Julius Caeser On the Board

Theatre lovers in Colombo will have the chance to sink their teeth into something juicy this May when Feroze Kamardeen presents his vision of one of Shakespeare's most powerful and political plays 'Julius Caesar'. It will run from the 9-18 of May at the Lionel Wendt theatre.

Subtitled 'The Anatomy of an Assassination' this epic, cinematic production will bring to life the power struggle in a futuristic, fascist Rome. The production will introduce new elements to the classic play, some of which are being kept closely under wraps and others which may be revealed. For instance, the play will have a strong multimedia feel to it, with a large video screen at the back of the stage. The approach to the play is via a fictional television programme entitled 'The Anatomy of an Assassination' which looks back at the history of General Julius Caesar and the aftermath of his brutal assassination. Bringing in the communications of the twentieth century, the assassination plot and messages are carried via cellular phones and e-mail. In fact, this will be the first production in Sri Lanka to have it's own website, courtesy of Lanka Internet at 'http://www.lanka.net/ je'. It will also use a specially developed audio-visual system by Sony and Bose, together with Aquarius Audio Visuals.

Incidentally, Caesar himself will be played by a veteran English theatre actor Jerome De Silva. The rest of the cast will be composed of, amongst others, Jehan Aloysious of 'Les Miserables' and John Benedict. Feroze Kamardeen is well known to theatregoers who witnessed his brawling, vigorous adaptation of Macbeth' last year at the Wendt. His theatre company called 'StageLight and Magic' intends to take theatre in Sri Lanka into the next century, making full use of the special effects and technology available in theatre today. 'We wanted to perform Julius Caesar because it is a powerful play which transcends time. And having picked it, we decided that if we did it, we would have to do it so that people of this generation will identify it as being part of what their society is about. We have taken certain liberties with the adaptation, but our criteria for doing so was that Shakespeare himself prophecied that his plays would be done long after his death in ways that even he couldn't comprehend at that time. In fact, Caius Cassius himself in 'Julius Caesar' says, 'How many ages hence shall this our lofty scene be acted over in states unborn and accents yet unknown.' Kamardeen goes on to say that This can be taken as a double meaning not only was he talking about his plays in general; number two was

that as long as man is alive there will be politics, because civil man needs to be governed, and as long as man keeps on wanting to be governed, he will keep on fighting for the right to govern. Julius Caesar’ boasts of one of the biggest budgets ever expended on a theatrical production running to an estimated 1.1 million rupees to date. A large part of the bill is being footed by Celltel, who once again underscore their committment to helping theatre art in this country.