

**COLLECTIVE WILL:
SHAKESPEARE'S THE TRAGEDIE OF JULIUS CAESAR**

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ABSTRACT

This project situates William Shakespeare's *The Tragedie of Julius Caesar* as a secular Passion Play, whose central themes of collective violence and sacrifice will underpin a directorial approach that seeks to actively engage and include the audience in the staging and dramaturgy. This will be accomplished by using popular models of crowd constellations such as the sporting event, the religious assembly and the protest rally, as design, staging and conceptual templates. By emphasizing the social dimension of the High Park Amphitheatre audience, we create conditions for them to be self aware of the nature, power and potential of their assembly, the ideal place from which to explore the themes of civic responsibility and government for which the play is famous.

DEDICATION

For Wendy, Gretta, and Violeta

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INTRODUCTION

My thesis project is the play *The Tragedie of Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare for Canadian Stage's High Park, Toronto 2015.

This process of investigation and enquiry begins with three components: the play *The Tragedie of Julius Caesar* (hereafter called *Julius Caesar*); Canadian Stage's High Park venue, which includes an institutional ethos which informs artists, process and presentation; and the audience as defined by their social, political and cultural time and place. These components can be distilled down to the geometric simplicity of Subject, Actor and Audience - Peter Brook's triangle that we as directors are eternally trying to connect (Nicolescu).

We theatre makers are obsessed with our audiences. We perceive them as elusive and unpredictable. We blame them for being uncouth and uncultured when they don't turn out in droves. In a recent Town Hall style meeting titled "Disappearing Audiences" the participants gathered at Theatre Passe Muraille decried the dwindling attendance rate experienced by most Toronto theatre companies, the more naïve among them suggesting that the solution was better advertising, the more perceptive recognizing that it was in fact a deeper problem, to do with the motivations behind the art, and the established means of presenting to and engaging with the public. I recognize that there are many factors contributing to our Canadian producing models and their challenges, not least among them a lack of public funding and a society that does not have a vigorous theatre going tradition. However, I believe that the real solutions are to be found in a re-examination of the needs of the audience.

The hypothesis that I intend to advance in this project is that the social dimension of the crowd is a major factor in the theatrical event. I came to this conclusion in my days as Artistic Director at Caravan Farm Theatre, where, because of our rugged, isolated location, we took great pains to cultivate a comfortable, stimulating environment for our audiences who made the trek. The result: year after year, people would book their tickets and then ask, “by the way, what is the show?” My research will explore the social and psychological dimension of audiences; investigate the historic antecedents that have shaped our current framework and expectations thereof; and examine corollary public assemblies. I will incorporate my findings into the staging and concept of this production, in order to join the points of the triangle.

The second side of this triangle is comprised of the Actor. It is the actor upon whom the responsibility falls to connect with the audience, but their performance is the result of a mostly invisible effort by a multitude of artists, assembled under the aegis of a producing company whose values are expressed in the day-to-day institutional practice. The actors and design are process made manifest. This process is shaped every step of the way by the director, and it is a reflection of the director’s own values as they mesh and collide and survive in relationship to the producing company. Therefore this component is about the practice of directing. It is all about relationship and collaboration: communication, methods of facilitation and negotiation, time management and leadership style. In preparation for this project I will articulate what skills I bring from my past experience as an artistic director, and how these are refined and expanded under Peter Hinton’s mentorship. This new practice will inform my creative process from early preparatory work with designers, the casting process, the rehearsal scheduling, and the rehearsals from opening presentation to opening night.

Lastly, we come to the Subject: the idea, the problem, the set of circumstances that we as artists and audience have agreed to consider, explore, examine, imagine, experience, and speculate upon.

Julius Caesar is multifaceted and many leveled. There is Shakespeare the poet of universal distinction, whose entire canon provides a context within which to consider the themes that course through this play. There is the social and political environment of the age in which the play was written, and the specific events to which this play was a response. There is the historical figure of Julius Caesar, transmitted by Plutarch, Suetonius, Cicero, and Tacitus, who brought him and the Roman Republic into the Elizabethan zeitgeist, and which was the raw material from which Shakespeare drew. Then there is the text itself: the dramatic structure, the central moral problem, the images and rhythms of the language, the characters, both historical and invented, that comprise the universe of the play.

These historical and material dimensions of *Julius Caesar*, when confronted with the nature of the audience and the process of the artists, all come together to inspire a directorial interpretation, which is simply another way to describe the act of joining the lines of the triangle. Each side informs the other and must bear an equal amount of responsibility to maintain its overall shape and vitality. The independent breadth and depth of each side of this triangle will be explored in detail in the following pages. I love the idea of the triangle as a form for theatre because it reduces a complex recipe down to the most basic equation of an actor, a spectator, and something to pass between them. Without one of these components the whole

thing collapses. This geometry reminds me that each side is necessary and must inform the other for the theatre to be vital. This project is an opportunity for me to explore this balance.

The Subject: A Killing Poem

I bring to this examination my own sensibility, which looks for some things and ignores others. My predilection is for a sense of occasion, ritual, ceremony, and the most direct means of accessing an audience, which includes a sense of contemporary relevancy and an opportunity for engagement. I lean towards plays that contain these elements for I believe all theatre is a veiled rite and that the best plays, from the epic to the domestic, have this kind of substructure. For me, *Julius Caesar* is a secular passion play, a “killing poem” (Burkhardt15) dealing with sacrifice, death and resurrection. It specifically speculates on the nature of collective violence. My apprehension of these themes in the play leads me to pursue scholarly research that supports and expands on this hunch, especially as I take into consideration a popular audience and an outdoor venue. The following research will provide the thematic foundation from which to erect the production’s conceptual framework.

Julius Caesar is regarded as Shakespeare’s fulcrum play, on which his career turned from work that was largely historical or purely entertaining (*Titus Andronicus*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Richard II* and *III*, and *Henry IV*, *V*, and *VI* plays, and *Comedy of Errors*) to his profound tragedies and romances. “When Shakespeare moved on from *Henry V* to *Julius Caesar* the playwright did more than shift ground from the Old Curtain to the new Bankside Globe. He ratcheted up the level of discourse.” (Sohmer 185). *Julius Caesar* marks a developmental

mustering point for his great psychological character studies: Caesar presages Lear. Brutus presages Macbeth and Hamlet. By contextualizing this play in the spectrum of Shakespeare's canon, we can assume a greater range of dramatic potential for these characters and the play as a whole. The full flowering of Shakespeare's later characters can inform and enhance the tragic dimensions planted in the characters in *Julius Caesar*. Thus our Brutus can wrestle with his conscience with all the moral ambiguity of Macbeth and the anxiety of Hamlet. Key ideas such as Degree can be traced from *Richard II* through to Ulysses' famous speech in *Troilus and Cressida*, illuminating Brutus' and Cassius' conspiratorial motivations. Context is everything: each play exists in relationship to the full imaginative arc of the canon and by divining this relationship, we have access to express, within the confines of this one play, the fullness of his genius.

Scholars generally agree that *Julius Caesar* was written in 1599, directly after *Henry V* and preceding *As You Like It* and a first draft of *Hamlet*. It premiered at the newly constructed Globe Theatre (of which Shakespeare was part owner) in the fall of that year. By 1599 Elizabeth had been on the throne for forty years, and the years between 1588 and her death in 1603 were marked by rising taxes, interminable wars, an intensification of Catholic repression, price fixing and favouritism of the elite at the expense of the poor, all of which led to widespread resentment. The succession to Elizabeth was unresolved, and the future of government was unpredictable. It was, according to Andrew Hadfield, the Elizabethan's Republican moment, characterized by a heightened awareness of the limits of royal authority, and all kinds of political speculation. Lettered Elizabethans learned their Latin through the writings of Tacitus, Cicero, Suetonius, and Caesar's own *Commentarii de bello Gallico*, bringing the Ancient

Republic, and the later Empire in all its glory (and corruption), to the young minds of monarchical England. The political landscape of classical Rome became a figure for London, with the Queen herself staging elaborate triumphs throughout her reign, displaying tapestries and busts of Caesar in her palaces, and in later years, absorbed with translating Plutarch's *Lives*. For the Elizabethans at the close of the 16th century, "Rome was a tool that made thinking about citizenship possible, bypassing complications thrown up by Christian faith" (Wiles 93).

All this to say that *Julius Caesar* was written in response to a highly charged political environment, one in which there was a collective knowledge of ancient Roman history. The parallels between events leading up to 44 BCE, 1599 CE, and 2015 are obvious in a political sense: all three points in history are transitional moments in governmental authority, in an environment of economic instability, interminable wars, calls for parliamentary reforms, and perceived abuses of authority in government. It is widely acknowledged that we are living under one of the most secretive, centralized, and divisive governments in Canadian history. "Harper is on a course towards a very authoritarian populist government appealing over the heads of Parliament to the people with an enormous public-relations machine. The appeal is to the less educated and less sophisticated parts of society." Creating "a presidential prime minister ship without a powerful legislative branch to keep it in check" (Martin). Clearly this is a timely text, and an opportunity to examine the oppositional forces surrounding notions of authority, government and citizenship, or in Foucault's words: "how to be ruled, by whom, and to what ends".

But to uncover this play as a politically relevant topic for speculation is not enough, for to make it a response merely to our own political landscape will make it small. I agree with Howard Barker's criteria for his Art of Theatre, that theatre is not a lesson in moral obligations, nor an occasion to instruct the public, nor a platform for the improvement of mankind. Rather it is a place of heightened engagement with the fundamental problems of existence: pain, love, death, loss, and violence. To access this primal layer of *Julius Caesar* one need only dig a little deeper.

Elizabethans knew Julius Caesar as the creator of their calendar. The Julian calendar was Caesar's attempt to correct the faulty Republican calendar that, at only 355 days long, caused the dates of the seasons to drift from their proper months and the holy feasts from their seasons. To correct this divergence his reformed calendar crammed 445 days into 46 BC, causing, in that year, a titanic dislocation of familiar holidays. Conservative Romans felt this to be an arbitrary and tyrannical interference with the course of nature. Two years later Caesar was dead.

