

# thecrucible

by Arthur Miller



Wednesday 11 – Saturday 14 March  
7.30pm, Big School

*In partnership with*



**Old Palace of John Whitgift School**



## director'snote

*The Crucible* has long been a regular fixture on book lists for GCSE and A Level English and Drama curricula. When it was rumoured last year that the then-Education Secretary planned to remove it, he was widely criticised – unsurprisingly, and for good reason. The play's exploration of integrity, greed and ambition makes it an ideal text for students to sink their teeth into. I studied it at school myself, and have taught it many times. However, only during the past few months of directing this play have I fully appreciated the utter complexity of Miller's characters – and how difficult they are, therefore, for teenage actors and actresses to empathise with.

*The Crucible*'s list of characters includes a betrayed wife and mother, a conflicted reverend (and a self-righteous one), a bitter and wealthy landowner, a downtrodden slave, an unyielding judge – and then there's John Proctor, whose sheer range of emotions would be a test for even the most experienced actor. Then, of course, there are Miller's famously enigmatic stage directions: a particular favourite instructs Proctor to speak 'as though a secret arrow had pained his heart'. For a group of 34 students whose ages range from 14 to 18, this play was always going to be a challenge, but I am so pleased to be able to say that it is a challenge they have risen to with perseverance, enthusiasm and, in the end, resounding success.

In addition to the difficulties presented by this array of characters, the play is set in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692 – a time of not only very different cultural practices but also a vernacular that is rather unfamiliar today. There is also a very strong political undertone: Miller noted obvious parallels between the events in Puritan New England and the McCarthyist government in the early 1950s when he wrote *The Crucible*,

and wrote the play as an analogy of the world he was living in. Senator Joseph McCarthy and other powerful politicians were trying to hunt out communists, bring them to trial and punish them – much like the sanctimonious Puritans of Miller's Salem. Thus, a study or performance of *The Crucible* requires an understanding of two bygone eras.

Yet despite the play's age, and its even older setting, there is no disputing that its themes are still all too relevant today. Atrocities committed in the name of religion flood our newspapers. Intolerance within communities persists and leads to conflict and suspicion. The desire for power and influence leads individuals to do whatever it takes – and hurt whomever is in their way – to achieve it. In short, prejudice remains an incessant evil of human society. Suddenly, we can see that Miller's 17th century is not so far removed from our world in 2015.

The quality of Arthur Miller's writing notwithstanding, it is no small feat for a play to still be compelling after, as a director, one has watched it many, many times – yet these talented young people have managed it, and in doing so have truly been inspirational to work with. I am enormously proud of their achievement and trust that they are equally proud of themselves. Furthermore, as with any production, this could not have come together without the help and support of my directorial and technical team, and I trust you will share my gratitude for the immense amount of time, effort and energy that has gone into putting this wonderful show together. I hope you find it as moving and captivating as I do.

**Miss Miranda Hughes**  
Director

## cast



<i>Betty Parris</i>	Maya Mackenzie
<i>Reverend Samuel Parris</i>	Louis Danckwerts
<i>Tituba</i>	Asia Kinghorn
<i>Abigail Williams</i>	Charlotte Boris
<i>Susanna Walcott</i>	Isobel Marchant
<i>Goodwife Ann Putnam</i>	Ayo Mabadeje
<i>Thomas Putnam</i>	Paul Bird
<i>Mercy Lewis</i>	Maya Elliott
<i>Mary Warren</i>	Shawmikaa Prabaharan
<i>John Proctor</i>	Pavan Rao
<i>Goodwife Rebecca Nurse</i>	Iman Naqvi
<i>Giles Corey</i>	Oriel Agranoff
<i>Reverend John Hale</i>	Aaron Bird
<i>Goodwife Elizabeth Proctor</i>	Rebekah Elliott
<i>Francis Nurse</i>	Daniel Horsley
<i>Ezekiel Cheever</i>	Adam Haddour
<i>Marshal Herrick</i>	Milo Basak Whitbread
<i>Judge Hathorne</i>	Alexandre King
<i>Deputy-Governor Danforth</i>	Abbas Khan

<i>Courtroom girls</i>	Maya Aidoo, Eve Koushi, Sophie Thomson
------------------------	---

<i>People of Salem</i>	James Andrews, Rhys Crossman, Gabriel Diaz-Aylwin, Byron Easmon, Gus Flind-Henry, Eddie Hutton, George Jaques, Macauley Keeper, Husain Masood, Marc Muhlemann, Harry Seager
------------------------	---



## technicalcrew



<i>Directors/Producers</i>	Mr Lloyd Beecham, Miss Miranda Hughes
<i>Assistant Producer</i>	Mrs Frances Simmons
<i>Technical Director</i>	Mr Peter Crook
<i>Technical Supervisor</i>	Mr David Jenkinson
<i>Technician</i>	Charles Sladdin
<i>Lighting</i>	Jude Willoughby
<i>Sound</i>	Mr Mark Rowles
<i>Stage Manager</i>	Henry Parritt
<i>Hair and makeup</i>	Talisa Tossell
<i>Costumes</i>	Birmingham Costume Hire



