

ROCKING ROMANS!

Bringing history to life...

Performance notes by Cheryl Mitchell-Morgan

Introduction:

Rocking Romans! is an entertaining and educational play, made up of a succession of sketches and songs within the TV channel Roman TV! This allows your school the flexibility and ease to select all or some scenes according to performance timing and curriculum coverage.

These Notes offer guidance to the non-specialist teacher and inspiration for a range of simple staging options. The suggestions included are easy to stage and simple to direct, with a scene by scene breakdown of ideas that you can follow and then develop. It includes *Quick Movement Sessions* (QMS) and visual diagrams of *Staging Plans* to help your production.

Rocking Romans! offers:

- unlimited ensemble parts
- Narrator and RTV Announcer parts that can be played by several performers
- Narrator and RTV Announcer parts that can be read, if learning is difficult
- movement and music opportunities that do not rely on any one pupil having to learn a large part, with a variety of supporting online resources that can be simply downloaded including the full-vocal and backing track versions of each of the songs
- two versions of the script: a word document that is easy for you to edit and annotate and also a pdf file of the original, so that you are always able to refer to the original script
- easy to stage ideas and suggestions that may enhance your staging, but which are not fundamental to the performance
- flexibility regarding overall length the play can be adapted for a short performance (eg an assembly) or as a performed play (eg a performance to parents)
- flexibility to arrange the scenes in an order that suits you and to adapt them also eg the introductions of 'today' / 'tonight' / 'next'
- · flexibility on whether to include an interval

Rocking Romans! and the National Curriculum

The value of drama within the new National Curriculum to be taught from September 2014 is acknowledged in the introduction to the Programmes of Study for English, where it states: All pupils should be enabled to participate in and gain knowledge, skills and understanding associated with the artistic practice of drama. Pupils should be able to adopt, create and sustain a range of roles, responding appropriately to others in role. They should have opportunities to improvise, devise and script drama for one another and a range of audiences, as well as to rehearse, refine, share and respond thoughtfully to drama and theatre performances.

Our Rocking Romans! performance pack:

- develops imaginative and creative responses to the topic of 'Romans'
- provides opportunities for careful, focused listening using a range of voices and a variety of styles
- · enables children to see issues and dilemmas from a number of points of view
- builds pupils' confidence in drama
- engages pupils in drama activities

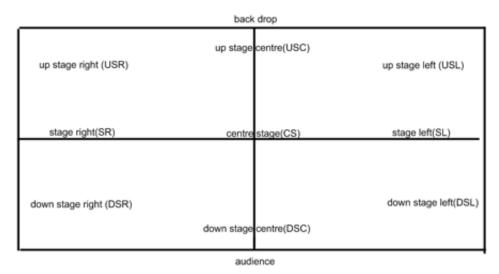
How to use *Quick Movement Sessions* (QMS) to enhance staging and develop themes:

Children's imaginations are the strongest resource we have in schools. Their ideas are limitless. The *Quick Movement Sessions* of this performance pack allow you to provoke and stimulate these ideas, enabling the children to physically create and develop ideas linked to the themes. These may then be incorporated into your performance.

How to use Stage Directions:

To make rehearsing as fun and as easy as possible take your terminology from the *Stage Directions Diagram* when positioning your cast. Show the children this diagram and discuss how to use it. It could be on your classroom board. The simple convention is that areas are named for performers facing the audience. When the performers and directors know this, it will make recording moves given during rehearsals easy and these can be abbreviated for speed (see the diagram below). It can also be used for fun games as mentioned below.

