



The Nashville Shakespeare Festival

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Nashville Shakespeare Festival to stage *Julius Caesar* *Eddie George to play Caesar*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. -- The Nashville Shakespeare Festival will present *Julius Caesar*, a complex political story with themes of corrupted power, betrayal and tragic consequences, at Belmont University's Trout Theater Jan. 10-29, 2012.

"*Julius Caesar* is the singularly most requested play by teachers and students who have attended our winter performances, said Denice Hicks, Artistic Director for the Nashville Shakespeare Festival." The Festival's last performance of *Julius Caesar* was summer 1996 at Centennial Park.

Eddie George will play Caesar, the ancient Roman general and consul assassinated by conspiring senators. George is the former Tennessee Titan star running back and Heisman Trophy winner whose many roles now include entrepreneur, motivational speaker and philanthropist.

"Eddie's dedication to the craft and commitment to the art of theater is truly inspiring," Hicks said. George's previous acting credits include the 2010 Amun Ra production of Suzan-Lori Park's *Topdog/Underdog*.

Hicks noted that some "heavy-hitters" of past local Shakespearean productions have been cast in this production. Brian Webb Russell will play Brutus while the role of Mark Antony will be performed by Eric D. Pasto-Crosby.

Russell starred as Prospero in the Festival's 2010 production of *The Tempest* and played the Bard himself in the original play *Shakespeare's Case*, performed in 2011. Pasto-Crosby had the role of Laertes in the 2008 production of *Hamlet* and the role of Berowne in the 2010 production of *Love's Labor's Lost*. Meanwhile, David Compton, who will play Cassius, was named best local actor for 2011 by the *Nashville Scene's* theater critic.

Actors who make up the play's ensemble are Hicks, Jon Royal, Tamira Henry, Robyn Berg, Matthew Raich, Daniel Hackman, Will Sevier, Caleb Pritchett, Maya Abram and Elizabeth Walsh. David Chattam, who will understudy the role of Julius Caesar, will perform on Jan. 28.

"The play's most significant message is that politics have not changed in 2,000 years," said Beki Baker, director of *Julius Caesar*. "Power still corrupts, conspiracies continue to erupt. Words can affect and do hurt everyone," said Baker, who is also Education Director for the Nashville Shakespeare Festival.

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Hicks noted that while Shakespeare set this play in ancient Rome, the Bard was not overly concerned with historical accuracy. The Festival's production of *Julius Caesar* will have strong ancient Roman overtones, but the overall goal is to emphasize the humanity of the story and its relevance to today's world.

June Kingsbury returns as the Festival's costume designer with original music by Tom McBryde. Anne Willingham is in charge of light design and Jonathan Hammel of MadeFirst will design the set.

A sign language-interpreted performance is scheduled Jan. 14. For tickets to the public performances, visit nashvilleshakes.org or call 615-852-6732. To purchase tickets for school matinees, email Beki Baker: beki@nashvilleshakes.org.

This production is part of *Shakespeare for a New Generation*, a national initiative sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts in cooperation with Arts Midwest. This project is also funded in part by the Tennessee Arts Commission and the Metro Nashville Arts Commission.

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