

This play about the Salem Witch Trials of 1692 has been a “bucket list” show for me to direct for over a decade now. I am incredibly grateful to the talented cast and creative team that have put their all into bringing *The Crucible* to life with me.

Just after we started rehearsals for *The Crucible*, I drove up to Salem, MA to do some research, meandering along streets named after the people fictionalized in Arthur Miller’s play. From my room on Proctor Street, I could see both Gallows Hill, where the accused were hung centuries years ago, and the town water tower with a cartoonish witch on a broom painted along the side—a perfect encapsulation of the dichotomy of the legends we’ve told ourselves about the Witch Trials.

I found the current town of Salem almost too lovely to imagine the horrors of the trials, with gorgeous old homes, a beautiful harbor, and a sense of history kept alive. I went in many museums, saw many comically terrible wax models and dioramas, and heard stories of bravery and betrayal.

Through all of it, though, what struck me most were the stories we didn’t keep alive. The historic Tituba disappears from the record after her arrest. Sarah Good was indeed pregnant, but lost her child while in the jail. In a heart-breaking letter to her church, the real Putnam daughter publicly apologized for her role in the trials. And though Giles Corey was ultimately accused and died stoically defending his wife, he originally participated in the trials.

Miller was intentionally selective in which of the details he included, and within the Salem of the play, the characters are very aware of whose stories matter, and whose do not. The Isaacs, Jacobs, and Sarahs of the village are inconsequential, while we see the Johns, Elizabeths, and Rebeccas as heroes. The characters ultimately repent for many sins, but Miller never brings them to task for being so selective in which narratives to preserve and which to discard.

Though written almost 70 years ago about events that happened over 300 years ago, many of the lines in *The Crucible* feel like they could be pulled from nightly newscasts or internet headlines. Every political stance from McCarthyism to the red/blue election battles a week away can find a way to fit themselves into the allegory of a witch hunt. Through all of it, I think we’re still making decisions that some voices matter more than others.

As I worked with this incredible cast, we spent a lot of time discussing whose stories were important in the play. We discovered how the play changes when the perspective of a serving girl is just as valuable as a minister, and what happens when the scorned wife or enslaved woman is able to wrest a little bit of agency back from the narrative. What we’ve found has been surprising and inspiring, and I hope you enjoy this journey with us.

Thank you for supporting live theater and sharing these stories with us.

Michelle Newman, Director and Co-Founder, Shakespeare & Friends