

JOAN AND CHARLES WITH ANGELS

STUDY GUIDE

a new play by Robert Montgomery

music composed by Robert Montgomery

Indiana Repertory Theatre  
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NOTES FROM THE DRAMATURG: JOAN OF ARC IN HISTORY

The completed production of JOAN AND CHARLES WITH ANGELS offers us a rarefied glimpse into a medieval world--the combined elements of scenery, costumes, light, music and language blend the ancient with the modern; tradition with innovation. The accumulated effect of the production visually has something of the child's view about it--bright colors, simple shapes, and hand-operated machinery evoke a world depicted by Japanese children's book illustrator Mitsuma Anno in his ANN'S MEDIEVAL WORLD.

From amid five hundred years of accumulated literature on her life and place in history, playwright Robert Montgomery has plucked a Joan who is spirited, earthy, direct, and filled with spiritual common sense. Although her story is fixed firmly within her moment in the fifteenth century, her plight, and the plight of beleaguered and divided France, resounds throughout history, and the echoes of all impassioned fights for freedom and justice trumpet through her words and songs.

Joan of Arc issues from a period in French history when war--both civil and international--had been commonplace for nearly a hundred years. The Hundred Years War, as it was aptly named, spans roughly the period from the 1340's to the 1440's. It was a war of conquest and disputed kingship fought primarily between France and England. The English kings claimed as a birthright the rule of many regions of France inherited by them through French marriages. The French kings were trying desperately to consolidate a true French nation

English/Burgundian blockade of Orleans, and led Charles to Reims and his official coronation. She was subsequently captured by the English, tried, and burned at the stake as a heretic, but not before she had inspired enough patriotism and purpose into the French people to allow them to eventually unite France and oust the English within Charles' lifetime.

This flurry of political activity, according to Joan's testimony at her trial, was directed and overseen by three heavenly messengers sent to her by God--Michael, the Archangel, Saint Margaret, and Saint Catherine. A debate over the veracity of these "voices" as Joan called them formed the central argument at her trial, as the English and Burgundian theologians sought to discredit her mission by disavowing the existence of her angelic advisors. And yet Joan repeated, time after time, that the voices had physical presence, that Michael had wings, and Catherine and Margaret held and comforted her in her distress. Further, Joan claimed that others had heard her voices, and that particularly Charles had shared her divine revelations. These sightings by others were never verified. In an era gone wild with the brutal tribunals of the Inquisition, such admissions meant an inevitable condemnation to death.

In the five hundred years which have intervened since Joan's time, many political leaders have invoked her spirit, and used her name as a call to freedom. Both DeGaulle and Churchill sought her heavenly blessing during World War II.

Theatrically, however, Joan has been a legend from the earliest times. Shakespeare dramatized her exploits, capture by the English, and communication with the spirits of Hell in HENRY VI, PART 1. His use of the legend is to prove the English claim to France right. Shaw's ST. JOAN, written in 1924, picks up the story of Joan to strike a note of nationalism in a between-the-war Europe. In the early 1950's, Jean Anouilh in THE LARK utilizes the legend of Joan, and dissects the French character under pressure from outside forces. "What becomes a legend most" then is how that story is adapted by the tellers of their time.

In the spring of 1982, the IRT commissioned Bob Montgomery to look into the legend of St. Joan for our 1983-84 season. Bob had done OEDIPUS AT THE HOLY PLACE, a new reworking of Sophocles' OEDIPUS AT COLONUS, and his particular sensibilities seemed right for this undertaking. Having met actress Priscilla Lindsay, and done a half a year of research, Bob accepted the commission and JOAN AND CHARLES WITH ANGELS is the resulting play which will receive its world premiere on February 14th.

What becomes Joan's legend most in Bob's view is a story that concerns the underlying impulses for justice that beat within Joan's breast and within all humans, particularly when life is torn apart by outside invaders. How those impulses are underlined through action, wisdom and compassion (corresponding to Joan's "voices" -- St. Michael, St. Catherine, St. Margaret), this legend then becomes a striking parable of individuals oppressed by political forces anxious to take from them their resources, lives and character. Gifted musician that Bob is, the

MONTGOMERY: Yes. Although we first thought of it as being written for the organ because that is the kind of sound we wanted. Then as we looked at organs we realized the synthesizer could not only provide an organ sound, but also other interesting dramatic sounds and moods. Teresa Metzger, who is also working on the music, and I have been learning as we go along. But also, there will be a cello in it, because we are lucky to have a member of the cast, Edward Terry, who plays the cello.

