

John Proctor is the VILLAIN



**DIRECTOR'S PRODUCTION
NOTEBOOK**

HEMANI MEHTA

Artistic Manifesto

I don't care to be honest. I don't care about my artistic vision. I don't care about my values and my purpose and what other people think art should be. I DONT CARE. What I care about is the uncomfortable truth, the messy, the raw chaos that no one wants to face. I create because ignoring it feels like suffocating. Art is the space where I can exhale.

My art is built on the urgency to break the silence. I care about disrupting the norms, creating storms, amplifying what's buried, and making space for voices that have never been carried.

My non-negotiables? Honesty. Discomfort. Rebellion. But I also believe in feeling safe. The kind of safety that comes from feeling seen and inspired. My art should remind people that they belong, and they matter, and everyone can create. If my work feels inaccessible, it has failed.

When I walk down the street, I see a penny. Tails up. I flip it. It is now heads up. I walk away in hopes that the next person receives the luck. That's what art is to me. A small, deliberate action that might bring someone else something they didn't know they needed.

I've seen art shatter walls. Art's power is in its ability to strip us bare, challenge our narratives, and demand something new. It's activism, healing, and provocation wrapped into one.

I'm inspired by my peers. I'm inspired by people who have big dreams and go for it. I am inspired by the youth who aren't confined by walls and dream to be a dragon slayer. My audience is anyone willing to look. I'm here to light fires. But I also want them to feel safe and inspired..to walk away knowing they are capable of creating, questioning, and imagining. Art isn't just for the few... it's for everyone.

Creating is chaotic. My process is messy and nonlinear. Some days I pour everything out, other days, I wrestle with doubt. I stay grounded by leaning into imperfection, embracing discomfort, and knowing that art's worth isn't in applause but in authenticity.

In the future, I want my work to keep breaking rules, building bridges, and breaking me open. In 10 years, I hope my art challenges systems and offers hope. If I can leave a world where more voices are heard, I'll have done enough.

My medium's form is never fixed. I blend, twist, and bend it to match the message. Rules don't bind me. If a piece feels like it's alive, I know I've succeeded.

I promise to stay vulnerable, stay relentless, and stay curious. To keep questioning, even when it's painful. To challenge myself and others. And to never stop creating work that matters.

So here's my call: Don't settle. Seek what's uncomfortable. Demand better from the world, from yourself, and even from me. Flip the coin, leave the head. Bring your fire. Let's burn something old to make space for something new.

PART I. PREPARATORY WORK

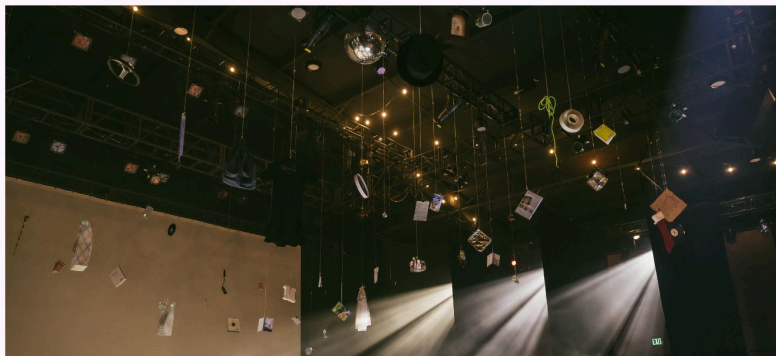
Preliminary Visual/Aural Outline

scenic design



I am very fond of the set looking like your typical American classroom. Very bright and cinder brick walls. I like the idea of having translucent walls so you can't see through it, but you can see light colors through it. I also love a good cyc in the background.

scenic design



I also love the idea of hanging items that are pertaining to the theme of the show...memories of the girls, Melodrama album, newspaper articles that cover the #Metoo movement



