

barefoot
shakespeare company

barefoot shakespeare
company presents

william shakespeare's

Julia Caesar

directed by regina renée russell

july 16-18 &
23-25, 7pm EST

Director's Note

Hello and thank you for taking your time to experience our wonderful play.

Over the course of 2020 I witnessed and was reminded of how cruelly the world treats Black women and Black femmes. The murder of Breonna Taylor and the subsequent dismissal of her murderers' charges at the hands of the coward Daniel Cameron really shook me to my core. But not (just) because it was a horrific miscarriage of justice. I was overwhelmed because of how *often* Black femmes are denied justice, credit, kindness, and even downright human decency. How *common* it is, even as we actively fight to achieve and provide these things for others. We are continually told to "wait our turn" and "not make it about race/gender." To quiet our pain, our frustration, our discomfort, our justifiable anger in the face of our own mistreatment. And when we do not? We are vilified, belittled, mocked, gaslit, dehumanized, and even killed.

When I read *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare, my immediate entry point was Caesar himself. Historical record shows Julius Caesar a tyrant, stretching his murderous reach far and wide to grasp at more power and land, seemingly only for himself. And yet, Shakespeare doesn't have Caesar speak for himself much in the play. He has some seemingly towering confidence, but there is no sign of a megalomaniacal dictator in the way Shakespeare wrote Caesar. In the play, the only context we get for Caesar's supposed tyranny is from the conspirators. People who have already decided that Caesar is monstrous and dangerous and needs to be killed. One of the conspirators, Brutus, even has a whole speech where he admits that Caesar only *might* become a tyrant, and must convince himself that *potential* is enough reason to kill Caesar. This made me wonder: what if the play's Caesar is no tyrant at all? What if he actually did want the good of the people and it is his *colleagues* who decided that was unacceptable? What if the conspirators deliberately choose to vilify Caesar due to their own reasons, irrespective of who Caesar actually is or what he is actually doing? They've made up their minds about Caesar, twisting all his actions to justify their bad opinions and there is nothing Caesar can do to stop them.

It struck me swiftly and strongly then that Black femmes and Black women experience this on a never-ending basis. Others make up their minds about who we are, how we look, what we believe in, etc. and use their assumptions (of ignorance, of arrogance, of anger and even of dangerousness) to determine how we are to be treated, regardless of our actual actions and who we truly are as individuals. I also thought back to Daniel Cameron, a Black man who chose to dismiss the charges of those who he knew took a Black woman's life unjustifiably. Heart breaking, I remembered that not everyone knows how to examine their history, to see how it repeats itself and thwart the patterns of oppression and destruction. More importantly, not everyone *chooses* to do that work, even among marginalized folks. We are not a monolith and how we all have been forced to adapt to the structures of cisgendered white supremacist patriarchy can lead to us perpetuating that system of oppression, even as it is actively destructive to our own people. It can even cause marginalized folks to balk at and actively work against positive change, claiming it is "too fast," "too much," and "not respectable enough." Especially those for whom the current system benefits, irrespective of the parts of themselves they've had to excise in order to assimilate. In synthesizing all this, I knew then in which direction I would take this production.

You will be witnessing the result of that exploration, developed with the support of Barefoot Shakespeare Company, Laurel Andersen, Cristina Ramos, and Caitlyn McCain, and with the boundless talent, bravery, and skill of this wonderful cast. I am eternally grateful to all of them.

Protect and believe Black women and Black femmes.

Welcome to Julia Caesar.

--Regina Renée Russell

THE COMPANY

Julia Caesar
Marc Antonia
Marcus Brutus
Portia Catonia/Octavius Caesar
Caius Cassius
Casca Longus
Metellus Cimber
Cinna M. M
Decius Brutus

Tiana Shuntaé Alexander
Alexandra Taylor
Jordan Cobb
Nazlah Black
Rachel Weekley
Mariah Naomi Sanchez
Andy Figueroa
Amelia Fei
Nessa Amherst

Directed by Regina Renée Russell (She/Her)

Assistant Director: Laurel Andersen (They/She)
Stage Manager: Mel Ryan (She/Her)
Intimacy Director: Christina (Cha) Ramos (She/Ella)
Dramaturg: Jimmy Lovett
Voice and Speech: Caitlyn McCain
Movement: Arden Winant (She/Her)

TW: This play contains themes of violence, self-harm and suicide. This production will explore themes of misgendering, homophobia and violence against people of color.

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Tiana Shuntaé Alexander (Julia Caesar) is a Dallas native. Graduate of Booker T Washington HSPVA and Alumna of Grambling State with a BA in Theatre. Known throughout the Dallas metroplex for being a teaching artist/performer. She has been on many stages from Jubilee Theatre, Bishop Arts and The Pocket Sandwich Theatre. She has also worked with Soul Rep Theatre company performing in their Black Men Illuminated play Festival and as Fiona in the regional premiere of “Amazing Grace.” She wrote/produced a one woman show “Pieces of Me” at The Black Academy of Arts and Letters. She has been in numerous productions: Prelude to a kiss (Taylor), Twelfth Night (Dame Toby Belch) Legally Blonde (former Laker Girl/Judge), Hair(Ronny), The Wiz (Evilene), Medea(Medea), White Christmas (Martha) and many more. Tiana believes that with God all things are possible and hopes to be a positive light to whomever she encounters.

