if several more *if onlys* didn't occur. Miller introduces here the first of three powerful times that John Proctor pushes the point that his wife could never tell a lie. He sets the audience up for the biggest *if only* of the play. Proctor's real love for his wife starts to show through here as he protects her from Hale's questioning and praises her honesty and goodness.

Unit 26      pages 40-41      *Going Crazy*

The world in Salem appears to be going crazy. Corey arrives to inform them that Rebecca Nurse has been arrested for witchcraft, despite her being a pillar in the society, as well as his own wife. **The fact that Rebecca is charged shows that the court is spinning out of control.** We also discover the clues that personal revenge is at the root of some accusations (e.g. Corey's wife chastises someone over a pig and he now accuses her of witchcraft).

Unit 27      pages 41-45      *A Needle in a Poppet*

Cheever arrives with a warrant for the arrest of Elizabeth. Abigail charges that she was stabbed by her with a needle in her stomach. The discovery of the poppet in the house with a needle in it offers grave consequences. Despite Mary admitting that it was her poppet and her needle Elizabeth must still go to jail. Proctor is furious that they doubt her innocence. **In addition to some exceptional plot twists the scene is filled with the themes of the play. John Proctor brings to surface the tragedy of what can happen when religion is given power over the court and the people. "Is the accuser always holy now?...I'll tell you what's walking Salem-vengeance is walking Salem."** When Elizabeth agrees to calmly go with her arresters we again see John's true love for her arise. I noted the brilliant writing here when she asks to "Tell the children I have gone to visit someone sick..." She is going to a sick court in a sick world.

Unit 28      pages 45-46      *Gone Mad*

In an effort to heal Proctor's weeping heart, Hale asks him to trust the courts and God. He cannot believe that God would allow petty causes to murder people. Proctor asks to be left alone. The world appears to have gone mad. **Despite Hale's pleading that God would not allow petty causes to bring murder and corruption to such a stalwart community, that is exactly what is happening.**

Unit 29      pages 46-47      *The Naked Truth*

Proctor insists to Mary that she will go to court and tell the truth about the needle in the poppet, so his wife can be saved. Mary worries that Abigail may kill her for it and charge lechery on Proctor. Proctor realizes that Abigail will have his wife or his reputation. He realizes he has slid into a pit but will not let his wife die for him. **This discovery brings to light Proctor's guilt. He has been hiding from the sin of lechery and now it must come out. He will lose his reputation in the community to tell the truth. He is a broken man who is willing to "go naked now", (be revealed for what he is) and be**

exposed to "God's icy wind", (take his punishment). The intermission arrives leaving the audience in classic cliffhanger style with a man about to lose his spirit and soul.

### *Intermission*

#### Unit 30      pages 48-51    *A Whore in Denial*

It is night, in the woods outside Abigail's house. Thirty-six days have passed with Elizabeth in jail. Her trial is the next day. Proctor has come to inform Abigail that if she doesn't tell the truth in court, that he will. Abigail is shocked that he has come with this intent versus to woo, wed or bed her. Their encounter ends on a low note. Both of them are fired up and determined to get what they want. She will have him and he will have his wife back, even if it means damning Abigail and himself with truth of their fornication. **In this scene we see the results of Miller's outstanding character work. The lines and actions reveal exciting characterizations and plot twists. Abigail switches in the scene back and forth from a sexually awakened, mature women to a helpless child and then finally is a vengeful witch herself. She is in a state of denial of John's release of her and is almost psychotic when her power in the court is challenged. Is she really starting to actually believe in dealings with the Devil? If only John Proctor had not come this night to see her. He speaks of not wanting to surprise her in court, but all he does is strengthen her resolve to have him or defeat him. The big mistake here is that the army has let the enemy in on their plan of attack, the element of surprise if gone and she is prepared for the counter attack. In this unit Proctor proudly announces that he has found "his honesty", his soul. There is cruel irony then, in her last words to him "I will save you tomorrow. From yourself I will save you." He is looking for himself, his core, and his soul. She doesn't save him from "himself"; she rips it out of him.**

#### Unit 31      pages 51-52    *In Session*

The Salem General Court is in session. The prosecutor Judge Hathorne is questioning suspects who protest their complete innocence. It seems to fall on deaf ears, as the judges remain convinced of their own infallibility and honor. **Here we discover the steadfastness of the court. Most importantly is that Corey presents news to the court that some of the accusations are truly based on land lust. Their response is to have him removed from the court. They are rigid and appear unreasonable, with closed eyes and ears. This does not bode well for Proctor whose case is about to come up.**

#### Unit 32      pages 52-54    *Here Comes the Judge*

Corey, Hathorne and the Governor Danforth go at it in the vestry room of the court. Corey throws himself at them, begging understanding and acceptance of the truth. Their concern is for respect for the court and how proceedings should be. **While respect in the court is a standard expectation in our society, this scene points out the frustrations with system. While any court should be most interested in truth and fairness we are all subject to the weight of procedure and process which can impede truth and**

protect the lies. The character of Danforth is introduced as a powerful man to be reckoned with. He is an admirable foe.

Unit 33      pages 53-54    *How Dare You*

Francis Nurse adds his part. He protests the condemnation of his wife and claims that the girls are frauds and the court has been deceived. Danforth is insulted, as he considers himself a wise judge. **Once again we hear the judicial system refusing to hear real hard evidence that they may have been wrong. Honor, pride and ignorance seem to abide. The encounter seems to distance the possibility of a fair trial even further.**

Unit 34      pages 54-57    *You're Being Deceived*

John Proctor champions himself and shares a disposition that Mary Warren signed in which she alleges that she saw no spirits. Parris who supposedly still maintains that it must be witchcraft constantly interrupts with the fear the Proctor is out to undermine the court. Proctor is backed by Hale and persists with his pleas that the business is all pretence. Danforth questions Proctor's spiritual strength and motives, and then challenges him to give up. His wife will be saved, for awhile, as she is pregnant. Proctor, however, pushes on in support of his friends and neighbors. **While we have discovered some of Proctor's character flaws along the journey, in this moment we see that he is basically an honest, good man. Unlike some other selfish characters in the community he is ready to push forward and perhaps save some friends even after his own wife has some reprieve. Remember this may be at great detriment to him. His secrets and his sins are very large. Miller structures this scene in a way that we are exposed to the second bell (so to speak). When Proctor is informed of Elizabeth's pregnancy and it is questioned, he clarifies that if she says she is pregnant, it must be, as "That woman will never lie, Mister Danforth." This is a strong *set up* for the tragic *pay off* that is about to come for the audience. I will want to explore with the actors why they think at the end of this unit Danforth has a "sudden change of manner" and agrees to hear Proctor 's evidence when prior to this; he is blind and deaf to the evidence of others.**

Unit 35      pages 57-59    *Are You With This Court?*

Proctor presents a petition that has been signed by ninety-one of the villagers which declares the good name of Rebecca, Elizabeth and Martha Corey. Thanks to the urgings of Parris the petition is put aside and the list is to be used as a basis for further arrests and examinations. Giles Corey then charges and denounces Thomas Putnam as strategizing to accuse Salem people so he can buy up their land. **The conviction and strength of the court is enhanced here. Miller provides the audience with even more complications that impede Proctor and the innocent from achieving their objectives. Corey sets himself up for another major *if only*.**

Unit 36      pages 59-61    *The Fear of The Court*

Putnam and Corey debate the charges that Putnam is trying to kill his neighbors for their land. When asked for the proof, Corey refuses to name the individual that supplied the information. He fears that they will meet the same fate as his wife, imprisonment. **Battling the court seems almost impossible now. If you have evidence you can't**

present it for fear that people who come forward to tell the truth become damned for it. I found it interesting that in the text here Corey flaunts his knowledge of the law and is ridiculed by the court, at the same time that the court was almost making a fool of itself. It was if they were both trying to play God!

