

'The Crucible' Gets Cast

(Nan Lincoln, The Bar Harbor Times April 29, 2004)

New Surry Theater director Bill Raiten has chosen his cast for his major production of Arthur Miller's "The Crucible." The play will go into rehearsal mid-May for performances in August. Mr. Raiten says while many of the roles were filled by his own ensemble of student actors, he was in something of a quandary about finding sufficiently experienced stage performers to play the pivotal roles of John and Elizabeth Proctor, a 17th century couple caught up in the horrors of the Salem Witch Trials.

"I picked the play partly because I knew there were plenty of parts for the actors who have taken classes with the New Surry Theatre and who would give a wonderfully professional performance," Mr. Raiten says, " but I had no idea where I would get the actors for the parts the New Surry Theater actors could not fill.



John and Elizabeth Proctor were played in by Liam Neeson in the recent Broadway production of "The Crucible," and by Daniel Day Lewis and Joan Allen in the movie, several years ago - all dynamic actors.

New York actress Alexandra Lincoln will be coming home to MDI this summer to play the part of Elizabeth Proctor in Bill Raiten's production of "The Crucible."

Mr. Raiten says he was concerned about finding actors of similar caliber in a local open audition call.

"I figured I would either have to get experienced actors who would understand or accept my approach to finding the "truth" in their role and to refrain from "acting," or inexperienced actors who would be open to learning and both would have to be willing to take classes in addition to attending rehearsals. I wasn't sure that I could find such "beasts" quickly. But I did."

On the second day of auditions, he says, a young actress living in New York who had heard about the production and wanted to be in a serious play and to work in the professional and serious way the NST works showed up to read. "Alexandra Lincoln was wonderful in her tryout," Mr. Raiten says. "Even at that first reading she had people in tears. Well, I knew we had our Elizabeth."

The next problem, Mr. Raiten says, was to find an actor of similar age and talent who could play opposite Ms. Lincoln as John Proctor.

While he says he had several people in his own company who could have done an adequate job, the match would have been off.

"So, I made a few calls," he says.

One of those calls went out to Ron Adams, who has been the lead in many Penobscot Theatre productions in Bangor - mostly comedies, but he also played Prior Walter, the young man stricken with AIDS in PTC's excellent production of "Angels in America." Apparently, Mr. Adams was intrigued enough by Mr. Raiten's proposition to come down from Old Town to read with Ms. Lincoln. Suffice it to say, Mr. Raiten had a match.

Another challenge - to find an Abigail, the girl who unleashes the juggernaut that eventually sends more than 100 men, women and even an infant to their deaths as accused witches, was more easily met. George Stevens Academy student McKenzie Lirakis is both the proper age for the role and, Mr. Raiten says, has a dynamic, mature stage presence that belies that age.

Other "Crucible" cast members, many of whom helped make Mr. Raiten's past two productions, "Lost in Yonkers" and "Noises Off" so successful, are Cindy Robbins as Anne Putnam; Jane Clark as Tituba; Keith Robinson as Tom Putnam; Ralph Chapman as the Rev. Hale; Dindy Royster and Jason Tripp as Rebecca Nurse and her husband; Kelly Wilder as Betty Parris; Peter Coleman as Giles; Perry Halbert as Ezekial Cheever; Tim Puglisie as Mr. Parris; Ian Chittenden as Mr. Hawthorn; Woody Haight as Sara Good Elizabeth Maran as Mary Warren and Julia McCarrier and Amber Cochran sharing the role of Susannah Walcott.

Mr. Raiten says, "I can't remember when I have felt so excited about a play and its cast before this. To have professional and amateur actors together on the same stage working to bring excitement and truth to the audience is my idea of real fun. I can't wait for rehearsals to begin."