Caesar's great calendar correction came close but his mathematician had erred by a matter of eleven minutes – undetectable in a Roman's lifespan but amounting to a full day every 128 years. In 1582 Pope Gregory XIII finally restored the equinoxes by advancing his calendar ten days, leaving the (Protestant) English calendar ten days behind, and the English living and worshipping by a scientifically discredited Julian calendar. Elizabeth and her privy council's refusal to concede to the Church of Rome made England the laughingstock of Christendom. By early 1599, the times were seriously out of joint. The English were compelled to observe the New Year of 1599 after their Catholic friends had already celebrated the twelve days of Christmas, and were exchanging Valentines while the Catholics were observing Ash Wednesday

and the onset of Lent. Worst of all, true Easter fell on the English observed April Fool's Day. To an English Christian, for whom the calendar and religion were intertwined, its arbitrariness was absurd. For the recusant Catholics among the English, it was downright tyranny.

Steve Sohmer suggests, in his book *Shakespeare's Mystery Play*, that Shakespeare conceived and wrote *Julius Caesar* at the height of the English Julian calendar controversy. Moreover, his scholarship examines Shakespeare's masterful exploitation of the Bible and his audience's knowledge of scripture, positing that "Shakespeare played on his audience's biblical knowledge as a mode of discoursing on forbidden or dangerous subjects" and that his "borrowings from scripture are methodical and systematized" (Sohmer). The necessity of this kind of covert communication was illustrated by the fate of Dr. Thomas Hayward, who in early 1599 was jailed and tortured for his historical account of Henry IV in which he praised the (going rogue) Earl of Essex. "*Julius Caesar* was written in an environment of religious tyranny of which the absurd Julian calendar was merely one manifestation. The text of *Julius Caesar* must be encountered as a response to that tyranny" (Sohmer 186).

Sohmer's book is a detailed account of the imbedded textual markers that through biblical association provide a subversive interpretation of the unfolding action, a kind of undercurrent narrative, responding directly to the controversy of the day. Most of these associations would be obscure to a modern audience unversed in scripture, but to an Elizabethan audience the connections would operate on a deeply associative level, as they were used to hearing scripture read aloud, each passage on its associated day. This would have made *Julius Caesar* a deeply topical and subversive mode of discourse for Elizabethan playgoers. This context and the

scholarship around it are useful for a contemporary production in two ways. Firstly, it helps to determine what can be cut since many references are so specific to the political environment of 1599 that there is no worth in wresting meaning for a modern audience, and secondly, Steve Sohmer's landmark investigation of the scriptural undergirding of this play throws light on the primal bedrock of this narrative: the compounding of the martyrdom of Christ with the murder of Caesar.

That Shakespeare would find similarities between Julius Caesar and Jesus Christ is not farfetched. The Geneva Bible was considered an account of literal history, and Plutarch, Shakespeare's main source for *Julius Caesar*, was a contemporary of the authors of the New Testament. Plutarch's account of Caesar contained a series of details that would invite parallels between the lives of Caesar and Christ: both were exalted religious figures (Caesar was Pontifex Maximus of Rome and an acknowledged descendant of Venus), both were renowned for piety, beloved by the poor, mistrusted by the elite, dressed in purple robes, offered a crown, hailed as king, and betrayed by their closest friend. Omens and portents surrounded their last days, both were declared a god and both reformed the calendar.

The premise of this scholarship is thus: Shakespeare the Catholic sympathizer with Republican leanings interrogates the religious and political prerogatives of the crown through a coded work, and using the New Testament as his key, taps into the western world's oldest and most primal story, (that of a victim god lynched by a crowd) creating less a political drama and more, a passion play of a very new order.

Julius Caesar is about one of history's most famous murders. Its language is steeped in blood and images of slaughter. Its central and decisive moment, the assassination, is a replay of collective violence from Romulus and Remus up through the ages, and is so foundational that it is even formalized in the text as a play within a play, with Caesar himself prompting the beginning of his end "Are we all ready? What is now amisse / That Cæsar and his Senate must redresse?" (3.1.34-35). This is soon followed by another lynching, and three onstage suicides. The physical violence is underscored by Brutus' own psychological state, for he is "with himself at war" (1.2.51). This vexation of Brutus' leads to a full-scale civil conflict that levels the social order, and with his voluntary death, he is transformed into an agent of reconciliation, ushering in an imperial age. Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* turns on social violence, it is the fencepost on which its theatrical gate swings.

From my first read of the play I was struck by the twin killings of Caesar and Cinna. Both men were victims of collective violence - one by the patrician class, one by the plebeians. It struck me as fascinating that the conspirators should disappear from the narrative as soon as the assassination was completed, only to be replaced by a crowd of plebeians, who are then later replaced by a host of interchangeable soldiers. It seemed to me that violence was articulating its way through the strata of society and that this particular kind of violence - collective - was expressing something deeply primal and necessary: the exorcising of social violence through the ritual of sacrifice. This led me to French philosopher Rene Girard, and his work on violence, the sacred, and the scapegoat. For Rene Girard:

Julius Caesar is centered neither on Caesar nor on his murderers; it is not even about Roman history but about collective violence itself. The real subject is the violent crowd. Julius Caesar is the play in which the violent essence of the theatre and of human culture are revealed. Shakespeare is the first tragic poet and thinker who focuses on the foundational murder. (Girard 123)

I share this view. *Julius Caesar* is a poster child for Rene Girard's Mimetic Theory. In *Violence and the Sacred*, he describes the complex phenomenon of human mimetic behaviour – how we learn through imitation, including what to desire, and how this leads to rivalry and conflict, and how communities learn to control this internal conflict by projecting their violence outside the community onto a scapegoat. A Republican atmosphere, in which equality and fraternity are the dominating values, is an ideal environment for mimetic desire to flourish: members jockey for distinction and power, and the individual who dares rise above the pack is brought down in a paroxysm of thymos (envy, competition, recognition). Rene Girard asserts that all myths house the phenomenon of the scapegoat, and that Judeo Christianity confounds this mechanism through the sacrifice of the non-dualistic, irrefutably innocent Christ, revealing the projections at the root of the persecution.

Rene Girard maintains that the scapegoat mechanism requires certain criteria, the first being an environment of social instability, which in *Julius Caesar* is established in the opening scenes with the unruly plebeians playing truant from their workbenches and decked out for holiday. This social instability is often projected out onto the natural world through interpretations of earthquakes, storms, and freaks of nature, which we find in full swing in Act 2.1, with the

gullible Caska reading omens and portents in every thunder flash, and the shrewd Cassius only too willing to reinforce his superstition for the conspiracy's ends. The second criteria is that the surrogate victim be marked as different, set apart, and isolated. Caesar the political "colossus", the deaf (Shakespeare's invention) and the sacred (his epilepsy, known at that time as *sacer morbus*, the sacred disease) was a marginal insider by virtue of these qualities. The whole point of the scapegoat mechanism is that by choosing a marginalized victim the cycle of reciprocal violence can end, since marginalized groups are not likely to retaliate. Caesar himself even displays a foreknowledge, an acceptance of his fate with his brushing aside of all warnings and opportunities for rescue. Caesar is a sacred victim, and his death and resurrection on the plains of Philippi makes this play a ritual.

The drama in *Julius Caesar* is that this sacrifice is out of order, for instead of ending violence and restoring equilibrium, it throws the populace into an escalating cycle of violence, all through the actions of Antony, the "limb of Caesar" (2.1.172) who is the principal author of the fall of the Roman republic. "It is the act of reprisal, the repetition of imitative acts of violence, that characterizes tragic plotting" (Girard 47). It was Antony who, according to Plutarch, fled from the hostile senate to Caesar, camped by the Rubicon, and urged him to march on Rome in opposition to Pompey. It was Antony who offered the crown to Caesar thrice on the Lupercalia, spurring the conspirators to act. It was Antony whose impassioned oration in the marketplace turned the crowd into a mob bent on mutiny and destruction. And it was Antony who held the pen for the Black Proscriptions, condemning one hundred senators, including Cicero, to death. Antony makes this play a tragedy.

The principal actor in our tragedy is Brutus. He and his shadow, Cassius, his other self, play out this drama of emulation in meta-theatrical terms, their language spiced with references to actors, theatre, and the stage. Brutus' vexation on the Lupercal festivities marks a profound psychological discontent, for he is so at war with himself that he "Forgets the shewes of Love to other men" (1.2.52). Brutus, out of love with the republican brotherhood, is out of love with himself. If we take Cassius' words in the seduction scene at face value: "And since you know, you cannot see your selfe / So well as by Reflection; I your Glasse, / Will modestly discover to your selfe / That of your selfe, which you yet know not of" (1.2.72-75), we must conclude that the envy that permeates Cassius' diatribe against Caesar is a reflection of Brutus' own envy and hidden desires: "Brutus and Cæsar: What should be in that Cæsar? Why should that name be sounded more than yours?" (1.2.48-49). Popular opinion held that Brutus was Caesar's illegitimate son. Suetonius and Plutarch report of Caesar's great love for Brutus' mother Servilia, and because the child was born to her when their "love was hottest, he {Caesar} perswaded him selfe that he begat him" (North 1057). Suetonius records that Caesar's dying words were not "et tu Brute" but "And thou my sonne" (Holland 33). It is also recorded by Plutarch that Brutus stabbed Caesar in the genitals. "Judge, O ye Gods, how dearly Caesar loved him. / This was the most unkindest cut of all." (Antony 3.2.186-87).

Steve Sohmer identifies Shakespeare's allusions to Brutus' bastardy throughout the text, in the many references to metallurgy and counterfeit coining, Shakespeare's habitual metaphors for illicit births and extramarital sex: "Well Brutus, thou art Noble: yet I see / thy honorable mettle may be wrought / from that it is disposed: therefore it is meet / That Noble minds keep ever with their likes: (Cassius 1.2.415-19). A Noble was a coin of gold, the "honorable metal". Antony

completes this allusion to Brutus' parentage with his reference to Brutus as Caesar's "Angel" (3.2.185) which in Shakespeare's day was an old English gold coin. Shakespeare's bastards were characteristically untimely men who, like Lear's Edmund, were born under the wrong stars. Steve Sohmer goes on to point out a provocation made by Cassius to Brutus: "the fault (deere Brutus) is not in our Starres, / But in our Selves, that we are underlings" (1.2.46-47).