### *Special thanks to:*

Mrs Sara Beecham, Mr Paul Dinnen, Miss Sarah Flind, Mrs Beverly Gibson-Patteux, Mrs Felicity Hewson, Miss Amy Hinds, Mrs Carol Jewell, Mrs Jillian Mannion, Mr Graham Maudsley, Mr Ashley Merrett, Mrs Linda Onisiforou, Ms Rebecca Parker, Mr Ben Prestney, the parents of the cast and crew, Whitgift staff who have helped with front of house, and the Headmaster for his continued support.



## plotsynopsis



### ACT I

It is the spring of 1692 in Salem, Massachusetts. Reverend Parris has discovered his daughter, his niece and a group of other girls dancing in the forest: a terrible sin in this Puritan New England town. Betty, Parris's daughter, has fallen into a coma-like state, and the townsfolk begin to spread rumours of witchcraft. Having sent for the expertise of Reverend Hale of Beverly, Parris questions Abigail (his niece and the girls' ringleader) about exactly what went on in that forest. Afraid of punishment, Abigail admits to nothing more than dancing, and later warns the other girls not to admit to anything either.

John Proctor, a local farmer, arrives and talks briefly with Abigail, alone. It is revealed that Abigail once worked for the Proctors and, during that time, had an affair with John, which led to her dismissal by his wife, Elizabeth. During their conversation, Betty awakes and begins screaming, and a crowd of people rush into Parris's home to investigate. We learn from the following interactions that there is no love lost between Proctor and Parris, or indeed Proctor

and Putnam, a wealthy landowner. As the men argue, Reverend Hale arrives. He examines Betty and interrogates Abigail, who shifts the blame of the previous evening's events onto Tituba, Parris's slave. Tituba is brought in for questioning and eventually admits to consorting with the Devil, whilst blaming other townsfolk for doing the same. Suddenly, Abigail joins her in these accusations, as does Betty, and the crowd are thrown into uproar.

Eight days later, the uncomfortable relationship between John and Elizabeth Proctor is revealed as the couple discuss the ongoing trials and accusations of witchcraft. Mary Warren, their servant and part of Abigail's circle, returns from Salem with the news that Elizabeth's name has been mentioned in the court. Shortly after, Reverend Hale arrives to judge for himself the 'Christian character' of the household. While he is there, Giles Corey and Francis Nurse arrive with the astounding news that their God-fearing wives have been arrested, and then officers of the court arrive to arrest Elizabeth. Distraught, Proctor demands that Mary go into the court and expose Abigail and the other girls as frauds.

### ACT II

The witch trials continue and Proctor brings Mary to court. In order to save Elizabeth, he tells Deputy-Governor Danforth that Mary will testify that the girls are lying, but Danforth has already been irritated by the pleas of Corey and Nurse and is suspicious of this sudden turnaround. In an effort to put a stop to Proctor's case, he tells him that because Elizabeth has claimed to be pregnant, her life will be spared until the birth of the child. Unable to let his friends' wives be punished regardless, Proctor persists, and Mary is allowed to testify. The girls are brought in for further questioning and Abigail leads them

in accusing Mary of bewitching them. Furious, Proctor sacrifices his good name by confessing to his affair with Abigail, accusing her of seeking vengeance on his wife. Danforth summons Elizabeth for confirmation of this, assured of her reputation for honesty, but in an act to protect her husband's honour, Elizabeth denies knowledge of the affair – leading Danforth to dismiss Proctor as a liar. The girls pretend Mary is bewitching them again, Mary crumbles and realigns herself with the girls, and Proctor, with no support left, rages against the court. He is arrested, and Hale (convinced of the Proctors' innocence) denounces the proceedings.

Summer passes, and autumn arrives. Danforth is nervous of the unrest in neighbouring towns caused by the witch trials, and Parris is a broken

man, terrified of his neighbours and penniless due to Abigail and Mercy having robbed him and run away. Hale, who has lost faith in the court, begs the accused witches to confess falsely in order to save their lives, but they refuse. Believing that the Proctor name would carry weight to influence others, Danforth asks Elizabeth to convince John to confess, and they are reunited. Conflicted, but desperate to live after an emotional reunion with his wife, John agrees to confess, but refuses to incriminate anyone else or let his confession be made public, retracting his admission of guilt when Danforth insists on this. Despite Hale's desperate pleas, Proctor is led off to the gallows with the others, and we are faced with the full weight of the unjust and unfounded accusations in Salem.





Whitgift School  
Haling Park  
South Croydon  
CR2 6YT

[www.whitgift.co.uk](http://www.whitgift.co.uk)