

As you watch this show, please consider that for us it has largely been an experiment—an experiment as to whether theater can survive and adapt during COVID, and whether actors can themselves create a play of great beauty while doing so in a safe and responsible manner. In this, I think we have been highly successful. As far as Shakespeare goes, *Julius Caesar* lends itself to a socially distant format as well as any other plays. It is ageless, adaptable, and highly public. It lends itself just as well to the world of 2020 as any other. The Rome of our production may seem eerily familiar to you all: it is a city plagued with pandemic and fierce civil strife. Tyranny looms like a spectre on the horizon, and though the efforts to keep it at bay may seem valiant and goodhearted, they are worse than fruitless.

Please, do not expect a happy ending. Some productions of *Julius Caesar* try to separate characters off as heroes and villains, but we do not. They are all villains. They are all oppressors. Their little game ends at its beginning, and the circle is rounded in nothing but a bloody whimper.

My heartfelt thanks to the cast of this show. You have made this pandemic bearable for me and for each other— strike that, more than bearable— you have made this semester truly delightful! You have poured your hearts and souls into this show and boy-oh-boy has it paid dividends! Whatever happens, please know that you have forged a thing of grim joy and thunderous beauty, whose memory I will always cherish. My one and only regret is that none of you can see this show in its entirety as I have.

I give you my best,

Ballard Powell

“A thing of beauty is a joy for ever: Its loveliness increases; it will never Pass into nothingness.”  
John Keats, *Endymion*.