



AUDITIONS

Western University's Summer Shakespeare 2020

JULIUS CAESAR

(To be rehearsed and performed online)

Western University's Department of English and Writing Studies is auditioning actors for its 2020 online version of *Julius Caesar*, directed by Jeff Culbert.

ROLES TO BE CAST

PINDARUS – narrator – 14 scenes

CASSIUS – 7 scenes

BRUTUS – 4 scenes

CASCA – 4 scenes

PORTIA – 2 scenes

SOOTHSAYER – 2 scenes

DECIUS – 2 scenes

MARK ANTONY – 1 scene

JULIUS CAESAR – 1 scene

CALPURNIA – 1 scene

LIGARIUS – 1 scene

COBBLER – 1 scene

CITIZEN – 1 scene

LUCIUS – 1 scene

Character Descriptions and Audition Monologues

(Note that most use Shakesperean language, but some do not, so you are free to choose.)

PINDARUS

- a minor character in Shakespeare's script, but in this version, the narrator (14 speeches)
- has the most scenes and holds the whole story together
- usually speaks in a casual 21st century voice
- is Cassius' slave, and is making a video to document Cassius' actions to save the Republic from becoming a dictatorship
- The monologue below opens the documentary. At this point, his assumption is that Cassius' plan will be successful.

PINDARUS:

Hello everyone. My name is Pindarus, I'm a slave, and my master is Cassius. He has asked me to keep a record of his plan to save the Republic and the freedom of everyone. Well not me; I'm a slave, but ... freedom more generally. Freedom for my master. But I am on board, for sure. Cassius is a good guy. We want history to be able to look back and see how it all happened. I'll try to get as much as I can on record.

I'm in isolation because the pandemic is starting to set in. Everything is going crazy at once: the pandemic, the political crisis, the economic crash, the climate crisis – everything.

Right now, the Republic as we know it is under threat. One man is on the verge of absolute power, which he will be all too happy to seize. So unless someone intervenes, the Rule of Law will be thrown out and replaced by a Leadership Cult. The Cult of Julius Caesar. That's where we are right now, and that's where Cassius comes in. He's not going to let that happen.

CASSIUS

- seven scenes
- the driver of the conspiracy to kill Caesar
- bitterly resents Caesar assuming absolute power
- This speech lays out his background thinking on the case against Caesar, before any actions have been suggested.

CASSIUS

Well, honour is the subject of my story.
I cannot tell what you and other men
Think of this life; but, for my single self,
I was born free as Caesar; so were you:
We both have fed as well, and we can both
Endure the winter's cold as well as he:

For once, upon a raw and gusty day,
The troubled Tiber chafing with her shores,
Caesar said to me 'Darest thou, Cassius, now
Leap in with me into this angry flood,
And swim to yonder point?' Upon the word,
Accoutred as I was, I plunged in
And bade him follow; so indeed he did.
The torrent roar'd, and we did buffet it
With lusty sinews, throwing it aside
And stemming it with hearts of controversy;
But ere we could arrive the point proposed,
Caesar cried 'Help me, Cassius, or I sink!'
I, as Aeneas, our great ancestor,
Did from the flames of Troy upon his shoulder
The old Anchises bear, so from the waves of Tiber
Did I the tired Caesar. And this man
Is now become a god, and Cassius is
A wretched creature and must bend his body,
If Caesar carelessly but nod on him.
He had a fever when he was in Spain,
And when the fit was on him, I did mark
How he did shake: 'tis true, this god did shake;
His coward lips did from their colour fly,
And that same eye whose bend doth awe the world
Did lose his lustre: I did hear him groan:
Ay, and that tongue of his that bade the Romans
Mark him and write his speeches in their books,
Alas, it cried 'Give me some drink, Titinius,'
As a sick girl. Ye gods, it doth amaze me
A man of such a feeble temper should
So get the start of the majestic world
And bear the palm alone.

