

ARTISTIC DOSSIER
JULIUS CAESAR
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
ARTHUR NAUZYCIEL



Théâtre National de Bretagne
Direction Arthur Nauzyciel
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By
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
Direction
ARTHUR NAUZYCIEL
Set design
RICCARDO HERNANDEZ
Lighting design
SCOTT ZIELINSKI
Costumes design
JAMES SCHUETTE
Sound design
DAVID REMEDIOS
Choreography
DAMIEN JALET

Avec
SARA KATHRYN BAKKER Portia / Calpurnia
NEIL PATRICK STEWART Decius Brutus
LUCA CARBONI A soothsayer
JARED CRAIG Lucius / The boy
ROY FAUDREE Casca
ISMA'IL IBN CONNER Cinna / Marullus
ISAAC JOSEPH TAL Octavius
DYLAN KUSSMAN Julius Caesar
TIMOTHY SEKK Cato / Dardanius / Trebonius
MARK MONTGOMERY Cassius
RUDY MUNGARAY Metellus Cimber / Messala
DANIEL PETTROW Mark Anthony
JAMES WATERSTON Marcus Brutus
and musicians
MARIANNE SOLIVAN vocals
LEANDO PELLIGRINO guitar
DMITRY ISHENKO double bass

Show created for the American Repertory Theater from 13 February to 16 March 2008 at Loeb Drama Center (Cambridge, Boston, USA).

Production: Théâtre National de Bretagne.
Coproduction: Centre Dramatique National Orléans/Loiret/Centre in partnership with the Repertory Theatre (principal mécène: Philip and Hilary Burling), Festival d'Automne à Paris, Maison des Arts de Créteil, TGP-CDN de Saint-Denis. With the support of the Fonds Etant Donnés The French-American Fund for The Performing Arts, a Program of FACE.

Duration 3h20 with intermission
Show performed in English

JULIUS CAESAR SHAKESPEARE ARTHUR NAUZYCIEL

Julius Caesar by Shakespeare is one of Arthur Nauzyciel's major creations.

Created in 2008 in Boston with American actors it has already known several tours in France and abroad. Arthur Nauzyciel has created then artistic companionships with actors and collaborators that he has regularly worked with since. It consecrated an American experience, a rare thing for a French director, with two plays by Bernard-Marie Koltès, *Black Battles with Dog* (2001) and *Roberto Zucco* (2004), and in Boston for the A.R.T. *Abigail's Party* by Mike Leigh (2007). A play giving a central role to politics, seldom performed in France, *Julius Caesar* opens up the relection on what is the common good, and it still finds today strong, vivid, contemporary resonances.

After 2 plays by Bernard-Marie Koltès, *Black Battles With Dogs* at the 7 Stages Theater in Atlanta (2001), reprised in Chicago (2004), and *Roberto Zucco* at the Emory Theater in Atlanta (2004), Arthur Nauzyciel staged Mike Leigh's *Abigail's Party* at the American Repertory Theatre in Boston (2007). Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, his fourth show in the United States, was created at the A.R.T. in February 2008.

Julius Caesar inaugurated in 2017 Arthur Nauzyciel's first season at the head of the Théâtre National de Bretagne, a way for him to present his work to the audience and to transmit this art theatre open on the world that questions the issues at stake of today's society in all its diversity.



AVAILABLE ON TOUR
JAN - MID-MARCH 2025





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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Written in 1599 for the opening of The Globe Theatre and right before *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar* is the first in a series of great tragedies. It contains in itself all the subsequent plays of Shakespeare.

It is a political play, in which language and rhetoric play a prominent part; the power of discourse can change the course of History; the flow of words both reveals and hides their extraordinary presence.

And if the world pictured in the play still resembles ours (what has changed in politics?), one nonetheless feels throughout the text a will to encompass both the visible and the invisible, the real and dream life, the living and the dead in a one-and-only unit, a singular cosmography.

