



SOUTHBANK
THEATRE COMPANY

PROUDLY PRESENTS

SENECA AND THE SOUL OF NERO

A NEW PLAY BY

MARCIA EPPICH-HARRIS

DIRECTED BY

DOUG POWERS

WWW.SOUTHBANKTHEATRE.ORG

Content warnings: violence, sexual situations, discussion and depiction of death by suicide.



What Could We Learn that Nero Couldn't

Foreword by Betty J. Bruther, PhD

Rome was founded on murder—Romulus, the mythic founder, butchered his brother, Remus. Little changed over the centuries, the patricians and the equestrians dominated the social classes on the Italian peninsula. Rome experimented with a monarchy. However, the king over-reached, threatening the stability of the system. The king was overthrown and the Roman Republic established.

The new system entrenched power in the hands of the patricians and equestrians in the judiciary, bureaucracy, military and the new representative of the people, the Senate. For nearly six hundred years, the Republic held sway over first the Italian peninsula, then over the Mediterranean. However, in the last two centuries of the Republic, imperial expansion brought naked military power to the fore among the elite of the Republic. Eventually, on the Ides of March in 44 BCE, the Republic crashed and burned as a result of a century of civil war and a murderous conspiracy against the consul and tyrant, Julius Caesar.

Rome was founded on murder

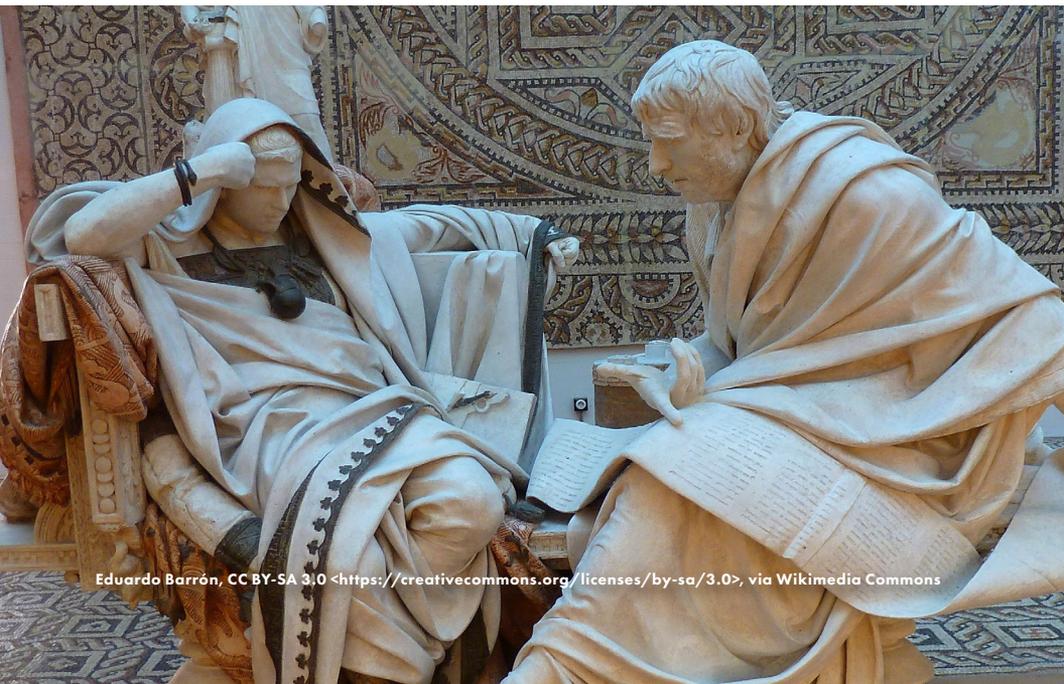
The winner of the ensuing civil war was a somewhat frail young man, the adopted heir of Julius Caesar, Octavian, who declared himself

first citizen, pontifex, and emperor of the Roman Empire. He ruled over the Mediterranean littoral and what is today France for more than forty years, as **Augustus Caesar** (27 BCE-14 CE), founding the Julio-Claudian line of Roman Emperors. The imperial family under Augustus, the dark heart of the empire, had been rife with overweening ambition and secret murder, and that did not change under successive emperors, **Tiberius** Claudius Nero (14 CE-37 CE), Gaius Caesar, known as **Caligula** (37-41 CE), Tiberius **Claudius** Drusus (41-54 CE), and finally

Nero Claudius Caesar Drusus Germanicus (54-68 CE), whose reign we witness in *Seneca and the Soul of Nero*.

