

https://www.sfexaminer.com/culture/we-players-take-caesar-from-outdoor-stage-to-screen/article_3801b301-5e03-51cc-8acc-d839b348fba4.html

We Players take 'Caesar' from outdoor stage to screen

By Jean Schiffman

Aug 22, 2020

1 of 5



We Players' 2018 production of "Caesar Maximus" in Golden Gate Park is the basis of an effective new film the...



PLAY DATE

JEAN SCHIFFMAN

We Players take 'Caesar' from outdoor stage to screen

If you'd seen We Players' "Caesar Maximus," a walk-through, quasi-circusy adaptation of "Julius Caesar" at the Music Concourse in Golden Gate Park in 2018, then gone home and dreamt of it that night, your dream—perhaps a beautiful, illuminated nightmare—might have resembled the theater's new, half-hour film on Vimeo.

Presciently, artistic director Ava Roy and team had filmed the production— not an official performance— scripted by Nick Medina with Roy, planning to eventually cull footage and experiment with new theatrical forms. The result is this film, co-created with Tracy Martin.

Roy describes it as "a visual exploration of the thematic elements of our original adaptation," and as such, it's quite effective, and probably as good a video example as possible of We Players' wonderfully sensorial and physically imaginative approach to theater making.

The film's floating fragments of text, taken from Shakespeare's tragedy about the assassination of Roman emperor Julius Caesar by members of his own triumvirate, are bookended by wily Marc Antony's soliloquies, addressed directly to the camera in close-up by a mesmerizing Rotimi Agbabiaka.

The chilling elements of mob violence and manipulation are present and accounted for throughout various scenes in this female-centric "Caesar." The plot is re-imagined in a swirl of images, music (original score by Charlie Gurke), expressive slo-mo movement, splashes of red (scarlet gossamer veils, bloody entrails), shining daggers, eerie vocals, festive celebratory activities that include juggling, a silent figure drifting through a tunnel, and more.

Caesar is portrayed by a particularly strong and dynamic Libby Oberlin in military garb and high-heeled boots, and Emily Stone is a chilling soothsayer, fruitlessly warning of Caesar's impending fate. (The Ides of March was Caesar's doomsday—and close to the start of our pandemic lockdown.) The cast is uneven, but ultimately this filmed incarnation of "Caesar Maximus" is an inventive way to regenerate the original production, and an example, for these restrictive times, of We Players' unique artistic exploration.

The film runs through Sept. 5 at <http://www.weplayers.org/we-connect>; a donation is required for the link.

Marsh solo shows

One-person shows, so Zoomable, are a bonanza for The Marsh, a longtime developer and producer of solo work. And San Francisco playwright Lynne Kaufman's "Exposing Margaret Mead," performed by Nancy Madden as a staged reading, is an intriguing addition to The Marsh's packed lineup—and to Kaufman's extensive body of dramatic work (which includes plays about other 20th-century figures such as Ram Dass, Sylvia Plath and Freud).