JULIUS CAESAR
WRITTEN BY
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
DIRECTED AND ADAPTED BY
MICHAEL HALBERSTAM AND SCOTT PARKINSON
Begins September 7th
Performed in the Alexandra C. and John D. Nichols Theatre
Dear Friends,

We can’t think of a better way to celebrate our 25th Anniversary than by welcoming you to the first full season in our stunning new home. And we’re thrilled to be opening the season with the greatest of all political dramas, Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*. We hope we’ll be seeing you throughout this 25th Anniversary Season as we explore the gamut from classic, to contemporary, to world premiere!

In this edition of *The Brief Chronicle*, you’ll learn a bit more about how this production came to be, with Artistic Director Michael Halberstam and WT regular Scott Parkinson collaborating on both the adaptation and direction of the piece. They’ll share insights on their joint process and discuss how the collaboration worked to bring out the best in the piece. We’ll explore the Rome of Caesar’s era, from the intricacies of its political system to the manipulations and power plays that led to its ultimate fall. We’ll look back at some of Shakespeare’s work that WT has done over the course of our 25 years, and we’ll meet some members of the cast of *Julius Caesar* and learn a bit about their first experiences with this particular play and with Shakespeare’s work in general.

Finally, we’ll fill you in on our recent partnership with The Chicago Inclusion Project, with whom we collaborated on a reading of George Bernard Shaw’s *Saint Joan*, and we’ll introduce you to some of our exceptional Teaching Artists, who do incredible work extending the Writers Theatre mission into Chicagoland schools—and vice versa! Our brand-new ACTIVATE program to supplement the student matinee experience debuted with tremendous success this year, reaching more than 100 students through workshops held before and after their attendance of *Arcadia* this past season. We look forward to expanding ACTIVATE this season and in the seasons to come!

The past 25 years have been a gift. We are incredibly grateful for the support of you, our patrons, and we look forward to sharing six exceptional pieces of theatre with you this season, and to welcoming you into our home repeatedly in the coming years. As always, deepest thanks to our friends, audiences, Board members, donors, staff and artists who have made this journey possible.

Yours Sincerely,

Michael

Kate
STATE OF THE ART
By Michael Halberstam, Artistic Director

I am so happy to be opening our 25th Anniversary Season with Shakespeare. Not only are we celebrating a quarter of a century of bringing you intimate encounters with some of literature’s greatest creators and creations, but we are presenting you our first six-production season in our beautiful new venue.

“The purpose of playing,” as Hamlet states in his eponymous play, “is, to hold, as ‘twere, the mirror up to nature; to show her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.” I can think of no better play to reflect this highly unusual election season than the greatest political play to reflect this highly unusual election form and pressure. “I can think of no better Shakespeare’s text while still imbuing it with innovation and fresh thinking and attention was a production I saw at the Stratford Festival featuring Nicholas Pennell as Caesar, Colm Feore as Cassius and the late, great Brian Bedford as Brutus. It was designed by Ultz (lights, sets and costumes) and directed by Richard Monette. The production was filled with innovation and fresh thinking and enjoyed a highly contemporary approach to the world of the play without sacrificing its historical foundation. I am utterly fascinated by the way the play handles the conversation about global politics. Rome is a superpower and Caesar the conqueror of the known world. What is at stake is nothing less than absolute power. Furthermore, at the center of the play are issues of nationalism and the uneasy tension that always lies between military might and the rule of the people. Because Shakespeare was writing for a nation ruled by a monarch who supposedly held power through divine right, that tension is particularly fraught, and it is not possible for him to take sides. In fact, he must create as much sympathy for the one-way—lack such basic awareness of either themselves or of one another has far-reaching consequences for Rome, and for the world.

