

THE TRAGEDIE OF IVLIVS CÆSAR

Performing Mark Antony's
Funeral Monologue
From William Shakespeare's
"Julius Cæsar"

Or

"He's not dressed as a Roman, he's dressed as an Englishman portraying a Roman!"

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The date is October 1st, 1599, and you find yourself at the Globe Theater in London, England, waiting to see the newest play by William Shakespeare. The theater is crowded with an excited audience, but you, as an honored guest, are sitting in the upper seats with a soft cushion beneath you.

The play being performed tonight is none other than Julius Cæsar, the tragic tale of the Roman ruler Cæsar, betrayed by his friends and colleagues for fear of his ambition. As you watch, the third act unfolds, and Cæsar lies dead. The second scene of the act begins, and Mark Antony appears, ready to deliver his rallying eulogy for his departed friend.

Playing the part of Antony tonight is the renowned actor, poet, and man-about-town, Damon of Scarborough. The crowd gets silent as he starts to speak...

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Mission Statement

This project has two main goals.

- To reproduce a period performance of William Shakespeare's "Julius Cæsar" as it would have been performed by a period Shakespearean actor at the time of the play's original performance. Specifically, I will be performing the opening piece of Mark Antony's Funeral Monologue in Act III, Scene ii.
- To study the actor Henry Condell, who played the role of Mark Antony, and to examine how this actor's performance skills and history might have influenced the direction that Shakespeare took with his character.

Note:

According to the performance judging forms for the Kingdom of Trimaris, a score of 4 is awarded if "...*Entrant learned the piece directly from period sources, but it required very little translation or reconstruction (e.g. a scene learned from a facsimile reproduction of Shakespeare's 1609 Quarto)*..."

This rule would normally limit my score, so I've included the more detailed information about Henry Condell to *increase* my own complexity with this in mind.

Mark Antony's Funeral Monologue "Julius Cæsar" Act III, Scene ii

ANTONY:

Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears:
I come to bury Cæsar, not to praise him:
The euill that men do, liues after them,
The good is oft enterred with their bones,
So let it be with Cæsar. The Noble Brutus,
Hath told you Cæsar was Ambitious:
If it were so, it was a greeuous Fault,
And greeuously hath Cæsar answer'd it.
Heere, vnder leaue of Brutus, and the rest
(For Brutus is an Honourable man,
So are they all; all Honourable men)
Come I to speake in Cæsars Funerall.
He was my Friend, faithfull, and iust to me;
But Brutus sayes, he was Ambitious,
And Brutus is an Honourable man.
He hath brought many Captiues home to Rome,
Whose Ransomes, did the generall Coffers fill:
Did this in Cæsar seeme Ambitious?
When that the poore haue cry'de, Cæsar hath wept:
Ambition should be made of sterner stuffe,
Yet Brutus sayes, he was Ambitious:
And Brutus is an Honourable man.
You all did see, that on the Lupercall,
I thrice presented him a Kingly Crowne,
Which he did thrice refuse. Was this Ambition?
Yet Brutus sayes, he was Ambitious:
And sure he is an Honourable man.
I speake not to disprooue what Brutus spoke,
But heere I am, to speake what I do know;
You all did loue him once, not without cause,
What cause with-holds you then, to mourne for him?
O Iudgement! thou are fled to brutish Beasts,
And Men haue lost their Reason. Beare with me,
My heart is in the Coffin there with Cæsar,
And I must pawse, till it come backe to me

Cast of Characters

Here is a list of the major characters of Julius Cæsar, and the actors who portrayed each role, according to “The Best Actors in the World”, by David Grote.

Julius Cæsar	Thomas Poope (Pope)
Marcus Brutus	Richard Burbage
Cassius	Augustine Phillips
Mark Antony	Henry Condell
Octavius Cæsar	Alexander Cooke
Portia, Brutus' Wife	Nicholas Tooley
Decius	John Hemmings
Flavius	William Slye
Casca	William Shakespeare

According to Honan, John Hemmings played the part of Cæsar (Honan, pg. 282), but Grote’s “Best Actors” lists the part of Cæsar as being played by Alexander Pope, while Hemmings played the part of Decius (Grote, pgs. 231-32). I believe the Grote listing is more likely to be accurate.

Julius Caesar

The Characters and the Play

The tale of Julius Caesar was a very serious and grave story, and one of the only plays where the titular character isn't actually the lead character of the play. The play is truly about Brutus, Caesar's friend and betrayer, and the consequences of his actions as they affected the Roman Empire.

When boiled down to essentials, there are three main characters who control the play and the actions within it: Cassius, the senator who led the mutiny against Caesar for fear that the man would possess more power than he should have alone; Brutus, the senator and friend of Caesar who painfully joins the rebellion, and then painfully regrets his treason; and Mark Antony, a general and supporter of Caesar who returns to Rome in time to speak at his funeral and rally the citizens in Caesar's memory.

Shakespeare based most of his play off of the history written by the Italian historian Plutarch, who had documented the events in his book *Lives* (Honan, pg. 273). Shakespeare supposedly followed this history very closely for historical information, but had to create the characters personal details himself, based on his experience with politics (mainly between players and shareholders in the company), and a detailed knowledge of his troupe of actors (Honan, pg. 273).

The play of *Julius Caesar* had the fortune of being recorded in history, not just by William Shakespeare and his troupe, but also by a visiting doctor who happened to catch the show while he was visiting London. Thomas Platter recorded details on his trip, including describing briefly the play that he witnessed. (Honan, pg. 271-72).

"...On September 21st, after dinner, at about two o'clock... ..we saw the tragedy of the first Emperor Julius Caesar, very pleasingly performed with approximately fifteen characters..."

Henry Condell

The Man Behind Mark Antony

In order to truly understand the character of Mark Antony, we need to do more than study the writer and the history. When Shakespeare was writing the story of Julius Cæsar, and all of his other plays, he had a pretty good idea of who would be performing each of his parts. More so, he often wrote parts specifically for, and with the intention of casting, specific actors within his troupe.

Henry Condell was one of the original performers of the Lord Chamberlain's Men when they started performing in 1594 (Grote, pg. 14), as well as being one of the primary shareholders in the troupe (Grote, pg. 252-53), and one of the two men who organized Shakespeare's surviving works into The First Folio. Where Richard Burbage was the main actor in the troupe, and the star of most of the plays, Condell often played the second starring role opposite him, and "...usually played the handsome mirror image of Burbage..." (Grote, pg. 85).

Based on the various information available, while Burbage was commonly the star of the show, Condell must have had the reputation as one of the most reliable and popular members of the troupe. As mentioned, he is considered more handsome than Burbage, and he was also likely the best swordsman "...in the practical world of the stage... ...for it takes great skill to be killed safely or (perhaps even more important) not to defeat the hero accidentally..." (Grote, pg. 85).

Finally, history suggests that Condell could be quite charming and persuasive. Shakespeare's Antony was "...a sensual opportunist..." (Honan, pg. 273), and although Mark Antony was a well-known political figure in his time, there isn't enough information to determine that much detail of his personality. Therefore, these characteristics would have to have been written to Condell's own strengths.

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