KIM: You have also taken advantage of modern technology as you've written the script. Don't you use a word processor, and have you used this for writing other plays?

MONTGOMERY: I just got my word processor in New York as a gift from my family in the summer. Like many writers now, I find it very exciting. The fact that IRT had a word processor that I could use has facilitated the rewrite process enormously.

KIM: Does this change the creative process at all of playwriting, or does it just make it easier?

MONTGOMERY: It certainly makes it easier and faster. It also adds some psychological benefits which I wouldn't have been able to admit before, but when you're typing out something and you look back over what you've typed and you see that you'd like to go back and put a word in, if you're using a typewriter, you think three or four times about doing it because it's that much more work; whereas, in word processing you only think about it a moment. You can go right ahead and make the creative changes you want to without thinking about it and that fact puts you in a higher gear. I still write longhand first and then when I have something ready I start putting it into the machine.

ecting department, and he was working with some actors who were also in my class in the acting program. He wanted to do a project with them based on Dostoevsky's THE IDIOT, and he asked me if I would like to work on it with him. It was the first time I had ever read Dostoevsky--he introduced me to that great writer. That process is very similar to what has happened in the other two processes.

KIM: Have you ever done this kind of thing with any other director?

MONTGOMERY: No director is exactly alike, and there's no director to match Tom, but the process of doing many rewrites with a director during the process of rehearsal is something that has happened each time I have done a play.

KIM: What have you been working on since you were last here for OEDIPUS AT THE HOLY PLACE?

MONTGOMERY: I have been starting a couple of projects which I have in the fire right now. The only completed works that I have done are some liturgical drama for my church--that's the Catholic community at Columbia University. I did a dramatization of a gospel--the visitation where Mary visits her cousin and also did a bigger production for the Good Friday service at St. John's Passion with music and using the people in the community as actors.

KIM: Did you write the music for that too?

MONTGOMERY: Yes.

KIM: There have been several adaptations of the Joan of Arc Legend--Shaw's SAINT JOAN and Anouilh's THE LARK, to name two--what did you hope to make significantly different about your play?

## THE STORY OF JOAN OF ARC

St. Joan of Arc was a peasant girl who, believing that she was acting under divine guidance, led the French army in repulsing an English attempt to conquer their country during the Hundred Year's War in a momentous victory at Orleans and, captured a year afterward, was burned by the English as a heretic. She became the greatest national heroine of her compatriots. Her achievement was a decisive factor in the revival of French determination to oust the English from France and in the awakening of French national consciousness.

Joan was born the daughter of a plowman, Jacques of Arc, and baptized c. 1412 at Domremy, a village in the French part of the Duchy of Bar, between Champagne and Lorraine. She had three brothers, Jacquemin, Pierre, and Jean, and one sister, Catherine, who died while young. Joan, a peasant girl without formal learning, acquired her faith and her prayers from her mother. She was later remembered by her friends and neighbours as a hardworking, good, simple, and exceptionally pious child. At 13 she began to hear a voice from God that taught her self-discipline; later, the voice told her to go to France, where she would raise the siege of Orleans. She declared that she frequently saw St. Michael, St. Catherine, and St. Margaret, the patron saints of her country. These "voices" were to guide Joan throughout her life.

The crown of France at the time was in dispute between the dauphin Charles, the son and heir of Charles VI, and the English king Henry VI, whose armies, in alliance with the Burgundians, were occupying nearly all the northern part of the kingdom. The apparent hopelessness of the Dauphin's cause at the end of 1427 was increased by the fact that, five years after his father's death, he had still not been crowned at Reims, the traditional place for the investiture of French kings. Reims was well within the territory held by his enemies. As long as the Dauphin remained unconsecrated, the rightfulness of his claim to be king of France was open to grave question in the minds of the people.

Led by her "voices," Joan, in May 1428, travelled from Domremy to Vaucouleurs, the nearest stronghold still loyal to the Dauphin, where she asked a captain for permission to join the Dauphin. He did not take the 16-year-old girl and her visions seriously, and she returned to Domremy. Joan went to Vaucouleurs again in January 1429; this time her quiet firmness and piety gained her the respect of the people, and the captain, persuaded that she was neither a witch nor feeble-minded, allowed her to go to the Dauphin at Chinon. She left Vaucouleurs again in January 1429; this time her quiet firmness and piety gained her the respect of the people, and the captain, persuaded that she was neither a witch nor feeble-minded, allowed her to go to the Dauphin at Chinon. She left Vaucouleurs

so far. The victory was, indeed, complete: the English army was routed and with it, finally, its reputation for invincibility. A contemporary chronicler, although a partisan of Burgundy, freely acknowledged that Joan had now won so much honour and renown that all felt that the king's enemies had no longer any power against her.

