

Media Contact Only:
John Western, Marketing Director
San Francisco Shakespeare Festival
415-865-4422
jwestern@sfsakes.org
For immediate release
November 20, 2025



San Francisco Shakespeare Festival Announces 2026 Season: “Empire”

***Julius Caesar* to perform Feb - May, 2026 Shakespeare on Tour**
***Antony and Cleopatra* to perform July - Sept, 2026 Free Shakespeare in the Park**

Is it the rise of an Empire or the fall of one?
How do we know?

Welcome to “Empire”, SF Shakes’ 2026 season where we explore what it means to “let slip the dogs of war” and what happens when we reflect on our ‘salad days’ amidst chaotic times.

Shakespeare on Tour 2026 - *Julius Caesar*

*“The evil that men do lives after them;
the good is oft interrèd with their bones.”*

Our 2026 Shakespeare on Tour production of *Julius Caesar* will be directed by April Ballesteros. The production will explore how the force of fierce devotion to a leader can skew governance, how the dissemination of false narratives through biased reporting can change the course of history and how blind commitment to well-meant ideals can lead to tragic choices.

Shakespeare on Tour’s *Julius Caesar* will visit approximately 100 schools, giving students an opportunity to reflect on the relationship between rhetoric and power as it exists in the play and in our 24-hour news cycle. What gives a leader the ability to make things happen by words alone and what are the dangers of this form of authority?

Free Shakespeare in the Park 2026 - *Antony and Cleopatra*

*“The breaking of so great a thing should make
A greater crack.”*

Our 2026 Free Shakespeare in the Park production of Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra* will be directed by Katja Rivera. *Antony and Cleopatra* is one of Shakespeare’s most complex and passionate tragedies, exploring themes of love, power, loyalty, and betrayal. The play revolves

around the political and romantic entanglements between Mark Antony, a Roman general, and Cleopatra, the queen of Egypt.

Set against the backdrop of the Roman Empire and Egypt, the play examines the conflict between duty and desire, and the impact of personal relationships on political power. Performing for thousands this July through September, the play travels from Cupertino's Memorial Park, to Redwood City's Red Morton Park, then San Francisco's McLaren and Sue Bierman parks.

Taken together, these two plays start with the civil war in Rome and move to the destabilization of Egypt thirteen years later. *Julius Caesar* will be set during what was known as The Great War, WWI; *Antony and Cleopatra* will conjure the merriment and creativity of the Roaring 20s and the Harlem Renaissance, stalked by the spectre of rising fascism.

During such difficult times - for the arts, for so many members of our community, for our country and our planet - SF Shakes is moving into 2026 with determination and resilience, and looks forward to sharing these important plays.

Specific dates and locations for both plays, as well as the cast and creative team of each play, will be announced.



San Francisco Shakespeare Festival 2026 Season logo

[Download full size file](#)

Image by Neal Ormond

####

Note to Editor: To schedule an interview with the directors or artists of SF Shakes, please email sfshakes@sفشakes.org or call 415-865-4422.

The mission of the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival is to make the words and themes of Shakespeare accessible to everyone, regardless of age, ethnicity, financial status, or level of education.