If we assume that Shakespeare's Brutus was the illegitimate son of Caesar, and condemned like all Shakespeare's bastards to a marginalized, ambiguous social status and a complicated relationship to the paterfamilias as it reverberates out from the domestic to the political, then what we have is a character study of a man fundamentally ill at ease with the world and his place in it. Brutus is our untimely man, out of joint with life, unable to be "gamesom" (1.2.32), lacking that "quick spirit that is in Antony" (1.2.33), his isolationism converted to high-minded morality and the lonely honour of his stoicism. His love for Caesar is, in the Republican atmosphere of mimetic rivalry, transformed into a desire to be Caesar. Unlike Edmund in *King Lear*, Brutus struggles with his ambiguous relationship to "the World" (1.2.308). It is the chief cause of his anxiety, the fuel for his guilt and the reason for his suicide. His is a drama of the mimetic double, of the struggle between love and hate, and the boundaries of the Self. Brutus, our tragic actor who out of envy kills "his best lover" (3.2.42) is our way in to this material. Brutus makes this a killing poem.

The political dimension of *Julius Caesar* is obvious and straightforward. With this production I propose to amplify the religious dimension of *Julius Caesar*. For it is one thing to point out the evil in another, no matter how obvious. It is quite another to consider one's own culpability, and

see the evil in oneself. This is universally recognized as hard to do, for as the doomed Brutus observes “the eye sees not itself, but by reflection, by some other things” (1.2.57-58).

The Audience: The People’s Assembly

Jonson: “If but stage actors all the world displays,
Where shall we find the spectators for our plays?”

Shakespeare: “Little, or much, of what we see, we do
We’re all both actors and spectators too”

A possibly apocryphal piece of dialogue between Shakespeare and Ben Jonson over the alleged motto of the Globe ‘Totus mundus agit histrionem’ (Kezar 246).

The action of *Julius Caesar* unfolds in the public sphere. It opens with a procession of plebeians, followed by Caesar and his entourage. Cassius’ seduction of Brutus takes place in the street, as does his seduction of Caska, during the storm. Shakespeare places Caesar’s assassination on the Capitoline Hill (not the porch of the first permanent theatre of Rome, as was recorded by Plutarch) the most sacred part of Rome, and the site of the altar where victorious generals made sacrifice during the celebration of a triumph. Both the funeral orations and Cinna’s lynching are enacted in the marketplace. The battle of Philippi rages over the open plains. Only four scenes: Brutus’ garden, Caesar’s house, Antony’s house and Brutus’ tent, are private. Underscoring the whole of the play is the idea of the crowd, tribe, mob, collective, which must be convinced, moved, performed for, swayed and governed.

Assembly is at the root of *Julius Caesar*, at the root of our political engagement, and the root of spectatorship. If the real subject of *Julius Caesar* is the crowd, then we need to cast one, and the audience of High Park is a perfect fit.

I have spent most of my professional career creating theatre outdoors, for large and diverse audiences – a popular audience. As artistic director of BC's Caravan Farm Theatre, I had the opportunity to produce and/or direct over twenty-four full-scale productions for the company. We had no curtains, no fly gallery, no proscenium nor the means to do a blackout. Instead, my colleagues and I created theatrical spaces in fields, forests, and the backs of pickup trucks. To shift scene and perspective we often had the audience move to another location of the farm. Very often the performance began at the front gates, in the form of a scripted preshow, an audience plant, or a musical overture. We had audience members carry coffins as part of funeral processions, get up onstage and engage in debates with actors, and hold set pieces, lighting, and microphones. The facilities were rustic – hard wooden bleachers, outhouses and a tailgate concession by kerosene lamplight. Yet over a five-week run over 10,000 people from hours away would flock to the shows. What this experience taught me is that most audience members, even the ones who at first glance look conservative and unadventurous, are more than ready to depart from our western formula of padded armrests, blackouts and proscenium headlock, and to engage in the communal fabrication of the play.

In outdoor theatre, a certain amount of aesthetic control is ceded to the spectator, since they are not as contained and focused by the space and the lighting. They are free to gaze wherever they

like with no spotlight to train their eye. Add movement and direct actor/audience engagement and they become downright empowered. This empowered audience requires the artists to employ more skill and exert more effort to direct and hold their attention, and there are lauded theatrical disciplines that have developed the performance techniques for this (the Peking Opera, Kabuki, Commedia). However, the muscle required to hold and direct a large and empowered audience can result in a broad, generalized performance style. Add to this the perceived (and mostly accepted) notion that a popular audience requires conservative, romantic, tradition entrenching, status quo maintaining texts and you have the standard, pejorative definition of Popular Theatre. I have no truck with what Dennis Kennedy calls “Hochkulturbetrieb – the high culture business – the long established assumption that excessive emotional or physical involvement in an audience renders it less competent to recognize the value and sophistication of a work of delicate or deeply significant art” (Kennedy 179). I maintain that with the right techniques and a trust in the audience’s capacity to engage with complex and challenging ideas, we can embrace our audiences desire for more lateral freedom and create progressive popular theatre with nuance, complexity and depth.

The High Park venue attracts an audience that is remarkable for its diversity and youth. I would hazard a bet that that more cabdrivers attend the High Park shows than any other theatre in town. The open air creates a crowd who are acutely aware of each other’s presence, given that they can see each other for most of the performance, and of the theatrical nature of the event, given that they can see that the actors can see them. Unlike a black box theatre, they do not have the option to recede into an individual, personalized experience of the play, instead they are confronted with their fellow spectators throughout. The ticket price, its informality, and the

visceral pleasures of the outdoor space make it accessible to all and this very informality and diversity creates a crowd atmosphere that resembles other, more vital crowd constellations: the sporting event, the religious procession and the protest rally.

Dennis Kennedy believes there are three things that characterize the playful freedom that spectators assume when they attend a sporting event: firstly, they are free to negotiate a relationship with other unknown spectators (in solidarity or opposition to their respective teams); secondly, they have the freedom to express disappointment in the performance's outcome; and thirdly, sports spectators have the freedom to vary or alter the purpose of their presence through flirting, conducting business or otherwise (Kennedy 156). I would add to this that sports spectators (and movie goers) are also given license to consume food and drink lustily and unapologetically, and that this is seen as a complement to the experience.

Under the rigours of theatre architecture and the modernist revisions to the actor-audience association, theatre spectators have been deprived of much of the privilege to write themselves into the event. The sports spectator, meanwhile, has elaborated the Victorian working class patterns of public behaviour as a method of owning the experience. (Kennedy 156)

Julius Caesar is a play built on the idea of doubles and competition, from the opening moments of the Lupercal chase, where Antony and Brutus will strip and chase through the crowd to the music of Brazilian Samba bands; to the forum speeches pitting Brutus's cool prose against Antony's impassioned verse, to the pitched battles between their two armies on the plains of

Philippi. For this production, we will implement the three “playful freedoms” to activate both the audience and the dualistic struggle in this play.

The environment in which Shakespeare was writing was rife with revolt. Wars, famine and high taxes led to regular riots in the streets. Today, images of protest are transmitted globally, and one can view marchers in Moscow, Wisconsin and Montreal in a morning’s Google search. What one sees in these images is an often wildly diverse crowd, in the full flush of civic participation. Costumes, elaborate props, music and megaphones make these gatherings a vividly theatrical event, amplifying the message to the powers that be with signage and signifiers of all sorts. Protest is inextricably linked with the “people”, the “proletariat”, and the “plebeians”, the socio-economic class from the early Republic to the present upon whom the world relies to bake their bread, mine their metals and teach their children. To protest is to express an objection to external forces that are deemed threatening: a loss of rights, a restriction of mobility and freedoms, an imposition of scarcity. The more global the threat, the more this crowd expands to include a broader spectrum of class strata. When it is perceived that change is not forthcoming, or they encounter police force, or the right political showman to “ruffle up their spirits” *Julius Caesar* (3.2.231) there is the potential for the rally to transform into the riot. Aspects of the rally and the riot will manifest throughout *Julius Caesar* but will find fullest expression in the forum scene and the battle at Philippi, where the audience will be incorporated into the dramatic action.

The religious procession is the template for the staging of this production of *Julius Caesar*. “A sense of the treacherousness of the crowd, is, so to speak, in the blood of all historical religions”

(Canetti 24). To marshal the inherent volatility of the crowd there are certain principles at work in religious gatherings: the first is repetition, the second is distance. Repetition, in the form of ritual, requires deliberation and creates a drawing out of the experience, “an infinite dilution of lament” so that “scarcely anything remains of the suddenness of death and the violence of grief” (Canetti 155). Goals, (including heaven) are always a long way off, and satisfaction is delayed and deferred for a submissive, attentive now. Slow and steady wins the race, and processions are the best example of this: their slow shuffle to their sacred sites, in a line of ascending hierarchical order, brings the faithful together and creates a crowd feeling of veneration. Spectacle on parade with a narrative implied in the images and their order, with music and interaction, are characteristics shared by the Good Friday procession, the Santa Claus and the Pride parades. What contrasts them is their degree of solemnity in their celebrations. *Julius Caesar*, with its opening procession of Caesar in triumph, is followed a few scenes later by his doomed procession to the Capitoline Hill, there to meet the conspirators’ daggers. These two processions, one in a frenzy of excess and celebration, one in solemn formality enroute to sacrifice, suggest a third: the high mass of Caesar’s resurrection that brings about the self sacrifice of Brutus. The final moments of the play will see the ghost of Caesar multiplied in chorus, a priestly procession in accompaniment to Brutus’ final moments, for what does Brutus’ rolling eye finally see? Himself, in Caesar: his invincible double. The use of the religious procession punctuates this drama at three points to describe the nature of violence and sacrifice: its origins in competition and emulation, its projection onto the scapegoat victim, and the cyclic nature of this mechanism, since the scapegoat is merely a stand in for the true target: the self.

