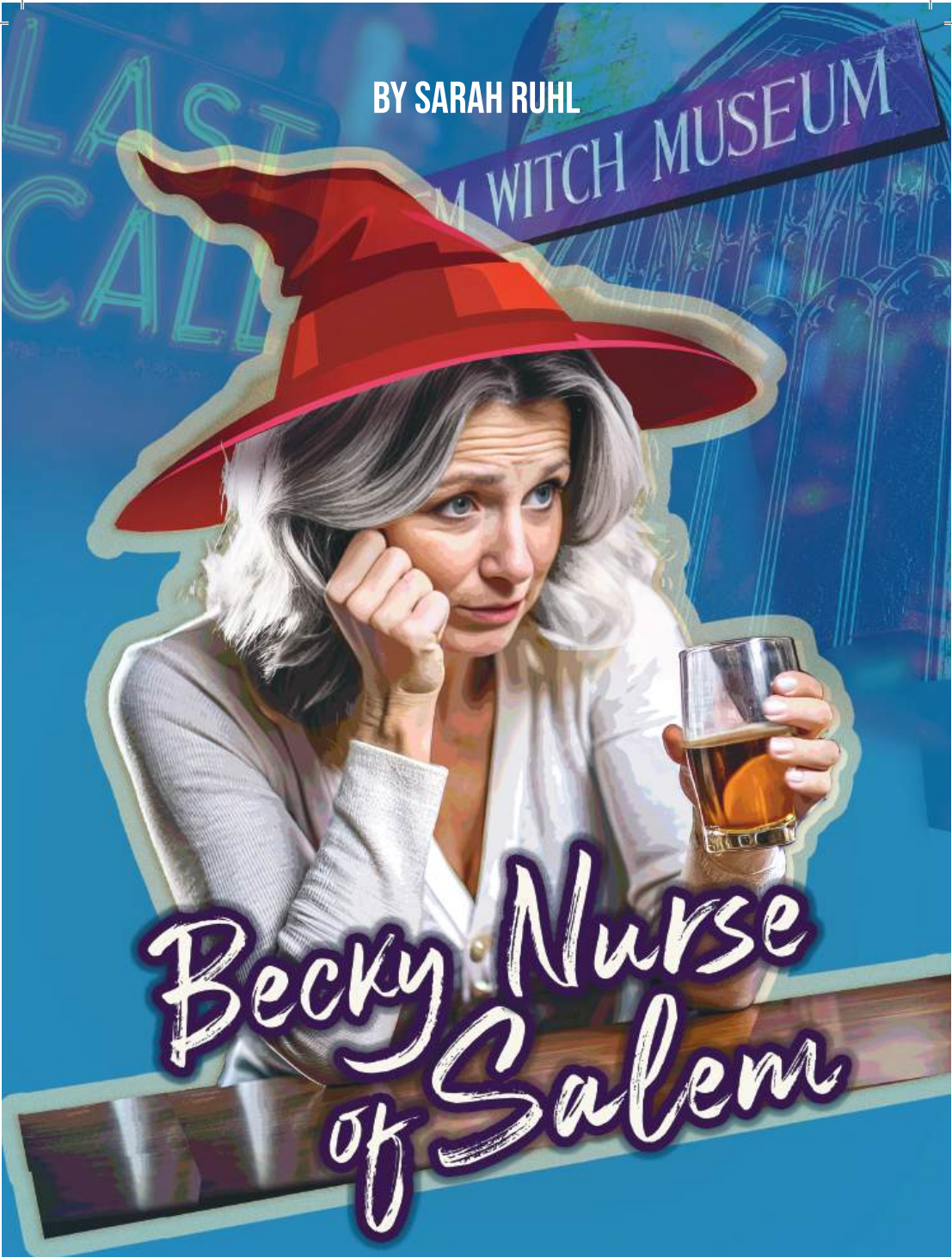


BY SARAH RUHL



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Onstage this season, you'll meet characters who will stretch your imagination and burrow into your heart: a grandmother seeking a just world for her granddaughter in "Becky Nurse of Salem;" a sweet young detective longing for a partner in "Murder for Two: Holiday Edition;" teenaged boys desperate for purpose in "Archduke;" a star-crossed couple fighting to save their marriage in "Dodi & Diana;" and a trio of sisters slinging pizza and belting pop hits in "Mystic Pizza."

The audience brings them all to life. The theatre exists because you believe in it. Thank you for joining us. We couldn't do it without you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Miriam".

Miriam Weisfeld
Producing Artistic Director



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Capital Repertory Theatre
presents

Becky Nurse of Salem

By Sarah Ruhl

Featuring
(in alphabetical order)

Shayne David Cameris*

Brenny Campbell*

Jose Gamo*

Kathy McCafferty*

James Joseph O'Neil*

Briana Gibson Reeves*

Alexandra Szeto-Joe*

Daniel Conway+
Set
Design

Shelby Loera+
Lighting
Design

Elivia Bovenzi Blintz+
Costume
Design

Katherine Horowitz
Sound
Design

Kylee Lorera+
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Design

Stephanie Klapper, csa
Casting Director

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Production Stage
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Madison Rivera
Asst. Stage
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Yvonne Perry
Intimacy
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Joe Isenberg
Fight
Choreographer

Kathy McCafferty*
Fight
Captain

Directed by
Margaret E. Hall++

"Becky Nurse of Salem" is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc.

www.concordtheatricals.com

Produced by Lincoln Center Theater, New York City, 2022

Originally commissioned by Tony Taccone and produced by

Johanna Pfaelzer, Artistic Directors / Susan Medak, Managing Director

Developed with the support of New York Stage and Film & Vassar's Powerhouse Season, Summer 2019