Stage Directions diagram:



The diagram above gives the full overview of positioning:

- 'up stage' = the back of the stage
- 'down stage' = the front, nearest to the audience
- for example: 'down stage left' is at the front left, as seen from the performers' perspective (it can be abbreviated to DSL)

How to ensure rehearsals are fun and easy:

Children thrive on routine - it gives them a safe boundary in which to explore, so start and finish your rehearsals in same way. This allows children the opportunity to be creative within the rehearsal framework. Try these 5 minute games:

• Play Jump-A-Stage starter game regularly. Use tape to mark out the stage areas in your performance space. Call out the areas for children to move to, eg 'Up stage left' / 'Down stage right.' After a few sessions, when children are familiar with the areas, remove the tape and repeat the game. After a couple more sessions, give abbreviations, orally or on card - eg 'USL' / 'DSR'. This is not only fun but helps children learn the areas of the stage, so they can notate their moves accurately on their script. You can add in fun extras, like audience coming (they all freeze), fix the lights (they mime climbing a ladder), scrub the stage (they drop to floor and scrub).

- Remote Control Freeze-frame. Freeze and unfreeze scenes from play.
- Speed Run. Once scenes / songs are plotted, go through it as fast as possible!
- Backward Rehearsal. Once a scene is familiar, perform it backwards!

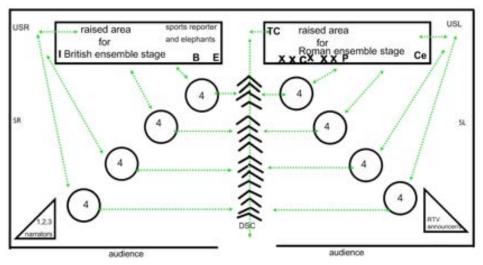
How to organise your schedule:

Set up your rehearsal space in advance, with music cues, props and costumes. Know what scenes you will rehearse and when. Give children clear dates as to when lines must be learned by.

How to use the Staging Plan:

The Staging Plan is a visual guide for more complicated ensemble scenes. The ENSEMBLE is seated throughout on a 'stage' area. In front of this is the 'performance space'. The staging will be adapted where different circumstances apply, but a centre walkway and stage left and right walkway is desirable. The Narrator/s is / are pre-set DSR. They could be on a raised area, either through stage blocks / PE apparatus / tables. They operate the imaginary remote control for RTV.

Staging Plan Diagram:



- arrows indicate entraces and moves to 'stage' area
- C = 'Caesar'
- X = 'Roman soldiers'

Scene-by-scene performance guidance:

The following table offers at-a-glance guidance for each of the scenes that make up Rocking Romans!

Scene synopsis	Suggested backdrop	Audio	Quick Movement Sessions	Stage guidance	Suggested props
Scene 1 This scene sets the feeling of change and invasion.	1 Split map & Timeline. Highlighting Rome and Britain.	1 2 3 4 5	Marching over Europe. Whole group march on spot to 'Signals!' song. Whole group march round room. Into lines A & B with 1 leader each. Line A at one side of room. Line B same on opposite side of room. Line A marches from one side to other in time to music. Line B marches in opposite direction. They pass each other but ignore. On 'Signals!' lines, soldiers of Line A & B stop. Back to back slow motion mime of a fight. Then back in lines A & B. March off again, following their Leader. 'Marching to Londineum' etc. Repeat with call and response chants: A: 'Marching to Londinium.' B echoes. A: 'On to Verulamium'. B echoes. A: 'On to Camulodunum'. B echoes. Leaders can include commands: 'Halt!' / 'At ease!' etc.	Narrator/s and RTV announcer/s are pre-set in position to establish them as different to the ensemble. Brits enter first. They march on singing from off stage, or through the audience if there is an aisle. Make diagonal line from DSR to SC. Romans enter second; make a diagonal line from DSL to SC to make a \(\Lambda \) shape on stage. (* See Staging plan for Scene 1). OR use QMS ideas. End of song USC Brit and Roman peel up centre walkway to separate ensemble areas. Brits and Romans follow to sit in ensemble 'stage'. Narrators switch RTV on and off with remote. Always point outwards at audience. Is That A fact: Stand in ensemble stage. Jazz and Blues march & click on spot.	Decorated narrator/s' script/book cover with Rocking Romans! on it.
Scene 2 55 BC. This scene introduces Julius Caesar and his desire to conquer Britain.	2 Caesar's map.	6	Song: 'Is that a fact?' On 'when he went home' British side rise and mime pushing Caesar back to Rome. 'When he came back' - British sit with head on hand and Romans rise.	5 Soldiers come SC. Roman ensemble stand. Caesar stands and comes SC. 'Is that a fact?' - as per script.	
Scene 3 RTV's documentary about Ancient Brit- ons. Iceni &Trino- vantes.	3 Rural.	7	In 4 groups, Group A & B role play repeated movements for stone wood and metal-making. Group C & D role play grooming horses, fixing chariot wheels & farming. Perform as a round.	RTV announcer stands. Expert stands and comes to DSC. The British ensemble Group 1 follow to performance area. The British ensemble Group 2 follow to performance area. Groups 1 & 2 freeze each time expert speaks.	