Michael Halberstam: I’ve known the play for years, of course, but I think the first time it really caught my emotional

Of course the world of Shakespeare’s play is very different from ours, and so I have partnered with Scott Parkinson in adapting the play, focusing it down to a searing 90 minutes or so, with no intermission. Further, as co-directors, we have crafted a world that includes some of the tools of modern politics including social media and video. Furthermore, we have cast a diverse group of brilliant actors who hopefully reflect the greater culture in which we live, and incorporated a design that takes full advantage of the breadth and depth of our new venue. I have dreamt about bringing you a version of this production for well over a decade but it has not been until now, with the superb balance between the intimate and the epic that the Alexandra C. and John D. Nichols Theatre allows us, that I have been able to realize this vision. Scott has played an immeasurable part in pulling that vision organically from Shakespeare’s story, the contest isn’t even close—but at what cost?—the play seems to ask. I’m also fascinated by the way in which world-shaking decisions affecting millions of people’s lives are often made based on the simplest, sometimes pettiest of unrealized motivations between individuals. The fact that Brutus, Cassius and Caesar—each in their own way—lack such basic awareness of either themselves or of one another has far-reaching consequences for Rome, and for the world.

Michael Halberstam: I’ve known the play for years, of course, but I think the first time it really caught my emotional

What was your first introduction to Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar? What do you find fascinating about the play?

Scott Parkinson: My introduction to the play was probably similar to most people’s introduction—in English class back in junior high or high school. What stands out most in my memory is that it was the first time I was made aware that politicians might not be what they tell us they are. One of the many things that fascinate me about the play is how it explores the tension between a practical approach to governing on the one hand, and a moral approach on the other. In terms of which approach wins out within the context of Shakespeare’s story, the contest isn’t even close—but at what cost?—the play seems to ask. I’m also fascinated by the way in which world-shaking decisions affecting millions of people’s lives are often made based on the simplest, sometimes pettiest of unrealized motivations between individuals. The fact that Brutus, Cassius and Caesar—each in their own way—lack such basic awareness of either themselves or of one another has far-reaching consequences for Rome, and for the world.

Michael Halberstam: I’ve known the play for years, of course, but I think the first time it really caught my emotional
Why did you decide to adapt the play instead of doing it as is? What are you hoping to emphasize or address?

SP: I’ve actually played Cassius three times before. It is one of those roles where you inevitably hear someone from the audience say to you after the show one night, “You were so evil.” I know that people usually mean this as a compliment, of course, but an actor works so hard to make his character multi-dimensional that he can’t help but feel as if he’s somehow failed to fully inhabit the complexity that is Shakespeare’s creation when hearing this. So as co-director and adaptor on this production, I am keen to tell a story where the blame for the play’s tragic events don’t easily rest on any one character’s shoulders; these are all complicated individuals who each make highly questionable choices. Each time I’ve done the role I have struggled with what happens to Cassius after the assassination of Julius Caesar, and particularly with what happens to him after the famous tent scene with Brutus. By the time we come to the final two acts of Shakespeare’s play, a number of new characters both primary and secondary have appeared on the scene, and most of them are so slightly sketched that we never have the chance to invest in them or truly understand their importance to the story. In my opinion, the confusion that results from this diffuses the story of Brutus and Cassius just as it’s moving toward its conclusion. We’ve attempted in our adaptation to address this perception by streamlining events and characters from the original play, as well as by bringing in language from Antony & Cleopatra (the continuing story of some of these characters) in order to fill in where needed. It may be sheer hubris to say this, but in doing the play three times now, it has never felt to me that the world’s greatest playwright satisfactorily ends the story of Brutus and Cassius that he begins so brilliantly, and this adaptation is, in large part, a response to that feeling. I should add that while we present a refashioned final act that takes into account these views of mine on the play, just about every single word of it is Shakespeare’s.

