

Union College Department of Theater & Dance

Witch

by Jen Silverman

directed by Jasmine Roth



WELCOME TO EDMONTON.

**THIS WILL BE A NON-STOP TALE
WITH NO INTERMISSION.**

**THE RUNTIME IS APPROXIMATELY
95 MINUTES.**

WITCH

BY JEN SILVERMAN

DIRECTED BY JASMINE ROTH

Stage Manager -- Hannah S. Wolland

Lighting Design -- Phoebe Ferguson & Drew Bodd

Costume Design -- Brittney Belz

Scenic Design -- Drew Bodd

Sound Design -- Mackenzie Trowbridge

Technical Director -- Drew Bodd

Properties Design -- Kyra Kelly

Fight Choreographer -- Joe Isenberg

CAST

Elizabeth Sawyer ----- Kellye Nguyen
Scratch ----- Spencer Newman
Sir Arthur Banks ----- Jerome Anderson
Cuddy Banks ----- Brian Rusk
Frank Thorney ----- Matthew Parr
Winnifred ----- Anya Landi
Swings ----- Aaron Armstrong
& Maddy Pilkington

**THIS PERFORMANCE CONTAINS STRONG
LANGUAGE, BRIGHT FLASHING LIGHTS, LOUD
SOUND AND ON-STAGE DEPICTIONS OF VIOLENCE
INCLUDING STAGE BLOOD.**

PRODUCTION STAFF

Assistant Stage Managers -- Kyra Kelly, Regan Roitz

Assistant Technical Director -- Lexi Knowles

Assistant Sound Designer -- Maple Smith

Costume Shop Assistant -- Sarah Goethe-Jones

Fight Captain -- Mackenzie Trowbridge

House Manager -- Lexi Knowles

Box Office Team -- Charlie Jones, Brendan Cullen, and Emmet Suh

Poster Design -- Carlos Martinez

Program Design -- Kyra Kelly

RUN CREW

Light Board Operator -- Phoebe Ferguson

Sound Board Operator -- Maple Smith

COSTUME SHOP WORK STUDY

Dana Aument, Elaine Du, Dove Hoque, Evelyn Mallory, Caitlin Phipps,
Christian Thompson

SCENE SHOP WORK STUDY

Jerome Anderson, Zach Dickinson, Jasper Geer, Lexi Knowles, Gavin
McKiernan, Holden Talluto-Hiris, Regan Roitz, Brian Rusk, Eli Valore-Caplan

“Witch” is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of
Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com

“WITCH” was commissioned by Writers Theatre through the Literary
Development Initiative, with the generous support of David and Mary
Winton Green, and the World Premiere was presented at Writers Theatre
in Glencoe, IL; Michael Halberstam, Artistic Director, Kathryn M. Lipuma,
Executive Director.

DIRECTORS NOTE

“Nothing about this play is actually about England in 1621. To me, an adaptation is just choosing a different shaped window to look at what’s happening right now.” - playwright Jen Silverman

What struck me most when I first read *Witch* was the sense of urgency. I kept thinking about hourglasses and decay, our planet hurtling towards more and more climate catastrophes, violence that begets more violence in perpetuity, ceasefires that never come, and the idea that the systems of power we live under can both feel immovable and fragile. This play asks us if it's possible to imagine something different - something better, and if you can, what would you sacrifice to get there?

England in the 1600s was filled with economic, political, and social upheaval. The rise of agrarian capitalism led to land privatization, the end of customary rights around communal care, increased poverty and incarceration, and the further subordination of women. So-called witches were often impoverished women who found themselves marginalized in a rapidly changing society. But this play isn't just about witches or the 1600s. What I think this play does particularly well is portray the continual dehumanization of women by the men in power, while also showcasing the way the system harms men too. The characters who lose the most may be the ones who choose to pay the cost of participating in the system rather than stand against it. As a queer artist myself, I also resonate with how the play depicts the stigmatization of queerness and the violence of cutting off parts of yourself to play a societally expected role.

When rereading this play with my Advanced Directing class during the fall term, it echoed our collective fears, frustrations, and despair at the current political landscape, and thus quickly became a frontrunner of possible shows to do this winter. Working on this play with our students, faculty, and staff, at this moment in time, has been an invitation to alchemize distress into dark comedy and metabolize fear into art. Jen Silverman describes the setting of the play as “then-ish. But equally of our moment” and while we landed on a mostly period-accurate Jacobean design, I hope that you’ll see yourselves and the questions that keep you up at night reflected onstage. I know I do.

Our Winter Studio Series here at Union is often devoted to staged readings, or smaller projects because it’s a very fast process. Our decision to tackle this play as a full production was ambitious but offered an incredible opportunity for our students to dive deeply and intensely into this world. As a new faculty member, my goal when directing this term was to not only find material that was exciting for students but also would challenge them artistically in new ways. Every student working on this show, on and off stage, has found some way to move beyond their comfort zone and level up their craft.

