

# POWER AND DUTY

Playmaking Pack - Resources - Director Notes



# Director's Notes

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## MARIEKE AUDSLEY

**Marieke Audsley is currently the Associate Director for the RSC's forthcoming production of 'Julius Caesar'. She will also be directing the First Encounters production in 2018 and here reflects on her what the play has to offer audiences.**

A compelling thriller with the assassination of a powerful leader at the centre of it, *Julius Caesar* is a fierce, fascinating play with mighty relevance and appeal. In the most famous of his Roman plays, Shakespeare gives us an exhilarating concoction of plotting conspirators, charismatic rulers, dazzling speeches, strange supernatural events and of course some gory violence too. He also invites us to consider some rather significant questions and join the characters in debating their intense doubts and dilemmas.

One of the central issues in the play is expressed by Brutus when he is alone in his garden late at night, weighing up whether to kill Caesar or not. Brutus is worried that if Caesar becomes king he "may do danger" and thinks of Caesar as a "serpent's egg, Which hatch'd would, as his kind, grow mischievous". If he is crowned, will he, like a snake, cause trouble and destruction? This is Brutus' major concern and understandably one that he has to think extremely carefully about. What would you do if you thought somebody might commit a crime or do something terrible? Do we, as citizens of a civilized society have a responsibility to prevent bad things from happening if we get the chance? Or should we sit back, do nothing and just hope that everything will be all right? How far would you go to protect the values that you believe in?

When it comes to leadership and who is in charge, is it right that one person should be allowed to become almighty and rule alone? Or do we want to be lead by a group? Cassius's concern about Caesar is that "he doth bestride the narrow world/Like a Colossus" and everyone else has become "petty" and irrelevant; something which Cassius believes is highly unfair given that really, Caesar is just as human and 'normal' as everyone else ("We both have fed as well, and we can both/ Endure the winter's cold as well as he"). And is it right that those in charge should gain power by their ability to manipulate and persuade a crowd to be on their side? In the play we see how fickle and changeable the masses can be when they very swiftly switch allegiance from 'team Brutus' to 'team Antony'. Once you reach the age of 18 in the UK you have the ability to cast your vote for who governs the country and they will then make decisions that directly impact the quality of your life: what sort of leader appeals to you and what would persuade you to be on a particular politician's side?

Indeed *Julius Caesar* prompts us to consider important questions such as these, but it is also magnificently entertaining with the high stakes, duplicitous dealings, shocking murder and the presence of soothsayers, ghosts and prophetic dreams to mention just a few highlights. It is this masterful combination of grand themes and superb storytelling that makes it a tremendous play to engage with in and at any age.



Photos of LPN Regional Festival rehearsals by Rob Freeman