

# ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

**THE MSIS PRODUCTION IS SET IN NO SPECIFIC TIME AND YET LIKE 44 BCE AND 1599 AD, IT IS A TIME OF UNCERTAINTY AND LOOMING INSTABILITY.** The set design reflects a landscape of buildings that once evoked great architectural structures but is now slowly falling into ruin. On the sides are signs of public postings of past and present rulers and the sentiments of others spray painted on the walls themselves. At top is a chain link fence-like border that appears to keep the outside at bay. It is a post-apocalyptic world that suggests what can happen when tides of power shift and the centers of order no longer hold.

The production also features a world where women and men command power in equal measure. Mark Antony is a woman; Octavius becomes Octavia whose armies are women and who will, together with Mark Antony, take over as leaders of this conquered land. Among the conspirators, Casca is a woman and joins forces with Brutus and Cassius. These shifts in gender encourage us to question stereotypical views of power and leadership and consider new possibilities for how Shakespeare might be presented for contemporary audiences.

## PUBLIC OR STREET ART INTO SET DESIGN

**ON THE SET, THERE IS EVIDENCE OF A COMMUNITY USING THE SIDES OF BUILDINGS TO EXPRESS DIFFERING OPINIONS.**

Often seen as graffiti or street art, depending on your point of view, these images can tell us a lot about the current state of a culture.

The inspiration for our style of design came from the artist Shepard Fairey, who emerged from the skateboarding scene, and is most commonly known as the artist behind the Barack Obama “Hope” poster from the 2008 campaign. Fairey has written many articles on his work as art and as propaganda. He makes evocative symbols that are deceptively straightforward. “Investigate and deconstruct everything because a person and the simplified symbol they have become aren’t always the same thing.”  
[www.obeygiant.com](http://www.obeygiant.com)



Barack Obama Hope  
by Shepard Fairey

Humans have long been known to express their thoughts, experiences and opinions by drawing on the inside

of caves, on streets, and buildings. Graffiti and street art have a tense relationship, and is often simplified

to mean that one was done without permission while the other was given the space by the property owner or government. Others see graffiti as a way of defying the establishment of galleries and museums and saying that just because something is made outside their jurisdiction doesn’t mean it’s not art. It is also a way of reclaiming an area in both instances. The art on the buildings of a neighborhood can tell an outsider a lot about the world they are entering. It can also serve to communicate non-verbally between citizens by ascribing certain blocks to certain allegiances of politics or social groups. It can easily be a way for the people to covertly spread a message. Think of billboard advertising: a quick image on the side of the road attempting to get your attention and to give your brain the message “You are thirsty. Get off at the next exit and buy this icy cold beverage now.” If a society is living under a dictatorship or if it is even mildly threatening to punish people who have alternative ideas to what is allowed to be spoken, a way of rallying support might be to leave messages up on buildings, especially if those symbols only mean something to the people involved in a certain movement or group. In a time without social media, the public space is the only way to “post” an opinion.

## ASK YOURSELF

HOW DO WE USE IMAGES DAILY TO COMMUNICATE?

CAN YOU THINK OF AN INSTANCE WHERE IMAGES HAVE BEEN USED PUBLICLY TO SWAY PEOPLE’S OPINIONS?

# ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

## CHARACTERS

### CAESARIANS

**JULIUS CAESAR** General and ruler of Rome

**CALPURNIA** Wife to Caesar

**MARK ANTONY** Caesar's favorite; one of three generals (the Triumvirate) who lead Rome after Caesar's death.

**OCTAVIA** Caesar's niece and heir; a member of the Triumvirate.

**PUBLIUS**

### FAMILY AND FOLLOWERS OF THE CONSPIRACY AGAINST CAESAR

**MARCUS BRUTUS** Senator recruited to lead the conspiracy

**PORTIA** Wife to Brutus

**CASSIUS** Senator and friend to Brutus; organizes conspiracy

**CASCA** Senator

**CINNA** Senator

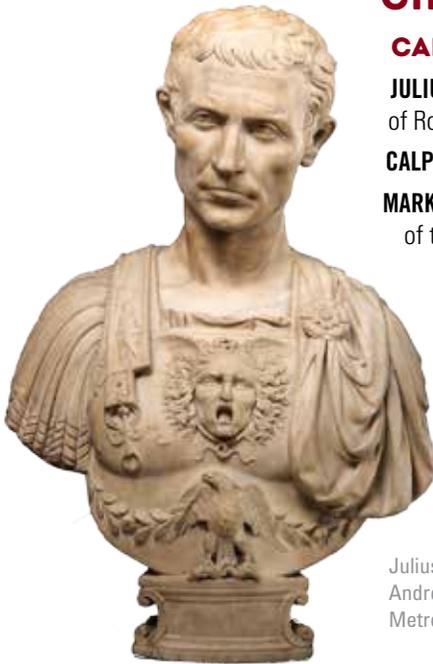
### OTHER ROMANS

#### SOOTHSAYER

**PINDARUS** Slave, freed by his service to Cassius

#### FIRST AND SECOND COMMONER

#### SOLDIER



Julius Caesar bust by Andrea di Pietro di Marco Ferrucci, Metropolitan Museum of Art

## EMBLEMS AND COSTUME DESIGN

**I**N THE COURSE OF THE PLAY, the characters are vying to form allegiances to different sides of ideologies and in battle. A tool that is often used to identify one's belief system is an emblem, and you will see them in our production of *Julius Caesar*. An emblem is a symbol that holds within it the ideas a group stands for and the values they share.

