

JULIUS CAESAR

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

AUGUST 4-7, 11-14 AND 18-21, 2016
SELIG-JOSEPH-FOLZ AMPHITHEATER IN KADISH PARK

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JULIUS CAESAR

By William Shakespeare

Directed by ML Cogar and Tom Reed

THE CREW

Jessica Connelly*	Production Stage Manager
ML Cogar	Dramaturg
Alyssa Bolden	Costume Designer
Jason Fassl**	Lighting Designer
Megan Henninger	Sound Designer
Ron Scot Fry	Production Manager
Posy Knight	Set Designer
TJ Hull	Soundscape Composer
Madelyn Yee	Props Mistress
James Fletcher	Fight Choreographer
Chris Segedy	House Manager
Ashley DeVos	Assistant Stage Manager
Corrie Tritz	Sound Board Operator

THE CAST

Allen Edge*	Julius Caesar
Laura Gray*	Mark Antony
Angela Iannone*	Brutus
Patrick Lawlor*	Cassius
Libby Amato	Portia, Plebeian, Strato
Allie Babich	Metellus Cimber, Messala, Plebeian 1
Chris Bolden	Popilius Lena, Plebeian, Soldier
Michael Chobanoff	Trebonius, Lepidus
Brittany Curran	Lucius, Plebeian, Soldier
Leslie Fitzwater	Cicero, Soothsayer
Cory Jefferson Hagen	Plebeian 2, Lucillius
Mary Kababik	Murellus, Caesar's Servant, Plebeian, Volumnius
Josh Krause	Caius Ligarius, Octavius
Laura Monagle	Calphurnia, Plebeian, Pindarus
Emmitt Morgans	Casca, Plebeian, Titinius
Nathanael Press	Decius Brutus, Plebeian 4, Clitus
Tom Sebald	Carpenter, Octavius' Servant, Soldier
Shayne Steliga	Flavius, Cinna the Conspirator, Plebeian 3, Soldier

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States, appearing under a Special Appearance Contract.

**Member of United Scenic Artists Local USA 829

Julius Caesar

Triumph, Jealousy and Portents...

Hail Caesar! It's a party! Until Marullus and Flavius come along, that is. They break up a gathering of Roman citizens who are celebrating Julius Caesar's triumphant return from war with Pompey. Enter Caesar! His glorious victory is being feted by public games in which his great friend, Mark Antony, takes part. On their way to the arena, Caesar is stopped by a stranger who warns that he should **"Beware the Ides of March."**

Conspiracy to Murder...

Cassius and Brutus fear Caesar will accept Mark Antony's attempts to crown him as Emperor. Cassius, a powerful general himself, is jealous, while Brutus, who is devoted to Caesar, has a more balanced view of the political situation. Cassius, Casca, and their allies visit Brutus at night and persuade him of their views. They plan Caesar's death. Brutus is troubled but will not confide in his devoted wife, Portia.

The Death of Caesar... "Et tu, Brute"

On the 15th of March – those previously portended 'ides' – Caesar is urged not to go to the Senate by his wife, Calphurnia. She has had terrible dreams that he will be murdered, and fears the portents of the overnight storms. He is nevertheless persuaded by flattery to go, where the plot by Cassius and Brutus to kill Caesar comes to bloody fruition. As petitioners surround him Caesar is stabbed and dies as Brutus gives the final blow, "The unkindest cut of all".

Incite to Vengeance... "Friends, Romans, Countrymen"

At Caesar's funeral, Brutus explains to the people of Rome why Caesar's ambition was a righteous cause to kill him. Against Cassius's advice, Brutus also allows Mark Antony to speak a funeral oration. Antony's clever speech about Caesar's virtues rallies the people's love for Caesar and stirs them to rioting. The conspirators are forced to flee from the city.

"Cry 'Havoc!' and let slip the dogs of war!"

Brutus and Cassius gather an army in Northern Greece and prepare to fight the forces led by Mark Antony, who has joined with Caesar's great-nephew Octavius. Away from Rome, Brutus and Cassius are filled with doubts about the future and quarrel bitterly over funds for their soldiers' pay. They reconcile and despite Cassius' misgivings they prepare to engage Antony's army at Philippi. Brutus receives news of his wife's suicide in Rome. Unable to sleep on the eve of the conflict, he sees Caesar's ghost as he tries in vain to rest.

Death With Honor...

In the battle, the Republicans at first appear to be winning but when his messenger's horse seems to be overtaken by the enemy, Cassius fears the worst and gets his servant, Pindarus, to help him to a quick death 'the Roman Way' by falling on his sword. Brutus, finding Cassius's body, commits suicide as the only honorable action left to him. Antony, triumphant on the battlefield, praises Brutus as **"The noblest Roman of them all,"** and orders a formal funeral before he and Octavius return to rule in Rome.



ML Cogar
Co-Director, Dramaturg,
Producer, and Co-Founder
of Shakespeare in the
Park

ML (Mary Lynn) Cogar is grateful for the opportunity to co-direct with Tom

Reed, her loving (and occasionally startling) husband of 25 years, for Optimist Theatre, her arts home for all seven seasons of Shakespeare in the Park. With Optimist, ML has assisted the director, conducted research, and edited scripts for each Shakespeare in the Park production, with the exceptions of this co-directing project and 2012's *The Winter's Tale*, her first solo Shakespeare directing experience. Beyond Optimist, ML has worked locally with Quasi Productions on *Henry V*, Cornerstone Theatre on a Valentine's cabaret, Alverno College on *Antigone* and *Shakespeare Out Loud*, and First Stage Theatre Academy on multiple company class productions, including *Our Town* and *Much Ado about Nothing*. Outside Wisconsin, ML has directed, arranged music for, or accompanied productions at University of Illinois, James Madison University, Parkland College, Sunset Dinner Playhouse, Cheyenne Little Theatre, The Rude Mechanicals, and Mary Washington College (now University of Mary Washington). ML is proud to spend her days teaching analytical reading and writing full time at Alverno College, as well as an occasional Shakespeare course at Marquette University. All in all, ML knows that she is a lucky woman, and she encourages you to get out and experience LIVE performing arts at companies that pay and promote Wisconsin artists.



