**Julius Caesar**

**by William Shakespeare**

**Audio Description Introduction**

**to the streamed performance by**

**the Lir, National Academy of Dramatic Art, June 2021**

Welcome to the audio description introduction to **Julius Caesar** by William Shakespeare, presented by the Lir Academy.

The play is directed by Marc Atkinson Borrull. Set Design is by Sarah Bacon, Costume Design by Maree Kearns and Lighting Design by Eoin Winning. Sound Design is by Kevin Gleeson.

The performance lasts for approximately two hours and twenty minutes with one fifteen-minute interval. This interval will later be cut from non-live streams.

**ABOUT THE PLAY**

Enter the situation room of Julius Caesar’s government - the political heart of a city in turmoil.

Caesar’s popular and progressive leadership is delivering much needed change, but where do his personal ambitions lead? Inside the corridors of power, a young and radical faction is forming, determined that Caesar’s cult of personality should move on and make way for new voices.

Outside, Rome is a place where time is running out. Mysterious forces make the idea of conspiracy an everyday reality, and the will of the people is easily manipulated. As rumours and lies spread across the citizenry, big questions are on everybody’s lips. At what point does political violence become a moral imperative? And, when progressives are divided, what forces lurk ready to take power in a political vacuum?

This performance will be live-streamed on the 21st of June 2021 at 7pm, with a recording available to book from the 22nd to the 29th of June. Once booked, the link remains active to view until the 6th of July.

Details about the performances and how to book, can be found online at [www.thelir.ie](http://www.thelir.ie), or by calling the Lir Box Office at (01) 896 2559.

**ABOUT THE SET**

Before the performance begins, the stage is dimly lit in a pale blue light. The whole back wall is covered by thick, claret red velvet curtains in deep swags. Two long boardroom tables form a line towards the rear of the stage, each with three black upholstered chairs spaced evenly behind. The long sides of the tables, facing us, are dressed with black, pleated fabric to the floor.

A square table sits between them, upon which is a single, ornate golden armchair, with cream, striped-satin upholstery. Both this table, and the longer boardroom tables, have a honeyed wood veneer surface, edged with black.

On either side of the stage, facing in towards the centre, are four plain black, moulded-plastic chairs, each with a cardboard box underneath. When not performing in the centre space, actors return to these chairs and sit and wait for their next scene – observing the action.

Hanging from a clear wire in the centre is a golden band of laurel leaves. It is picked out in the gloom by two cross beams. Large flat screen televisions on moveable stands have been placed on either side of the stage. Throughout the performance they are turned away from us. When crowds are heard cheering in the distance, characters turn to the screens to acknowledge this uproar. At certain times throughout the performance, the screens are turned to us, as at the beginning, showing the illuminated laurel crown.

Later on, the two long tables are arranged parallel to one another, with the chairs facing the centre, and the small square table set neatly between them at the end nearest us, forming a U-shape. A television camera is set up, to facilitate Caesar’s address to Rome. Some characters opt to use an amplified microphone to address the crowd.

Later still, the velvet red curtain at the back is dropped to the floor and then half-hoisted again to form uneven peaks, like army tents on the horizon. At this point, a lighting rig is lowered to mid-height over the stage, and fluorescent strip-lighting glows dimly: a blueish glow for one location, and a queasy green for a second.

In this set-up, a single trestle table is set on the left hand side, with a laptop facing the rear of the stage. Someone brings in a cylindrical Bluetooth speaker to play music.

**ABOUT THE CAST AND COSTUMES**

**Julius Caesar** is played by Macleod Stephen. With fair hair, neatly parted at the side, and a slight beard and moustache, Caesar wears a pale grey lounge suit with white shirt, and pale pink tie tucked in place with a gold tie bar. His movements are calm and confident. When not onstage, he often sits to one side, observing the action.

He later appears as **Strato**, wearing dark heavy-duty cotton trousers, jacket and peaked cap.

Caesar’s wife, **Calpurnia**, is played by Maeve Bradley. A tall woman, with long brown hair, she first appears wearing a bright red sheepskin overcoat, with red jacket underneath teamed with black trousers and court shoes, and a black and red floral-patterned top. Her hair is swept back from her face with a black velvet hairband studded with pearls. Her only other accessory, a gold necklace.

She later appears as **Cinna the Conspirator**. Here, she speaks with a Northern Irish accent, and wears a grey blazer instead, with the black trousers and shoes, and a black trench coat. Her long hair is pulled back into a low ponytail.

**Brutus**, a Roman politician, is played by Coleman Pedigo, who speaks with a soft American accent. His wavy brown hair is cut short and neatly combed. He is clean-shaven. Brutus wears a Prussian blue and grey check suit, with a blue waistcoat, pale shirt and striped tie. An ID badge on a lanyard hangs around his neck.

**Cassius**, another politician, is played by Molly Whelan. A petite woman, with straight, shoulder-length dark brown hair, Cassius is stern, her brow often furrowed. She is quick to anger, nostrils flaring and eyes widening. At first she wears a three-quarter length black overcoat, with a neat black-and-grey check, silver zipped jacket underneath, and black jeans with lace-up, flat-heeled boots. Later, she swaps the jacket for a heavy-duty cotton army jacket with epaulettes, and a peaked cap. She too wears an ID badge around her neck, and a knife pouch attached to her belt.

**Portia**, Brutus’s wife, is played byRebecca Raeburn. A woman with long blonde hair, hanging loosely around her shoulders, Portia wears a sky blue trouser suit, with a plain white blouse untucked, and unbuttoned at the neck. The sleeves of her jacket are rolled back to reveal white silk lining. She wears cream, mid-heeled shoes. Her demeanour is open and gentle.

She later appears playing **Octavius**, kinsman to Julius Caesar. Her blonde hair swept up into a high ponytail, she wears a black polo neck, with black jeans, with a leather jacket and black leather boots. Her face is stern, often with lips firmly pursed.

**Marc Antony**, is played by Darragh Feehely. A slight man, with short, neat brown hair and trimmed beard, Marc Antony speaks with a lilting midlands accent. He wears a charcoal grey pinstripe suit with pale blue shirt, and red tie.

**Cinna the Poet** is played by Jeremy Martin. When he first appears, he wears a grey woollen cap, check flannel shirt and a waistcoat and trousers in Prussian blue. He wears black leather shoes, and covers all with a heavy canvas apron.

He later appears as **Lucius**, an attendant to Brutus. He wears the same shirt, waistcoat and trousers as before, but without the woollen cap. His hair is neatly shaved at the sides and long on top, swept carefully into a well-gelled topknot. He is eager and fresh-faced.

**Murellus**, a member of Caesar’s cohort, is played by Terri Jade Donovan. She has shoulder-length brown hair, and wears red lipstick, and speaks with an English accent. Murellus wears a black wool overcoat and black mid-length skirt with a red jacket with black edging, and black court shoes. She also wears a string of pearls.

Later appearing as **Casca**, she wears a black polo top, black trousers, boots and a glitter biker jacket, with a dark green overcoat on top. She wears her hair in a low ponytail.

The **Soothsayer**, citizens, servants and soldiers’ voices are played by the ensemble throughout the performance.

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Thank you.