Unit 37      pages 61-62    *If Only He Had Gotten a Lawyer*

Proctor is asked to present his plea regarding Mary's testimony. There is considerable discussion between Hale and Danforth regarding the need for Proctor to submit this with the aid of a lawyer. Danforth sees no need for it and pressures the anxious Proctor to proceed. **Isn't it strange that after so much regard for the pomp, circumstance and official proceedings of this court Danforth is now prepared to allow a nervous farmer to present so important a case against the validity of testimony the court has embraced? Perhaps Danforth is torn and worried about how he might look? This is another major *if only* in the play. *If only* Proctor had heeded the advice of Hale and brought a lawyer to do a lawyers job.**

Unit 38      pages 62-63    *Damn All Liars*

Mary is questioned and swears that she is with God now. Despite the threat that God damns all liars she is ready to tell the truth. **Again we see Danforth himself, badgering the witness. It suggests some interesting subtext and reinforces the themes of religion vs. legal justice.**

Unit 39      pages 63-65    *Turning the Tides of Doubt*

Four of the principal girls in the accusations join the investigation. Danforth explains how Mary denounces their accusations and that she or they never saw spirits. Abigail denies it all as a lie. Proctor leads Danforth to increase his doubt of Abigail when he reveals she laughed at prayer in church and was caught by Parris dancing in the woods. This does not bode well with Danforth. **The important twist of action here is that the audience is engaged with Danforth's doubt. It stirs their interest in what will happen next, as the tides are starting to turn. It creates new empathy for Danforth (as truly a fair judge) and for Proctor who is championing the cause without having to reveal his own wrongdoings. Because of all of this the stakes and tension in the scene are intensified greatly. We also have the potential to enjoy Parris' squirming as he worries about Proctor "blackening my name", merely because the truth about his daughter's involvement may now come out.**

Unit 40      pages 65-67    *No Spirits Now*

The pressure is high now. Mary is being pressed by many who goad her to faint and make pretense now, as she did in the court. She cannot. While some doubt Mary others are in doubt of Abigail. Abigail is insulted by Danforth mistrusting her. He weakens and she is so empowered that she even warns him of the power of Hell. **The seams of everyone's moral fabric are about to burst. Everyone in the room has something vital to lose depending upon which way the discussion turns and therefore the stakes are high as thrashing fingers point harder and biting tongues lash out. The fact that**



**Abigail is the only one in the room that can actually speak harshly to Danforth and get away with it is telling. He weakens more than the script suggests.**

Unit 41      pages 67-69      *Here is the Whore*

As Mary keeps to her story, Abigail loses ground and affects a trance state and the madness grows. Proctor has had enough. He is enraged and calls her the whore she is. He admits to having her and sacrifices his integrity and reputation to prove her evil.

**Proctor puts himself in the hands of the court and the Lord as he relinquishes what he believes to be his goodness and honor in their eyes. He does it for his wife and his friends. It is his penance.**

Unit 42      pages 69-71      *Never Tell a Lie*

Danforth is torn between what Proctor swears and Abigail denies. He has Elizabeth brought in to tell if John Proctor has ever committed this crime of lechery. His judgment will lie in her answer for once again John swears that she could never tell a lie. Elizabeth tells the first lie of her life at a time when it was never more important to tell the truth. **I believe this to be one of the best-written scenes in theatre. At this point Miller has delivered enough doubt for Danforth and the audience to dramatically question the outcome. He has set us up brilliantly. There was enough tension and jealousy in the previous interactions between John and Elizabeth to cast doubt as to which way she will go. Having Abigail and John face away from her and forcing her to only look at Danforth is brilliant manipulation of the characters and the audience. Then, thinking to save her husband, she damns him, her friends and herself.**

Unit 43      pages 71-75      *The Whore Wins*

Danforth believes the testimony and to heighten the win, the girls go into a visionary, psychotic trance. Mary gets swept up in and charges that Proctor threatened to murder her if she didn't help overthrow the court to save his wife. The judges are swayed and Proctor joins the accused in jail. **For several characters there is a huge release here. Parris is now safe with his secret and his purity. Danforth, who has surely felt his court and judgment slipping, is re-empowered and Abigail is soothed and triumphant. On the opposite end of the scale, Proctor, Corey and Hale are burnt. Their spirits, reason and morality are crushed. Two powerful poles are enflamed. Mary has become hysterical and screams that Proctor wants "My name, he wants my name. I'll murder you, he says, if my wife hangs!" How ironic that, by the end of the play they want Proctor's name and she has just murdered him, by turning coats.**

Unit 44      page 75      *Scene Change*

As the revolve turns and the new scene is set up, abstracted movement or gestures will reinforce some of the court action and subtext in a disturbing manner and then fade into the final scene of the play

Unit 45      pages 75-77      *Gone Crazy or That 'Aint Satan, Just a Poor Old Cow...*

Act two, Scene three opens and it is three months later. It is a cold moonlit morning. Tituba and Sarah are imprisoned and they are disheveled, confused and appear to be

going mad. They speak of the beauty of going with the Devil to Barbados. Their guard Willard shares his flask with them and they are removed, as the room is needed for the arrival of Danforth and Hathorne. **On the surface little seems to be happening here. Miller, however, is using this simple moment to show in a few words how things have deteriorated. The prisoners are ragged and senseless. The guard is listless and drunk. Now the women speak of going to Hell versus wanting to go to Heaven at the top of the play. Miller twice calls for cows bellowing in the distance (we later discover they are wandering, abandoned by imprisoned farmers). No one cares about much. The community is rotting.**

Unit 46      page 77      *A Stench in the Air*

The two chief prosecutors of the Salem witch trials have returned. They discuss with Willard that Hale and Parris go among the prisoners that will now hang to pray with them. Parris is sent for. **There is cold irony in the rich writing here. While the characters speak of the conditions of the cell it is all a metaphor for the state of the community that they have ravaged. "There is a prodigious stench in this place" is a direct reference to how things are now. When Willard states that "it is a bitter night", referring to the cold air, it is a direct connection to the fact that some of the most upright and good citizens of Salem are preparing to hang.**

Unit 47      pages 77-78      *Contention Makes You Weep*

Cheever shares with the men his concern for Parris who weeps and appears to have gone mad and that the general state of the society has broken down through neglect and disagreement, a direct result of so much imprisonment. **The unit serves to reinforce that the community has indeed deteriorated; however despite this news we that note that Danforth still refuses to take any responsibility. His comment that "contention makes him weep" lays the blame elsewhere. It is also interesting here how Parris himself may have gone mad. No doubt his distress and unsteadiness is the result of his part in toppling the community. Here we see one man consumed with his guilt, while another dismisses it.**

Unit 48      pages 78-80      *Runaways, Riots and Rebellion*

Parris enters and is described as "gaunt, frightened and sweating". He brings the news that Hale sits with the prisoners hoping to make them confess, which could save their lives. His news that Abigail and Mary Lewis have run off and of the potential for a riot in the town over the discontent of hanging such prominent citizens as Proctor and Rebecca is not received well. His fear of rebellion is mixed with a fear for his own life as he has received a dagger in his door as a warning. **With this information Miller crafts a new hope for the audience that Proctor and Rebecca might be saved and this stirs a renewed interest in what happens next. When Danforth resists any postponements there is a disappointment for the audience and also a payoff. If they have seen Parris as a major antagonist in the action of the play there will be some satisfaction in seeing him get his just reward, (i.e. he is frightened and sweating because now he too can feel what it is like to have your life threatened and pulled out from you).**

Unit 49      pages 80-82      *No Pardons, No Postponements, but Possibly Proctor...*

Reverend Hale joins them, a broken and exhausted man, who is still reaching out to Danforth to pardon these prisoners. Danforth is adamant that there will be no pardons or postponements but is responsive to the idea of letting Elizabeth, three months with child, speak to Proctor. There is hope that she might bring him to confession. **There is compelling conflict between Hale and Danforth here, which is a beautiful metaphor for basic right and wrong in society.** At the top of the unit Danforth greets Hale cheerfully and respectfully, however in the previous pages there was clear discontent and dislike for him, (he had, as we know, walked out and denounced the court). While Hale marvels how Danforth's own province has not been burned as a result of his mistrials, Danforth asks if he's been preaching in Andover, where a rebellion already occurred. The arrows of insults are flung and matched with equal strength, just as good and evil can match wits. Note though that Danforth does agree to let Proctor speak with Elizabeth which is a strong clue to what he truly wants and needs.

