

Director's notebook
Student A (SL and HL)

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The Director's Notebook:

I am not sure what "The Crucible" is telling people now, but I know that its **paranoid** center is still pumping out the same darkly attractive warning that it did in the fifties. For some, the play seems to be about the dilemma of relying on the testimony of small children **accusing** adults of sexual abuse, something I'd not have dreamed of forty years ago. For others, it may simply be a fascination with the outbreak of paranoia that suffuses the play – the blind **panic** that, in our age, often seems to sit at the dim edges of consciousness. Certainly its political implications are the central issue for many people; the Salem interrogations turn out to be eerily exact models of those yet to come in Stalin's Russia, the Salem interrogations turn out to be eerily exact models of those yet to come in Stalin's Russia, Pinochet's Chile, Mao's China, and other regimes. (Nien Cheng, the author of "Life and Death in Shanghai," has told me that she could hardly believe that a non-Chinese – someone who had not experienced the Cultural Revolution – had written the play.) But below its concerns with **justice** the play evokes a lethal brew of illicit sexuality, **fear** of the supernatural, and political manipulation, a combination not unfamiliar these days. (Arthur Miller, *The New Yorker*, pgs. 5-6) **Highlighted words – I dared myself to pick only 5 that may be central to influencing my own vision.**

The Crucible by Arthur Miller

Why did I choose this play?

After reading three different plays I decided to choose Miller's famous text to explore as a director.

The pros:

I am from North America and although I don't live there I feel that if I ever move back this play is so important and so revered. Personally, I hear it referenced so often I thought this would be an amazing chance to explore it.

It's a wonderful-horrible story. It's so well written and full of tension. I felt its relevance is still in the here and now. Oppression and lies don't go away. People are fooled and controlled and lose their name, and their lives because others with more power or who are manipulative can turn people against each other.

The challenge:

Looking back now that I am finished it was a challenge taking on a play that is so well known and complex. Also, I realized I can't do it justice here in 20 pages but I can try! I have to admit I saw some advantages for my peers who chose shorter plays but I didn't want to turn back once I was far in. I purposely avoided watching any videos or movies of the play. I was too afraid to be influenced and lose my own vision. Our teacher reminded us that you, the reader, are now our audience and may never have read this play so I have to remember you are here. I hope you feel me communicating my ideas to you. :)

Special note: Please be aware that my structure includes filtering ideas slowly down to my two specific moments but I actually highlight these moments almost from the beginning to show their unique process.

The play text, its context and the ideas represented in the play

The Crucible was written in the early 1950's and many sources discuss the political climate and culture of the United States at that time.

After the end of the Second World War (1939-1945), in which the United States and the Soviet Union were allies against the Germans, relations between the two major powers deteriorated. They became suspicious, and then so fearful, of each other that this period became known as the Cold War, even though no war between them was ever declared. The United States was a democracy, and the US government believed in capitalism, whereas the Soviet Union was a dictatorship, and was a communist state. In theory at least, in a communist state everyone shares in the wealth of the country, so that no one will be either very rich or very poor. Many people, both in England and in America, thought that this system of government would be fairer. (Wateryard, pg. 4)

Interesting that the play itself has different groups and families that have had long last tensions between them just like countries. Parris (the reverend) wants more money and power. The Putnam family wants to hold on to their wealth and power. There are several references to things from the past that the characters are angry about. Giles Corey is an excellent character who brings up these wrongs for the past very often. Understanding these relationships as characters will help me build subtext with my actors and have them understand that the "story" began before the first act. Like the U.S. and Russia, the past permeates the script. The previous quote mentions that some people in America and England thought that communism might be a better system just like in the play the characters are new settlers in a place they too hope will give them better lives. I think the tension between the characters in Act One, scene one when the girls have been dancing in the forest and Betty is pretending to be in a trance is more than just about the dancing. Miller wisely forces people/character with past conflicts to come together.

There was great concern in the United States and paranoia arose in the U.S. government that there may be communist supporters in their country. The group in charge of this was called "the House Un-American Activities Committee, and was chaired by a senator called McCarthy." (Wateryard, pg. 4) Thus what many sources refer to as 'McCarthyism' began. In the play, there are also those who clearly hold power over the lives of others, like McCarthy. The vestry scene in Act Two and Deputy Judge Danforth as a character is about those who have this kind of ultimate power. I was struck by how human Danforth is though and how he will do anything to get the answer he wants even if it's not really the truth. That kind of witch-hunt is frightening; it's frightening when people won't say they are wrong even if it will cost others their lives.

In 1966, Miller himself wrote an essay for *The New Yorker* entitled “*Why I Wrote ‘The Crucible’*”. His distrust for McCarthy is captured in a comparison from a film he saw about Hitler in relation to the McCarthy: “Buzzing his truculent sidewalk brawler’s snarl through the hairs in his nose, squinting through his cat’s eyes and sneering like a villain, he comes across now as nearly comical, a self-aware performer keeping a straight face as he does his juicy threat-shtick.” (Miller, *The New Yorker*, pg. 1) It’s alarming to read something like this about Hitler but it reminded me that we all are human and have the power to do good or evil. Proctor cheats, Abigail lies, Elizabeth is cold, Willard drinks too much....but Miller shows rays of light and dark in all these characters. My vision needs to avoid making them into stereotypes in action. Proctor is also strong and fair; Abigail’s parents were killed in front of her and she needs love; Elizabeth knows who she is; and Willard is a toy controlled by others but actually shows kindness in Act Two, scene 3 by the way he interacts with others in the Salem jail. But, because of religion or affairs (Proctor with Abigail) or withholding information (Reverend Parris knows his niece Abigail is guilty of dancing naked in the forest but doesn’t reveal it) there is paranoia in every scene:

In any play, however trivial, there has to be a still point of moral reference against which to gauge the action. In our lives, in the late nineteen-forties and early nineteen-fifties, no such point existed anymore. The left could not look straight at the Soviet Union’s abrogations of human rights. The anti-Communist liberals could not acknowledge the violations of those rights by congressional committees. The far right, meanwhile, was licking up all the cream. The days of “*J’accuse*” were gone, for anyone needs to feel right to declare someone else wrong. Gradually, all the old political and moral reality had melted like a Dalí watch. Nobody but a fanatic, it seemed, could really say all that he believed. (Miller, *The New Yorker*, pg. 2)

Miller says he “*read about the witchcraft trials in college, but it was not until I (he) read a book published in 1867—a two-volume, thousand-page study by Charles W. Upham, who was then the mayor of Salem—that I knew I had to write about the period. Upham had not only written a broad and thorough investigation of what was even then an almost lost chapter of Salem’s past but opened up to me the details of personal relationships among many participants in the tragedy.*” (Miller, *The New Yorker*, pg. 3) This is why Miller’s setting is perfect. I can’t recall how old I was when I first heard about Salem witches but I know that I have heard stories about witch hunts since I was very young. The very mention of Salem conjures these images in my mind. When I did further research about the real people and what it was like in the “new world” it reminded me of *The Lord of The Flies* by Golding and how any new world comes with old world problems and behaviours. The isolation of the characters in *The Crucible* is frightening. It reminds me of what is happening to gay people in Russia right now and how laws are being made to hurt them. When I read these stories in the news or hear about them Russia feels so far away. But it’s not. I will use the idea of isolation to develop a vision for setting.

When Miller visited Salem in 1953 he read “a report written by the Reverend Samuel Parris, who was one of the chief instigators of the witch-hunt. ‘During the examination of Elizabeth Procter, Abigail Williams and Ann Putnam’—the two were “afflicted” teen-age accusers, and Abigail was Parris’s niece—‘both made offer to strike at said Procter; but when Abigail’s hand came near, it opened, whereas it was made up into a fist before, and came down exceeding lightly as it drew near to said Procter, and at length, with open and extended fingers, touched Procter’s hood very lightly. Immediately Abigail cried out her fingers, her fingers, her fingers burned. . . . (Miller, *The New Yorker*, pg. 3) Miller’s investigation into Salem prompted me to do some of my own exploration into this time and place. When I considered modernizing my vision and placing the setting elsewhere, like somewhere in the here and now like Russia, I eventually decided against it. Why? Because Miller has found the perfect Every Man (and Woman) time and place. It’s universally known. This works. The fact that he uses the truths of real people from that time makes us also remember that there is great truth in the play and I think it will feel relevant for any audience. I plan on putting my play on according to a vision of 1692 (The *Crucible* Synopsis at the beginning of the play, Miller) and to be historically suggestive. But one bias I have is that is so many images I found of the play, the characters look like....well, like A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving or the likes. I appreciate that maybe others are being historically accurate so I researched if everyone dressed in purely black and white and they did not. “If you were wealthy, you were almost obligated to show it....And if you weren’t, it would not have been right to look higher up....Puritan grays and whites would be for the plebeians, not for wealthy townfolk...who would have favoured blues and yellows.” (Strauss, *Salem Witch Hunt*, pg. 66). I feel a freedom to recreate history with colour to offset what is a very dark canvas of a play.

Because religion and rules of Puritanism are the governing force or theocracy in the play it’s important for me as a director to understand this. The following enabled me to understand this much better. (In brackets) I have included my connection to the play amidst the quotes.

The settlers had fled religious persecution in England, and they had a strong belief in the rightness of their way of life and faith which helped to sustain the □ in the tough early years of the new colony. (Explains Proctor’s dedication to the land) Many children died before the age of sixteen, and average □ life expectancy was thirty five. (Explains why Ann Putnam is so accusatory after losing so many children at birth) Salem was a farming community, but the land was difficult to farm; farmers needed to work from dawn to dusk, and it was hard, physical work. Summers were hot and the winters bitterly cold. (Miller makes several references to heat, cold, windows, light, the eerie yellow bird, the forest meeting between Abigail and Proctor, the girls dancing naked in the forest) The Revd Parris certainly needed his firewood to keep warm. (Parris is self-serving, lies, and wants more wealth) The way of life was strict and sombre; “vain enjoyment” such as dancing or reading novels was not permitted, and even children were discouraged from playing; they were expected to “walk straight, eyes slightly lowered, arms at the sides,” and not to speak unless spoken to. (Explains why the girls are so afraid of breaking rules and dancing naked) Women were expected to be subservient to men (note the way Proctor speaks to Elizabeth in their first scene together). Even Christmas was not celebrated, and any holiday from work meant more prayer.

The laws of the new community were based on the Bible, and more specifically on the strictures of the Old Testament; there were fifteen capital offences, including murder, rape, adultery with a married woman, and of course, being a witch: "If any man or woman be a witch, that is, hath or consulteth with a familiar spirit, they shall be put to death." Fornication (having sex with a single woman) was against the law, and was punishable by "enjoyning to marriage, or fine, or corporall punishment". Not to mention the public shame that Proctor endures when he confesses the affair with Abigail; his private shame he acknowledges to Elizabeth in their first scene together. This small community was also subject to external stress; there was political uncertainty, land titles were in dispute, (as Putnam and Corey exemplify) and the country was not entirely safe; Native American tribes still attacked settlers from time to time. (Abigail saw Indians kill her parents—I can use these fears of devils and Indians and the unknown)

And so " a host of socially disruptive pressures were upon Salem which seemed to threaten a disorder beyond the power of the mind to analyze. The girls lifted up a cause for it all out of the morass". (Arthur Miller) (Wateryard, pg. 6

An article by Jess Blumberg in *The Smithsonian online* helped me to understand the reality behind the witch trials. It coincides with my vision that I must not allow one dimensional characters and that I must find new ways to reach my audience so that they feel the fears of these characters.

