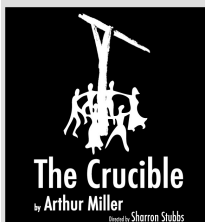




## The Crucible



**Written by:** Arthur Miller

**Directed by:** Sharron Stubbs

**Performed:** Tues 24th-Sat 28th July 2007 at 7.30pm at St. Anne's Hall, Wandsworth

| Cast                           |                    | Crew                                   |  |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|--|--|
| <i>John Proctor</i> .....      | Mike Ainsworth     | <b>Producer</b> .....                  | Emma Stallard  |
| <i>Abigail Williams</i> .....  | Rachel O'Reilly    | <b>Assistant Director</b> .....        | Orna Joseph  |
| <i>Elizabeth Proctor</i> ..... | Melissa Williams   | <b>Stage Manager</b> .....             | Judith Butler  |
| <i>Reverend Hale</i> .....     | Richard Frampton   | <b>Prompt</b> .....                    | Fiona Makujina   |
| <i>Reverend Parris</i> .....   | Richard Brent      | <b>Lighting Operation</b> .....        | Jenny Davis  |
| <i>Ann Putnam</i> .....        | Orna Joseph        | <b>Sound Operation</b> .....           | Anna Gilbert   |
| <i>Thomas Putnam</i> .....     | Benjamin Ellis     | <b>Make-up</b> .....                   | Hannah Fisher  |
| <i>Francis Nurse</i> .....     | Jonathan Murray    | <b>Catering Manager</b> .....          | Susan Jakobsen   |
| <i>Rebecca Nurse</i> .....     | Julia Coleman      | <b>Costume Co-Ordinator</b> .....      | Niki Bencic  |
| <i>Mary Warren</i> .....       | Niki Bencic        | <b>Set Design</b> .....                | Sharron Stubbs   |
| <i>Mercy Lewis</i> .....       | Emma Jane Stallard | <b>Set Construction</b> .....          | Paul Checkley,<br>Giles Checkley &<br>Richard Frampton |
| <i>Susanna Wallcott</i> .....  | Siân Ashworth      |  | Julia Coleman  |
| <i>Betty Parris</i> .....      | Emily Blakey       | <b>Poster &amp; Sound Design</b> ..... |  |
| <i>Danforth</i> .....          | Ian Pring          |  |  |
| <i>Cheever</i> .....           | Peter Nower        |  |  |
| <i>Sarah Good</i> .....        | Kate Adlington     |  |  |
| <i>Hathorne</i> .....          | Neil Morgan        |  |  |
| <i>Tituba</i> .....            | Rezina Malik       |  |  |
| <i>Giles Corey</i> .....       | Paul Checkley      |  |  |
| <i>Herrick</i> .....           | Alex Holdaway      |  |  |

## Synopsis

The plot revolves around the witchcraft hysteria that plagues Salem and splits the town into those who use the trials for their own ends and those who desire the good of the society.

Act I introduces most of the main characters in the play. The action takes place in Reverend Parris' home. Having discovered his daughter dancing naked in the woods with several other girls and his Negro slave, he has called in the Reverend Hale to investigate his suspicions of witchcraft. Various characters are introduced, and the reader learns of the pettiness of the Putnam's, the superstition of Parris, the open-mindedness of Hale, the viciousness of Abigail, and, most importantly, the secret guilt of Proctor, who has committed adultery with Abigail.

Act II develops the need for Proctor to take action in defending the truth. The action takes place at the Proctors' home. John and his wife

argue over whether he should denounce Abigail, and the reader learns of the rift that has developed between Proctor and his wife over his act of adultery. When officials of the court arrive and Elizabeth is arrested, John realizes that he can no longer stand by and not act. Act III shows the attempts by Proctor and other citizens to oppose the court and the opposition they face by those with vested interest in the proceedings. Giles Corey and Francis Nurse denounce the trials and are subsequently arrested. Proctor admits to committing adultery with Abigail but is not believed.