For all these reasons and more, we give you this play. I hope that even in a small way, it can be a spell cast against the deeply flawed systems we are living in today, and an incantation to build a better world.

Jasmine Roth

DRAMATURG'S NOTE

Jen Silverman's *Witch* takes inspiration from *The Witch of Edmonton*, a Jacobean play from 1621 co-written by William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford.¹ It premiered in 2018, transforming the story of an innocent woman wrongly accused of witchcraft into a searing exploration of power, vengeance, and desire.²

Set in the quiet village of Edmonton, Silverman's play revolves around Elizabeth, a woman labeled a witch and cast out by her community. In *The Witch of Edmonton*, Elizabeth's fate is intertwined with a devil who offers to exchange her soul for a chance to fulfill her darkest wishes. But in Silverman's retelling, she is no mere victim of circumstance. As the devil returns to strike bargains, Elizabeth refuses to give in, and her battle becomes one not just of survival, but of reclaiming agency in a world that has written her off.

During King James I's reign (1603-1625), witchcraft trials were rampant, fueled by James' own belief in witches, as demonstrated in his book *Daemonologie*, which "intended to convince sceptics of the reality of witchcraft."³ It reflected the era's deep fears around power, gender, and the persecution of women.

Jacobean women had little to no rights in English society and were considered to be subordinate to men, so a woman living on her own was especially scandalous. The expectations of women in capitalist society were rooted in the sexual division of labor and women's unpaid work.⁴ Gender roles and sexuality were rigid, and heavily regulated by religious and societal beliefs.⁵ Homosexuality was forbidden by the church, as it violated the patriarchal domination of men over women, but it was not uncommon.⁶

This era of England had a strict class hierarchy, with aristocrats and landowners at the top, workers and farmers at the bottom, and a middle class of tradespeople and merchants. Men held property and political power, while married women had no legal rights. Lower-class women were often illiterate, while wealthier women were educated, but regardless of class, women were expected to manage the household and care for children.⁷

Along with these societal challenges, early 17th century England was a time of political unrest. The death of Queen Elizabeth I was followed by the tumultuous early years of King James I,⁸ and the movement from feudalism to capitalism. Dramatic works of the time reflected this unsteady transition. The plays of the period became spectacles of madness, violence, and death, even including satanic elements,⁹ as can be seen in *The Witch of Edmonton*.

However, *Witch* takes the original play's themes of social exclusion and revenge and flips them on their head. All these elements are explored in detail by Silverman's cast of characters, who all defy societal expectations in their own way — transcending class, gender, sexuality, and morality.

Witch is a sharp, daring fable about the worth of one's soul when hope is in short supply. Silverman uses a modern perspective in tackling issues such as capitalism, which reduces human value to mere commodities, as well as the fluidity of gender and sexuality, thereby capturing the intricate nature of identity in contemporary society. By merging the rigid, fear-based morality of 17th-century witch trials with current concerns regarding power, exploitation, and sexual freedom, the narrative connects historical and modern-day anxieties, offering a bold examination of how both economic and sexual factors influence the human experience.

The classic tale becomes a fertile ground for exploring the complexities of identity, power, and the harsh realities of a world where societal labels can define one's destiny. With a devil charming yet dangerous, and a heroine who refuses to be easily defined, *Witch* leaves us questioning: What are we willing to bargain for when the stakes are our very souls?

Geo Cutaro
Class of 2024

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8. Welliver, Amel . 2013. "The Face of Bedlam: Madness, Gender, and Social Mores in the Face of Bedlam: Madness, Gender, and Social Mores in Jacobean Drama." Utah State University.
9. Black, Joshua B. 2019. "Class, Gender and the Anxieties of Meritocracy in Jacobean England." *Inquiries Journal*. *Inquiries Journal*. 2019. <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/amp/1749/class-gender-and-the-anxieties-of-meritocracy-in-jacobean-england>.