In January of 1692, Reverend Parris' daughter Elizabeth, age 9, and niece Abigail Williams, age 11, started having "fits." They screamed, threw things, uttered peculiar sounds and contorted themselves into strange positions, and a local doctor blamed the supernatural. Another girl, Ann Putnam, age 11, experienced similar episodes. On February 29, under pressure from magistrates Jonathan Corwin and John Hathorne, the girls blamed three women for afflicting them: Tituba, the Parris' Caribbean slave; Sarah Good, a homeless beggar; and Sarah Osborne, an elderly impoverished woman. (It's terrible in the play how they turn on the defenseless and weak and elderly include characters who were real people mentioned here as well as Rebecca Nurse and Giles Corey. I felt great sadness when Corey is announced dead but so proud of him for not giving in. I think a modern audience would love this character and find his self-righteousness quite funny. A casting consideration.)

□ All three women were brought before the local magistrates and interrogated for several days, starting on March 1, 1692. Osborne claimed innocence, as did Good. But Tituba confessed, "The Devil came to me and bid me serve him." She described elaborate images of black dogs, red cats, yellow birds and a "black man" who wanted her to sign his book. She admitted that she signed the book and said there were several other witches looking to destroy the Puritans. All three women were put in jail. (The yellow bird is a symbol in the play and Abigail convinces others that she sees it—it is like a trigger that gets all of the girls going in Act Two, scene two). (Blumberg, *A Brief History of The Salem Witch Trials*, web article)

To summarize, the play encompasses witchcraft, politics, religion and paranoia. Rich ideas and themes for any director. Yet there is a love story in the centre.

My artistic responses, creative ideas and explorations of live theatre as a director

HELLO TARGET AUDIENCE:

The play is most suitable for students in 8th grade and up. I asked various teachers and this was what they thought. I also remember when I watched an outside group put on *The Importance of Being Earnest* one night at our school. There were two sixth graders behind me and I thought it would be way over their heads. But I could hear them whispering to each other during the performance and they actually did a better job understanding it than some of my peers! So I would hate to cut anyone off. There's a few strong words and anger against God that might upset some people. There are images and references of death especially as I plan to use the symbol of the noose powerfully. My interpretation of the possession scene when the girls go wild in the vestry in Act One, scene two will be too disturbing for many young children. Although not the focus of the two scenes I specifically share here, I want the love story between Elizabeth and John Proctor to be so believable, and so powerful, that real loss will be felt when the two are separated, with Proctor heading towards his death.

Two images that will inspire many elements of my production:



Texas Lightning Sky (Source: <http://www.backgrounds.cc>)

This image inspires my artistic vision so much. When I found it I brainstormed (collected from various journal entries):

According to *The Theatre Experience* (Pg. 138) a director must discover “the spine of a play” and “the general action that motivates the play, and the fundamental drama or conflict of which the script’s plot and people are the instruments.” When I look at this image I see this spine. Land, anger, darkness.

-I want THIS kind of tension in my play through believable acting and a sense of foreboding—it captures the essence for me: land, battles over land, lives lost, constant tension in the spine of the script, something’s coming, something’s coming....Religion, God, Nature is more powerful than anything—this is the way I will build tension in Act Two scenes one and two. They brew like storms thanks to Miller’s pacing and dramatic irony.

-Act 2, scene 1 “the forbidden scene” when Proctor and Elizabeth meet (he wants to tell her not to play a role in sending his wife to trial but Abigail seem frail and delusional and wants him back)—I want the lighting to feel like this image....I want very little light for this scene/lanterns maybe to illuminate faces—Abigail in a white nightgown if scene will be so dark—will make her silhouette stand out. My idea for immersive theatre was inspired by Punchdrunk’s *The Drowned Man: A Hollywood Fable* which I saw in London at ISTA’s TaPS. We were literally immersed into a huge old warehouse, had to wear masks, and the use of space was stunning. You were in it and could not escape. That’s how I want my audience to feel. I was influenced by a video in which the director discusses the production and how theatre must make us feel in the here and now. I love this philosophy.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ktpes0qMZ0&feature=youtu.be>

A second immersive performance I have seen was a version of *Jesus Christ Superstar* where the audience had to walk along trails and sand dunes to reach a converted warehouse space. The journey made you feel like you were en route to an experience, not a show and I believe this was their intention. I want to use this idea for the lobby before my audience enters. How can I make them think or feel before they enter? One stunning moment in this production was during Judas’ suicide when a real window was opened on stage allowing real sea mist to float in with a huge amount of side white light which is something I plan to use for making Abigail’s follower become part of the forest amidst shadows and side lighting. I have found a simple but wonderful website that explains the basic effects of lighting:
<http://www.stagelightingguide.co.uk>

-since I have been so inspired by a Butoh (comes from Japan according to people who were talking in the audience) performance that I saw at Wreck Beach in Vancouver by Kokoro dance I realize now how much power THE BACK can have. I know, never turn your back on and audience but (!) what if that back can tell a story? Just an idea. Once again, this was incredibly immersive—it took place at a beach and the performers literally came out of the ocean and then returned into it. It was if they were oblivious to the

audience. I wrote in my journal that it was like “being witness to something sacred, real and raw.” My friend said she thought it was bizarre but started crying towards the end of it. When I asked her why she said she had no idea and it made me think about expressionism (we studied *Spring Awakening* by Wedekind in Y1) and so I told her sometimes performances capture the “inside out”. Butoh is both beautiful and grotesque. I see it being one way to capture the scenes when the girls appear possessed in the play.

There is a second image that I also credit for huge inspiration



The Trial of George Jacobs, 1855. Library of Congress, Tompkins Harrison Matteson

-I placed myself into each of these character's positions and allowed myself to feel their story. We would DEFINITELY be recreating this image as a tableau at our first rehearsal. Rehearsals will be focused on realism but with immersive moments and using Butoh.

