

York Shakespeare Project Newsletter



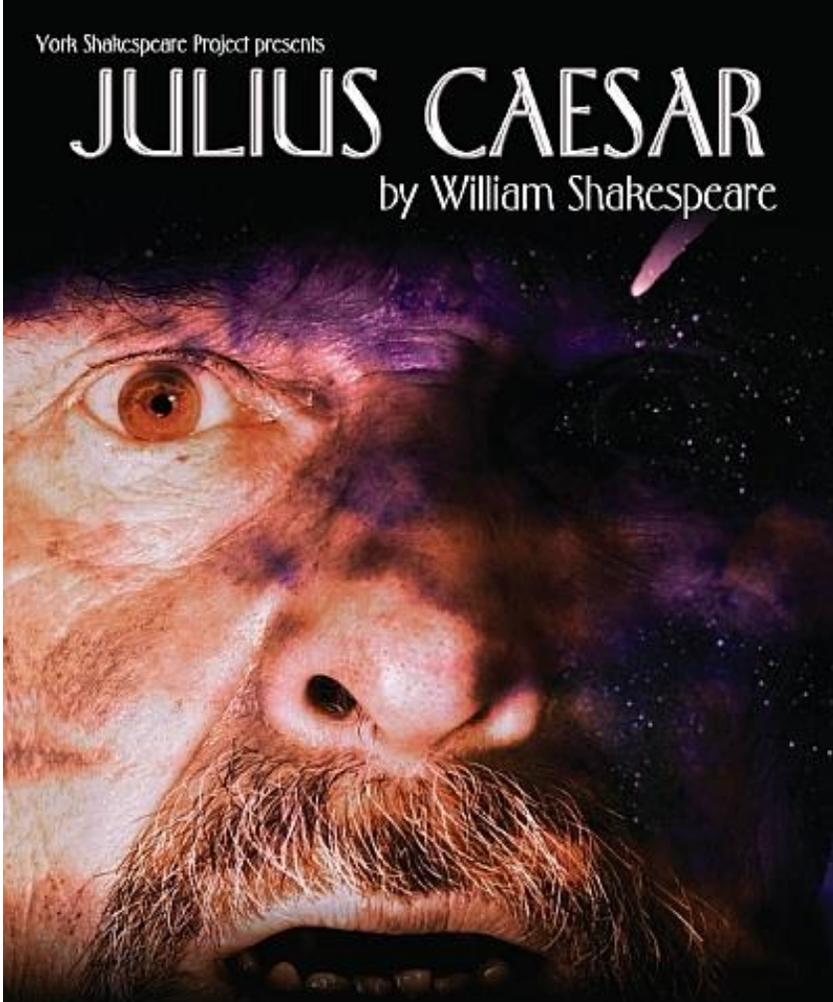
June 2009

*“Cry, 'Havoc!' and let slip the dogs of war.”*

York Shakespeare Project presents

# JULIUS CAESAR

by William Shakespeare



at the Studio Theatre, 41 Monkgate  
Tickets £9 (£7 concessions)  
Opening night all tickets £7  
Theatre Royal box office 01904 623568

Weds 10th - Sat 20th June 7.30pm  
Matinee Saturday 20th 2.30pm  
No performance on Monday 15th  
[www.yorktheatreroyal.co.uk](http://www.yorktheatreroyal.co.uk)

## **Julius Caesar**

It's almost here, the summer YSP blockbuster, Julius Caesar, with stabbings, ides, poets, dogs of war, plebs and the usually cut scene where Mark Antony wrestles with an alligator.

It opens on 10<sup>th</sup> June and is at 41 Monkgate, which is the one behind the Methodist church on Monkgate. Just past the Tap and Spile. If you're not sure, just pop in to the Tap and Spile and ask me, as I have selflessly volunteered to sit in there most nights when the show's on.

So, just to wet your appetites, here's director Mark Smith on the story so far...

*We're getting closer and closer to opening night, how's it all looking?*

Great! There are so many different elements to bring together, but we've got some brilliant people working on them all, particularly on the design, set and props side, and I can't wait to see everything coming together. The acting side of things is looking fantastic, and we're just working on keeping the pace up and creating an electric experience overall

*What are you most excited about seeing in the production?*

See above, but really I'm looking forward to seeing these scenes, this incredible forward action of the play, under the lighting and with all the sound and music we've been sourcing separately. There's a fascinating tension between the slow nobility and thoughtfulness of the characters and the incredible pace of the plot.