MH: I’ve often seen the play taken out of the global arena. For a period of time it was quite popular to set it in small South American nations or nebulous African cultures. The idea of portraying Caesar as a petty dictator is tempting, of course, but in doing so the stakes of the play are diminished. If our central players are not fighting for the fate of many nations, then the central struggles of the play start to feel petty. We must watch two politicians attempt to sway the opinion of the people—one naive and believing himself motivated strictly by honor; the other a brilliant rhetorician attempting to take revenge for a horrifying assassination. Both are motivated by ego and pride as much as anything else.

Can you tell us a little bit about how your process as co-adaptors and co-directors has gone thus far?

SP: We have been close friends and collaborators for over twenty years now, and in that time we have developed a shorthand and a language that allows us to push and inspire each other in ways that people who don’t have that kind of a history together perhaps could not. For this particular project the process started with a conversation about the play over dinner, with Michael telling me that he was interested in doing a 90-minute version. Knowing that I had done the play a few times and had strong ideas about it, he then asked if I would help him adapt it. Although Michael and I have each had a good deal of input into the adapting and directing thus far, when all’s said and done the bulk of the adaptation work fell to me and the bulk of the directing will fall to Michael, especially once we reach rehearsals (given that I’ll be acting in the play as well). We have very different but complimentary tastes that make for an occasionally jarring but always respectful dance between us. Michael is running an important cultural institution at the same time he is thinking about the play. I get to sit around most days and just daydream about a scene before I have a fresh draft time he is thinking about the play. I get to work as a Petty dictator is tempting, of course, but in doing so the stakes of the play are diminished. If our central players are not fighting for the fate of many nations, then the central struggles of the play start to feel petty. We must watch two politicians attempt to sway the opinion of the people—one naive and believing himself motivated strictly by honor; the other a brilliant rhetorician attempting to take revenge for a horrifying assassination. Both are motivated by ego and pride as much as anything else.

MH: Scott is lightning fast in his adaptive skills and I barely get a thought out about a scene before I have a fresh draft waiting for me in my inbox. Furthermore, his conceptual skill is pushing me outside of some of my comfort zones and challenging me to use some very fresh approaches to the design process. I think the design will represent our most significant process of collaboration and although he often allows me to drive the discussion in actual design meetings with the full team, everything we explore has been discussed in detail together before meeting and in our one-on-one sessions. The thrilling result of this is that Scott discovers new muscles as he thinks conceptually about realizing a complete and consistent directorial world, and I am challenged to discover new muscles when an idea asks me to think about a scene or a design choice in a completely fresh and exciting way. It has been a wonderful process I must say and I am absolutely delighted with our design.

You’ve put together quite a cast for this production. Can you tell us a little about what you were looking for during auditions?

MH: In the field of theatre across the nation there has been a growing call to open up our imaginations when casting plays in order to give all actors a fair and equitable opportunity to be seen for roles and, happily, diversity in casting has become a priority across the nation. But diversity for the sake of diversity often leads to casting choices that satisfy no one and end up looking, at best, condescending and, at worst, unconsciously racist. We strove instead to truly call in actors who would be right for each and every role regardless of gender or race and to our delight we ended up with a very diverse cast of artists, all of whom will be magnificent in their (often multiple) roles. Fifteen years ago we would have discussed colorblind casting. But what does that actually mean? We are going to ignore your identity? Surely “colorblind” suggests that culture and unique identity should be invisible, in which case everyone should ultimately seem homogenized. Currently we discuss color-conscious casting, which suggests that when we invite actors to the table to collaborate, we invite them in their entirety and look for them to inhabit their characters with all their distinct cultural traits. Consequently, we end up with richer more complex productions in which cultural specificity ends up making a good
play even better and which might strike you momentarily as novel at the outset of the evening, but which will soon allow you to be swept up in the play with a freshness and vitality that engages and fulfills you.

SP: All of the discussions we had about the play before we began adapting it referenced real time, present-day events and figures. So we knew that the production had to reflect the world that we were seeing all around us (without being too on the nose about it), and we knew that the face of our Rome had to be one that encompassed all four corners of what today would be a global empire. So it was important to us to consider actors of every conceivable ethnicity and demographic, to have women read for male roles (and in one case, a man read for a woman’s role), to see transgender actors who don’t often get a crack at Shakespeare, and so on; in short, we wanted to keep as open a mind as possible about who could play these characters.