Alex Taylor (Antonia) is so honored to be working with Regina and Barefoot Shakespeare, and to be playing this version of this classic character. Some recent credits include Henry VI, Part I (Bishop of Winchester) directed by Calvin Atkinson, and, pre-pandemic, Jules Vernes’ From The Earth to the Moon (General Morgan), directed by Ariel Francoeur.

Jordan Cobb (Brutus) is a New York City based actress. Creator of the sci-fi horror podcast series *Janus Descending* (Chel) and the high seas adventure-thriller *Primordial Deep* (Dr. Marella Morgan), Jordan has been featured on over four-dozen audio dramas, and narrated several audiobooks including *A Song of Wraiths and Ruin*, *This Poison Heart*, and *Deathless Divide*. When she isn't comfortably settled behind the mic, you can find her on stage. Recent credits include Harriet Smith in Shakespeare and Company's *Emma*, Anne Page in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and Maid Marian in *Robin Hood*. You can find her on Twitter (@inkphemeral) or visit her website at jordanvcobb.com.

Nazlah Black (Portia/Octavius) is a theatre artist whose most recent credits include Hermia in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Little Flame), Julietta in *Measure for Measure* (Barefoot Shakes), Gwendolen in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Encounters Theatre) , Malcolm/Witch 2in *Macbeth* (New York Shakespeare Company), and Juliet in a New York City educational tour of *Romeo and Juliet*. Recent film credits include starring as Spoon in Michael Irish’s latest feature film *Permanent Collection*. Nazlah Black received their BFA in Theatre from Cornish College of the Arts (2016)

Rachel Weekley (Cassius) Is a Clown/Performer/Movement Coordinator based in NYC. They graduated from Ohio University with a BFA in performance and trained with The American Mime Theater. Besides creating their own solo work, They are also a Line Producer and Performer with SCOWL, a Queer and Trans-centric, stage combat comedy show. For more info on what shenanigans they’re up to now go to www.rachelweekley.com or Instagram @rachel.weekley.

Mariah Naomi Sanchez (Casca) is working with Barefoot Shakespeare Company for the first time and she is so grateful for the opportunity. While attending Brooklyn College, Mariah performed in productions of: *The Winter's Tale*, *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, [*Porto*], *Porch Play* and *Little Shop of Horrors*. Before Brooklyn College, she also had the privilege of performing in LaGuardia Performing Arts Centers' productions of: *In The Heights*, *Columbus is Happening* and *Passing Strange*. Mariah would like to thank her incredible family and friends for the continued love and support. **IG:** @MariahNaomiSanchez **Twitter:** @MariahActs

Andy Figueroa (Metellus Cimber) is an actor and transgender rights advocate working to create art and space for marginalized identities, particularly queer, Latin*, and disabled communities. Recently, their favorite stage credits (both in-person and online) include: Luz in *En Las Sombras* (Tantrum East), Beth/Laurie in *Little Women* (Ohio University, adapted by Heather Chrisler), King Philip/Hubert in *King John* (The Non-Binary Divers Shakespeare), Polonius in *Hamlet* (Athens on Tap), and Dr. Sweet in *Bug* (Ohio University). They're a sucker for historical fiction, audio dramas, TTRPGs, and all things fantasy. Andy is EMC, recently graduated from Ohio University with a BFA in Performance, and is studying with Shakespeare and Co. this summer. They plan on moving to Chicago in spring of 2022 to pursue a career in theater and voiceover. For more, visit andy-figueroa.com.

Amelia Fei (Cinna) Having *Julius Caesar* being one of the last shows she performed in before COVID, Amelia is over the moon to come full circle to dive back in, with a brand new take, making this beast even more scarily relatable. Born in Taiwan, Seasoned in NYC, and now living in Texas. Some of her credits include: *Avenue Q* (Christmas Eve-Winnepesaukee Playhouse), *Miss Nelson is Missing* (Cheryl-Theaterworks USA), and *Revelation the Musical* (Off Broadway). Special thanks to Regina, Barefoot, and everyone in *Julia Caesar* for creating this loving and safe environment to explore and create art. Ameliafei.com IG: @banana_bedeliafei

Nessa Amherst (Decius Brutus) is an actress and writer based in the MD/DC/VA area. Originally from Chicago, she has graced the stage - both physically and virtually - in a colorful mix of new works and the classics. Most recently, her monologue *Define "Black"* is one of over 40 monologues featured in the anthology, *08:46: Fresh Perspectives*, published by New World Theatre, now available to purchase on Amazon. Some of Ms. Amherst's favorite credits include *As You Like It* (Theatre Lab School of Dramatic Arts) *Lotto & Raffles & Sweepstakes*, *Oh My!* (PlayZoomers), *Medea* (Globe Online), *Runtime Error* (Transformation Theatre), *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (JaYo Théâtre), *These Violent Delights* (Letter of Marque Theater Co.), *The Unnatural Combat* (Sweet Tea Shakespeare), and *The Wednesday Train* (The Organic Theatre). You can find out more about her wonderful adventures at her website: <https://www.nessaamherst.com>, as well as on Instagram @nessaamherst. Carpe Diem!