BRUTUS

- four scenes
- principled conspirator.
- highly respected, so he'll gain public support for their action to take out Caesar
- quick to assert authority in decision-making.
- In this scene, Brutus and Cassius are on a video call, making plans to kill Caesar. Brutus is

responding to Cassius' suggestion that Mark Antony be killed along with Caesar. Brutus insists that only Caesar should be killed.

BRUTUS:

Our course will seem too bloody, Caius Cassius,
To cut the head off and then hack the limbs,
Like wrath in death and envy afterwards;
For Antony is but a limb of Caesar:
Let us be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius.
We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar;
And in the spirit of men there is no blood:
O, that we then could come by Caesar's spirit,
And not dismember Caesar! But, alas,
Caesar must bleed for it! And, gentle friend,
Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully;
Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods,
Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds:

This shall make

Our purpose necessary and not envious:
Which so appearing to the common eyes,
We shall be call'd purgers, not murderers.
And for Mark Antony, think not of him;
For he can do no more than Caesar's arm
When Caesar's head is off.

CASCA

- four scenes, which vary widely in tone
- has a dry, comedic tone in this one
- the conspirator who makes the first stab at Caesar
- works directly for Caesar, calling for silence when Caesar wants to speak, for example.
- has no respect for Caesar, and is jaded. This speech is before there is any plot to kill Caesar.
- has been contacted by Brutus and Casca and asked what just happened at the Caesar rally. This is his reply.
- can come across as somewhat cynical, but at this point, saying negative things about Caesar could be very dangerous, so he doesn't want to show his feelings yet. Not too forthcoming.
- In this scene, we are watching one side of a two-person conversation.

CASCA:

- Ay, you left a text; would you speak with me?
- Why, you were with Caesar, were you not?

- Why, there was a crown offered him: and being offered him, he put it by with the back of his hand, thus; and then the people fell a-shouting.

- Why, the second noise was for that too.
 - Why, the third noise was for that too.
 - Ay, marry, was't offered him thrice, and he put it by thrice, every time gentler than other, and at every putting-by mine honest neighbours shouted their approval.
 - Why, 'twas Antony offered him the crown.
 - I can as well be hanged as tell the manner of it: it was mere foolery; I did not mark it. I saw Mark Antony offer him a crown;--yet 'twas not a crown neither, 'twas one of these coronets;--and, as I told you, he put it by once: but, for all that, to my thinking, he would fain have had it. Then he offered it to him again; then he put it by again: but, to my thinking, he was very loath to lay his fingers off it. And then he offered it the third time; he put it the third time by: and still as he refused it, the rabblement hooted and clapped their chapped hands and threw up their sweaty night-caps and uttered such a deal of stinking breath because Caesar refused the crown that it had almost choked Caesar; for he swooned and fell down at it: and for mine own part, I durst not laugh, for fear of opening my lips and receiving the bad air.
 - Ay, he fell down in the market-place, and foamed at mouth, and was speechless.
 - Ay, the falling sickness.
 - We are the ones who have it? I know not what you mean by that; but, I am sure, Caesar fell down. If the tag-rag people did not clap him and hiss him, according as he pleased and displeased them, as they use to do the players in the theatre, I am no true man.
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PORTIA

- two scenes
- In this scene, we see only Portia's side of a conversation with partner Brutus.
- Brutus has committed to the murder plot, but hasn't told Portia.
- Portia knows that something serious is on Brutus' mind, and she confronts him to make him say what it is.
- They have a very respectful relationship, so this is unusual behaviour for Brutus.
- It is early morning and Brutus has already gotten up to go. She reaches him as he has just left the house.

PORTIA:

- Dear my lord,
Make me acquainted with your cause of grief.
- Brutus is wise, and, were he not in health,
He would embrace the means to come by it.
- Is Brutus sick? and is it physical
To walk unbraced and suck up the humours
Of the dank morning? What, is Brutus sick,
And will he steal out of his wholesome bed,
To dare the vile contagion of the street
And tempt the rheumy and unpurged air
To drop the deadly virus? No, my Brutus;