To those audience members who’ve seen the play before and to those encountering it for the first time, what do you hope they’ll take away from seeing it at Writers Theatre?

SP: I hope it feels a little like treading on a familiar surface that has been upended in surprising ways, and that we’ve essentially honored Shakespeare’s intentions even as we’ve reshaped certain moments to better fit the demands of modern storytelling. I hope that this four hundred-year-old play about a republic teetering on an empire that existed two thousand years ago feels eerily familiar. Early on in our plan was to cut all of the references to omens and portents, our feeling being that these notions wouldn’t be relevant to a modern audience; but then when I went back to read the play again I was struck by just how many references of this kind there are in the text; it’s as if the Universe itself was trying desperately to steer these people in a different direction before they walk down a terrible path from which they can’t come back. Upon further reflection Michael and I both agreed that this idea is actually shockingly relevant today, so much so that it felt unwise not to engage with it more fully, but in fact to make it a central theme of the adaptation. There are signs all around us today that verge on the apocalyptic. I’m interested in the things both within us and without that point us in a certain direction, and whether or not we are open to receiving and acting upon those things. Almost more than any play I can think of, Julius Caesar deals with daunting decisions about how to do the greatest good for the greatest number of people, and with the mistakes we make as unrealized human beings going about the process of making those decisions, ignoring outward signs and inner warnings at our peril.

MH: Our goal in creating the Nichols Theatre was to experience epic themes on an intimate scale. Julius Caesar is no exception. Being able to experience this play on an epic emotional scale and yet engage with its titanic characters in an intimate way should breathe new life into a play you thought you knew and hopefully generate a new appreciation for Shakespeare’s magnificent text. Furthermore, the play’s relevance to the moment is startling and occasionally terrifying. I hope that as we head into the election season we can give you an unbiased political discussion which will help you make the right decision for yourself at the polls. ■

THE UNMAKING OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

By Bobby Kennedy, Literary Manager

In 44 BC, the year Julius Caesar was assassinated, the Roman Republic ruled most of the classical western world, from Spain in the west to Syria in the east, as far north as the Netherlands and as far south as Libya. What began as one of many Mediterranean city-states had grown into a superpower in only a couple hundred years. Rome would remain a superpower for several more centuries after the death of Caesar, but the republic—which Brutus and Cassius struck to preserve—would soon be gone.

Originally a Kingdom, Rome had overthrown its monarchy in 509 BC and established itself as a republic. The city-state grew quickly thanks first to its success at trade and later due to its military might. An early adversary, the North African city-state of Carthage, was completely destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC, leaving no major challenge to Roman supremacy of the Mediterranean.

The political system of the Roman Republic consisted of magistrates and senators. As historian Tom Holland describes it, the Roman Senate was “an assembly of some three hundred of Rome’s great and good, generally acknowledged—even by those not in it—to be both the conscience and the guiding intelligence of the Republic. Membership of this elite was determined not automatically by birth but by achievement and reputation. This gave to the Senate’s deliberations immense moral weight, and even though its decrees never had the technical force of law, it was a brave—or foolhardy—magistrate who chose to ignore them.”

Pictured: Bust of Julius Caesar. Photo by Mcleclat [CC BY-SA 3.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)], via Wikimedia Commons.
Magistrates could serve in a number of different roles. Higher-ranking positions included tribunes (ten officials elected solely from the plebeian class who oversaw the interests of the common people), praetors (sixteen leaders who oversaw the judicial system for a one-year term and could lead an army in defense of Rome in an emergency) and consuls (two leaders jointly elected to rule for one year as chief executives and commanders-in-chief of Rome’s armies). After their term as praetor or consul, a Roman could serve as propraetor or proconsul (essentially a governor) of one of Rome’s foreign provinces.

