



Audio Description Pre-Show Notes

Julius Caesar

Please note: This performance will include bright flashes of light and loud noises, such as to represent a thunderstorm.

Ambition, conspiracy, and violence are rife in Bell Shakespeare's production of Julius Caesar. Betrayal and chaos rock the republic as Rome teeters on the brink of collapse.

This play has always contained anachronism, blending details from different time periods. When William Shakespeare adapted Plutarch's ancient Roman history 400 years ago, he was also reflecting on the politics of his own Elizabethan society.

This new production amplifies the anachronism. The modern and ancient are blended together onstage, an age-old story reaching through time to touch our present day.

The Venue

Julius Caesar will be staged in the Playhouse, one of the Sydney Opera House's smaller theatres.

The Playhouse is located inside the Western Foyer, a long rectangular space that runs the length of the building at ground level. Stretching along one side of the Foyer is a wall with many large glass windows and doors looking out on the Harbour.

Along the opposite wall of the Foyer are the theatre entrance doors, as well as a bar and café, a box office counter, and a cloak room counter. There are toilets at either end of the Foyer, including an accessible option at both locations.

The Playhouse has 400 seats arranged in 17 long rows that slope down toward the stage. The seats are made of a light wood and have dark blue fabric cushions. The black walls of the theatre are covered with panels of the same light wood as the seats. The stage is quite small, and the front of the stage has three edges so that it juts out slightly towards the audience.

The Set

The story of Julius Caesar takes place in the Roman Republic. This performance is set in a run-down Italian courtyard. Within this humble courtyard, different furniture, props,

lighting, and video projection will be used to transport the audience to different places such as a busy forum, a quiet orchard, or a tense military camp.

The courtyard floor is paved with dark grey slate tiles, well-worn with many comings and goings. Mossy greenery and tufts of grass poke through the cracks.

The tall, stuccoed outer walls of a building wrap around the back edges of the courtyard. The side walls are angled slightly outward, mirroring the front edges of the stage to give the courtyard an irregular hexagon shape.

The walls are terracotta red, with a gold frieze in a thick band along the top. Reminiscent of a vibrant villa, but weathered and faded from years in the Italian sun.

The walls are divided into 7 tall panels of different widths, with a gap in between each one. The largest gap is in the centre back wall, and is used as an entry and exit point. Two smaller doorframes are cut out of the wall panels, one directly to the left of the centre gap and one in the side wall to the right.

Words will be projected vertically down the back wall panels to indicate scene changes.

An olive tree stands in the back left corner of the courtyard, -bushy green leaves with a spindly brown trunk. Dotted around the edges of the courtyard are knee-height bushes of spikey spinifex grass.

Folded up against the lefthand wall of the courtyard is a battered and faded cafe umbrella, which will be opened and closed during the show. It is navy and red striped and has the logo for 'Cinzano', an Italian brand of vermouth, printed on each side. At the beginning of the play, a garland of lavender is draped over the top of the umbrella.

Four metal base plates are hidden in tufts of grass around the left half of the courtyard floor, so that the umbrella and olive tree can be moved to different positions.

A stylish but tired mid-century modern couch sits along the righthand wall. Its lush, dark green leather is faded and crumpled after years of sitting outside in a courtyard. It has a wooden base and legs.

At the beginning of the play, a white plastic table and mis-matched folding chairs are set up in the middle of the courtyard, slightly to the right of centre. The table is covered in purple lavender sprigs, old wooden crates and a handful of white plastic cups.

During the second half of the play, a rusted steel scaffold like a fire escape ladder is wheeled in to become the "pulpit" for grand speeches. Around 2 metres tall, it towers over the courtyard. Open metal steps climb to a platform at the top, just wide enough for one person to stand comfortably up there. A microphone stand is placed on the platform.

The Cast and Characters

An ensemble cast of ten actors populate the tumultuous Roman Republic. Most will play more than one role throughout – from senators and generals to servants and commoners.

