

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Free Shakespeare in the Park Announces 2016 Production, “Julius Caesar” and Membership Program

MILWAUKEE, WIS. – Milwaukee’s Free Shakespeare in the Park and presenter Optimist Theatre have announced their 2016 production of “Julius Caesar” in August of next year. One of William Shakespeare’s most famous works, the tragedy will play on three weekends: August 4-7, 11-14 and 18-21. This will mark the Shakespeare in the Park’s seventh annual production and fourth year at COA Youth and Family Centers’ Selig-Joseph-Folz amphitheater in Alice Bertschy Kadish Park.

The production will be co-directed by M.L. Cogar and Tom Reed, respectively Shakespeare in the Park’s Dramaturg and Associate Artistic Director. Cogar most recently directed the company’s 2014 presentation of “The Winter’s Tale.” Reed directed “As You Like It” in 2013 and has performed in several of Shakespeare in the Park’s productions, including as Puck in 2015’s “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.”

“We hope to create a production of ‘Julius Caesar’ that is a political thriller, bridging the public and the personal, exposing the moment when idealism falls to ego and anxiety,” explains Reed. Cogar adds, “Summer 2016 will find us all within a swift and shallow breath of the next presidential election -- a transfer of power weighted with promise and peril. We look to Shakespeare to help us measure the human and the historical scale of the choices we make in such moments.”

Optimist Theatre has also launched a sustaining membership program for donors to Shakespeare in the Park, offering a range of benefits to this class of supporters. With a professional cast based in the Milwaukee area, Shakespeare in the Park offers a world-class theatrical experience free to its audience. In its first six years, Shakespeare in the Park has played to a cumulative audience of more than 12,000 and employed 200-plus Wisconsin actors, crew, suppliers and vendors.

About “Julius Caesar”

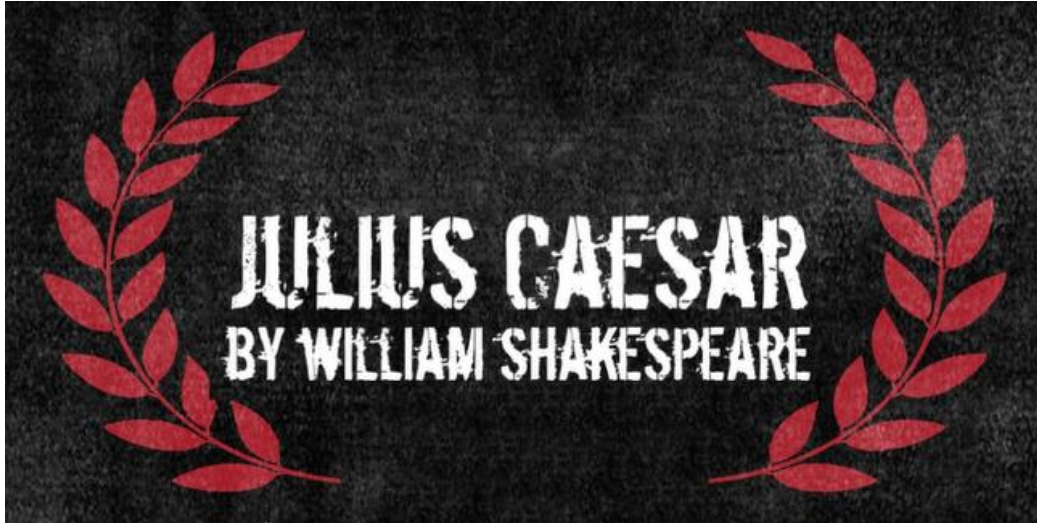
Believed to have been written in 1599, “Julius Caesar” is one of several of Shakespeare’s plays based on events of Roman history. Its enduring themes dealing with power, loyalty and friendship, as well as the twin questions of what constitutes “good government” and how to achieve its orderly transfer, have resonated with audiences down the centuries. The closing years of the sixteenth century were underlined with anxiety about the inheritance of the English throne, as the aged and unmarried Queen Elizabeth I refused to name an heir, and the memories of earlier bloody wars of succession were still fresh.

The performance history of “Julius Caesar” has tended to respond to current political events, rising and falling in popularity as it reflects events of the day. For example, interest in the production in England dropped off in the late eighteenth century just as it was finding favor in American colonial theaters. It has been reinterpreted by several generations of theater luminaries, including a contemporary staging created by Orson Welles in 1937 that, at 157 performances, became the play’s most popular single production.

Shakespeare based “Julius Caesar,” as well as “Coriolanus” and “Antony and Cleopatra” on Plutarch’s First Century accounts of the lives of famous Greeks and Romans. The source material had been published and translated on the Continent and in England from the 1400s, and the classical history was well known to the audience of Shakespeare’s day.

About Shakespeare in the Park™ and Optimist Theatre

Optimist Theatre is a 501(c)3 non-profit theatre company; Free Shakespeare in the Park is supported in part by grants from UPAF, the Wisconsin Arts Board, the Milwaukee Arts Board and Bader Philanthropies. In addition to Free Shakespeare in the Park, Optimist Theatre offers interactive educational outreach performances such as "To Be! Shakespeare Here and Now." The organization's goals include reaching artists and audiences across the economic, ethnic, and experiential landscape by creating art that is accessible to all people. They aspire to educate, entertain, and inspire through creative works of artistic integrity and, in doing so, to serve as a "gateway" theatre experience, bringing new audiences to the arts. To learn more, visit OptimistTheatre.org, or contact Managing Director Susan Scot Fry at SSFry@OptimistTheatre.org or 262/498-5777 or Artistic Director, Ron Scot Fry at RSFry@OptimistTheatre.org or 262/498-9788.



Julius Caesar logo



The Optimist Theatre logo



Shakespeare in the Park logo

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