Unit 50      pages 82-83    *Please Plead With Him*

Hale begs Elizabeth to prevail upon John to confess. His point that "God damns a liar less than he that throws his life away for pride." is met with her response that she thinks "...that be the devil's argument." At the final moment she agrees to speak with him but will promise nothing. **In addition to affirming Elizabeth's strong character here we are reinforced to the questionable character of the law. Most importantly we are being set up for the important theme, action and decisive action of the play.**

Unit 51      pages 83-84    *Take Your Leave*

Proctor enters and he is described as "another man", filthy, with "eyes misty as if webs had overgrown them." Proctor and Elizabeth do not speak. They are motionless and maintain eye contact as Danforth reminds Proctor that today is the day he is to hang. They are left alone. **Miller sets the actors up for a powerful gestic moment where no movement or gesture is necessary. In this meeting, this look of love and respect for each other should be an emotional high, a dramatic surge of energy. It is beautiful that the suggestion here is that their love and honor for each other has matured and blossomed despite three months of separation.**

Unit 52      pages 84-86    *Let Me Lie, Let Me Live*

At first the couple engage in small talk about their children, this builds to the discussion of the torture and death of Giles Corey and peaks with Proctor's plea for permission to confess. He asks for her advice, and permission. Elizabeth is clear that he must make his own decision and that it is his soul. Her words are powerful, "'Do what you will. But let none be your judge, there be no higher judge under heaven than Proctor is!'" **Miller is at his best in this scene. The rhythm of the writing is spectacular, building and flowing with gorgeous use of language, imagery and a meaningful message. The use of pauses that he indicates through grammar are especially valuable in the first section. They allow for breath and speak strongly to the inner struggle of the characters and to the beauty of a man and wife's final moments together. When Proctor admits that he cannot mount the gallows as a saint it is a stunning tribute to his high morals and character. Later we finally hear of some of the psychological**

motivations for Elizabeth's actions, "I counted myself so plain,...suspicion kissed you when I did; I never knew how I should say my love." We now see a changed Elizabeth. She has come to the end of her journey, where she can admit her love and be at peace with who she is. John has not yet reached his destination and peace.

Unit 53      page 86      *What is John Proctor?*

Proctor lets Hathorne know he will confess to save his life. He is set back, alarmed and reconsiders when he sees Hathorne running out and yelling it everyone. He once again looks to Elizabeth for support and again she reaffirms that she will not judge him. **Here John finally asks the big question, "God in heaven, what is John Proctor, what is John Proctor!"** I notice that Miller uses an exclamation mark instead of a question mark to suggest the inner pain and utter turmoil he is going through. He finally decides that what he does is evil but he will do it for his life.

Unit 54      pages 86-87      *Yes. I Did.*

The officials gather, and Proctor tells them that he saw the Devil and the Devil bid him do his work. John is disturbed that they must write down what he confesses. **The officials "praise God" throughout the confession. It is almost sacrilegious as they are really just praising that their own names and actions will be protected, not that a real soul is saved.** The writing of the testimony so that all will be able to read it adds to Proctor's pain and to the empathy with the audience.

Unit 55      pages 87-91      *It Is My Name*

When Rebecca Nurse joins the scene Proctor becomes unnerved and hesitates in his confession. He is careful in his remaining testimony to not involve anyone else. The climax of the play nears as he refuses to hand over the confession that he has signed. Despite Danforth's insistence that without a signed confession there is no confession Proctor chooses to rip up the paper and to hang. Proctor and Rebecca are taken away to be hanged with their names and their souls. **Here is the climax of the play. This is the moment where Proctor must search and decide for what really matters to him. With a glance at Danforth, Rebecca and then Elizabeth, he chooses his honor. He will live without his soul but will not live without his name. He now has his goodness as Elizabeth promised but it is he who has chosen not others.**

Unit 56      page 91      *He Has His Goodness Now*

Despite Hale's desperate pleas to Elizabeth she will plead no further with him. **In this rapid denouement, Elizabeth and John are triumphant. John has what he was searching for and she will not take it away from him. Unlike a typical tragedy this hero is somewhat exalted at the end, even though he has a demise.**

Unit 57      page 91      *The Credits*

As the revolve slowly moves around the Elizabeth of then fades away. I will explore through movement, slides and silhouettes a fleeting montage of how **these themes and actions are repeated throughout time. It is all, unfortunately, cyclical.**

I still had much research to consider and explore with my actors. This was the beginning of an exciting journey. It led us to a place where we could challenge ourselves and the audience. We were ready to explore those important questions: Could I have behaved better or worse? Could I stand up to a court or a religion? Could I betray my country, my friends or myself? Who am I?

## **CHAPTER FOUR: The Process into Production**

### **Creative Process**

JOURNAL (Diary of a sane director)

April 24, 2002

The University of Calgary Drama department held the 2002-03 Season Production meeting today. I must say it was exhilarating to meet with the technical team, all the designers and directors, etc. of the season to share concepts, consider dreams and of course be reminded to stay on budget. It was a well-run professional meeting, which energized me, excited me and affirmed that I was to be a part of a sensational season here. The Crucible opens the season so I put a little extra pressure on myself to be extra special.

I am pleased that Barry Yzereef has agreed to be my advisor for this project. We get along so well and I feel a deep mutual respect from him, which I truly appreciate. I look forward to working with him and everyone else on my journey.

May 23, 2002

I had my initial meetings with the Costume Designer – Lily Visser and the set designer Jessie Johnsen. We got off to a great start, confirming our passion for the play and our willingness to work collaboratively as a team. I explained my admiration for designers who added to the process and displayed a creative bent for giving and taking without ego getting too involved. We all landed on a similar base where we agreed that the show would have a period look with an allowance for elements of theatricality, which might inform or advance the text and themes. I presented my metaphor of the burning embers

and my Crucible box (an abstract collage) and was careful to ensure that this was only provided as an inspiration not a dictation of design. We left with some clear directions to begin playing with ideas along these lines.

June 24, 2002

Amid an abundance of research work I met again with the designers. Lily had actually done up several rough sketches which displayed historical accuracy but also livened up the picture with some bolder colors which served to enhance certain characteristics of the characters. I was pleased overall and particularly excited with her concept of bloodstains seeping up from the dress hems and petticoats of the girls, (the accusers). Wow, she works fast. Jessie's thinking was a little more reserved and vague. She had some very rough doodles and hadn't made any earth shattering visions. While this worried me a little (as I have never worked with her before) I was happy to entice her with some possibilities. I just have to be careful to not impose things on her and thus block her creativity, which promises new challenges, and creative sparks for me!