The story revolves around a group of Roman senators. The senators wear clean white suits. Relaxed fits and wide-leg trousers give them an air of breezy sophistication. Their wives also wear white, draped in luxuriously flowing gowns like Greco-Roman goddesses.

The senators must court the approval of Rome's commonfolk, a rabble of tradespeople and peasants. Their clothes are more casual and rustic, a variety of muted colours and sturdy fabrics.

The audience becomes a large crowd representing the general public of Rome. The commoners will sometimes be found in the crowd, moving up and down the side aisles of the auditorium. Senators will address the crowd in speeches.

In between the senators and commonfolk are the tribunes, the civil servants and union representatives of ancient Rome. They are dressed like old-fashioned private eyes, wearing double-breasted grey suits and long brown trench coats with the collars turned up.

[Septimus Caton \(he/him\) plays Julius Caesar.](#)

Julius Caesar is the ultimate Roman leader. Hugely popular with the masses, he is ambitious to be crowned king.

Caesar is an imposing, stately figure. He is very tall, looming over everyone, with a slim but strong build. He is in his late 40s or early 50s, with pale skin and short brown hair swept back into a glossy quiff. His beard, neatly groomed and greying, lends him a mature authority.

He wears a large white double-breasted suit jacket over a matching waistcoat and white business shirt worn open at the neck. The wide legs of his white suit trousers have a neat crease pressed down their centres. He has white leather brogues on his feet, and rings on his fingers. In the Senate, he drapes a large white toga with purple edging over his suit.

He carries himself with an upright but relaxed posture, moving about with a swagger. He has piercing eyes and often flashes an arrogant smirk. He is confident, blissfully unaware that his downfall is being plotted behind his back.

Brigid Zengeni (she/her) plays Brutus.

Brutus is a fellow senator and close friend of Julius Caesar. Governed by strong moral convictions, Brutus is concerned that Caesar is too hungry for power.

Brutus is a similar age to Caesar. She is much shorter than him, the top of her head about level with his shoulders. Her light brown freckled skin is smooth apart from deep-set creases between her cheeks and mouth, emphasising a solemn expression. Her lips are often tightly pursed, their corners sloping downward. The weight of responsibility rests heavily on her shoulders.

Her thick black hair has been tightly braided into about 5 rows that curve across her scalp, all gathered into a round bun at the nape of her neck. It's an elegant, practical hairstyle that means business.

She wears a similar white three-piece suit to Julius Caesar, and a pair of white leather ankle boots with blocky heels and pointed toes.

Leon Ford (he/him) plays Cassius.

Senator Cassius is a shrewd, weaselly man with a strong resentment for Julius Caesar. He is at the centre of the plot against the leader, pulling the strings.

Cassius is about the same age as Caesar and Brutus. He is tall and wiry with pale skin. He has light brown curly hair, short around the sides and longer on top, and a stubble beard. He peers about with sharp eyes. There is a tension in the way he moves, like a coiled spring.

He wears a white suit with no waistcoat, his shirt unbuttoned at the collar. He wears similar white brogues to Julius Caesar. When he first appears, a purple silk scarf hangs from around his neck.

Cassius is not often still. He paces, fidgets, and gestures passionately when he speaks.

Leon Ford also plays a commoner in rustic tweed.

Peter Carroll (he/him) plays Casca.

Senator Casca plays an important part in the conspiracy against Julius Caesar.

He is a slender man in his 80s, about the same height as Brutus with shoulders slightly stooped. He has pale skin and short white hair.

He wears a white three piece suit and white brogues. His suit is a little more close-fitting than the others, its jacket fastened with a button. He also wears a white tie.

Peter Carroll also plays a commoner, dressed like an old farmer in tweed, suspenders, and a flat cap.

[Jules Billington \(they/them\) plays Portia.](#)

Portia is the strong-willed, devoted wife of Brutus. She senses that Brutus is hiding something from her.

Portia is in her 30s and is about the same height as Brutus. She has fair skin and an androgynous appearance, lean and athletic with a short, slicked back pixie cut of sandy blonde hair. Her eyes are deep and gentle.

