

'Fear and paranoia' is back

*Brock students update McCarthy era's **The Crucible** to reflect new 'war on terror'*

By **MATTHEW VAN DONGEN**
Standard Staff

To professor and playwright Gyllian Raby, America's new "war on terror" seems a poorly-written remake of some classic episodes of historical hysteria.

Looking back is the best way to understand the current political climate of "fear and paranoia," argues Raby, a dramatic arts teacher at Brock University.

That's why Raby is excited about her department's adaptation of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, opening Thursday night at Brock's Centre for the Arts.

The classic play about the 1690's Puritan purge of witchcraft in Salem first opened in the early 1950s, when McCarthyist hysteria about communist conspiracies was at its height.

"Miller's work is extremely relevant today — he warns against political paranoia and he brilliantly shows how a community protects itself through scapegoating," said Raby. "I think it could really have something to say to us now, during the ongoing persecution of the Muslim minority in the U.S."



Ashley Agnew-Scarangella plays Abigail Williams and Will Morgan plays John Proctor in Brock University's department of dramatic arts presentation of Arthur Miller's *Crucible* in an *Age of Terror*. The play opens Thursday and runs through Nov. 20 at the Sean O'Sullivan Theatre.

PHOTOS SPECIAL TO THE STANDARD BY DAVID VIVIAN

"The politics of the play certainly interest me," he said. "It seems like every time I go home, it's a little harder, it takes a little longer to get across the border."

Morgan said he feels the message of the play needs to be out for public discussion. "You can't turn a blind eye to the lessons of history," he said.

Morgan added the political message of the play will likely attract a more diverse audience, especially among students. "It seems like every class evolves into a discussion of politics," he said. "People are definitely talking about (the war on terror). We may see a lot of people who would not be otherwise interested in attending."

The student production opens Thursday and runs through Saturday, with performances at 8 p.m. in the Sean O'Sullivan Theatre.



WHAT: *The Crucible* in an *Age of Terror*, directed by Gyllian Raby.

WHERE: Sean O'Sullivan Theatre at Brock's Centre for the Arts

WHEN: Nov. 18, 19 and 20 at 8 p.m.

ADMISSION: Tickets \$10 for adults \$7 for students and seniors.

CALL: Box office 905-688-5550 ext. 3257

Raby and her cast of 22 student actors have adapted the play, dubbed *The Crucible* in an *Age of Terror*, to give an even more modern-day feel to the centuries-old witch-hunt story.

The characters and plot don't change substantially, said Raby.

But with the help of Brock's visiting artist-in-theatre, David Vivian, the production is given a contemporary, Christian fundamentalist community setting and actors wear "modern, innovative" costumes.

Raby's decision to put on the ambi-

tionous production came after a discussion with her 16-year-old daughter, who had recently debated with classmates whether members of the Khadr family, which has been linked to terrorism, should be allowed to stay in Canada. "We are living in an age of terror," she said. "I wanted to investigate how fear and paranoia can cause people — even nice people like your or I — to scapegoat others."

The topic is a popular one among most university students, said lead actor Will Morgan, who plays tragic hero John Proctor, one of several townspeople ultimately hanged for allegedly practicing witchcraft.

Morgan, 22, hails from Houston, Tex., and admitted to a unique perspective on the play.

