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## 'Julius Caesar' filled with emotion

*Franci Hart*

A passionate, stormy tragedy "Julius Caesar" is far from the pedantic civics lesson that performances of the Shakespearean classic tend to be. Under the superior direction of Oklahoma Shakespeare in the Park's Kathryn McGill, with a masterful performance by guest artist Brian Lane Green as Marc Antony, "Julius Caesar" is filled with violent emotions and conflict. Its one forgivable flaw is the length: the production by Stage Center Presents runs almost three hours. Fortunately, these hours are filled with action, superior dramatic performances and, especially, William Shakespeare's exquisite language decisively delivered.

McGill, to emphasize the timelessness of the message, has set the production in a homeless person's camp and dressed her players as tramps and the homeless. The crudity of the surroundings – a dilapidated car and chain-link fence make up most of the set – and the coarse dress accentuate the passion of the story. It is a most fitting setting for rowdy Roman crowds.

The entire cast masterfully captured the nuances and complexities of the characters. The intensity of their play, the escalating tension on stage and especially the dexterity with the language bring "Julius Caesar" to life. Steve Martin as Brutus and Shane McClure as Cassius, the lead conspirators, ably carried the production with their rich portrayals. Monty Lewis' Caesar was a superb study.

Green displayed his Broadway prowess through the subtlety he instilled in the crafty Antony and the energy he invested in his performance.

First, there was the honest emotion expressed at Caesar's death. Yet, even in grief, Antony is plotting. Next is the famous speech delivered at Caesar's funeral. This is filled with delightful sarcasm.

Green's delivery is controlled, slowly escalating to an emotional, passionate conclusion, all the while manipulating the unruly crowd. Although Green's Antony was perfectly capable of treachery, as portrayed in the planning scene with Octavius, he was also honest in his admiration.

Martin's Brutus is truly an honorable man. His anguish and indecision over the rise and ambitions of his best friend Julius Caesar, his determination to do right and his righteous indignation at Cassius' dishonesty are honestly delivered.

Martin's performance was filled with emotion without bellowing. He played his voice like a finely tuned instrument, giving just the right tone and pitch for the intense feeling being portrayed.

Lewis' Caesar was regal, distrustful and frightening as the ghost. In a production with so many superior scenes, Caesar's death was probably one of the finest.

"Julius Caesar" will play at Stage Center through Sunday. Its active, emotion-packed story is great entertainment for all.