You have some sick offence within your mind,
Which, by the right and virtue of my place,
I ought to know of
By all your vows of love and that great vow
Which did incorporate and make us one,
That you unfold to me, yourself, your half,
Why you are heavy, and what men to-night
Have had to resort to you: for here have been
Some six or seven, who did hide their faces
Even from darkness.
- Within the bond of marriage, tell me, Brutus,
Is it excepted I should know no secrets
That appertain to you? Am I yourself
But, as it were, in sort or limitation,
To keep with you at meals, comfort your bed,
And talk to you sometimes? Dwell I but in the suburbs
Of your good pleasure? If it be no more,
Portia is Brutus' harlot, not his wife.
- If this were true, then should I know this secret.
I grant I am a woman; but withal
A woman that Lord Brutus took to wife:
Tell me your counsels, I will not disclose 'em:

SOOTHSAYER

- two monologues
- interviewed by Pindarus
- wanted to warn Caesar of the danger, but had no concrete prediction
- tells most of his story in modern language

SOOTHSAYER:

I see things, and then they come true. I don't know why; don't bug me about it. My sister had triplets, and I predicted that, what? 2, 3 years before she was even pregnant. That's just one example. In Caesar's case, I saw the date. The Ides of March. And I saw the danger for Caesar. Or at least, I saw that there *was* a danger. I couldn't quite make out what it was.

Well, I was out on the street and Caesar was about to walk by. Quick thinking needed; no time to lose. Do I just keep it to myself, when I know darn well he's in trouble? And it's big trouble. But I don't know what it is.

No, I couldn't let it go; I had to do it, so I just yelled, "Caesaaaaaaaaaar!!!" That stopped the whole show. Caesar said, "Who calls?" ... I just kept quiet. Then "Speak! Caesar is turn'd to hear." ... Nothing. Everyone waiting. So I went with the one thing that I was sure of: the date. "Beware the Ides of March". That's all I had to say, but Caesar said, "Set him before me; let me see his face." I said to myself Ah shit, here we go. So up I went, and Caesar said, "What say'st

thou to me now? Speak once again". I was a bit sheepish by that point, and I just said it again, sort of half-heartedly: "Beware the Ides of March."

He just brushes me off. "He is a dreamer; let us leave him." And off they went. ... I was trying to do him a favour!

DECIUS

- two monologues
- experienced politician who knows the game and enjoys it
- In an earlier scene, he expressed great confidence that he could talk Caesar into coming to the Capitol on the day they planned to kill him. In this scene, he tells the story of how he did it.

DECIUS:

I said, "All hail! good morrow, worthy Caesar:
I come to fetch you to the senate-house."

Calpurnia was trying to make me tell them
That he was sick and worried about the plague
But Caesar wouldn't have it said in public
"Have I in conquest stretch'd mine arm so far,
To be afraid to tell graybeards the truth?"

He said, "Go tell them Caesar *will* not come."

I said

"Most mighty Caesar, let me know some cause,
Lest I be laugh'd at when I tell them so."

He said,

"The cause is in my will: I will not come;
That is enough to satisfy the senate.

But for your private satisfaction,

Because I love you, I will let you know:

Calpurnia here, my wife, stays me at home:

She dreamt to-night she saw my statua,

Which, like a fountain with an hundred spouts,

Did run pure blood: and many lusty Romans

Came smiling, and did bathe their hands in it:

And these does she apply for warnings, and portents,

And evils imminent; and on her knee

Hath begg'd that I will stay at home to-day."

I said, "This dream is all amiss interpreted;

It was a vision fair and fortunate:

Your statue spouting blood in many pipes,

In which so many smiling Romans bathed,

Signifies that from you great Rome shall suck

Reviving blood, and that great men shall press

For tinctures, stains, relics and cognizance.
This by Calpurnia's dream is signified.”
Caesar liked that. So I said,
“And know it now: the senate have concluded
To give this day a crown to mighty Caesar.
If you shall send them word you will not come,
Their minds may change. Besides, it were a mock
Apt to be render'd, for some one to say
'Break up the senate till another time,
When Caesar's wife shall meet with better dreams.'
If Caesar hide himself, shall they not whisper
'Lo, Caesar is afraid'?”
And that, my friends is how I came to fetch him
And lead him to the end of his career.

