

Witch costume to wear? Halloween night contest set before “The Crucible” at BC3

Oct. 24, 2018



C. Stanley Photography: Cast members of the National Players are shown Aug. 19, 2018, rehearsing a scene from “The Crucible,” a 1953 Arthur Miller play that won a Tony Award that same year. The National Players, the nation’s longest-running classical touring company, will stage “The Crucible” at Butler County Community College’s Succop Theater at 7 p.m. Oct. 31.

(Butler, PA) Butler County Community College’s Cultural Center will sponsor a Halloween night costume contest for guests attending the National Players’ staging on Oct. 31 of “The Crucible,” a 1953 Arthur Miller play chronicling panic and terror in colonial Massachusetts during the Salem witch trials of 1692.

Three members of Pioneer Players, BC3’s theater group, will judge guests’ costumes before the National Players perform “The Crucible,” winner of the 1953 Tony Award for best play, at 7 p.m. in Succop Theater on BC3’s main campus in Butler Township.

A grand prize winner of the costume contest will receive a \$50 restaurant gift card and three runners-up will be presented with \$25 restaurant gift cards during a 15-minute intermission of the two-hour play. All winners will receive coupons for two tickets to an upcoming show at Succop Theater, according to Larry Stock, director of BC3's Cultural Center.

Witch outfits rank No. 5 nationally in a list of most popular Halloween costumes in 2018, according to Google's Frightgeist, trailing No. 1 Fortnite, Spider-Man, unicorns and dinosaurs.

"I am expecting a lot of witches," Stock said, "because that is what the show is about, the Salem witch trials. You have to have the nice pointy hat. The flowing robe of some kind. There are a lot of different ways to do it. There is the hag version, and there is the beautiful witch, the seductive witch. This ought to be fun."

Rebecca Dzida is community engagement and touring coordinator of the National Players, headquartered in Olney, Md. The 10-member ensemble, in its 70th season, is the nation's longest-running classical touring company.

"I think Larry was excited that we were able to schedule 'The Crucible' on Halloween because it does deal with witches and asks the question of witchcraft," Dzida said. "There are a couple of scenes in the play that do get a bit spooky because some of the characters really take advantage of how the other characters in the play react to supernatural elements."

Witch trials in Salem Village, Mass., began early in 1692 after a "group of young girls claimed to be possessed by the devil and accused several local women of witchcraft," according to History.com.

Bridget Bishop was the first to be convicted, and was followed to Gallows Hill by 18 other people, according to History.com, which added that more than 150 men, women and children were accused of witchcraft over the next few months.

"Always incredible, always energetic"

The National Players have performed in BC3's Succop Theater eight times since 2005.

"They are always incredible, always energetic," Stock said. "Their set design is always unique and very innovative."



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The company's 2018-19 season includes 100 performances in 60 cities such as Pueblo, Colo.; Manchester, Vt.; Holyoke, Mass.; and Daytona, Fla. The National Players will also perform Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night" and an adaptation of Jules Verne's 1873 novel "Around the World in Eighty Days" during a tour that ends in May.

Miller's play, Dzida said, is an allegory to McCarthyism, a fear of communism and an ensuing witch hunt for communist supporters in the United States in the late 1940s and early 1950s fueled by Sen. Joseph McCarthy, of Wisconsin, according to History.com.

"At the time Miller was writing, he and many of his colleagues were accused of being communists and were being asked to name names," Dzida said. "And so he saw a connection between what was happening back in Salem and what was happening for him during the Red Scare."

Tickets for "The Crucible" cost \$20 for general admission, \$18 for senior citizens 65 and older, and \$10 for students. BC3's Performing Artists Mini-Series is sponsored by Armstrong.

Call 724-284-8505 or order online at bc3.edu/succop-theater.

BC3's 35-member Pioneer Players will stage "Bleeding Façade," a 1990s murder mystery written by BC3 student Gabrielle Barton, from Nov. 15-17. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Nov. 15 and Nov. 16, and 2 p.m. Nov. 17.