



MAGICAL REALISM: THE FILM FABLES OF THE TAVIANI BROTHERS

Caesar Must Die (Cesare deve morire)

Caesar Must Die (Cesare deve morire)

Directors: Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani

©: Kaos Cinematografica, Stemal Entertainment, Le Talee

Production Company: Kaos Cinematografica

Presented by: Grazia Volpi

In association with: Stemal Entertainment, Le Talee, La Ribalta centro studi Enrico Maria Salerno

In collaboration with: RAI Cinema

With the support and sponsorship of: Direzione Generale per il Cinema – Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, Regione Lazio – Fondo regionale per il cinema e l'audiovisivo

With the contribution of: Roma Capitale

With the sponsorship of: Ministero della Giustizia

Executive Producer: Donatella Palermo

Producer: Frazia Volpi

Story/Screenplay: Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani

In collaboration with: Fabio Cavalli

Loosely based on The Tragedy of Julius Caesar by: William Shakespeare

Director of Photography: Simone Zampagni

Editor: Roberto Perpignani

Music: Giuliano Taviani, Carmelo Travia

Sound: Benito Alchimedè, Brando Mosca

With:

Cosimo Rega (*Cassius*)

Salvatore Striano (*Brutus*)

Giovanni Arcuri (*Caesar*)

Antonio Frasca (*Mark Antony*)

Juan Dario Bonetti (*Decius*)

Vincenzo Gallo (*Lucius*)

Rosario Majorana (*Metellus*)

Francesco De Masi (*Trebonius*)

Gennaro Solito (*Cinna*)

Vittorio Parrella (*Casca*)

Pasquale Crapetti (*legionary*)

Francesco Carusone (*fortune teller*)

Fabio Rizzuto (*Strato*)

Maurilio Giuffreda (*Octavian*)

Italy 2012©

77 mins

Digital

A contemporary review

The Taviani brothers, arthouse darlings of the 70s and 80s (*Allonsanfàn*, *Padre padrone*, *The Night of San Lorenzo*), have rather dropped off the international map in recent years. But though they've slowed down they have not stopped making films, and the unexpected triumph of their most recent movie, *Caesar Must Die*, at the Berlin Film Festival (where it won the Golden Bear) brings them back into the spotlight. The film also introduces something relatively new in their oeuvre – a teasing penchant for blurring the line between artifice and reality.

At first sight, we seem to be watching a documentary about a production of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, its text somewhat adapted, recently staged by the inmates of Rome's high-security Rebibbia jail. But early on there's a hint that things aren't quite so straightforward. We start at the end – the full-costume production, given before a mixed audience of inmates and invited outsiders, and received with wild enthusiasm. But then there's a title, 'Six Months Earlier', and the screen switches from full colour to black-and-white. A simple enough device, but quietly suggesting that what we see may not be as close to unfiltered reality as it initially appears.

It soon becomes evident – from framing, from camera placement, from the convicts' delivery of their lines – that a good deal of what we see of the run-up to the production has been staged, and quite possibly scripted and rehearsed.

Which immediately raises the question – how much should we believe? While Giovanni Arcuri (playing Caesar) and Juan Dario Bonetti (Decius Brutus) are rehearsing the scene where Decius persuades Caesar to attend the senate despite his wife Calpurnia's ominous dream, Arcuri suddenly slips out of character and starts accusing Bonetti of sneaking around behind his back and badmouthing him. The director Fabio Cavalli and the rest of the cast watch in dismay as the pair barge out into the corridor, seemingly intent on a punch-up. But the framing, and the cutting, make it improbable that this was a spontaneous quarrel – though of course it may have reflected a genuine animosity between the two men which the Tavianis picked up on and put to use.

Similarly there is a moment when two prison guards watch fascinated from a high gallery while another scene is being rehearsed, and start discussing the character of Mark Antony. A third joins them, saying it's time the prisoners were back in their cells, but the other two persuade him to wait until the scene's over. Real? Most probably not. Truthful? It has the ring of it.

Other moments, however much set up, ring equally true to their situation: Arcuri reading Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*, remarking, 'And to think that at school I found this boring!'; Cosimo Rega (Cassius), a Neapolitan, marvelling, 'It feels like this Shakespeare lived in the streets of my city'; an inmate, refurbishing the prison theatre in preparation for the play, stroking the plush seat of one of the chairs and musing wistfully, 'Maybe a woman will sit here.'

BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

SIGHT AND SOUND

Never miss an issue with **Sight and Sound**, the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine. Subscribe from just £25*

* Price based on a 6-month print subscription (UK only). More info: sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk

**SIGHT
AND
SOUND**

MAGICAL REALISM: THE FILM FABLES OF THE TAVIANI BROTHERS

Caesar Must Die Cesare deve morire

Sat 24 Feb 12:00; Thu 29 Feb 20:50

Allonsanfàn Allonsanfàn

Sat 24 Feb 20:25

Kaos

Sun 25 Feb 14:30

Wondrous Boccaccio Maraviglioso Boccaccio

Mon 26 Feb 20:40

You Laugh Tu ridi

Wed 28 Feb 20:50

With thanks to

Carla Cattani, Livia Azzolini, Monica Moscato and Erika Allegrucci at Cinecittà.

Presented in collaboration with the Italian Embassy in London and the Italian Cultural Institute.
Co-produced by Cinecittà, Rome.

Co-produced by

Cinecittà, Rome

CINECITTÀ

BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on player.bfi.org.uk

BFI SOUTHBANK

Welcome to the home of great film and TV, with three cinemas and a studio, a world-class library, regular exhibitions and a pioneering Mediatheque with 1000s of free titles for you to explore. Browse special-edition merchandise in the BFI Shop. We're also pleased to offer you a unique new space, the BFI Riverfront – with unrivalled riverside views of Waterloo Bridge and beyond, a delicious seasonal menu, plus a stylish balcony bar for cocktails or special events. Come and enjoy a pre-cinema dinner or a drink on the balcony as the sun goes down.

Join the **BFI mailing list** for regular programme updates. Not yet registered? Create a new account at www.bfi.org.uk/signup

Wryly humorous touches abound. Chided by Cavalli for slowness, Rega responds: 'I've been here 20 years and you say let's not waste time!' The occasional rewriting of Shakespeare might give purists a shock: Decius Brutus's protest that he must know some reason why Caesar declines to come to the senate, 'Lest I be laughed at when I tell them so,' becomes 'The other senators will take the piss.' Cries of 'For freedom!' from the conspirators carry their own ironic charge, as do the references to Brutus and his cohorts as 'men of honour'; several members of the cast, as we're told early on, have been jailed for involvement in the Mafia. The Tavianis hardly need to emphasise the relevance of the play as a whole to current Italian politics; that, they most likely feel, is a given.

We end with a return to full colour and a longer reprise of the final production in front of an audience and its ecstatic reception, the actors cheering as loudly as the spectators. It's a moment of uplifting jubilation before the dying fall as the cast, now back in drab prison garb, are returned to their cells and the doors locked on them, each a solitary prisoner. One of them, Cosimo Rega, we follow into his cell and watch as he mooches around and makes himself coffee, reflecting as he does so, 'Since I got to know art, this cell has become a prison.' Another scripted line? Quite possibly – but it hardly matters. Truth to art – as the Tavianis and Rega have just reminded us – is what matters.

Philip Kemp, *Sight and Sound*, March 2013

Directors' statement

A dear friend recounted to us a theatre experience she had had a few nights earlier. She cried, she said, and it had not happened in years. We went to that theatre inside a prison. Rome's Rebibbia, the High Security Section.

After passing a number of gates and blockades, we reached a stage where 20 or so inmates, some of them serving life sentences, were reciting Dante's *Divine Comedy*. They had chosen a few cantos of *Hell* and were now reliving the pain and torments of Paolo and Francesca, of Count Ugolino, of Ulysses – all in the hell of their own prison...

They each spoke in their own dialects, occasionally addressing parallels between the poetic story evoked by the cantos and their own lives. We remembered the words and tears of our friend.

We felt the need to discover through a film how the beauty of their performances was born from those prison cells, from those outcasts that live so far from culture. We suggested Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* to Fabio Cavalli, the stage director working with the inmates.

We staged it with the collaboration of the inmates, filming in their cells, in the prison yard, the depths of the High Security Section and eventually on stage. We tried to contrast the darkness of their life as convicts with the poetic force of the emotions Shakespeare evokes – friendship and betrayal, murder and the torment of difficult choices, the price of power and truth. Reaching deep into a work like this means also looking at yourself, especially when one must leave the stage and return to the confinement of a cell.

Production notes