On July 16 the royal army reached Reims, which opened its gates to Charles. His coronation took place on July 17. Joan was present at the consecration, standing with her banner not far from the altar. After the ceremony she knelt before Charles, calling him her king for the first time. That very day she wrote to the Duke of Burgundy, adjuring him to make his peace with the King and to withdraw his garrisons from the royal fortresses.

The King left Reims on July 20, 1429, and for a month the army paraded through Champagne and the Ile-de-France. On August 2 Charles decided on a retreat to the Loire, which implied abandoning the plan to attack Paris. The loyal towns that would thus have been left to the enemy's mercy expressed some alarm; Joan, who was opposed to Charles's decision, wrote to reassure the citizens of Reims on August 5, saying that the Duke of Burgundy, now in possession of Paris, had made a fortnight's truce, after which it was hoped that he would yield Paris to the King. Everywhere acclaimed Joan was now, according to a contemporary chronicler, the idol of the French.

Joan was becoming more and more impatient; she thought it essential to take Paris. She and Alencon were at Saint-Denis on the northern outskirts of Paris on August 26, and the Parisians began to organize their defenses. The Parisians could be in no doubt of Joan's presence among the besiegers; she stood forward on the earthworks, calling on them to surrender their city to the King of France. Wounded, she continued to encourage the soldiers until she had to abandon the attack. When next day she and Alencon sought to renew the assault, they were ordered to retreat.

Charles VII retired to the Loire, Joan following him. Nearby Joan met a clairvoyant, who told Joan that she wished to effect a reconciliation between the Duke of Burgundy and the King of France. Joan replied that in her view no peace could be found save at the lance's point; and she told Charles that the woman's pronouncements were foolish and empty. In October 1429 she was sent against Saint-Pierre-le-Moutier; it was through her courageous assault, with only a few men, that the town was taken.

Joan then rejoined the King, who was spending the winter in towns along the Loire. Late in December 1429, Charles issued letters patent ennobling Joan, her parents, and her brothers. Early in 1430 the Duke of Burgundy began to threaten Brie and Champagne; the citizens of Reims became alarmed and Joan wrote to them in March to assure them of the King's concern and that she would come to their defense. When the Duke of Burgundy moved up to attack Compiègne, the townsfolk determined to resist and, in late March or early April, Joan left the King and set out to their aid. She



dying, begged to be allowed to go to confession and receive Holy Communion and to be buried in consecrated ground. But they continued to badger her with their admonitions until May 2, receiving only her constant reply, "I am relying on our Lord," "I hold to what I have already said." They became more insistent on May 9, threatening her with torture if she did not clarify certain points. She answered that even if they tortured her to death she would not reply differently, and added that in any case she would afterward maintain that any statement had been extorted from her by force. In face of this common-sense fortitude her enemies, by a majority of ten to three, decided that torture would be useless. Joan was informed on May 23 of the decision of the University of Paris that if she persisted in her errors she would be handed over to the secular authorities for punishment (i.e., execution).

Nothing further, therefore, could be done. She was taken out of prison for the first time in four months on May 24 and was taken to the cemetery of the Church of St. Ouen where the sentence was to be read out. First she had to listen to a sermon by one of the theologians, who, during his peroration, violently attacked Charles VII, provoking Joan to interrupt him, because she thought he had no right to attack the King, a "good Christian," and should confine his strictures to her. After the sermon was ended she asked that all the evidence on her words and deed should be sent to Rome. But her judges ignored her appeal to the pope, to whom, under God, she would be answerable and began to read out the sentence abandoning her to the secular power. Hearing this dreadful pronouncement, Joan quailed, saying she would do all that the church required of her. She was, therefore, presented with a form of abjuration, which must already have been prepared. She hesitated in signing it, eventually doing so "on condition it was pleasing to Our Lord." She was then condemned to perpetual imprisonment or, as some maintain, to imprisonment in a place habitually used as a prison.