Scene synopsis	Suggested backdrop	Audio	Quick Movement Sessions	Stage guidance	Suggested props
Scene 4 Forward to Claudius' reign and intended changes and invasion. Introduction of elephant!	Claudius' map of Europe & time- line to reiterate historical facts.	9	Individually, move slowly like an elephant. How do legs move? In twos make elephant. In threes repeat. In fours, one is Claudius. How does he ride elephant? Does he sway? Could be piggy back / cross-hand seat. Use best ideas in Scene 4.	Claudius and Plautius come centre stage Army stand on drum beat and come forward to make semi-circle while Claudius goes back Brits stand and gawp then gradually sit as if defeated when narrator speaks. Back of semi-circle parts to let Claudius through on elephant (2 British ensemble) devised by movement improvisation. 2 more hold up large semi circles of grey card and white tusks at each side of Claudius being carried.	
Scene 5 47 AD. RTV reports on a football match. Roman Army use testudo to beat the Britons!	5 Map of Europe showing chang- es & timeline.	RTV	Testudo Hakkas - 2 groups. Group A form a rectangle of lines, according to ensemble size. Set a stamping rhythm. Introduce Hakka Commands - Drop: bodies low Forward: 4 steps start on right Back: 4 steps start on right Left: bodies turn Right: bodies turn Tuck: arms in front Fist: both arms bent in front Slap: 4 leg slaps Shield: Arms up over head. Children will want to devise more Hakka moves. Group B form a moving circle around them and create a repeated move of arms crossed in front of face. Gradually drop and die.	Semi-circle of Romans stays from scene before. They form a Hakka as developed in QMS. Britons at back stand over both benches chanting. Plautius has a tablet computer he is writing on through interview and testudo formation. Turns it when says 'shields up' it says KILL THEM on it! Reporter presumes British are audience! Narrators switch remote off! All return to stage areas.	Microphone. Tablet computer (fake!)
Scene 6 Small scene about warriors and their habits 'Two heads are better than one!'	6 Updated map of Britain with Roman graffiti of areas conquered (in red).			Wife is SC & mimes stirring huge pot. Warrior husband joins.	Two papier mache balloon heads / plain footballs in a beige socks with faces drawn on. 2 wigs.