*Denotes Member of AEA

+ Denotes Member of USA

++ Denotes Member of SDC



BECKY NURSE OF SALEM

CAST

(in order of speaking)

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Becky..... | Brenny Campbell* |
| Bob..... | James Joseph O'Neil* |
| Shelby..... | Briana Gibson Reeves* |
| Stan..... | Jose Gamo* |
| The Witch..... | Kathy McCafferty* |
| Gail..... | Alexandra Szeto-Joe* |
| The Judge/The Jailer..... | Shayne David Cameris* |

TIME

Act One – 2016 and an imagined 1692

Act Two – 2016, 2017 and an imagined 1692

PLACE

Salem, Massachusetts

There will be a 15-minute intermission between Act 1 and Act 2

PHOTOGRAPHY WARNING

As a result of an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and United Scenic Artists, photographs of the set may be taken before, during intermission and after the show.

HOWEVER, PER THE RULES OF ACTORS EQUITY ASSOCIATION NO PHOTOS, VIDEOS OR RECORDINGS OF ANY KIND ARE ALLOWED DURING THE SHOW OR AT ANYTIME ACTORS ARE ON STAGE. VIOLATORS OF THIS RULE WILL BE ASKED BY THE THEATRE MANAGEMENT TO DELETE ALL RECORDINGS BEFORE LEAVING THE THEATRE.

WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST



**SHAYNE
DAVID CAMERIS**



**BRENNY
CAMPBELL**



**JOSE
GAMO**



**KATHY
MCCAFFERTY**



**JAMES
JOSEPH O'NEIL**



**BRIANA
GIBSON REEVES**



**ALEXANDRA
SZETO-JOE**

SHAYNE DAVID CAMERIS* (*Judge/Jailor*) Originally from the Adirondacks, is a theatre practitioner based in the Capital Region. Selected credits include: Capital Repertory Theatre – “Once” (Eamon/MC US/ASM), “Rosie is Red...” (PSM), “A Sherlock Carol” (PSM), “Beautiful” (Donnie US/ASM), “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” (Mechanicals US/ASM), “Jersey Boys” (Bob Crewe/ASM), “Fly” (Reynolds et. Al), “The Blue Sky Boys” (CJ Caldwell); Troy Foundry Theatre – “City of Myth: Ilium Sings,” “Where There’s Smoke: Ilium Burns,” “The Prohibition Project: Ilium Was;” Adirondack Theatre Festival – “The Village of Vale” (PSM); Lake George Dinner Theatre – “Buyer and Cellar” (Alex More) and “The Hound of the Baskervilles” (Sir Henry, et. Al); Saratoga Shakespeare Company – “Twelfth Night” (Antonio/ASM), “Henry IV Parts 1 and 2” (Mistress Quickly et. Al), “The Winter’s Tale” (Clown) among others. He is also an Associate Producer with TFT and continues to cultivate and develop his own work such as his one-person piece “Antonio; or What I Would.” Proud AEA member. Love to JSC.

BRENNY CAMPBELL* (*Becky*) Brenny Campbell gladly plays again with Capital Repertory Theatre! Brenny performed most recently in “A Sherlock Carol,” and “Dracula: A Comedy of Terrors,” “Blithe Spirit,” “Other Desert Cities,” and “To Kill A Mockingbird.” Across the country, she’s played with Portland Stage, Bristol Riverside Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre (Margery in “Hand to God”), Arkansas Rep (as Ivy Weston in “August: Osage County”), Majestic Theatre, Adirondack Theatre Festival, Lake George Dinner Theatre, Shadowland Stages, Saratoga Shakespeare, among others. In NYC, she performed in “Bill W. and Dr. Bob” at Soho Playhouse. TV: “Gotham,” “The Other Two.” Her favorite roles are wife to Dale and mom to Nolan. Brenny is a proud member of Actors Equity Association.

JOSE GAMO* (*Stan*) Jose Gamo is a Filipino artist born and raised in Indonesia. Theater includes: “Poor Yella Rednecks” (MTC); “Romeo and Juliet” (Two River Theater/NAATCO); “The Great Leap” (Arc Stages); “Cymbeline,” “Much Ado About Nothing” (Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival). Screen: “Fantasmas” (HBO), “Instinct” (CBS). Training: Fordham University. All his thanks to Elli, his beloved. www.jose-gamo.com

KATHY MCCAFFERTY* (*The Witch/Fight Captain*) Recent favorites include Barbara in “August: Osage County,” Bridget in “Thirst,” Blanche in “A Streetcar Named Desire,” Regina in “The Little Foxes,” “Boeing Boeing, John Cleese’s “Bang Bang!” opposite Sean Astin, and “The 39 Steps.” Broadway Tour: “The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time.” Off-Broadway: Lincoln Center Theater, 59E59 Theaters. Regional Highlights: The Huntington Theatre Company, Ahmanson Theatre, The Williamstown Theatre Festival, Dorset Theatre festival, Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theater, Palm Beach Dramaworks, Portland Stage, Arkansas Rep, Boise Contemporary Theatre, Maltz Jupiter, Premiere Stages, Arts Center of Coastal Carolina, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Shadowland, Bay Street, Rep. Theatre of St. Louis, and others. TV/ Film: “And Just Like That,” “The Gilded Age,” “Little America,” “House of Cards,” “30 Rock,” “Law & Order: CI,” “Law & Order: SVU.” Company Member of The Actor’s Center. Thank you to Dave, Boals, Winnet and S. Klapper.

