*Vinegar Tom*

Audition Information

*Vinegar Tom* takes place in England, 1650, and follows the lives of several women accused of witchcraft by their neighbors. As playwright Caryl Churchill writes in her production notes, “I wanted to write a play about witches with no witches in it; a play not about evil, hysteria, and possession by the devil but about poverty, humiliation, and prejudice, and how the women accused of witchcraft saw themselves.”

**Seeking:**

12 Actors (any gender/race)

3 – 5 Musicians (any gender/race, including but not limited to drums, bass, and electric guitar)

2 Understudies (any gender/race)

Singers (strong singers are encouraged to audition, as some actors and musicians will sing)

**Conflicts:**

Vinegar Tom conflicts with all fall Mainstage, Studio productions, the MT workshop, and the January production of Walls.

**Audition Dates:**

August 27th, 2019 6:15 – 10:15 PM (Room 1220)

August 28th, 2019 6:15 – 10:15 PM (Room 1220)

**What to Prepare:**

1. 60 - 90 second contemporary monologue (dramatic or comedic) (If you don’t have a monologue, that’s OK. Speak a poem. Tell a story. Anything is fair game as long as you’re not reading text off the page.)
2. 16 – 32 bars of song (Vinegar Tom is not a musical. In fact, non-traditional voices are strongly encouraged to audition. I want to hear your pitch, your range, and your comfort acting through sung material. That’s it. An accompanist is provided. You may also self-accompany or sing a cappella. Songs can be MT, rock, R & B, gospel, folk, etc. Also, not every character in Vinegar Tom will sing. So, if you REALLY don’t want to sing, you may audition with a single monologue and no song, just be aware that it will limit your casting options.)

**Casting:**

Actors will be cast regardless of sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, or disability status.

**Characters:**

**Alice:** Independent-minded, buoyant, enjoys sex. Has an illegitimate child. Poor. Susan’s best friend. Joan’s daughter. Accused of witchcraft.

**Joan:** Alice’s mother. Widow. Poor. Tough, ornery. Husband was abusive. Accused of witchcraft.

**Susan:** Wife of a farmer. Mother of 3 children and pregnant at the beginning of the play. Poor. Good Christian girl, wants to be happy, but also wants to do the right thing. Takes “medicine” to induce abortion. Alice’s best friend. Accused of witchcraft.

**Goody:** Packer’s female assistant.

**Betty:** Daughter of landowner. Refuses to marry husband of her parent’s choosing. Doctors bleed her to cure her “hysteria.”

**Margery:** Married to Jack. “Middle-class” farmer. Accuses Joan and Alice of witchcraft.

**Ellen:** Healer and midwife. An outsider. Accused of witchcraft.

**Jack:** Married to Margery. “Middle-class” farmer. Accuses Joan/Alice of witchcraft.

**Packer:** Witch-finder, based on historical example of Matthew Hopkins.

**Doctor:** Treats Betty for “hysteria.” Confident. May work at local asylum.

**Man:** Landed gentry. Has one night-stand with Alice.

**Bellringer:** Town official.

**Kramer:** Historical co-author of *Malleus Maleficarum (Hammer of Witches)*; a manual for finding and punishing witches.

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**Understudies:**

Understudies will attend early rehearsals/run-thrus. Understudies will need to be “on call” up until 6:00 PM for rehearsals in case another actor is absent. Understudies will be responsible for knowing every character’s staging and emotional trajectory through the play. They will not need to be off-book, unless they are called to replace an actor during a tech rehearsal or performance. They are not guaranteed an opportunity to perform, unless they happen to be double-cast in another role.

**Music:**

*Vinegar Tom* includes 8 songs. Lyrics are provided by Churchill, music will be original. Each song includes one or more singers. Songs are played live by a 3 – 5 piece rock/punk band. Musicians will be an active part of the ensemble and may double as characters in the production.

**Sexual/Violent Content:**

Please consider the content of the play before auditioning. Copies of *Vinegar Tom* are available in Lisanby Library and at the audition table. If you are concerned about enacting any of the described content, please read *Vinegar Tom* prior to callbacks or contact us for further discussion.

Man and Alice appear immediately after sex. Man and Alice may be partially clothed with a lot of skin showing, but not nude on breast or bottom (pg 5)

Betty is tied to chair and bled by the Doctor (pg 24)

Susan drinks “medicine” which induces an abortion (off-stage)

Jack strangles Alice for 30 seconds (pg 43)

Alice puts her hand on top of Jack’s groin over his pants for 10 seconds (pg 44)

Margery scratches Joan’s head hard enough to draw blood (pg 37)

Joan, Alice, and Susan have their legs exposed up to their underwear line and legs pricked to draw blood by Packer and Goody. (pg 46)

Alice, Susan, Joan are tied up (pg 53)

Susan’s is shaved under her arm and her skirt is lifted up to shave her groin by Goody, an action which is hidden from the audience (pg 55)

Joan and Ellen are hanged (pg 58)

**Callback Dates:**

August 29th, 2019 6:45 – 11:00 PM (Room 1220)

August 30th, 2019 6:00 – 11:00 PM (Room 1220)

**Production Dates:**

Performances: October 29th – November 2nd (Strike: November 3rd)

Rehearsals: September 11th – October 28th

**Director’s Greeting:**

I am excited to share this process with you. *Vinegar Tom* is a play about the way our communities punish women who don’t play by the rules. As playwright Caryl Churchill writes in her production notes, “I wanted to write a play about witches with no witches in it; a play not about evil, hysteria, and possession by the devil but about poverty, humiliation, and prejudice, and how the women accused of witchcraft saw themselves.”

The action of the play takes place in England, 1650, and follows the lives of several women accused of witchcraft by their neighbors. Yes, the history of *Vinegar Tom* is tragic, but the play is also brash and funny. It’s the energy of punk, not *The Crucible*. *Vinegar Tom*, like so much of Churchill’s work, is actually an act of buoyant resistance. Like us, the women of *Vinegar Tom* want love, independence, travel, and adventure. They are real, everyday people, not “characters” or political ideas.

The songs (original to this production) are meant to be sung in contemporary dress. Some characters address the audience directly and some scenes stray from colloquial dialogue into choral-like chants. The play also ends with an abrupt epilogue of two witch hunters who give us a theology lesson on the threat of female sexuality. In other words, it’s not exactly a history play, or if it is, it’s history as collage.