Our engagement, or lack thereof in contemporary political and public life is a source of much bewailing - voter turnout is at an all time low, especially among the youth, even while we live and work under a regime that is proceeding to dismantle our country's constitutional infrastructure before our very eyes. The cause of this malaise is a sense of alienation, disempowerment, and futility. According to the Elections Canada survey "Explaining the Turnout Decline in Canadian Federal Elections: A New Survey of Non-voters", the number one reason for the turnout decline is "negative public attitudes toward the performance of the politicians and political institutions involved in federal politics". For the youth in the survey, the number one reason for not voting was applied to the box containing "not interested; didn't care; apathy". The same survey asked the question: "What might happen in the next few years to make you more interested in politics? The most prominent response was "political system change", in the form of electoral reforms, new leaders, new platforms and renewed political parties. Clearly the majority of the younger generation is disengaged with politics, and refusing to significantly participate. Of course a natural catastrophe or direct governmental confrontation like conscription would change this in a hurry, but in the absence of these, the Catch 22 is that what is required is their engagement to affect change for better engagement.

It is telling that the voting turnout and its most elusive demographic mirror the state of theatre attendance. We as theatre artists are chasing this wary spectator as well, and where they do flock is to the music concert, or immersive theatrical events like Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More*. They are certainly not to be found in Stratford, Shaw, or any of the city's traditional venues. We know that the origins of theatre are in ritual and politics. Aristotle stated that the human being is a political animal built for cooperation, partnership, and communal ventures, and he contended

that “the goal of *koinona* or ‘community’ involves not only working together but also *syntheorein*, ‘co-spectatorship’ (Wiles 15). For the ancient Greeks, the theatre was politics, where “choral dancing tied the practice of theatre to the democratic polis through collective and embodied participation” (Wiles 18). David Wiles has gathered from Cicero’s accounts of attending the theatre, that “An active and expressive engagement with theatre was part of public life for a citizen of the Roman Republic (Wiles 12).

All this points to a theatre that can be played *with* an audience, not *to* an audience. A theatre that recognizes that the heart of the drama is in the social dimension of the crowd, the assembly, in the audience itself. This project is as much about the audience as it is about the text. The principle governing all aspects of this *Julius Caesar* will be Assembly, with the High Park audience cast as the plebeians. With the aforementioned crowd models as our touchstones, we will incorporate spectators and actors into one civic body, and together, grapple with the themes and ideas at work in this play: violence, government, desire and envy. And love. Design of set, costumes, lights and sound, and the use of the space will all bend to this end.

The Artist: Collective Will

My directing practice is informed by my twelve years as an artistic director. The most important part of that job description was cultivating a community of artists and audience members who could meet on a regular basis around an evolving subject. I love artists, and I love audiences. I love the sense of expectation that arises when artists and audiences come to know each other. “Talent is relationship” are words I have taken to heart, ever since I heard Ruth Little,

dramaturge of the Young Vic, speak them at a conference. Our relationships with fellow artists and audiences are at the heart of what we do and can set the bar for our exploits.

From the founding fathers and mothers of the Caravan I learnt to value families and children, respect for history and its traditions, and the importance of celebrations. From my colleague Jennifer Brewin, I learnt to put these values into institutional practice, adding to these our shared love for and appreciation of beauty, food, and a sense of occasion. All these things provide social adhesion and engender love, important in a practice that is so often transient and marked with uncertainty and financial risk. Practically, the cohesion of an ensemble can enable feats of daring, ingenuity, and resilience in times of crisis. Similarly, when you relate to an audience you know how far you can go with them. You can push, provoke, and challenge in a way that is about dialogue, not didacticism. You come to discern what they want from what they need, and how you might deliver both. Artists and audiences who know each other can disagree and be disappointed in one another and still show up for the next show, because there is an intrinsic commitment, based on familiarity, interest, and shared concerns.

As a freelance director, I want to bring as many of these principles with me in my collaborations. It can be as simple as sharing food at meetings and as complex as negotiating and fundraising for the inclusion of a larger community in the production. That said, this project is an opportunity for me to focus solely on directing, and I mean to make the most of it. Most of my career has been juggling the responsibilities of directing with those of running a company, so it is a liberty to be able to focus in this way. My principles will remain, but in service to the play as opposed to the company.

Julius Caesar is 2500 lines long. It contains forty-five characters, many of who appear only in one scene. The conspirators, so vividly drawn in the first three acts, disappear and are replaced by plebeians, who are then replaced by a new crop of individuals. There are only two female characters. The action unfolds in the city of Rome for the first three acts, with the remaining two taking place on the plains of Philippi. It is predominantly in verse, and its style is economical and spare, with the most monosyllabic words than any other Shakespeare play.

To cut the text down to 1400 lines a point of view was necessary to guide the knife. I wanted to follow the thread of violence, both collective and self-inflicted. I wanted to preserve the ritual aspect, highlighting the sacrificial nature of Caesar's assassination and the resurrection of his spirit. I wanted to explore the role of the poet/prophet in relationship to social authority. And I wanted to preserve the moral ambiguity of the central characters of Brutus, Antony, Cassius and Caesar.

My work with Peter Hinton included a seminar on Northrop Frye's 'Genre Wheel', refined by Keith Turnbull, and further refined by Peter. The wheel defines twenty-four genres by their basic qualities, motor, idea, purpose, form and function. I classify *Julius Caesar* as a First Phase Tragedy, otherwise known as the 'Tragedy of No Choice', whose central motif is the stag pulled down by the pack of dogs. This supports my belief that Julius Caesar must not be played as a villain, but as a victim (though a highly divisive one) and that Brutus cannot be played as a hero, but as a tragic actor, like Macbeth, brought down by hubris and hamartia. To do otherwise presents this play as political theatre, which belittles its power, and ultimately, its inherently

political and spiritual message: beware your own projections, for in Cicero's words: "men may construe things after their fashion /Clean from the purpose of the things themselves" (2.1.34-35).

I cut and cast this play so that the actors playing the conspirators are the same as those who play the plebeians in Act three and the soldiers in Acts four and five. This way the same core individuals author the collective violence throughout the play, organizing themselves recurringly around Brutus and Cassius. I thought this would help us recognize the patterns in the play and therefore the larger themes at work. I combined the role of Cicero, Cinna the Poet, Artemidorus and the Soothsayer, to create a Poet Prophet with an outsider's perspective, relating more to the audience than the other characters in the play. I cut and rewrote the opening scene so that it could help cast the audience right away as citizens in an assembly. I added onstage Lupercal festivities to establish the spirit of rivalry that permeates the play and to specifically offset Brutus with Antony, a rivalry that will be repeated throughout. I added an addendum to the play to create an impending New World Order and to turn Octavius into Stephen Harper. I did not attempt to modernize or update the language of the play. Nor did I change genders or names.

In considering a production of *Julius Caesar* there are three contexts that help to determine setting: Elizabethan England, Ancient Rome and our own times. None of these by themselves is satisfactory to me, but each of them is a critical influence. The Elizabethan influence is alive in the text itself, so I didn't try to incorporate it visually. I wanted to stage this play in as unmediated and immediate a way as possible, which suggested modern dress, but I feared losing

the archetypal power of Caesar and symbolic power of Rome. I felt that the iconography of Rome was important, and that the historical trappings, and our by now clichéd familiarity with them, added ceremony and therefore exerted a distancing effect, which I liked. A model that manages to incorporate both modernity and history at once, without being self consciously meta-theatrical is the Good Friday procession. Actors in the processions wear costumes, but almost casually, over their Nikes and Reeboks. No attempt is made to disguise the fact that they are moderns in a pageant. Because of the Christian death and resurrection undertones in *Julius Caesar*, I felt the Good Friday procession was a perfect visual and formal approach to the text. *Julius Caesar* is public, it is processional and its narrative follows that of Christ's Passion, with a last wine tasting, a betrayal, a death and a resurrection.

For the first three acts, there will be a strong Roman look: togas, laurels, a golden eagle standard, six monumental pillars, and Caesar in a golden mask borne aloft by six senators in his triumphal chariot. Under these togas, and at points visible to the audience, are casual modern clothes, of the type one would wear to a performance in High Park. This casual underdress, as opposed to more formal attire, links the actors more with the audience, and allows for a greater range of character transformation. After the assassination, which marks the climax of the play, the historical veneer drops away. The ceremonial, ritual stage of the drama is over, and Antony and Octavius usher in a new world order. Antony strips off his toga and riles the plebeians, who then riot and destroy the six pillars of Rome. The civil war of the fourth and fifth acts is an Occupy movement gone awry, punctuated by Brutus' hallucinations of Caesar's ghost. Riot police with shields and batons, sirens and tear gas, flashing lights and megaphones provide the atmosphere of a modern street conflict between authorities and civilians both operating in their

countries best interests. The tragedy concludes in high ritual mode with Brutus' suicide. Strato, who is asked to hold the sword while Brutus runs upon it, is revealed to be the ghost of Caesar, and the riot police transform into a chorus of golden masked Caesars who preside over the play's only true sacrifice. True because, like scapegoats are intended to do, Brutus' death ends the cycle of violence. The epilogue features Octavius transforming into Stephen Harper with the assistance of his "kids in short pants" (MacKinnon) while the rubble and bodies are cleared away. Antony dances to club music in the audience, oblivious as the wheels of government start up again.

I felt this conceptual approach solved many problems: it keeps the play relevant without minimizing the ritual, archetypal nature of the play and allows for a distancing effect. It supports the motor of the fourth and fifth acts by bringing in a new energy, especially needed in this play, which is roundly criticized for having a weak hind end. By emphasizing the power of Caesar's spirit in the form of his ghost through the fourth and fifth acts, we don't lose the dramatic center pin with his death and we gain the psychological impact of Brutus' guilt. It addresses the technical problem of having to create large-scale battle scenes with minimal resources, and relies instead on lights, sound and smoke. This historical overlay treatment also helps highlight the gender issues in the play.