Tom Reed*
Co-Director, Associate
Artistic Director, Produc-
er, and Co-Founder of
Shakespeare in the Park

This is the second time Tom has directed for Optimist's Shakespeare in

the Park and his first time co-directing with his lovely wife, ML. Previous directing credit adventures with Optimist Theatre was for *As You Like It*. Tom has directed numerous productions at Alverno College where he teaches theatre, including *Jar the Floor*, *Necessary Targets*, *The Foreigner*, and many more. Tom has

also directed productions for James Madison University, The Rude Mechanicals, and First Stage Children's Theatre. As a member of the Actors' Equity Association, Tom has appeared in many Optimist productions including the title role in *Macbeth*, Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Caliban in *The Tempest*, Feste in *Twelfth Night* and Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*. Regionally he has appeared at the Utah Shakespeare Festival and the Court Theatre among others. Love and thanks to ML, Ron, and Susan.



Allen D. Edge*
Julius Caesar

Allen D. Edge has a BA in Theatre from Columbia College Chicago and a 40-year career as an actor, director, producer, comedian, performance

coach, and ordained minister. He's worked with The Goodman Theatre, E.T.A. Theatre, Victory Gardens Theatre, The Black Ensemble Theatre Company, Portland Stage Company, First Stage Children's Theatre, Court Theatre, The Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Geva Theatre Center and Lincoln Amphitheatre. He was also featured in a number of commercials and films, including "Barber Shop 2" and Tyler Perry's "Meet The Browns". Mr. Edge is also a member of Toastmasters International and is the District 35 Humorous Speech Champion for 2011 and 2013.

Allen has performed his special brand of humor live at Zanies, Barrel of Laughs, All Jokes Aside, Jokes & Notes, U Got Jokes, The Comedy Café, The Apollo Theatre in New York, on tv in Comedy Central's "Comic Justice", and as the opening act for Pattie La Belle, Aretha Franklin, Smokey Robinson, and The O'Jays. He is the founder and president of Transitions Edge Productions, which is committed to the effective communication of Christ Jesus through the performing arts and media. Allen is also a founding member of the Bronzeville Arts Ensemble. This is Allen's first production with Optimist Theatre.



Laura Gray*
Mark Antony

Julius Caesar marks Laura's debut with Optimist Theatre. Since arriving to Milwaukee in 1999 she has had the pleasure of working with many of

its fine theaters. Especially fond memories include: *The Good Father*, *Crimes of the Heart* and *Talley's Folly* with Chamber Theater, *Dear Esther* and *Four Places* with Next Act, *The Shakespeare Stealer* at First Stage, Milwaukee Shakespeare's productions of *Julius Caesar* and *Macbeth* and *Stop Kiss* and *Barney and Bee* with Renaissance, where she will appear in *Luna Gale* this winter. Laura is also on the Theater Faculty at Carroll University. Love to Jonathan, her leading man.



Angela Iannone*
Brutus

Ms. Iannone is pleased to return to Optimist Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park where she was last seen as Ariel in *The Tempest*. Shakespeare roles

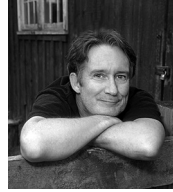
include Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, Boyet in *Love's Labor's Lost*, Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Henry IV in *Henry IV* and Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Other roles include Maria Callas in *Master Class*, Ensemble in *Twilight*; *Los Angeles 1992*, Medea in *Medea*, Roxie in *Chicago*, Adelaide in *Guys & Dolls*, Kate Hepburn in *Tea at Five* and Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Ms. Iannone's awards include Broadway World Award-Best Actress, Kudos Award; Queens, NYC- Best Supporting Actress, Joseph Jefferson Award, Chicago- Best Actress in a Musical, Shepherd Express Best Actress, Lunt/Fontanne Fellow 2014, Lunt/Fontanne Greek Fellow 2015, Creative Achievement Award (Playwright) UW-Whitewater.

Ms. Iannone has appeared at theaters including Georgia, Utah, Oak Park, Door County and Milwaukee Shakespeare Festivals, The Milwaukee Repertory Theatre as an Associate Artist, Next Act, Forward, Kansas City Rep, InTandem, Marriott Lincolnshire, Skylight, Light Opera Oklahoma, TheaterRED and Titan Theatre-NYC. She is the author of *The*

Edwin Booth Plays, produced Off-Broadway at Titan Theatre, The Players, NYC, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater (ACTF Festival), TheaterRED Milwaukee, and at Second Act New Works Festival, St. George Utah.

Ms. Iannone is on the faculty at University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, and a recognized researcher at The Booth/Hampden Library, The Players; NYC, the home of Edwin Booth.



Patrick Lawlor*
Cassius and Fight Captain

Patrick Lawlor is happy to be back at Optimist Theatre. He last appeared for Optimist as Jacques in *As You Like It*. Elsewhere in

Milwaukee, Patrick has worked with Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, First Stage, In Tandem and Milwaukee Shakespeare. Outside of the city, Patrick has acted, directed and/or choreographed stage combat for the Riverside Shakespeare Company, San Jose Rep, Laguna Playhouse, The American Players' Theatre, San Jose Stage Company, Grove Theatre Center, Sierra Rep and Shakespeare festivals in California, Utah, Wisconsin, Oklahoma, Kentucky and Virginia. Favorite roles include Vindice in *The Revenger's Tragedy* at the Hudson Guild Theatre in New York, Tranio in *The Taming of the Shrew* at the Riverside Shakespeare Company in New York, Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the New York Renaissance Festival (Featured with pop singer Bjork in a photo shoot in Rolling Stone Magazine - the 9/16/93 one with Janet Jackson on the cover...yeah, THAT one), Kevin in the US Premier of *Kevin's Bed* at Laguna Playhouse and King John in *King John* at the Actors Gang Theatre in Los Angeles. Patrick is also an accomplished audiobook narrator, having recorded close to 400 books, in every genre. He has recorded for authors such as Dean Koontz, Nora Roberts, Rob Paulsen, Suzanne Brockmann, Harry Turtledove, Philip K. Dick, Jim Wallis, Michelangelo Signorile and Peter Straub. He is the voice of the popular series *The Darwin Awards* and his recording of *Three Cups of Tea*, by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin, once held the record for weeks on the top 10 Best Selling Audiobooks List.



Libby Amato
Portia, Plebeian, Strato

Libby is delighted to work with Optimist Theatre again, after last appearing in their production of *Macbeth*. Other credits include *Little Gem* and

Eclipsed with Milwaukee Irish Arts, *These Shining Lives* and *God of Carnage* with Umbrella Group Theatre, *1959 Pink Thunderbird* and *The Nightmare Room* with In Tandem Theatre, *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* with First Stage Children's Theatre, *Grace* with Next Act Theatre, and *King Lear* with Alchemist Theatre. With love and gratitude to Beth Amato for her tireless support.



