

# Regarding ELT

Formed in 1952 to let producers know that a talent pool of actors existed in Chicago, Equity Library Theatre remains the Midwest's only ongoing producer of showcases. ELT is open to any and all members of Actors' Equity Association who are in good standing with that union.

ELT offers performance opportunities to actors in many venues from full performance to staged readings, from scene showcases to various workshops and discussions with visiting artists.

Members are encouraged to bring ideas for new projects to one of four yearly meetings. The Alternative Classic Theatre Project began this way in 1986 and has become one of the most successful ventures ELT has produced.

In 1993, we became a resident theatre of the Chicago Cultural Center. Each year we provide high quality, low cost Theatricals to the downtown area. Three to four fully produced plays in the Studio Theatre plus six to twelve one hour presentations in the Main Theatre on the second floor. Our last production was Jay Gieless' antic comedy *The Panties*. Our next production at the CCC will be in October.

The Shakespeare Project began in May 1995 as a special project, dedicated to reading the works of William Shakespeare aloud, in a presentation that achieves the clarity that could otherwise only be accomplished by producing the plays.

Workshops for children and the elderly have been conducted by ELT Members. These workshops encourage participation from both groups to keep the spirit of the theatre alive and to bring theatre into new areas.

You can also see ELT at work during our summer season; this year at Players Workshop Theatre, 2636 N. Lincoln. *Lonely Planet* by Steven Dietz plays now through June 30 and the World Premiere of *The Ascension of Iray Beirhtewaltz* by Chicago playwright Bret Cisco opens August 8. Call (312) 743-0266 for tickets and information.

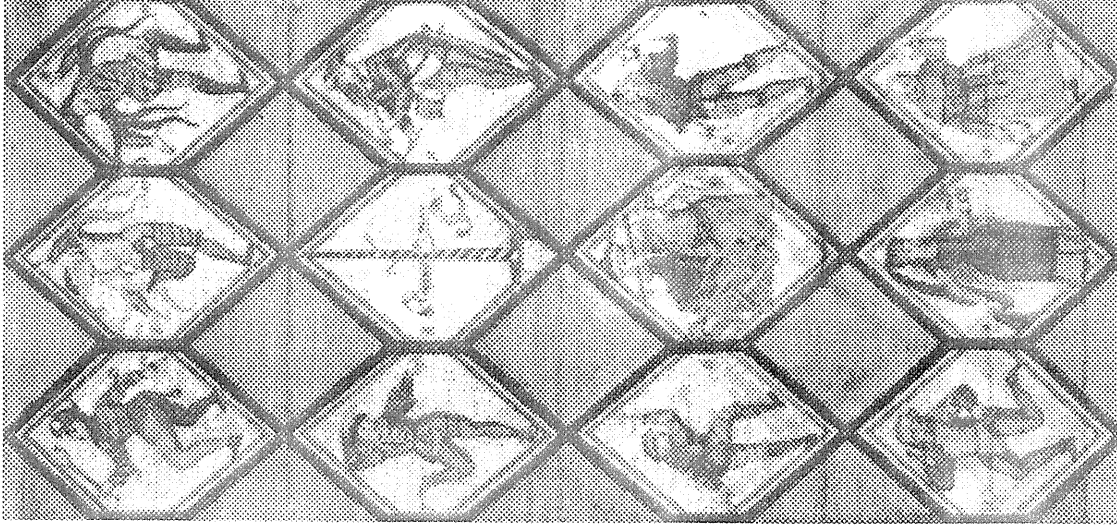
Equity Library Theatre Chicago is a nonprofit organization, and as such, may receive tax-deductible contributions. If you would like to contribute to ELT to help us continue programs such as this, please send any contributions to Treasurer, Equity Library Theatre, 4738 N. Laporte Avenue, Chicago 60630-3801. A confirmation letter for tax purposes, will be sent by return mail.

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About *The Shakespeare Project*—This group of actors, under an agreement with Equity Library Theatre the Chicago Park District and Actors' Equity Association, is dedicated to reading the works of William Shakespeare aloud, in a presentation that achieves the clarity that could otherwise only be accomplished by fully producing the plays. Assembled by TSP director and producer Mara Polster, these exceptionally skilled actors have been seen on the stages of the Shakespeare Repertory, The Goodman, Steppenwolf, the Court theatre and many other theatres in the Chicago area and around the country.

In January 1996, *The Shakespeare Project* began presenting one play per month at The Chicago Cultural Center at 78 East Washington. Starting with this reading, each play will also be presented at the Berger Park Cultural Center, 6205 N. Sheridan. Feel free to pick up a schedule of upcoming events as you leave the performance today. All readings begin at 1:00 P.M. and are free to the public. Donations are accepted. For further information or to book a reading by *The Shakespeare Project*, call (312) 252-8544.

The Shakespeare Project  
Presents



## A Theatrical Reading of The Tragedy of Coriolanus

Direction: Mara Polster

This event is sponsored by the **Chicago Park District**.

All of the actors are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers. "The Shakespeare Project" is under contract with the Chicago Park District to augment park programming.