We are connected to the Greeks, the Romans, to Shakespeare, by a long chain which, from the beginning of time and for many centuries to come, contains, like a DNA loop, the collective memory of human fears and illusions. As Eric Hobsbawm wrote in *The Age of Extremes*: "The short twentieth century ended in problems, for which nobody had, or even claimed to have, solutions. As the citizens of the fin de siècle tapped their way through the global fog that surrounded them, into the third millennium, all they knew for certain was that an era of history had ended. They knew very little else."

We have yet to come to terms with the dark side of this century. Whenever I confront myself with a classical text, I have the feeling I ought to direct a "memory for the future". The classics are like the Statue of Liberty at the end of Planet of the Apes. The characters project themselves into the future, in which they will be the spectators of their own past, in which their acts will be a spectacle for others to see.

Like a testimony for the future of what we are and were.

We are in Boston. The theatre was built in 1964. Pop culture in the United States then had never been so dominant, the world so loud, there were images everywhere and all was appearance: that is why I want to place the play in the sixties, during the years when one wanted to believe that Kennedy would open onto a new era, when a crowd became a mass, when the image won over the word, when the most innovative and significant artistic trends were born in this country (architects, performers, performance art, photography, collage, reproduction).

— Arthur Nauzyciel, 2007

THE ORIGINS OF JULIUS CAESAR

Written in 1599 for the opening of The Globe Theatre and right before Hamlet, *Julius Caesar* is the first in a series of great tragedies.

Inspired by Plutarch, he wrote it at a critical moment of the history of England: the rebellion of Essex against Elizabeth I. As in Richard II (1595), the theme is the deposition of a sovereign: Julius Caesar has become a threat to the republic. Is it fair then to murder him before Rome is held totally under his absolute power that has no limits?

Though rarely seen in France, *Julius Caesar* is in the United States one of the best-known plays by Shakespeare. Its premiere at A.R.T. in 2008 (a presidential election year, whereas the play depicts a moment when democracy would teeter if the republic was to give away to an empire), was thus eventful.

RESONANCES

"Like *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar* is a puzzle. It doesn't conform to the idea of Aristotelian tragedy in presenting a noble man with a conspicuous flaw, nor to Elizabethan melodrama in presenting a conspicuous villain. *Julius Caesar* has great relevance to our time, though it is gloomier, because it is about a society that is doomed. Our society is not doomed, but in such immense danger that the relevance is great. It was a society doomed not by the evil passions of selfish individuals, because such passions always exist, but by an intellectual and spiritual failure of nerve that made the society incapable of coping with its situation."

— W. H. Auden, *Lectures on Shakespeare*

It is no coincidence that the world of *Julius Caesar* is constructed almost entirely from language. The play contains little physical action: there are few shifts in location, in contrast to *As You Like It*, the play that preceded it, nor are there any special stage effects, apart from the appearance of Caesar's ghost to Brutus. Except for Caesar's assassination at the Capitol and the suicides in the final act, the play shows us very few events; almost everything that happens takes place off-stage and is then retold through rumour or report. This gives *Julius Caesar* an oddly subjective quality; so little is enacted directly in front of us that we must rely on other people's characterization of events, and we are never quite sure whom or what to believe. Words, not deeds, are the primary agents in the play, and they are endowed with extraordinary powers of creation, transformation, and destruction. Words can create a reality, or destroy a life.

— Gideon Lester, *The Power of Speech*

INTERVIEW WITH ARTHUR NAUZYCIEL

How are you approaching *Julius Caesar* ?

Whenever I direct a play, the context in which it's produced is very important. Why are we doing the play here, now, for this audience?

Julius Caesar is almost never produced in my own country, France, so when you asked me to read it I was coming to it for the first time.

Of course I immediately saw connections between the play and the fact that this is an election year in the United States. I don't want that to be obvious in the production, but it provides a strong context. For me, classical plays are a memory of the future. They're time capsules, they come from long ago, but they're with us now and they'll be here for centuries. They contain a collective memory of human behavior, aspirations, expectations, illusions. As time capsules, it's interesting to catch them and open them. They are like holograms or like stars, whose light arrives far after their death. In a sense the play is a user's manual for the next generation, written by Shakespeare for the future, a guide to politics and humanity.