COBBLER

- one monologue
- person on the street, interviewed by Pindarus for the documentary
- comic, likes to make fun of authorities

COBBLER

“Well, it was like a holiday, really. We all knocked off work and went down to see Caesar and celebrate his triumph over Pompey. But a couple of the old Pompey geezers, they were having a fit, you know:

“Hence! home, you idle creatures get you home:

Is this a holiday? Speak, what trade art thou?”

So I says “Trade? Truly, sir, in respect of a fine workman, I am but, as you would say, a cobbler.”

He says, “But what trade art thou? Answer me directly.”

A bit snotty-like, right? I says, “A trade, sir, that, I hope, I may use with a safe conscience; which is, indeed, sir, a mender of bad soles.”

“What trade, thou knave? thou naughty knave, what trade?”

“Nay, I beseech you, sir, be not out with me: yet, if you be out, sir, I can mend you.”

The other geezer steps in. He’s a little smarter.

“Thou art a cobbler, art thou?”

I says, “Truly, sir, I am, indeed, sir, a surgeon to old shoes; when they are in great danger, I recover them. As proper men as ever trod upon neat's leather have gone upon my handiwork.

He says, “But wherefore art not in thy shop today?

Why dost thou lead these men about the streets?”

I says, “Truly, sir, to wear out their shoes, to get myself into more work.” Finally, I says, “But,

indeed, sir, we make holiday, to see Caesar and to rejoice in his triumph.”
So then the first geezer has a fit. That was not what he wanted to hear.
“Wherefore rejoice? What conquest brings he home?
What tributaries follow him to Rome,
To grace in captive bonds his chariot-wheels?
You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!
You deplorables!”
By now, he’s losing it.
“O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome,
Knew you not Pompey?” he says,
“Be gone! Run to your houses”, he says, “Fall upon your knees,
Pray to the gods to intermit the plague
That’s falling now on this ingratitude.”
... I mean, come on. Right?”

ANTONY

- one monologue
- jock party animal who rises to the occasion when Caesar is killed
- Brutus has just spoken to the crowd on behalf of the conspirators, so Antony has to tread carefully at first, because they are not on his pro-Caesar side.
- Antony persuades the crowd to turn on the conspirators

ANTONY:

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones;
So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious:
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest--
For Brutus is an honourable man;
So are they all, all honourable men--
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
He was my friend, faithful and just to me:
But Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome

Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And, sure, he is an honourable man.
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
But here I am to speak what I do know.
You all did love him once, not without cause:
What cause withholds you then, to mourn for him?

But yesterday the word of Caesar might
Have stood against the world; now lies he there.
And none so poor to do him reverence.
O masters, if I were disposed to stir
Your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage,
I should do Brutus wrong, and Cassius wrong,
Who, you all know, are honourable men:
I will not do them wrong; I rather choose
To wrong the dead, to wrong myself and you,
Than I will wrong such honourable men.

CAESAR

- one monologue
- boastful, conceited
- actor's portrayal should be reminiscent of Donald Trump
- Caesar is in a video call with Mark Antony.

CAESAR:

Let me have men about me that are fat;
Sleek-headed men and such as sleep o' nights:
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;
He thinks too much: such men are dangerous.

Would he were fatter! But I fear him not:
Yet if my name were liable to fear,

I do not know the man I should avoid
So soon as that spare Cassius. He reads much;
He is a great observer and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men: he loves no plays,
As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music;
Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort
As if he mock'd himself and scorn'd his spirit
That could be moved to smile at any thing.
Such men as he be never at heart's ease
Whiles they behold a greater than themselves,
And therefore are they very dangerous.
I rather tell thee what is to be fear'd
Than what I fear; for always I am Caesar.
I'm doing a great job.

CALPURNIA

- one monologue
- tells this story in an interview
- makes a failed attempt to keep her husband Caesar home on the day he was killed

CALPURNIA:

I woke up, and Caesar wasn't in the bed. I got up to find him getting ready to go out for the day.
I said,

What mean you, Caesar? think you to walk forth?
You shall not stir out of your house to-day.