Gaius Julius Caesar, a Roman from a patrician family, was elected as a magistrate in 63 BC, served as praetor the following year, and then as praetor or consul, a Roman could serve as propraetor or proconsul (essentially a governor) of one of Rome’s foreign provinces.

Caesar did return to Rome in 49 BC, but with one of his legions behind him. His crossing of the Rubicon River (the historical border of Italy) with an army was a flagrant violation of custom. Pompey fled to avoid battle, choosing instead to make his stand against Caesar in Greece. Despite having fewer numbers, Caesar’s forces defeated Pompey’s, who escaped to Egypt. However, news of Caesar’s triumph had reached Egypt first and Pompey was killed as he stepped ashore. Caesar, upset about Pompey’s murder, overthrew the Egyptian leader Ptolemy XIII to install Cleopatra on the throne. After a brief affair with the new queen, Caesar led his armies through Asia Minor to quash further rebellions before returning triumphant to Rome in 46 BC.

Shakespeare’s play Julius Caesar begins after this triumphant return, in the lead-up to Caesar being appointed Dictator Perpetuus in 44 BC. A group of senators—including Marcus Junius Brutus, Gaius Cassius Longinus, Publius Servilius Caeca Longus and others—feared the new power that was to be bestowed upon Caesar and that he may decide to abolish the senate altogether to crown himself King. They also feared his popular support and his expressed desire to undermine the advantages of the patrician class. Tyrannicide, they resolved, was the Republic’s only hope.

The conspirators assassinated Caesar on March 15, 44 BC (the infamous “Ides of March”), stabbing him 23 times at the base of a statue of Pompey. In the aftermath, Mark Antony, Caesar’s friend and compatriot, stoked the anger of the Roman people against conspirators Cassius and Brutus, both of whom fled the city. Antony allied himself with Caesar’s newly revealed heir, Gaius Octavius (the fallen leader’s adopted nephew). Antony, Octavius and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus (a military commander and ally of Julius Caesar’s) formed a Second Triumvirate to share rule of Rome, and defeated the armies of Brutus and Cassius in Greece in 42 BC.

In their effort to prevent Julius Caesar from becoming King, Brutus, Cassius and the other conspirators ended up paving the way for Octavius to bring down the republic. Within ten years, the Second Triumvirate had fallen apart. Lepidus was forced out of power and Octavius and Antony went to war with one another. Octavius proved victorious and was left without major opposition in Roman politics. In 27 BC, the Senate appointed him Emperor, at which point he took on the new name Augustus. Rome would be ruled by Emperors for the next 400 years, until the last leader of the Western Roman Empire abdicated in 476 AD, completing the fall of Rome and plunging Europe into the darkness of the Middle Ages.
The actors of Julius Caesar discuss their intimate and personal connections to the play and to their characters.

Arya Daire (Portia, Decia, Soothsayer)
The play is a timeless study on how people with a taste for power politically and psychologically manipulate. (Insert evil cackle here.) Character assassination and deflection are the current weapons of choice in American political campaigning (I sympathize; it is notoriously difficult to "mic drop" to a voting record or principled stance). These are expected and accepted manipulations of public opinion. And our characters in Caesar lay forth a gorgeous array of verbal manipulation tactics in their individual quests for status and power. Antony's oration is a step-by-step masterclass in skillful crowd manipulation—the kind we see all the time in contemporary politics, hastened and amplified by social media. And in one famously delicious monologue, we are even invited to watch an "honorable" man (Brutus) manipulate himself, quelling the dissonance between his political aspirations and general moral posture. We see that even "men of conscience" can expediently unlock rather monstrous sides of themselves. Well, I should say "people of conscience"... I become rather monstrous when my name is misspelled on a Starbucks cup. The resultant hissing, spitting and latte throwing are—and always will be—my raison d'être.