What about the play resonates in the twenty-first century?

There's something "contemporary" about *Julius Caesar*, which sounds ridiculous, because it was written in the sixteenth century; it cannot literally be speaking about our own age. It's not that Shakespeare's observations are still accurate, it's more than that. It's as if nothing has happened in politics since the story that he writes about took place. It's as if we're stuck, like a scratched record; we're still in the final scenes when Octavius arrives. Nothing has evolved in terms of democracy or politics.



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Like Cassius and Brutus we believe that democracy is the best system, but it's still a compromise. So many so-called democracies are still really empires, like Rome in the play. What has changed is our experience of tragedy. We come from a century that invented Auschwitz and Hiroshima, after which we can never stage tragedy the same way again.

Your production will include many quotations from the 1960s. Can you explain why?

The production isn't set in the Sixties. I believe that all theatre takes place here and now, so it's not really a question of being in the past, whether that's Caesar's Rome or Shakespeare's London or 1960s America. But we will be quoting from the sixties, for many reasons. There's the obvious link between Kennedy's and Caesar's, assassinations and political contexts, but more than that, I'm intrigued by the way the sixties represent both past and future for us. It was a decade of great invention and innovation, obsessed with the future. The best Sci-Fi movies were made in the sixties. And the aesthetic is still inspiring; if you look at furniture or clothes from the sixties, they could belong in today's design magazines. *Julius Caesar* is a play about the invention of the future, a dream of a new world, so the resonances are strong.

What else interests you about the Sixties?

It was a period in which the image triumphed over the word. There's a wonderful story about the debate between Nixon and Kennedy: I don't know if it's true, but apparently people who listened to it on the radio voted for Nixon, and people who watched it on television voted for Kennedy. JFK was the first president whose image was more important than the content of his words. Suddenly visual icons and illusions were more powerful than speech. *Julius Caesar* is so much a play about language and rhetoric, and I think it'll be interesting to create this double layer by using elements from a time in which language and rhetoric failed. And at the same time there was a revolution in American art history, with the advent of Pop Art, installations, and performance art. The art and photography of that period was a strong influence in the design for our *Julius Caesar*, particularly Andy Warhol's repeated images and the installations of the Ant Farm. All this seemed appropriate for a production at the Loeb Drama Center, with its 1960s architecture. I like it when the theatrical design and the architecture of the building come together and the distinctions between the 2 spaces are blurred.

The set design incorporates huge repeated photographs of the auditorium.

Can you explain why?

In part we wanted to remind the audience that the theatre in which they're sitting is essentially the same shape as the theatres of ancient Greece and Rome. If you stand on stage and look out at the seats, you see that the configuration is exactly the same, two thousand years later. It's also good to remember with this play that theatre and democracy were invented at the same time, and that the theatre was, in its origins, a political space as much as a place of entertainment. In this election year, the images of those theatre seats may remind us of public assemblies, or the Senate. And I also want to create an uncertainty for the audience: Are we onstage or offstage? Who are the watchers and who the actors? Are we part of the performance? What is illusion and what is reality? On which sides are the dead and the living? How do those questions of illusion and reality relate to *Julius Caesar*? The play is full of dreams and supernatural events, of ghosts and burning men and lions roaming the streets of Rome. The world that it describes doesn't literally exist. It's an imaginary dreamscape, a distortion of reality, and we can't stage it realistically. The production has to feel truthful, but not realistic. I hope that the audience will feel connected to an invisible world, seeing things they can't usually see, listening to things they can't hear.