JAMES JOSEPH O'NEIL* (*Bob*) Broadway — “Take Me Out” (2nd Stage), “Present Laughter” (Roundabout) Off-Broadway — “A Month in the Country,” “Look Back in Anger” (CSC) “Richard

WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

III" (Epic Theatre Ensemble) "Ten Unknowns" (LCT) "The Hired Man" (47th St Theatre) Regional — Old Globe Theatre (15 productions), Hartford Stage Co, Folger Shakespeare Theatre, Ensemble Theatre Co. of Santa Barbara, St Louis Rep, Mark Taper Forum, South Coast Rep, Ojai Playwrights Conference, Williamstown, Baltimore Center Stage, Huntington Theatre Co., American Repertory Theatre, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Pioneer Theatre Co., Long Wharf. Directors include- Barry Edelstein, Christopher D Betts, Amy Kaissar, Erica Schmidt, Brian Kulick, Ron Russell, Kwame Kwei-Armah, Sarah Benson, Brendon Fox, Jonathan Fox, Darko Tresnjak, Karen Carpenter, Jo Bonney, Irene Lewis, Benny Sato-Ambush, Nicholas Martin, Jack O'Brien, Craig Noel, and more. Film/TV — "All the Little Things We Kill," "Aardvark," "The Bourne Legacy," "Fair Game," "Zodiac," "Godfather of Harlem," "Law & Order," "L&O: SVU," "L&O: CI," "L&O: OC," "Elementary," "Madam Secretary," "Person of Interest," "The Knick," "24," "Veronica Mars," "Charmed," "Sex & the City." MFA/USD, BFA/Adelphi University.

BRIANA GIBSON REEVES* (*Shelby*) Briana Gibson Reeves is thrilled to be making her Capital Repertory Theatre debut! Off Broadway: "Made by God" (Irish Repertory Theatre); "All's Well That Ends Well," "Henry IV," "Richard III" (NY Classical Theatre). National Tour: "Amazing Grace." Other credits: Pearl Cleage's "Flyin' West" (Everyman Theatre); "Stick Fly" (Meadow Brook Theatre); "As You Like It," "Emma," "Man of Mode" (American Shakespeare Center). She holds an MFA in Classical Acting from The Academy for Classical Acting at George Washington University (Shakespeare Theatre Company) and is also a proud alumnus of Hampton University. Like Shelby, she's a curator—an avid art collector who believes every piece tells a story. She's also producing a docu-series on multi-faith journeys, so stepping into a play about witches and belief systems just before the series debuts feels a bit like fate. Offstage, she's either at Pilates, wandering nature trails, thrifting for treasures, or teaching and writing curriculum. Follow along at @briangibsonreeves.

ALEXANDRA SZETO-JOE* (*Gail*) Alexandra Szeto-Joe is thrilled to be joining Capital Repertory Theatre! Recently, Alexandra made her debut at The Alley Theater in her hometown of Houston, Texas in the American premiere of Agatha Christie's "The Mirror Crack'd." Alexandra performs in both TX and NYC, with theaters such as Stages Houston, Catskill Mountain Shakespeare, and Houston Grand Opera. Favorite credits include: Irina in "Three Sisters" (Classical Theater Company), Jane in "The Heart Sellers" (Stages Houston), Dusty in "POTUS" (Stages Houston), Phoebe in "As You Like It" (Catskill Mountain Shakespeare), Audrey in Ken Ludwig's "Leading La-

dies" (Tapestry Players), and Nell Gwyn in "Playhouse Creatures" (Lionwoman Productions). cBFA: NYU Tisch School of the Arts. Big love to Mommy and Chris!! www.alexandraszeto-joe.com

MARGARET E. HALL++ (*Director*) Margaret E. Hall has worked internationally as a director, stage manager and drama teacher. Currently the Associate Artistic Director at theREP, she made her mainstage debut in 2017 with "An Iliad" and has since directed: "Seared;" "Sweat;" "Secret Hour (WP);" "Live From WVL Radio Theatre: It's a Wonderful Life;" "Red Maple" (WP & BWV Winner, Best Direction of a New Play); and was Assistant Director to Kevin McGuire on "Hamlet." Additional credits: "Shakespeare: The Remix;" "Harriet Tells It Like It Is!;" "Pure Poe;" "Petticoats of Steel;" "Cinderella;" "Alice In Wonderland!;" "Sleepy Hollow;" "A Midsummer Night's Dream;" "Friend of a Friend;" "They Built America;" "An Iliad;" "The... Henry Hudson;" "The Wizard of Oz;" "Peter Pan & Wendy;" "Circus Olympus;" "Disney's Aristocats Jr.;" "Into The Woods Jr.;" and staged readings for theREP, Troy Foundry Theatre, Theater Voices and Playground Theatre. Margaret holds an MFA in Theatre Directing from the University of Essex, London and a BA in Theatre Arts from SUNY New Paltz. She's a proud member of SDC and AEA.

DANIEL CONWAY+ (*Scenic Designer*) Representative Theatres: Woolly Mammoth Theatre, Signature Theatre, The Chicago Shakespeare Theatre; American Repertory Theatre; The Studio Theatre; Arena Stage; South Coast Rep The Cincinnati Playhouse; The Berkshire Theatre Festival; The Shakespeare Theatre; The Wilma; Milwaukee REP; The Kennedy Center; Hartford Stage; and Roundhouse Theatre. On Broadway: Penn and Teller on Broadway. Awards: Four Helen Hayes awards for Outstanding Set Design (20 nominations); The Anderson Hopkins Award for Sustained Achievement in Washington, D.C; Boston and Los Angeles Theater Critics Awards (nominations), featured American set designer at the 2019 Prague Quadrennial of Design and Performance.

