News release September 6 2012 CAESAR one

William Shakespeare’s play ***Julius Caesar*** will be staged at Harare’s Reps Theatre during September, bringing to the fore one of the Bard’s most important works.

Known more formally as ***The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*** it was written in 1599 and portrays the 44 BC [conspiracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assassination_of_Julius_Caesar) against the [Roman dictator](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_dictator) [Julius Caesar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Caesar), his assassination and the defeat of the conspirators at the [Battle of Philippi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Philippi). It is one of several Roman plays that Shakespeare wrote, based on true events from [Roman history](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Rome), which also include [***Coriolanus***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coriolanus_(play)) and [***Antony and Cleopatra***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antony_and_Cleopatra)***.***

The play is an O Level set book this year and particular emphasis is being made in marketing this production to schools whose students are either studying this play, or who may be literature students in general. Last year’s schools’ set book production, Shakespeare’s ***Much Ado About Nothing,*** was acclaimed critically and also enjoyed box office success. As with last year’s production, this play is directed by John Dennison.

It will run on the Reps main stage from Thursday September 13 to Saturday September 22, with a preview night on Wednesday September 12. Performances are at 7pm most evening, with matinee performances on the afternoons of September 15, 16 and 22.

Although the title of the play is Julius Caesar, [Caesar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Caesar) is not the most visible character in its action; he appears in only three scenes, and is killed at the beginning of the third act. [Marcus Brutus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcus_Junius_Brutus) speaks more than four times as many lines, and the central psychological drama is his struggle between the conflicting demands of [honour](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honour), patriotism, and [friendship](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friendship).

[Marcus Brutus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcus_Junius_Brutus) is Caesar's close friend and a Roman [praetor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Praetor).

Brutus allows himself to be cajoled into joining a group of conspiring [senators](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Senate) because of a growing suspicion—implanted by [Caius Cassius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaius_Cassius_Longinus)—that Caesar intends to turn republican Rome into a monarchy under his own rule. Caesar's assassination is one of the most famous scenes of the play, occurring in Act 3. After ignoring the soothsayer as well as his wife's own premonitions, Caesar comes to the Senate. The conspirators create a superficial motive for the assassination by means of a petition brought by Metellus Cimber, pleading on behalf of his banished brother.

As Caesar, predictably, rejects the petition, Casca grazes Caesar in the back of his neck, and the others follow in stabbing him; Brutus is last. At this point, Caesar utters the famous line "[Et tu, Brute?](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Et_tu,_Brute%3F)"("And you, Brutus?", i.e. "You too, Brutus?"). Shakespeare has him add, "Then fall, Caesar," suggesting that Caesar did not want to survive such treachery.

The conspirators make clear that they committed this act for Rome, not for their own purposes and do not attempt to flee the scene. After Caesar's death, Brutus delivers an oration defending his actions, and for the moment, the crowd is on his side. However, [Mark Antony](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Antony), with a subtle and eloquent speech over Caesar's corpse — beginning with the much-quoted "[Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friends,_Romans,_countrymen,_lend_me_your_ears)" — deftly turns [public opinion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_opinion) against the assassins by manipulating the emotions of the [common people](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plebians), in contrast to the rational tone of Brutus's speech..

The play ends with a tribute to Brutus by Antony, who proclaims that Brutus has remained "the noblest Roman of them all" because he was the only conspirator who acted for the good of Rome. There is then a small hint at the friction between Mark Antony and Octavius which will characterise another of Shakespeare's Roman plays, [***Antony and Cleopatra***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antony_and_Cleopatra).

CAESAR TWO LAST

According to Wikipedia, Maria Wyke has written that the play reflects the general anxiety of Elizabethan England over succession of leadership. At the time of its creation and first performance, [Queen Elizabeth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_I_of_England), a strong ruler, was elderly and had refused to name a successor, leading to worries that a civil war similar to that of Rome might break out after her death.

Advance booking for ***Julius Caesar*** is now open at The Spotlight and several schools have already placed their block bookings, for which there is a special discounted price and a means by which the schools can do their own fundraising from ticket sales. More information on this can be obtained from the Reps office.

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