He said,

“Caesar shall forth: the things that threaten'd me
Ne'er look'd but on my back; when they shall see
The face of Caesar, they are vanished.”

What can I say? He was a stubborn man.

I said, “Caesar, I never stood on ceremonies,
Yet now they fright me. There is one within,
Besides the things that we have heard and seen,
Recounts most horrid sights seen by the watch.
A lioness hath whelped in the streets;
And graves have yawn'd, and yielded up their dead;
Fierce fiery warriors fought upon the clouds,
In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,
Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol;
The noise of battle hurtled in the air,
Horses did neigh, and dying men did groan,
And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets.
O Caesar! these things are beyond all use,
And I do fear them.”

He said
“Yet Caesar shall go forth; for these predictions
Are to the world in general as to Caesar.”

I said,
“When beggars die, there are no comets seen;
The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes.
He just laughed and said,
Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once.”

I said,
“Alas, my lord,
Your wisdom is consumed in confidence.
Do not go forth to-day: call it my fear
That keeps you in the house, and not your own.
We'll send Mark Antony to the senate-house:
And he shall say you are not well to-day:
Let me, upon my knee, prevail in this.”

(I was literally on my knees)

And finally, he said,
“Mark Antony shall say I am not well,
And, for thy humour, I will stay at home.”
And I felt a heavy weight was lifting from me,
But that relief was not to be for long.
For Decius came and shattered it for ever.

LIGARIUS

- one monologue
- rises from his covid sickbed to join the conspiracy
- could have a cough
- is leaving a video message for Brutus, saying he wants to join the conspiracy

LIGARIUS:

Brutus!

Vouchsafe good morrow from a feeble tongue.

Your message said, “Would you were not sick”, but
I am not sick, if Brutus have in hand
Any exploit worthy the name of honour.

If so,

By all the gods that Romans bow before,
I here discard my sickness! Soul of Rome!
Brave son, derived from honourable loins!

Thou, like an exorcist, hast conjured up
My mortified spirit. Now bid me run,
And I will strive with things impossible;
Yea, get the better of them. What's to do?
A piece of work that will make sick men whole?
And are not some whole that we must make sick?
Set on your foot,
And with a heart new-fired I follow you,
To do I know not what: but it sufficeth
That Brutus leads me on.

LUCIUS

- one scene
- servant to Portia and Brutus
- Portia wants him to take an urgent message to Brutus, but she can't articulate one.
- the comedy is in Lucius' exasperation that he is supposed to deliver an urgent message, but there is no message, only urgency.
- Lucius only has four lines, so most of the acting in this scene is just listening to Portia, who is very agitated and impatient.
- Lucius is not used to seeing Portia so distraught.
- For the audition, you can just read Portia's parts to yourself and Lucius' lines out loud. (Or do whatever works for you.)

PORTIA

I prithee, boy, run to the senate-house;
Stay not to answer me, but get thee gone:
Why dost thou stay?

LUCIUS

To know my errand, madam.

PORTIA

I would have had thee there, and here again,
Ere I can tell thee what thou shouldst do there.
O constancy, be strong upon my side,
Set a huge mountain 'tween my heart and tongue!
Art thou here yet?

LUCIUS

Madam, what should I do?
Run to the Capitol, and nothing else?
And so return to you, and nothing else?

PORTIA

Yes, bring me word, boy, if thy lord look well,
For he went sickly forth: and take good note
What Caesar doth, what suitors press to him.
Hark, boy! what noise is that?

LUCIUS

I hear none, madam.

PORTIA

Prithee, listen well;
I heard a bustling rumour, like a fray,
And the wind brings it from the Capitol.

LUCIUS

Sooth, madam, I hear nothing.

PORTIA

Ay me, I must go in. O Brutus,
The heavens speed thee in thine enterprise!
(she realizes that she's still online with Lucius) Brutus hath a suit
That Caesar will not grant. O, I grow faint.
Run, Lucius, and commend me to my lord;
Say I am merry: come to me again,
And bring me word what he doth say to thee.