Seneca, politician, playwright, and the great stoic philosopher of his day, was a contemporary of a radical young preacher, Jesus, in Judea and two of his followers, Peter and Paul – who were martyred in Nero’s Rome. Seneca, as we shall see in the play, hoped to moderate the natural arrogance of the young emperor. However, as many of the later historians maintained in their stories of Nero’s reign, the emperor indulged himself in cruel, greedy, and lustful behavior, courting the love of the masses, performing music in public, and ignoring Seneca, the Senate, and the military. Nero’s reign is notable for the bloody gladiatorial games in the arena, the rebellion of Boudicca in Roman Britain (60 CE), the great fire of Rome (64 CE) and the rebellion of the Jews in Judea (66-73 CE). It is also during Nero’s reign that Seneca wrote his enduring dramatic tragedies.

Betty J. Bruther is an independent scholar who writes about military history, Irish revolutionaries, and serial murder. She has taught both history and geography at the college level, most recently at Marian University and Oakland City University at the Indiana Women’s Prison.





From Marcia Eppich-Harris, Artistic Director,

Welcome to Southbank's Inaugural Season: *What's past is prologue*

Southbank's mission is to produce plays and musicals of historical and contemporary significance. We begin with *Seneca and the Soul of Nero*, a play that looks back to ancient Rome and the reign of Nero to draw parallels with contemporary American politics.

The ways we encounter history are diverse and vast, but it is essential to remember that we are also living it! One of the things that I have done during the pandemic, for instance, is study the ways that the world handled the flu pandemic in 1918 or how the black death impacted Shakespeare's world. As we look back to the past to give context to our present, it makes sense to me to find contemporary and historic plays that can help us think about big questions – why are things the way they are? Can we heal the fractures that have deepened in our society? In thinking about these questions, I felt that diving into the complexity and brutality of Seneca's and Nero's Rome was a good place to start.

We can't find all the answers in plays, but as we have seen in the last 18 months, the arts give us solace in ways that other pastimes cannot. When I think about the plays we're producing for our inaugural season, I feel the outstretched hands of history beckoning to me, reminding me that people have struggled with the same kinds of questions that we have. We remember and honor our past through these stories. Thank you for joining us!



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Upcoming Auditions

Want to work with Southbank on our next project? Check out *Rabbit* by Nina Raine! Auditions: October 4-5 from 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at the Speak Easy in Broad Ripple. All roles are open casting. Underrepresented people are highly encouraged to audition!

Synopsis: It's Bella's twenty-ninth birthday. Friends and former lovers meet for a drink to celebrate. But as the Bloody Marys flow, the bar becomes a battlefield. In the uncivil war between the sexes, what happens when the females have the real fire-power—stockpiles of testosterone, lethal wit, and explosive attitude? And what happens when patriarchy gets personal, when it's your own father who is tragic and terminal? When the only man you really love is dying?

Roles:

Bella: late 20s (modern RP accent)

Father: late 50s (modern RP accent)

Emily: late 20s (London accent)

Tom: late 20s, early thirties (slightly lower class London accent)

Richard: early thirties (RP accent)

Sandy: late 20s, early 30s (London, or elsewhere, accent)

Rehearsals: Starting October 18-24, depending on actor availability. We'll take a few days off for Thanksgiving, but you must be available on Sunday, November 28th, since we'll be starting tech week.

Performance Dates: December 2, 3, 4, 5; 9, 10, 11, 12

This is not your mom's Christmas play — in fact, it's not a Christmas play at all.

To be considered, please enter your information in the form on our website: www.southbanktheatre.org/auditions-2/. A sample script is available on the auditions page. A brief, 2-3 minute monologue in a British accent will be expected at auditions. The cast will be paid a stipend of \$100 per actor.

SENECA

AND THE SOUL OF

NERO

BY MARCIA EPPICH-HARRIS

DIRECTED BY DOUG POWERS

Cast

Seneca

Nero

Pompeia Paulina

Agrippina / Medea

Lucan / Ambassador 1 / Creon

Burrus

Octavia

Sabina / Ambassador 2 / Medea's Nurse

Britannicus / Tantalus / Jason / Guard

David Mosedale

Evren Wilder Elliott

Jenni White

Rachel Snyder

Noah Winston

David Molloy

Bra'Jae' Allen

Trick Blanchfield

Brant Hughes

Crew

Stage Manager: Casey Ross

Set Design: Aric Harris

Charge Artist: Casey Ross

Lighting Design: Eric Matters

Wardrobe Head: Judy Eppich

Sound Design: Doug Powers

Light Board Operator: Jade Lynch

Videographer: Peter Matsoukas

Content warnings: violence, sexual situations, discussion and depiction of death by suicide.

