

Julius Caesar

SYNOPSIS

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar has returned to Rome in triumph after the war against Pompey. The Roman Republic is prepared to offer him all sorts of new honours, causing dismay and concern among some senators, who fear that too much power is held by one man and that he might try to make himself king.

Caius Cassius is the centre of a plot to assassinate Caesar. He tries to obtain the support of the well-respected senator Marcus Brutus. Brutus has misgivings, but he becomes convinced that Caesar's death is necessary for the good of the Republic. However, he rejects Cassius' proposal that Mark Antony, Caesar's close friend, should also be killed. Brutus' wife Portia sees that Brutus is worried about something, and is upset that he does not tell her. Caesar's wife Calpurnia has premonitions, and warns Caesar not to go to the Senate on the Ides of March, which a fortune-teller in the street has also warned him about. Caesar believes, however, that it would be a sign of weakness to stay at home.

In the Senate, Cassius and the other conspirators, and finally Brutus, stab Caesar to death. At Caesar's funeral Brutus addresses the people and successfully explains their motives, but Mark Antony is also allowed to speak and skilfully turns the ordinary people against the conspirators, some of whom are murdered, together with an innocent poet who shares a name with a conspirator. The rest are forced to escape.

Mark Antony, Caesar's nephew Octavius and Lepidus take command of Rome and lead an army against the conspirators. Caesar's ghost appears to Brutus as tensions rise between him and Cassius. The armies meet at Philippi, where, defeated, Cassius and Brutus commit suicide to avoid being captured.

Media:

DVD:

Julius Caesar (1953), dir. Joseph L. Markiewicz, with Marlon Brando and John Gielgud

The Spread of the Eagle (BBC TV 1963), dir. Peter Dews (mini-series covering 4 Roman plays)

Julius Caesar (1969), dir. Stuart Burge

Julius Caesar (BBC TV Shakespeare 1979), dir. Herbert Wise

Shakespeare: The Animated Tales Act 2 (2007) *Julius Caesar* and *Twelfth Night*

Me and Orson Welles (2008), dir. Richard Linklater, with Zac Efron, Claire Danes, Christian McKay

CD Audio:

Julius Caesar (Naxos)

Julius Caesar (Arkangel Complete Shakespeare)

[Michael Mitchell]