Laurel Andersen (Assistant Director) (she/they) is so excited to collaborate with Barefoot again. Previous directorial work includes: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Barefoot Shakespeare); *As You Like It* (Match: Lit); Occupy Verona's 2016 summer season (*Romeo and Juliet*; *Follow Romeo*; and *Stay with Juliet*); *And What Grew There*; nine new short plays in *Cocktails and Classics 2018* (Turn to Flesh Productions); *I Laugh To Keep From Crying* (The PIT; The Tank); *Flight Patterns* (Workshop/Reading); and *Merry Wives of Windsor* (staged reading, Match: Lit) and *Atalanta* (Reading). Laurel is also a playwright and actor. More info about those hats at laurelandersen.com. @laurelmrc

Cristina (Cha) Ramos (Intimacy Director) is a multidisciplinary theatre artist devoted to telling underrepresented stories with a focus on the power of movement. Cha received her BA in Anthropology from Columbia University, focusing on performance in the Latinx Caribbean, and is currently completing her MFA in Theatre at Columbia's School of the Arts, focusing on the dramaturgy of new play development, especially as it relates to writing violence and intimacy. As an intimacy professional, Cha has trained with IDI, IDC, and TIE (as well as independent intimacy professionals). She is the resident Intimacy Educator with Turn to Flesh Productions and a teacher-in-training with Intimacy Directors and Coordinators.

Jimmy Lovett (Dramaturge) (they/them) is a writer, maker, and theatre artist living and working in New York City. Outside of the theatre, they work as a dog walker and run a small Etsy shop. This is their first time working with Barefoot and they are grateful to have been so warmly welcomed. They live with two cats and two other humans in Washington Heights. Find them on social media @jimmyclovett.

Caitlyn McCain (Director of Voice and Speech) is a NYC based Actor, Singer and Teaching Artist. Caitlyn is a graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, where she received a BFA in Drama. As an actor, Caitlyn believes that positive representation matters and prioritizes stories that give a voice and platform to historically erased, marginalized and silenced voices on our world's stage. As a voice professional, Caitlyn currently teaches first year Voice & Speech at the Stella Adler Studio of Acting in their 3-Year professional conservatory and youth outreach programs. Additionally, Caitlyn works with New York City Children's Theater to bring theatre based literature programming to District 75 schools and homeless shelters throughout NYC and is the Artistic Associate in charge of Creative Clubhouse – a digital, interactive and accessible theatre space for young people that fosters social-emotional growth.

Special Thanks:
Rob Aronowitz
A.R.T New York

UNREHEARSED!



**MUCH ADO
ABOUT
NOTHING**

AUGUST 21, 4PM

SUMMIT ROCK, CENTRAL PARK



**LOVE'S
LABOURS
LOST**

AUGUST 28, 4PM

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Barefoot Shakespeare Company strives to make the works of William Shakespeare accessible to everyone, with an eye towards modernization to reflect the world we currently live in, and our recent past to examine how we got here. We continue to try and educate both ourselves and our audiences on the histories and struggles of topics such as race, gender equality, politics, and self expression with the Bard's works as our baseline. We value our relationships with our audiences, and encourage them to participate in our productions, blurring the lines between spectator and participant. Education is another pillar of our ethos, with 'ready-to-go' productions and workshops available to any and all who want to explore with us.

Barefoot Shakespeare Company is:

Emily Gallagher - President

Emily Thaler – Production Manager

Courtney Moors – General Manager

Arden Winant – Vice President

Jillian Markowitz Musarskiy – Vice President

Samantha Gronwoldt – Resident Props Director

Regina Renee Russell – Resident Director of Diversity and Inclusion

Caitlyn McCain – Resident Director of Voice and Speech

Rob Aronowitz – Resident Director of Fight

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Venmo: @William-Shakespeare

Barefoot Shakespeare Company calls Summit Rock in Central Park home. From our first show until now, every piece has been brought to life in this space. Summit Rock, is located on the west side of New York's Central Park on land that was original inhabited by the Munsee Lenape Tribe.

During the first half of the 19th century, Summit Rock was home to Seneca Village, a community of predominantly African-Americans, many of whom owned property. The village existed between 1825 and 1857. In 1855, there were approximately 225 residents, over 50 homes, three churches, and a school. For African-American property owners, Seneca Village provided residential stability and an investment in the future. Another incentive to owning property at the time was that it gave African-Americans the right to vote.

When the City decided to build Central Park, it used eminent domain to acquire the land. Residents were compensated for their property and had to leave by 1857. After they dispersed, all traces of the settlement were lost to history.

