



CAESAR MUST DIE

Een film van PAOLO en VITTORIO TAVIANI



Vanaf 13 december in de Nederlandse filmtheaters

SYNOPSIS

De opvoering van het befaamde Shakespeare-stuk *Julius Caesar* loopt ten einde, de artiesten worden onthaald met een uitbundig applaus. De lichten gaan uit, de acteurs verlaten het toneel en keren terug naar hun gevangeniszellen. Ze zijn allemaal gedetineerden in de Rebibbia-gevangenis in Rome. Een van hen vertelt: "Sinds ik kunst ontdekt heb, is deze cel pas echt een gevangenis geworden."

Regisseurs Paolo en Vittorio Taviani volgden gedurende zes maanden de voorbereidingen van deze theaterproductie. Hun film laat zien hoe het universele karakter van Shakespeares taal de acteurs helpt hun eigen rol te begrijpen en in zijn wereld te stappen waarin interactie bestaat tussen vriendschap en verraad, macht, oneerlijkheid en geweld.

CAESAR MUST DIE is winnaar van de Gouden Beer op het Internationale Film Festival van Berlijn in 2012.

CAESAR MUST DIE (CESARE DEVE MORIRE)/ 76 minuten/Italië, 2012/Italiaans gesproken/Nederlands gesproken



CAESAR MUST DIE wordt in Nederland gedistribueerd door ABC Cinemien. Beeldmateriaal kan gedownload worden van: www.cinemien.nl/pers of vanaf www.filmdepot.nl
Voor meer informatie kunt u zich wenden tot Gideon Querido van Frank: +31(0)20-5776010 of gideon@cinemien.nl

CAST EN CREW

Cassius	Cosimo Rega
Brutus	Salvatore Striano
Caesar	Giovanni Arcuri
Mark Anthony	Antonio Frasca
Decius	Juan Dario Bonetti
Casca	Vittorio Parrella
Metellus	Rosario Majorana
Lucius	Vincenzo Gallo
Trebonius	Francesco De Masi
Cinna	Gennaro Solito
Fortune-teller	Francesco Carusone
Strato	Fabio Rizzuto
Ottavius	Maurilio Giaffreda



Regie	Paolo en Vittorio Taviani
Idee	Paolo en Vittorio Taviani
Scenario	Paolo en Vittorio Taviani, Fabio Cavalli
Camera	Simone Zampagni
Geluid	Benito Alchimede en Brando Mosca
Montage	Roberto Perpignani
Productie	Grazia Volpi

PAOLO EN VITTORIO TAVIANI

Paolo Taviani werd geboren in Italië op acht november 1931.

Vittorio Taviani werd geboren in Italië op twintig september 1929.

Paolo en Vittorio zijn broers, die altijd samen films hebben gemaakt als schrijvers en regisseurs. In de vroege jaren 60 begonnen zij met regisseren. Sindsdien hebben zij zowel fictie als documentaires gemaakt.

Op het Cannes Film Festival wonnen de Taviani-broers een Gouden Palm voor PADRE PADRONE (1977) en de Grote Jury Prijs voor LA NOTTE DI SAN LORENZO (1982). Tijdens het Film Festival van Venetië van 1986 mochten zij een Gouden Leeuw voor hun gehele oeuvre in ontvangst nemen.



Filmografie

- 2012 Caesar Must Die (Cesare deve morire)
- 2006 The Lark Farm (La masseria delle allodole)
- 2004 Luisa Sanfelice
- 2001 Resurrezione
- 1998 You Laugh (Tu ridi)
- 1996 Elective Affinities (Le affinità elettive)
- 1993 Fiorile
- 1990 Night Sun (Il sole anche di notte)
- 1987 Good Morning Babilonia
- 1985 Kaos
- 1982 The Night of the Shooting Stars (La notte di San Lorenzo)
- 1979 Il Prato
- 1977 Padre padrone
- 1974 Allonsanfan
- 1973 San Michele aveva un gallo
- 1969 Sotto il segno dello scorpione
- 1967 Sovversivi
- 1963 Il fuorilegge del matrimonio
- 1962 Un uomo da bruciare

SALVATORE STRIANO als BRUTUS

Vanwege zijn verleden als jeugddelinquent en jaren in de gevangenis van Rebibbia is Salvatore Striano bekend met de ontberingen van een gevangenis. Hij raakte geïnteresseerd in theater dankzij de lessen van theaterdirecteur Fabio Cavalli. Nadat hij in 2006 vrij kwam, begon Striano aan zijn acteercarrière. Hij speelde veel toneel, waaronder een grote rol in de Italiaanse uitvoering van Shakespeares *The Tempest*. Zijn filmdebuut maakte hij in GOMORRA (2008).

