

PRESS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE OF ISSUE: THURSDAY 5TH NOVEMBER 2009

Yeovil College and the 13:31 Theatre Company Present:

‘VINEGAR TOM’

Main Hall, Yeovil College

Thursday 12th & Friday 13th November 2009 at 7.30

Tickets: £4 (Concessions £3)
Box Office: 01935 845314

The 13:31 Theatre Company, which is made up of BND Performing Arts students, is putting on its first ever dramatic play on Thursday 12th and Friday 13th November 2009.

‘**Vinegar Tom**’ is set in Somerset during the English witch trials and follows the story of Alice (Gemma McQueen), a girl in her twenties, as her small village is caught maelstrom of accusation, superstition and fear. The village lives on the cusp of poverty, so when livestock on the farm of Jack (Tom Wilkins) and Margery (Lorna Hinton) begin to fall ill, their situation becomes even more precarious. When Margery herself becomes ill, Alice’s mother, Joan (Hayleigh Barrington), accused of witchcraft. As suspicion and fear give way to reason, other women of the village are also accused, including herbalist Ellen (Katarzyna Koziel) and Betty (Poppy Rendell), who defies convention by preferring not to marry. As the situation escalates, witchfinder Henry Packer (Adam Ridout) and his assistant, Goody (Sian Doble), arrive in the village. The play explores themes including gender power relationships, corruption and the use of extremist beliefs and superstitions to reinforce oppressive stereotypes.

The piece was written by the highly respected feminist playwright Caryl Churchill in 1976 in response to the discrimination of the time. The play is noted for its unusual use of songs, which, unlike the bulk of the drama, are set in the present day. They add to the story by reflecting the discrimination of women and exploring male domination of society.

Gemma McQueen (17) of Yeovil said *“I’m very nervous about the role and have found performing the lines in a Somerset accent quite hard. I really like the challenge though and it makes you work harder. When you finally manage to do something more difficult, you do feel prouder about the achievement.”*



Tom Wilkins (18) of West Chinnock plays Margery’s husband Jack, whose personal feelings complicate the situation. He said *“Jack is a complex role. He’s a guy who is very rough on the outside, but deep down there is something quite soft about him. He’s more emotional around Alice particularly.”*

Lorna Hinton (17) of Martock is playing Margery, the first 'victim' of witchcraft. She said *"I really didn't like my character at first. I thought she was a bitch! But after a while I began to understand that she genuinely believed in witchcraft and was making the accusations because she was scared. Animals were dying and it can be easy to assume the worst when bad things are happening. I read up on the period and it was a really horrible time."*

Henry Packer, the witchfinder, is played by Adam Ridout (17) of Yeovil. He said *"I've gained an insight into the*



time period because I studied the Crucible while at Buckler's Mead School. I've also performed in other productions, but this is my first proper play and I'm really looking forward to it. You could say that Packer is the villain, but he doesn't think he is. He considers himself godly and thinks that he's doing the villagers a favour. I've found it hard to physically show how confident he is, through the way he walks around as if he owns everything and doesn't shuffle his feet. His speech has also been challenging – it has to be slow and not fast, as if he's making an important point all the time."

This is the first production by 13:31 Theatre Company, which is responsible for backstage and production work as

well as performing in the play itself, giving them a chance to develop more than just their acting skills. As well as playing a doctor, Matt Palmer (17) of Yeovil is also in charge of costume. He said *"I've been looking at the characters and when the play is set to determine which costume should be pick out for us and what is suitable. We buy a lot of things from charity shops and use the store at the College, but it's been hard to find enough long skirts! Eventually I hope to work in theatre. I'm already part of the Yeovil Youth Theatre and will be playing Cowboy Bob in its version of 'Footloose' between 18th and 21st November at the Octagon Theatre."*



Lecturer Ben Woof is directing the play. He said *"It has been a delight to work with these year two students. One of the most important aspects of putting on a successful show is a high level of commitment from everyone involved so that the work is produced to a good standard. This group have that in droves. They have been supported by a group of first year students, who will be running the lighting and sound during the performances."*

'**Vinegar Tom**' is at Yeovil College's Main Hall on Thursday 12th and Friday 13th November 2009 and starts at 7.30. Tickets are £4 (Concessions £3) and the Box Office can be contacted on 01935 845314.

... ENDS

Notes to Editors

All press enquiries to Eileen Furze, Marketing Officer t: (01935) 845428 e: eileen.furze@yeovil.ac.uk
www.yeovil.ac.uk

Cast List

Character	Performer
Alice, a village girl	Gemma McQueen (17) of Yeovil
Susan, her married friend	Lilly Meuross (18) of Crewkerne
Joan, Alice's mother	Hayleigh Barrington (17) of Yeovil
Margery, Joan's neighbour, a farmer's wife	Lorna Hinton (17) of Yeovil
Jack, Margery's husband, a farmer	Tom Wilkins (18) of West Chinnock
Betty, a landowner's daughter	Poppy Rendell (17) of Yeovil

Ellen, a cunning woman	Katarzyna Koziel (18) of Yeovil
Henry Packer, a witchfinder Man, a gentleman	Adam Ridout (17) of Yeovil
Goody, Packer's assistant	Sian Doble (18) of Beaminster
Doctor, a professional	Matt Palmer (17) of Yeovil
Bell ringer	Alex Dickenson (18) of Crewkerne
Kramer	Kayleigh Kaur (18) of Yeovil
Sprenger	Stella Bartle (18) of Yeovil

Songs and Performers

'Nobody Sings' performed by Kayleigh Kaur, Stella Bartle and Gemma McQueen

'Oh Doctor' performed by Katarzyna Koziel, Sian Doble, Adam Ridout and Matt Palmer

'Something To Burn' performed by Hayleigh Barrington, Stella Bartle, Kayleigh Kaur and Alex Dickenson

'If everyone Worked as hard as me' performed by Poppy Rendell, Tom Wilkins and Adam Ridout

'If You Float' performed by Lilly Meuross , Stella Bartle and Kayleigh Kaur

'Lament for the Witches' performed by Matt Palmer, Alex Dickenson, Adam Ridout and Tom Wilkins

'Evil Women' performed by the Ensemble.