Allie Babich
Metellus Cimber, Messala, Plebeian 1

Though she's been off adventuring for about five years, the siren call of bonfires, cheese curds, and Shakespeare in the Park

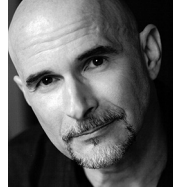
lured Allie Babich back to her home state for her fourth show with Optimist Theatre! Other credits include *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Winter's Tale* with Optimist Theatre, *Victory Farm* at Northern Sky Theater, *Sweet Revenge!* with the Minnesota Centennial Showboat, *South Pacific*, *Charley's Aunt*, *Dracula*, *Hamlet* at Utah Shakespeare Festival, as well as producing and performing with her own company, BARd Shakes. Allie graduated summa cum laude from the University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater BFA Actor Training Program. Catch her around Milwaukee this season playing the title character in *Violet* at Skylight Music Theatre, and Marian in a new adaptation of *Robin Hood* at First Stage! Thanks always to my family, and thanks also to our audiences for engaging in local art and the global conversation of Shakespeare. www.alliebabich.com Happy 400th Anniversary, Bill.



Chris Bolden
Popilius Lena, Plebeian, Soldier

Chris Bolden is a Graduate of North Carolina A&T University, and the University of Connecticut. He is married to Alyssa Bolden and

has one son The Grump (aka Michael). Chris has performed in many Shakespeare plays and is delighted to continue that experience through Shakespeare in the Park with Optimist Theatre.



Michael Chobanoff
Trebonius, Lepidus

Michael Chobanoff is THRILLED to be appearing for the first time on Optimist Theatre's stage, as a part of this brilliant production! He was last

seen as Charley in Imagination Theatre's production of *Death of a Salesman*. Favorite roles include Jack CS Lewis in *Shadowlands*, Jake in *Jake's Women*, Leonato in *Much Ado About Nothing* and Harpagon in *The Miser*. He's also currently playing the role of Dillon in *The Blood of Bad Men*, a local indie film, now shooting. Much love and thanks always to his gorgeous, amazing wife, Maureen!



Brittany Curran
Lucius, Plebeian, Soldier

Brittany Curran is honored to be making her debut with Optimist Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park this summer. Brittany holds a BFA degree in Act-

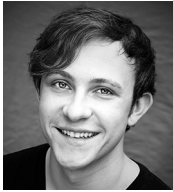
ing and a minor in Creative Writing from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She works as a director, instructor, and Educational Outreach Coordinator with Milwaukee Youth Theatre. Brittany has worked with several local theatre companies including Pink Banana, Renaissance Theaterworks, The World's Stage, Milwaukee Metropolitan Voices, First Stage, The Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Bard and Bourbon, and is a company member at Kohl's Wild Theater. You can see Brittany performing again in the fall as Dodo in *Jack of Hearts* with Milwaukee Entertainment Group at the Brumder Mansion.



Leslie Fitzwater
Cicero, Soothsayer

Leslie Fitzwater has been acting and singing professionally for nearly 40 years in opera, theater, musical theater, cabaret, and mime. Her roles have

been as diverse as Paddington Bear and Carmen. While Leslie has played her share of well known characters such as Desiree in *A Little Night Music*, Golda in *Fiddler on the Roof*, Agnes in *I Do, I Do*, and Marmie in *Little Women*, she is best known for her portrayal of the French chanteuse, Edith Piaf, in her one woman show, *Edith Piaf Onstage*. Leslie is a private voice and acting coach, has given seminars on vocal production for the young singer, has taught Voice and Speech at First Stage Theatre Academy, and has been an adjunct voice faculty member at Pius XI High School since 2007. This is her first time performing with Optimist Theatre.



Cory Jefferson Hagen
Plebeian 2, Lucilius

Cory is a recent graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater where he received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in theatre performance. His stage credits include Romeo in *Romeo & Juliet*, Dracula in *Dracula*, Will Scarlet in *A Lady In Waiting*, Lawrence Barrett in *The Seeds of Banquo*, and Jack in *Death by Design*. Mr. Hagen has also interned with Door Shakespeare where he played ensemble roles and ukulele in *As You Like It* and understudied *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*.



Mary B. Kababik
Murellus, Caesar's Servant, Plebeian, Volumnius

Mary B. Kababik has experienced the magic under the stars that is Shakespeare in the Park for the

last two summers, playing Paulina in *The Winter's Tale* and Petra Quince in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Mary has worked with Next Act Theatre in *Microcrisis* and *Heresy*, Youngblood Theater in *Neighborhood 3: Requisition of Doom*, In Tandem in *Equus*, *Two Rooms*, and *The Afghan Women*, and Theatre X in *The Hunting of the Snark*, among others. She has long had an interest in bringing historical figures to life and since 2008 has portrayed Cordelia Harvey, former First Lady of Wisconsin during the Civil War, in a one woman show that is part of the Theater Program at the Kenosha Civil War Museum. Mary would like

to dedicate her performance to her friend, Grace Ellen Ehr, who brought kindness and generosity into the world, who loved theater, and who could tell you something about every actor in Milwaukee!



Josh Krause
Caius Ligarius, Octavius

Josh Krause most recently appeared at Artists' Ensemble Theater as Ross in *Visiting Mr. Green* earlier this year. Other regional credits include *Goodnight*

Moon and Fred in *A Christmas Carol* for Children's Theater of Madison; Crumpet in *Jeeves at Sea* for Artists' Ensemble Theater; Martin in *Feeding the Moonfish* for Splinter Group; Verges in *Much Ado About Nothing* and Ambrose in *The Matchmaker* for Indiana Festival Theatre. Josh received his Master of Fine Arts in Acting from Indiana University, where he performed Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet* and Mr. Darcy in *Pride & Prejudice* among others. He performed internationally in Germany and Poland as Young Karski in *Coming to See Aunt Sophie*. In addition to acting, Josh is also a teaching artist in Milwaukee for The Milwaukee Repertory Theater, First Stage Children's Theater and Sunset Playhouse.



