



Antaeus Is At It Again

Posted by [Radomir Luza](#), May 29, 2013 at 11:41 pm



Eva Beebe, Kate Maher, Shannon Lee Clair, Rachel Berney Needleman
Photo by Karianne Flaathen

If a play about witchcraft among Puritans in 1692 Massachusetts interests you then make your way to the Antaeus Company's production of Arthur Miller's "The Crucible" at The Deaf West Theatre running through July 7 in the NoHo Arts District.

The story of one town's growing hysteria based on blind theological blame and the consequences of its actions to quell those fears is a reaction to the McCarthyism that gathered momentum in America in the 1950s.

First staged on Broadway in 1953, the play resonates as thoroughly today as it did 60 years ago.

It is a commentary on society, culture, religion, but especially Christianity, that rips through the heart of time and lands at today's feet.

Do the dark, black and white absolute warnings, midnight clouds and paranoid rants still have the same bone-chilling affect in 2013?

Can a man be hanged for speaking his mind and being an individual away from his peer group? Can fear and the need for self-protection cause one to betray another? The answer to these questions, according to Miller and Antaeus, appears to be yes.

Miller's words, ripe with power, description and imagery sit at the head of the table as a proud father guiding his children.

They dent and disturb, calm and cry, but are never false or in any way unauthentic.

The direction is well-paced and honest. Co-directors Armin Shimerman and Geoffrey Wade are true to Miller's words and vision and do not stand in the way of the action or this beautifully acted drama.

On the Saturday that this critic saw the traditionally split cast (Proctors and Putnams), he preferred the Proctors.

Kate Maher (Abigail Williams) shines with innocence and pride. Steve Hofvendahl (Giles Corey) is funny and wonderfully genuine. Devon Sorvari (Elizabeth Proctor) exhales dignity, purity and courage.

But it is Christopher Guilmet (John Proctor) who steals the show.

His performance is of such subtlety, vulnerability and strength that the play revolves around him.

And revolve around him it does in circles and rectangles, until we the audience realize that we are in the presence of a unique and special actor who combines training with natural instinct and who we are fortunate to see in a production that highlights him if only for a few weeks.

Stand-outs in the Putnams cast include Sandra McClain (Tituba/Judge Hathorne), Alexandra Goodman (Mary Warren), Bo Foxworth (John Proctor), Dawn Didawick (Rebecca Nurse) and Phil Proctor (Giles Corey).

Once again, every role is exceptionally cast, and the non-traditional casting here works, especially in the case of Ann Noble as Reverend Hale, who adds a femininity and strength to one of the most powerful portrayals in the play.

Aiding the play are Jeff Gardner's sound design, Bosco Flanagan's lighting design and E.B. Brooks' costume design. All in all, Antaeus is once more at the top of its game: providing Los Angeles with stellar classical theatre on a regular basis.

"The Crucible" with its harsh voices and put-upon hearts is a difficult piece of drama to mount.

But this company, by presenting it in a timeless setting where the actors do not face one another, but the audience, connects on a gut level with the one universal theme which even in bruised, bedraggled and barren Salem cannot be denied: love.

By Radomir Luza Thursdays at 8pm (dark July 4) Fridays at 8pm Saturdays at 2pm Saturdays at 8pm Sundays at 2pm TICKETS: Thursdays and Fridays: \$30. Saturdays and Sundays: \$34 RESERVATIONS/INFORMATION (818) 506-1983 THE ANTAEUS COMPANY 5112 Lankershim Blvd. North Hollywood, CA 91601 PARKING \$7 in the lot at 5125 Lankershim Blvd. (West side of the street), just south of Magnolia.