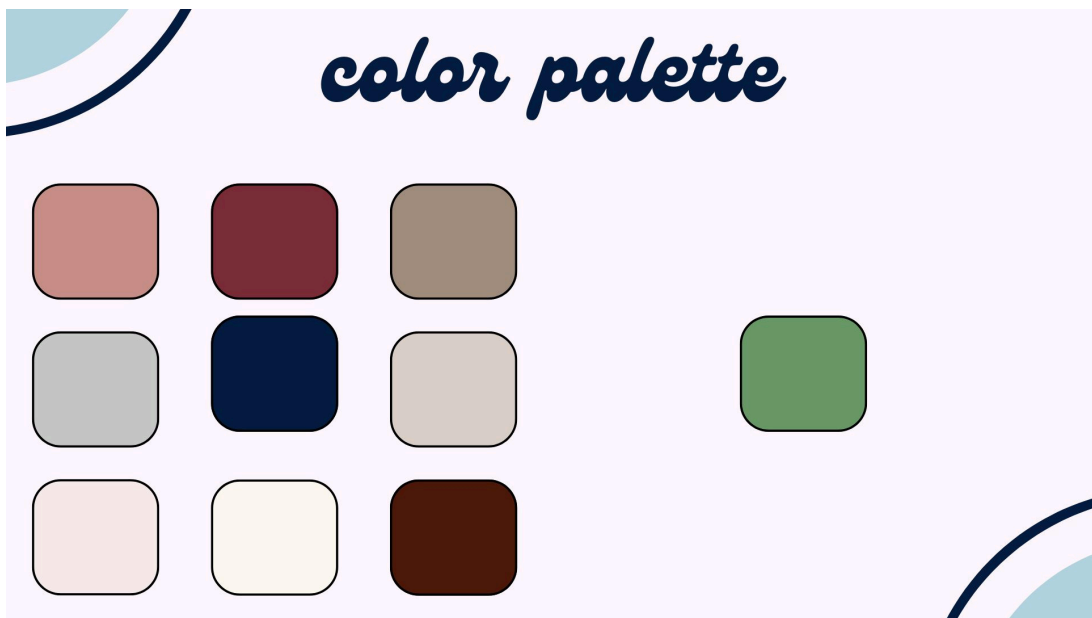
These are costumes inspo for the high schoolers. Very 2018-2019. Beth and Ivy on the top left (prim and proper), Bell (very edgy and different), Raelynn (Christian girl spring), Shelby (also a little edgy and rebellious), Mason + Lee have typical boy outfits.



On the left, I have inspo for Miss Gallagher. She's young and trendy, but not high school aged. Mrs. Smith, on the right, is dressed very nice and proper. Contrasting who he is as a person. I'd also like him to have some green on him. The green connects Shelby and Mr. Smith.

Lighting

- Classroom lights- cool and florescent
- For moments of high tension, like when Mr. Smith gets caught, significant shift, darker, intense
- Love a lit up cyc
- The ending dance number can be crazy, absurd. Multi-color lighting. Representing rebellion but also hope.



- Color palette like trendy America
- Outlier- green (in the costumes of Mr. Smith and Shelby)
- Refers to “Greenlight” by Lorde, important to show
- Green represents hope and disgust
- Representing Shelby’s inability to move on till she sees that “Greenlight”

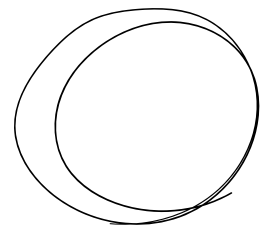
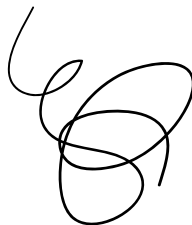
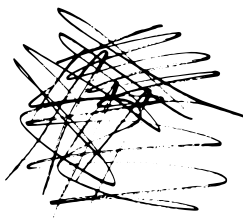


- These are just a few important props used in the show
- I'd really love it if they could stick to the color palette
- Some tokens of the era sprinkled in like #MeToo pins on backpacks

