ON ARENA STAGE . . .

Players To Portray Witch Trials In Miller’s ‘Crucible’ Next Weekend

By KAY KELLY

“You are pulling down heaven and raising up a whore,” cries John Proctor at the climax of “The Crucible,” a controversial drama by Arthur Miller which the Rice Players are presenting next weekend, February 24 and 25.

Proctor, played by Tom Phythian, reviles the pompous court, the grasping minister, and the crazed nymphomaniac who have tried as witches all who have resisted the hysterical superstition of Salem in 1692.

TO INTENSIFY the play’s examination of justice, the crucible over the fire of hysteria, contentious materialism, frustrated sensuality, and tendencies toward condemnation by accusation, the director, Bill Denny, is staging the drama in the round in the RMC ballroom at 8:15 Friday and Saturday nights.

The controversy aroused by the play stems from the various reactions of critics and spectators to the play as either a significant commentary on Miller’s collision with the “UnAmerican” witch hunts of the past decade, or as a reaction of commentary and examination of the Puritan minister played by Arnold Victor, and viewed in confusion by the younger minister, played by Jim Kuttler. Justin Kidd plays the self-righteous governor of the colony, and DeLinda Frazier, a hysterical, intimidated witness.

Judy Gathers plays a victim of the trial, as do Helen Hendrick and Honey Moore. Linda Froman, as Betty Parris, Mary Kay Hawkes as “Goody” Putnam, and Honey Moore as Mercy Lewis are frenzied accusers. George Jergenson plays the overbearing judge of the proceedings; Bill Edwards, Hopkins; Chuck Yingling, Ezekial Cheever; David McKay, John Willard; and David Russel plays Francis Nurse.

The purchase of a season ticket for $1.00 will admit one to the play, the first arena production at Rice in four years.