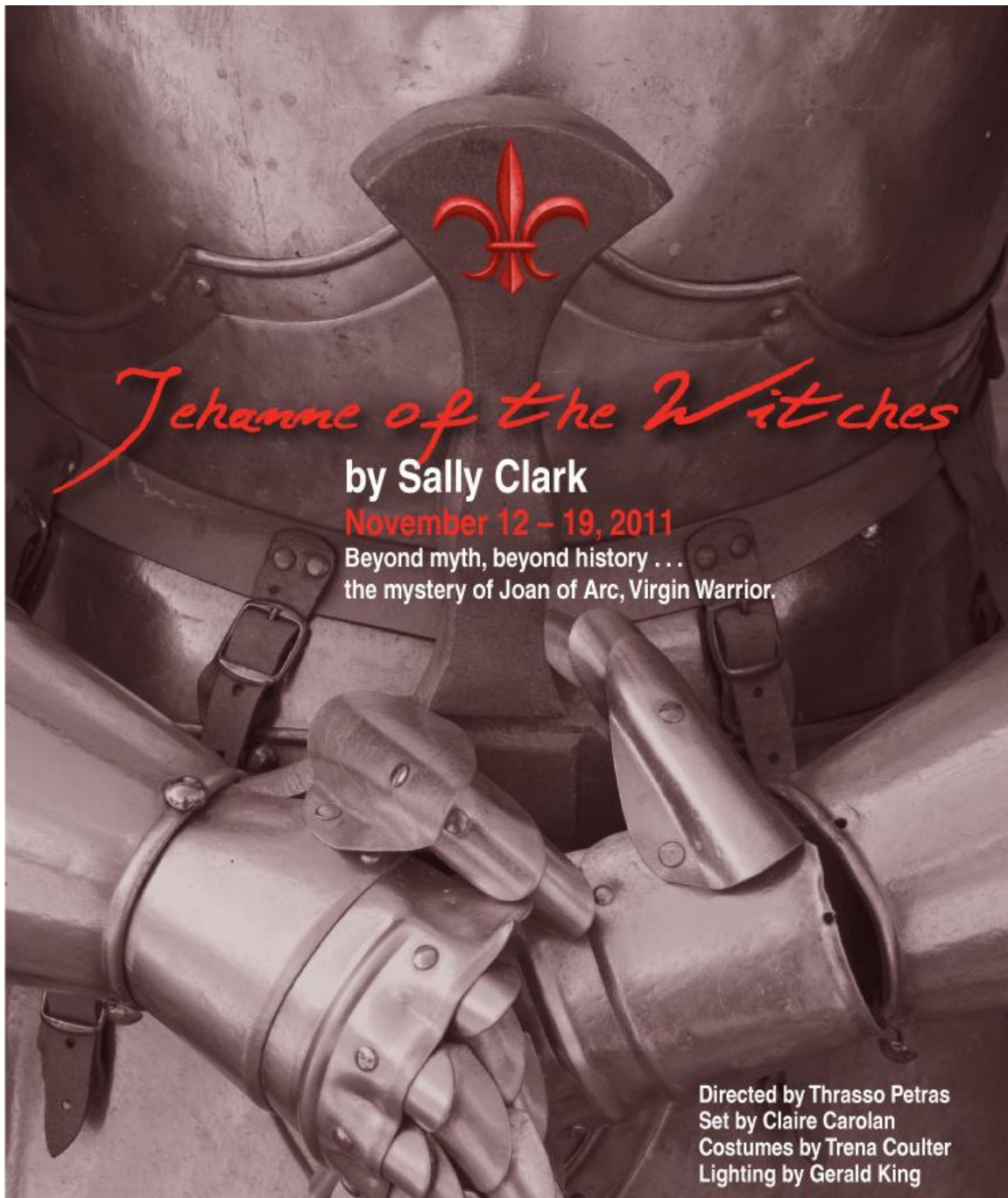




Resource Guide

for educators, students and lifelong learners



“This metaphysical romp and roadmap for human travelers is beset with twists and turns and ambivalent signposts. Be warned: we suspend all disbelief before entering into the bizarre logic of Clark’s dramatic narrative.”

-Christina Manolescu, 2007 Invisible Cities Network

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Creative Team
3. Cast List
4. Synopsis
5. Background
6. Timeline
7. Themes
8. Pre-show Exercises
9. Post-show Exercises
10. Links and Resources

Introduction

This guide is created to augment your theatrical experience and to provide greater insight to our production. Although it is intended primarily for teachers and students we offer it to our other patrons who may be interested in further exploration of the play.