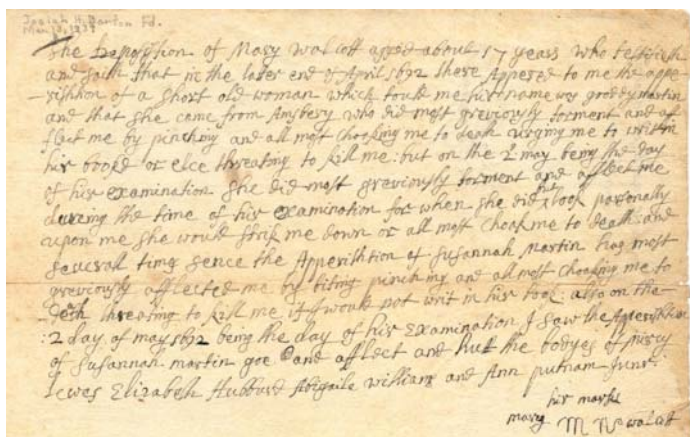
-Angry men judges upper left—these are my Danforths and Hathornes—dark, in control, merciless, almost like a barricade (but in other parts of the play they too are more like the women: weak and pleading—everyone gets a turn at two sides in this play)

- I saw *Sweet Bird of Youth* by Tennessee Williams and was inspired by a strong sense of realism. Even though I was in the front row of the audience and inches from the actors, they never broke the fourth wall and so it truly was a looking in kind of experience. Although my vision is looking for moments of immersion I still think the Miller's play also needs to make us feel like the helpless voyeur throughout most of the play as per his original intentions. I will experiment with Abigail in the audience for the beginning of Act Two.

-the hysterical women who must be the accused are so faded and weak and held back—the men that support them are hurt or held or guarded—reminds me of Parris' uptight inflated ego and Cheever who is like a pawn to the court and holds the audience's fear—he is the scribe in the court but he is just a puppet in suspension like the audience will feel if all works—they will feel helpless—I actually want this painting to be part of my set-foreshadows

-not modernizing this—story is still attainable—can't remember exactly when and where but I was young I saw *Into The Woods* twice and once was just all like the fairy tale and it worked but the second one had all these cubes and nothing looked like it was supposed to and from this childhood memory I think you shouldn't "try to fix what isn't broken" (source unknown)

-when I told my English teacher I was doing this on *The Crucible* she said she loved the play but when she saw it live she hated all the girls screaming all the time and it became annoying...made me think a lot about when I look at this image. It's horrific but I want something else to reach my audience here to show the hysterics of the girls in court. BIG IDEA: Use Butoh. Ethical issue: Butoh is beautiful. Reality: Probably not to your average audience member who is not used to it in pretty much any part of the world. Desire: I am going to use it for the possession scene. It's too good not to. Conscience: Explain its purpose in the programmed



Although difficult to read in places, The Boston Public library has an incredible collection of real documents from the real witch trials and many names resurface from Miller's play. These were chilling and yet again inspired me to find ways to make my characters real and to bring my audience into a world where they too will feel entrapped in the forest and world of these people. Ann Putnam, Elizabeth, Abigail...they are all here. These documents would be powerful for an audience to read or to see—maybe before the play or as part of a set concept. (From my journal) Document source: <http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/archives/BPL.xml>

When reading sections in *The Theatre Experience* on directing and what directors do one statement that stood out for me is "since a production occurs through time, it is important for the director to see that the *movement, pace and rhythm* of the play are appropriate...One of the most common faults of directors is not establishing a clear rhythm in a production." (Theatre Experience, pg. 148). It is difficult to discuss all of my ideas here but I will focus on this later in regards to two specific moments. But I do need to consider this overall so here I include an excerpt from a chart I made for all acts and scenes (too long to include—sorry).

Act and scene	Movement	Pace	Rhythm	Other notes
1/1 A bedroom in Reverend Samuel Parris's house. Salem Massachu setts, in the spring of the year 1692.	<p>Tituba exits hurriedly (pg 2)</p> <p>Tituba—huge transformations in this scene from taking care of Betty to begging Parris for forgiveness to accusing others like Sarah Good—her movement will be that of survival in a sense—from throwing herself at Parris's feet to when she rises to discuss the devil amongst them—blocking considerations</p> <p>Constant entrances and exits</p> <p>Central focus is Betty in bed which I would make larger than life but stay with realism.</p> <p>The end of the act when Betty and Abigail become possessed has key words in the stage directions like "chanting" and hysterically" (The Crucible pg. 32-33)</p>	<p>Frantic—much is at stake! Who is guilty? Church is about to start. Rumours are abound. People want answers. And all this in a feeling like a kettle about to go off—so many rules about NOT losing it or being out of control. The audience needs release during moments and it is Proctor who must give us these!</p> <p>Violent electric moments when Betty runs for window or Tituba blames the devil.</p> <p>Scene with Hale is a slower pace—everyone</p>	<p>Reality of off stage scenes affect mood and rhythm of on stage action.</p> <p>i.e. As 3 or 4 persons off-stage begin a quiet chant—a psalm or hymn" (The Crucible pg. 14) Variations when Betty is alone with Abigail and Mercy and it becomes very "mean girls" with dramatic irony as audience understands the girls know more than they let on.</p> <p>Almost like the court/vestry scene later this scene is full of questions, answers, and explosive moments. It moves like an epic court room drama.</p> <p>When Betty runs for the window which I imagine is the actual 4th wall maybe offset with a gobo tracing it's frame on stage the rhythm should go from frantic to almost slowmo and she literally leaps into the audience but is caught by Abigail and Mercy—will take a lot of rehearsal</p>	<p>Miller has such specific details about lighting and staging. I think he plays with light powerfully throughout the play not only to show the time of day but also symbolically. "The mood must be one of high mystery." (The Crucible, pg. 1)</p> <p>When we looked at Commedia in Y1 we did a teacher led exercise where we used different animals to inspire characters. Although I want naturalism I share a few thoughts here on how animals I associate with my interpretation of different characters might inspire early stages of their physicality for rehearsal exercises:</p> <p>Ann: peacock Abigail: cat Betty: crab Proctor: wild horse Parris: rooster Rev. Hale: show horse Tituba: dog Mary: rabbit Rebecca: swan Mercy: bat</p> <p>Set: A large central bed for Betty to make the actor look even tinier and highlight her innocence.</p> <p>Bed is CS and on the SL is a sitting room</p>