Kareem Bandealy (Brutus)
My first experience with Shakespeare was thanks to an itinerate company that would go out to local schools, slap together a few platforms, throw up a couple nondescript flats and perform (usually in a gym). When they visited my middle school, it was to tell us A Midsummer Night's Dream. I remember classmates heckling and being generally disruptive, and though it was all quite hilarious for 30 seconds, I found myself deeply perturbed for the rest of the afternoon. I wanted to hear and make sense of what I was being told. Now, I'm an actor. I should have recognized the signs. So long as there are political systems, Julius Caesar will be relevant. Failing those, so long as individuals seek to ride the volatile bull of popular opinion, this play will be relevant. And failing all that, so long as there are friendships and betrayal, or there is risk, or loss, or so long as there remains a shred of arrogance in humankind, Julius Caesar will remain relevant. Don't believe me? Go stream CNN or look on your Twitter feed after the show, and you'll be met by characters from Caesar… without a tenth the poetic effulgence, of course.

Christine Bunuan (Calphurnia, Metella Cimber)
The first Shakespeare play I ever did was A Midsummer Night's Dream in college. Being the petite self that I am at 4'10", I played Moth... one of Titania's fairies. I remember being in the scene where Titania and all her fairies fall asleep next to her. And I literally did... fall asleep on stage. Titania called out "Moth" and two extra beats later I yelled out, "And I." Needless to say, I learned never to do that again. I've always loved Shakespeare. I feel like his work challenges me as an actor and as a human being. His plays are so timeless and can be adapted to any time period. Julius Caesar is a perfect example of this, what with the upcoming election. I am not a very political person but this upcoming vote is certainly one of the most important of, at least, my lifetime.

Sydney Germaine (Cinna, Octavius Caesar)
The first experience I had with Shakespeare was thanks to an itinerate company that would go out to local schools, slap together a few platforms, throw up a couple nondescript flats and perform (usually in a gym). When they visited my middle school, it was to tell us A Midsummer Night's Dream. I remember classmates heckling and being generally disruptive, and though it was all quite hilarious for 30 seconds, I found myself deeply perturbed for the...
## ANNOUNCING OUR 2016/17 SEASON

Our 25th Anniversary Season—the first completely in our new theatre center—will have six productions: four in the Nichols Theatre and two in the Gillian Theatre.

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**THE WORLD PREMIERE**

**MUSICAL FOLKTALE**

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Consider this a Standing Ovation.

WT partNERS WITH THE CHICAGO INCLUSION PROJECT

On Monday, July 11, 2016, Writers Theatre collaborated with The Chicago Inclusion Project on a staged reading of George Bernard Shaw’s 1924 play, Saint Joan. TCIP was founded in 2015 by actor/producer Emjoy Gavino to “create inclusive theater experiences by bringing together Chicago artists and audiences normally separated by ethnic background, economic status, gender identity, physical ability and countless other barriers. Through its programming and collaboration with Chicagoland theatres, TCIP aims to unite diverse collections of Chicagoans by deliberately choosing the unexpected, both in play choices and non-traditional casting, cultivating a diverse audience and keeping price of tickets affordable.”

WT also passionately believes in inclusivity in its casting and hiring and undertook this reading with the goal of highlighting the importance and benefit of inclusivity through performance and the following discussion. WT Artistic Director Michael Halberstam directed the reading with a specific eye toward including the play in a future season. By presenting Saint Joan with a transgender actor in the title role and a cast predominantly made up of actors of color, a play that otherwise might have seemed well-known and familiar took on extraordinary new depth and intrigue. The reading was followed by a lively talkback led by TCIP member Elana Elyce, and featuring the cast and artistic team members from both WT and TCIP.

For more information on TCIP, visit thechicagoinclusionproject.org.

Photo by Joe Mazza, Brave Lux.
AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Join us for these exciting engagement events, tailored to enhance your WT experience! For more information and to RSVP visit writerstheatre.org/events.

