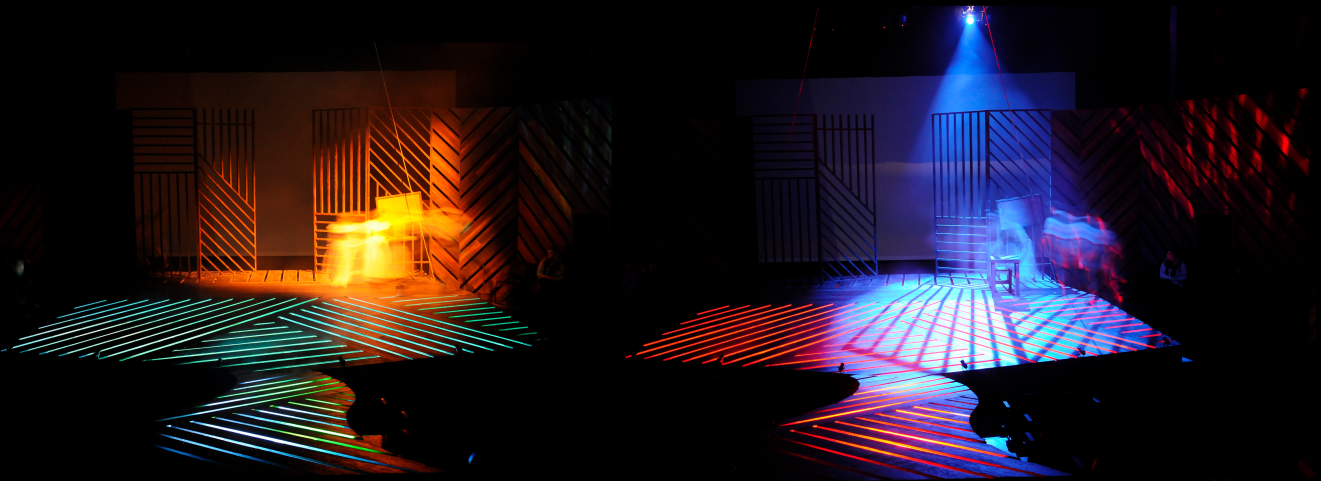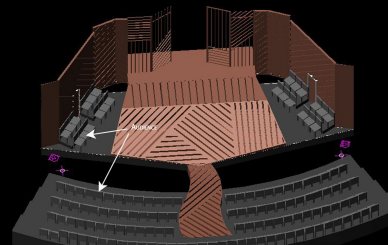# VINEGAR TOM

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

VINEGAR TOM IS THE TITLE OF A 1976 PLAY BY THE BRITISH PLAYWRIGHT CARYL CHURCHILL. THE PLAY ANALYZES GENDER AND POWER RELATIONSHIPS FROM 17TH CENTURY WITCHCRAFT TRIALS IN ENGLAND. THE SCRIPT USES FEATURES OF THE EPIC THEATER ASSOCIATED WITH BERTOLT BRECHT.
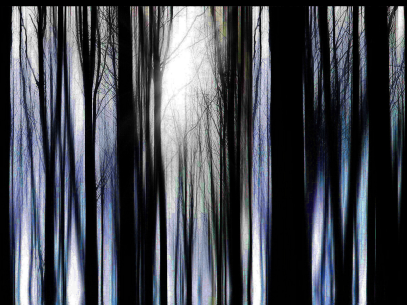
THE PLAY TELLS THE STORY OF ALICE, WHO IS IN HER TWENTIES AND LIVING IN A SMALL VILLAGE. ALICE AND HER MOTHER JOAN ARE ACCUSED OF WITCHCRAFT AFTER AN ALTERCATION WITH THEIR NEIGHBORS, FOLLOWED BY SEVERAL MISHAPS UPON THEIR NEIGHBORS' FARM – SUPPOSEDLY THE RESULT OF JOAN'S "WITCHCRAFT". IT IS LATER IMPLIED THAT VINEGAR TOM, JOAN'S CAT, MAY HAVE BEEN BEHIND IT ALL. THE PLOT INCLUDES WITCHCRAFT, SOME SLATING OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, AND THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN. CHURCHILL WROTE VINEGAR TOM AT THE HEIGHT OF THE SECOND FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN THE 20TH CENTURY. THE SCRIPT DISPLAYS HOW MUCH CONTROL MEN HAVE IN SOCIETY AND HOW WOMEN HAVE HISTORICALLY BEEN TREATED AS A PROPERTY AND TAUGHT TO BE SUBSERVIENT TO MEN. ALL OF THE SONGS ARE SET IN THE PRESENT, RATHER THAN THE TIME PERIOD OF THE PLAY, AND REFLECT, IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, THE GENDER AND SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION PRESENT IN SOCIETY. BETTY, ONE OF THE PLAY'S CHARACTERS, IS CLASSED AS MAD OR ILL SIMPLY BECAUSE SHE DOES NOT WANT TO MARRY. THE PLAY ALSO OUTLINES SOCIETY'S REJECTION OF PEOPLE WHO DO NOT CONFORM TO THE MAINSTREAM, OR WHO ARE "DIFFERENT".

DESIGN

MY SET DESIGN REFLECTS THE OPPRESSIVE ENVIRONMENT THAT THESE WOMEN ARE TRAPPED IN. THE UNUSUAL DESIGN OF THE PRISON BARS SPEAK OF THEIR DESIRE TO MAKE THEIR OWN CHOICES AND TO BREAK OUT OF THIS PRISON. THE CAT'S TAIL SHAPE STRUCTURE CONNECTS THE STAGE TO THE AUDITORIUM AND BRINGS THE ACTIONS CLOSER TO THE AUDIENCE. BY PLACING LIGHTS UNDER THE STAGE AND ALLOWING THEM TO SEEP THROUGH THE GAPS OF THE FLOORBOARDS, MY LIGHTING DESIGN CREATES AN UNNATURAL AND UNCOMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENT THAT BOTH ACTORS AND AUDIENCES WOULD EXPERIENCE AT THE SAME TIME. MY PROJECTION DESIGN CREATES A SURREAL BACKDROP AND PROVIDES A SEAMLESS SHIFT FROM ONE SCENE TO ANOTHER.

UNDER STAGE LIGHTING

PROJECTIONS