— by Gideon Lester (A.R.T.'s Acting Artistic Director from 2007 to 2009), in Boston, January 2009

ARTHUR NAUZYCIEL DIRECTION

Arthur Nauzyciel is a director and actor. He directed the National Dramatic Center of Orléans from 2007 to 2016 and has been director of the Théâtre National de Bretagne since 2017. After studying visual arts and cinema, he entered the Théâtre National de Chaillot School directed by Antoine Vitez in 1987. Initially an actor under the direction of Jean-Marie Villégier, Alain Françon, Éric Vigner, or Tsai Ming Liang, he created his first stage productions, *Le Malade imaginaire ou le silence de Molière* after Molière and Giovanni Macchia (1999) and *Oh Les Beaux Jours* by Samuel Beckett (2003). Next, in France: *Place des Héros*, which marks Thomas Bernhard's inclusion in the repertoire at the Comédie-Française (2004); *Ordet (The Word)* by Kaj Munk translated and adapted by Marie Darrieussecq at the Festival d'Avignon (2008); *Jan Karski (Mon nom est une fiction)* based on the novel by Yannick Haenel at the Festival d'Avignon (2011, Georges-Lerminier prize of the Syndicat de la critique); *Hunger* by Knut Hamsun (2011); Chekhov's *The Seagull* in the Cour d'honneur at the Avignon Festival (2012); *Kaddish* by Allen Ginsberg with the complicity of Étienne Daho (2013). In 2015, he created *Splendid's* by Jean Genet, recreated on Zoom, live streamed during the Festival Fantôme 2020, an online edition of the cancelled Festival TNB.

He works regularly in the United States, and creates in Atlanta 2 plays by Koltès: *Black Battles with Dogs* (2001) and *Roberto Zucco* (2004), and in Boston, for A.R.T., *Abigail's Party* by Mike Leigh (2007) and *Julius Caesar* by Shakespeare (2008). Abroad, he creates shows that are then performed in France or in international festivals.

In Dublin, *The Image* by Samuel Beckett (2006); at the National Theatre of Iceland, *The Museum of the Sea* by Marie Darrieussecq (2009); at the National Theatre of Norway, *Abigail's Party* by Mike Leigh (2012); at the Mini teater in Ljubljana, Slovenia, *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* by Fassbinder (2015); at the National Theater Company of Korea (NTCK), *The Empire of Lights* by Kim Young-ha (2016), presented at the TNB in 2017 and revived in 2022, and *Love's End* (2019).

He also works for dance and opera: he directed *Red Waters* (2011), opera by Lady & Bird (Keren Ann Zeidel and Barði Jóhannsson) which he recreates in 2022 at the Rennes Opera House, he directed *A Florentine Tragedy* (2018) by Alexander Zemlinsky at the Abbaye de Royaumont and *Le Papillon Noir* (2018), an opera composed by Yann Robin and Yannick Haenel and also presented in 2021 at the TNB. Alongside Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, he participated in the creation of *Play* (2010) with the dancer Shantala Shivalingappa and *Session* with the choreographer Colin Dunne (in residence at the TNB in 2019). In the cinema, he turns in *Rodin* by Jacques Doillon (2017) and in the series *Irma Vep* by Olivier Assayas.

At the TNB, he created *La Dame aux camélias* (2018) after Alexandre Dumas fils and *Mes frères* by Pascal Rambert (2021). He directed Arthur Schnitzler's *La Ronde* with the National Theatre of Prague during the TNB Festival 2022, and recreated his first show *Le Malade imaginaire ou le silence de Molière* (1999) in May 2023. In 2023-2024, he will stage *Les Paravents* by Jean Genet, created at the TNB and toured at the Odéon Théâtre de l'Europe à Paris. Arthur Nauzyciel is also director of the TNB Drama School.

DAMIEN JALET CHOREAGRAPER

Damien Jalet is an independent Belgian and French choreographer and dancer working internationally. He worked as a choreographer and dancer for companies such as les ballet C de la B, Sasha Waltz and Guests, Chunky Move, Eastman, National Youth Dance Company, Hessisches Staatballett, Paris Opera Ballet, Scottish Dance Theatre, Iceland Dance Company. His latest works as choreographer include: *Babel* ^{words} (2013); *Bolero* (2013); *Inked* (2013); *Les Médusés* (2013); *YAMA* (2014), at TNB in 2017; *Gravity Fatigue* (2015); *Vessel* (2015); *Thro|ugh* (2016); *Skid* (2017); *Pelléas et Mélisande* (2018); *Omphalos* (2018), presented at TNB in 2019. In 2017, he created *The Ferryman* with the director Gilles Delmas, with Abramović and Ryuichi Sakamoto, and choreographed the remake of *Suspiria* by Luca Guadagnino in 2018. In 2019, Damien Jalet made the choreography for the film called *Anima* by Paul Thomas Anderson with Thom Yorke for which he has been awarded by the UKMVA for the best choreography. He is also the choreographer for few scenes of the first *Madame X* tour for Madonna. In 2021, he create *Planet [wanderer]* in collaboration with Kohei Nawa.