SUNDAY SPOTLIGHT

Are you curious about the world that surrounds your favorite productions? Our Sunday Spotlight series offers you access to the finest speakers, academics and cultural leaders. Each event extends the conversation on our stages by featuring an expert in an area connected to the play. Past audiences have learned about the future of artificial intelligence in Marjorie Prime from Northwestern University professor Douglas Downey and explored the landscape architecture in Arcadia with garden historian Cathy Maloney.

Save the date for the Sunday Spotlight for Julius Caesar on Sunday, October 2nd.

THE MAKING OF…

Have you ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes? The Making of… series offers you an insider view of what goes into creating each production at WT. Past events have explored the workings of the WT costume shop for Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf: A Parody, how the choreography of Company came together, and what it was like for the cast of Arcadia to be the first performers in the new Nichols Theatre.

Save the date for the The Making of…Julius Caesar on Monday, October 17th.

PRE-SHOW CONVERSATION: UP CLOSE

Join us at 6:45pm before every Thursday evening performance (excluding previews and any extension weeks) of Julius Caesar, The Hunter and The Bear, The Scene and Parade for a 15-minute primer on the context and content of the play facilitated by a member of the WT Artistic Team.

POST-SHOW CONVERSATION: THE WORD

Join us after every Tuesday evening performance (excluding previews and any extension weeks) for a 15-minute discussion of the play, facilitated by a member of the WT Artistic Team.

POST-SHOW CONVERSATION: THE ARTIST

Join us after every Wednesday evening performance (excluding previews and any extension weeks) of every production in our 16/17 Season for a 15-minute discussion with actors from the production facilitated by a member of the WT Artistic Team.

AUDIENCE EXCHANGE

Remember that our Concessions Center is open for an hour before and after our performances. You are welcome to enjoy a snack or beverage and discuss the play in the Litowitz Atrium, on our Grand Gallery Walk or on the Stephanie and Bill Sick Rooftop Terrace.
WT EDUCATION WELCOMES RECORD-BREAKING NUMBER OF STUDENTS TO OUR NEW HOME

Writers Theatre’s student matinee series exposes students to world-class art through on-site engagement.

This spring, we welcomed 750 students from eleven different high schools across the Chicagoland area to the Theatre for exclusive student matinee performances of Tom Stoppard’s *Arcadia*, our new home’s inaugural production.

Over the previous few seasons, WT has piloted student matinees at the Theatre on a limited basis. This year, with the opening of our brand new theatre center, we were able to host a robust student matinee series bringing young people through our front doors and face-to-face with the art on our stages.

Following each performance, students engaged in a post-show discussion with several of the actors from *Arcadia*—and many lingered in the Litowitz Atrium following the matinees to continue their own spirited discussions about the play.

“This had to be one of the best plays I’ve ever watched... I feel like I learned so much from watching the actors work. Thank you to the staff and the cast of *Arcadia* for such a wonderful performance!”

– Student, Taft High School

In conjunction with the expansion of our student matinee series, this year WT Education launched a brand-new wraparound residency program, ACTIVATE. This program is designed to deepen students’ engagement with the art on our stages and extend their experience following each performance through in-school workshops led by a WT Teaching Artist.
THE WORD AND THE (TEACHING) ARTIST

WT Education’s programs are implemented in schools by some of Chicago’s finest teaching artists. Hear what some of them have to say about their favorite experiences in the classroom.

Sindy Castro
Hometown: Hialeah, FL
Number of years teaching for WT: 4 years
A favorite memory of mine from this past year was on a final presentation day at a school when we invited parents. Our students were introduced to short stories and worked together to adapt them into a mini-play. We brought in simple props and set pieces (chairs). The students were so excited about presenting that they were full of energy before and during the show. They kept talking in excitement throughout the whole performance as their classmates were presenting and after they presented themselves. It was a lovely energy in the air and you could really tell they were having fun!