Witch Hunt

- Kimberly Belflower, the playwright, heard someone call the #MeToo movement a witch hunt. That inspired her to write this play.
- That image is really striking to me, and I want to include that “hunting” theme in the show as many ways as possible

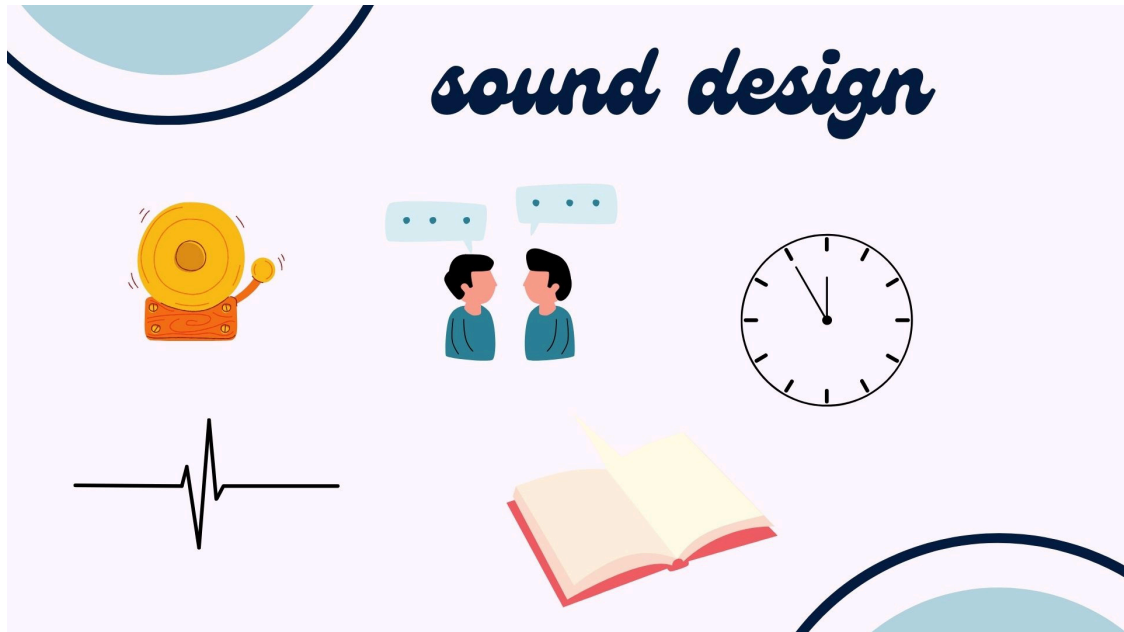
Blocking and Staging



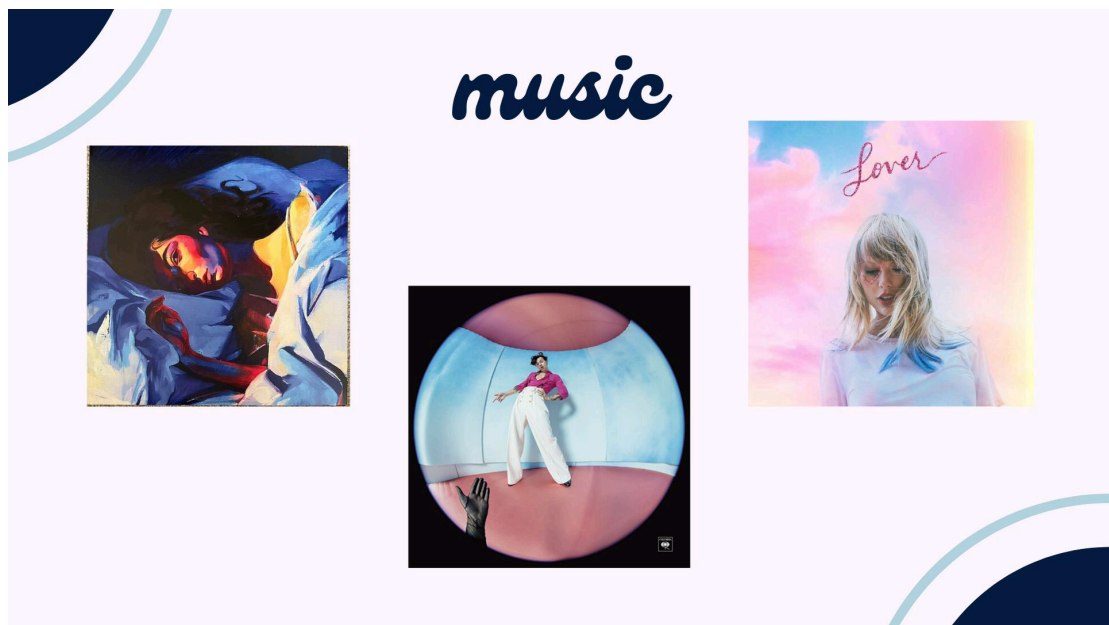
- A big part of where the theme of “witch hunt” will come into play is the blocking and staging
- I want it to be chaotic, but also finding order in this chaos
- These scribbles and images are ones that spoke to me. It is all about the vibe.