Creative Team

Jehanne of the Witches
By Sally Clark

Directed by Thrasso Petras
Set Design by Claire Carolan
Lighting Design by Gerald King
Costume Design by Trena Coulter

Cast List

Jehanne.....	Julia Siedlanowska
Gilles de Rais.....	Spencer Stump
Voice 1, Michael, Poulengy, Fool, Minguet, Bastard, Whore 1, Mother.....	Emma Hughes
Voice 2, Catherine, de Baudricourt, La Hire, Whore 2, Mother.....	Chelsea Stamp-Vincent
Voice 3, Margaret, Isabelle.....	Vicky Brown
Charles, God, Bisho.....	Ian Duck
George, Bishop Cauchon.....	Zach Blumke
Priest (Pierre), Village Priest, Father Pasquerel, Archbishop, English Soldier.....	David Hollinshead
Attendant.....	Charlie Black

Synopsis

Source: www.sallyclark.ca

Christianity vs. Paganism provides the backdrop for this play-within-a-play centering on the relationship between Joan of Arc and the reputed mass murderer, Gilles de Rais (Bluebeard).

Background

Preface to the Play

This play is not like my earlier plays. It came about partly as a dare and partly out of my own desire to write something different. At the time, I was bereft of ideas so Clarke Rogers issued me a challenge – write a play about positive female power. My thoughts instantly flew to Joan of Arc. In my reading, I discovered that witchcraft / Satanism was an invention of the Christian Church. While the Church was trying to establish itself, the populace still worshiped the pagan gods – primarily the Moon Goddess. The Church couldn't obliterate Goddess worship so it usurped the pagan shrines and replaced Goddess worship with "Mary" worship.

Joan of Arc falls on the seam of this conflict. She was one of the first witches to be burned at the stake. Jehanne la Pucelle was her original title. The Church renamed her Jeanne d'Arc. "La Pucelle" is the title given to the female head of a coven. I felt that by putting the "h" back in her name, I was reclaiming something that had been lost.

In the translation from pagan to Christian history, someone else has been lost to us: Gilles de Rais (1404-1440), a man we only know through the fairy tale Bluebeard – reputedly a black magician who murdered 200 boys. Bluebeard and Joan of Arc were best friends. Fight side-by-side in battle, he saved her life twice and emerged Marshall of France. After Joan's death, Gilles staged a pageant about her victory at Orleans. Some historians claim that Gilles de Rais is the founder of modern French theatre. His

Mystery of the Siege of Orleans is one of the first plays on a secular subject. Most unusual was Gilles' presentation of the play. He staged the play on set around the entire town of Orleans. People followed the action from set to set. Gilles de Rais was a scientist and an alchemist. He may or may not have been a mass murderer.

The play is historically accurate. You might not agree with my interpretation but the events are true.

Sally Clark
Toronto, November 1993

Timeline

Sources: Wikipedia; Clarke Rogers

1337	Hundred Years' War begins
1404	Birth of Gilles de Montmorency-Laval, baron de Rais
1412	Birth of Jehanne in Domrémy, eastern France
1424	Jehanne experiences her first vision, age 12
1427 - 1435	Gilles served as a commander in the Royal Army
1428	Jehanne petitions for permission to visit the royal French court at Chinon, age 16
April 1429	The Dauphin orders background inquiries and a theological examination at Poitiers to verify Jehanne's morality. The commission of inquiry "declared her to be of irreproachable life, a good Christian, possessed of the virtues of humility, honesty and simplicity."
29 April 1429	Jehanne arrives at the siege of Orléans.
7 May 1429	Jehanne insists on attacking the main English stronghold called " <i>les Tourelles</i> ." Contemporaries acknowledged her as the heroine of the engagement after she was wounded in the neck by an arrow but returned to lead the final charge.
8 September 1429	French assault on Paris. Despite a wound to the leg from a crossbow bolt, Jehanne continues directing the troops until the day's fighting ended.
17 July 1429	Gilles is created a Marshal of France
October 1429	Jehanne granted nobility
23 May 1430	Jehanne captured in a skirmish when her force attempted to attack the Burgundian's camp at Margny
9 January 1431	Legal proceedings against Jehanne commence at Rouen, the seat of the English occupation government.

30 May 1431	Jehanne tried and convicted as a heretic by an ecclesiastical court sentenced to execution by burning, age 19
1434/5	Gilles produces a theatrical spectacle called <i>Le Mistère du Siège d'Orléans</i> .
1440	Gilles accused of engaging in a series of child murders
26 October 1440	Gilles condemned to death and hanged at Nantes
1452	During the posthumous investigation into Jehanne's execution, the Church declared that a religious play in her honor at Orléans would allow attendees to gain an indulgence (remission of temporal punishment for sin) by making a pilgrimage to the event.
7 July 1456	Pope Callixtus III examines the trial, pronounces Jehanne innocent and declares her a martyr.
1909	Jehanne beatified
16 May 1920	Jehanne canonized
1992	In a retrial of the de Rais' case in France, the court found the accusations of mass rape and murder completely unfounded in evidence and declared Gilles a victim of a conspiracy and innocent of all charges.

