

British Theatre Guide

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The Crucible

Arthur Miller

Lyceum Theatre Company

Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh

18 February–19 March 2016

In a deservedly ambitious production of Miller's Salem witch trial drama, the large dour-clad puritan cast ably fill the stark wooden barn of a stage. It is not just the set that's solid; the cast deliver strong performances of characters under pressure.

The play begins in the house of Reverend Parris (Greg Powrie) where his daughter Betty Parris (Christina Gordon) is sick in bed after dancing at night in the forest. Murmurings of witchcraft lead to confessions from the girls, which quickly escalates involving other women in the community.

The play centres around Abigail Williams (Meghan Tyler), the girls' ringleader, and John Proctor (Philip Cairns), her former employer. These fresh actors certainly prove themselves. Tyler's feisty, jilted girl is a great if at times unnerving performance. Cairns is the picture of a rugged pioneer not afraid to speak his mind and show his anger.

It is without doubt though an ensemble production, with even the most minor parts playing a key role as the members of the Salem community. It is a very straightforward working of Miller's concise text; what John Dove does is to allow the characters to really show their emotion.

Elizabeth Proctor (Irene Allan), Giles Corey (David Beames) and Reverend John Hale (Richard Conlon) all show their anger quite visibly. You can really feel their indignation at the accusations.

The play was written as an allegory for the Communist witch hunts happening in the US at the time Miller was writing, but the play transcends this, just as it transcends 17th century Massachusetts.

With the strong ensemble cast you really get the feel of the mob mentality gripping the community. This dangerous and steamrolling force is shown to great effect over the ever escalating acts of the play, in particular with the spine-chilling scene in act three where Abigail Williams and the other girls win Mary Warren (Kirsty Mackay) back to their side.

Standing up to authority is also a powerful theme, authority being embodied by Deputy Governor Danforth (Ron Donachie). Donachie proves a formidable presence on stage. Just as you can feel certain characters anger in the play, you can also feel the fear of this unwavering force of the law.

These are all negative reactionary themes; the feeling at the end of the play though was definitely uplifting. What really shines through is the need to be true to yourself and not compromise. Even if you know the ending, those final moments of Proctor's will have you on the edge of your seat.

An epic rendering of Miller's classic. Also a fitting part of the Lyceum's anniversary celebrations and Dove's dedication to the works of arguably America's greatest twentieth century playwright.

Reviewer: [Seth Ewin](#)