Director's Note for *Cloud 9*

When I sat down to re-read *Cloud 9* last year, my greatest fear was that it would no longer feel relevant. It was, after all, written 40 years ago, and parts of it are set 100 years before that. But as I read that day in the dim light of someone else's tech rehearsal - and found myself inappropriately chuckling in the back of the theater - I was pleased to discover that the play felt more necessary than I could have hoped.

That feeling of immediacy has only deepened since beginning rehearsals. The conversations that we're having in the rehearsal room - about gender bias, racism, colonial legacy, toxic masculinity, homophobia, and the sinister thread that runs through them all, a grasping at proximity to power - are the same conversations that I'm having in my circles about the socio-political landscape of 2019. And really, it is always a conversation about power; it's about how it's tangled up with whiteness and maleness, and with being straight and cisgender; it's about the price paid to get closer to those things if they're not inherent in your identity; and it's about who got to decide that those qualities were synonymous with power in the first place. In some sense, it's disheartening to see that the challenges we're facing today span so far back, because microaggressions, mansplaining, and performative wokeness abound in *Cloud 9*, well before those terms made their way into popular discourse.

The silver lining, though, is the opportunity that Churchill provides to examine these "modern" challenges at their Victorian root, exposing the ridiculous and near-comical lengths that gatekeepers of power must go to in order to justify the inequalities they have created. In doing so, Churchill reminds us that these traditions of oppression which we've inherited were once invented, and that when we pull back the curtain and reckon with our history, we too can unlock the power to invent something better for ourselves.

--Allie Moss