*What are you most proud about?*

I'm incredibly proud of the cast. They've been so dedicated, from the noblest Roman senator to the cheekiest Commoner, and have really put in the time outside of the rehearsal room, coming up with brilliant suggestions and really working hard on the text. It's been fantastic to see such a mix of people, of different ages and experience levels all coming together (all 25 of them...!)

*What one thing would you shout into the faces of the good people of York to make them come and see it?*

Maurice has come up with a good sales pitch, given the current climate: "If you feel like seeing a politician hacked to death, come to 41 Monkgate between the 10th and 20th of June...!"

Personally, I'm hoping the promise of a large-cast, fast-paced, spooky thriller will tempt the crowds.

*I imagine the cast will want to get you a sumptuous director's presents, any hints you'd like to subtly drop while you have the chance?*

Hehe! Well, I really don't know. I like the look of those tunics they're getting to wear... Not sure I'd wear one out and about though.

And there's more, here's Maurice Crichton, a newcomer to YSP playing Brutus...

*Hello Maurice, what's been your favourite thing about Julius Caesar so far?*

Among my favourite things: Dermot's relentless attempts at humour; making my Zip Zap Boing debut and working on my Zap; regularly getting to stick a knife into a politician; being affectionately pawed by Mrs Brutus; finding week by week that the script is actually quite well written; the line addressed to Cassius "By the gods,/You shall digest the venom of your spleen/Though it do split you"; ganging up on Artimedorus/Alan, in one of Mark's loudest rehearsal exercises, in fact, being loud in general; but above all, being welcomed into the warm bosom of YSP and re-discovering the toothsome glory of the custard cream.



*The noblest Roman of them all*

*What are you most looking forward to about the show?*

Right now, not having performed on a stage since I was at school in 1982, that question gets a Boing. 3 weeks out it's really all about dread. So, the moment the dread goes and I get to say 'I did it'?

*As a YSP debutant, I'm sure you'll be wanting to come back and be in more plays, if you could choose any part in Shakespeare to play, what would it be, and why?*

You all have permission to shoot me if I ever take on more than 300 lines again. I have wanted to play Shylock since I did it for 'O' level. But I have already taken the opportunity on Bardathon day (where were you?) to have a run at 'Hath not a Jew eyes' and where better to rail at Christianity than right outside the Minster. So next thought, as a pure bred Scot who 'disny huv ony accen', is to have two or three minor roles in the Scottish play that would allow me to showcase a variety of Scottish voices and in particular to work up my Sir Alex Ferguson. But, if I could absorb the lines merely by diligent ingestion of tea and biscuits, Benedict, in Much Ado, would I believe be the very custard cream of parts, a bit dry and brusque to begin with, but soft and sweet in the middle.

Thank you Maurice!

And dear, dear Jenny on Portia, Brutus's's's's missususususu.

*Hello dearest heart, what are you most looking forward to about the show?*

Everything!

I'm really looking forward to the Portia scenes at the start of the play because she's just so clever – emotionally and intellectually. And her speeches in the scene with Brutus are fantastic and so beautifully written. I just hope I can do her justice, really.

And then I get to be a pleb and a soldier for the rest of the play. Raaaaah!!!!!!! Maurice and Gareth, bring it on!

Oh, and there's the bit in the last scene where Krystal, Jane and I are being soldiers but morph into Charlie's Angels for Mark Antony's final entrance. But don't tell Mark S. It's a special, secret surprise!

*What have you most enjoyed about the production so far?*

In the earlier rehearsals, I've enjoyed having the chance to really explore Portia's character and her relationship with Brutus. And getting to know Maurice, because he's fantastic.

More recently we've been doing crowd scenes. Heckling the important people, killing poets, that kind of thing. And at the weekend we did fighting!!!!!! With metal swords!!!!!! And it was brilliant!!!!!!

Obviously, being a Pleb/Soldier isn't all fun and games though; it is a serious business. Here is what we have learned:

- Plebs were quite rich Romans and wouldn't have adopted comedy accents.
- Especially not fake-Geordie. Or Mockney. And definitely not Welsh. No accents.
- And they weren't pirates either.
- You have to learn your Pleb lines properly and not just say "Aye" all the time. This is important as one of Brian's actual Pleb lines is "Aye" and we can't all be Caesar's mate. Apparently.
- It is bad form to offer other Plebs a shiny pound coin to speak their line in the style of Professor Yaffell from "Bagpuss." And just because they were the one who accepted the challenge, doesn't mean that you won't be found out and have to face the music later.
- Some of the younger members of the cast don't know who "Bagpuss" is and have to do "Him-Off -Tweenies" instead.
- There were surprisingly few fairy princesses in the Roman Army. And if there had been, they wouldn't have had sparkly battle-tiaras or glitter wings.
- We've all been issued with exciting battle-long-johns and we gels have been delighted to discover an exciting pouch in the front that's just the right size for stashing our tic-tacs. Unfortunately, they make a somewhat un-Roman noise when we're fighting.
- Wearing men's underwear is not the erotic experience it's cracked up to be.