THEATER & DANCE FACULTY & STAFF

Omonike Akinyemi - Adjunct Instructor of Dance - Flamenco

Hettie Vyrine Barnhill - Visiting Assistant Professor of Theater & Dance

Brittney Belz - Department Chair, Costume Designer & Costume Shop supervisor

Drew Bodd - Technical Director & Lighting Supervisor

Laurie Zabele Cawley - Interim Director of Dance

Christine Geren - Adjunct Instructor of Dance - Ballet & Pilates

Alicia Hornicek - Adjunct instructor of Dance - Ballet

Charlie Jones - Office Assistant

Gabriel Thom Pasculli - Lecturer of Performance/Directing

Freddy Ramirez - Adjunct Instructor of Dance - Jazz & Broadway

Jasmine Roth '14 - Visiting Assistant Professor of Performance/Directing

Victoria Rotondi - Arts Department Coordinator

Mackenzie Trowbridge -- Adjunct Instructor of Stage Management

Dan Venning - Associate Professor of Dramatic Literature, Theatre History, &
Performance Criticism

Patricia Culbert - Senior Artist in Residence Emerita of Theater and Dance 1997-2019

William A. Finlay - Professor Emeritus & Chair of Theater and Dance from 1994-2019

Miryam Moutillet - Gustave L. Davis '59 & Susan S. David Director Of The Dance
Program/Senior Artist-In-Residence Emerita 1996-1999 & 2001-2022

Charles Steckler - The Dwane W. Crichton Professor Emeritus
of Theater, Scenic Designer 1971-2017

CAST & CREW BIOS

LAM "KELLYE" NGUYEN | ELIZABETH SAWYER

Lam "Kellye" Nguyen (She/Her) is a sophomore from Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam. She majors in Neuroscience and minors in Nanotechnology and BME. Before Union, she has portrayed Florinda in *Into the Woods*, and Annabeth Chase in *The Lightning Thief*. Theater holds a very dear place in her heart, and she is incredibly grateful for the chance to be involved in this winter's production. Kellye wants to thank the entire amazing *Witch* team, her friends and family for always being her rock, and you for coming. Enjoy the show!

SPENCER NEWMAN | SCRATCH

Spencer Newman (They/Them) is a senior theater major and history minor. Recently they were seen in *7 Plays/7 Days: Salt, Light, Spear* (Cyan), *You on the Moors Now* (Fitzwilliam Darcy) and *She Loves Me* (Arpad Lazslo). Their upcoming projects include a 24 hour thesis project with Lilian Ruggieri and Brian Rusk, working as an Associate Stage Manager on this year's Winter Dance Concert, and Music Directing and performing the role of Will in the Mountebanks' upcoming production of *Big Fish*. Spencer is also a part of the Concert Choir, Schola Cantorum, Eliphalets and the Dutch Pipers. Surprisingly Spencer still manages to have free time. Thanks to Grace, for putting up with my actor brain, and Brian for always being with me in the trenches.

JEROME ANDERSON | SIR ARTHUR BANKS

Jerome Anderson (He/They) is a junior (Yikes :() and a first gen student from Chicago. He is a Psych/Theater double major and a GSW minor. Their introduction to performance on "the big stage" was a concert style *Hamilton* in high school. At Union he was in *Everybody*, played Child 1 in *FLORIDITA: my Love*, Prof. Bhaer in *You on the Moors Now*, and Cody in *One Day We Will Be Two Old Ghosts*. He also works in the Scene Shop, shout out workstudy crew! Thank you to all the directors, SM crew, and design crews that made this show possible!

BRIAN RUSK | CUDDY BANKS

Brian Rusk (He/Him) is a senior theater major from Carroll County, MD. Previous Union College credits include Jason in *Sweat*, Laurie in *You on the Moors Now*, and Georg Nowack in *She Loves Me*. When not in some sort of theater, Brian enjoys star-gazing and trying to befriend random cats on the streets of Schenectady. He thanks you for coming, and hopes you enjoy the show!



MATTHEW PARR | FRANK THORNEY

Matthew Parr (He/Him) is a senior from South Hamilton, Massachusetts. Matt will be playing the role of "Frank Thorney." He is a Music and Theater double major with a minor in English. Matt has been involved in Theater at Union since freshman year, in shows such as *The Sex Habits of an American Woman*, *Club Dragonfly*, *Act A Lady*, *Patriot Acts*, *She Loves Me*, and *You on the Moors Now*. He hopes you have an amazing time and thanks you all for coming! Hope you enjoy!

ANYA LANDI | WINNIFRED

Anya Landi (She/Her) is a sophomore Psychology major and Creative Writing minor from New York, and is so excited to play as Winnifred in her third show at Union! At Union she has been Beth/Nelly Dean in *You on the Moors Now*, and Dahlia in *7 Plays in 7 Days*. She has also played several ensemble roles in shows such as *Aida*, *Once on This Island*, and *The Addams Family*, as well as Mr. Bundles in *Annie Jr.*, Mrs. Teavee in *Willy Wonka Jr.*, and The Narrator in *Into The Woods Jr.* Her hobbies include hugging her cat and writing in her spare time. She'd like to thank her family, her friends, and especially her cat Midnight for always believing in her.