In addition, he works in collaboration with the French stage director Arthur Nauzyciel on several shows such as *L'Image* (2006), *Julius Caesar* (2008), *Ordet* (2008), *Red Waters* (2011), *Jan Karski* (2011), *La Mouette* (2012), *Splendid's* (2015), *La Dame aux camélias* (2018) and *Mes frères* (2020). Damien Jalet is also frequently teacher at the Pluridisciplinary Drama School within the TNB (The National Theatre of Brittany).

SCOTT ZIELINSKI LIGHTING DESIGN

Scott Zielinski is a lighting designer for theatre, dance and opera. A graduate of Yale University School of Drama, he has worked with American and international directors including Richard Foreman, Robert Wilson, Tony Kushner, Hal Hartley, Krystian Lupa. In New York, he works regularly on Broadway, for the production of Suzan-Lori Parks' *Topdog/Underdog*, for Lincoln Center and The Public Theatre. He has designed lighting for shows created in several North American cities and abroad, with numerous directors and choreographers such as Neil Bartlett, Chen Shi-Zheng, Daniel Fish, Tina Landau, Diane Paulus, Anna Deveare Smith, Twyla Tharp, George C. Wolfe. Most recently, he designed the lighting for Judith Weir's *Miss Fortune* at the Royal Opera House in London. In 2019, he will be designing the lighting for Daniel Fish's *OklaHoma!* a great Broadway success that won a Tony Award.

For Arthur Nauzyciel, he created the lights *Julius Caesar*, *The Museum of the Sea*, *Jan Karski (My Name is fiction)*, *Red Waters*, *Abigail's Party*, *The Seagull*, *Splendid's*, *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*, *Love's End*, *La Dame aux camélias* and *Mes frères*.

RICCARDO HERNÁNDEZ SET DESIGN

Riccardo Hernández is a set designer. Born in Cuba, he grew up in Buenos Aires and studied at the Yale School of Drama in the United States, where he now works as a teacher. He works regularly on Broadway, where he has won numerous awards: *Caroline or Change* (Awards for Best New Musical 2006) and *Parade* (nominated for the Tony Awards and Drama Desk 2007), *Topdog/Underdog* (Pulitzer Prize 2002), *The People in the Picture* (at the legendary Studio 54 in 2011), *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess* (Tony Awards 2012), *The Gin Game, Indecent* (Tony Award nomination 2017). For the opera, he created among others the sets for *Appomattox* by Philip Glass in 2007, *Lost Highway* directed by Diane Paulus, based on the film by David Lynch (Young Vic, London, 2008), and those of *Il Postino*, composed by Daniel Catàn and directed by Ron Daniels (Los Angeles Opera, Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, 2011).

In the theater, he has worked with George C. Wolfe, Tony Kushner, Brian Kulik, Mary Zimmerman, Ron Daniels, Liz Diamond, Rebecca Taichman and notably Robert Woodruff, Ethan Coen, John Turturro, Steven Soderbergh. In recent years, he directed the set of *Grounded* by George Brant, directed by Julie Taymor with Anne Hathaway at the Public Theater in New York, *The White Card* and *Jagged Little Pill* (a musical by Alanis Morissette choreographed by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui) directed by Diane Paulus for the American Repertory Theatre.

For Arthur Nauzyciel, he created the sets of *Julius Caesar*, *Jan Karski (My name is a fiction)*, *Red Waters*, *Abigail's Party*, *The Seagull*, *Splendid's*, *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*, *The Empire of Lights*, *La Dame aux camélias*, *Mes frères*, *La Ronde* and *Les Paravents*.