Voor zijn rol als Brutus keerde hij - als acteur – meerdere weken terug naar de gevangenis waar hij ooit gevangen zat.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

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

After passing a number of gates and blockades we reached a stage were twenty or so inmates, some of them serving life sentenced, 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 adresssing 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 fathoms 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 choice, the prices of power and truth. Reaching deep into a work like this means also looking at yourself, espically when one must leave the stage and return to the confinement of a cell.

INTERVIEW

Could you tell us the story of this project?

All happened by accident, like our previous film "Padre Padrone" when everything started after our encounter with the Sardinia-born shepherd-linguist Gavino Ledda. This time – thanks to a phone conversation with a dear friend of ours – we got in contact with a universe that we knew only through American films, even though Rebibbia, the Roman prison on the outskirts of Rome is quite different from those we had seen on the screen. However, on our first visit there, the gloomy atmosphere of a life behind bars had given way to the energy and the frenzy of a cultural and poetic event: the inmates were reciting some of Dante's "Inferno" cantos.

Subsequently, we found out that they were the convicts of the High Security Section, mostly affiliates to the different kind of mobs - mafia, Camorra, ndrangheta – sentenced in most of the cases to life imprisonment. Their instinctual acting was animated by the dramatic urge to tell the truth and was channelled by the steady and continuous work of their "intern" director, Fabio Cavalli. When we left Rebibbia we immediately realized that we wanted to know more about them and their situation; so we paid a second visit and asked them if they wanted to work for a cinematic adaptation of "Julius Caesar" by William Shakespeare. The answer of Fabio and of the inmates was immediate and plain: "Let's start, now!"

The actors we see in the film are all inmates? And as to the auditions, did they take place exactly as we see in the film?

The actors you see in our film are all convicts of the High Security Section. To be more specific, we would like to add that Salvatore "Zazà" Striano - who plays Brutus - has already served his sentence in the prison of Rebibbia. Originally condemned to 14 years and 8 months, he has served 6 years and 10 months and following a general pardon he is now a free citizen; the same goes for Stratone. The only "foreigner" is one of the prison's acting teachers, Maurilio Giaffreda.

As to the auditions, for some years we have adopted a quite simple but extremely effective method: we ask the actors to identify themselves, as if they were being interrogated by customs officials; then we ask them to say goodbye to somebody they love, telling them that the first time they have to show pain and the second rage.

In this case, we have had a sort of pre-casting with Fabio Cavalli showing us the photographs of some inmates he had pre-selected and who afterward have all been cast without much additional work. As for the others, during the audition we told them that for the sake of privacy and if they wished to, they could have provided us with phoney names; we have been extremely impressed when all of them insisted on sharing their real names, the names of their parents and their birth-places with us. After a while we came up to the conclusion that for them the film could become a way to remind all the people living outside that they were leading their lives in the silence of the prison.

It was only after watching them going before the camera one by one that we got to know them and discovered their real painful, outraged and raving nature.

Did you follow the screenplay or you resorted to improvisation as if you were shooting a documentary?

We did follow the screenplay. We have written a screenplay as we do with all our films; then, as it is always the case, once on the set, with the camera rolling and the actors playing, the screenplay has become something different, thanks also to the locations, the lighting, and the darkness. With all due respect for Shakespeare (who has always been a father, a brother and then – as we grew older - a son for us), we have taken over his "Julius Caesar", dismembered and rebuilt it. We have certainly kept the spirit of the original tragedy as well as the narrative but at the same time we simplified it taking it a bit far from the traditional stage work tempos. We have tried to construct that audiovisual organism that we call film, and that is the degenerate son of all the arts that have preceded cinema. A degenerate son that Shakespeare would have certainly loved! Fabio Cavalli has been extremely helpful in translating all the lines into the different dialects-slang of the various inmates-actors. They have understood what we intended to do and gave mesmerizing performances with different degrees of emotions and involvement. Thanks to them, to the various truths they expressed and to their unexpected performances, the screenplay evolved. To make

