



### Director's Note by Professor Danny Scheie

I have wanted to direct *The Children's Hour* ever since I came to UC Santa Cruz. I think it's because of the danger of outrage, which when it is fetishized becomes deadly. This is pitted against academic freedom, which is the foundation of everything we do here, but is also extremely fragile.

It is also kinda the only "homo classic" of the 20th century. It is by the only woman playwright to be famous in the 20th century and hold a position of stature alongside the male playwrights, especially in America.

The play has gone in and out of style, with accusations of homophobia, feminism, internalized homophobia, and counter-misogyny rearing their heads in cycles, often depending on the fetishized outrage of the day. But I just think now is the time. The play has become dangerous again.

When I was in high school and college it was "the lesbian play." And the ONLY lesbian play. It was scary, and wrong, and awesome. As gay kids back then, we didn't care if gay characters were miserable and punished, we were so glad that they were onstage at all it seemed incredibly affirming and brave. So there. And who doesn't love evil mean schoolgirls? They're the best. Cuz we've all been tortured by one at some point or another, and if we're honest, have sometimes desperately wanted to be one.

Jane Fonda played Lillian Hellman in the 1978 film *Julia* opposite Vanessa Redgrave, and I thought I was going to die.

I am interested in its position in the 1930s, when even the presence of a lesbian character onstage had been known to trigger the police to shut down production. Then, in the 1950s it was revived and since has been taught with *The Crucible* as the perfect metaphor for the Red Scare and the Blacklist of accused communist sympathizers, Hellman being one.

And its relationship to our current moment can speak for itself. But I love the way the first two acts are still really tight and fun and frightening and whack. *Mean Girls the Musical* just got a ton of Tony nominations. Just saying. That shit just never gets old.

*The Children's Hour* was considered very, very dangerous. When it opened in New York, the team was scared it would be shut down by the police. It was banned in Boston, Chicago, and London. The first production in England could not happen in a public theater, but had to be in a private club. I would like to somehow rediscover that edge.

Let's do this sick little play.