In any case, the English insisted on her returning to her former prison; she obeyed the order of the vice inquisitor that she should wear women's clothes. But two or three days later, when the judges and others visited her, and found her again in male attire, she said she had made the change of her own free will, preferring men's clothes. They then pressed other questions, to which she answered that St. Catherine and St. Margaret had censured her "treason" in making an abjuration. These admissions were taken to signify relapse, and on May 29 the judges and 39 assessors agreed unanimously that she must be handed over to the secular authorities. The next morning, May 30, 1431, Joan received from Cauchon permission, unprecedented for a relapsed heretic, to make her confession and receive Communion. There she endured one more sermon, and the sentence abandoning her to the secular arm, that is, to the English, was then read out in the presence of her judges and of a great crowd. The executioner seized her and led her to the stake, lighting the pyre. A Dominican consoled Joan, who asked him to hold high a crucifix for her to see and

## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS SURROUNDING JOAN OF ARC'S LIFE

- 1403--birth of Charles, the Dauphin, at Veinnois
- 1407--murder of Charles' uncle, Louis, Duke of Orleans, by his great-uncle, John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy
- 1411--civil war begins between supporters of the Duke of Orleans, and supporters of the Duke of Burgundy
- 1412--birth of Joan of Arc at Domremy
- 1418--seizure of Paris by Duke of Burgundy; siege and capture of Rouen by the English
- 1419--murder of John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy refuels the civil war between factions of the French royal family
- 1420--Treaty of Troyes, whereby Charles the Dauphin is disinherited by his parents who swear loyalty to the English kings
- 1422--death of Charles' father; death of Henry V of England, leaving the throne to Charles, the Dauphin, or, according to the treaty, to the one-year old Henry VI of England
- 1424--Joan first visited by her voices
- 1429--Joan journeys to the French garrison town of Vaucouleurs to ask for military support to go to the Dauphin
  - Feb.--Joan arrives at Chinon to see the Dauphin
  - March--Joan is interrogated by the theologians
  - April--Joan leads the troops to Orleans to break the English/Burgundian blockade
  - May--Joan enters Orleans triumphantly
  - June--bloodless capture of cities on the road to Reims
  - July--coronation of Charles VII at Reims cathedral
  - Sept.--Charles disbands the army
  - Dec.--letters patent of nobility granted to Joan's family, giving them a coat of arms
- 1430--Joan captured by the Burgundians at Compeigne
  - Dec.--Joan is sold to the English for trial after months in prison
- 1431--court assembled for Joan's trial
  - Feb.-March--interrogations of Joan
  - May--Joan abjures, then resumes her male dress; is condemned as a relapsed heretic
  - May 30--Joan burned at the stake

## Vocabulary and Text Explications

Dauphin--French designation for the next in line to the throne; similar to the English use of Prince of Wales; the oldest living son of the king became heir to the province of Dauphine and was thus referred to as the Dauphin

Pucelle--French word for virgin; young, innocent, chaste girl; same word used for the Virgin Mary in old French

Orleans--this city in central France was considered the gateway to Southern France; the French felt that if the English took this city that all of France would fall to them

Reims--the city in Northeast France which was the traditional coronation place for the kings of France

Paris--the capital of France; the royal family had been exiled from Paris for several years at the beginning of the play and were living in other chateaus and towns in the southern and western parts of France

Chrism--the hold oil used to anoint the kings of France; it was felt that a king was not fully legitimized until the coronation ceremony took place in which the king was consecrated by the holy oil

St. Clovis--the first Christian king of France

Charlemagne--the first king of the Holy Roman Empire; his real name was Charles I

St. Louis--Louis IX, king of France in the middle of the thirteenth century; a great and benevolent king who was canonized in 1297 for his great piety; France experienced one of the greatest era's of prosperity during his reign

Angelus--ringing of a church's bells to indicate three designated prayer times in Medieval times--angelus was rung at 6 am, noon and 6 pm. At that time all people were to kneel in prayer

Michael, the Archangel--one of three archangels mentioned in the Bible. He is known as the protector of Christians, and as the angel who sent Satan to hell. He is a militant saint, as the precursor of St. George. He is often depicted with a sword, slaying a serpent who is the devil.

Saint Catherine--Catherine of Alexandria was a virgin martyr. Her legend says that she was a learned and beautiful maiden who publically protested to the emperor against the worship of idols. A tribunal of fifty philosophers was assembled to question her and failed to shake her from her position. She was tortured on a spiked wheel but it was shattered by a heavenly force and she was eventually beheaded. She is considered the saint of learning, wisdom and reason.

Saint Margaret--Margaret of Antioch was also a virgin martyr. She was beheaded for refusing to marry a pagan nobleman who attempted to force her to give up her faith. She is considered the saint of compassion.