

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

29 March 2016

### **Optimist Theatre Announces Free Shakespeare in the Park's "Cakes and Ale" Fundraiser**

MILWAUKEE, WIS. – Milwaukee's Optimist Theatre, presenter of Free Shakespeare in the Park, has announced its "Cakes and Ale – A Surprise Birthday Party for William Shakespeare" fundraiser in support of this summer's performance of "Julius Caesar." As has become the organization's custom since the establishment of Free Shakespeare in the Park in 2010, the fundraiser will take the form of a variety show with silent auction. The event has been set for Friday, April 22, 2016 at The Woman's Club of Wisconsin (813 E. Kilbourn Avenue). Doors open at 7 p.m., and the entertainment begins at 7:30 p.m.; the shouting of 'Surprise!' will occur when the guest of honor, William Shakespeare, arrives at around 8 p.m., and the show will resume thereafter. Tickets are available at [www.BirthdayBard.org](http://www.BirthdayBard.org).

Entertainment will include the stand-up comedy of Alan Edge, Milwaukee band Sorry, We're Open, and performances by the King Solomon Missionary Baptist Church Gospel Choir and Kinsella Irish Dance, with additional acts to be confirmed. The program will also feature the cast announcement of the primary roles for "Julius Caesar."

Proceeds from "Cakes and Ale" will fund the free presentation of William Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" at the COA Youth and Family Centers' amphitheater in Alice Bertschy Kadish Park in August 2016. The new season will mark the seventh year of production of Free Shakespeare in the Park and will encompass three weekends, totaling 12 performances.

Tickets may be purchased individually for \$50 each (\$25 of which is tax deductible). 100% tax-deductible donations may also be made at the Optimist Theatre website, [www.OptimistTheatre.org](http://www.OptimistTheatre.org). "Cakes and Ale" will also include a silent auction offering a variety of donated items and services, including several one-of-a-kind works by local artists.

#### **About "Julius Caesar"**

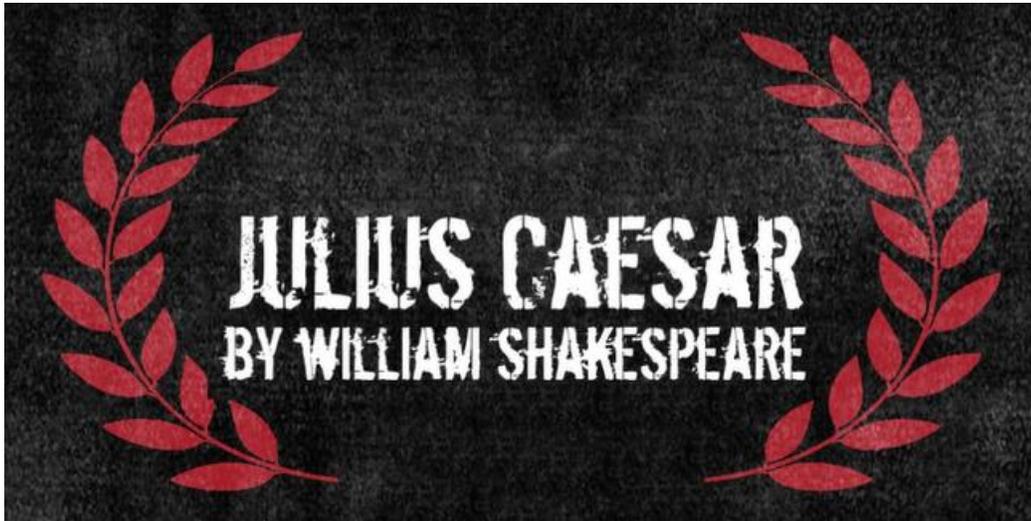
Believed to have been written in 1599, "Julius Caesar" is one of several of Shakespeare's plays based on events of Roman history. Its enduring themes dealing with power, loyalty and friendship, as well as the twin questions of what constitutes "good government" and how to achieve its orderly transfer, 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.

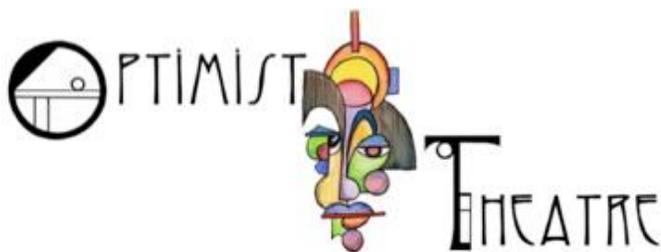
Shakespeare based "Julius Caesar," as well as "Coriolanus" and "Antony and Cleopatra" on Plutarch's First Century accounts of the lives of famous Greeks and Romans. The source material had been published and translated on the Continent and in England from the 1400s, and the classical history was well 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](http://OptimistTheatre.org), or contact Managing 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*



*The Optimist Theatre logo*



*Shakespeare in the Park logo*

###

### OPTIMIST THEATRE MEDIA CONTACT:

Susan Fry  
2010 N. 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53212  
[SSFry@OptimistTheatre.org](mailto:SSFry@OptimistTheatre.org)  
262.498.5777  
[www.FreeShakespeareInThePark.org](http://www.FreeShakespeareInThePark.org)  
[www.facebook.com/OptimistTheatre](http://www.facebook.com/OptimistTheatre)