	<p>Parris' movements will show paranoia as he continuously looks out the window to see his parish arriving for church.</p> <p>Idea: use window as a motif for all characters to show true selves as they look through into audience without breaking 4th wall</p> <p>Important: most characters awake all night—on edge</p>	<p>turns focus to him and he becomes like a teacher with answers as he gives lessons. Where he goes heads will follow on stage.</p> <p>The pace is like a roller coaster with the final moments being the scariest part of the ride.</p>	<p>to do this safely</p> <p>Prior to this scene I would actually use a large shadow screen with images of girls dancing with eerie drum beat which will be foreshadowing of final scene in play when drum is used as Proctor's death approaches. At end of play both Proctor and Rebecca nurse will leave prison at back of audience and walk into the light of this screen with the girls dancing as shadows once again but this time distorted: Butoh.</p>	<p>with piles of books that will attract Hale during his speech about magic. (pg. 24 refers to book) Perfect props.</p> <p>SR is the entrance to the house as per Miller's own stage images (Pg. 133) Sparse chairs for the Putnams to sit in. Stool beside Betty's bed and washing bin with wash cloth. Furniture should suggest modest wealth. Parris aspires to be wealthier.</p> <p>Abigail should use various parts of the stage always following Proctor when he enters but not placing herself in an obvious area. Side glances.</p>
2/1 Five weeks later. A wood.	<p>I see it like cat and mouse and both Proctor and Abigail take turns with this. He wants her to save his wife so he is nice to her, compliments her, she wants him back, she almost throws herself on him, and then the cat and mouse fight but the cat (Abigail) wins. My staging would reflect this using the aisles for her</p>	<p>Slow, sexual then violent, physical and then ends with an empty lingering. Like an echo.</p> <p>Pulsation: I will use several girls along the aisles who will blend in with the forest and be under nylon cloth with</p>	<p>The whole scene has an underlying tension. Sexual tension from Abigail whose hair is down (Pg. 65) and who wears a white night dress (Pg. 65) and who pulls up her dress to show her leg to Proctor (pg. 66) Their dialogue is even, back and forth, like breathing. The rhythm changes with the stage direction for Proctor: "Seeing her madness now" (Pg. 66) which builds into</p>	<p>Apparently this is known as the forbidden scene (!) and not found in all versions of the play. I read a blog about why people think it's not in all versions and it seems many people think it makes it too predictable or will make us think less of Abigail. I don't agree and will stick with the version of the play that I have.</p> <p>http://rbrenglishhonor.blogspot.nl/2008/10/act-ii-scene-ii-of-crucible.html</p> <p>As a director I need to show they are two</p>

	<p>approach to make the woods vaster. The impact alone of her approaching him from a distance is sinister.</p> <p>Audience must still be able to “hope” Proctor can save Elizabeth at onset of scene or scene is lost—note to self.</p>	<p>an eerie lighting effect. They will echo Abigail in strange whispers and reach out towards the audience to extend her threats. They will be part of the rhythm.</p>	<p>him being physically violent with her and him both terrorizing and promising to save him leaving him “alone, amazed in terror” (pg.70)</p>	<p>sided: she loves him, she is not mentally well. He needs her, he hates her and he cares for her. I would highlight he is still attracted to her.</p> <p>Words from lines that girls hidden in woods in forest will echo: Pleading (69) Hypocrite (69) Murderous (69)</p>
<p>2/2 The vestry of the Salem Meeting: House, two weeks later.</p>	<p>This is a complex scene so I have limited my focus. From pages 100-106 as the act comes to its finale. The movement here as the court spirals out of control will be based on unbelievable tension. In the vertical plane the audience sees the girls slowly rise, Judge Danforth up and out of control for the first time demanding order, Proctor, Francis Nurse and Hale also rising vertically in protest and in CS is Abigail, the conductor as on the horizontal</p>	<p>From what I recall our teaching said LeCoq's “the bomb is about to go off state of tension and disbelief when the yellow bird appears to raging madness.</p>	<p>This section builds like a slow raid with one bomb going off after the other. You start to see Proctor and his supporters fall apart one by one as Abigail takes over. In the text alone there are numerous exclamation marks. My lighting will intensify too as this section takes place and go from Miller's own lighting of DSL sunlight (pg. 134) to flashes of outside lightning and candles going out in the courtroom as a very very red sun filters onto the stage as the Butoh begins. I want it to truly horrify because I want my audience to feel the way I believe it once really felt.</p>	<p>My focus here for this project is from pages 100-106 when Mary is swayed to return to Abigail and the other girls. But I had a great idea inspired by “Butoh backs” to often place Abigail DSC almost at the very edge of the stage with her back turned to the audience and using that alone for her to react to Elizabeth and John (neither who are allowed to see each other).</p> <p>Set: I would literally use the image I shared earlier of Matteson's <i>The Trial of George Jacobs</i> inspired by The Salem Witch Hunt. In front of a black scrim we see this painting, once again an anachronism but I use it to remind the audience of the real horrors involved. And to the characters it could be perceived</p>

	plane a Butoh transformation creates swirls around the physically high perched Judge as the girls swarm like the beginnings of a tornado. Like my image of the storm.			as a visual threat. In front the painting CS is an impressive stand for Judge Danforth and his supporters. They would need to be elevated on platforms for some of the Butoh inspired visual scenes and effects for practical reasons.
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Please not all synopses of scenes in my first column are from *The Crucible*, no page stated in actual play.