SHELBY LOERA+ (*Lighting Designer*) Shelby Loera is thrilled to be back with theREP designing "Becky Nurse of Salem." She is a New York based lighting designer and associate. Select designs: "Titanic" (University of Michigan); "Sweat" (theREP); "The Frogs" (Jazz Lincoln Center); "Sister Act" (The Muny); "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (theREP); "House of Bernarda Alba" (University of Michigan); "Camelot" (The Muny); "The Sound of Music" (The Muny – first female lighting designer); "Your Alice" (BAM Fisher). Select associate: The

WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

Muny; "Big Gay Jamboree" (Orpheum Theatre); "Sunset Boulevard" (The Kennedy Center); "42nd Street" (Goodspeed); "Verdi's Rigoletto" (OSA); "Next to Normal" (WCP); "Dreaming Zenzile" (ArtsEmerson). USA 829. Shelbyloeradesign.com

ELIVIA BOVENZI BLITZ+ (*Costume Designer*) Elivia Bovenzi Blitz is a costume designer based in NYC. Previous at Capital Repertory Theatre: "Sweat" and "Three Mothers." Recent designs include: "Once Upon A Mattress" at Central City Opera, "Other Desert Cities" at Dorset Theatre Festival, and "Faust" at Heartbeat Opera in NYC. She has designed tons of Shakespeare—a favorite is "As You Like It" at Notre Dame Shakespeare, directed by Sara Holdren. Elivia has worked on Broadway & regionally, most recently as the Associate Costume Designer for the Broadway production of "Real Women Have Curves." Other spots you may have seen her costume magic & designs include The Guthrie Theater, The Public, Alliance Theatre, Lincoln Center, Manhattan Theatre Club, Two River Theater, Papermill, Hartford Stage, Yale Rep, LaMaMa, Ars Nova, NYU, Barrington Stage, and Berkshire Theatre Group. MFA: Yale School of Drama. Elivia also has taught as an Adjunct Professor at FIT and CUNY Queens College. Member USA 829. www.eliviabovenzi.com IG: @eliviaseyes

KATHERINE HOROWITZ (*Sound Designer*) Katharine Horowitz is a sound designer, composer and teaching artist in Minneapolis, MN. She has designed critically acclaimed and award-winning shows for the Guthrie Theater, Children's Theatre Company, Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theatre, Creede Repertory Theatre, Great River Shakespeare Festival, Second City Theatricals, and many others. Katharine is a 2017 McKnight Theatre Artist Fellow at the Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis. www.katsound.com

KYLEE LOERA (*Projection Designer*) Kylee Lora is video designer and content creator/editor for live performances. Selected design credits: Washington National Opera Kennedy Center ("Gods and Mortals, Fidelio), BAM/Little Opera Theater NY ("Zemlinsky's Room"), 92nd Street Y Kaufman Concert Hall ("Sing Happy, "Louder than Words," "Rebel with a Cause," "Cockeyed Optimist"), 59e59 Theaters ("The Light and the Dark"), The Muny ("Jersey Boys," "La Cage," "Frozen," "Anything Goes," "Legally Blonde"), Capital Repertory Theatre ("Three Mothers," "Sweat"), Rice University ("Ghosts of Versailles"), Pittsburgh CLO ("Young Frankenstein," "The Color Purple"). Associate Designer MET Opera ("Florencia En El Amazonas," "Champion"). More at kloeradesign.com

STEPHANIE KLAPPER (*Casting Director*) Stephanie Klapper is excited to continue her long-time collaboration with Capital Repertory Theatre. Her award-winning work is frequently seen on Broadway, Off-Broadway, regionally, concert stages, film and television. Select recent credits: "Crooked Cross" (Mint Theater); "Garside's Career" (Mint Theater); "AVA: The Secret Conversations" (w. Elizabeth McGovern/NY City Center Stage 1); "Distant Thunder" (Amas Musical Theater); "The Night of the Iguana" (Signature Theatre Center); "All's Well That Ends Well" (NY Classical Theatre); "Mythic" (U.S. Premiere CPHP); "SHANE" (world-premiere CPHP /The Guthrie); "ONCE" (theREP); "Gutenberg the Musical!" (ATF); full seasons for Peterborough Players; Cape Playhouse. FILM: "The Nature of Crime;" "Netuser," the film (Denis O'Hare); "Elf Quest," audio movie, "Ranked," the musical/HBO Documentary. Stephanie, and her team, are known for their limitless imagination and creativity, as well as connecting creative, caring people to each other to make extraordinary things happen. Member: Casting Society; Casting Society Cares; Jimmy Awards judge; Say Gay Plays Advisory Board; NYU Tisch School of the Arts Women's Mentorship; "Someone's Thunder Podcast." www.klappercasting.com

KATE KERN* (*Production Stage Manager*)

Kate Kern is an AEA Stage Manager based in the Capital Region. Her most recent shows include "Once," "The Lehman Trilogy," "Beautiful: The Carole King Musical," "Seared," "Sweat," and more. Kate is a company member of Troy Foundry Theatre and has worked with local companies such as Black Theatre Troupe; Proctors. Kate is a graduate of Russell Sage College where she was the Stage Manager for 4 years at the Theatre Institute At Sage with over 20 productions. Kate would like to thank her family, friends, and NJH for all their support.