Because there are only two women in *Julius Caesar*, and because Shakespeare has so few parts for women in general, I wanted gender parity. I requested that six women and six men make up our ensemble. It is already a core value at the park to present diversity on stage to better reflect the city, but this might be the first year that the cast reflects the city's gender balance.

The concept of citizenship from Aristotle onwards has been a masculine concept, and the Republican model is based on a rigid separation between the public and private spheres, with the public sphere belonging to the society of men, who make the decisions, and the private sphere, the domain of domestic necessity, relegated to the women. And indeed, two of the four private scenes in the play are the mirror scenes of Portia and Calphurnia, in which they both plead on their knees for their husbands to listen to them. Republican Roman society revered male friendship as the highest expression of virtue, for through male bonding, “emotional ties are a function of political ties”, shaping and cohering the society, and male friendships “become indistinguishable from politics itself, from which women were formally excluded” (Kahn 278).

Portia desperately wants in on the boy’s club. She knows that politics is a male sport, and, as Cato’s daughter she knows she is more than capable of holding her own, but by virtue of her gender she is shut out. She uses an array of rhetorical tactics to sway Brutus, but her zealous self-maiming is the only act that garners any attention. Like Lady Macbeth, once she has denied her sex and adopted the masculine ethic she fails, dissolving in anxiety. I want to highlight the frustration of Portia, and looked for an actor who would bring a tomboy’s sense of adventure and sport that would rankle in the narrow confines of wifely companion. In essence, I was looking for a kid sister type, the kind who wants desperately to join in the game but is never included. And in the larger schema, I wanted this thwarted energy to reincarnate as the quintessential kid, Octavius, who, by being underestimated, wins all.

Calphurnia is the other prophet in the play, a Cassandra to whom no one pays any attention. Like Portia, she uses argument to sway her husband, and is successful until the promise of a crown galvanizes Caesar to hustle to the senate. In her brief scene she is all fear. Her language is filled with images of blood and war, a precursor to Antony's vivid curse. She is the feminine principle in full crone mode – barren but full of portents. After her dream is recounted and reinterpreted by the men she is dismissed and abandoned. We don't hear from her again in the play, and her energy, having spent itself in futile warnings, doesn't need to reincarnate in a substantial way except in the final moments of the play where, in a hazmat suit, she will hose the blood off the stage. I wanted an actor who could play the high status of the wife of Rome's "First Man", but have a darker, witchier edge. If we look at these female parts as the animas' of Brutus and Caesar, we have a frustrated zealot and a defrocked high priestess.

Gender is important in this play, and I wanted to protect this. By modernizing the setting we run the risk of erasing the gender issues, for if half the characters are female, then the two original females lose their significance. By not changing the pronouns and names, and by having the senators wear togas, we can keep a masculine veneer that is true to the original, and accommodate twenty first century gender mores, without having the women act as males. This also allows commentary on contemporary gender issues like the continued self-masculinizing of women in business and politics. The female actor playing Cassius will wear a toga over her contemporary women's clothing, will be addressed as "brother", and "man", but in scenes will behave as a woman. We are free to read this in a few ways: as a meta-theatrical comment or as a psychology, where the women are denying aspects of their femininity in order to gain credibility and access to power.

Three women and two men will play the conspirators, the plebeians, and the array of soldiers who constellate around Brutus and Cassius in the fourth and fifth Acts. Each of the five tracks will have a through-line quality, as certain energies are reincarnated again and again: the coward Caska becomes the reluctant killer Pindarus, who runs away after slaying Cassius. The authoritative Trebonius becomes the leader of the rabble in the forum scene. I would like their transformations to happen onstage, so that we see the identities discarded and new ones put on, but the danger is that this will look like they are disguising themselves to escape persecution. This will need to be explored in rehearsals. We will enhance their choral identity in the staging through music, movement, and costume, always linking them to either Brutus and Cassius or Antony. This choral mode will help to contrast and compare the twin killings of Caesar and Cinna, and help us speculate on the nature of violence and the scapegoat. This choral treatment will help stress that the nature of collective violence transcends class and vocation: the patrician senators / are the plebian mob / are the soldiers in the field at Philippi. On a psychological level, this chorus will help illuminate Brutus' projections, when they transform from his friends into a chorus of Caesars, a hallucination that fuels his suicide. They will have a base costume of t-shirts and cargo pants, which, when under the togas will all but disappear. As the plebeians they will drop the togas and add hoodies and toques, and as the soldiers they will adjust this look with scarves and bandanas. Their overall look is supposed to reflect our contemporary popular casual dress, so that they are as familiar as possible.

A major revision to this play is the creation of the "Soothpoet". By amalgamating Cicero, the Soothsayer, Cinna the Poet, and Artemidorus, I have created a more tragic type of chorus, the

kind Northrop Frye describes as the “character in the position of refusing or resisting, the tragic movement towards catastrophe” (Frye 218). Cicero warns Caska of the dangers of misconstruing signs, the Soothsayer famously warns Caesar three times to “Beware the Ides of March”, and Artemidorus tries in vain to alert Caesar of his impending death on the way to the Capitol. The prophet “is typically a figure who is isolated because of the unpopularity of the message he brings, and who is very frequently persecuted” (Frye 182). Cinna the Poet’s lynching fulfills this persecution destiny of the prophet. Historically, the poet has fulfilled the role of Soothsayer, as well as historian and propagandist. The language of prophecy and proclamation has always relied on poetry, “because the language of symbolism and imagery, which bypasses argument and aggressiveness and at the same time clearly describes the difference between life and death, between freedom and slavery, between happiness and misery, is in short the language of love” (Frye 250).

The character of the Soothpoet will stand outside of the drama, commenting from the audience on the action. He will be a subversive, outsider element, and an antiauthority figure in contrast to the patriarchal Caesar. He will start the play with a sermon in the tradition of the “prophet who appeared in English churches on Palm Sunday to read or sing the lessons at Passiontide” (Sohmer 108). Like Christ, Caesar “bears the palm alone” (1.2.137) “is destined to be martyred, becomes a god” (Sohmer 108). After he dies, he will resurrect with Caesar’s ghost, and provide a contrapuntal ghostly presence in the fourth and fifth acts. By paralleling Caesar and Cinna’s ghosts, I hope to keep aloft the spectre of persecution and its consequences. What happens when the voice of prophecy is silenced? Propaganda? Additional text will be used in the creation of this role, which we will explore in rehearsals. The poet will be associated with a large sheaf of

papers, which will be scattered over the stage when he is lynched, adding to the detritus of the collapsed Rome.

A production of *Julius Caesar* is an opportunity by which we can scrutinize our own political situation. This famous play invites comparisons of our own definitions of citizenship and government, and it behooves us, in an election year, to make the most of this opportunity. However, I resisted associating Caesar with a contemporary political class or personality. Shakespeare's Julius Caesar is more than a political figure, and the historical figure defies modern comparisons. Caesar was a brilliant military strategist who slept and fought in the field with his soldiers. He was an accomplished statesman who enacted ambitious reforms, and was considered one of the best orators and writers of his day. He was a High Priest. He amassed tremendous wealth from his campaigns in Gaul which bolstered the economy of Rome. He was a Populare, unlike his assassins, who were the conservative Optimates, and his political reforms, as well as being self-serving, were often geared to improving the lives and social mobility of the Roman middle and lower classes. He was ruthless, ambitious, and was enroute to dismantling a three hundred year old Republic, but he was socially progressive, generous, and greatly loved by the plebeians. For the purposes of this production, I prefer to support Caesar's mythic dimension, and instead train our associative eye on his successor, Octavius.

When Octavius came to power he assumed both Caesar's name and massive fortune. After the crisis of the civil wars he created the Principate, a militarily backed, rigidly autocratic government disguised as Republican self-rule. Shakespeare's Octavius is a shrewd and ruthless politician, who, despite his eighteen years, outmaneuvers the more experienced Antony. That

the true nature of our government is masked is a current Canadian anxiety: The Canada – China Investment Treaty, the Omnibus Bill and the most recent Bill C-51 were all devised in secret, sidestepped parliamentary process, and have been deemed unconstitutional by political watchdogs, all this by a government whose election platform included a Federal Accountability Act. By not making overt commentary all the way through the play, we allow people to make their own associations. By showing our hand at the very end, we invite the audience to speculate on the future.

For this production I wanted to use the audience area as a playing space and a set that could be destroyed. The key design elements of *Julius Caesar* are a central platform in the audience, and six twelve foot towers on an otherwise bare stage, which is flanked by a backdrop painted with a forest scene. The central platform, as well as the three audience aisles, will be used throughout the play, as entrances to the stage and as playing spaces, most critically in the opening Lupercal festivities, the assassination, the forum scene, and Brutus' final moments. The platform will be specifically associated with Caesar, Brutus, Antony, and the Poet. In the scene following Cinna the Poet's lynching, the skyscraper-like towers are destroyed by the plebeians and portion of the backdrop will be ripped apart and spray-painted with graffiti. For the opening scene, Caesar will make his entrance on a five-foot high platform, carried by six senators. This platform will draw on Christian and Roman iconography, combining the look of the traditional Roman triumphal chariot and Catholic processional carts, with their carved statues of Christ. The senators in their white robes will suggest priests carrying their martyr, as well as "petty men", walking "under his huge legs" (1.2.142-43).

The violence in the play will be staged naturalistically, and in the audience, so that we feel responsible for it and part of the collective action. The only blood will be Caesar's, which will make an appearance when the conspirators bathe their arms and hands in it and parade to the forum. We will maximize this blood imagery through the staging of the chorus, their bloody hands forming a backdrop to Antony's curse, their hands and knives held high in their march to the forum, and their attempts to wash it off during Antony's speech to the audience.