Run Time: 2 hours and 30 minutes

There will be a brief 15 minute intermission.



SOUTHBANK
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A Note from the Playwright

I have always been deeply interested in the way plays can interact with history and politics. Several years ago, my doctoral studies in Shakespeare had led me to studying Seneca, who was enormously influential on Elizabethan playwrights. We have few remaining tragedies from the ancient Roman era – almost all of

which were written by Seneca. His plays speak directly to the political, philosophical, and personal experiences of their author and his famous student – the emperor, Nero.

American politics from 2016-2021 has inspired an incredible response in journalism and the arts. *Seneca and the Soul of Nero* started out as yet another response. However, in the rehearsal process I realized that if there were nothing else to gain from watching *Seneca*, other than reliving modern times in togas, then it wasn't a very good play. What the play is *really* about is integrity, virtue, and honor – and a desperate desire for those things in our lives.

I almost wrote, "and a desperate desire for the *return* of those things." Yet, the last few years have made me even more skeptical about the mythic virtue of our country. To be American means to be optimistic, and yet, that optimism heralds from the blinders we wear about history. It's impossible to shake off our mythos entirely, but when we see history repeating, it's important to call out the pattern. Otherwise, we will always have leaders like Nero and plagues like covid.

Seneca and the Soul of Nero is a call to remember, to *never* forget, what *can* happen here – what *has* happened here – and a challenge to do better.

A Note from the Director

This play may be about ancient Rome in the first century CE, but the Emperor Nero we see tonight will be at once rooted in well-researched history and chillingly familiar to us here in the US in the twenty-first century CE. It is not a novel idea to draw parallels between the Roman Empire and the modern United States, but you will seldom see it done so deftly and cleverly, with such resonance and immediacy as it is in *Seneca and the Soul of Nero*.



I “inherited” some of this cast from the playwright’s choices for the Zoom readings she organized as the play developed. The rest I assembled after I signed on to direct. The resulting “blended family” has pulled together to bring this story to life in astonishing fashion. It has been so rewarding to watch the development of the visceral, funny, jarring, tender, tragic, and thought-provoking moments that these actors have created over our rehearsal period. Now, you get to experience those moments in their fully crafted form. I can’t wait to share with you the talents and hard work of all the artists who have applied their artistry to this project.



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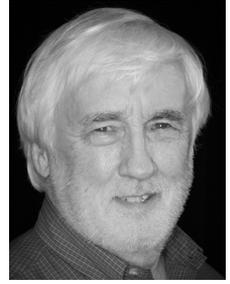
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Actor Bios

David Mosedale (SENECA)

David is excited to be part of the maiden voyage of Southbank. Local credits include Pellinore and Merlin in *Camelot* with Indy Opera, Justice Wargrave in *And Then There Were None* with Civic Theatre, Jacob Klein in *Triangle* with Q Artistry, Sgt. O'Brien in *Dial M for Murder* with the IRT, Lear in *King Lear* with First Folio, the Duke in *Measure for Measure* with Hoosier Bard, Marley and Old Joe in *A Christmas Carol* and Captain Brackett in *South Pacific* at Beef and Boards, Douglas in *Impressionism* with Wisdom Tooth, the Stage Manager in *Our Town* with Acting Up, and Herr Schultz in *Cabaret* for Bobdirez.



Evren Wilder Elliott (NERO)

Evren (He/They) is thrilled to be joining the cast of *Seneca and the Soul of Nero* as Emperor Nero. Evren is a local actor, writer, and Theatre of the Oppressed facilitator, and recently received a grant fellowship with the Indiana Arts Commission to continue to refine curriculum and present workshops in this field. He works full-time at Damien Center with youth and young adults, is a fellow and board member of Caliban Artist Co-Op, and a core artistic member of NoExit Performance. You may have last seen Evren as Ethan in *PROSPECT HILL*, by Bruce Walsh, with Fat Turtle Theatre Company. Evren is delighted to get to work together with so many lovely, familiar faces and once again share the stage with some of his favorite people in Indianapolis.