myself clear I would like to mention just an example: the soothsayer, the Neapolitan “Pazzariello” who brings his open palm to the nose and with disquieting jests tells the audience to be silent, was not in the screenplay. However, he reminded us one of the many crazy characters of Shakespeare, a Jorik for instance, who has run away from his tragedies. It was almost a tribute and a wish by that genius to all of us.

Why did you choose Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar?

We had never had anything else in mind. And our choice came out of necessity: the men we wanted to work with had a past – far or close – to reckon with; a past characterized by misdeeds, faults, offences, crimes and broken relationships. Hence we had to confront them with an equally powerful story going in the opposite direction. And in this Italian cinematic version of Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar, we bring to the silver screen the great and the pitiable relationships among human beings that include friendship, betrayal, power, freedom and doubt. And murder, too. Several of our inmates-actors once were “men of honour”; and in his arraignment Antonio quotes the “men of honour”. On the day we shot the sequence of the killing of Caesar, we asked our dagger-armed actors to find the same killer urge within them. A second later we realized what we had just said and we wished we could withdraw our words. But that wasn’t necessary because they were the first ones to reckon the necessity to face reality.

Consequently, we decided to follow them through their extremely long days and nights. We wanted our common work to take place within the tiny five-people cells, in the corridors, in the yard where they spend the only time in the open air, or while waiting for the meetings with the relatives.



How did you work with Fabio Cavalli?

To give you an idea of our cooperation and of the enthusiasm of Fabio, I’ll mention you what he told us when we discussed with him our film for the first time. “We could shoot the Filippi Battle sequence in the meadows behind the jail; we would ask the director to allow all the inmates to participate”.

But since this was not the point of view we wanted to adopt for our film, Fabio has immediately understood our approach and accepted it, thanks to his intellectual sensitivity and to his deep knowledge of the show business.

We have described him how we wished to construct the plot and Fabio has worked with us in writing the screenplay; he helped us to discover some of the most secret places of the jail, organized the meeting with the inmates selecting those who were more suitable for some roles. Before the final cast was completed, he attempted to stage some of the sequences with a selected group of inmates but above all, with the help of his assistant, he focused on the staging of the final sequences of the film. In a later phase, he proposed us a sketch of the set design with two Roman columns made up of coloured fibreglass, like the soldiers' shields.

And in the end, he made the final leap: he gave up his role of director and turned into an actor playing the Director of the film who has a prominent role. He was excellent in his performance ... even because his actors were watching over him! He said to them: until today I have been your stage director; now we are switching to cinema and we will use a totally different language. So, this time, they will direct us."

But now we know that he has gone back to Rebibbia, among his inmates-actors to stage the original version of "Julius Caesar". "The most beautiful sequence – he told us with a defiant grin – is the one with Brutus opposite Calpurnia.." That is the sequence we have eliminated because we had an all-male cast.



Could you explain us why you have decided to have the characters talk in the different dialects of the inmates?

In the months before shooting, we often went to Rebibbia. On those visits, we crossed the different wards of the High Security Section and through the half-closed doors we could see the inmates, young and old men silently lying in their beds. "We should be called the ceiling-lookers – they one told us– since we spend half of our days lying in bed watching the ceiling..." After hearing these words, while we freely went up and down those corridors, we were often assailed with a sense of guilt. But one particular morning, in a larger cell we found out something that had us laugh out of amazement and complicity: six or seven inmates sitting around a table reading a text placed at the centre of the table. We later found out that the text was our screenplay and those men were our actors who were translating their lines into their respective dialects, that is Neapolitan, Sicilian, Apulian with the help of other compatriots – who had not been cast for the film. The whole work was supervised and coordinated - as always - by Fabio and Cosimo Rega – Cassius. This anecdote too, helps to explain the meaning of the film.