Scene synopsis	Suggested backdrop	Audlo	Quick Movement Sessions	Stage guidance	Suggested props
Scene 7 60 AD. Boudicca, female leader of the Iceni Tribe. Angry with the Romans. Leads resistance against them.	Boudicca shield; or British map of divided kingdoms / areas. Use names of places on backdrop as a chant.	11 12	Use Boudicca music to link arms and rotate clockwise for 4 counts. Link left arms and rotate for 4 counts. Use instrumental music to improvise tribal scenes: floor slaps back slaps hand slaps. Leap frog. Sword mimes. Trust games: in pairs 1 person lets themselves drop back slightly and other catches. Swap and repeat.	Boudicca comes DSC as narrators talk. Britons stand up (on benches) at back. Romans stand up in song, spread over both ensemble stages and join in song. Song: 'Boudicca!' V1: move, creeping into army positions. On 'Boudicca!' - hands raise! Instrumental: in pairs, link arms and rotate clockwise for 4 counts. Link left arms and rotate for 4 counts. V2: still with more urgency. On 'Boudicca!' - hands raise! Instrumental: link arms and rotate clockwise for 4 counts. Link left arms and rotate for 4 counts. *Floor slaps, back slaps, hand slaps. Leap frog. Sword mimes worked from QMS. V3: still but quicker. On 'Boudicca!' - hands raise! On the Boudicca repeated chant, in the music, put arms out towards Boudicca to acknowledge her. 4 people behind catch her as she falls back. Dies and 4 of cast lift her USC walkway or through audience as narrators and ensemble 'chuffa chuffa'!	
Scene 8 122 AD. RTV: 'Loca- tion, Location'.	8 British Country- side.	13 14	One by one, gradually form a low wall using the children curled up as the building blocks.	Centurion and Ivor are DSL during interview. Meanwhile a slow wall is being formed by ensemble from DSR to USL similar to QMS. Wall remains.	
Scene 9 Small scene with General and Queen	9 Hadrian's Wall.			Wall of children sit up to silent thumbs-up after 'Charge'. Thumbs down after 'slave'.	
Scene 10 The two conditions for peace: Pax Romana and belief in Roman gods and goddesses.	10 Zeus / starry sky. Roman Doctor's surgery.	15 16	Use some up tempo music. Make a cat walk. Take turns to be a god with a characteristic or repeated action. People in audience have to guess which of the gods it is.	Tax collector works the front row or up the aisle of audience. Song: 'Roman gods and goddesses'. Ensemble in performance area, like a stately dance. Chorus: in 4s, right arms up and place hands on top of eachother. Rotate clockwise for 4 lines. Change to left arms and repeat other way. Verse: make a temple straight down SC. Children stand facing each other in 2 lines, 1 metre apart,. Hold hands up high with child opposite to make a roof. Gods come down the inside as called. Gods go to left and right and strike pose. Remaining temple freezes as Emperor and Physician come through to DSC. Gods freeze.	Bag. Stethoscope. Props / costumes / masks made in lessons for gods.

Scene synopsis	Suggested backdrop	Audlo	Quick Movement Sessions	Stage guidance	Suggested props
Scene 11 Roman buildings and using concrete	11 Roman temples.		Use Doric, Ionic, aqueduct pictures as a stimulus. Individually form columns. In pairs from arches. In groups of 3 or 4 form bridges and aquaducts.	Unfreeze but stay in position and talk when narrator says 'meetings took place'. Silent on 'quiet' and in same lines. On 'columns' temple people put arms straight up in air. On 'arches' gods make arches in pairs. On 'bridges' columns walk under arches as if under a bridge back to ensemble area Narrators bring on their table (pre-set props under) for 'Concrete scene' and pass the containers up as needed. Tidy away at end.	Bucket and containers pre-set under narrators' tables. Spoon. White lab coat for teacher.
Scene 12 RTV: First Gear.	12 Sat Nav. Signpost.	17 18	na	Driver stands DSC. Navigation system kneels in front.	
Scene 13 Rich villa and poor house comparisons, with hypocaust	13 Contrasting villa and round house.		na	2 actors stand back to back through scene SC.	Rich robes and dirty robes.
Scene 14 RTV Refurbishings and Pickaxo! Song: 'Make a mo- saic'.	14 Mosaic backdrop.	19 20	In groups of 6 create a human tessellated mosaic pattern. Look at each other's' and comment on strengths and improvements. Join together as a complete piece.	Pickaxo waves from ensemble and comes DSC with Sponsor. During song 'Make a mosaic', Pickaxo stays in one spot like he has a magic wand to make everyone move. Ensemble forms a diagonal line, 1 by 1, to right and left of Pick- axo. They form a human mosaic of star position + straight posi- tion, repeated. Swap poses at the end of every 2 lines in song. Stay in position.	Micro phone. Bag. Smock.
Scene 15 Rich and poor class system, including the song 'Oh, the strata of society'.	15 Roman class structure. Like a 'Two Ron- nies' or 'Monty Python' sketch, but Roman!	21	Role play moving around the space as high / low status of Romans and actions they may have to represent them. Split into 2 groups: A & B. A are high status, B are low status. Meet and role play a scene.	Romans move to one side of performance space and Britons to other on 'big differences'. Actions to match script: 'Powerful' - flex biceps / 'Told' - bow to Romans / 'Wealthy' - rub stomach / 'Bean' - cup hands begging action. 4 Brits cross to Roman side and vice versa for lines as script. Song: 'Oh, the strata of society'. On musical intro, ensemble get into 3 rows facing audience. V1: Back row - standing Middle row - one knee Front row - sitting Between each verse back row peels from each side and moves in front of front row. This new front row sits. New middle row up on one knee. New back row stand.	