To provide the spectacle of Caesar's Triumphal entrance, and to create the festivities of the Feast of the Lupercal, I have approached three local Samba bands: Samba Squad, Maracatu Mar Aberto and Samba Elégua, who have signed on to share the thirty performances between them. Each band will supply six to ten members, who will march with Caesar and his entourage in the opening procession. Processional Samba and Maracatu music is festive, primal and sexy. It is a perfect way to launch the play, especially given that these bands are well known participants in popular street festivals such as Kensington Market's Solstice celebration. They will give Caesar his air of popularity and the festivities their pulsing tribal energy. The cuing is internal to the scene so it will be relatively easy to insert this large element.

The music and sound world for the rest of the play will be recorded tracks, spliced and edited to provide underscoring. The two strands of musical influence will be Leonard Cohen for Brutus and Cassius and the conspirators, and Madonna (musical hooks) for Antony and Octavius, and Rome's military power. Cohen's poetry, the old world folk sound of his string instrumentals (not his synthesized albums) and the biblical nature of many of his songs evoke family, tribe, the monk's and the revolutionary's conversation with God. Madonna is Empire, expansionism, is

populist power in all its sexy frightening dangerous glory. Together they capture two sides of the popular music coin: folk and pop.

We will engage the audience first and foremost by casting them as the plebeians, which they already are. This will be accomplished in the opening scene, when two actors as audience members arrive for the show, and proceed to do all the things that audiences naturally want to do to have a good time: eat, drink, take photos, which will land them in trouble with an actor playing the Front of House Manager, who will then have to call in a security guard, also an actor. The conflict will escalate until the Front Of House Manager launches into the Tribune's speech "You Blockes, you stones, you worse then senslesse things" (1.1.01), including the whole audience in the accusation. Eleven out of seventeen scenes will be staged in the audience. All contests and rivalry, all violence, all procession and ritual, and all direct address rhetoric will take place amongst the assembly in full acknowledgement of their presence. Even the private scenes will acknowledge the audience. We will immerse the audience in the action, and make the experience as visceral as possible. By altering performer position we can influence perspective: Brutus, Cassius, the Poet and Antony will be associated with the centre of the audience. Caesar and Octavius, above it. The closing moments of the play offer two focal points for the audience to choose from: Antony dancing to club music amongst them, or the new government of Rome taking shape onstage. This approach offers the audience the freedom to engage as they are, and to take or leave what we are offering. We are not speaking for them, or asking them to participate in a disingenuous way by providing them a character or point of view. Like the sports event, we are simply working with who they are and encouraging their engagement.

Lighting becomes crucial in this expanded use of the park. Brad Treneman and I will have to find lighting positions to illuminate the aisles, and handheld lights may need to be employed when an adequate position can't be found. We began discussing these challenges early, and because I know where in the aisles scenes will be staged we can start to plan accordingly.

Before rehearsals begin, I will meet as many of the actors as possible to talk about the show, share our thoughts on the play, and generally get to know one another more, if we have not worked together. This is an opportunity for me to describe the conceptual approach and let them know about any extraordinary elements. I like to do this so that the first day of rehearsal doesn't seem like such a blind date. This also invites the actors in as collaborators and serves to strengthen our relationship in the room.

Julius Caesar launches the rep rehearsal process. The first part of the day will be shared with *The Comedy of Errors*. We will do general introductions and Matjash (the director of *The Comedy of Errors*) and I will each present our plays, concepts and research. After lunch we will invite the Canadian Stage staff in for a full company meet and greet, and the *Julius Caesar* design presentations and reading. More discussion will follow.

The second day will be table work. We will go through the play slowly, focusing on punctuation, pentameter, pronunciation, meaning, intention and events. We will work act by act, to isolate their characteristics and better understand their motors. We will punctuate each act with physical exercises in which everyone can participate.

The third day will continue with table work, which we will aim to complete by the afternoon. We will finish the day with the Denise Clark Tableau exercise, as taught to me by Peter Hinton. The cast is divided into two groups that must come up with a sentence that describes each act. We come together and choose the best of the two so that we have five sentences that we all agree captures the action of each act. The group then creates a tableau for each one, then we put them all together with music. Through this the cast learns a lot about the story, and can take ownership of it and all the information I have shared with them over the previous days. Interesting imagery and relationships can be revealed that can serve the rehearsal process. Starting with the third day, I will ask the actor playing Cinna the Poet to start each JC rehearsal day with a reading of his choice – scripture, poetry, and newspaper articles. This will keep him plugged in and exploring in a way that can influence our process. By the end of our first three days I want the company to have a clear understanding of what they are saying and why, and a sense of the function of each scene and act.

We will close our first week with another shared rehearsal: on Sunday afternoon the full company will meet at the site, where we will explore the terrain, the acoustics and the scale. This is important for the actors so they can learn how vocally intimate, and how gesturally large they need to be. I will go through the play and show the company where I intend to stage each scene.

As a general rule, for the second and third weeks I will maximize the time by reserving my primary rehearsals for the group scenes, and relegating the two hander scenes and soliloquys to

secondary rehearsals. This of course will be in consultation with the stage managers and Matjash, as we will want to work together to devise rehearsals that allow us both to work on our plays as much as possible. The tricky part will be that *Julius Caesar* has so many ensemble scenes with eight or more actors involved, and the significant fight choreography in the assassination and Cinna scenes will need to be run regularly. In all scenes, intentions and relationships will be the priority. The larger more complex scenes will require blocking, but for the most part, I will allow the logic of the space, the dramaturgical purpose of the scene (which we will discuss beforehand) and the instincts of the actors to shape the scenes, rather than impose blocking early in rehearsals. It is most important that the actors are clear in their needs, intentions and targets and that the text is clear. Once we are on site we can adjust any muddy blocking for maximum effect. Throughout rehearsals I intend to use our music cues so that we have the timings under our belt by the time we move to the park. I anticipate we will have to have our lighting designer in regularly to see the shape of scenes, as we won't be able to do a run through of the entire show until June fourteenth, two days before we move to the site. Before we leave the studio I hope to have a company that is confident in their text, their scenes and their story, so that when all that takes a back seat to technical concerns in the park they can trust that a foundation has been laid.

Once on site, we will have to spend considerable time getting comfortable and testing the limitations of our space and our technologies. This includes mapping out the traffic, since so many of our entrances are from behind the audience and so much of our playing space is situated in the aisles. We will need the actors to get comfortable with the stairs in the aisles, and the vastness of the playing space. We will pay attention to vocal projection so that we can avoid

the common park pitfall of yelling, despite the mics. The mics also erase vocal positions, making it harder to pinpoint which actor is speaking, so we will need to take care that our staging supports the speaker through how we direct the focus. By the end of our technical weeks in the park, I hope to have a company that is comfortable with all of the technical and spatial elements in the park, and how they serve their storytelling.

Our six previews will be an opportunity to get to know our major scene partner, the audience. Here we will be able to gauge reactions and adjust our levels of audience engagement accordingly. The preview audiences are our testing ground, and we will push for a maximum level of interaction so that we can pull back if necessary. It will take some actors some time to get accustomed to seeing their audience, much less talking to them. With the stands full of bodies we will reassess sightline issues, aisle traffic, and vocal levels. Six previews for each show also allow the actors to develop their repertory muscle, so that their bounce back from each show becomes quicker. By opening night, after two weeks in the park, the company should have found their park legs and be physically, vocally and socially comfortable in the environment. I hope to leave the actors and crew a show with a strong architecture that supports and allows for their performances to richen and grow over the run.

CONCLUSION

Like all plays, *Julius Caesar* is an instrument. In this case, it is a mechanism by which to examine ideas of citizenship and government, and artists have been using it to interrogate their relationship to politics for centuries. This summer, all of Canada will be immersed in political rhetoric. As the Prime Ministerial candidates jockey for public favour by debating or debunking each other's platforms and personalities, the minds of Toronto's citizens will be more attuned than ever to themes of power, governance and the common weal. The large and diverse family audience of the High Park Amphitheatre, with its intrinsic collective self-awareness, presents an ideal forum in which to explore themes of civic responsibility.

Before politics, comes community: a shared experience of environment and resources. And what has traditionally knit communities together are moments of assembly where face can see face, and shoulder can rub shoulder. These opportunities for communal engagement are what remind us of the humanity in others by revealing our similarities. This in turn generates our capacity for empathy, the fibre that gives our morality the tensile strength to stretch beyond kith and kin. By acknowledging our assembly of spectators, by including them in the narrative, by placing the critical action amongst them, by inviting them to occupy their rightful place as co creators of an event in progress, we invite them to be a dynamic and essential part of the dramaturgy. By erasing these boundaries of spectator and spectacle, we start to erase the idea of us and them, and create a we. This is a play with no villain and no hero, only a perpetual dilemma. By peering past the partisanship of Republican Rome, into its sacred heart, I hope to ponder not "what do you do with a tyrant?" but "what do we do with us?"

EPILOGUE

I am pleased overall with how this production of *Julius Caesar* turned out. For this I can thank the preparation process, which included a mentor to challenge and question my ideas and provide genre and structural wisdom that bolstered my dramaturgical approach; an unmounted workshop to test key concepts; and the enforced intellectual discipline of articulating all of this on paper. Would that every project had these! This process laid the foundation on which my instincts and skill set could operate at their best.

I think the script stood up well in production, telling the story and serving my conceptual agenda of preserving a four lead narrative (Caesar, Antony, Brutus and Cassius) with a strong ensemble. The text with genders unchanged proved to work – audience did not seem to get hung up on Cassius being referred to as male despite it being an obviously female character. The revisions I made to situate the play in the audience and refer to our contemporary political climate were successful: the spectator plants at the beginning palpably united our audience in solidarity, both in celebrating Maddie’s birthday and protesting her usher accuser. I liked the impact of Octavius and Antony’s entrance, and the use of the audience. I loved the energy of the addendum but it never quite achieved the punch I hoped for. One too many cleaners on stage plus a flag that didn’t flutter kept it undercharged.

The creation of the Sooth poet and the additional poetry text was highly satisfactory and one of the elements I am most pleased with. This was a case of hiring an actor I trust, who trusts me and my creative abilities, which enabled me to follow hunches and instincts with more courage.