My directorial intentions and the intended impact on an audience

In Y1 we did an exercise where we had to write a director's message we would include in the program for the script we were interpreting. I really found it useful so I am using that format here again:

I seek, foremost, to tell the story in the script and to do my best to bring Arthur Miller's incredible words to life. So much of the symbolism is inherent to the text, props, and settings. I imagine a great number of rehearsals ahead will be spent on the process exploring the characters: their subtext, thoughts, and motivations.

I want a minimalistic set that allows the audience to be immersed in the action and moments. The forest was an eerie setting for the Puritans, and beyond Indians and animals, some also believed it was inhabited by the devil and I want it to encompass everything without feeling tacky like the Rainforest Café (which I don't think is tacky but you get my point).

The technical and lighting team will bring out the mystery and ambiance of the scenes in the play. Challenges will include a very realistic or stylistic immersive encaged feeling by making the audience feel as if they are truly in the woods. The upper balcony will be closed and used for sound effects and from where the nooses will literally "fall" on the audience in the final scene as Proctor walks up the aisles towards his destiny. I say aisles because the prison will also be immersed in the audience by taking advantage of the natural overhang of the balcony that covers seven rows and creates a crate feeling. The back wall of the theatre in that area will need to look like a realistic, cold prison.

The costumiers' goal will be to create a believable world of the time that was historically suggestive. A focus will be on costuming to convey character and to weave in colour to supplement this dark canvas.

It's strange to see documents from the late 1600s with the actual names of many of the characters. Although Miller took artistic license with the

backgrounds, we are reminded that much of this play is based on truth. Adultery and dancing *really* were punishable. The witch hunt was real.

The Crucible has been all around since we began. Stories of bullying in our greater community have saddened us lately. Reports of corrupt financial institutions that aim to take advantage of the unknowing victim remind us that the Putnams are still amongst us. And even now we see the strong upright finger branches of trees patiently awaiting buds. Miller extracts so much from the natural world.

Recently my sister told me about her neighbor whose young son told him that he wanted to wear a dress. The parents had already taken him out of his regular school as they feared he would be bullied for being himself and placed him in a private school beyond what they could afford. The father, like Proctor or Corey, although human flawed and brave, held truth up as the strongest virtue. He said to his son, "Heck, If you want to wear a dress I'll get one for myself too and we'll walk down the street together." The characters in the show don't go away. They simply reinvent themselves around us.

Beyond this:

Although not highlighted in my chosen moments, I would love the challenge of directing a real love story between Proctor and Elizabeth. So much would depend on the actors and their ability to convey subtext (like in Act one, scene two when Elizabeth and John convey a great deal through what I believe is not said). The final scene would be a real challenge as they cling to each other. If you lose pacing, you will lose the audience here.



My own image

The noose is a powerful symbol in the play as more and more innocent people are taken off to die (Nurse). I would use an immersive approach for the final prison scene. The audience has been watching the action unfold on stage but they will also be confronted with what I call *The Beautiful Past* in the lobby, the forest from all angles including using Abigail's followers to become the presence and voice of this forest, and a prison scene for the final act which will take place in the audience itself. The back wall of the theatre becomes the prison and the balcony above creates a natural "roof". Sound effects (wailing un milked cows, wind, nature) will come from above as well with the effect on the audience that they are truly submerged. As Rebecca Nurse and Proctor go off to their final death at the end these nooses would fall from the balcony above surprising and submerging the audience. It will feel strangely close. Experiment and image by me.



My own image

In my opening section I mentioned that I do not want my characters to be conveyed as stereotypes. No character is entirely bad or good. To remind the audience of this, as they enter the theatre the lobby will be full of fresh cut beautiful smelling flowers (the value of land and Proctor's dedication to working the land and also how beautiful it was to see Butch out in nature at a beach). There will be piles of fresh sweet smelling hay. I gathered these items from the concierges and our prop department. I hung the photos with old images to show the idea. I found a few pieces of hay! Back to Lightning Storm image and the power of land which is something characters argue about during the play and they hold old grudges. Some ideas for the hung pictures: A happy Abigail with her parents, Reverend Hale with his diploma from Harvard, Abigail and all over her friends with Tituba in happier times or Reverend Parris with Tituba and Abigail looking happy. Or Elizabeth and Proctor with their sons. I risk using this anachronism (photography) to the time period as I think the effect is worth it. (My image)



My own image

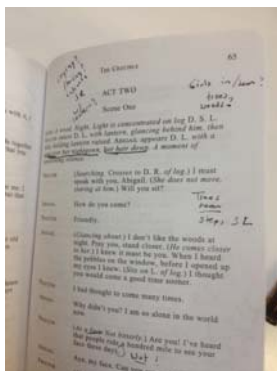
"Salem people believed that the virgin forest was the home of the Devil. ...Salem people thought that everywhere on earth God was worshipped, except in the American forest."
(Wateryard, pg. 7)

I want my audience to feel immersed in the dark forest. This would be done by suspending branches like the one you see on the left from the top balcony which looms over much of the audience. They would also be set along the aisles of the theatre intertwined with camouflage material which I have seen in past shows at our school can look very real. These branches are for sale where I live at certain times of the year and are known as "Easter branches". They are inexpensive and I think they have a lot of personality and are ominous. They would need to be well mounted and asymmetrical to avoid it looking really silly. Image by me. Special thanks to my friend Patty who suggested I check out these branches.

How I would stage two moments of the play:

Act Two, scene one. Pages 65-70.

Please note that a great deal of what I believe is required for this section is holistically included throughout but especially in the last two sections. As I knew I would be focusing on two moments I thought it best to share general ideas but always build towards these. Thank-you.



