

Citadel's *Crucible* hot, but not scorching

The Crucible
Shoctor Mainstage
In repertory through November 12

review by Mike Evans

Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible*, currently in repertory at the Citadel Theatre with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* until November, is one of the finest pieces of theatrical literature penned in America this century. It is less well known than that icon of modern American drama, Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, but in many ways it is a more accessible and more powerful drama of a fundamentally good man driven by his own pride, shame, anger, and morality to sacrifice his life for his

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convictions. It is a piece that is a showcase for brilliant characterization and an excellent choice to run as one of the Citadel's first offerings for its 25th season.

A further inducement to expect genuine magic from the Citadel is the fact that Robin Phillips, seven years the Artistic Director of the Stratford Festival and one of the lions of contemporary Canadian theatre, is the director of both plays. What a pity that this production does not live up to the promise of the script.

Miller's play uses the Salem witch-hunts of 1692 as an allegory for the American political arena of Senator Joe McCarthy's House Un-American Activities Committee which — in the name of truth, justice, and apple pie — ravaged the entertainment industry in the 1950s, exposing and destroying subversives and Communists— real and imaginary. In the play, John Proctor, a Puritan farmer, is confronted by the condemnation and hanging of members of his community precipitated by a single adulterous evening during his wife's illness the previous winter. This

indiscretion coincided with the sexual awakening of a vengeful, adolescent girl who unintentionally, and then gleefully, hatches a plot to have Proctor's wife dispatched for witchcraft, clearing the way for her insinuation into his life. Obviously, the play's success is inextricably bound with the competence and vision of the actor playing John Proctor— and this is the Citadel production's chief flaw.

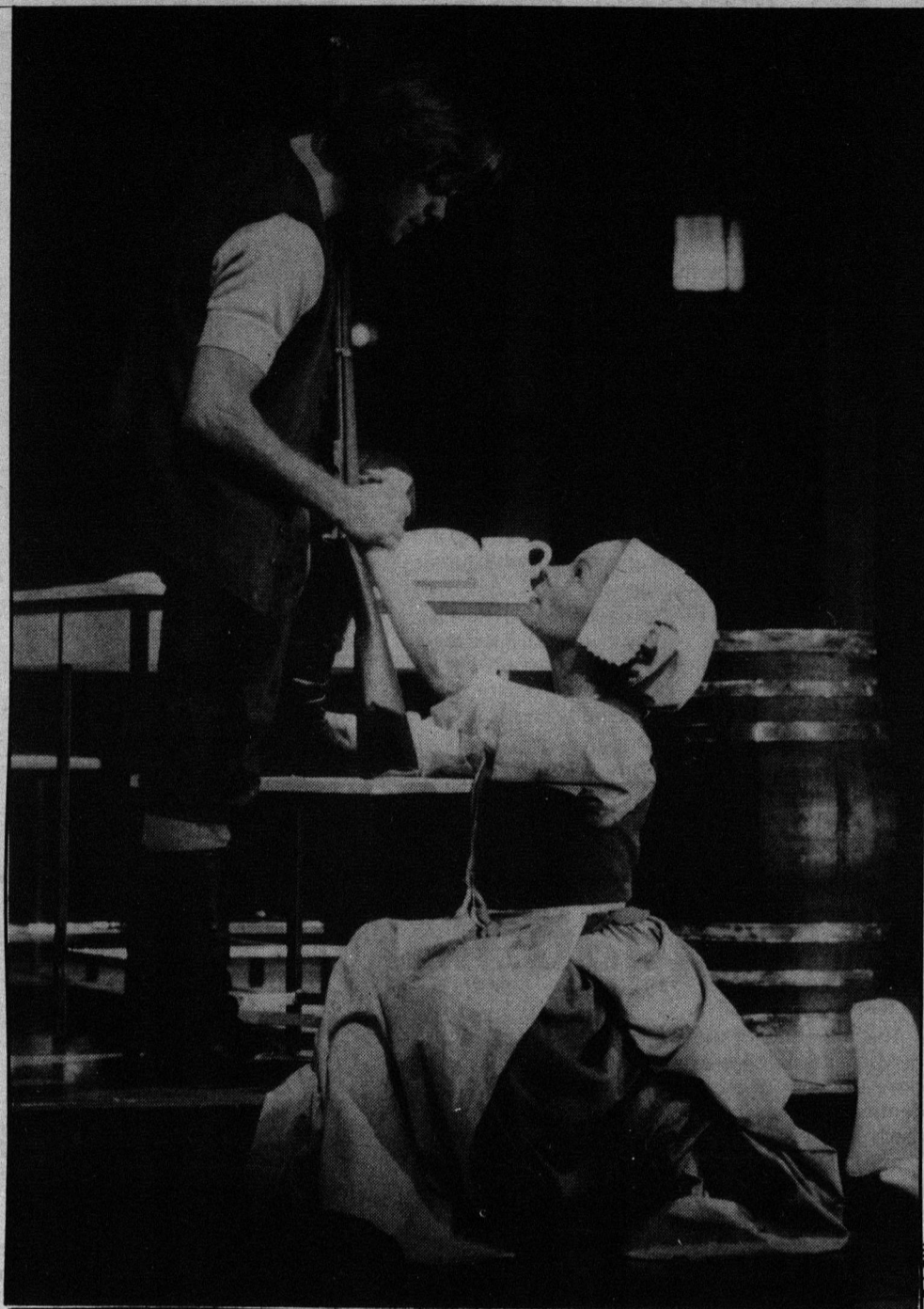
Stuart Hughes portrays John Proctor with a swaggering, fumbling brutality — self-righteous and sanctimonious to a degree that prohibits any sensitive characterization — in a kind of twentieth century, fashionable rebel style. There is no evidence whatsoever until the fourth act of a compromised but loving relationship between Proctor and his wife. There is no indication of shame or even that he acknowledges what he has done in bedding his former servant girl. Proctor is a Puritan who commits the sin of adultery, serious business in his community, so where is the evidence of his conviction of sin? Hughes' first, second, and third act performance is too often buried in the belly of his throat; his clarity of purpose is blurred by bluster. Thankfully, he rises to the occasion in Act IV and manages to salvage the play.