July 11, 2002

At our third formal design meeting Lily showed up with final designs sketched! They were excellent and incorporated the elements we had discussed, including, the attention to detail of the period, the non-traditional colors that might come from pigments and dyes found in the environment and the subtle bleeding in the costumes, etc. Jessie had more rough sketches and had gone off on a new tangent, exploring the concept of the burnt out remains of a house from the period. She was exploring the fireplace stones and remains

being the heart of the set and the environment overall. While this intrigued me (and I encouraged her to flesh it out more after some exploration that involved all three of us), I still had a small concern with her progress as our deadlines were soon upon us. Jessie agreed to come back with a paper model for me, as I was having trouble envisioning how her concept was going to work in a thrust, on a revolve. I look forward to this! I am attempting to remain patient, yet supportive and to contribute without imposing.

August 26, 2002

Jessie and I met and she had a paper model that was a great aid for me to see how this concept could actually work. Preparing her model helped her to flush out some thinking as well. I added some of my own creative sparks to the piece and this in turn sparked several new ideas with her. We both left excited and rejuvenated with her designs. She is ready to draft and I can now rest that I will have a working model that challenges the actors, services the text and stimulates me in an innovative way. Great work Jessie!

September 5, 2002

I am pleased with the professional and friendly manner that my Stage Manager, Ruby Eustaquio brings to our meetings. To date we have met to do some basic housekeeping things in preparation for auditions and we have clarified a working relationship that I think will prove to be dynamic, mutually respectful and fruitful. She is a senior undergraduate here so I hope to augment her learning here with some new techniques and approaches to the rehearsal process. Right now she is invaluable to me, an outsider who



relies on her knowledge of the system and personalities here. I think we are a good match, which is important, as it will make rehearsals go so much smoother.

September 6, 2002

After a few close calls of us almost not getting the revolve mechanism that I believe to be integral to Jessie's design choices and my vision, (i.e. I believe it will give a necessary flow to scene changes and will serve to reinforce the cyclical nature of the themes of the play), Jessie announces today the revolve is a go. In preparation for the upcoming build and design presentation she shared her finished model with me. It is outstanding. At the heart of a revolve that isn't round, is the remains of a burnt out home of the period. All that remains are stones suggesting the fireplace and charred pieces of wood that when placed the correct way suggest a burned cross. Levels and the clever use of pieces in a non-traditional manner suggest that it will serve and enhance my vision of the play. The painting and attention to detail and dimension in her model is the finishing touch for my thrill and anticipation for the rehearsal process to begin.

September 9 – 11, 2002

We had auditions these three days. I had the actors sign up for a 10-minute slot with a short contemporary dramatic monologue that they had prepared. This potentially shows them off at their best where they immerse themselves in their own dramatic choices in a piece that ideally appeals to them. In some cases I worked through parts of the monologue (to see how they took direction) and often would also give them a cold reading to see how they fit into the world of the play. I ended each audition with a brief

discussion of the play to assess their text analysis skills and/or their passion for the play.

At the end of two intensive days I was extremely impressed with the pool of talent. I discovered actors with great potential who are working at an advanced level, playing truth and vulnerability very admirably. I called back over fifty actors. My third audition day was divided into two groupings where I mixed pairs to see how they played off of each other and to check if they could play to the high stakes that the text and I would demand. The actors did a great job of making my job of casting the play difficult. In a few instances there were obvious casting choices but I was pleased to go to my casting meeting with a few options open to me.

I ended my last night making some concessions with the director of the second show of the season (as our rehearsals overlap) but ultimately casting a show with actors as passionate as both Arthur Miller and I.

September 12, 2002

Tonight was the big night! We had our first read-thru. After friendly introductions, a clarification of roles and responsibilities and other housekeeping activities we got down to business. I shared my metaphor, my Crucible box and highlighted some of the ways I would be working with them. I explained how I liked to block the play first from start to finish, and that we had only two and half weeks before we had to share a run thru for the lighting designer. That will leave us about three weeks to polish, hone and dress the show. Jessie and Lily did an excellent job of their design presentations, which added to the excitement of the evening, and aided in opening the doors for the world we were about to enter. The read-thru was superb. Characters were already passionate and

several of us had goose bumps in some scenes. As always, there were interpretations, line deliveries, intents, etc. that I wanted to leap in and comment on, but I bit my lips and enjoyed the playing and passion. For the most part these actors all affirmed to me that I had made excellent casting choices. Whew! I did have a minor concern with the actor playing Mary in a far too understated manner, but I calmly reminded myself that there was lots of time for her to grow and she would be coached and guided by me. That is my job after all.

We ended the evening with me assigning them their personal actor homework, which included, character bios, character charts, animal metaphors and a review of how I might use verbing, operative words and/or side coaching in the coming weeks.

September 13, 2002

We sat around the table and spent our entire evening doing in-depth script analysis. This included the naming of the units (titles) with what I felt was the meat or substance of the bit. After reading aloud each unit we engaged in spontaneous and enlightening debates about what was occurring on the surface of each unit, what purpose it served in the overall structure of the piece, what character insights we discovered and finally what was simmering below the surface of the action. Capitalizing on my techniques of looking for “ah-ha’s” and “if only’s” the cast had no problem delving into the script. The discussions flourished with spicy notes, thoughtful reflections and some intriguing detective work sparking the air. I was impressed with the abilities of the group and their willingness to explore. This was a great beginning with a pleasant foreshadowing of good risk taking, I hope.

September 14, 2002

Today we worked another seven hours on the script analysis. To break up the mental demands of the process we watched part of an old movie which offered the young actors of today an insight into the fear and paranoia of the actual McCarthy trials. It unfortunately didn't have as much as these events as I had anticipated. I am racking my brain (and my peers) for the movie I watched years ago which were entirely about the effects of the McCarthy Communism trials on Hollywood. As soon as it comes to me I must share it with the cast. It will help them to identify and relate with the feelings and fears of the Salem community in a contemporary way. The day overall was intellectually exhausting but extremely rewarding. We pushed through and only have the last scene left to dissect. I will add that into next week's schedule. I completed the day by having each actor propose and sign up to be a mini-expert in one area of research that was important to the world of the play and /or to his or her own character. We will hear them next week as part of the rehearsal process.

September 16, 2002

We started blocking today. We have been assigned Room F-08 (a small black box classroom) for the first few weeks of rehearsal as the Alumni show is running in the Reeve. It is a bit overbearing to be right on top of the actors with no room to truly see how the spacing actually works but we seemed to all quickly adapt. I am making a point to walk around all three sides of the performance space as we are playing in the University Theatre and our designs are placed on the downstage area of the thrust. This

adds an extra little challenge for the actors and I to be sensitive to all three sides of the audience. It is actually helping to make for some interesting stage pictures (including actors face straight upstage at times) that work very well. It is proving invaluable to have the model handy and review the different positions of the fireplace corners, entrances and the potential use of the levels before we get up and move in each unit. I am purposefully pushing this process through quickly with the pressure of a full run thru due in ten days and then the luxury of three weeks of polishing available after that. The actors are initially overwhelmed but they are catching on quickly (incorporating my wishes for diagonals, triangles, variety in stage areas and levels, audience awareness, and most importantly that their movements are dramatically motivated). I prefer the process of letting the actors discover their blocking with some shaping by me. Tonight we got through Units 3 to 13, (short just one that was planned). We left with some good work being established.

September 17, 2002

Today we heard round one of the research presentations. Actors spoke briefly about relevant topics such as the Bible, witchcraft, Andover during the Salem trials, Quakers, the role of children in these times, and Voodoo. Not only did these mini-sessions dramatically inform us all but they stress the importance for the actors to base their characterization choices and actions on some of the important period and historical data that drive the play. It proved to be an excellent motivation tool for them and added to the multitude of research that I did. We then blocked Units 14 through to 18. Again the new actors into the process responded well. We are progressing fast and furious.