My own image of the book "The crucible" by Arthur Miller, 2010

Being a director means going through the script and considering so many factors including subtext and setting. Imagine: It has just been intermission. Once again the audience walks through the lobby smelling of fresh flowers and hay (see inspiration of my storm image and how the land is vast and important). They are reminded these characters had lives before the play. They are in a brightly lit space. But as they enter, there is Abigail in the aisle near the lobby very much in the first circle of acting or "solitude in public" (http://www.gyford.com/phil/writing/2005/05/27/an_actor_prepare.php) unaware of anyone but herself as she prepares to meet John Proctor alone in the forest. I want the audience to think What's going to happen? Why does she look so thoughtful and sad? And then, they see the forest in the theatre in a new light as they enter the theatre and will feel off centre by how dark the theatre/forest will be. They will feel disoriented as they try to get to their seats. They will feel like Abigail does.



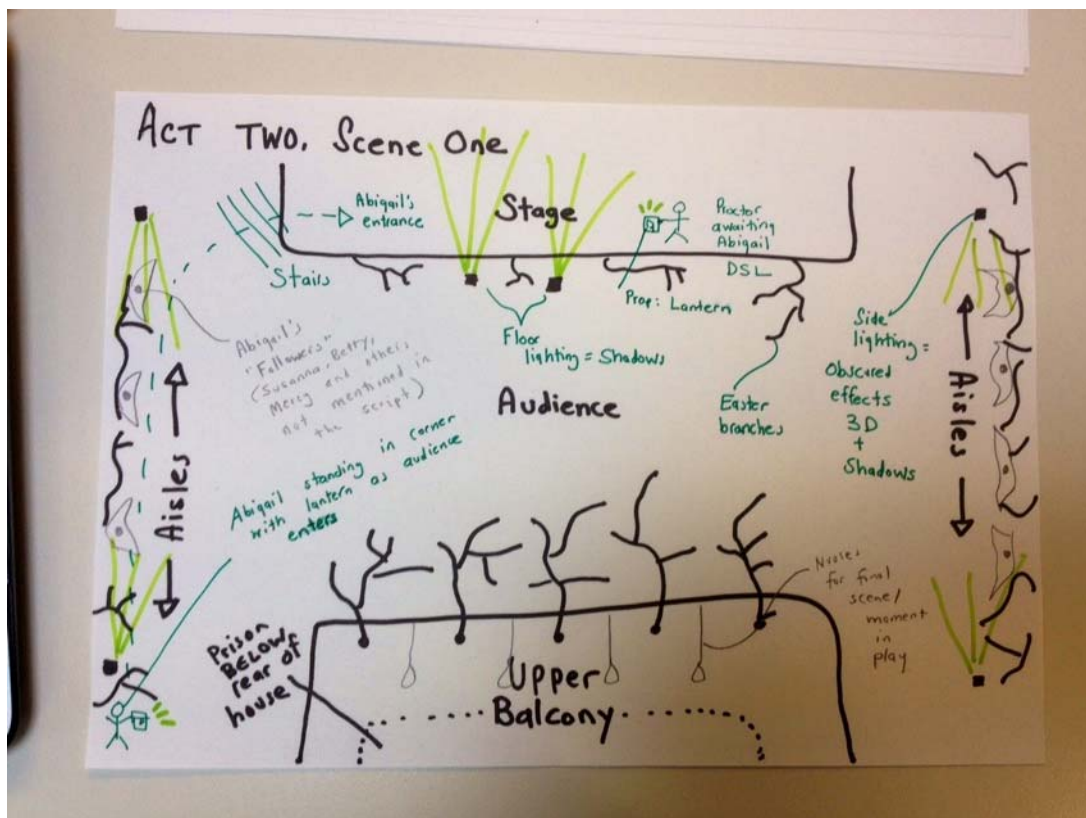
My own image

The kind of lantern that could be used with a believable looking. Abigail is holding this. Proctor will have one too as it's dark and the middle of the night. Lantern found in school's prop room. The lighting for this scene will be the absolute minimum needed. I want the audience to feel the night. Both images here by me.



My own image

I couldn't find any image to really show what I wanted so I asked friends to drape themselves in nylon material, I added a few braches to the wall aisle and angled the lights for a side lighting effect for shadows. All of Abigail's followers line both sides of the theatre. They breathe in rhythms. They represent the fear of the devil in the forest felt by the Puritans (see earlier reference to source) and they will echo some of Abigail's words in the scene ahead. They amplify the atmosphere I want. I want to reach my modern audience ages 13+. Personal photo.



My own image

In my sketch I hope you can see some of my previous ideas coming together. It will challenge the audience in the final act of the play to have to turn in their seats to watch the prison scene from behind but I think it will be unexpected and when Proctor and Rebecca Nurse move forward to the actual stage and towards their deaths the audience will follow them. Ironically the audience will have slightly sore necks as they watch this final moment. They will feel the upcoming fate...literally.

Act Two, scene two. Pages 100-106.



Salem's Witch House,
R. Strauss, pg. 64

How do I convey the possessed girls to compete with modern horror movies and capture what must have truly been a horrific sight? This article was very inspiring and focused on the true story of the original "Jonathan and Elizabeth":

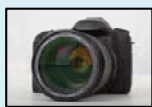
"Suffer the Children

Jonathan Corwin's stepdaughter Margaret was one of the nine children in his family who never reached adulthood. She is pictured in a fancy lace dress when she was 8, near the age of several girls who prompted hysteria in Salem in 1692 when they threw screaming fits, uttered strange sounds and contorted themselves into peculiar positions. Corwin and other local magistrates concluded the girls had come under the spell of witches, who were summarily condemned to death."

Salem's Witch House, R. Strauss, pg. 64.