Jenni White (POMPEIA)

Jenni (she/they) is the founding Executive Director of Trinity Haven, offering transitional housing options and supportive services to LGBTQ youth/young adults experiencing housing instability. They have been seen on the stages of the Phoenix Theatre, Buck Creek Players, IndyFringe, and several others. She is excited to play with this incredible cast under the direction of Doug Powers, to whom she is incredibly grateful for the opportunity. Big love to their wife, Eve, for her unending support: "to gratitude and hope." Enjoy!



Rachel Snyder (AGRIPPINA)

Rachel (she/her) is a writing manager for Artisan E-Learning, where she writes and designs bespoke e-learning courses for organizations. She has appeared in the Indy Bard Fest productions of *The Merchant of Venice* (Salarino) and *Hamlet* (Osric), and in 2020 she participated in several (virtual) theater festivals presented by Fat Turtle Theatre Company. Rachel is grateful for the opportunity to tread the (actual) boards again with Southbank Theater Company and this incredibly talented ensemble.



Actor Bios

Noah Winston (LUCAN)

Noah is excited to be a part of Southbank Theatre Company's Seneca and The Soul of Nero as Lucan! He is a resident actor for the Lilly Children's Theatre at the Children's Museum of Indianapolis, where he has performed in plays and musicals such as *Tales From The Jungle Book*, *Star Tracks: The Exposition Menace*, *Pinocchio*, *James and the Giant Peach*, and many more. He has also appeared in other Indianapolis Theatre performances and events such as Beef and Board's *A Christmas Carol* as The Ghost of Christmas Present, Bard Fest production of *Hamlet* as Laertes, and performing as The Strongman at Q Artistry's *Zirkus Grimm* at the Phoenix Theatre. His TV credits include hosting *The INtheLoop* TV show, and *The Indy Visitor's* channel. Noah would like to thank Doug Powers for giving him the wonderful opportunity to perform live on an Indianapolis stage after a difficult time for artists. He would also like to thank his family and friends for their amazing and heart warming support.



David Molloy (BURRUS)

A familiar face to Indy theater goers over the years, David Molloy has appeared in productions and with companies too numerous to list. He is co-founder of Clerical Error Productions and casting coordinator for the Indiana Playwrights Circle. A resident of Brownsburg, David spends his time off stage volunteering with feline rescue groups.



Bra'Jae' Allen (OCTAVIA)

Bra'Jae' is actor and from Indianapolis, IN. A dog lover, travel and fashion enthusiasts. She is currently working her way through the Indiana art scene where she hopes to network with other artists of all forms, and produce her own projects. She is extremely grateful to portray the role of Octavia in this production. You can catch her in her next production, *Ransom Place* by Jameel Martin, for Oynx Fest. She hopes you enjoy the show!



Actor Bios

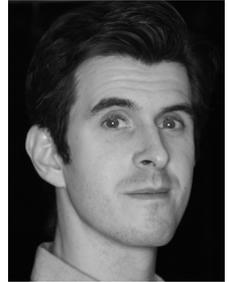
Trick Blanchfeild (SABINA)

Trick is currently an Indianapolis author, actor + immaculate shade whose first love, as a perpetual student of the world, has always been mythology, ancient history + classic literature. Their first book of poetry + flash fiction, 'V.i.t.r.i.i.o.l.', is available on Amazon - or by asking nicely - & 'Permafrost' will be published through Indianapolis' own Vedere Press very soon, to shortly be followed by 'petals.&.thorns.' Although fairly new to this city, their artwork + photography have been presented in various galleries around town & while performing on stage has been a delight only recently pursued within the past few years, performing as Sabina in a work as brilliant as this glimpse into the ancient world by Marcia Eppich-Harris, wonderfully directed by Doug Powers, is an honour they are only too grateful to fulfill.



Brant Hughes (BRITANNICUS)

Brant (he/him) is an Interaction Designer at the Westfield-based software firm SEP. He has also served on many non-profit boards, include Monroe County Civic Theater, Garfield Shakespeare Company, and Indy Design Collaborative. Some of his favorite theatrical roles include George Bailey in *It's A Wonderful Life* (Monroe County Civil Theater), Baron Fitzwater in Shakespeare's *Henriad* (Garfield Shakespeare Company), and Captain Phoebus in the musical *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Brooks & Bourke Theater Company). Brant is thrilled to join the talented cast of Seneca under the direction of Doug Powers to help bring this exceptional play to life. He would like to thank his wife, Yolanda Valdivia, for her love, her unwavering support, and for introducing him to the world of theater.