MADISON RIVERA (*Assistant Stage Manager*)

Madison Rivera is beyond excited to be the ASM on this production and to be joining the Capital Repertory Theatre team! She recently graduated from the University at Albany with a B.A in Theatre, with recent credits including, "The Wizard of Oz" (PSM) through Summer Stage for Young Audience with Proctors, BTTUNY, and theREP, "Butterflies are Free" (PSM) through Theatre Voices, and "Mary Shelley Meets Frankenstein" (PSM) through UAlbany. She wants to thank her family for always supporting her and she can't wait for everyone to see the show!

YVONNE PERRY (*Intimacy Coordinator*) Yvonne Perry is an actor, director and educator who is also a Consent Forward Artist certified by IDC. She has

WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

been on the forefront of intimacy direction, choreography and coordination since the movement's onset, and trained in summer 2018 at the University of Illinois with some of the leaders of this new field. She has led consent workshops and choreographed intimacy at Syracuse U, Skidmore and UAlbany, and at many professional and community theatres in upstate NY. Yvonne also performs — and directs intimacy — at Capital Repertory Theatre, where she is an Associate Artist. AEA, SAG-AFTRA.

JOE ISENBURG (*Fight Choreographer*) Most recently, Joe's fight direction was seen at the Met's premiere production of "The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay," directed by Bart Sher. He is a regular at the Metropolitan Opera, and his work has been seen at the Washington National Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, Bard Summerscape, The New York City Opera, Arena Stage, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Round House Theatre, Studio Theatre, Signature Theatre, Children's Theatre Company, Adirondack Theater Festival, Theater J, Humana Festival, Florida Stage, InterAct Theatre, and ShowScore.com (Teaching). His work has also appeared at 52nd Street Project, Union College, Middlebury College, University of North Carolina School of the Arts, Howard University, Georgetown University, and the Duke Ellington School of the Arts. Awards include the 2013 Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Choreography, the Kennedy Center Kenan Fellowship, and the 2010 Society of American Fight Directors Swashbuckler of the Year.

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THE SALEM WITCH TRIALS

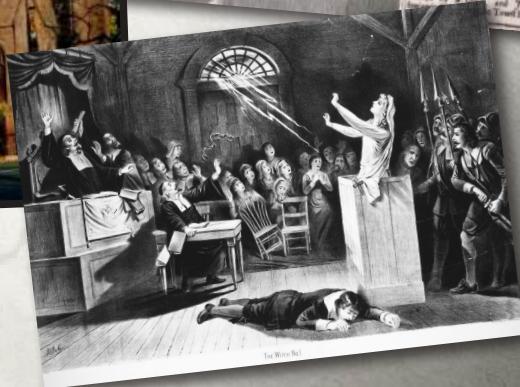
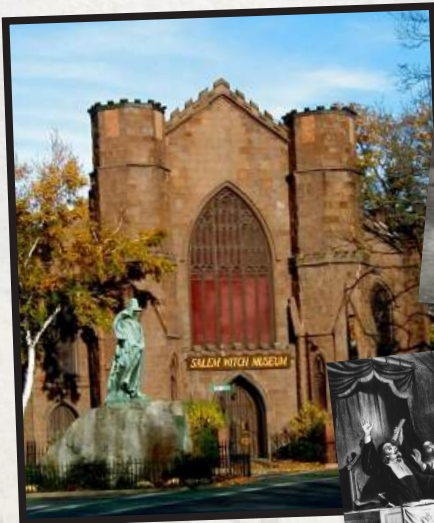
There is no one thing that caused the Salem Witch Trials to occur, and yet 200+ individuals (mostly women) were accused, and 20 were executed, between 1692-mid-1693. Fueled by xenophobia, religious extremism, social tensions, personal rivalries, paranoia of the “unknown,” misogyny, and more, the Salem Witch Hunt (which has become synonymous with paranoia and injustice) continues to beguile us some 300 years later.

While anyone could be accused of witchcraft, folks who were different were the easiest to blame and typically the first accused. Suspicions often began with beggars, older or unmarried women, women who fought with their neighbors, or healers and midwives. Tests to determine if one was a witch propelled mob justice; with many of the tests being illogical in nature and easily abused. For instance, “spectral evidence” – or the accuser’s visions and dreams– were allowed as evidence, along with finding a “witch’s mark” on the accused (a mole, skin blemish, or irregularity) could be used as proof of where the devil suckled the witch.

Ultimately 19 innocent people were hanged, another man was pressed to death, and five more perished while still in jail.

DRAMATURGY

BY MARGARET E. HALL



REBECCA NURSE

Rebecca Nurse was a 71-year-old devout and God-fearing woman when she was accused of witchcraft. Born in 1621 in England, Rebecca Towne moved to Salem, MA circa 1635 with her family. She married Francis Nurse in Salem in the mid-1640s and lived near the North River where seven of their eight children were born. In 1664 they moved to the western part of Salem (present-day Peabody), to a 20-acre farm, where their last child was born in 1666. In 1678, the Nurses “leased-to-buy” a 300-acre farm in Salem Village.