September 18, 2002

We had a vast amount of activity planned for tonight and got through it all. We had a publicity presentation, followed by the remainder of the research presentations. Topics ranged from the House of Un-American Activities Committee to Hymns, law enforcement, and the education and discipline of the times. Once again we were stimulated and enlightened by the actors. We blocked Units 2, and 20-23, which takes us up to the end of Scene 1. It was interesting to run the whole scene at the end of the evening and see a flow and pacing begin to take shape. I can see I have a chunk of work to do on getting the scene to climax into the "I saw Goody Hopper with the Devil" moment, but there is a definite shape and edge already to the first scene that was wonderful to experience after only three days.

September 19, 2002

The rehearsal began with what was to be a period movement workshop with Val Campbell and Lily Viser. Lily and I had decided this would be important to get the actors familiar and sensitive to the costume restrictions and movement limitations, etc. right away. The workshop actually developed through Val's expert guidance into an interesting character based movement session. At the end of the hour each actor had a vocal and physical abstraction that spoke of his or her character's journey throughout the play. It was a brief but powerful sequence that students responded to easily, as most have studied movement with her. It ended up being an excellent exercise and tool for both the actors and I. The next blocking segment scheduled was the transition from Betty's room

into the Proctor's house. I had planned all the time to utilize my own strong movement background to explore abstract movement in the scene changes, but the work that the actors discovered through Val's coaching was so exquisite that I just inserted it in as an experiment (with some shading and editing) and it worked. No reason to re-invent the wheel! The end result was quite creepy for us all. The intent here was to reinforce action and themes that has just occurred or were about to come up versus just change the set and it worked wonderfully. A big thanks here to Val, the actors and my instinct. We also blocked some of the Elizabeth and John Proctor scene and it too went well.

The highlight of the evening was working on what I now call the "Overture"; a movement sequence detailing what might have happened the night before the real action of the play takes up. The instrumental music I chose worked very well with the thrashing, twisted abstract movement we explored. The discovery of the girls by Parris and transition into the bedroom (the literal beginning of the play) was slick and moved many of us in the room. This was a definite high point in the rehearsal process as it was created so quickly and yet worked so well. I guess my years of choreographic experience can even come in handy in an Arthur Miller drama!

September 20, 2002

Tonight we finished blocking all of Act 1, Scene 2. I think some of the actors were a bit overwhelmed at how urgently I pushed them to at least sink into some blocking that they were comfortable with. They might forget we have a design deadline of having the entire play blocked within the next few days, but I haven't. I know I pushed them a bit hard but we have a lighting designer coming in soon with his own deadlines to meet and he needs

to see a run of the play. I calmed myself with the reminder that we had weeks after this to polish and shine the scenes so I pushed on. To my delight I actually started to see some sparks fly with the entrance of Hale, the discovery and accusation of the poppet and with the ultimate climax of the act. Overall the group rose to my challenges. I suspect they used the tension of my push for blocking choices so quickly to add to the tension of the drama. I hope they can maintain it, develop it and then live it on stage.

September 21, 2002

Today was a test for the demands I had been making. In the morning we worked through Act 1, starting and stopping to remind or reinforce actors of their blocking, shape some new discoveries and basically solidify our hard work to date. I'm finding there are still several actors who don't seem aware or sensitive to blocking one another so I was a bit of a nag about that. After lunch we did an excellent run-thru. The actors were committed, spontaneous and integrated our work from the morning. It was a very encouraging ending to a grinding week.

September 23, 2002

Today we kicked into Act 2 and blocked our little hearts out. We did Units 30 – 34, which are the entire forest scene with John and Abigail and a big chunk of the court scene. This was an odd night as we were literally working at two different ends of the spectrum. John and Abigail's work in the forest was awkward, cumbersome and rarely stayed the same. I'm not sure if it was because of the set placement (the archway of the fireplace was at an odd angle pointing downstage) or perhaps I was pushing for the



sexual tension (that I felt was boiling in this scene) too early from young actors, but whatever the case, the movement and intents, etc were just not working. I chalked it up to the “fact that everything else had to be going too well, so far” and “this was something I could easily spend more time on later”. The actors are both great to work with so I think it just needs some more experimentation and breathing time. The courtroom scene on the other hand was very powerful. I think Dan and Derek, playing the judges have just been waiting in the wings to get into the action (neither of them have been seen in the play up to this point) so they brought a fresh energy and passion to the rehearsal. I suspect they have been impressed by seeing some of the fine work in the Act 1 run-thru and set themselves up to come out kicking. Whatever the reason the blocking of the opening court sequence went very smoothly (especially with so many bodies) and the energy was electric.

September 24, 2002

Argh! Today we had to block out of sequence, due to some actor's availability. What I mean is that instead of just blocking the next units in sequence we jumped ahead to the middle of the final scene. This meant that we had no flow to carry into the work and we also didn't know where we were coming from (i.e. the actors and I guessed where we might be in the middle of the scene). This proved a little awkward both in movement and in capturing the very different energy in this scene. In our process we had just left the heat of the court scene building up into a mellow moment with Elizabeth and Hale. The blocking got done with interesting choices but it proved to be a challenge for the ensemble. I know this has to happen in theatre but I prefer the sequential blocking. I

guess I was getting too spoiled with things going so smoothly up until now, so something that was really not that big of deal kind of threw me.

September 25, 2002

Another little “argh!” Our actor availability caused me to have to jump back and block the opening units that led up where we started at yesterday. Naturally we had to make some adjustments but the actors are keen and good enough that they just go for it.

Tonight made me really appreciate how professional and respectful they are to the play, the process and me. They truly are a treat to work with.

September 26, 2002

An excellent rehearsal tonight. We finally got to go back and finish up that powerful court scene that had to be left in limbo. The actors amazed me as they picked up the pace and energy that we left with and built upon it into an exciting frenzy. I had quite a bit of fun encouraging non-traditional blocking as the numbers built in the scene. People sat on benches with their back to audiences and groupings were cluttered around warrants so that the reality and tension of the court came to life in alternative staging that I think will work very well in the thrust setting. This was new territory for me and I am pleased with the results. (But will they really work in the theatre?)

September 27, 2002

There was some powerful work done tonight. We blocked the entire John and Elizabeth meeting in the cell. These actors have good instincts and their blocking choices were

simple and effective. I am a bit worried about taking the scene and making it “too precious”. I remind myself, we’re still blocking Darold, let’s not worry about perfection yet. Our run of Act 1 was strong. Many of the actors make new discoveries as the flow of the piece gets connected and this is encouraging.

September 28, 2002

Today was the big day deadline day. We finished blocking the entire play in the morning and fixed up some transitions. So after lunch we were actually ready to do an entire run-through. The run was superb. All of the designers were there and gave me a lot positive feedback. We all actually had a tear in our eye or chill on the back of our necks in the finale. Despite the roughness of the blocking we were moved. It really is a tribute to power of the writing, (it’s such a great story) and to the talents of the actors (they really throw themselves sincerely into the work). OK, I’ll take some credit too, (for some passionate shaping and guidance). However we now have several weeks to hone the show, which is a great place to be in. We all went home feeling very satisfied and proud of our efforts to date. We have a well-deserved day off.

October 1, 2002

We worked through all of Act 1, Scene 1 tonight. I basically did a stop-start every time I felt something could be enriched by a different interpretation or angle or if I felt a moment or delivery needed to be explored more or lacked the weight I felt the character might have in certain instances. This is how I plan to polish the entire production before

full run-thrus to discover how things might connect more. The actors responded well to my coaching and suggestions and were open-minded and flexible. So some interesting discoveries were made. It really is a great cast to work with. They are raring to try anything and grow thanks to this spirit and mutual trust. Our glitch in the night was that we didn't get to run the scene at the end of the night and thus cement our growth, thanks to a far more dramatic fire alarm that went off and brought streams of firemen to our rescue. So a false alarm got in the way of great art being created!