In contrast, Camille Mitchell, who plays Proctor's wife Elizabeth, is wonderful throughout. Her characterization is beautifully subtle, capturing the entire life of her character in her measured, gentle speaking voice, delicate gesture, and resolute will. In the fourth act, when Elizabeth has the

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revelation of her own complicity in her husband's guilt and realizes her genuine, full-bodied love for him, Mitchell brings an

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John Proctor (Stuart Hughes) in a tense moment with his wife Elizabeth (Camille Mitchell).

ED ELLIS



Aaron Goettel and Jennifer Lee appear in CBC's *The Anti-Elope Play* tonight at 8:30.

student appearing on CBC

interview by Ron Kuipers

It's a big jump from the small stage to the small screen, but local BFA student Aaron Goettel manages to pull it off. He will be appearing in a half-hour comedy to be broadcast nationally on CBC tonight at 8:30 pm. The program, entitled *The Anti-Elope Play*, is the first episode of CBC's 1989 "Family Pictures" series, an anthology of regional half-hour television dramas.

Actually, the jump from stage to screen has not been that huge for Aaron. In addition to being in his third year of the University's BFA program, he has appeared in several plays including *As You Like It* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. As well, his film credits include the role of "Billy" in Anne Wheeler's *Bye Bye Blues*. He is excited about augmenting his film career, but he is quick to point out that "A lot of this job is to find work. I'll go wherever it takes me."

Aaron explains that the *Anti-Elope Play* is a "comedy of the culture clash." It's about a WASP/Ukrainian family, the Peridichuks. The press release describes them as "a collective of co-habiting eccentrics." In this episode (which is also a pilot for a prospective series), twelve-year-old Max Peridichuk finds himself in a jam when he is requested to perform a Ukrainian dance before his class yet lacks the necessary skills to do so. The only person who can help him is his sister Nadia, but she's eloping with her "mad, splatter-painting boyfriend" Leo Phillet (played by Aaron). Max gets caught up in the young couples plans, supposedly resulting in comedy and zaniness.

In fact, the show's promoters go so far as to compare the program to Jonathan Cleese's *Fawlty Towers*. Aaron hesitantly agrees with this flattering comparison. "It never seems to stop for one thing. Everyone's getting in each other's way. That's what makes it work, it

keeps rolling. Once things get going, it moves."

The promoters are also placing much emphasis on the program's irreverent and iconoclastic elements. This is becoming a trend with the CBC— they seem to be taking more risks. Asked whether or not this is true of *The Anti-Elope Play* Aaron explains that "It's risk-taking in the zaniness of it. It's nothing erratic, just different. I think that's a good trend."

This brought up such topics as censorship of television and the goals of the CBC. "I think there should be self-censorship," Aaron explains of the former topic. "Any program should be there, but it shouldn't be thrown

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at people. But definitely watch this!"

As for the CBC's programming goals, Aaron has many ideas. "Canada does have a certain 'Canadianism,'" he explains, "and I think that the CBC is trying to find that 'Canadianism.'" As for the risks CBC is taking with such shows as *Degrassi Jr. High-* (kids taking acid, getting pregnant etc.) and *Four on the Floor*, Aaron says that "It's good to take risks if it means they can find this Canadianism."

Aaron seems to be very excited about his work, and he also has many ideas about his area of work. To say very little, *The Anti-Elope Play* sounds interesting enough to deserve a quick peak. So if you feel the need to escape that mid-September mountain of homework, maybe you'll want to check out what one of your fellow students is up to.