AARON ARMSTRONG | SWING SCRATCH, SIR ARTHUR, CUDDY, & FRANK

Aaron Armstrong (They/Them) is a first-year, Undecided major from Minneapolis, MN. Most recently at Union, Aaron was involved in the fall term show, *7 Plays/7 Days*. Outside of Union, past roles include Martha Dobie in *The Children's Hour*, Hector McQueen in *Murder on the Orient Express*, and Martin Vanderhof in *You Can't Take It with You*. Aaron is very excited to be a part of this production and they hope you enjoy the show!

MADDY PILKINGTON | SWING ELIZABETH & WINNIFRED

Maddy Pilkington (She/Her) is a sophomore from Rockville, MD. She is majoring in Archeoastronomy and minoring in Theater. At Union, Maddy has assistant stage managed a production of *You on the Moors Now*, has been in the ensemble of Mountebanks' *She Loves Me*, and has been a part of *7 Plays in 7 Days*. This year, Maddy is the president of Mountebanks, the student-run theater group, and looks forward to a great season with them! She is currently playing Josephine in their production of *Big Fish*. Maddy has been so excited to be a part of *Witch*, and can't wait for a great show. She wants to thank all of the theater professors and students for being such a welcoming and supportive community. Lots of love!!



KYRA KELLY | ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Kyra Kelly (She/They) is a sophomore Theater major from Saratoga Springs, NY. She has worked on several Union productions including *FLORIDITA, my Love, You on the Moors Now*, and *7 Plays/7 Days*. In their limited free time, Kyra enjoys getting enough sleep, overcommitting to too many projects, & daydreaming about puppets. She would like to thank the department for believing in her, as well as her parents and friends for their continued support. She hopes you enjoy the show!

REGAN ROITZ | ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Regan Roitz (She/Her) is a first-year Theater major from Bentonville, Arkansas. In high school, she did props management, stage management, and assistant directing for several productions including *Black Comedy, Tartuffe*, and *The Fantasticks*. At Union College, she was one of the stage managers for *7 Plays/7 Days*, and she works in the scene shop. She was so grateful to get to be an assistant stage manager for the production. She thanks everyone for coming tonight and hopes you enjoy the show!

PHOEBE FERGUSON | CO-LIGHTING DESIGNER

Phoebe Ferguson (She/Her) is a sophomore transfer student. She is a double major in Theater and Visual Arts with a passion for technical theater and design. Her previous experience in theater was being the production manager and stage manager for the theater club at her previous college, and she was an active member of the drama club in high school. Phoebe works as an assistant stage manager for Newport Contemporary Ballet in Rhode Island on school breaks. She is very grateful and excited to be assistant lighting designing for this production!

LEXI KNOWLES | ASSISTANT TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Lexi Knowles (She/They) is a sophomore Mechanical Engineer and Theater double major from Pawling, NY. She has been working in the scene shop since coming to college. At Union College, they have worked on multiple shows doing several different jobs, including *FLORIDITA, my Love, Patriots Acts, The Winter Dance Concert 2024 - Borders and Boundaries, You on the Moors Now*, and *7 Plays / 7Days*. She is excited to get to be the Assistant Technical Director for *Witch* and wants to thank their friends and family for the continuous support. Enjoy the show!

MAPLE SMITH | ASSISTANT SOUND DESIGNER

Maple Smith (They/Them) is ecstatic to be working on their first traditional show at Union! They have worked backstage for *7 Plays/7 Days* and have experience as the head of their high school sound team in Alexandria, VA. Maple is currently undeclared going into their second term but are looking into a double major in Environmental Policy and Theater. They would like to thank everyone for making the Yulman lobby such an amazing place to hang out in. They hope you and your soul enjoy they show!

SPECIAL THANKS

Elizabeth Stehle and the PokingBrook Morris Dancers

Brittney Belz, Spencer Newman, & Matthew Parr for
Assistance with Sound Design

Seo Chutaro & Maya Wines for Dramaturgy Work

Pattie Wareh

PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEOGRAPHY, AND AUDIO
RECORDING ARE NOT PERMITTED DURING
THIS PRODUCTION.

UNION
COLLEGE
FOUNDED 1795

We would like to acknowledge that we here at Union College live, work, and study on the traditional homelands of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, including the Cayuga, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Seneca, and other tribes. As a College, we honor the land itself with gratitude and respect for those who have stewarded the land past and present.

COMING SOON FROM UNION THEATER & DANCE

WINTER 2025

Winter Dance Concert: *Spaces Between*
March 5th-8th

SPRING 2025

Lothridge Festival of Dance
at Steinmetz Day May 9th

Mr. Burns, a Post-Electric Play by Anne Washburn
Directed by Gabriel Thom Pasculli
May 28th-June 1st

FOR INQUIRIES ON SELLING ONE'S
SOUL, PLEASE CONTACT SCRATCH



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