Laura Monagle
Calphurnia, Plebeian, Pindarus

Laura is thrilled to make her debut with Optimist Theatre alongside this phenomenal cast, crew and production team! You

may have also spotted Laura with Skylight Music Theatre, Boulevard Theatre, Windfall, Davenport's in Chicago, Splinter Group, Bialystock & Bloom, The Fireside Theatre, Soulstice Theatre, Off the Wall, and Children's Theatre of Madison. Favorite roles include Katharine in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Diana in *Next to Normal*, Eva Peron in *Evita*, and Countess Charlotte Malcolm in *A Little Night Music*. Next up is *Musical Mainstage* this December at Sunset Playhouse, and another turn with the Bard as Tamora, Queen of the Goths in *Titus Andronicus*. Many thanks and much love to her husband, Bob - who is smart enough to listen to her advice.



Emmitt Morgans
Casca, Plebeian, Titinius

Emmitt is thrilled to be appearing, for the fifth year in a row (!), with Optimist Theatre in their Shakespeare in the Park performances. You may

have previously seen him as Lennox in *“The Scottish Play,”* LeBeau in *As You Like It*, Camillo in *The Winter’s Tale*, and Demetrius (despite multiple reports to the contrary) in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Emmitt can also be seen performing with Kohl’s Wild Theater at schools, libraries, festivals, community events, and at the Milwaukee County Zoo. He has also had the pleasure of working with Skylight Music Theatre, Renaissance Theatreworks, Bunny Gumbo, Phantom Cicada, and Soulstice Theatre. Thanks and love to “Ma and Pa Morgans” for their never ending love and support. Enjoy the show and remember to beware “a friendly stranger in a black sedan”... or something to that effect!



Nathanael Press
Cobbler, Decius Brutus,
Plebeian 4, Clitus

Nate is overjoyed to be making his Optimist debut with this production of *Julius Caesar*. Some of his favorite roles from the

recent past include Horst in *Bent* with The World’s Stage, Nial Lynch in *Moment* with Milwaukee Irish Arts, CB in *Dog Sees God* with Splinter Group, father and son Ned and Walker Janeway in *Three Days of Rain* with Carte Blanche Studios, and more that he can tell you about if you buy him a beer. Nate has been a teaching artist at First Stage since 2012 – where he was first introduced to theatre as an academy student at the age of 12! – and he received his BFA in Theatre Arts from Boston University’s College of Fine Arts.



Thomas Sebald
Carpenter, Octavius’ Servant, Soldier

Thomas Sebald is honored to make his sophomore appearance with Optimist Theatre’s Shakespeare in the Park. Recent credits include

Mustardseed the Fairy in last year’s production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* with Optimist, and Sebastian the Muse in *aMUSED* with Memories Dinner Theatre. Thomas has a degree in Theatre Performance from Wisconsin Lutheran College. sDg.



Shayne Steliga
Flavius, Cinna the Conspirator, Plebeian 3, Soldier

Julius Caesar marks Shayne’s second stirring venture with Optimist Theatre, the first being last

season’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* where he portrayed Lysander. An alumnus of UW-Green Bay’s theatre program and the The Milwaukee Repertory Theatre’s internship, Shayne’s recent projects include Windfall’s *Death Takes a Holiday*, Milwaukee Public Theatre’s *Stories From the Medicine Wheel*, Milwaukee Chamber’s *Young Playwrights Festival* as well as Uprooted’s *Classic Rock 101*. Also an accomplished musician and voice-over artist, Shayne thanks his parents, bandmates, friends, foes and Shaina for their enduring support.

*Member of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States, appearing under a Special Appearance Contract.

Holding a Mirror to Life

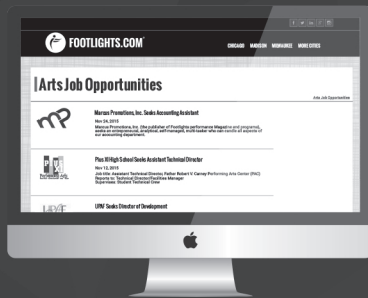
Shakespeare's Subtle Commentary on England's Precarious Political Situation

Unlike today when vociferous criticism is the norm, speaking out about concerns with your governing powers in Elizabethan England could have head-chopping consequences. Subtlety was the watchword.

In 1599, when *Julius Caesar* was first performed, Queen Elizabeth had sat on the throne for nearly forty years, enlarging her power at the expense of the aristocracy and the House of Commons. At 66 years old, her reign seemed likely to end soon, but she lacked any heirs – as did Julius Caesar. Many feared that her death would plunge England into the kind of chaos that had plagued England during the fifteenth-century Wars of the Roses.

Shakespeare's contemporaries were well versed in ancient Greek and Roman history and would have seen parallels between *Julius Caesar's* portrayal of the shift from Republic to Empire and Queen Elizabeth's trend toward consolidated monarchical power. Art imitates life, so Shakespeare's dramatization of the Julius Caesar history could have been an easily understood and slightly safer commentary on the political situation of his day. Through the vehicle of the play, he can subtly ask, who has the right to rule? What is just rule? What is the best nature for our leaders? What is the nature of good in politics?

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Jessica Connelly*
**Production Stage
 Manager**

Jessica is delighted to be back at Optimist Theater and Shakespeare in the Park, after Stage Managing for them last summer.

Since 2006 Jessica has been the Resident Stage Manager for Next Act Theatre, where she has stage-managed over 40 productions. A few of Jessica's favorite projects include: *Dear Esther*, *Master Harold and the Boys*, *Last of the Boys*, *Mystery or Irma Vep*, *Faith Healer*, *Purgatorio*, *Going to St. Ives*, *Vigil*, *Race*, *Three Views of the Same Object*, the world premier of *Ten Questions to Ask Your Biology Teacher About Evolution*, and *Twilight: Los Angeles 1992* (Next Act Theatre), *A Rising Wind* (J.M.Kohler Performing Art Center) *Chesapeake*, *Trojan Women*, *The Shape of Things*, and the US premier of *Skin Tight* (Renaissance Theaterworks), *Santaland Diaries* (Marcus Center for the Performing Arts). Jessica would like to thank her father who passed away in December for teaching her to always see the beauty of the world.

Alyssa Bolden, Costume Designer

Alyssa Rose Bolden is a freelance costume designer, technician, teacher and fan of all things costuming from stage to steampunk and cosplay. An avid devotee to the art of costume creation, she has designed for everything from renaissance faires and avant garde movement theaters to traditionally staged productions. Recently she has had the privilege of a production attending the New York Fringe Festival, as well as being named by The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel as one of 2015's Best Theatrical Designers. She finds joy in being a mother to her beautiful 4 year-old boy, Michael, and focusing her creative energies to 'make it sew'.