October 2, 2002

Ditto work was done on Act 1, Scene 2 this evening. Tonight I felt deeper work was being done and much richer work occurred overall. I think this is because of several things at play. An obvious one is that the actors are getting more used to my explorations and expectations of them so a positive result is sometimes achieved quicker. They are also getting to know their own characters better. I also feel that because there were fewer people on stage at any one time in this scene (sometimes only 2 or 3) that I was able to focus more of my attention on them versus a larger group. A note to myself to ensure that I share my focus in the larger ensemble scenes. (I think I do this as I often watch people's reactions in a scene versus just the character speaking, but it's a good reminder). We were able to do some cleaning and run the whole scene for flow and pacing.

October 3, 2002

I kicked in to some polishing and exploration work on Act 2, Scene 1 today. This was something I have been looking forward to as I have been feeling a lack of sexual tension

and conflict between John Proctor and Abigail. To date, this is the weakest scene and I was anxious to see how we could spark it up. I started by doing some trust and body contact exercises with the two actors. I suspected that they themselves were sexually reserved in real life and therefore didn't relate to or feel comfortable with the steamy, dangerous relationship that I believe Abigail and Proctor stumbled into. The exercises appeared to loosen them up, trust each other and physically connected them in a safe environment. This seemed to prepare them for some riskier work in the scene. I was pleased but I know there is still a long way to go for this moment to really click. We had a strong run of Act II, which helped to reinforce lines and blocking for everyone. It also served to remind everyone where their characters were headed in their journey in the play, which I hope, strengthens the ensemble as a whole.

October 4, 2002

We spent our entire evening on a start-stop polishing process for the big courtroom scene (Act 2, Scene 2). I tried to remember my note to myself about sharing my directorial focus with all of the actors involved. It is a powerful heated scene and I reminded the actors that absolutely everyone on stage had something quite major at stake here. This fuelled them up and kept me on their toes ensuring everyone was in the moment all of the time playing the stakes without melodrama. We all worked hard and ended the night with a solid run of the scene.

October 5, 2002

I love it when my instincts take over in the directorial process and a spontaneous idea gives birth to a great discovery or sumptuous work. That's exactly what happened this morning. As we worked through the final scene (Act 2, Scene 3) I was getting frustrated with Willard thinking he was clever playing a stock comedic drunk in the cell and John and Elizabeth Proctor playing precious moments in their last goodbye. I reminded myself that although they were very accomplished actors they were still young. Some side coaching to Willard where he wasn't allowed to physicalize or vocalize his intoxication (but rather have it effect his spirit and cloud his thoughts) and to explore with him why he has turned to drinking (i.e. the state of the community) helped to authenticate his work. For the Proctor challenge I had everyone leave the room and in separate corners they did an improvisation on their own, talking to a real person in their life that they cared about as if they were on their deathbed. It was a little more complex (and safely guided), then I am alluding to but it worked wonders to make the Proctor interaction in the cell more real, more vulnerable, understated and ultimately more touching. Wow, it was an awesome morning of work.

In the afternoon we had the luxury of running the entire show with lots and lots of picky notes from me afterwards. We are in great shape. The work is engaging, powerful and moving. I must work hard next week to ensure that we don't peak too early with the production.

October 8, 2002

Prior to rehearsal today I received some positive feedback from Barry (my supervisor and a wonder-director). He agrees that the show is strong but to be cautious about peaking too soon. We discussed my concern about the forest scene (where Abigail and John meet the night before the big courtroom adventure). I find it is not quite working and the sexual tension that we explored and discovered earlier in the rehearsal period is not consistent. From my perspective there is danger here. This scene is typically not in the play. Miller himself has commented that one day he'd like to see it done right. He feels it doesn't work. I am committed to make it right for Mr. Miller and the audience but not so committed that I won't cut it as the play runs long (3 hours). Bravo to Barry. He just nonchalantly suggests that it will help if I just instruct the actress to try to kiss John in the scene and to play with, making her sexuality "more dangerous". We have fun with this in rehearsal and boom, the scene works! It is everything I want it and need it to be to validate leaving in. I thank Barry the wonder-director and make a note to myself to be more playful and experimental with this technique in the future. Let's hope they can keep this growth.

The rest of the run is also stellar.

October 9, 2002

Run the show and give lots of notes. This is wonderful. Many of the actors are hungry to learn and grow so could do this forever (almost) while I can see some are peaking and are more hungry for an audience than my sessions of notes. I still see development and will push on until we can move into the theatre.

October 10, 2002

I let my instincts take over again. We were scheduled to run with notes and Barry is to come in for feedback. Despite my ego wanting strokes and to check in with him that things really are working at the level I believe them to be, I can sense the actors are tired and I worry about staleness. We did an entertaining Italian run of Act 1 instead. Each actor chose a style to play in Italian speed at, (e.g. like the Sopranos, like a bad porn movie, Shakespeare, etc). I then alternated style as we ran through at high speed. We laughed a lot, we reinforced some line problems and most importantly we were fresh. Needless to say we went home early!

October 11, 2002

I felt the best thing I could do for the cast right now to reward their hard work and dedication and to keep them fresh and spontaneous for an audience was to give them two nights off. So everyone had a good rest and enjoyed with anticipation moving into the University Theatre where we will begin to add on the technical and design dressing which will compliment and enhance our work.

October 13, 2002

The energy was high tonight as moved into "our space". Before doing a run-thru on set for the crew we spend a lot of time walking the set and running the revolve scene changes. Safety, safety, safety!



The run is rough with some blocking challenges that I'll solve tomorrow. Despite this roughness I watched many crewmembers get deeply involved in the play and they ended their evening with solemn faces, warm applause and even a few tears in their eyes. Right on!

October 14, 2002

I solved some minor blocking concerns that had worked in rehearsal but needed adapting for the space and set limitations. After more revolve work we had a smooth run-thru. Again I sense that even as we add these exciting technical and design elements the actors are hungry for an audience. Actually, so am I!

October 15, 2002

Tonight we added lights and sound, which needless to say, added a lot to the overall look and dramatic punch to the show. Although there a few minor cue problems and prop notes things went very well. Yes, it is really starting look like a show now!

I remind the actors in notes to keep the stakes high, to play truth with sincerity and spontaneity.

October 16, 2002

This was cue-to-cue rehearsal so I stayed out of Ruby's way and let her hone her stuff. It was quite fabulous. It's probably the fastest and smoothest cue-to-cue I've ever been involved in. I assisted in the timing of the last set of cues as it's a tricky call with several sound, light, revolve and slide cues happening all simultaneously. I find it quite stunning

when it works (the noose drops in silhouette at the climax of a drum effect as the revolve fades the actors away). The timing of this (which we had to run several times) was the only real challenge of the evening and we were out of the theatre in record time.

October 17, 2002

Although our scheduled dress rehearsal is not for a few days we added the costumes into the run tonight. How wonderful they are! They truly complete the picture with a twist of color in the authenticity and darkness of the overall show. This meant I was kept busy after the run balancing notes between all of the design elements, stage management and the actors. Thankfully there were not too many in any of the areas.

October 18, 2002

Our technical rehearsal was excellent. Right now the only concern I have is that I still haven't seen all of the actual slides we'll be using. Jessie promises them for Monday with the potential for change but I'm not comfortable waiting until the last minute. Alas I cannot complain though, everything else has been on time and exquisite. I trust her and Jim, as the rest of their designs are smashing.

October 20, 2002

The Dress Rehearsal goes very well. Other than a few finishing touches through my notes and those scary slides we are so ready!

