

Theater Director Ivo van Hove on 'Crucible,' Coming From Amsterdam to Broadway



Last fall, Amsterdam-based director Ivo van Hove had zero Broadway credits to his name. Six months later, he's got two: "A View From the Bridge," the critics-darling revival starring Mark Strong, and a revival of "The Crucible," selling well with a cast that includes Saoirse Ronan and Ben Whishaw. In between, he directed the Off Broadway premiere of "Lazarus," the new David Bowie musical.

You're widely recognized for what's considered an experimental approach to classic plays. How would you describe your style?

I always say I have a very traditional approach, but everybody starts to laugh. Deep down, it's true, though, because I try to read a play very carefully and look at every line, every character. I have really analyzed the play. It's what I call the traditional thing to do, to look at what it really means.

But you don't seem to go for traditional trappings. There are no bonnets in your "Crucible."

You always have to look at the play through the mirror of today. For me, every play is a contemporary play, even when you do Shakespeare and Arthur Miller.

You seem like you can be pretty intense to work with. Do you think you are?

There's this mythology about me, you know, which I should perhaps keep going. I always say to my actors, "Well, it's only theater, but it has to be the best in the world." It's a little bit of a contradiction, but there it is. I want to have a good time with them, but at the same time, I want to challenge myself and them.

Are you surprised by how receptive Broadway has been to a European director's nontraditional stagings of American classics?

I must say it's so reassuring, the great mixture of theatergoers coming to a complicated play like "The Crucible." It seems that Broadway is ready for it. My mission has always been that I want to make extreme theater, but I want to do it for as huge a public audience as possible.

What you didn't know about Van Hove

AGE: 57 Born: Flanders, Belgium DAY JOB: Artistic Director, Toneelgroep Amsterdam PLAYWRIGHT WHOSE WORK HE FEELS HE HASN'T YET CRACKED: Chekhov NEXT UP: "The Other Voice," a companion piece to his 2009 staging of Jean Cocteau's "The Human Voice"