And even previously, watching their screen test, we were extremely and happily surprised to hear Prosperus and Ariel squabbling in Neapolitan, or Romeo and Polonius whispering, shouting and cursing in Sicilian, or Apulian... We realized that the dialectal mispronunciation of the lines did not belittle the high tone of the tragedy, but on the contrary lent those lines a new truth. And we listened to those lines with a deeper awareness. The convict-actor and his character found a deeper connection through a common language and followed more easily the unwinding of the drama, that in Shakespeare has always had a popular side, too. So it was not us who decided to use the dialects, but our actors who have taken over the screenplay and adapted it to their respective natures.

Has the film been entirely shot in the prison? Which have been – if any – the main production and artistic challenges? Did authorities impose any limitation to the access of the camera?

The whole film has been shot in Rebibbia. We have spent four weeks in Rebibbia: we entered in the morning and we left at night, exhausted but happy and satisfied. One day we said to ourselves: "We are shooting this film with the same brash recklessness of our first films".

As for the camera, we have been granted the freedom to take it everywhere: the wards, the stairs, the cubicles, the yard, the cells, and the library. With a sole exception: the unreachable and off-limit area where the prisoners under protective confinement are held in isolation. Nobody can see their faces, neither us. From the outside, a prison guard showed us the windows of the turncoats' cells, that were immersed in a deep silence.

We suspended shooting only when the inmates of the other wards had to pass through the corridors to go out in the yard, to go to the showers or when some of our actors had to move for the meetings with their relatives. When they came back they were deeply touched, moved, gloomy or crossed. They went back to acting but their gazes were floating far away, they had lost the wild and tender spontaneity of their acting.

A film set is a place where friendships and complicity thrive and this film was no exception. One of the wardens had mumbled to us: "Don't get too close to them; I have excellent relationships with them, and sometimes I also feel some mercy and compassion, even friendship... But then I have to impose to myself to keep at distance and to think about those who have suffered and who suffer more than them, that is the victims of their crimes and their families...".

This is true but nevertheless, when the film was completed and we left the jail and our actors, it was a heartbreaking goodbye. Climbing the stairs back to his cell, Cosimo Rega – who plays Cassius – raised his arms and shouted: "Paolo, Vittorio: from tomorrow on, nothing will be the same!".

Why did you decide to shoot most of your film in black and white?

Because colour is realistic and black and white is unrealistic. This may appear an authoritative statement but at least in this film it is true. Once inside the jail, we felt that there was the risk to fall into TV naturalism and we escaped from that using black and white that made us feel more free to invent and to shoot in this absurd set that was the prison of Rebibbia, where Caesar is not killed against the backdrop of ancient Rome but in the tiny cubicles where the inmates spend their time in the open air. Using black and white we felt freer to shoot in a cell where Brutus repeats with suffering and passion his monologue: "Caesar must die". We opted for strong and violent black-and-white images that in the end take on the magic colours of stage work, extolling the furious joy of the inmates overwhelmed by their success.

But the choice of black-and-white was also due to narrative reasons: we wished to underline the passing of time, the leap backward in a kind of easy and straightforward way. This isn't certainly a new idea, we are well aware of that, but sometimes we do like to follow well-trodden paths.

Let's talk about the music score and the composers.

As always, we started by sending the screenplay – even though it was not the final version – to the musicians. But, one of the most topical days for the musicians was the day they came to Rebibbia during the shooting of the film. The shooting was going smoothly, we were all full of energy, and extremely concentrated, but nevertheless the musicians could still seize the shadows of the past on the faces and in the eyes of the inmates.

And on that day they made their decision: the music had to be scarce but extremely powerful. Very

few musical instruments: the saxophone with its sweet disconsolation; the corn laden with omens; hard, raw and crude sounds and finally an orchestra with electronic instruments and synthesizers. As to the participation of Giuliano Taviani, he once said to us: "Since I'm your son and your nephew respectively, I'll never work with you"; twenty years have gone by from that declaration and in those twenty years Giuliano has scored 26 films working with several great filmmakers of the new generation. So, after two wonderful seasons with Morricone and Piovani, we asked him to work with us as if he were any composer.

In the meantime, Giuliano had met a very special person in a very special place, that is the Aeolian Islands: the person in question is a young and extremely talented pianist, Carmelo Travia with whom he has started a very fruitful cooperation that led them to co-sign the music score of our film.