- **March 1692 Rebecca Nurse is accused of witchcraft by Ann Putnam Jr.**
- Abigail Williams and Ann Putnam Sr. also claimed to be tormented by Nurse’s specter.
 - Former Salem Village minister Deodat Lawson visited the Putnam’s in March and claimed to witness Putnam Sr. battle with Nurse’s specter, though he himself could not see the specter.
- **In the 3rd week of March**, a committee visited Nurse who was ill in bed. When told that she had been accused, she wondered aloud, what had she done that God, “should lay such an affliction on me in my old age.”
- **On March 24** a complaint was sworn against Nurse by Jonathan and Edward Putnam, she was arrested and taken to the Salem meetinghouse for examination.
 - The afflicted writhed and twisted, mimicking Nurse’s movements and claiming Nurse’s specter was tormenting them; that they could see the Devil whispering in her ear and saw familiars in the shape of birds flocking around the room. Ann Putnam Sr. shouted at her, became paralyzed, and had to be carried from the meetinghouse by her husband.
- Despite relentless questioning by Judge Hathorne, Nurse said, “I am as innocent as the child unborn.” The judges ordered her to be held in Salem jail, if only for the afflictions they themselves witnessed at her examination.
- **In April**, her accusers claimed that Nurse’s specter took part in a witches sabbath that was presided over by “the King” of the witches (the specter of Rev. George Burroughs), in the parsonage pasture.
- **On June 2**, Nurse underwent the humiliating, invasive process of an intimate search of her body where the investigating women found a suspicious (“witch’s”) mark.
 - Years later, Nurse’s daughters-in-law testified that an infirmity she’d had for years was mis-identified.
- **By June 29, Nurse’s grand jury trial was underway.**
 - Despite relentless questioning, Nurse held firm to her innocence. When asked about her specter’s torments of the afflicted, Nurse replied, “The Devil may appear in my shape.”
 - In the courtroom, Nurse’s daughter witnessed Goody Bibber deliberately stick her own knees with pins, pretending to be afflicted.
 - Testimony from neighbor Sarah Houlton was also taken, about an instance in 1689 when Houlton’s husband sickened and died after an altercation with Nurse. Sarah Houlton blamed his death on this altercation claiming an act of witchcraft.
 - When Deliverence Hobbs was brought in to testify against her, Rebecca said, “But she’s one of us!?”
 - A petition supporting Nurse, signed by 39 members of the community, was also presented to the court.

- **Rebecca Nurse was found not guilty.**

- The moment Nurse was found not guilty “the afflicted” in the room reacted wildly and the outburst was enough to concern the magistrates and jury foreman.
- Chief Justice William Stoughton had Nurse returned to the courtroom because he was not satisfied with the verdict, or the outburst that followed, and wanted an answer to the comment Nurse made in regard to Deliverance Hobbs.
- When brought back into the courtroom Nurse was asked what she had meant by “But she’s one of us!?” However, Nurse did not answer. She was old, very sick, hard-of-hearing, and overwhelmed. She stood silently. Her silence was interpreted as an admission of guilt.

- **The verdict was reversed, and Rebecca Nurse was now found guilty.**

- Later, Nurse explained her statement – Deliverance Hobbs had been in prison with her and also accused of witchcraft, so how could she now be an accuser?
- **On July 3,** Reverend Nicholas Noyes presided over Nurse’s excommunication from the Salem Town church.
- Nurse’s supporters turned to Governor William Phips for help, and he was able to grant Nurse a reprieve, but after an outcry from the afflicted (especially the Putnam’s), Phips backed down. Nurse was found guilty, again, and condemned to execution.
- Chief Justice William Stoughton signed her death warrant.
- Rebecca Nurse was hanged on July 19, 1692, on Proctor’s Ledge at Gallows Hill.
- It is believed that her family came and collected her body that evening, taking her home to be buried in an unmarked grave on the homestead.

Witches: Evolving Perceptions exhibit at the Salem Witch Museum presents a formula for a witch-hunt:
FEAR + A TRIGGER = A SCAPEGOAT.

*THINK
ABOUT
IT*

PHOTOS OF REBECCA NURSE S HOMSTEAD



AN AFTERWORD BY THE PLAYWRIGHT

In 2022, the last accused witch from Salem was finally pardoned, three hundred and twenty-nine years after her conviction; Massachusetts lawmakers were spurred on by an eighth grade Civics class. In Scotland, a bill is now before Parliament to formally pardon the four thousand accused witches (mostly women) who were tortured and killed there. It seems that “Becky Nurse of Salem” is coming at the right time.

I started writing this play in 2016 after Trump was selected, and after seeing a production of Arthur Miller’s “The Crucible,” when I started to wonder if the depiction of a lustful, deceitful young woman named Abigail stank of fabrication.

Often, a playwright has both a public way into a play and a private way into a play. Ostensibly, Arthur Miller’s “The Crucible” was about McCarthyism and the blacklist. But privately it was about Miller’s guilt at wanting to sleep with Marilyn Monroe. This bit of truth was passed on to me by the brilliant playwright Branden Jacobs-Jenkins. We were talking about “The Crucible” over a glass of wine at a retreat in Princeton. I was explaining to Branden that I’d recently experienced some rage after seeing a production of “The Crucible.” My rage had nothing to do with its being a masterpiece or not a masterpiece – I think it is a masterpiece – but, instead, with my sense that the whole concept of witchery had been redirected toward girls’ desires for older married men, which felt like an enormous historical imposition.

“Oh,” Branden said. “Didn’t you know that Arthur Miller wanted to get with Marilyn Monroe when he wrote that play and he felt guilty about it because he was married and she was young?” I did not. But watching the brilliant documentary Rebecca Miller made about her father, and reading “Time Bends,” I saw that, indeed, Miller struggled with his feelings for the younger Marilyn Monroe during the writing of “The Crucible.” Of course, the play was also very much a parable about McCarthyism, about his friend Elia Kazan’s betrayal – but the heat of the play is the lust of John Proctor for Abigail Williams. Miller said that he saw a painting of the trials in Salem – of Abigail Williams reaching her hand toward John Proctor – and found a passage about her hand having a burning sensation when it touched Proctor. That was Miller’s way in. The real Abigail Williams was eleven years old. In the play, Miller made her seventeen. The real John Proctor was a sixty-year-old tavern keeper. Miller made him an upright farmer, age thirty-five. The real Abigail Williams never turned to prostitution; Miller writes, in “Echoes Down the Corridor,” that legend has it that Abigail grew up to be a whore in Boston. There is no evidence for that line of thinking, nor is there any evidence that she and John Proctor knew each other before the witch trials.