Dance

- Dance is a key factor of this show
- There will be a dance in the show, but the actors do not need to be dancer
- Dance will serve as a way of rebellion
- Dance will serve was a way to find peace



Sound effects I think would better enhance the environment are school bells, hallway chatter, clock ticking, pages turning, pages falling, heart beating. These could happen during transitions or during the scenes or both.



Pop music is important to the culture and speaks to the time of the show. These are popular and important artists mentioned in the show. Good for pre-show, post-show, and even during some transitions.

Dialects

Since this show takes place in a small town in Georgia, Southern dialects are debatable. I don't think they are necessary. We can talk more with the actors about it but not necessary. Nell should definitely NOT have a southern accent.

Silence

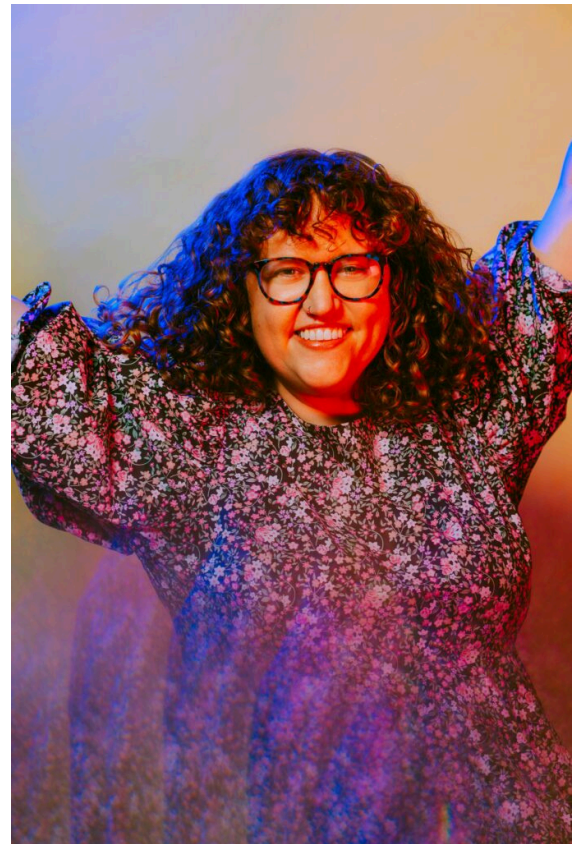
Men silencing women is an important theme of this show. So creating moments of silence will be fun to play with. Displaying power dynamics, diffusion of tension, etc. Will be playing with silence.

Mood/Atmosphere

- CHAOS and ORDER. I am so obsessed with this idea because I love the dichotomy of it but also how well it works together
- It is also just so reflective of the real world. Our current situation is chaos. But we do things like creating art to find and have order.
- The girls in the show use dance to keep order in their chaos.