October 21, 2002

The second and final dress rehearsal was tonight. The cues and sound effects for the finale (that I cherish) were all wrong so we stayed late and ran them to perfection. (Whew!) I like some of the slides but not all, (I find them too blurry or too literal and too.... etc.) but I don't have the heart to insist on last minute changes plus my experience in theatre is that when you change an element at the last minute that's the thing that goes wrong on opening night. Other than these details the show continues to glow and grow. New crewmembers and guest photographers sitting in assure me of the strength of the production by their superb response. I am proud of all the team and I anxiously await opening night. I'm tired but ready to hand over the show to the actors, the crew and the audience.

October 22, 2002

Opening night! It was everything I hoped for and more. The audience response is fantastic. Gossip on the stairs at intermission and afterwards is superlative. The response from my colleagues, peers, and the respected Professors in the department is also outstanding. We have an unqualified hit it would appear. The actors and stage management proved their professionalism and respect for the writing, the vision and each other as they delivered an engaging production that moved the audience. So many of my goals are achieved. I will now spend the remaining days of the run resting, revitalizing myself and most importantly analyzing what's working and what isn't, and why. It's been a great journey to here.

## **PROCESS RETROSPECTIVE**

As part of my personal evaluation of the directing process on this thesis project I asked the actors to fill out an evaluation of the rehearsal process that they experienced with me. I identified specific skill sets that I felt were important for a solid director to be proficient in. I have included the questions and a summary of the answers as Appendix "A". This information informed me as director about my areas of strengths and weaknesses. I also hope it aids the reader in a further appreciation of my creative process and what did or didn't work for the actor. It would appear from the overwhelmingly positive results (an average of 97% positive feedback, as summarized in Appendix "A"), that the skills and the techniques I have been allowed to nurture and hone as a MFA student here work well for most students. I have taken note of the student's appreciation for my organizational skills, my passion, and my positive energy. I am pleased to be affirmed that most of my coaching techniques such as verbing, visualization and my process of blocking quickly and then spending a great amount of time on polishing and running with notes also is effective. Setting up an environment of trust and safety where actors are free to experiment also proved to be important and rewarding. I will heed their advice and will experiment more with greater initial character development and some improvisational work in my future directing. Other specific comments from this research (as summarized in the Appendix) will aid me in specific situations that arise when my usual experimentation expertise or instincts don't necessarily work.

A big thanks again to the actors for their detailed and honest feedback.

## **PRODUCTION RETROSPECTIVE**

As the dust settled and the final mourner of John Proctor exited the theatre for the last time I gathered the audience response and critical feedback from peers, professors and professionals and synergized it with my own critique of what I felt did and didn't work in this bold production of The Crucible.

Overall the play was extremely well received. After the resonance of a plane slamming into an obstacle and the trap door of a hangman's platform thumping open there was a blackout that often met moments of stunned silence and was followed by cheers or standing ovations. On other nights the performance met enthusiastic but exhausted applause. I suspect the length of the play and the weight of the emotions and subject matter often challenged even the most serious of theatregoer. A friend who is a regular audience member of all types of theatre informally substantiated this thinking. He exclaimed with a sigh that he was "...overwhelmed at the conclusion..." he thought it was outstanding but "...it didn't seem right to give it a standing ovation." It was too dramatic, too rich and too solemn for him. Other comments and audience response was not so subdued. Many anonymous audience members were heard whispering down the stairs that it counted among "...some of the best plays they had experienced at the University of Calgary." One dedicated University of Calgary theatre subscriber even wrote in to confirm this. I was proud of my actors, my design and technical team, my supportive professors and advisors and of myself. I felt it was a lush production that was true to the characters, message, themes and to the soul of the play.

So in the spirit of learning and growing I ask myself what would I do differently? Based on the comments and critiques from respected peers and advisors and from my own discriminating eye I must admit there are a few areas that had room for improvement. My first and foremost "fix-it" would be the slide choices that I ultimately inspired and approved. The slides that were to echo the societal wrongs that resonate in world history following the events of Salem were highly controversial with many of the audience members. Some felt they were too literal and many didn't understand their inclusion. Some people loved them and were thrilled with what they added. In retrospect I do believe they were too literal and thus inconsistent with the other design elements, including the distorted sound and suggestive set and movement elements. I think they would have had more impact if they were abstract collages of the images we wanted to provoke or if they were de-constructed in a way that was more consistent with the other design elements. This way they still would have had the potential to impact contemporary audiences (who are accustomed to a more alternative multi-media world), in a suggestive or critical way. This would have suited more a production which challenges us to digest messages versus being force-fed them. For the less experienced audience member a more abstract approach might just have colored the stage for them versus confusing an issue or the moment at hand.

Although I still suggest it with hesitancy I think it would have been wise to have heeded Mr. Miller's advice and left the Proctor/Abigail forest scene out. While I believe it added to the dramatic zest and stakes of the play, it did add an extra fifteen minutes on to a three hour play that has been proven to work without it. Perhaps an alternative to this choice would have been to arrange for the production to have started a half an hour earlier than

traditional curtain time. This was what they did in the recent Broadway production, which alleviated the potential for audience exhaustion due to the late hour and the heavy subject matter.

My other re-shaping would be to hone the courtroom scene so that there was not quite so much yelling. While many of the actors achieved a beautiful ebb and flow in their volume, tempo and emotional pitch, I wish I had picked up on the fact that too much frenzy can equal too little impact. Some actors needed more guidance from me to color their performance with more vocal and emotional shading.

So what did I learn? I learned that that I can direct an epic drama with truth, sincerity and power and move an audience. I learned that sometimes a whisper in the theatre is far more powerful than a scream, and a furtive glance can be more dangerous than a sharp blow. Nuances and being in the moment are powerful tools for an actor and for the engagement of the audience. I nurtured and discovered some wonderful new coaching and directorial tools and I succeeded in achieving my original production goals. Did I challenge the actors, the audience and myself? The answer is a resounding yes!

### **SOME FINAL THOUGHTS**

**My most successful design interaction:** Working collaboratively with all the designers to take risks and to go where no Crucible production had gone before.

**My most moving rehearsal moment:** After the actors playing John and Elizabeth returned from their improvisational work on a real death-bed, farewell scene, I experienced some of the richest, most vulnerable and moving work ever in a rehearsal situation.

**The sexiest rehearsal:** When I asked the actor playing Abigail to experiment with her sexuality being more dangerous. The raising of a skirt two inches above the ankle suddenly became oh-so-steamy.

**The funniest moment in rehearsal:** When the actor playing Danforth is supposed to say, "God damns all liars Mary" he blurted out, "God damns all lawyers, Mary". I had to call my personal lawyer the next day and thus inform her.

**The funniest audience comment:** At intermission one young lady behind me admonishes that, "...it's exactly like the movie!" She and I had a pleasant discussion as I felt it was nothing like the movie. It turns out that our actor sounded a lot like Winonna Ryder to her.



**The most moving audience response:** Audience members with tears in their eyes or sitting in silence just thinking, after the show.

**My proudest moment:** Opening night when the audience leapt to their feet and enthusiastically applauded a great cast, a great crew and a play that continues to pack a punch on so many levels.

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## **APPENDIX A: Actor Evaluation**

Here are the results from the questionnaire I distributed to all of the actors in The Crucible. Note that all but one of the cast members were University of Calgary Drama students (ranging from first to fifth year). The majority of the students were in what I would deem an advanced/seasoned capacity. There was one senior staff member in the role of Rebecca Nurse.

I feel the results provide me with valid information in that they were distributed and collected by the Stage Manager in a confidential manner (no names were required), during the second week of the run. Nineteen out of twenty responses were returned. Note that in the comment section I have marked a “y” for a positive comment and an “x” for an area suggesting improvement. In each section if a similar comment appeared I would add an extra “y” or “x” (e.g. - “yyy” would indicate that this type of comment appeared three times). This assisted me in areas that were of major concern or identified skills that jumped out as areas of excellence and therefore were keepers.

