

'The Crucible' is superbly done at EIU

I had a real treat Friday night, and I hope that in the day or two remaining of its run you can catch the Arthur Miller play, "The Crucible" which will be presented at Eastern Illinois University tonight and Tuesday night.

Curtain time is at 8 p.m. and there's magic galore behind that curtain in this drama of the witch trials in Salem, Mass., in 1692. The price of your ticket is only \$1.50, and in this time of Phase III surely you can scrape together the price of a ticket. You'll be well repaid for your efforts.

Arthur Miller, one of our leading dramatists, wrote this play and entered it on Broadway in 1953, and he was inspired to write it by the McCarthy congressional hearings, which were a witch hunt of another color. I had never seen this 1953 drama, and I was excited by it Friday night, and found it stimulating the mind, exciting the eye and hypnotizing the ear. Miller's words roll like poetry. Though I did not expect it, the suspenseful ending had my knuckles white as they gripped my theatre seat, and

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I held my breath as to the fate of John and Elizabeth Proctor. My Senior Citizen, who does not always share my enthusiasm over EIU theatrical brews, was as engrossed with this show as was I.

Gerald Sullivan directed the play, and here's a man who knew what he was doing. He has turned this drama of religious zealots, susceptible and-or conniving teenagers, and innocent villagers into a drama to stay with you long after the curtain falls.

John's Keough's colonial costumes will impress you with their authenticity and Bill Bielby's sets afford interesting viewing of that gargantuan stage (What Guy Little wouldn't give for that!).

I was privileged to see Friday night one of the finest amateur acting jobs that my tired old eyes have ever thrilled to. Michael Boyll as Thomas Proctor is perfect. Mr. Boyll has always given good account of himself in EIU plays, but this is the best thing I have ever seen on that stage. His acting would make the trip to Charleston on a flat tire in a raging blizzard worth the effort. Anne Brady is a loving and tender wife, and acts with mature understanding. I am more accustomed to seeing Miss Brady's name on the technical crew — after this show I hope to see her more behind the footlights.

Marc Campbell is handsome looking and handsome acting as the Rev. John Hale, who

tires, too late, to return sanity to Salem, the town gone mad. (Salem, Mass., saw 79 citizens hanged or burned at the stake in a nine months' period in 1692 as being witches, or at least in liege with Satan.) Brent Schweisberger plays the Reverend Samuel Parris as the stuffy, stiff little man he was.

Kristine Kirkham plays Abigail Williams with fire that well expresses the woman scorned; it is she who unleashes the witches from their coven. Miss Kirkham is a lovely young lady, and very believable in the part. Special praise must also go to Kris Hofacker as "Mary Warren," another village lass caught up in a deadly game of make believe and deceit. Frieda Hicks is stunning as the native girl from Barbados, who is no stranger to voodoo and black magic.

Diane Bird, one of my favorite EIU performers, is perfect as Rebecca Nurse, the beloved old dame of the town — even she is caught up in the web of black magic, lies and madness. Joseph Allison, who improves with every role, is the village handyman, stunned to find his wife accused of witchcraft. J. Sain is very politic as a shrewd constable.

The cast is large, and Mr. Sullivan has schooled them well in their roles. I can imagine coaching our 1973 young adults in this colonial drama was not always easy, and at times the lines must have sounded a bit alien to his modern performers. But they generally seem comfortable in their parts, and look generally at ease in those Puritan-type costumes.

I hope you can go to EIU to catch this show, though the house was well-packed Friday night. I could call the Eastern Fine Arts Box Office for a reservation. Tell 'em Emery sent you. You'll thank me.