The Elaine Maria Upton poem which served as the soul of the Poet's material was a miraculous find via Google search a day before rehearsal – I placed it on Michael's script the first day, he plunged in and we never looked back. Similarly, early on I happened on a fashion site about painted models and was struck by a black and white 2D version. I showed Michael to see what he thought, he loved it, and we used the painted poet as an anchor for the second half of the play.

The set design supported the text and concept. I am glad I pushed for six towers instead of settling for the four that production was trying to get us to agree to. The struggle to get the platform paid off as well – so far no audience members have sliced open arteries on its edges, and it has provided a necessary stage anchor in the audience. The only major regret I have with regard to the set design is the flag, which was an addition late in tech and was only constructed in previews, after Teresa had left the country. As a result it was not fully thought out nor executed satisfactorily. We knew going into our tech dress that the addendum was not conveying Stephen Harper enough. I felt introducing a flag at that moment would be appropriate to bring it all home. I felt strongly that it should be up high, and filling the sky as opposed to somewhere lower on the set. However, without a fan it hung limply most performances and the impact was diluted.

The costumes successfully described the world we intended to create. The togas provided an instant reference point for Rome, and I liked seeing the modern dress underneath to ground me in the here and now. I was happy with the conversion mid show from historical to contemporary dress, and how the characters started to blend in with the audience. I loved the Poet' modern

dress off the top and how it counterpointed the costume of the Romans, and his later transformation into the ghost Poet was a satisfying surprise. I was happy with Antony's wolf costume – I think we got a perfect scary/sexy/fun look out of him that set him up for the rest of the play. I think we achieved the blend we were aiming for of high ritual and modern day. I would change only a few small things, such as the Strato reveal at the play's end so that his cuirass was not such a giveaway under the blanket. Mid run we jettisoned the cuirass in favour of his hoodie, going for a Trayvon Martin look rather than a fussy Caesar reveal just before Brutus' stabbing. We gained theatrical surprise, but lost the visual impact of Caesar's Roman regalia against the riot police.

The sound design supported the overall concept. I liked the simplicity of the palate and the contrast of the three worlds: Samba processional, Cohen strings and Madonna hooks. I wouldn't change anything except the sound cue for the Brutus abstracted scene "Ride Mesalla Ride" moment – a moment that we never got right and is as much a text edit issue. I was also pleased with our timing, we had the majority of our cues in place for our runs in the rehearsal hall, so in the park we were only dealing with levels and fine-tuning.

I had the most issues with the lights. I found the design to be frustrating. In so many instances there simply was not enough light, so much so that crucial scenes like Cassius' suicide were in near darkness. This was the fault of the hang, as well as the instruments themselves, which were not up to the task. Brad and I have aesthetic differences and I felt I was always contradicting his design instincts for colour and gobo patterns. Perhaps we did not spend enough time describing the look of the piece before hand. My anxiety was primarily to get the show lit, given that half

the scenes took place in the house, and therefore applied a lot of my prep to getting clear and detailed information to Brad in that regard. In future, I will take more time to discuss the overall aesthetic and individual states to be sure we are on the same page. I also underestimated the candlepower and quality of LED lights, as I had not worked with them until this production. The whole process was hampered by the technical glitches: our level sessions in the evening were taken up with trouble shooting, so that we went into our cue to cue with very few cues built, and more technical glitches on top of that, all of which ate up extreme amounts of time. It was a frustrating process, with the instruments, the board, the board operator, the staging and concept all blamed at various points.

I was also less happy with the violence, as I found the assassination to lack the necessary grit. This was perhaps unavoidable, as Simon was dealing with the very real challenges of the stairs in the audience, flowing togas, different levels of actor ability and no place to hide. I thought the unmounted fight was far more successful, but there we had physically fearless twenty year olds, no togas, and a one off performance in which they could give it their all.

With two exceptions I was very pleased with our cast. Allan Louis was a joy to work with, so creative and so powerful – his faith in me made me smarter. Dylan Trowbridge is also one of my favourite types of actors, he thinks on his feet, turning every question and challenge into an attempt. Kyle, Chris, Randi, Soo, Jessica, Dalal were easy going, uncomplicated and responsive. They were a strong ensemble and very gracious in their support of the four leads. I think Naomi is brilliant and I had a great time working with her except for the fact that she needs to fully comprehend every single aspect of something before she can actually do it. She is so smart that

she gets in her own way. I had asked her to play extreme low stakes as Caska, as a deflecting mechanism. A kind of apathetic, blasé type who feigns disinterest. We achieved it once in rehearsals and someone made a comment that it unnerved them how contemporary she seemed as Caska, which I took as a compliment, but I believe this frightened her off and despite repeated notes she never went there again. Had she, I think she would have been an audience favourite. She is a very accomplished Shakespearean actor and can make any text clear and compelling, but I found her Caska unable to rise to the occasion I had hoped because she mistrusted going for the extreme note. Now that I trust myself more, I would push her harder.

If I could do this all again I'd recast Sean and quite possibly Allegra. Sean was an unknown to me, he was hired based on his reputation and he certainly looked like an interesting choice for our Brutus. I knew I wanted someone not Caucasian for the role, I felt it needed that extra element of outsidership from the western status quo to help fuel the revolutionary fire in the second half of the play. My first choice was Ryan Cunningham but he was unable to make the scheduling work due to his Native Earth commitments, and there were some reservations about his facility with text. At that point in the actor search, Sean looked like a good bet. The irony is, my other criteria was that whomever played Brutus be a "nice guy", intrinsically gentle, generous, kind, the type of person everyone loves – not a description I would use for Sean Baek after coming to know him! We found early on in rehearsals his reflexive impulses tend toward aggressive authoritarianism, and this combined with his inability to engage with other actors in the scenes alienated the ensemble working around him, and made it quite hard to generate any sense of "brotherhood" and mutual respect in the conspirators.

I think Allegra was well cast as Cassius. She was just very challenging to work with, and her and Sean were oil and water together – or fire and gasoline more like. I found her to be very contrary and unconsciously obstructive in rehearsal, mistrusting directions and needing to dissect every note before attempting anything. I found this to be demoralizing to the extent that I dreaded rehearsing any scene with her, anticipating challenge and endless conversation. In addition, her tendency was to direct others around her, a habit that aggravated Sean and sparked their conflict. Sean's inability to give to Allegra in the scenes made Allegra more controlling as she tried to make their onstage relationship work, which in turn drove Sean even deeper into his isolationism.

The unfortunate result of these two actors' habits was that the cornerstone relationship of the play simply did not develop. Brutus and Cassius's political romance is the stuff of legend and is such an opportunity to explore the intersection of eros and logos between two individuals. It is a disappointment that this did not get to occur. I don't know if any of this could have been avoided. Perhaps a more authoritarian director could have kept Sean intimidated enough to check his aggressive tendencies, and Allegra mollified enough to curb her anxious director impulses.

The Samba bands worked well in the opening scene. They established a raucous celebratory atmosphere that launched the play well. I was disappointed that I could not raise enough funds to have them play every performance, but it was no small feat raising the \$6900. Over the last year I have met with over twenty bands to confirm the three we finally got; and I have spent countless hours fundraising: I negotiated a \$5000 donation from BMO, which took several

harrowing phone calls with Nada Ristich; while we were in tech, I visited fifty-three Roncesvalles businesses at least three times, in addition to email follow ups, to secure the seven businesses that sponsored the bands. This after a less than successful indiegogo campaign I had launched in the early spring. I visited each band's headquarters several times to meet with members and go through cues. All this to say that a lot of work went in to creating this extra element. When I wasn't in rehearsal, I was organizing this component. I think the payoff was worth it but it was a much more exhausting and stressful rehearsal process overall because of these fundraising commitments.

If I could remount this *Julius Caesar* I'd recast my Brutus and Cassius and explore more fully the passion between these two characters. I would love to explore Brutus' psychological journey in more detail as I had intended. I would secure funding for the Samba bands ahead of time. I would make sure that our flag technology worked for a consistent, clear and potent final image. I would push Naomi harder. I might give the audience more lines, since they were so good at the two lines they got in this production. I would go into tech week with more authority around how it unfolds on the hill: moving the stage management table closer to the action on stage so I could take more advantage of the time. I would wear a watch so I would not have to rely on stage management for time management. I would go through tech week expectations with stage management before hand so that we could all be on the same page and maximize my time and efficacy with both actors and crew. I would cultivate a stronger creative relationship with the lighting designer, and have a clearer understanding of their aesthetic and how to work with it to achieve the design goals.

In closing I wish to say I am so grateful for this opportunity to direct *Julius Caesar*. I love this play and I thoroughly enjoyed the preparation process. The quality and scope of the research I undertook for this project is a benchmark for how I would like to prepare for any play in the future, and I know there are far greater depths of preparation possible. I believe the opportunity to explore the ideas in a play is the greatest gift the theatre provides a director, for each exploration is a chance to discover something vital and eternal and immediate about our human existence and the infinite ways we exist together on this earth. I look forward to continuing this exploration.

JOURNAL ENTRIES

Tuesday May 20, 2015

Slow going but in depth discussion and real forensic work. People are engaged with the ideas and the “world” of the play. After three days, a real sense of accomplishment. The exercises in between acts were successful – people relish being on their feet and playing. I am surprised how playful everyone is, even the more mature actors are squealing like children in the devil/angel game. The tableau exercise is very moving.

Tuesday May 26, 2015

Scene work with the conspirators. We establish their choral nature against their individual identities and the group dynamic as a whole. We get through three full company scenes. It’s slow going, but we make good first passes at the Garden Scene, and Caesar’s house. Some nice moments articulated but definitely rough around the edges. It helps to establish the “story” of each scene prior to going into these big group rehearsals. Gets everyone on the same page. End of day we move to the downstairs space to work on the capitol scene. This was unsuccessful – this scene is all about blocking and the space was too difficult.

