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Theatre Review >> The Crucible

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"Compassionate, Powerful And Intense Is "The CRUCIBLE"



Arthur Miller wrote "The Crucible" back in 1953 where it first premiered in New York as a commentary on McCarthyism when the US was blacklisting accused "communist" throughout the country. Miller made the analogy by setting this between 1692 and 1693 in Salem,

Massachusetts during the height of their 'witch hunts' where they hanged and burned people at the stake for practicing magic/witchcraft.

At the Antaeus Theatre in the North Hollywood, directors Armin Shimerman (best noted for playing Quark on Star Trek: Deep Space 9) and Geoffrey Wade did a fresh production of this classic by allowing the characters to speak to each other by reacting, responding and expressing themselves directly to the audience. It was the most visceral and passionate version of Arthur Miller's "The Crucible" I have ever seen. This play is intense and extremely upsetting and heartbreaking for reasons of simple misdirection and lying that leads to the imprisonment and eventual death of a large part of the old Salem community.

Some of the most incredible intense performances come from Christopher Guilmet playing John Proctor, a husband who is drawn into the center of falsehoods and deception that will eventually lead him to his demise. Christopher plays it with

such passion and scornful pain that you can't help but immediately sympathized with the wrong doing around him.

I must say if there was a villain in this production that will make you want to jump out your chair and slap the living daylights out of her, is the intense and domineering performance of Reba Waters Thomas as the judge with no compassion for "their" version of the truth. Reba is so convincing and incredibly intense that I was so angry with her when I left the theatre. (Good job Reba!)

Reverend John Hale is played by John Prosky with the fervid pleas of compassion and trust in order to get the court to rethink their reasons for condemning anyone to death. John has so much desire to get the message that killing people based on accusations is not better for society or in the eyes of God.

Another amazing performance comes from Suandra McClain playing the justifiably frightened Tituba and the not so forgiving Judge Hathorne. Saundra gives an amazing heartfelt performance and gives lots of energy in both roles. Joe Delafield playing Rev. Parris and Devon Sovari playing Elizabeth Proctor, wife of John Proctor, both give just as convincing and driving performances as the priest with an absolutely screwed version of the truth and the woman who is accused of witchcraft about to be imprisoned, who will have your heart pounding.

Supporting the story with their ever present compassion were Fran Bennett playing Rebecca Nurse a woman, a grandma and a mother who is caught in the web of lies that she also risks losing her life as well as Rhonda Aldrich playing both Ann Putnam and Sarah Goode. Both ladies are amazing to watch. Stephen Mendel plays Thomas Putnam, a man with the same confused convictions of the interpreting hearsay and the truth.

There is a wonderful ensemble of equally passionate performers, including Ranya Jaber as co-conspirator/faker Betty, Nicole Erb as the psychotic and the go-along confused Abigail, Rachel B. Needleman plays the compulsive liar Mercy and Shannon Lee Clair plays the tag-a-long Mary. All these girls are the basis of the lies that will sentence many innocent people to death.

Other standout performances came from the various townspeople like Daniel Dorr

as Marshal and Jim Kane as Ezekiel. Joseph Ruskin does a memorable Francis and very proud and exciting persona is that of Phil Proctor playing Giles Corey who is about to lose his wife in an execution.

This is a wonderful production of Arthur Miller's "The Crucible" and it has a wonderful lesson of justice and how it can be misled and twisted to help fulfill another person's agenda at the cost of other people's lives. This is definitely worth seeing as truth isn't necessarily always 'the truth'. Check them out at www.Antaeus.org.

Pic 001 - Joe Delafield, John Prosky, Reba Waters Thomas, Sandra McClaine

Pic 002 - Full cast -THE CRUCIBLE