The Romans adopted the eagle, or the Aquila, as their

emblem. The eagle was associated with the god, Jupiter, and therefore symbolized strength, courage, and immortality. The symbol of the eagle was carried into battle, and it was believed that if the eagle was captured, then the battle and Roman honor was lost.

In this production you will see two versions of an eagle, much like the two visions for the Roman Empire's future. As new leadership in the form of Mark Antony and the younger Octavius come into play, a new emblem emerges.

This tour has women playing the roles of Mark Antony and Octavius (here, Octavia), and it is fitting that their em-

blem should take a new shape. In history, these two figures would work together for a time, but eventually Octavius would lead a battle against Antony when he chose his love of Cleopatra over the love of country. After Octavius won, there began a period known as Pax Romana, or a period of Roman peace.

In this production Octavius is Octavia and her accord with Mark Antony can be seen in the new symbol which includes a circle. A circle symbol through time has signified wholeness and the cyclical nature of life, and is often associated with women or female power as felt in the earth and the moon.



Julius Caesar costume designs by Jeremy Floyd feature the new emblem

# ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

## THE STORY OF THE PLAY: JULIUS CAESAR

**T**HE CITIZENS OF ROME HAVE GATHERED IN THE STREETS IN CELEBRATION OF THE RETURN OF THE GREAT MILITARY GENERAL JULIUS CAESAR.

**CAESAR** and his armies have defeated Pompey and the ascension of Rome as a military might is assured. The Roman Republic is a government where no one man may rule alone. However, the Senate moves to anoint Caesar with a crown, in recognition of his successes. Caesar's favorite, **MARK ANTONY**, joins in the idea. A lone voice in the crowd calls out to Caesar: "Beware the Ides of March." **THE SOOTHSAYER** steps forward and repeats the warning. Caesar waves it away and proceeds to the Capitol.



*Julius Caesar costume designs by Jeremy Floyd*

There are those who fear this consolidation of his power. One ruler's absolute power will undermine the Republic and lead to tyranny. Led by **CASSIUS**, the conspirators plot their course of action. Cassius says: "I was born free as Caesar. And this man/Is now become a god, and Cassius is/A wretched creature."

Cassius enlists the support of the loyal and respectable **BRUTUS**. Brutus, hearing the cheering, worries: "I do fear the people/Choose Caesar for their King." Once Brutus joins Cassius and the others, they agree the only solution is to assassinate Caesar before he is proclaimed King. Cassius also suggests that Marc Antony be killed along with Caesar but Brutus overrules the idea saying, "Let us be sacrificers, not butchers."

The Ides of March arrive and Caesar after dismissing the warnings of his wife, **CALPURNIA**, to not attend the Senate this day, enters the Capitol to take his

place. **CASCA** stabs Caesar and others quickly join in, ending with a final stab by Brutus to which Caesar exclaims: "Et tu, Brute? Then fall Caesar." Assured of his own safety, Mark Antony appears to join forces with them and asks to speak at Caesar's funeral. Once alone, she vows revenge: "O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth/That I am meek and gentle with these butchers. Thou art the ruins of the noblest man/That ever lived in the tide of times. Woe to the hand that shed this costly blood!"

Before the crowds, Brutus explains his fears what Caesar might have become for the Republic. "There is tears for his love; joy for his fortune; honor for his valor; and death for his ambition." Brutus leaves Mark Antony alone to speak. She begins cautiously, noting that Brutus said Caesar was ambitious "And Brutus is an honorable man." She continues with his passionate words, identifying each wound in Caesar's body and points to Brutus's "most unkindest cut of all." Claiming to be no gifted speaker such as Brutus, she instead tells the crowd that were he Brutus he would "ruffle up your spirits and put a tongue/In every wound of Caesar that should move/The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny." As the angry crowd carries off Caesar's body, Mark Antony gloats that "Now let it work. Mischief, thou art afoot/Take thou what course thou wilt!"

Anthony and **OCTAVIA**, Caesar's niece and heir, take control of Rome and plot how they will defeat Brutus and Cassius and the rest. Forced to flee Rome and the angry mob Antony has incited to action, Brutus and Cassius gather armies. At their camp, Cassius and Brutus argue with one another. They also learn that Mark Antony and Octavia are marching towards Phillipii where Brutus says they will meet. Late that night, Brutus is visited by Caesar's ghost who identifies himself as "thy evil spirit, Brutus... /thou will see me at Phillipii."

As the two armies face each other, Mark Antony's forces gain advantage over Cassius. Disconsolate with the loss, Cassius orders a servant to stab him. Brutus discovers his body and his spirit is broken. "I know my hour is come" and he too, asks his servant to hold his sword "whilst I run on it." Learning of their deaths, Antony says of Brutus: "This was the noblest Roman of them all." Octavia orders his body to be buried "With all respect and rites of burial." She concludes: "So call the field to rest; and let's away, To part the glories of this happy day."