Stephanie Chavara
Hometown: Pittsburgh, PA
Number of years teaching for WT: 3 years
My favorite experience was spending a whole school year at Ida Crown and finding so many different ways to bring text to life. I remember trying to stage the scene where Romeo and Juliet meet. It was a freshman class and everyone was a little nervous about the “love” scene. In order to figure out what “palm to palm” meant, I had students explore a way that they could bring the idea to life without actually touching hands. A couple students began passing a basketball back and forth and choosing different ways of passing it to illustrate how quickly Romeo and Juliet fell for each other. It was safe for them and everyone felt connected to the language of basketball. It taught me about nuances in the text that I have never experienced before.

In another Romeo and Juliet moment, I was working at Cleveland Elementary and getting somewhat disengaged eighth graders to get pumped up. We work on “swordfighting” with sticks. Before I knew it, all the young people were memorized because they wanted it to look good. It showed me the power of being excited about what you love and how that can grab other young minds to create something truly wonderful.
Elizabeth Dowling
Hometown: Sumter, SC
Number of years teaching for WT: 2 years
I had a student in a class who had amazing ideas and kept contributing to the show the class created, including singing an original theme song of his own devising! He was the sort of student who’s cooperative and enthusiastic, so I assumed he was one of the leaders of the class. Later, his teacher explained to me that he usually struggled in class, and had trouble following through with projects. I was surprised—and thrilled! Giving students an experience of making a play is awesome—but giving them the experience of leading, adding value to a project and shining in excellence—that was priceless.

Risha Hill
Hometown: Birmingham, AL
Number of years teaching for WT: 2 years
I love being a teaching artist in general, but what I especially love about being a teaching artist for Writers Theatre is the level of support I receive from the Education Department. It is clear that WT is dedicated to cultivating future audience members by offering opportunities to enrich their classroom learning.

Kelsey Chigas
Hometown: Chicago, IL
Number of years teaching for WT: 3 years
One of my favorite memories this year came on a final presentation day in one of our Novel Series classrooms. The students had adapted scenes from the novel they were studying and devised an original movement piece in response to the themes of the novel. On the day of the final presentation, a handful of students were absent—and without missing a beat, the rest of my class stepped up to decide who was going to cover their lines in the performance and worked together to adapt their group movement sequence to work with our smaller number of performers. Watching these students—many of whom were incredibly shy and quiet at the start of the residency—be so self-directed, empowered and supportive of each other as they prepared and shared their work was one of the greatest gifts I’ve ever experienced as a teaching artist.

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Join our circle on Google+

We look forward to hearing from you!
CONCESSIONS CENTER

Our Concessions Center, open before and after the performance, offers wine, beer, liquor, specialty cocktails, coffee, tea and a mix of savory and sweet snacks.

Drop by the bar to pre-order your drink and it’ll be waiting for you at intermission or after the performance!

WT Cups allow you to bring your drink into the theatres during the performance and are offered in two convenient sizes. WT Cups are available for purchase at the Concessions Center.

CUSTOM COCKTAILS

Enjoy a custom cocktail from our Concessions Center—specially created for each of our productions by Mixed metaPours!

JULIUS CAESAR

TOGA TONIC

Aylesbury Duck Vodka
KOVAL Ginger Liqueur
Tonic
Fresh Lime
Thyme Sprig Garnish

All of our signature cocktail creations are designed by WT Cocktail Consultant Cheryl Rich Heisler & Glencoe-based Mixed metaPours.

312-613-7499 | www.mixedmetapours.com
### SEPTEMBER

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- Private Event
- Post-Show Conversation
- Pre-Show Conversation: Up Close
- Student Matinee
- The Making of...
- Sunday Spotlight

Student tickets only $20 (with valid student ID).
Ticket discounts are available for groups of 10 or more. Call 847-786-3519 for more details.