Jason Fassl (AntiShadows), Lighting Designer

Over the last decade, Jason has consumed mass quantities of electricity at American Players Theatre, The Milwaukee Repertory Theater, The Milwaukee Ballet, First Stage Children's Theatre, Skylight Music Theatre, Peninsula Players, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Renaissance Theaterworks, Next Act Theatre, Forward Theatre Company,

Milwaukee Opera Theatre, TheatreLILA, The Fireside, and many others. Jason is member of Scenic Artists Local #829, Milwaukee Stage Employees Local #18 and a proud graduate of the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. Portfolio and information at www.AntiShadows.com

Megan B. Henninger, Sound Designer

Megan B. Henninger is thrilled to be making her debut at Optimist! She is Milwaukee based and has served as designer and assistant designer on shows large and small. Favorite designs include: *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Hands on a Hardbody* for Williams Street Rep, *RRRED* for NYMF, *42nd Street* for TOTS tour) *The Martian Chronicles* for Fordham University, *Turn of the Screw* for Lyric Opera, Kansas City. Assistant Designs include: *You're Welcome America*, *Ghetto Clown*, *Stick Fly*, and *Blithe Spirit* on Broadway, *Company* for the Lincoln Center.

Ron Scot Fry, Production Manager

Ron is the Artistic Director for Optimist Theatre, Producer and co-founder of Shakespeare in the Park. For Shakespeare in the Park, he has directed *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest* and *Macbeth* and played Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night* and Antigonus in *The Winter's Tale*. Other recent Milwaukee work includes performing, directing, design, building, and puppetry for Alverno College, First Stage Children's Theatre, Wisconsin Hybrid Theatre, Milwaukee Public Theatre, Bunny Gumbo Combat Theatre, Theatre Gigante, and Milwaukee Mask and Puppet Theatre. His one-man show "To Be! Shakespeare Here and Now", has played for more than 85,000 people in schools, libraries and theatres around the world, and he wrote and performed the title role in *Bloody Filthy Shakespeare* at the Teatro Goldoni in Florence, Italy. Coming up next is directing *Peter Pan* for The Children's Theatre of Madison. His gratitude is too vast to be contained in words, but it includes a very special place for all his fellow Dreamers. www.ronscotfry.com

Posy Knight, Set Designer

Posy Knight, holds an MFA in Scenic Design from the University of Connecticut, and a BFA in Dance from The Juilliard School. From New York City to Buenos Aires, Colorado

to Milwaukee, Ms. Knight has continued to blend careers as a performer, choreographer, designer, director, scenic painter, and arts educator. She is the Director of Outreach for Danceworks Inc., and is a proud member of their faculty. Upcoming projects include *Whose Island?* an original devised physical theatre and dance performance inspired by Gilligan's Island presented by the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, and *aLL WroNg* a pub crawl theatre event presented by the Milwaukee Performance Cooperative in the spring. Special thanks to Kirk Thomsen.

TJ Hull, Soundscape Composer

T.J. is an award-winning composer and has written music for the theatrical stage, film, and concert hall. Currently Orchestra Director with Franklin Public Schools, past credits include Artistic Director/Youth Programs coordinator and principal violist for the Kokomo Youth Symphony, Strings Program Coordinator for the Portland Center for the Arts, and Interim Conductor/Artistic Director for the Waukesha Area Youth Symphony, and co-principal violist in the Seattle Philharmonic. T.J. also plays with the nationally touring Irish music duo Ogham and is on the Board of Directors for Optimist Theatre.

Madelyn (Maddie) Yee, Props Mistress

Madelyn Yee is excited to be joining this wonderful group of people for her first professional Shakespeare production. Currently residing in Milwaukee, she is a freelance designer and props artisan with a degree in Theatre Arts from Marquette University. She has worked with companies around town including Milwaukee Rep, Skylight Music Theatre, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, and Splinter Group. Recent credits include properties for *The Mojo and the Saysos* for Bronzeville Arts Ensemble and Theatre LILA, and *These Shining Lives* for Umbrella Group; and scenic design for *The Ballad of Emmett Till* for Renaissance Theatreworks. Many thanks to her family and Joe for their love and support.

James Fletcher, Fight Choreographer

Fletcher is a theatre professional who wears many hats in the city of Milwaukee. After receiving his MFA in acting from the Professional Theatre Training Program at UW-

Milwaukee, he headed west to Los Angeles for a few years. There he was a member of The Sacred Fools Theatre Company where his play *The Big Schlep* was produced. Moving back to Milwaukee in 1998, he founded The Bunny Gumbo Theatre Company and serves as its Artistic Director. Directing credits include *Bye Bye Baby*, *Losers*, *'Twas The Month Before Christmas*, *Our Country's Good*, *The Lark*, *Two Shakesporean Actors*, *The Madwoman of Chailot*, *Hamlet*, and this summer he will be directing First Stage's Company Class in *The Merchant of Venice*. Fletcher's plays include: *Give Until It Hurts*, *Blue Stella*, *Sweet Dreams*, *Love Verona Style*, *Pushing Daisy*, *The House of Silence*, and his latest endeavor, *The Four Hamlets*. He teaches everything from movement to Shakespeare, is a Certified Actor/Combatant who has designed fights for many of the theatres in Milwaukee, and has acted for a few of them. Fletcher is an ardent supporter of local theatre and is happy you can join us for this new production. Support local theatre!

Ashley DeVos, Assistant Stage Manager and Set Construction (Wisconsin Lutheran College Alum)

Ashley DeVos is a recent graduate from Wisconsin Lutheran College, and this is her third year with Shakespeare in the Park, where she has been previously seen darting around backstage of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *A Winter's Tale*. Other recent credits include Set Designer for *A Doll's House* and Stage Manager for *Women of Lockerbie*. She thanks her parents for supporting all her endeavors, her sisters for keeping her on her toes, and her best friend for being there through this mayhem we call life.