PLAYWRIGHT BIOGRAPHY & COMMENTARY

The playwright, Kimberly Belflower, is a playwright, educator, and theater artist originally from Appalachian, Georgia. She earned her BFA in Playwriting from New York University, her MFA from University of Texas Austin, and currently teaches at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. After her formal education, she began writing and producing her own original plays. She often draws from her own life and personal experiences. Her other plays include *Lost Girl*, *Rebel People*, and *Saint Pigtail*. One of her most notable works is *John Proctor is the Villian*. Belflower's play draws similarities between Arthur Miller's *Crucible* and modern times. The inspiration for this play began when Belflower picked up a book about the Salem Witch Trials by Stacy Schiff. Belflower mentions that the book opened her eyes, and when she finished the book, the world was entering the first phase of the #Metoo movement. Belflower realized there were similarities between the Salem Witch Trials and the #Metoo movement. She decided to reread Arthur Miller's *Crucible* which led her the thought, "It's crazy, because John Proctor feels like the villainin."



Belflower began research for the play and interviewed women who were in high school during the time of the #Metoo movement. She said these conversations led to a "breakthrough" and she realized that these women had no emotional connection to men who have outed for sexual harassment, assault, etc. When she asked the women "What would you feel if Harry Styles was accused of the same things?" And the women would reply "He wouldn't be." This helped Belflower identify the central conflict of the play: What happens if someone you trust is accused of sexual misconduct?

Belflower says, "The most interesting drama is about moments of change, moments of upheaval. In your teenage years, that's like every day. It's a really great time to examine a lot of bigger questions, and to put that power in the mouths of [teenage girls], people who have been marginalized in a way but who are asking those questions in real life."

Sources:

"About the Author: Kimberly Belflower." CCBC Performing Arts, blog.ccbcmd.edu/performingarts/2024/03/11/about-the-author-kimberly-belflower/. Accessed 24 Apr. 2025.

Sweeney, Kate. "Recasting the 'villainin': Emory Playwright's Play Is Broadway Bound." Recasting the "Villainin": Emory Playwright's Play Is Broadway Bound, 31 Jan. 2025, news.emory.edu/features/2025/01/er_belflower_broadway_31-01-2025/index.html.

Selective Production History

- 2018- The play was originally commissioned by the Farm Theater project for their College Collaboration Project. It was workshopped at three different colleges in their theater departments.
- 2022- A final version of the play was produced by the Studio Theatre in Washington, D.C.
- 2024- Produced by the Huntington Theatre Company in Boston.
- 2025- It is currently on Broadway at the Booth Theater starring movie star, Sadie Sink
- Many colleges such as University of Michigan (2024) and University of Arizona (2025) have produced this show as well



PART II. PRODUCTION PAPER

PART III. DESIGN

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

lighting

Page	LQ #	Lighting Descriptions	Notes
86	51	Classroom, DS lit	cue: actors in places
90	52	Rest of stage gets brighter	cue: "we're very gifted very beautiful interpretive dancers"
90	53	Full Class, warmer	cue: school bell sound
110	54	Colder	cue: "you've told me I am, Mr. Smith remember?"
112	55	Blackout	cue: Shelby (Courtney Rodd) walks out of classroom
112	56	Bows	cue: actors in places

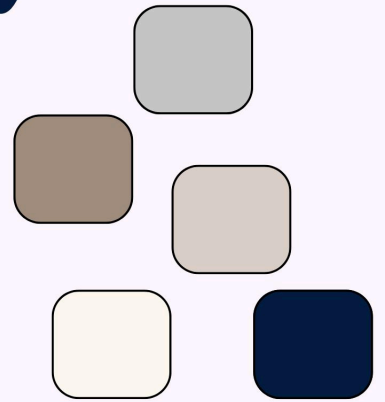
costumes



raelynn



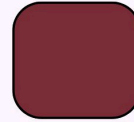
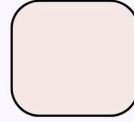
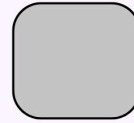
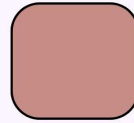
mason



