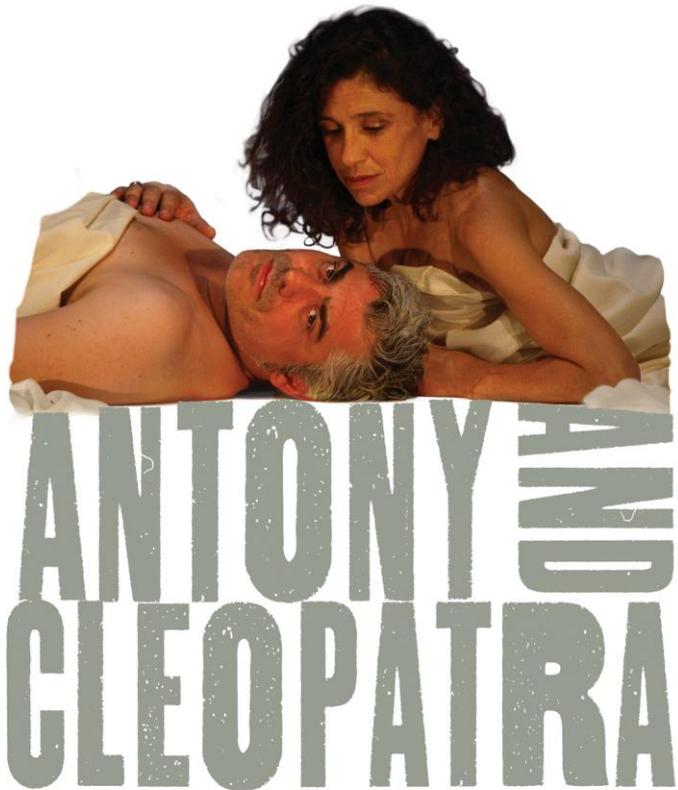


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Antony and Cleopatra, directed by Michael Boyd is the final Shakespeare of the 2010 summer season. The show has been set in a non-specific modern world as during rehearsals the actors saw it has many parallels to current political events. This pack will outline some of the techniques the actors used in rehearsals to put the play onto the stage and explain how these can be used with your students.

INVESTIGATING THE POLITICAL SITUATION

 <p>REHEARSAL NOTES</p>	<p>At the beginning of the rehearsal period the actors familiarise themselves with the play and sources for it. In the case of Antony and Cleopatra the play is based on Plutarch's biography of Antony, some of the speeches are almost identical, especially the barge passage. It is also in the early stages of rehearsal that the social and historical context for the play is considered. Michael Boyd spoke about the similarities between Cleopatra and Mary Queen of Scots and Actium and the Spanish Armada. Finally parallels were drawn between the play and our contemporary political situations. The exercise below will help your students explore the political situation in the play. You might also want them to research the parallels in Shakespeare's time and now.</p>
 <p>ACTIVITY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You will need an open space for this activity, preferably a hall or drama studio.• Create signs for the places on the room plan on page 3 and set up the room so it represents the locations. The important thing is that the students get a sense of the relationship of places to each other rather than exact geography.• Cast your students into roles. You will need a Lepidus, Antony, Octavius, Cleopatra, Octavia and Pompey. The other students in the group can be the followers and servants.• Set up the activity with the students in their starting positions and then begin the narrative. Ask the students to respond by acting out the action that applies to them.• The students might feel they want to run the action more than once.• REFLECTION QUESTIONS: What do the students feel about the political situation? How do they feel about Antony? What are the potential problems with showing this on stage?

It's the year 41 BC and the Mediterranean is being ruled by a Triumvirate of Romans. The three men have split the Mediterranean into three areas and are working together to develop the Empire. Lepidus is living in Africa, Octavius Caesar is living in Rome and Antony who is currently in Greece. All three men have servants and soldiers that live with them.

Meanwhile in Egypt, Cleopatra is ruling alone. Antony, trying to extend the Empire sees her sailing on a beautiful barge in Egypt and falls immediately in love with her. He is so bewitched that he stays with her in Egypt and they enjoy many extravagant parties.

However, Antony's wife Fulvia who is near Rome decides that her husband living with another woman is not acceptable and decides to fight with Octavius to get her husband home. This plan is ruined slightly when she is killed by one of his troops. Antony does return to Rome on hearing the news which leaves Cleopatra alone in Egypt feeling very sorry for herself. Things take an unexpected turn when Antony is offered Octavia, Octavius's sister as his wife. Antony agrees to the marriage.