Corrie Tritz, Sound Board Operator

Corrie Tritz is delighted to return to the Shakespeare in the Park sound board after joining Optimist for last year's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. A Milwaukee-based stage technician and theater artist, Corrie currently serves as a house stagehand at Alverno College. Previous affiliations include: Huntington Theatre Company in Boston, MA, American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, MA, North Shore Music Theatre in Beverly, MA, The Theater Offensive in Boston, MA, Portland Stage in Portland, ME, and Deertrees Theatre in Harrison, ME. Locally,

Corrie is an active member of Cooperative Performance Milwaukee, having most recently directed *The Women's Follow Your Dream Club* for the CPM One-Acts Festival. Corrie holds a BA in Theater from Emerson College in Boston, and a professional certificate in arts management from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Jacob Dubey, Stage Crew – Sound (MPS Arts Intern)

Jacob Dubey is currently a senior at Ronald Reagan High School and an MPS arts intern for Shakespeare in the Park. Jacob is cutting his theatrical teeth working on backstage sound. Working on this production as it will help him in his future goals of going to college to study sound engineering and design.

Drea DeVos, Stage Crew (Wisconsin Lutheran College)

Drea DeVos has been seen acting in Wisconsin Lutheran College's *The Women of Lockerbie* and *Shakespeare in Rep*; and she hasn't been seen in several of its other performances as she was wearing black as any good stage crew would. Currently she is cast as Iron Jenny in the premiere performances of *Bonny Anne Bonny* with Theater RED and WLC. Drea has also overthrown the past president of Creative Writing Club, installing herself as it's new gracious but absolute ruler, the Captain. She studies the rigging on pirate ships for fun and finds it disconcerting whenever she is forced to write about herself in the third person.

Rebekah Heusel (Yale School of Drama) Stage Crew

Rebekah Heusel is a third-year MFA candidate at Yale School of Drama, where her credits include *Women Beware Women*, *Paradise Lost* and *Preston Montfort—An American Tragedy*. Other credits include *Knives in Hens* at Yale Cabaret and *The Little Mermaid Jr.* at Children's Theatre Company. Rebekah earned her BA in classics and theatre from Knox College, after Victor Pilolla sparked her love of theatre at East Laden High School.

Katherine (Katy) Lane (University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire) Stage Crew

Katy Lane is a sophomore at UW-Eau Claire, majoring in instrumental music education. Her primary instrument is the flute, and she has played in the pit orchestra for *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, and *Hairspray* in high school. She has built sets for *Nevermore*, *Hairspray* and *Don't Drink The Water* at Nicolet High School, and *Cabaret*, and *Roustabout: The Great Circus Trainwreck* during her freshman year in college. She has attended Optimist Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park since before it was "in the park" and is excited to be able to in the crew for Julius Caesar.

Katlyn Rogers, Stage Crew – Wardrobe (Wisconsin Lutheran College)

Katlyn Rogers is a Senior at Wisconsin Lutheran College pursuing a Theatre major. She is a homeschooled graduate, with exposure to theatre thanks to S.H.E.L.L and Lisa Knight. This is her first involvement with a professional theatre company and is humbled by the opportunity. At school, she takes special joy in caring for the costume shop, and helping the actors look their best. Distinct thanks to her family and friends for their support. Alla mio caro, ti amo!

Julia Teegarden, Scenic Assistant

Kirk Thompson, Scenic Assistant

Kirk was a founding member and production manager for the Alchemist Theatre and The Milwaukee Quasimondo Physical Theatre, where he also devised, directed, and designed over 20 productions from 2009-2015. Kirk has collaborated with Milwaukee's finest visual and performance artists at venues like the Skylight Music Theatre, Present Music, and Danceworks, and continues to teach physical theatre skills like juggling and clowning to all ages. His latest project is an original devised work inspired by *Gilligan's Island, Whose Island?*, produced by the University of Colorado, in collaboration with ICONography Dance Company.

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States, appearing under a Special Appearance Contract.

How accurate is Shakespeare's portrayal of the real Julius Caesar story?

William Shakespeare was one of the world's greatest poets and playwrights. He was also an astute businessman who knew that a tale well told sold tickets.

Julius Caesar plays somewhat fast and loose with facts, details, nuances, and history in favor of a good story that resonated with his audience. As his chief source in writing, Shakespeare probably used Thomas North's translation of "Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans", written in the first century a.d. but that's just his jumping off point. Beyond Plutarch, it's a dramatization crafted with flair and punch. A few tidbits...

- Historically, the action of the play covers around two and a half years but Shakespeare crams it all into about 2 weeks.
- Caesar's ghost is a well-oiled theatrical trope, only outdone by Shakespeare's tendency to dress women as men in disguise.
- In 44 BC, Caesar ordered the kingship be bestowed upon himself. In the play, the crown is offered to him three times by Mark Antony and each time he turns it down.
- It's widely recognized that the image of Caesar's murdered body is what actually incited the Roman mob to revenge, not Marc Antony's eulogy. But, such a compelling character as a charismatic, righteous leader who so sways the average person with the force of their personality that they will blindly change their minds to his way of thinking and rally their troops behind his cause is a mighty powerful dramatic tool.
- There is reference to a mechanical clock striking three times – a machine not invented for another 767 years after Caesar's time. No pun intended.
- According to Plutarch, Brutus and Cassius flee Rome one year after the assassination. According to Shakespeare, they flee immediately.
- It was not the first time that senators carried weapons around with them. Caesar would most likely be carrying a weapon for protection as well and would have tried to use it to defend himself.
- Shakespeare followed Plutarch's lead and emphasized how the actions of the leaders of Roman society, rather than class conflicts or larger political movements, determined history. However, Shakespeare also points out that power rests, to some degree, on the fickle favor of the populace.

Chris Segedy, House Manager

Chris Segedy is thrilled to be part of Shakespeare in the Park this year. Chris is a professional house manager throughout the Milwaukee area. In addition to serving as the Senior House Manager for PTG Live Events, overseeing front-of-house for the Pabst Theater, Riverside Theater, and Turner Hall Ballroom, Chris has also worked or volunteered with Skylight Music Theatre, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Renaissance Theatreworks, First Stage, and the Father Robert V. Carney Performing Arts Center. She would like to thank her cat, Isabelle, for giving her permission to leave the house.

Christie Manussier, Communications Director

Michelle Owczarski, Vice-President and Treasurer, Board of Directors

Michelle is an independent video producer and editor, as well as a designer and video display operator for the UWM Panthers Arena. In addition to being a long-time SITP supporter, she has experience as an actor and theater technician for productions at Marquette University, performed for eight seasons at the Bristol Renaissance Faire, and works with Hangman Radio and Wisconsin Hybrid Theatre/Radio WHT as a Foley sound effects artist. Michelle designed posters for the 2015 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and 2016's *Julius Caesar*.