SCREENDAILY

Now into their eighties, the Taviani brothers show with this remarkable, fresh and moving drama-documentary they have lost none of that mix of observational rigour and sympathy for the underdog that marked early films like *Padre Padrone*, their 1977 Palme d'Or winner. *Caesar Must Die* (*Cesare Deve Morire*) is a powerful prison drama about drama in prison: specifically, about a staging of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* with a cast of prisoners from the high-security wing of Rome's Rebibbia jail.

Its hold on the audience comes from the pared-back, unshowy, understated way that it lets two strong stories – one by Shakespeare, and one about prison life – unfold with a minimum of interference.

It would have been easy to make the film as an inspirational tale of lifers finding comfort and creative release in acting. But what gives *Caesar Must Die* real heft and resonance is the way the directors use the Shakespearian text, the prison setting, and the rehearsal process to blur the boundaries between drama and reality and to turn the Bard's political tragedy into a film that makes resonant points about brotherhood, longing, regret and the pain of incarceration. In fact the Tavianis make the point that for a lifer, creative awakening can be a burden: as one of the film's jailbird actors says, to camera, towards the end, "Since I discovered art, this cell has become a prison".

International audiences will lose some of the nuances of a film in which each prisoner speaks Shakespeare's lines (freely adapted in places to make them less fusty and literary) in his own dialect; or the darkly ironic double sense that comes out in the oft-repeated phrase subtitled here as 'honourable man' (many of Rebibbia's high-security prisoners are inside for Mafia-related crimes – they are, in other words, 'uomini d'onore', or 'men of honour'). But these nuances will not prevent a film that was well received at its Berlinale competition press screening from reaching out to arthouse audiences worldwide.

The film opens, in colour, with the culminating scene of Shakespeare's tragedy, the death of Brutus; gradually, the camera's tight focus pulls back to reveal that we are in a small theatre, with an audience. A caption informs us that this is the high-security wing of Rebibbia prison, and we see the actors being locked back in their cells. Then we backtrack six months, and switch to black and white – a purely aesthetic decision which pays off, turning the prison interiors and grounds where the rest of the film will be shot into a place of limbo, a kind of mythic space. The soundtrack, which alternates saxophone lilts with big Hollywood-style orchestral highlighting, works to the same end.

The *Julius Caesar* project was apparently initiated by the Tavianis, but in the film the directors keep themselves out of the picture: onscreen, we only see Fabio Cavalli, the non-inmate director of the stage play. In a strangely compelling scene, that mixes dramatic intensity with flashes of humour, we watch a succession of prisoners auditioning by giving their names and other details in different registers determined by two separate dramatic scenarios; the scant

information we glean from this is supplemented by terse captions that tell us what these men are inside for and how long they're serving. Some are camorristi, some are drug dealers, a couple are murderers; their sentences range from 14 years to life.

After the actors have been assigned their roles it's into the play proper – presented through fragments of scenes played out with a minimum of costumes (a white sheet for Caesar, a black t-shirt for Mark Anthony) inside the prison and out in the exercise yard. The essence of Shakespeare's play is presented with impressive economy, but there's another layer to the scenes, as the line between learned lines and real ones, between life inside and rehearsal, begins to blur. Just occasionally this game feels a little scripted, but then again the occasional stilted line or performance carries its own pathos. We're constantly reminding ourselves that these men may be playing at being Ancient Romans, but they're not playing at being locked up.

Salvatore Striano, who plays Brutus, is the cast's De Niro, a born actor who burrows deep into his role (it's no surprise to learn that he really is now working as an actor – this is the Tavianis' one sleight of hand, as Striano was actually released from Rebibbia in 2006, returning only to work on the film). But Giovanni Arcuri's Caesar and Cosimo Rega's Cassius also acquit themselves admirably. Other prisoners outside the main cast, and even three prison guards, are co-opted for certain scenes, some of them part of Shakespeare's drama, some of them part of the film's extra-textual drama about prison life. But that makes *Caesar Must Die* sound knowing and post-modern. Whereas in fact the film is quite the opposite: its hold on the audience comes from the pared-back, unshowy, understated way that it lets two strong stories – one by Shakespeare, and one about prison life – unfold with a minimum of interference.