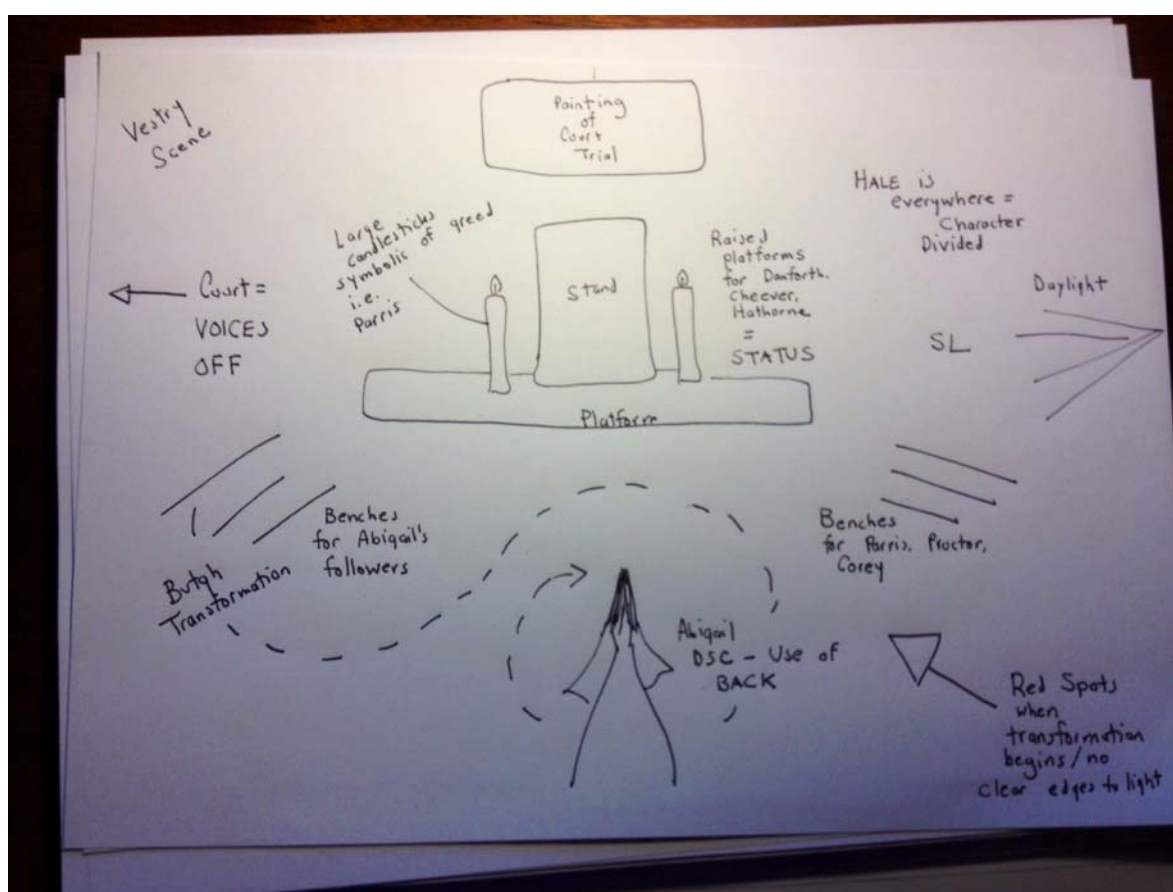
Thanks to Mrs. T.D. our librarian who helped me to research better.

See these images at



http://www.gyford.com/phil/writing/2005/05/27/an_actor_prepare.php

No photography was allowed at the Butoh performance that I saw. I choose to share these images to show the power of contortion, shadows, and eeriness that I felt. I would not use the white make up from Butoh which apparently has various meanings but not one clear one (<http://www.nurdankarasugokce.com/pPages/pArtist.aspx?paID=611§ion=550&lang=ENG&periodID=&pageNo=2&exhID=0&bhcp=1>). I did look at the scene and tried to imagine where or how the girls could end up with a white chalky substance on them but every idea I had was really not great. I will rely on lighting and an echo effect to help bring this to life instead. Source of images: http://www.gyford.com/phil/writing/2005/05/27/an_actor_prepare.php



Personal sketch: Act Two, scene two pages 100-106.



My own image

I love this image! I pre-chose costumes from our school's costume room that I think capture my vision of historically (1692) suggestive. I looked at many artists and paintings from the 1600s and fell in love with paintings by Johannes Vermeer. As I mentioned earlier I want colour to say these are individual characters. I would ask my costume designers to look at the following website to inspire them:

http://www.essentialvermeer.com/museum_pages.html Carmen had studied Butoh before and was able to help me by preparing the girls in the image through a visualization. I used two intense spotlights with a red gel to show the climax of Act Two, scene two in *The Crucible* page 106. Abigail's followers have been present in the vestry scene as witnesses. I would add several non speaking roles to show that the group of girls is larger than just the characters we meet in the play such as Mercy and Susanna Walcott because the impact on the audience will be amplified. I am not changing any of Miller's words. But at the top of Page 102 in the script when Abigail is overpowering Mary there is an echo when Abigail mimics Mary and by adding the additional voices it will amplify the horror as once again, Abigail is victorious and has played the card that will help her win (she is fearful as Proctor has admitted to having an affair with her which is against the laws of the time) and by feigning possession she is able to win Mary back to her side and Proctor loses his argument. The transformation beginning on pg 102 would be gradual as the girls go from benches on SL to encircling Abigail and Mary in CS leaving a lasting impression in the minds of the audience as the visual peaks here at the end of the scene. Photo assistance by Mr. Ohlsson. Lighting assistance by Lachlan and Sawyer.

Conclusion:

I think *The Crucible* is still a powerful and relevant play. I hope the audience will leave remembering the smell of hay and flowers, of breathing forests, and thinking about the consequences of greed and deception. I hope they will remember how I used light and darkness, echoes, realistic acting amidst immersive spaces. I hope they will feel a fear of the unknown and I hope they will feel brave enough to fight oppression when they see it next time.