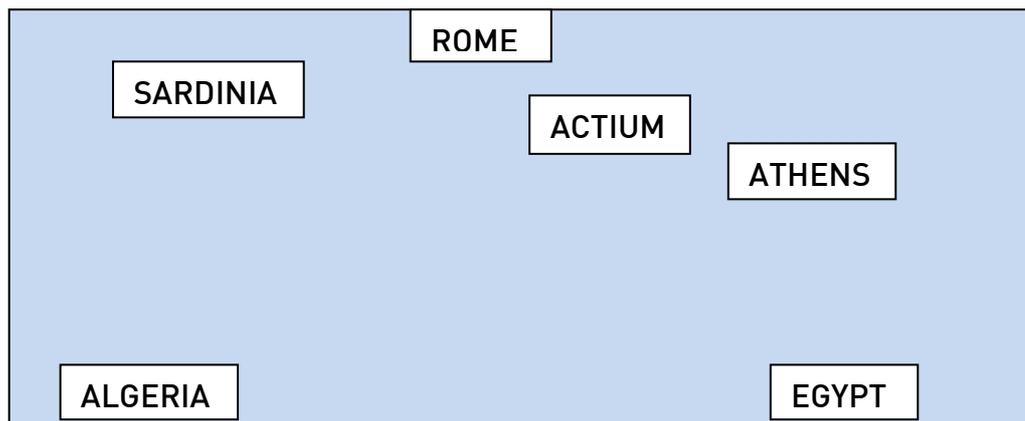
The Empire is also in trouble because, Sextus Pompey is planning a battle from Sardinia against the Triumvirate. Whilst in Rome Antony with Lepidus and Caesar try and decide what they should do. The three fight Pompey and he dies. At the end of the battle however, Antony does not return to Rome or Greece to be with his new wife, instead he goes back to Egypt to be with Cleopatra.

This return to Egypt is the final straw and Octavius and Antony prepare to fight each other. Octavius gathers his troops from Rome and Antony and Cleopatra organise an army in Greece. The two armies sail on their ships to fight each other. This battle became known as The Battle of Actium. As Octavius begins to win the battle Cleopatra sails back to Egypt. To his soldier's surprise instead of continuing with the fight Antony too turns his ship around and sails back to Egypt.

MAP OF EUROPE



ROOM PLAN



CREATING IMAGES FOR REPORTED SPEECH

 <p>REHEARSAL NOTES</p>	<p>In <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> some of the clearest images in the language are descriptions of events that have happened in the past, such as the barge and the battle of Actium. A director has to make the decision about whether these descriptive passages should be shown or just heard. This activity will explore staging the barge sequence.</p>
 <p>ACTIVITY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that the Barge speech in <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> is a reported event. Enobarbus is describing it to his friends. As a group the students will be exploring whether it is better to just hear the speech or whether seeing the image that accompanies it is clearer. • Read the Barge passage around the group line by line • Ask the students to read it through again this time underlining the words that particularly stand out. • What are those words – what is the picture this speech is creating for you? • Explain that in small groups they are going to create the barge. You can either introduce props, material and other items to help them create the barge or ask them to explore it using their bodies. • In groups of 8, ask the students to pick the images of the barge that stand out most for them and create them either using props or themselves. • Add a rule that Cleopatra must also be obvious. She can be one or more people and they must decide on her posture etc. • Explain that the barge has to move as if it was crossing a stage. • Once the groups have had a chance to prepare their barge ask each of them to show their work with either a member of another group or you reading the text. • REFLECTION QUESTIONS – What were the similarities/differences between each of the barges? What had the students picked up on? What does showing this on stage do? What are the advantages/disadvantages of taking a literal image from the words – what else could Enobarbus have been trying to do with his speech that isn't shown here?

THE BARGE SPEECH

ENORBARBUS The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Burned on the water. The poop was beaten gold;
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
The winds were lovesick with them. The oars were silver,
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke and made
The water which they beat to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes. For her own person
It beggared all description. She did lie
In her pavilion, cloth-of-gold of tissue
O'er picturing that Venus where we see
The fancy outwork nature. On each side her
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
With divers-coloured fans, whose wind did seem
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,
And what they undid did.

Her gentlewomen, like the Nereides,
So many mermaids, tended her l' th' eyes,
And made their bends adornings. At the helm
A seeming mermaid steers. The silken tackle
Swell with the touches of those flower soft hands,
That yarely frame the office.

WHAT IS IT TO BE ROMAN?

 <p>REHEARSAL NOTES</p>	<p>One of the key elements of this play is the difference between Rome and Egypt and the choice that Antony has to make between being his Roman self and his infatuation with Egypt and Cleopatra. In order to help the actors explore this, after their first read through of the play they were encouraged to create images of Rome and Egypt. You can use the barge passage exercise to create a picture of Egypt. Michael Boyd spoke of Rome being sleekly seductive for Antony, this exercise will help your students decide what they think.</p>
 <p>ACTIVITY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain that there are two distinct worlds in the play. Rome and Egypt. Explain that actors get clues about an environment by reading the text.• Give the students the text scraps on page 7.• Explain that inspired by these scraps they have to create a moment in a Roman world. This could be a meal, a political meeting, a party, anything they choose. They need to think about how the characters will stand, what will preoccupy them etc.• After they have had time to work on them ask the students to play back what they have done.• Reflection questions – What are the choices they have made? What is appealing about this world? Why might you choose this over the exotic of Egypt? What is a Roman? What do they stand for?

ROMAN TEXT SCRAPS

The sword is warm

The wide arch / Of the ranged Empire

Files and musters

Our Italy / Shines o'er with civil swords

Leave thy lascivious wassails

All honoured, honest Roman

Triumphant chariots

The hearts of Romans serve your ends

O my brave Emperor

Eternal in our triumph

Great Rome

The arm of mine own body

A Roman thought hath struck him

This Herculean Roman

The demi-Atlas of this earth

The world and my great office will sometimes / Divide me from your bosom

Tomorrow, soldier,/By sea and land I'll fight

This is a soldier's kiss

I'll leave thee/ Now, like a man of steel

His legs bestrid the ocean

In his livery walked crowns and crownets