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Introduction to London Theatre

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*The Crucible*

The National Theatre's recent production of *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller took a most unfortunate turn when the play's attention was centered solely on one of the male characters. In today's generation directors are shining a spotlight on women and the ways they have been pushed out of history. Therefore, with a show like *The Crucible*, where the very foundation of the production is the retelling of women's stories, about women being accused, tried, and hung, would you not expect the same? One could expect to sit down and hear about these women's hardships or the corrupt system that put them there. Instead, we were presented with the story of a man. Of all people an adulterate man. How did he become the face of the show? In a story about the oppression and silencing of women, why were the actresses silenced and pushed to the background? In an even more unfortunate turn, we learned that Lyndsey Turner solely directed this production. She is a British director and the third woman in history to ever win a Laurence Olivier Award. Turner is thought of to be a highly revered director who has many nominations as well as taught a number of courses around London all the way from the Royal Shakespeare Company to the University of London. This all brought quite a shock when audience members learned that the production they had just seen was directed by a woman. This is purely because of how silenced the woman characters were. In a short introduction to the show The National Theatre writes "Raised to be seen and not heard, a group of young women suddenly find their words have a terrible power." Yet, the women were hardly seen nor heard and had very little

power when it came to the stage. Roles that were already small to begin with were made even smaller as she erased women from the story almost altogether to put forth a man. Furthermore, Abigail Williams, who is arguably thought of to be the main character was turned from the seductive, powerful character she was written as into a pitiful and meek child. Thus pushing her even further into the background to make room for the male, John Procter, to suddenly become the driving force behind the story. The only question we are left with is, why? Some may argue that Turner was looking to find sympathy for Procter's character, so that in the end when he died the audience could feel moved by his so-called "selfless act." If that was in fact the attempt being made, it failed quite miserably. As the audience was left both frustrated and confused as to why they had been asked to sympathize for a man that had done nothing to earn it. Confused as to why a show about women had been completely overrun by men. The show was pitifully ended by an attempt to suddenly shine a light on the women in the last few moments, grasping at straws and desperately trying to fool the audience into believing it had been a feminist production all along. It was an utterly disheartening, male-focused, production of *The Crucible* which proved to be an embarrassment to true feminist productions and directors everywhere.