Jenn Turner, Community Outreach Director

Macie Laylan (Wisconsin Lutheran College)

Macie Laylan is entering her final year as a student at Wisconsin Lutheran College this fall. Macie is studying both theatre and communications, and you can see her in the upcoming productions on campus. She has been interning with Optimist Theatre for the summer and has had a great time being a part of *Julius Caesar*. A big thanks to the cats at the Cat Café who allowed me to record their adventures and to Susan, who made my very first step into theatre outside of school very memorable.

Bividiana (Bivy) Murguia (Alverno College)

Bividiana Murguia is a student at Alverno College studying Business in Marketing, Communication, and Theatre. She has much love for the world of acting and enjoys being onstage releasing her creative side. When she

first got casted in her middle school's musical production of *Beauty and the Beast*, it was then that Bividiana knew she had a passion for the theatre, which has led her to audition and be a part of several shows. Her most recent performance was playing Kelli in *Commencing*. Bividiana is very pleased and excited to be joining the House Crew for the first time this summer at Shakespeare in the Park for the production of *Julius Caesar*.

Marah Nitz (Wisconsin Lutheran College)

Marah Nitz is a senior theatre major at Wisconsin Lutheran College. She is specializing in acting, but she loves to do all aspects of theatre including playwriting, stage-managing, and dramaturgy. She is so thankful to have had the opportunity to work behind the scenes with Optimist and do some theatre things that she has never done before. She would like to thank her professors Jay Sierszyn and Simon Provan for making it possible and she would also like to thank Susan for being so amazing to work with.

Abby Thompson (MPS Arts Intern)

Abby Thompson just graduated as a theater major and valedictorian of Milwaukee High School of the Arts. While still in high school, she took theater classes at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee where she and six other students created a script for a full-length documentary that will be produced in the fall. Abby has been president of Milwaukee Repertory Theater's Teen Council for two years and has served in various capacities including as Education intern, receptionist, and youth leader for a 12 week Storytelling Residency. Abby has interned with Milwaukee Repertory Theater, First Stage, African American Children's Theatre, and Skylight Music Theatre. Her First Stage credits include *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*, *The Wiz*, *My Son Pinocchio*, and *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer*. Last Christmas, she was seen in *A Christmas Carol* at Milwaukee Rep. In the fall, Abby will be attending Columbia College Chicago majoring in Acting and minoring in Education and American Sign Language. She would like to thank her friends, family, and God for supporting her on this journey!

Auxiliary House Crew...

Sheila Beck

Cathy Bauerwald

And all the other wonderful people who helped

ABOUT US

Optimist Theatre is a 501(c)3 non-profit theatre company established in 1993. Free Shakespeare in the Park began its first season in 2010. All donations are 100% tax deductible. www.FreeShakespeareInThePark.org

For more information, contact Susan Fry at SSFry@OptimistTheatre.org or 262-498-5777.

OUR MISSION

We believe that the theatrical arts broaden and enrich those parts of our minds and spirits that are most essentially human. Optimist Theatre is driven to reach artists and audiences across the economic, ethnic, and experiential landscape. We educate, entertain, and inspire through creative works of artistic integrity.

STAFF

Susan Scot Fry.....	Executive Director, Producer and Co-Founder of Shakespeare in the Park
Ron Scot Fry.....	Artistic Director, Producer and Co-Founder of Shakespeare in the Park
Tom Reed.....	Associate Artistic Director, Producer and Co-Founder of Shakespeare in the Park
ML Cogar	Dramaturg, Producer and Co-Founder of Shakespeare in the Park
Christie Manussier.....	Communications Director
Jenn Turner.....	Community Outreach Director
Michelle Owczarski	Graphic Artist, Development
Karen Samelson	Grantwriter
Sam (The Poet) Schuldt.....	Right Arm to the Executive Director
Ross Bigley	Payroll Administrator

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And many of the Shakespeare in the Park Founding Members

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NO OBVIOUS HERO

Interestingly, Shakespeare does not offer a clear-cut and definitive villain in *Julius Caesar*. It's possible that because his country's current political situation was so precarious and Shakespeare may have been using *Julius Caesar* as a vehicle for commentary on that situation, that it was prudent not to put forth an obvious hero. Elizabethan England was not an era for out-right criticism of the powers that be, even for a most loved poet and playwright.

Scholars will argue (of course) who fills the roles of protagonist and antagonist / heroes and villains in *Julius Caesar*.

- **Brutus** – The brave general who stood by Caesar's side but whose love for Rome is so great that he allows himself to be convinced that Caesar has become a threat to his country's very existence?
- **Julius Caesar** – The conquering hero who has brought fortune and glory to Rome? A brilliant man riding high on great accomplishments.
- **Mark Antony** – Steadfast champion of Julius Caesar who wants the best for all Roman citizens and believes that Caesar embodies those best qualities?
- **Cassius** – Triumphant general who fought as long and hard as Caesar but saw through what he deemed his façade and vehemently questioned Caesar's elevation to near godlike status?

Although he commits the ultimate act of personal betrayal to help assassinate Caesar, Brutus is often seen as the play's tragic hero.

People in the Mark Antony court point out the supreme virtue of his steadfast devotion to Caesar, his appeal to the common man, and his ultimate victory at war. That makes him the hero, right?

Arguments can be made for the other main characters – perhaps slightly less so for Cassius – but ultimately, Shakespeare leaves it to you to decide. Beware though, once you do, it's hard to change your mind. The characters in *Julius Caesar* are so charismatic and passionate that Shakespeare makes it easy to fervently devote and defend yourself of choice of hero and villain.

Who's your hero?

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Shakespeare in the Park is honored by our partnerships with Wisconsin Lutheran College and COA Youth and Family Centers. Thanks to them, we have a place to rehearse, to build our sets, to perform, and so much more. Thank you.



Wisconsin Lutheran College

We are honored to partner with the great people of Wisconsin Lutheran College's awesome Theatre Department. Thank you, Jay Szierzyn and Simon Provon for your continued championship.



COA Youth and Family Centers

COA Youth and Family Centers, one of Milwaukee's most venerable community youth organizations, is again hosting Optimist Theatre in the Selig-Joseph-Folz amphitheater and performance space in Alice Bertschy Kadish Park.