Wednesday May 27, 2015

Fight work with Fon all morning. The result – a really great assassination scene has been built. It will need more grit to the violence but will see how it develops. Right now the hurdle is to get actors on board with a violent group fight on stairs in an audience. In the afternoon we had a

successful pass at the opening “Triumph” scene. Great Hive Mind work in creating the opening “play” of Caesar’s entrance with the senators. This takes it out of us I think. The last scene of the day ends in an unresolved mess – differences of opinion (Allegra brings a full company scene to a standstill because she doesn’t think the concept is correct for Cassius) a space that doesn’t accommodate the staging, and tired people make for an hour of trying things and not finding a solution. An unsatisfactory end to the two days of primaries. Leaves me a bit depressed. I think I let the room expand a bit too much.

Thursday May 28, 2015

Secondary rehearsals. A great session with Kyle and Christopher. We make a good first pass at the preshow scene. This is followed by excellent Poet discovery work with Michael, Ali and Clive. Then an hour with Sean and Allegra, which proves to be an excellent rehearsal – no resistance today. We get straight to work and sidestep the habit of talking for 20 minutes before working. The Downstairs room facilitates this, what with the absence of all the other opinions. A great first pass at the Seduction scene.

Sunday May 31, 2015

We retouch scenes in the morning and make great progress, clarifying intentions and enhancing dramatic action. I wish we could do this with every scene – the jump is substantial. But only time to prioritize a few scenes if we want to do a run of the first half, which I am not sure we should do. In the end I think its best to see where we are at in our storytelling, and put in everyone’s brains the physical sequence of events. The run in the afternoon is very informative. The storm scene needs the storm – it’s another character without which Naomi is target less.

The poet's poetry needs to be really incisive after Cassius' Shake soliloquy or it diffuses energy. Not sure what the material is – recycle/reprise the Time Of Fire or something new? My instinct says reinvest in Time of Fire imagery – make that our soul poem for the play. We will have to revisit the only group scene we did not retouch – it shows. The intentions need recalibrating as it has lost its vitality and direction. This and three other scenes require another revisit but on the whole we are in good shape to move on. A great end to the week.

Tuesday June 2, 2015

One thing I'm pondering - not a big deal/but the idea of a woman playing a male part is something Allegra keeps bringing up as a profound challenge and to be honest I can't see what the big deal is, I wonder what I'm missing. I see Cassius as a feminine part anyways, regardless of gender of actor. She maintains it's governed by a male mind and therefore a bit alien to her - she finds herself falling into maleness. Which she doesn't want to do. I don't see this but she feels it. I think she thinks I'm making light of it or I am too obtuse to see it. I feel like she is not playing the text and might be prescribing a fictionalized femaleness to the character which would feel weird/fake when it doesn't pan out (a real affair with Brutus). Or maybe I am not as feminine as she is and identify more with Cassius' way of thinking. I flag it because I want to help her but can't see the problem and that of course makes it worse.

Tuesday June 9, 2015

Preliminaries. Brought the whip in for today – less time talking as the tunnel narrows, more push to get through so we can see what we've got. It gets easier – the talkers of the group are getting killed off in the play, and as the narrative has progressed most questions have been

answered. The big exciting questions now emerge – what are we actually saying, seeing, offering up for speculation? I question whether it is political enough. I don't want the beauty we are striving for to be too obscure, and outweigh the political enquiry/relevancy.

Wednesday June 10, 2015

We stage the final scenes of the play, which involve the poet, the Caesar Ghost, and the addendum. This is by far the section that is the most “constructed”. It is exciting to be working in creative rather than interpretive territory, and the actors seem inspired and invigorated by the exploration. In particular, how the Poet and his Harper poetry collides with the Caesar Ghost filial drama. The day involves choral work with the riot police as Caesar Chorus into the people of the NOW addendum. I worry that we don't have enough people onstage – I want one more “cleaner” for this final image. It comes down to costumes and quick-change chaos. Will see what we can do.

Thursday June 11, 2015

This is a secondary day with Dylan on Antony scenes and Sean and Allegra on their two major scenes. We talk about the arc of these characters and their relationships, now that we've made it through the play. How does what we have learnt of them inform their early scenes? What is the kernel of their story? I say it is turning into a revolutionary Romeo and Juliet with the Cassius Brutus romance. The scenes have grown by leaps, they are playing with each other, and Sean's softer, gentler Brutus is way more compatible with Allegra's impetuous Cassius. Dylan's work on the forum speech is likewise coming along. I love how he works – so active, up on his feet leaping into the text, searching for action in every thought, paraphrasing or repeating for

emphases when he has not felt he has grasped an action/seen a target fully. Great progress.

Today also a costume meeting with Michelle – we add Calphurnia to the Caesar resurrection scene with the plebs, a great finale for her character. Now I worry about Portia's one and only scene.

Saturday June 13, 2015

We worked scenes in the morning, including inserting the new poet material. We worked the garden scene, after having had a sit down talk with Sean about working the gentler, loving aspects of Brutus. We talked about Brutus as inspiring the conspirators, not commanding them, as is his instinct. We worked the Calphurnia and Caesar scene and didn't quite have enough time in the 30 minutes to get somewhere satisfying with the scene. We are looking for complexity where perhaps there is none? In the afternoon we run the play in the studio. I find the run disheartening – I see what I have not accomplished. The actors are struggling for lines. I'm tired. The running time is worrisome – two hours. How to trim 20 minutes? The opening scene is going to be full – and the violence (assassination, Cinna lynch, and the Riot, plus the suicide of Brutus) has added to the first day read time of 130 minutes.

Tuesday June 16, 2015

First day in the park. Spacing. We lose two hours of our call to the safety walk and mics, which as I predicted turns into 3.5 hours because everything is new, and therefore slower than anticipated. The large scaffolding is still on stage because the focus is not complete, which hampers any kind of spacing we do. So not only does the first show in the schedule lose out to the necessary first day because of the mic fittings, safety walk and all the protocols around

getting to know the site, it also inevitably deals with all the kinks in the system/unfinished business/and company member distraction by the new stimuli. I brought this up with stage management a month ago and asked that we find a way to share this load between the shows but no solution was found. Despite my bitterness we have a good but slow session. I try to focus on spacing but can't help veering into scene work to help motivate spacing – the result is we don't get through the play on our first day. The two-hour levels session in the evening is taken up by trouble shooting the board and the new LEDs. I don't think we build any cues/see any levels.

Wednesday June 17, 2015

Spacing. Peter here to remind me that spacing is spacing, not rehearsal. So we move faster as I curb my desire to work on the scenes. We get through the rest of the play and have time to work on the traffic and choreography of the final scene. For an outside in director, it is a relief to move people around to make better pictures, something I have not been letting myself do in the studio.

Saturday June 20, 2015

Work through rehearsal with sound. We spend a chunk of time on the fights with Simon, now that we have the togas. We invest in a new bit of violence in the riot, with Christopher being visibly taken down by the police. Christopher was the only actor who I could spare for the riot collateral damage, and Kyle pointed out that because he is black it is saying something that could be contentious, something I had not clocked. So we decide to make more of it and reference cop on black man violence from Rodney King to Trayvon Martin to Eric Garner. I

worry about our time as the clock ticks on this new “non essential” rehearsal investment, but I think it will pay off.

Sunday June 21, 2015

We continue work through rehearsal with sound, while Brad hopefully builds cues on top. We fix the fight, extracting the dangerous Allegra backwards in heels push. I also take out a now extraneous move at the bottom of the hill. We also take out the lift in the Cinna Lynch. Both fights look way better and grittier now. Plus they are safer. We get through the play but forego a second run of the assassination to incorporate the latest change, something stage management does not like but I feel it is better to complete this second pass through. We spend an annoying chunk of time revisiting the choreography of the final scene, poor Randi’s broom and paper bit is turning into a hellish finale for her. Soo and Christopher’s cop traffic is confounded by the Randi and Dalal traffic. The gold mask choreography still looks shitty! We end the day with this scene still looking like a mess. But we just need to look at this not at the end of the day, which is what ends up happening with the final scenes. These two last scenes rely on precision, something tired actors are less likely to have at ends of days. Peter reminds me that this finessing can be addressed in previews, embarrassing as it is.

Thursday June 25, 2015

Cue to Cue. Fight erupts between Allegra and Sean during seduction scene. Sean calls me down from the tech table to intervene, a move that dismays Allegra, who thinks he is being punitive. These two really are oil and water and bring out the utter worst in one another when times are stressful. I am frustrated with the snail’s pace of this cue to cue – some of these cues take forty

fucking minutes! Actors are waiting around onstage. I'd love to be rehearsing them in these windows but when I do that the focus is lost on the table up top and we lose our tech motivation. So it's a really inefficient way to go. The moving lights are time consuming to program, and it seems that our operator is not familiar with how they work. But god bless actors, they are inventing while we tech. Great solutions and new layers being offered. They are building on our foundation. Allan solves the mantle business at the assassination with a Christ like shrug of it for his last walk toward Brutus.

Monday July 13, 2015

Day off. I have to make a call as to whether we rehearse on Wednesday or not and use up the floating rehearsal day. I want to: in the tent scene I could add the lantern and move the scene further along, and we could tighten the final moment of the play. But there is resistance to this: Stage Management infers that everyone is exhausted and that it has been a long haul, also it is pointed out that they have never split company focus before by rehearsing one show before performing another. This plus Peter's caution that we don't alienate Allegra and Sean by bringing just them in (which they need but could turn into a big deal) scares me off rehearsing.

Wednesday July 15, 2015

I am full of regret. Show was cancelled last night due to rain and now more than ever we could use that rehearsal. I feel so stupid. Lesson: use any and all rehearsal! People are hardier than you think, it's my job to push, and stage management can push back if it's a problem, don't cave so easily. But it's hard to gauge exhaustion when I am not on the same schedule as the cast and crew, so I erred on the side of caution and sensitivity. I have to be tougher. People are not going

to die. I would have worked the tent scene, the addendum, and prodded Naomi to go even more understated. Now I may never get to fix those fucking things! For future, I resolve to trust that I am essentially decent and kind, and push harder to get results I want.

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