Playwrights deserve the creative liberty to enter their plays with all their emotional heat and history. I do not begrudge anyone a love story, real or fictional. After all, as my friend Ezra (the self-proclaimed maker of the best falafel in the Western world) once told me, every good story must contain a love story. I suppose what strikes me as fundamentally dishonest about “The Crucible” is the mixture of fact and fiction; the copious historical notes, unusually embedded in the stage directions, lead us to believe that we are watching actual history unfold. But we are watching what we always watch onstage – a psychic drama from the mind of a complicated individual

relating his psyche to humankind's larger, collective unconscious. That "The Crucible" is performed at almost every high school, and is in fact the way American girls and boys understand the history of Salem, added to my frustration. I thought, all those bonnets, all those Goody Sarahs, and, really, Arthur Miller just wanted to have sex with Marilyn Monroe! I thought, all those women died, but John Proctor was the hero of the story. I thought, to this day, no one knows why the girls engaged in mass hysteria, but it probably was not the lust of one duplicitous eleven-year-old for a middle-aged barkeep. For all of these logical reasons, I thought that I would end up writing my own historical drama about the Salem witch trials, but every time I tried to dip my toe into the seventeenth century my pen came back and told me to stay in my own era. Perhaps because I felt dwarfed by the long shadow cast by Arthur Miller's mastery. Or perhaps I wanted to stay in the present moment because I have been undone and fascinated by the language of the witch hunt used by Donald Trump from his campaign, in which he whipped crowds into a frenzy, yelling "Lock her up!", with those crowds often replying, "Hang the bitch!", to his term in office, during which he has used the expression "witch hunt" hundreds of times, describing himself as the victim. Not since the burning of witches in Europe has the iconography of witchery been used with such base hypocrisy and to such effect.

Although most contemporary historians have dismissed the rye-bread explanation for the symptoms of hysteria in Salem as sheer folly, we do know that rye was rare in the New World, and that it was shipped from Europe, often moldering on the long journey. And we also know that Tituba fed rye bread mixed with urine to the girls, trying to get to the bottom of their maladies. It would be ironic if the "cure" for witchcraft was actually a biological deepening and intensifying of the girls' symptoms, which would have subsided on their own after St. Anthony's fire left their bodies. Most contemporary historians eschew a biological explanation, preferring post-traumatic stress from the American Indian Wars, property disputes, and the like as more feasible. I don't know that we'll ever understand why those girls accused their elders of witchcraft. But what we do know is that the accusations were not a function of the lust Abigail Williams had for John Proctor.

Speaking of Tituba and the American Indian Wars, I think the historical characters of Tituba and John Indian deserve new plays of their very own. (Two contemporary novels have already been written about Tituba.) Apparently, Tituba may not have come from Barbados, as "The Crucible" suggests, but was, instead, from South America, a member of the Arawak tribe. The magic she was asked to do was not native to Barbados but was European witchcraft already known to the white women who asked her to perform it. The "othering" of Tituba throughout the ages, and the great mystery surrounding her own desires and intentions, deserve investigation. I did not think that story was mine to write.

A note on the opioid crisis. Massachusetts is one of ten states that have the highest casualties for opioid overdoses in the country. In 2017, there were twenty-eight deaths per one hundred thousand people in Massachusetts. Sixty-four thousand Americans died of opioid overdoses in 2016, more than died in automobile accidents. It is the largest preventable cause of death for people between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five. This cluster has created what some call a lost generation, flooding the foster care system with their children. The greatest increase in opioid deaths has been attributed to synthetic opioids like fentanyl. In a bizarre Karmic loop, or bitter irony, the nineteenth-century opium trade with China, which destroyed many Chinese citizens, greatly enriched Boston. The money from the trade even helped finance cultural institutions, such as hospitals and libraries in Boston, as well as the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem. Even in nineteenth-century Boston, doctors like Dr. Fitch Edward Oliver warned against the dangers of opium, particularly for women:

“Doomed, often, to a life of disappointment, and, it may be, of physical and mental inaction, and in the smaller and more remote towns...deprived of all wholesome social diversion, it is not strange that nervous depression, with all its concomitant evils, should sometimes follow, – opium being discreetly selected as the safest and most agreeable remedy.”

The current focus on the opioid crisis, which disproportionately affects white Americans, is in stark contrast to the lack of attention, empathy, and resources being directed toward public-health crises that feature fewer white faces on posters. As for St. Anthony’s fire, the disease comes from ergot – a poison produced by a fungus that grows on rye. The condition was named for St. Anthony, who was pursued by hallucinations of the Devil in the desert and resisted. Acute and chronic ergotism lead to convulsions, pain in the extremities, and delusions. LSD was originally synthesized from ergot, and medications derived from the fungus are used to treat migraines and Parkinson’s disease. I don’t wish to add to conspiracy theories by writing this play, nor do I want to ignore a biological explanation for hysteria.