Abigail, by pretending that Mary is "sending her spirit out" to attack her, induces Mary, who has been supporting Proctor, to abandon her testimony and accuse him to protect herself. Proctor is arrested, and Hale quits the court in disgust.

The final act focuses on Proctor's dilemma whether to live or accept death. He signs a confession, but, when he realizes that it will be used against his fellow accused, he tears it up. On a personal level, this act recovers his sense of goodness. In a larger sense, his act represents the tragic sacrifice of good as the only means to bring harmony back to a society gone awry.

## ***NODA Review by Stephen Macvicar***

A simple dark set led us on the familiar trail of those Salem witches again. This is a long play with little to take the tension away. An extremely hot auditorium in some strange way enhanced the uneasiness of the audience. There were excellent portrayals throughout, no weak links at all.

In my previous attendances, I have always admired what NSTC were able to achieve at the St Anne's Church Hall in terms of production. The production was at least as good if not better. The subject matter dictated that this was to be no laugh a minute Saturday night out, however, there is nothing like a good drama to keep you on the edge of your seat. NSTC proved their versatility again with a classic of American literature. Many schoolboys and schoolgirls will remember vividly the part that *The Crucible* had in their education. I remember sort of half reading it at school but it wasn't until I saw a production on stage a few years later that I realised what I had been missing. It has some essentials needed of this genre of drama. The hook for me is the witchcraft theme. Whether we believe in anything we can't see or touch, there is always something fascinating about things we don't understand. There is no doubt that ladies who lived at the time of the Salem witch-trials and a few years either side got a terribly raw deal with many innocents dying under the direction of avaricious authoritarians. This fantastic play gives an insight to the times. Not exactly a frivolous night at the theatre but a challenging one!

Sharron Stubbs was at the helm for this production and put on a good production with a large cast. Sharron relied on a simple set with the focus on the heavy content and particularly strong characters. The period costumes were good, the red back light and gobo with a cross were effective. The pagan dancing added a touch that I hadn't seen before. It's a long play and heavy going so pace was imperative and I was delighted that proceedings did race along. If the pace had at all flagged, it would have been a very difficult evening for your audience. The action evolved from a table slap bang in the centre of the stage in scene one and progressed in a relevant manner. There was a mixture of American and British accents which confused me a little, as did one or two unnecessarily long scene changes (I'm guessing for a costume change). Other than that though, I'd say the production was an undoubted success.

The large cast looked well rehearsed and focussed in their roles. There are too many named principals to comment on individually but I have written a few notes on some of the principals who caught the eye;

John Proctor – Mike Ainsworth – Mike as the bearded John Proctor maintained a surly disposition as the generally decent man who does have a skeleton in his closet.

Abigail Williams – Rachel O'Reilly – Although Abigail is the leader of the witch-hunters, Rachel played her quite calmly which perversely gave her an air of authority and integrity.

Elizabeth Proctor – Melissa Williams – Melissa portrayed with ease the loyal wife who is not only is accused of being a witch but has to deal with adultery.

Tituba – Rezina Malik – Rezina nicely played the Jamaican slave Tituba and was the first person to be accused

Reverend Parris – Richard Brent – Richard was very natural and showed good diction. Extremely fiery and selfish, more than any minister I have ever met!

Reverend Hale – Richard Frampton – A relatively complex character whose initial belief is challenged - I thought Richard did a good job.

Rebecca Nurse – Julia Coleman – Julia had nice inflections in her quickly spoken voice and impressed as the respected Rebecca in the face of adversity.

Dep Gov Danforth – Ian Pring – Not in Act One but causes a storm for the rest of the play. Ian was impressive as Danforth, a character who we thought we might uphold honesty but prefers to keep the reputation of the court.

As previously mentioned this was an ensemble production and should be treated as such. Good strength in depth and a hard working support team were much in evidence. Congratulations to New Stagers Theatre Club for an entertaining and tense evening. Once again thank you for inviting me to St Anne's Church Hall in John Huckle's absence and best wishes for your next production.

I look forward to seeing you again in the not too distant future.

**Production Photos** (Click to enlarge)

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