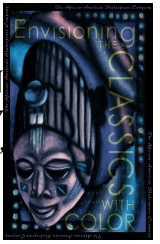


**AFRICAN-AMERICAN  
SHAKESPEARE COMPANY**  
*"Envisioning the Classics With Color"*



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**AFRICAN-AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE COMPANY  
CONTINUES 17<sup>TH</sup> SEASON WITH THRILLING PRODUCTION OF  
"JULIUS CAESAR"  
March 10-April 1, 2012**

SAN FRANCISCO (February 9, 2012) – San Francisco's **African-American Shakespeare Company** continues its 2011-12 season with a thrilling production of William Shakespeare's **JULIUS CAESAR**. Directed by renowned actor and playwright **Michael Gene Sullivan** (San Francisco Mime Troupe) and featuring a small ensemble cast, African-American Shakespeare Company's version of **JULIUS CAESAR** highlights the similarities between the politicians who will say anything, and do anything, to win. This bold interpretation captures the energy of current political landscapes, from front-and-center rallies, protests and conventions, to behind-the-scenes deal making and strategizing. **JULIUS CAESAR** plays **March 10 through April 1** (*press opening: March 10*) at the Buriel Clay Theater at the African American Art & Culture Complex in San Francisco. For tickets (\$10-35) and more information, the public may call **1-800-838-3006** or visit **African-AmericanShakes.org**. *Parental guidance suggested; may not be appropriate for children under the age of 10.*

Set during the ongoing civil wars of West Africa, **JULIUS CAESAR** is not just a history play. At a time when partisanship has gone from bombast to blood sport, when patriotism and violence have become commingled, and when the people are so desperate for a leader they will follow anyone who promises them security while playing on their fears, the violent political struggles of Caesar are not history, they are nightly news. Full of passion and intensity, this potboiler about life and death political struggles tells us not only about the dead leaders we see etched in stone or live on TV each night, but also about the people who put them in power in the first place. We are living in a fractured and divided historical moment. The evidence is all around us, and so Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, a play more than 400 years old depicting events more than two millennia past, unveils its undeniable and ongoing relevance.

*The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*, also known simply as **JULIUS CAESAR**, by William Shakespeare is believed to have been written in 1599; the play was likely one of Shakespeare's first to be performed at the Globe Theatre. It portrays the 44 BC conspiracy against the Roman dictator Julius Caesar, his assassination, and the defeat of the conspirators at the Battle of Philippi. In Shakespeare's version of

AFRICAN-AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE COMPANY PRESENTS “JULIUS CAESAR”

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history, Brutus and Cassius conspire to murder Caesar to save the Roman Republic from popular dictatorship. Marcus Brutus is Caesar's close friend but allows himself to be cajoled into joining a group of conspiring senators because of a growing suspicion, implanted by Cassius, that Caesar intends to turn republican Rome into a monarchy under his rule. **JULIUS CAESAR** is one of several plays that Shakespeare wrote based on true events from Roman history, including *Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. The play reflected the general anxiety of England over succession of leadership. At the time of its creation and first performance, Queen Elizabeth 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.

**Michael Gene Sullivan** helms African-American Shakespeare Company's production of **JULIUS CAESAR**. He has performed in, written, and/or directed over 20 San Francisco Mime Troupe productions. Sullivan joined the San Francisco Mime Troupe in 1988. In 1992, he became a Contributing Writer, and Resident Playwright in 2000. As an actor, Sullivan has also appeared in productions at the American Conservatory Theater, Denver Center Theater Company, Magic Theatre, TheaterWorks, Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, Aurora Theatre Company, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, and San Jose Repertory Theatre, among others. He is also the author of the award-winning one person show *Did Anyone Ever Tell You - You Look Like Huey P. Newton?*, and *1984*, the critically-acclaimed adaptation of George Orwell's dystopic novel, which opened at the Actor's Gang Theater under the Direction of Tim Robbins. Sullivan is also a blogger for The Huffington Post.