## Summative Evaluation

**To:** All cast members of The Crucible

**From:** Darold Roles

**Re:** Director Evaluation

As part of my MFA thesis project I am including an evaluation of my directorial process. I would appreciate it if you can take a few minutes to complete the following evaluation. The more honest and specific you can be the more helpful it will be for me.

Thanks!

Please comment on the following:

*(Summation: y = positive response, x = areas needing improvement)*

1. Rehearsal techniques, (blocking, polishing, character development, scene enhancement, etc.) Were there techniques that were especially helpful vs. ones that didn't progress your work? Why or why not?

yyyyyyyyy = block then polish, lay foundation then work up

yyyyyy = trust to actors for own choices in rehearsal

xx = sometimes feel rushed, but appropriate time lines

y = you're a master!

yyyyy = wonderful how blocking was not dictated to us

xx = wished for character connections, needed more character work before blocking

yyyyy = character development was especially rewarding

y = impressed with entire process

y = unit breakdown helped text analysis (ah-ha's)

y = secrets and animal metaphors really helped character development

yy = feet very prepared for performance

y = I always knew what you wanted and was intent on getting it there for you

y = verbing was most effective technique for character development and texturing and clarifying purpose in some lines

x = work more on character during the process

yy = movement abstractions

yy = in depth script analysis

y = Italian run

y = generally everything – helped in some way – gave us a sense of pride in our work

## 2. Communication Skills (i.e.: notes, getting my point across in coaching, text and character analysis, etc.)

yyyyy = Notes were very clear and helpful  
 x = Notes that were repetitive could have been explained in more detail in private  
 yyy = Enjoyed the days we spent on script analysis  
 y = the way the units were broken down  
 yyy = group discussions brought out a lot of subtexts  
 yyyyyyyy = communication skills are excellent  
 x = sometimes you speak really fast or are a bit quiet  
 y = great at motivating us so that we want to be better every time  
 y = you let us come up the ideas and encourage us to bring more  
 y = good variety of practical coaching suggestions  
 y = I like how were told to 'discover' things  
 x = in the last few days of rehearsal I just wanted to be told what to do vs. being told to discover things.  
 y = your style was non threatening and entertaining  
 yy = very supportive with new ideas  
 yyy = very collaborative, but still true to his own vision  
 yy = you managed to be very blunt and tell us what needed improvement while you made us feel very good about our work at the same time.  
 y = you pushed me greatly and I thank you  
 yy = coaching and notes were always in a very positive and supportive way  
 yyy = notes poignant and fun too  
 yy = there was usually a clear goal we all could see  
 y = I always got feed back when I felt I needed feedback  
 x = If you find yourself giving the same note - you could try different approaches in giving it.  
 x = the description of 'beige' is a little unclear  
 y = approachable  
 x = help the actors understand the directorial vision by making sure they know the ideas behind music, slides etc.  
 y = coaching was proficient and to the point  
 y = a wonderful acting coach

## 3. Organizational Skills (e.g.: scheduling, use of rehearsal time, daily and weekly development of the scene or the play as a whole, etc.)

yyy= awesome scheduling, the best I've ever had for a show  
 yyyy = the use of rehearsal time was efficient  
 xx = we are all some what concerned about peaking to early  
 yy= we were given ample time to develop the scene and the repetition of the separate acts helped in memorization and blocking.  
 yyyy = extremely well organized  
 yyyyyy= I have never felt that I have wasted my time during rehearsals  
 yyy = scheduling was very considerate to everyone's needs, very accommodating.



y = you were very good about us out on time, but getting everything too and done well.  
 yyy= we accomplished ALOT every week so we were able to polish later in the process  
 y= use of rehearsal time was outstanding  
 y= the pace that the play developed was outstanding because rehearsal was so effective  
 yy= the entire play was blocked in two weeks and we moved into runs. It was the  
 quickest I have ever seen it done  
 yy= a very strong area  
 y= coaching and notes were proficient and to the point  
 y= exceptional, smooth, considerate and ahead of the game  
 y= I never felt rushed or unprepared  
 y= great  
 y= I always felt my time with the cast was important  
 y= easy to work with

**4. What would you change about my rehearsal process? What would you make sure I kept?**

x= a little more one-on-one note time  
 y= keep the unit division  
 yyyy= liked the several days of text analysis, (incredibly useful)  
 xx= perhaps add a voice workshop to compliment the movement workshop  
 xx= work slightly smaller chunks every night  
 y= the repetition of runs made getting off book easier  
 yyyyy= the process is laid out quite well  
 y= easy-going but under control  
 yyyyy= there was respect as well as fun  
 x= I would have played with character improv  
 x= more initial character development  
 x= more warm-up time  
 y= appreciated the openness to trying ideas  
 y= encouragement of risk within a safe place  
 y= clear vision  
 x= more physical character work  
 y= liked the research projects  
 y= animal metaphors and visualization were great  
 y= character discussions were great.  
 yyyyyy= don't change anything  
 y= keep your bluntness  
 y= taking us out for a beer and chat was great  
 y= incredible energy and dynamic passed on to the ensemble  
 y= the "team" concept made the show so magical  
 y= definitely keep the "ah-ha's" and metaphors  
 y= you are great with people

### **5. Did you grow as an actor? What did you learn as a theatre student?**

There was a 100% positive response to both these questions. In the area of growth there were numerous accolades such as, “absolutely”, “immensely” and “I have grown more as an actor in this show more than any other.” The responses to what students felt they learned were also extremely positive and varied. It was rewarding to hear that students were educated in the following areas:

- Experimenting
- Professionalism
- Taking risks
- Listening and reacting
- Text analysis
- Faith in your director and fellow actors
- Urgency and passion
- Raising the stakes when appropriate
- Facing challenges and meeting them
- Sub-text
- Discovering something every day
- Voice work
- The incorporation of class work into performance
- The importance of the good basics they receive in class (voice, body, etc.)
- It isn't just the acting class that makes the actor, but the person who makes the actor
- The value of text work and historical research
- Character development
- Trusting of impulses
- The importance of an open mind
- Spontaneity
- Character relationships
- Teamwork
- The value of verbing

### **6. Would you want to work with this director again? Why or why not?**

The responses were all 100% yes, with superlatives such as “definitely”, “absolutely”, “in a second” and even one that suggests he/she would, “pay money to work with groundbreaking Darold Roles again.” That is one actor I must seek out! While there was a wide variety of supportive comments that echoed the compliments mentioned above, the most common themes for choosing to work with me again included:

- Original ideas
- Energetic and fun
- The trust between actor and director
- My passion and dedication
- I made them proud of their work and the show overall
- My professionalism
- A trust in me to make sound dramatic choices

- Supportive
- Organized
- I challenged them
- Mutual respect

### **7. Other comments**

The summaries from students in this section reaffirmed that they had an incredible theatrical experience that was meaningful and memorable. The process was rewarding and very powerful for many of them. They exclaimed that were extremely appreciative of the opportunity and felt often that the audience response was wonderful and made them proud of their work and their career choice in the theatre.

### **8. Rate the director from 1 – 10, (1 being poor, 10 being excellent)**

The averages from the poll are indicated beside each skill set.

9.9 Passion for theatre

9.9 Passion for the project

9.7 Knowledge and understanding of the play

9.4 Knowledge of the author

9.5 Knowledge of his craft

9.4 Organizational skills

9.4 Rehearsal skills and techniques

9.6 Communication and Inter-personal skills

9.8 Relationship/respect for the actors

9.8 Relationship/respect for technical and design crew

9.8 Directorial vision

**Thank you, I have truly enjoyed working with all of you. I wish you continued success in your education and acting career!**

**Break a leg!**