

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **Announcing the cast of free Shakespeare in the Park's "Julius Caesar"**

MILWAUKEE, WIS. – Milwaukee's own Shakespeare in the Park (SitP), presented by Optimist Theatre, has announced details of this August's production of "Julius Caesar." The three-weekend run (August 4-7, 11-14 and 18-21) will feature Milwaukee theatre luminaries Angela Iannone\* as Brutus, Laura Gray\* as Marc Antony and Patrick Lawlor\* as Cassius. Allen Edge\*, in the title role, is a newcomer to Shakespeare in the Park but has a long career as a professional actor and is a member of the Bronzeville Arts Ensemble.

The cast for "Julius Caesar":

Allen Edge\* as Julius Cesar  
Laura Gray\* as Marc Antony  
Angela Iannone\* as Brutus  
Patrick Lawlor\* as Cassius  
Libby Amato as Portia, et al  
Chris Bolden as Popillius Lena, et al  
Michael Chobanoff  
Brittany Curran, Lucius, et al  
Leslie Fitzwater as Cicero, Soothsayer, et al  
Kark Iglesias as Lucillius, et al  
Mary Kababik as Ensemble  
Josh Krause as Octavius, Cinna the Poet, et al  
Laura Monagle as Calpurnia, et al  
Emmit Morgans as Casca, et al  
Nate Press as Decius Brutus, et al  
Tom Sebald as Ensemble  
Shayne Steliga as Cinna the Conspirator, et al  
\*Member of Actors' Equity Association

The summer of 2016 will see several prominent Shakespearean roles in the region filled by women in a ground-breaking wave of gender-bending casting assignments. These include SitP's selection of Ms. Iannone as Brutus and Ms. Gray as Marc Antony, along with Illinois Shakespeare Festival's production of "Hamlet", in which Milwaukee-based Deborah Staples\* will play the titular Prince of Denmark.

SitP's 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 SitP'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."

William Shakespeare's tragedy will be performed twelve times over three weekends, with evening performances (8 p.m. curtain) August 4-7, 11-13 and 18-21, and a 10 a.m. matinee on Sunday, August 14. This will mark the program's 7<sup>th</sup> season of free, professional theatre for the greater Milwaukee area. Performances are held outdoors at the Selig-Joseph-Folz amphitheater in Alice Bertschy Kadish Park. Kadish Park represents the ideal location, at the

crux of Riverwest, the Eastside, Brewer's Hill and Bronzeville, to accomplish Shakespeare in the Park's outreach goal of connecting diverse audiences. COA Youth and Family Centers has hosted SitP since 2013.

With a professional cast based in the Milwaukee area, Shakespeare in the Park offers a top quality theatrical experience free to its audience. The 2016 season is co-presented through the generous sponsorship of Bader Philanthropies, the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, the Brico Fund and the Herzfeld Foundation. Shakespeare in the Park rehearses at Wisconsin Lutheran College (WLC) through a partnership with the WLC Theatre Department.

In its first six years, SitP has played to more than 12,000 people and employed 200-plus Wisconsin actors, crew, suppliers and vendors. With their 12-performance season of "Julius Caesar", they expect to attract another 4,000 people in 2016.

### **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.

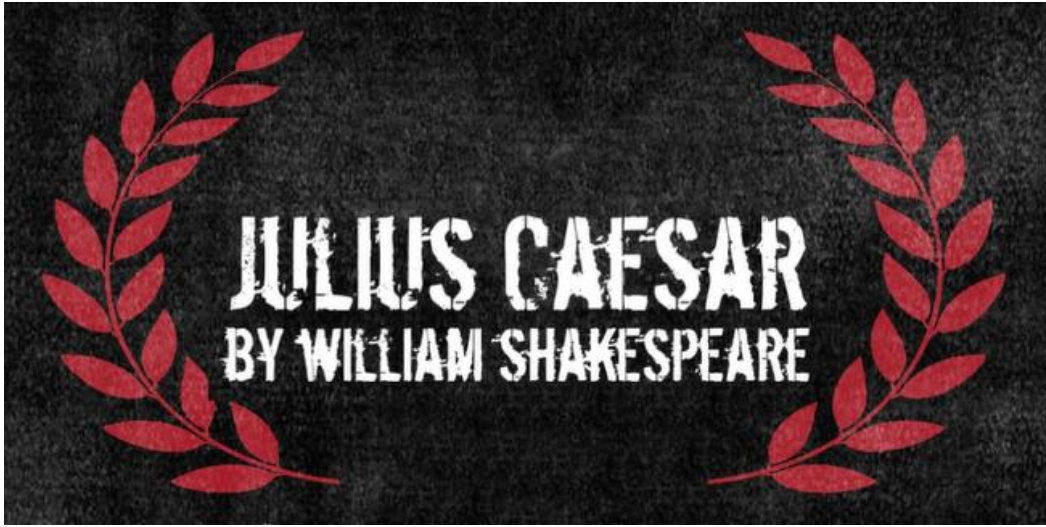
The performance history of "Julius Caesar" has tended to respond to current political events, rising and falling in popularity as it reflects events of the day. For example, interest in the production in England dropped off in the late eighteenth century just as it was finding favor in American colonial 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.

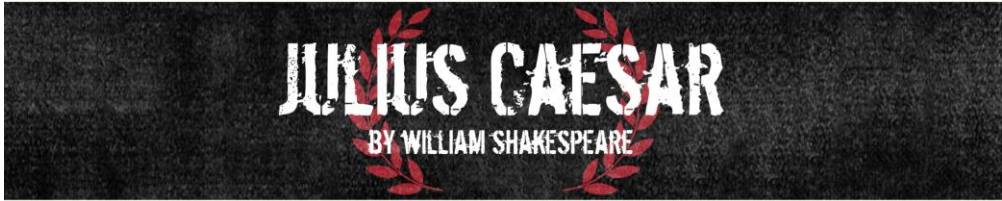
### **About Shakespeare in the Park™ and Optimist Theatre**

Optimist Theatre is a 501(c)3 non-profit theatre company; Free Shakespeare in the Park is supported in part by grants from the Wisconsin Arts Board, Milwaukee Arts Board and Bader Philanthropies and is a UPAF Affiliate Member Group. In addition to Free Shakespeare in the Park, Optimist Theatre's educational outreach program is "To Be! Shakespeare Here and Now", which has been performed internationally for more than 20 years and for more than 85,000 people.

Shakespeare in the Park's goals are to connect with 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](http://OptimistTheatre.org), or contact Executive Director Susan Scot Fry at [SSFry@OptimistTheatre.org](mailto:SSFry@OptimistTheatre.org) or 262/498-5777 or Artistic Director, Ron Scot Fry at [RSFry@OptimistTheatre.org](mailto:RSFry@OptimistTheatre.org) or 262/498-9788.



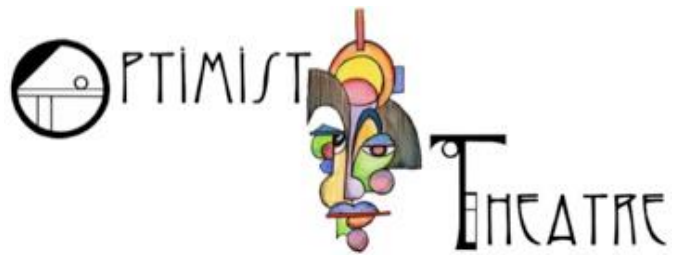
*Julius Caesar logo*



MEMBER ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION

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*Julius Caesar headline cast pictures*



*The Optimist Theatre logo*



*Shakespeare in the Park logo*

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