He who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god ....Aristotle

*Director's Comments*—As I started studying *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, my first impression was extreme. I thought, “Why would anyone want to write a play about this guy?” Apparently this not an uncommon opinion. People generally find this play to be harsh and political, and to have a hero who is not at all sympathetic. Wyndham Lewis finds Coriolanus the least lovable of tragic heroes; he calls the play “an astonishingly close picture of a particularly cheerless snob, such as must have pululated in the court of Elizabeth—a schoolboy, crazed with notions of privilege, and possessed of a demented ideal of authority.”

However, as I looked closer at the struggles of Caius Martius (later surnamed Coriolanus), my opinion began to soften. Indeed, he is both god and beast. As an unfettered soldier, one who single-handedly defeats the Volscian in Corioles, he is a god. In that he is ill-equipped and in fact uneducated in the ways of adopting “a gentler spirit”, having no ability to “temp’rately transport his honors” from the field to the arena of politics, he is a beast. This is, in fact, the theme of the tragedy.

The play takes place in Rome, just after the institution of the monarchy had been destroyed. The Roman Republic was established and control placed in the hands of the aristocracy (the “patricians”), who intended to keep it that way. They reserved for themselves virtually all of the rights, both political and economic, and yielded very little to the common people (plebeians). Those citizens, leaving their farms to go off and fight the city’s many battles, would return to find their farms neglected, or even ravaged, and would be in need of capital to begin again. Loans from the patricians were on harsh terms; and if they were not repaid, could cause a man and his family to be sold into slavery. Further, with food scarce, there was nothing to prevent the patricians from buying up the supplies and reselling them to the plebeian at a profit.

The common man’s revolt against this lot sets the stage for our opening scene. The play begins with a clash of interest and prejudices between members of one body, and the result is disease in the body politic. The image of the diseased body is one that Shakespeare uses repeatedly throughout this play. As in Julius Caesar, we again see Shakespeare’s ability to remain non-judgmental as he presents differing viewpoints through his major characters. In this case they are the patricians (including the “chief enemy of the people” Caius Martius), the many “mutinous” citizens, their Tribunes, and the Volsces (including, Tullus Aufidius, Martius’ greatest rival.)

The women in the play provide a crucial glimpse into the inner workings of our hero. Valeria, in describing the behavior of Martius’ son, gives us a look at the childhood of Coriolanus. Virgilia, his wife—famous for her silence—is the one character embodying tenderness in this play and is perhaps the only person who truly understands Martius. Volumnia, Caius Martius’ mother is the only love or piety he recognizes. That excessive respect for his mother which uses up all the love he needs for good government, finally overthrows him. In their last scene together, Volumnia forces him to surrender a position in which it is finally enough for him to be a soldier, and to plunge himself into complexities with which it is impossible for him to deal. This results in his complete demise. This is, for Shakespeare, the authentic tragic music, the mark of a world where a man’s reach must always exceed his grasp and everything costs not less than everything.

Although the play takes place in ancient Rome, and is thought to have been written around 1608—undoubtedly containing social commentary more pertinent to England than to Rome—as with all of Shakespeare, we can see many parallels to our lives today. Aristotle’s god / beast statement is embodied in the allure of the suicidal, drug-addicted rock star and conversely in society’s repulsion at an artist’s “madness”; in a government notoriously dedicated to supporting the vehicles of war, but unable to fathom the mounting violence in the streets; where politicians get votes by saying what is desired, while one who speaks truth or has “rough edges” is slandered and defeated; and where a work of art, embodying the deepest

## The Shakespeare Project

Presents

# The Tragedy of Coriolanus

## The Players

(in order of appearance)

Narrator/Chorus .....	Christopher Wa
1st Citizen (Nicanor) .....	Ora Jon
2nd Citizen .....	Ron But
3rd Citizen .....	David Skidmo
4th Citizen .....	Lorrie Sparro
5th Citizen .....	Julia Thudiu
Citizen/Messenger .....	Richard Marla
Menenius Agrippa, friend to Coriolanus .....	Kyle Colrider-Krug
Caius Martius, afterwards, Coriolanus .....	Peter Wittro
A Roman Senator .....	Rick Cart
Comitrius, A General in the Roman Army .....	Kent Ktinenu
Titus Lartius, a General in the Roman Army .....	Peter Garti
Junius Brutus, tribune of the people .....	Phillip Van Le
Sicinius Velutias, tribune of the people .....	Fredric Sto
Tullus Aufidius, General of the Volscians .....	Richard Marla
1st Volscian Senator .....	David Skidmo
2nd Volscian Senator .....	Christopher Wa
3rd Volscian Senator .....	Ron But
Volumnia, Mother to Coriolanus .....	Mary Beck
Virgilia, wife to Coriolanus .....	Julia Thudiu
Valeria, friend to Virgilia .....	Lorrie Sparro
1st “Officer”, a worker at the Capitol .....	Lorrie Sparro
2nd “Officer”, a worker at the Capitol .....	Christopher Wa
Another Citizen .....	Peter Garti
Adrian, a Volscian .....	Christopher Wa
Lieutenant to Aufidius .....	Christopher Wa
Young Martius .....	Christopher Wa
1st Volscian Lord .....	Peter Garti
2nd Volscian Lord .....	Phillip Van Le
3rd Volscian Lord .....	Julia Thudiu
3rd Conspirator .....	Christopher Wa

Scene: Rome and the neighborhood; Corioles and the neighborhood; Antium.

There will be one 10 minute intermission