**African-American Shakespeare Company** has assembled a talented ensemble for **JULIUS CAESAR**, including: **L. Jeffrey Moore** (Caesar), **David Moore** (Brutus), **B. Chico Purdiman** (Cassius), **Frederick Pitts** (Mark Antony), **Tristan Cunningham** (Portia), and **Amy Lizardo** (Calpurnia).

With **JULIUS CAESAR**, African-American Shakespeare Company presents the second installment of this season's **ACTive Engagement Series**. “Beware the Ides of March” was the warning given to Caesar, but what do the stars actually tell us about our faith and relationships? Is it possible to know your fortune and what lies ahead? How does the ancient tradition of learning the fates impact our decisions? These theoretical concepts and how they touch our lives in a modern day context are explored in a pre-show discussion. The ACTive Engagement Series seeks to provide 20-minute entertainment and educational opportunities that allow audiences to have deeper connections to the stage work performed by African-American Shakespeare Company. This new initiative, designed to enhance cultural experiences in conjunction African-American Shakespeare Company's mainstage productions, is **free and open to the public**.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE COMPANY PRESENTS "JULIUS CAESAR"

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Following **JULIUS CAESAR**, **African-American Shakespeare Company** closes its 17<sup>th</sup> season in April with the company's first World Premiere production, acclaimed Chicago-based playwright and actor Nambi E. Kelley's **XTIGONE**, directed by Darryl V. Jones. For more information about African-American Shakespeare Company, or for tickets to upcoming productions, the public can call **1-800-838-3006** or visit **[www.African-AmericanShakes.org](http://www.African-AmericanShakes.org)**.

**African-American Shakespeare Company** was introduced in 1994 to create an opportunity and a venue for actors of color to hone their skills and talent in mastering some of the world's greatest classical roles. The company is dedicated to producing classic stage works from an African-American cultural perspective, providing opportunities and accessibility for minority artists and their communities to view these works in a manner that is inclusive of their cultural heritage. African-American Shakespeare Company has produced over 30 productions, toured to over 97 schools, and reached over 105,000 patrons through its main stage productions and arts education program.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE COMPANY PRESENTS "JULIUS CAESAR"

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**FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:**

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**DATES:**       **Opening: Saturday, March 10, 8pm** (*also press opening*)

Sunday, March 11, 3pm

Saturday, March 17, 8pm

Sunday, March 18, 3 pm

Saturday, March 24, 8pm

Sunday, March 25, 3pm

Saturday, March 31, 8pm

Sunday, April 1, 3pm

**JULIUS CAESAR special event - ACTive Engagement Series**

*Beware the Ides of March* - Sunday, March 18th at 2pm, free and open to the public

**WHERE:**       Buriel Clay Theater at the African American Art & Culture Complex  
762 Fulton Street (at Webster), San Francisco, CA

**TICKETS:**     For tickets (\$10-\$35) and information, the public can call **1-800-838-3006** or visit **[www.African-AmericanShakes.org](http://www.African-AmericanShakes.org)**

**PHOTOS:**     High-resolution digital color photos may be accessed at **[http://www.African-AmericanShakes.org/Media/Media\\_PressPage.htm](http://www.African-AmericanShakes.org/Media/Media_PressPage.htm)** (after February 13) or are available upon request by contacting [brightbutterfly\[at\]hotmail.com](mailto:brightbutterfly[at]hotmail.com)

African-American Shakespeare Company is funded in part by the Zellerbach Family Fund, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Grants for the Arts/SF Hotel Tax Fund, San Francisco Foundation, the California Arts Council, a state agency, the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency, Shakespeare in American Communities, Fleishhacker Foundation, and the James Irvine Foundation.

African-American Shakespeare Company's production is part of Shakespeare for a New Generation, a national program of the National Endowment for the Arts in cooperation with Arts Midwest.