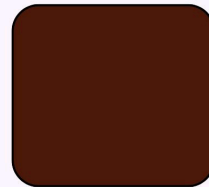
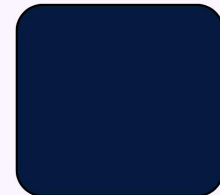
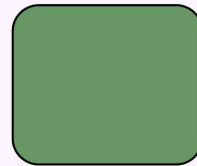
nell



beth



mr. smith



sound

- Music when Shelby and Raelynn dance at the end of scene 1 (“Greenlight” by Lorde. Start it at the lyrics “Those great whites they have big teeth..”. Make it sound like it is coming out of a phone speaker)
- Bell sound to start the transition
- Transition music from scene 1 to 2 is also “Greenlight”

property

5 desks

5 chairs

5 Notebooks

5 Phones

5 Backpacks

6 Crucible Plays

DESIGN DISCUSSION



other inspirations

A big inspiration for this show is the Melodrama album by Lorde. The album was extremely important in pop culture during this time. It perfectly sums up what a female friendship is like while capturing the 2019 vibes. The music perfectly encapsulates what it is like to be a teenager of the time.

PART IV. PRODUCTION SCRIPT & STAGING

PART V. COMPANY INFORMATION

CASTING ANNOUNCEMENT!

Now casting the show....

***John Proctor is the Villian* by Kimberly Belflower**

Set in 2019 in a small town in rural Georgia, a group of high school students are exploring “The Crucible” in a modern day context. Through their exploration they find the themes from the play are not too different from their own lives. The students navigate modern feminism and power dynamics through friendship, optimism, and Lorde (yes, the singer who dropped the banger Melodrama).

The show will run: April 24th-May 4th

First rehearsal: March 22nd

Performance Venue: Athenaeum Theater

Pay: One time stipend of \$400 for six weeks

This is a Non-Equity Production.

Character descriptions:

- **Carter Smith:** teacher, mid-30s, M, Caucasian, white. charming and thoughtful and a little goofy. he’s a great teacher. but.. he has romantic relations with one of his students. no intimacy required.
- **Shelby Holcomb:** student, 16, F. people have always underestimated her. romantically taken advantage of by Mr. Smith, her English teacher. no intimacy required.
- **Beth Powell:** student, 17, F. nervous and ambitious and enthusiastic. kind of like if Rory Gilmore and Paris Geller had a baby and raised her in the Deep South.
- **Nell Shaw:** student, 17, F, POC. from Atlanta. just because she’s ahead of the curve and ballsy as hell doesn’t mean she isn’t also vulnerable
- **Ivy Watkins:** student, 16, F. sheltered. from old Southern money. fiercely loyal and always well-intentioned. resist the urge to play her as a mean girl.
- **Raelynn Nix:** student, 16. a cheerleader type who’s always lived her life by other peoples’ standards. razor-sharp but has no idea – until she does.
- **Mason Adams:** student, 17, M, Caucasian, white. on the basketball team. earnest and affable.
- **Lee Turner:** student, 16. M. a carhartt-wearing good ol’ boy. deeply insecure and without the tools to deal with it. he’s always been good at getting what he wants.
- **Bailey Gallagher:** counselor, 24. sweet and genuine. this is her first real job out of college. she’s doing her best.

NOTE: We invite anyone of any race, ethnicity, gender, or physical disability to audition for this show.

Audition details:

Auditions will occur Saturday, March 1st at the Athenaeum Center Rehearsal room (2936 N Southport Ave, Chicago, IL 60657).

If you are unable to attend an in-person audition, there is a zoom option available. Please select it in the audition form linked below.

Please prepare a contemporary 60 second monologue.

Sign up for a time slot with the audition form here: [\[link here\]](#)

If called back, they will occur in the same room as auditions on Sunday, March 2nd from 1:00pm-5:00pm.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact our production manager, NAME NAME (email@something.com).