Themes

- Religion
 - Paganism and Christianity
- male-female rivalry for dominance and power
- Identity
 - cross-dressing, in which male and female swap roles through expediency or through choice
- the nature of mission and sacrifice
 - In the case of Jehanne's supernaturally induced or self-appointed mission, the question arises: is it divine inspiration, obsession, madness, demonic possession? You be the judge.
- miracles and magic
- self-destruction versus the stubborn continuance of the human race

Preshow Exercises

"In short I think this play is a great way to start discussions about identity, about the potential for all of us to be murderers and saints." Thrasso Petras, director.

Discussion Topic: Identity

1. What other characters in contemporary film or politics/culture are represented in one way only, or try to represent themselves in a certain light and how does the media affect that representation?
2. How do you try to represent yourself and your identity (through social media, E.G., FACEBOOK, Twitter etc.); do others have perspectives of you that are inaccurate or unexpected? Have you ever felt your reputation to be in peril? How?

Post Show Exercises

1. "Clark's using the monster to tell the story of the saint's life...It shows how human the monster can be, and how flawed the saint can be." Jessica B. Hill, <http://www.montrealmirror.com/2007/100407/theatre1.html>

This sums up one of the most interesting ideas behind the play, that of exploring three dimensional characters that contain both the shadow and light aspects of their identity. It's easy to cast Joan as a saint and Lady Macbeth as a cold hearted villain but what causes them to be perceived this way? And how did they end up like that?

2. Historical Discussion Topics
 - a. Who was St. Joan, why was she a saint?
 - b. What role does religion play in war? Are there any parallels in the 100 years war and contemporary wars that continue to be fought today?
 - c. What makes a saint? What does it take to get canonized?
 - d. How are saints used to enhance the reputation of a country or the church?
3. Contemporary Discussion Topics
 - a. Who would you choose to be a saint? How would you go about arranging their publicity to justify your choice. (eg: Angelina Jolie vs. Jennifer Aniston)
 - b. Why does a contemporary playwright choose this topic? What makes it personal to you? Why does this story still command our attention?

- c. If you were going to write a play about a historical figure, who would it be?
- Imagine you had to "pitch" your script to a producer. Write a synopsis and an outline of the plot for your play. In addition students could write a two page scene between characters, cast it, direct it and share it with their class.
4. For older students
Compare George Bernard Shaw's *St. Joan* with Clark's. In what ways do the two plays reflect the social and political realities of the times in which they were produced and written?

Links and Resources

- **Douglas College Library**
<http://encore.douglas.bc.ca/iii/encore/search?formids=target&lang=eng&suite=def&reservedids=lang%2Csuite&submitmode=&submitname=&target=Joan+of+Arc>
- <http://www.montrealmirror.com/2007/100407/theatre1.html>
- http://www.invisiblecitiesnetwork.org/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=283
- *Taken from: Theatre Review by Christina Manolescu © 2007 Invisible Cities Network*
http://www.invisiblecitiesnetwork.org/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=276

Clark's play, possibly the most radical and provocative examination of the Joan of Arc legend, breathes life into the familiar story by offering a look behind the icon, and by extension, a look inside her. Brutal and bawdy, fearsome and funny, the deftness of her vision is at once entertaining and thought-provoking, breathing new life into a miraculous character we all know but have never really met.

"We have the tradition of many miracles—but usually there are few witnesses, the records sparse and uncertain, and the truth obscured by time and wishful recording of 'after the fact.' But to the miracle of Joan the witnesses were legions, the records exact, and the facts established. This is a miracle that did happen, and the rules were set aside. There is in our minds, because of Joan, the conviction that if it could happen then—it can happen again." --John Steinbeck

Joan of Arc is one of the most iconic figures in recorded history, a girl who heard the voice of God and subsequently became her country's most famous heroine only to be executed for heresy at nineteen. Today, almost 600 years after her death, she lives on as an icon and martyr, although few study what that really means. The story of Joan of Arc has been misinterpreted, misunderstood, and

accordingly, misrepresented for centuries. Jehanne of the Witches, while paying tribute to an uncommon kind of hero, humanizes her; Clark forces us to recall that before she was Joan, she was Jehanne, and that before she was celebrated, executed, beatified and canonized, she was merely an ordinary person touched by the extraordinary.

Films

1. **The Passion of Joan of Arc(1928)**

La passion de Jeanne d'Arc (*original title*)

Originally released as a silent motion picture in France in 1928

Dramatization of the life of Joan of Arc centering on her trial and execution

Silent film with French intertitles, optional English subtitles and optional oratorio soundtrack sung in Latin and French

Optional soundtrack features Richard Einhorn's oratorio "Voices of light" inspired by the silent motion picture and performed by Anonymous 4, Susan Narucki, the Netherlands Radio Choir and the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic.

Director: [Carl Theodor Dreyer](#)

VPL Call # FRE 791.4372 P2882d

2. **The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc (1999)**

Director: [Luc Besson](#)

VPL Call # 791.4372 M584b

3. **Joan of Arc(1948)**

Director: Victor Fleming

VPL Call # 791.4372 J62f1

Starring Ingrid Bergman

4. **Joan of Arc: Virgin Warrior A&E Biography, 2004**

VPL Call # 944.026 J43a1