

Playing Legends: The Actors' Perspectives on Antony and Cleopatra

The mysterious imprints of Antony and Cleopatra are stamped onto our collective consciousness, and perhaps our collective unconscious. Among the reasons they continue to fascinate is that they practically define erotic tension, and their potent and myriad desires reflect our own fundamental human needs for so many things: power, belonging, freedom. Thus, their story has endured and been interpreted and re-interpreted throughout history. Although rehearsals for PSF's production do not begin until June, actors Greg Wood and Lauren Lovett offer some initial thoughts about their characters.

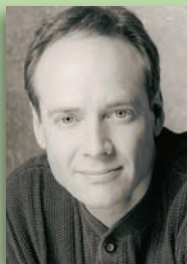
Greg Wood

Antony is the finest soldier of his age. He certainly is the last one standing. Caesar is dead. Pompey is dead. There is only Antony and he

knows it. Unfortunately, it's why he doesn't see Octavian coming. Octavian is a shrewd and manipulative politician while Antony is up front and direct. Who do you think will win?

Antony has his own code. He is loyal to Antony. His men. Then to Rome. In that order. That's why Cleopatra throws such a monkey wrench into things. She has changed his code. His men don't understand him and they no longer feel led. And it's obvious to all that his loyalty to Rome has shifted to Egypt. I believe Antony and Cleopatra have found their match, their equal, in the other. It's not about politics; they truly can't get enough of each other. I can relate to being blinded by love and passion—I hope we all can.

When I begin rehearsing Antony I will start with the text. It's what I have to play. So what other characters say about Antony is one key and—of course—what Antony says about himself. Then, if there is an historical context, as there is with Antony, I'll read as much as I can and use as much as I can. I'm really looking forward to what Patrick has to



Greg Wood

say. Because after all the work I do on my own, I still have to fit that into his vision of the play. In short, I have a lot of work to do!

Lauren Lovett

I think Cleopatra and Antony are addicted to one another. They exhibit classic addict behavior: distrust in all including one another and themselves, sudden mood shifts and irrational words and acts, and devastating errors in judgment, leading to their ultimate demise.

Cleopatra has, in her younger days, been a lover to several powerful men, not the least of whom is Julius Caesar. She has fought tooth and nail for the power she herself has achieved, mostly by means of her sexual enchantment over her lovers and by her ruthlessness to gain whatever she desires. She is driven by many internal forces, including this lust for her men and her lust for overall power. Once she and Antony become involved, her world revolves around keeping him close. She will say and do anything, often contradicting herself to have Antony beside her. She also knows, even from the start of the play, that she will never possess him completely—his marriage (and subsequent re-marriage) and his supposed commitment to the triumvirate are poison to her.

To relate to Cleopatra, I must imagine being a woman of such reputed power and magnetism—a queen in a world of brutal male rulers—who has at last found the man with whom she might die, or at least for whom she might die.

Interviewed by Jeremy Sabol, a graduating theatre major and PSF marketing intern.



Lauren Lovett



Costume renderings for PSF's production by Lisa L. Zinni