If we are to insist on fact, it should be noted that Gallows Hill does indeed appear to be at the site overlooking a Walgreens in Salem, not a Dunkin’ Donuts. Some townspeople and amateur sleuths have claimed that the original site is now a Dunkin’ Donuts (a strange fact that led me down the rabbit hole of this play), but the Walgreens was designated in 2016 as the most probable site of the executions. Much of the evidence was wiped away in an attempt to forget, and one of the few historical sites still preserved is the Rebecca Nurse Homestead, in Danvers. I did a reading of this play on July 19th, in Poughkeepsie, and a descendant of Rebecca Nurse, who worked at the theater, wanted to mark the day; in 1692, July 19 was the day that Rebecca Nurse, Sarah Good, and three other women were hanged. Before she died, Nurse said, “Oh, Lord, help me! It is false! I am clear. For my life now lies in your hands.” On July 19, before the

reading, we performed a ritual at a very large tree – it is said to have the largest self-supporting branch of any tree in the United States. I cannot tell you what we did around that tree. Today, August 19, is the day that John Proctor was hanged. John Proctor, also an innocent victim, became the cultural symbol of the witch trials (rather than the large group of women who were put to death) as a result of Arthur Miller’s outsized success in turning Proctor into a tragic hero.

Arthur Miller once lived in my neighborhood. Maybe we heard the same fog horns from the water in Brooklyn Heights while thinking about witches. There is a public way into a play and a private way in, like a worm turning over the earth. Earthworms are blind. So, frequently, are writers, especially when they’re in the midst of writing. Often, a playwright will never recognize the private way into a play. Sometimes the playwright knows and keeps it secret. Sometimes the playwright does not know while writing but realizes with some embarrassment, at the first preview, and blushes. Sometimes the playwright does not know while writing but realizes ten years later, and, like the great Arthur Miller, writes about it in a very thick memoir. Let playwrights have their secrets, their private lusts, their compulsions – but do let us free Abigail Williams from her manufactured lust for John Proctor. When John Proctor says, “It is a whore!” and the “it” is a child called Abigail, let us consider that the real historical child was neither an “it” nor a whore.

As for my own private reason for writing this particular play, I either don’t know or I will never tell.

– Sarah Ruhl



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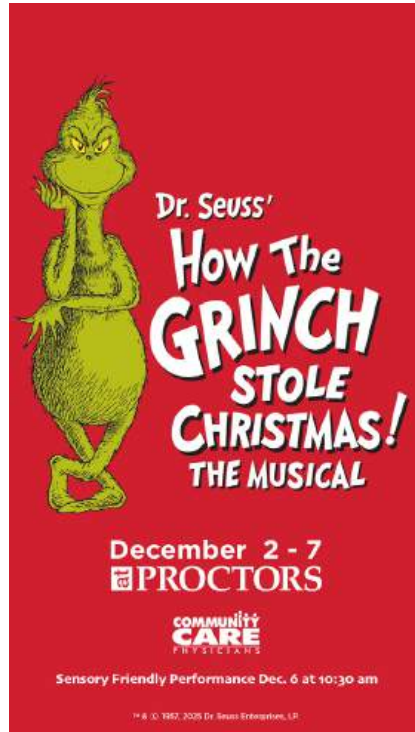
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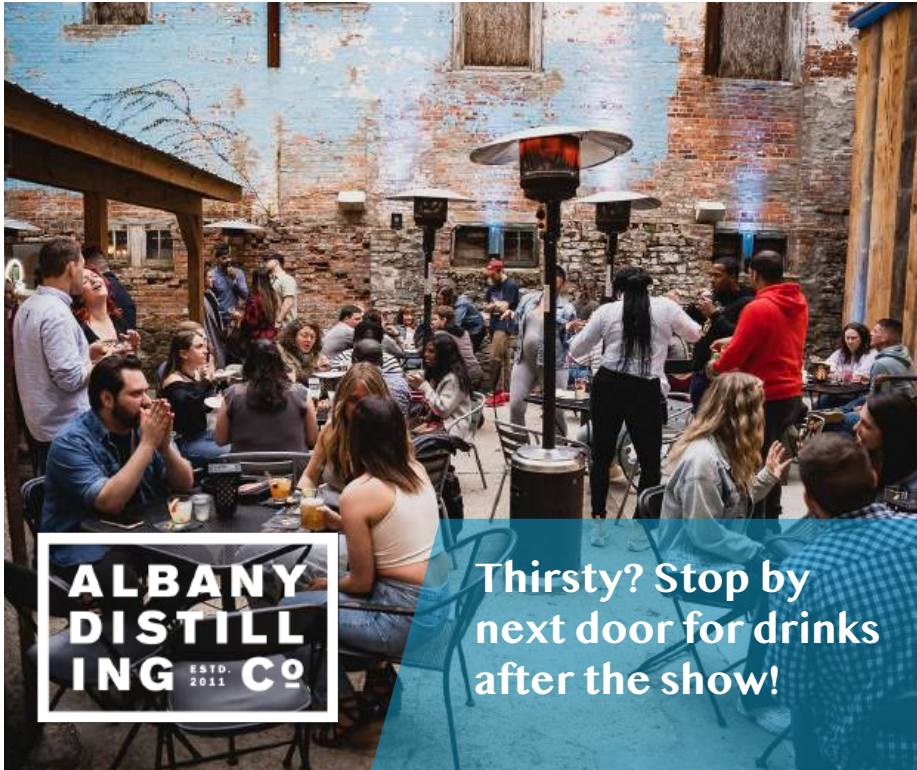
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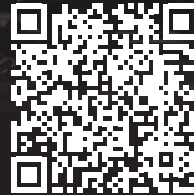
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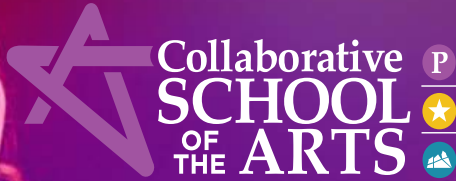
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