Creative Team

Doug Powers (DIRECTOR)

Doug is thrilled to be back directing live theatre again, even if safety protocols make things look a bit different than before. He was slated to direct another of Marcia's plays, *The Profession*, in spring 2020, but it so happens that this wonderful script is reaching the stage first. Most recently, he directed *Hamlet* and *The Merchant of Venice* for Bard Fest and "A Play on Words" for the Ten-Minute Play Festival. Doug is also an actor who's performed on numerous local stages, most recently in "Copyright/Safe" at this year's Fringe Festival and *26 Miles* at Fonseca Theatre Company. Outside the theatre, Doug is a software consultant, the father to a Ball State junior, and the fortunate husband to Jodi. Thank you for safely supporting live theatre even during a pandemic--and welcome to the city, Southbank Theatre Company!



Marcia Eppich-Harris (WRITER / PLAYWRIGHT)

Marcia taught Shakespeare and dramatic literature at the college level for roughly fifteen years. Having left academia for far greener pastures, Marcia is now a playwright and the artistic director of Southbank Theatre Company. She is a founding member of the Indiana Playwrights Circle (IPC), where she is the Scene Nights Coordinator and serves on the steering committee. Marcia's writing includes plays, fiction, poetry, scholarship, and reviews — all influenced by the literature and history of the ancient Greeks and Romans, the British Medieval and Renaissance periods, as well as current events. In her creative writing, she focuses thematically on politics, philosophy, the arts, gender, family, and culture.



Casey Ross (STAGE MANAGER / CHARGE ARTIST)

Casey is a local playwright and director. A graduate of Hanover College, and the founder and Artistic Director of Catalyst Repertory Theatre, Casey has become a veteran playwright, through her participation in the IndyFringe. Her notable works include her published trilogy, *The Gallery Trilogy*, a musical penned with Catalyst partner, Dave Pelsue, *Hell's 4th Ring* [The Mall Musical], *Arcadefire* [The Redemption of Billy Mitchell], and most recently, *Copyright/Safe*. Notable directing credits include 'Nuvo's Best Play of Indy' winning *Equus*, and the critically acclaimed *Tooth of Crime*, as well as, Shakespeare adaptations, *Coriolanus* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. Casey is thrilled to be working with Southbank to bring more new theatre to this amazingly creative city!



Creative Team

Aric Harris (SET DESIGN)

A web developer and graphic designer by trade, Seneca and the Soul of Nero marks Aric's return to theatre after a long hiatus. He has worked for acts such as Peter, Paul, and Mary and Manhattan Transfer, as well as done lighting design for Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. His current project is creating webs



Eric Matters (LIGHTING DESIGN)

Eric is glad to be back working on Seneca and the Soul of Nero. Eric can be found working various technical parts of the theater arts at any number of community theaters around Indiana. He would like to thank Doug Powers for the opportunity to work on this production. He would also like to thank his family for bringing him into this adventure and supporting him throughout."



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Special Thanks

4621 Creative Solutions and TikiKitchen, Indiana Playwrights Circle, IndyFringe, Speak Easy, Catalyst Repertory Company, Herron High School, and Send a Friend Lasagna. To Marcia's family: Aric Harris, Will Harris, Kai Harris, Judy Eppich, Stephanie Eppich Daily, and Ashley Eppich for their faith, patience, and encouragement. To the Board of Southbank Theatre Company: Chelsea Anderson, Betty Bruther, Carla Castaño, Sara Galer, Aric Harris, Mark Harvey Levine, Rod Macrae, Robin Lea Pyle, Carol Stamile, and Latrice Young. To Doug Powers, Casey Ross, and the entire cast and crew of Seneca and the Soul of Nero for their incredible work on this show, especially David Mosedale, who has played Seneca since the very first reading at Scene Night (September 25, 2019). For additional writing advice and dramaturgy: Andrew Kramer, Becky Schlomann, Kate Duffy, Megan Ann Jacobs, Laura Goodenow, Carla Castaño, Mark Harvey Levine, and all the great playwrights in the Indiana Playwrights Circle where Seneca was workshopped – a thousand thanks to you, friends.

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