

YORK SHAKESPEARE PROJECT NEWSLETTER



February 2009

"Beware the ides of Febru...no wait, that's next month's!"

Julius Caesar

We are off and running! There's a director, Mark Smith, of whom more later, and very very soon we'll have a cast.

We'll be having Open auditions at [Southlands Methodist Church](#) (Southlands Road off Bishopthorpe Road) on:

Wednesday 18th February	7pm - 10pm
Saturday 21st February	10am - 4pm
Monday 23rd February	7pm - 10pm

Some recall auditions will then be held on:

Tuesday 24th February	7pm - 10pm
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Anybody wishing to audition is welcome to simply turn up, but if you would like to book a particular slot please contact Mark at mkdsmith@gmail.com. If you cannot make any of these dates please contact Mark to arrange another time. Please prepare a piece from any Shakespeare play (not necessarily from Julius Caesar) which may be read or learnt. You may also be asked to read specific excerpts from the play.

Rehearsals will be at [St Luke's Church Hall](#) and will start on Monday 2nd March and follow a pattern of Monday and Thursday evenings and Sunday afternoons until the performances in June from the 10th to the 20th. Please bring details of any dates on which you are unable to attend rehearsal to the auditions. Where necessary, extra rehearsals may be called in consultation with the actors involved.

Anyone interested in taking part in the production team (costume, lighting, etc) and applying for positions backstage will be welcomed at auditions and can book a time slot to discuss their possible role and availability.

5 Questions for.....Mark Smith

Welcome to the York Shakespeare Project for our new friend Mark, and what better thing to do to get to know him than put him to the newsletter interrogation...

Hello Mark, what appealed to you about doing Julius Caesar with the YSP?

Hi Newsletter Interrogation, as a relative newbie to York, I first heard about YSP over the summer, and Merchant of Venice was the first show I got to see. I was really impressed with the cast as a whole, and the idea of an ongoing project to put on all of Shakespeare's plays sounded like a fantastic project. Julius Caesar itself really appealed, as it's a really gripping, psychologically complex tragedy.



What sort of things have you been involved in before?

Mostly much more modern productions, and normally with *Mark Smith, yesterday* as few actors as possible! But I've worked with some fairly large casts - I'm currently directing the Upstage Centre Youth Theatre in a production of "Hard Times" which involves marshalling some 20 children and teenagers. (Shameless plug?) It's on at the Guildhall on 19th and 20th March!). I'm also producing a new, devised Masked Comedy which will be on in 41 Monkgate at the end of February.

I lived and worked (teaching English) in Finland for a while before returning to England to do an MA in Theatre last year. While I was in Finland I set up an English language theatre company which put on comedies such as Tom Stoppard's "On the Razzle" and Alan Bennett's "Habeas Corpus".

What's your vision for Julius Caesar?

Supernatural! Shakespeare's really getting into his tragic swing in Julius Caesar, with ghosts, forebodings and wild and spooky goings-on. I want there to be a sense of the elements of nature being out of joint, and the actions of the characters having diminishing returns in the face of such immense forces. It's also a pacy play - one of the shorter tragedies - with a relentless forward motion, starting with the famous "Beware the Ides of March" (in only the second scene). It's going to be fluid, driving forwards. Minimum of set, in order to facilitate this. (Though before any talented constructors throw down their tools, we will be needing you! See below for crazed set design ideas...) I'm also looking to use projections, as a sort of lighting effect to frame the action, in order to create dramatic effects such as gathering storm clouds or the high winds which foreshadow Brutus's fatal decision.

What are the biggest challenges you foresee, and what are you most looking forward to?

The play has quite a large cast, and the dynamic between all of the characters is really important. So getting the right combinations of actors in the optimum roles is the first challenge. Then just coordinating everybody's diaries is always a challenge! In terms of the set design, I really want to keep it fairly simple, but I would like the acting space presented to the audience to be quite limited at first, with a backdrop/gauze/cyc restricting the depth of the stage. Then, at a key moment, the backdrop would be removed, revealing the full depth of the Monkgate studio. Ideally, audience members

who haven't been to the theatre before would have no idea of the size of the venue until that key "reveal" moment. This is one of the challenges I hope those set constructors will be able to help me out with!



No togas!! Are you mad?

Is that two separate questions? As to togas - I am resolutely against placing the play in anything other than a Roman setting, as I think that the (imagined) Rome that Shakespeare creates is the only place in which the politics and mores of the play and characters make full sense. But I'm also keen to create a streamlined, slick production which has a modern feel - and to this end I won't be aiming for total historical accuracy in terms of togas and sandals. I'm not averse to the odd robe though. As to whether I'm mad... I thought that was part of the job description?

And some quickies;

What's your favourite...

Singer?

Yikes. That's a quickie? Well... Anything pop/rock where the lyrics make sense and have a bit of bite. Quite a Morrissey/Smiths fan, I must confess.

Football team?

Crewe Alexandra due to indoctrination from an early age.

Author?

Argh, I studied French as an undergraduate so I can't answer this without sounding like a total pseud. I'm quite a fan of some of Stendhal and Flaubert, as well as the more modern Michel Butor. I like Paul Auster and Martin Amis too. If it's poets, I can't get enough Simon Armitage.

Play?

Probably Stoppard. The Invention of Love's great, but Rough Crossing for the laughs. And I love Chekhov! The Seagull, The Cherry Orchard, and Platonov are all big favourites of mine, which I hope one day to mount productions of or act in! And, a bit closer to YSP, the Scottish play really does it for me...

Film?



I know, any excuse!

Lovers of the Arctic Circle by Julio Medem. Or Back to the Future Part II.

Doctor Who?

Sylvester McCoy (you might as well run a carbon-dating test on me)

James Bond?

I am fairly proud (but should that be ashamed?) of the fact that I have never watched a whole Bond film.

Food?



*Mark's favourite
plaice, arf arf*

During my time spent living abroad, I got regular, severe, cravings for fish and chips.

Place?

York's the place for me at the moment. I do have extremely fond memories of Oulu, in Northern Finland, though.

Many thanks Mark! Welcome aboard!

April 25 fundraiser

It's that time of year again! This year, we're outside at, er St Mary Le Belfry or something (**what is it Sally, I wasn't listening?**), and we're doing a dusk to dawn Shakespearothon on Saturday April 25! Although not set in stone, it's likely to include read performances of Romeo and Juliet and Macbeth, a bit of singing and busking Shakespeare. So if there's any speech or any scene that you've ever wanted to do, this is your chance – no auditions – we're taking EVERYONE!! And their friends!!! Please do get involved with this, it'll be great fun and absolutely the more the merrier. Please contact either me or Sally to say not what your YSP can do for you, but what you can do for your YSP!

Competition time!

Not that anyone *ever* bothers entering, but this month's fantastic prize is a lock of Shakespeare's VERY OWN HAIR!! This invaluable artefact, that could be from his head, his beard or any other part of his body can be yours if you can tell me what the following has to do anything of the above...



The one person I've already shown the picture to is, sadly, not allowed to enter!
An all time high

Usual bump, send any contributions, competition entries, offers to help at the fundraiser to mr.alistair@talk21.com. Look forward to hearing from you! I'm wide to receive!

Pipitty pip!