

The Crucible by Arthur Miller

The Crucible, written in 1953, was seen by some as equating the Salem witch hunt with the anti-communist crusade of Joseph McCarthy.

Miller was convicted of contempt of Congress for refusing to name those present at a meeting of Communist writers in 1947. His conviction, however, was quashed on appeal.

This very powerful play by Arthur Miller on the witch hunt in the village of Salem, Massachusetts is based on real events and real people. It is set in 1692 and it is therefore essential that any group undertaking it must research the period in which it is set and also give thought as to how the characters would feel and react in such circumstances.

Firstly, I must say that Faringdon always impresses me with the simplicity but effectiveness of their sets. This play was not a disappointment. The set was imaginative but simple and the transition from bedroom to kitchen and then from the vestry of the Salem meeting house to the jail was so easily done but giving such a marked difference that the audience was transported from one to another effectively.

The cast is large and involves several youngsters; two of these gave particularly strong performances: Sally Norris as Abigail and Kathryn Whiffen as Mary. The Director is to be congratulated for getting such performances from two so young.

From start to finish, the whole cast was able to keep the audience enthralled and none of them faltered in words, character or performance. They were so very well cast and so professional that I am unable to fault them. I will not pick out any for special mention (other than the two above) as all, whether in major or minor parts, played almost to perfection.

It is not often that you see a play for the third time and come away feeling that way. A lot of it, of course, is in the writing but not all.

I have no criticisms and that, in itself, is rare. Oh yes, I do have one - the seats were bloody hard and uncomfortable but the play was so good that I didn't notice it until the interval.

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