IN THE PRESS



LE MONDE (2009)

« Rarely does theatre reach such heights of thoughtful emotion as in this *Julius Caesar*. Rarely do words resonate like this, like blows, conscious or unconscious, that the characters deal to each other or to themselves. Rarely does power appear in such a sharp light, bathed in an unfathomable melancholy »
– Brigitte Salino

L'EXPRESS (2010)

« Applauded, acclaimed and praised in France in 2009, the play, directed by Arthur Nauzyciel with a quiet genius seasoned with a jazzy zest, has rarely been served up with such elegant irony. Where are we? In Rome? In Washington? In antiquity or in the belle époque of the dolce vita, with its women in evening gowns and couture buns and its men of the world flanked by ceberus detectives? Mystery, champagne, blood, fear... »
– Laurence Liban

LE FIGARO (2010)

« He [Arthur Nauzyciel] works with a scalpel and on the vast stage, he achieves tight shots served by the remarkable actors, fine, nuanced, complex. » – Armelle Héliot

ABOUT THE TNB

The "Théâtre National de Bretagne" (National Theater of Brittany), called the TNB, traces its history back to the very creation of the Centre for the Dramatic Arts in the West in 1949, which then worked in association with the House of Culture after it was founded in 1968. The TNB proper was created in 1990 with the merger of the CDN and the House of Culture. Today the TNB is an eminent CDN in the French cultural landscape: it is also a European Centre for the Theatrical and Choreographic Arts; it organizes an annual festival, has a cinema and a drama school. The TNB welcomes some 200,000 spectators each season across its many programmes: live performances, cinema, special events and workshops.

The primary mission of the French National Centres for the Dramatic Arts (CDN) is artistic creation for the theatrical stage. Established in the aftermath of World War II, there are now 38 CDNs in France. Envisioned by Jean Zay as contributing to the decentralisation of theatrical production and to the democratisation of culture in France, promoted by Jeanne Laurent, then by André Malraux, the CDNs remain to this day the mainstay of France's cultural policy, which continues to endorse the idea that art, culture and theater are a public service, which aims to make available high-quality artistic offerings throughout the land. It is common practice to entrust the management of the CDNs to stage directors, so as to ensure the long-term viability of the artistic project by cementing it in a particular region and sharing it with the local public. With a focus on theatrical creation, contemporary writing, innovative staging, and the hosting of major shows of French and foreign origin, as well as providing promising creative talents, troupes and the audience with valuable support, the CDNs remain to this day unique in the world and welcome over one million spectators annually.

In 2017, Arthur Nauzyciel was appointed director of the TNB, bringing with him a new project rooted in a set of three principles: "Share, Transmit, Exchange". Involved in this project were 15 associate artists, a research fellow, and an academic director: Julie Duclos, Vincent Macaigne, Guillaume Vincent, Damien Jalet, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Gisèle Vienne, Mohamed El Khatib, Phia Ménard, Marie Darrieussecq, Yannick Haenel, Valérie Mréjen, M/M (Paris), Xavier Veilhan, Albin de la Simone, Keren Ann, Patrick Boucheron and Laurent Poitrenaux, joined in 2021 by 10 other associate artists : Patricia Allio, groupe Catastrophe, Steven Cohen, Tania de Montaigne, Bruno Geslin, Caroline Guiela Nguyen, Sébastien Lifshitz, Latifa Laâbissi, Madeleine Louarn, Théo Mercier.

This project removes the barriers between disciplines and invites the audience to move freely between them. Cinema, in particular, has pride of place in the programming, including cycles of movies and film tributes directly associated with the regularly announced shows. The TNB Festival is seen as the precipitate factor in the new project. It will be held in November of each year with the aim of establishing a permanent bond with the public. It will also draw the TNB to ever more eclectic and international artistic territories.

Since 2018, Arthur Nauzyciel and Laurent Poitrenaux, the school's associate academic director have given a renewed vision to the TNB Drama School. Designed around a group of artists and research fellows, the project will enable the TNB to provide multidisciplinary training in acting which is both open-minded and international.



CONTACT TOURING

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