*A dish fit for gods*

*Given that the prototype YSP time machine is almost up and running now, when we go back in time and talk to WS himself, what improvements would you suggest to him about Julius Caesar?*

Well, for a start, Portia should be in it more because she's ace. In fact, she (that's Portia – not just me with a costume change pretending to be a bloke) should be in the fight scenes. Fighting. In a nice frock. And she should have some friends. Maybe an Australian one called Krystallia. And Sallia and Jania. And they should have a scene where they get roaring drunk with the Soothsayer-ia, Calphurnia and Esme-ia. And the night before the battle, I see them staying in a nice boutique hotel, rather than a tent. Because camp beds can play hell with your back and you've got to concentrate if you're going to be playing...er, sorry...fighting with swords. And it's important not to squeal and drop your sword when Maurice pulls his scary face. That's another thing we've learnt.

And then, of course, there's the unexplored love story of Clitus and Dardanius. They've become a bit legendary for us lately and I know that Gareth and Straz will be keen to pad out this vital bit of back story. Old Shakey tantalisingly sets it up in the final scene, only to have them "Fly, my pretties, fly!" off into the sunset just before the denouement. I think, to be fair, there would need to be a spin-off interlude to deal fully and frankly with this touching and beautiful strand of subplottery...maybe involving a dream ballet...and a bit where Wagon Wheels get thrown into the audience...

Thank you Jenny!

### **Fantastic Competition!!!**

Win, win, and win, pretty much anything you want, in the all-new, spot the Muldowney competition. In the following picture, we have concealed Jeremy Muldowney, all you have to do is to use your expert opinion as to where he might be. Simply mark with a cross where you think he is, and if you're the first correct answer drawn from the YSP hat, you can win anything you set your heart on, including fantastic cars, tellies, speedboats and the like. And a place on the first trip taken by the prototype YSP time machine as we go back, back, back in time and see the genuine opening night of Julius Caesar! Wowsers, wowsers, wowsers!



## **Henry VIII, from Jeremy**

My thanks to all who have expressed an interest in the joint YSP/York Minster abridged production of Henry VIII on July 18th. Please bear with me ... there's absolutely no chance of any rehearsals until Julius Caesar is over!!!! I do intend, however, to finalize the casting over the next week or two and will send out a full list as soon as I've done so. Meanwhile - if I've already allocated you a named part (Howard, Sally, Pulak, Lee, Toby, Elaine etc etc) just start learning the lines: they won't change much!

## **Richard II**

There's still time to put in your fantastic ideas for directing. Closing date is the 17<sup>th</sup> June – for further information on what we need from you, contact Sally.

## **Taming of the Shrew**

Don't forget as well that for outdoor picnic Shakespeare this summer, our dear friends at Mooted (A Life in the Theatre, 'Tis Pity She's a Whore) are producing Taming of the Shrew for their summer spectacular, which is being performed in Rowntree Park in York on 1 – 10 July and Valley Gardens in Harrogate on 14 - 17 July. In it are such YSP luminaries as Jonathan Bedford (King John, Henry VI), Andy Curry (Henry VI), Alistair Carr (newsletter fellow) and Lara Pattison (As You Like It), and is directed by Mark France (A Midsummer Night's Dream, Henry VI). Cath Doman, the genius designer behind Bottom's head in Midsummer Night's Dream, and Henry VI is involved in the design for this as well. Further information can be found at their website at <http://www.mootedtheatre.com/>, where tickets are available.

## **Warm summer days**

Next newsletter will be the post Julius Caesar one, so we'll have reviews and scandalous gossip from the last night party, as well as the early runners and riders for Richard II. Please get in touch if you want to put anything in the newsletter, just a reminder the lonely hearts column will be up and running the second someone puts an ad in (which will, of course, be sensitively handled). There are plans afoot for a bigger summer night out, so any suggestions for that will be welcome. For all the above, and, indeed anything else, please email me at [mr.alistair@talk21.com](mailto:mr.alistair@talk21.com).

*Goodnight, ladies. Goodnight, sweet ladies, good night, good night.*