GRANTS AND FOUNDATION SUPPORT

Shakespeare in the Park is free to attend but far from free to produce. These amazing foundations and granting organizations are largely responsible for making the magic happen for us all. Please join us in thanking them profusely for their vision and dedication.



Bader Philanthropies

Optimist Theatre is honored to be included in the Bader Philanthropies family of support. In addition to generously funding Shakespeare in the Park, they treat us as an investment in the future, and seek to provide growth opportunities, enabling us to build a solid foundation. Thank you for your commitment to the health, vitality and viability of Milwaukee and beyond.



Greater Milwaukee Foundation

The Greater Milwaukee Foundation is a cornerstone of our great community. Their investment expertise, history and community knowledge make them ideally suited to support Shakespeare in the Park's mission. We are grateful for the faith and trust you have placed in us to help carry that torch.



Herzfeld Foundation

The Herzfeld Foundation makes grants in the areas of Arts and Culture, Education, Arts Education and Civic Improvements to Wisconsin-based organizations with an emphasis on those that benefit the people of the Greater Milwaukee area. Thank you for your faith in us.



THE BRICO FUND

The Brico Fund's visionary approach to actively supporting members of their fund family is inspirational. They seek to help organizations such as Shakespeare in the Park connect with other groups, making us truly greater than the sum of our parts. Thank you for your inspirational, holistic approach.



Milwaukee Arts Board

Shakespeare in the Park is supported in part by a grant from the Milwaukee Arts Board and the Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the state of Wisconsin. Thank you for your invaluable help in making the dream of Shakespeare in the Park a reality.



BMO Harris Bank

BMO Harris Bank believed in Shakespeare in the Park very early in our history, and we strive to continue to be worthy of that belief. They made a leap of faith and helped Optimist Theatre when it was needed most -- and continue to actively support our ongoing growth. Our Thanks will never adequately express our depth of feeling and appreciation - but Thank You.



NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT FUND

Nonprofit Management Fund

The Nonprofit Management Fund of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation supports capacity-building for small- and medium-sized organizations within the nonprofit sector in Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Waukesha and Washington counties. Shakespeare in the Park is grateful to count itself amongst NPMF's supported organizations.

CAMPAC

Milwaukee County Arts Fund

Arts and cultural organizations contribute significantly to the quality of life and economic development in Milwaukee County. The Milwaukee County Cultural Artistic & Musical Programming Advisory Council (CAMPAC) seeks to ensure that our great community supports organizations who exemplify those contributions. Shakespeare in the Park is honored to be included in that esteemed company.



UNITED PERFORMING ARTS FUND

United Performing Arts Fund

UPAF is critical to the sustainability of our community's performing arts treasures. Their brilliant annual Ride for the Arts is a cornerstone to their annual fund drive. Optimist Theatre is a proud and honored to be an Affiliate Member of the United Performing Arts Fund.



Wisconsin Arts Board

Shakespeare in the Park has been supported in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015 and 2016 in part by a Creative Communities grant from the Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the people of the state of Wisconsin. Thank you for all the work you do and your inspirational perseverance.



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Optimist Theatre is eternally grateful to our friends at Paris Dentistry for again sponsoring Shakespeare in the Park. Dr. David Paris has been a part of the Shakespeare in the Park family since the beginning and we're proud and honored to continue the association.



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2015-16 marked the first season of Shakespeare in the Park membership. Members enjoy some fun, added perks including invitation to the very popular Shakespeare Salon Series. More is in store – like a road trip this fall to enjoy the 400th Anniversary traveling exhibit commemorating Shakespeare.

Thank you all for becoming Founding Members.

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And the list continues to grow...

DONORS

The following people helped personally make Shakespeare in the Park possible for all of us thanks to their very kind donations.

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PUSH FOR YOUR TUSH

The following people donated specifically for the Push For Your Tush campaign. If we could put plaques on chairs, their names would be on them! Thank you all!

Ruth and Chad Lawson
David HB Drake and
Jennifer Esh
Mary P Pluta in honor of
Michelle Owczarski
Jeff and Tania Renken
Kathleen Peebles in Honor of
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SPECIAL THANKS

Shakespeare in the Park would not be possible without the kindness and generosity of time, spirit, and material support (aka lending us some great stuff...) that these fantastic people have given.

Posy Knight would like to thank...

Mario and Cathy Constantini, Deborah Farris, and Kirk Thomsen

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Pa Sponcia with the Greater Milwaukee Foundation

Leslie Seib with Herzfeld Foundation

Anne Summers and Lynn Lucius with Brico Fund

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And Our Volunteers

Ryan Alba and the Kinsella Irish Dancers, Allen Edge, Maria Eugenia, Rachael Fry, TJ Hull and Amanda Caretta-Hull of Ogham, Mary Kababik, Tim Kowalski, Laura Monagle, Eric Nesselth, Amanda Schumacher, Shayne Steliga and "Sorry, We're Open", Gee Wilson and the King Solomon Missionary Baptist Church Choir, and everyone else who has pitched in to stuff envelopes, help at Shakespeare's Birthday Party, hand out flyers – all the things it takes to make the magic happen.

“Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” *Julius Caesar* and Parallels to American Politics Today

Does the adventure playing out on the stage smack you as eerily familiar? The reason may lie in some uncomfortable parallels between the struggles of the ancient Rome of Julius Caesar and today's American political scene. Unconvinced? You decide. This is a democracy, after all...

Julius Caesar takes place at a time when Rome was the center of an empire stretching from Britain to North Africa and from Persia to Spain. As they grew stronger, so, too, did the dangers threatening its existence:

- Rome suffered from constant infighting between ambitious military leaders and the senators to whom they supposedly owed allegiance.
- The empire suffered from a sharp division between citizens, who were represented in the senate, and the increasingly underrepresented plebeian masses.
- A succession of men aspired to become the absolute ruler of Rome
- Those citizens who favored more democratic rule feared that Caesar's power would lead to the enslavement of Roman citizens.
- A group of conspirators came together and assassinated Caesar. The assassination, however, failed to put an end to the power struggles dividing the empire, and civil war erupted shortly thereafter.

Metaphorical assassinations, deep political divides, and civil wars of words already plague today's American political stage. Do we wish to avoid a literal parallel? There are lessons to be learned in historical hindsight.

Partial thanks to Sparknotes, et. al.



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