She wears an elegant robe of flowing white silk. A high cowl neckline of loose folds covers her chest, then drapes low behind her to reveal her bare back. The flowing sleeves of the gown cover her arms up to the wrist. As she moves, her legs peek through slits that open in the sides of the skirt. She is barefoot.

Jules Billington is also the mysterious Soothsayer, a pale and ghostly figure in a billowing black robe that hides most of her body. She seems to glide rather than walk, the long train of her robe floating across the ground behind her.

Other minor roles played by Jules Billington include a young male servant in a uniform of black trousers and waistcoat, white business shirt and black tie, and a soldier named Titinius in khaki green military fatigues, his young face worn and weathered.

[Ava Madon \(she/her\) plays Calphurnia.](#)

Calphurnia is the charming wife of Julius Caesar. She is concerned for the safety of her husband, sensing the threat that he is too confident to notice.

She is younger than Caesar, in her 20s or early 30s. She is average height with a petite build and light brown skin. Her long, wavy dark hair is pulled into a high ponytail, cascading down past her shoulders.

She wears a sleeveless gown of pleated white silk, draped like a toga over one shoulder and then the other to create a deep plunging neckline. She also wears dangling gold earrings and strappy gold sandals with a heel.

Ava Madon also plays Brutus' young servant Lucius, who wears a uniform of grey trousers and waistcoat with white business shirt and grey tie, her hair piled in a messy bun on top of her head.

Other minor roles played by Ava Madon include a senator called Popilius wearing a white three-piece suit, and a commoner wearing a mid-length pink cotton skirt, several layers of cardigans and jackets in mis-matched colours and a purple bandana headband.

[Mark Leonard Winter \(he/him\) plays Mark Antony.](#)

Mark Antony is Caesar's fiercely loyal right-hand man. He is a passionate person who understands how to play the political game.

He is about 6 foot tall with a slim, athletic build and fair skin. His dark, greying hair is curly and tousled. He often looks directly at people with a wide-eyed and intense gaze, his eyes a piercing blue.

When we first meet Mark Antony, he is wearing a flashy red tracksuit with white stripes up the seams, clean white trainers, and has a garland of lavender draped around his neck. He later changes into a cream-coloured suit, his white business shirt open at the collar.

A little less distinguished than Brutus and the other senators, Mark Antony is not to be underestimated.

Mark Leonard Winter also plays a commoner in light brown trousers with a green business shirt and patterned tie.

[James Lugton \(he/him\) plays Decius.](#)

Senator Decius is a member of the conspiracy against Caesar.

He is 60 years old, 6 foot tall and slim. He has fair skin, greying collar-length hair swept back away from his face, and a short white beard. He wears a white suit and white loafers.

James Lugton also plays tribune Marullus in a grey suit and brown trench coat, and a commoner in light blue jeans and denim jacket.

[Ruby Maishman \(she/her\) plays Cinna.](#)

Senator Cinna is another conspirator in the plot against Caesar.

She is in her late 20s or early 30s, with an average height and slender build. She has fair skin and long brown wavy hair.

She wears a white suit with a stylish white blouse instead of a business shirt, and white high heels with pointed toes.

Ruby Maishman also plays tribune Flavius as well as the stern Octavius, Julius' Caesar's heir and ally of Mark Antony. Octavius wears a white suit and black framed glasses, with her hair slicked back into a bun.

[Ray Chong Nee \(he/him\) plays Metellus.](#)

Metellus Cimber is also involved in the plot against Julius Caesar. His brother has recently been banished by Caesar.

Metellus is in his 40s, with an average height and build. He has brown skin and short, curly dark hair, with a short greying beard. He wears a cream-coloured suit with matching tie and brogues.

Ray Chong Nee also plays Lepidus, an ally of Octavius and Mark Antony, wearing a white suit.

Other minor roles played by Ray Chong Nee include a cobbler wearing brown pants and rust-coloured canvas jacket, and a commoner in a dark green vest and light-coloured beanie.