

Paranoia Takes the Stage at Dana Hills' *The Crucible*

by Rowan Olson, a sophomore at University High School

As the show opens with a low, ominous rumbling, a paranoia fueled witch hunt rips through the quiet, religious town of Salem. In a time when no one is exempt from suspicion, relationships are torn apart, loyalties are questioned, and even the concept of right and wrong itself is scrutinized.

The show begins with a foreboding, thunderous grumble and the sounds of a rustling forest, designed and implemented by Marina Kosor. It sets the scene for the chaos to come and establishes the mood of the piece even before any actor has said a word. As the actors do enter, an argument ensues between Reverend Parris (Sebastian Bojorquez-Cantu) and Abigail Williams (Nici Curry). The tension between them is palpable; they give a believable and layered performance in this opening scene.

The familiar arguing of Parris and Abigail well underway, they are suddenly interrupted by the ragged screams of Betty Parris (Marina Kosor). Kosor's cries are laden with emotion; they own the stage with a tremendous commitment to their distressed character. Also evident in this scene and throughout the play are the costumes (Nici Curry, Raechel Newman, and Serena Pearl). The costumes are well researched in their historical accuracy, and clearly detailed and well made. They serve to elevate the performance, and excel in building the world of Salem from cotton and wool.

John Proctor (Riley Lenthall) absolutely commands the space. Lenthall's range throughout the show from an authoritative confidence to a conflicted inner struggle is well done. This louder stage presence presents a beautiful balance to Elizabeth Proctor (Alex Ushiyama), as Ushiyama's performance displays the quiet strength of her character. She paints Elizabeth's pain with grace and authenticity, a grounded character in the sea of uproar that is Salem.

The props throughout the show, designed by Evelin Chavez, Luke Inman, and Katharine Robinson, were creative, well-utilized, and tied the play together under a common design aesthetic. They layered in well with the minimalistic yet effective set (designed by Sebastian Bojorquez-Cantu) to truly create the world of Salem.

The cast and crew of Dana Hills High School, under the guidance of their capable student stage manager Caroline Field, stun with their portrayal of the hysteria sweeping the town of Salem. Even in a show full of distrust and accusations, the company has succeeded in creating a unified and thoughtful piece.