Scene synopsis	Suggested backdrop	Audlo	Quick Movement Sessions	Stage guidance	Suggested props
Scene 16 RTV: Slave Time.	16 A backdrop based on the Masterchef logo.	22		Master lies over the Britons in ensemble area like a chaise longue. They feed him grapes, fan him etc. Cook is at front. Narrator switches programme off.	Filthy apron for cook. Really disgusting and scratches all time. Mixing bowl and spoon.
Scene 17 School lesson to inform us about slaves, schools and pastimes.	17 Spinning coin.	23 24	Using narrator passage and role play component parts of it eg - Groom it / wash it / play with it / catch a ball etc. Marble games. Dolls. In groups.	All stand as bell rings. 'lessons at all' - Brits sit. 'then they did' - half of Romans sit. 'were boys' - remaining girls sit. 4 rich Roman boys are left standing. 1 steps forward joined by slave (Brit side). 'so there' Roman boy tosses coin and stares at slave. Narrators say 'fields' - Group1 come forward into position and perform repeated action. Narrators say 'around the house' - Group 2 come forward into a space and repeat action. Group 3 - 'pets'. Group 4 - 'toys'. Song: 'Spin that coin'. Verses are sung to audience. Instrumental sections: all mime same action. Sung outro: 'Spin that coin' - arms out low 45 degrees. 'roll that dice' - 90 degrees out. 'Dance and music' - 135 degrees. 'Spin that coin' arms straight up and spin hands.	
Scene 18 Adult pastimes like the Roman baths.	18 Same as Sc 17.				
Scene 19 RTV: Roman Riches. Low cost beauty regime including, calderiums strigils and frigidariums!	19 Roman bath interior.	25 26 27		Trixie sits on Narrators' table. As Trixie says 'now hop into the caldarium' Narrators unroll a length of fabric and hold it low. As Volunteer mimes getting hotter, so the fabric gets higher until it is neck height. Trixie gives strigil to slave (also behind cloth). Cloth can be bumped to make it look like strigil is being used. 'All done?' - slave hands strigil back. Volunteer is wrapped in the cloth like a towel by narrators and sent off to behind ensemble area.	Beauticians coat or plastic apron. Long length of white or blue fabric 1 metre width.

Scene synopsis	Suggested backdrop	Audlo	Quick Movement Sessions	Stage guidance	Suggested props
Scene 20 Entertainment - the theatre.	20 inside amphitheatre.			Actor SC. Ensemble are as the audience seated in stage area.	Actor costume. Masks.
Scene 21 RTV introduced by Rosie Glow, who takes us to the am- phitheatre to witness gladiators in battle!	21 Coliseum inside.	A28 A29	Start by just walking around imagining you are the audience in a huge arena. Set steady rhythm with feet just stamps to start. Then stamp with left only. Then stamp, clap, stamp stamp, clap, repeated as excitement builds. Swap roles. Now you enter as a gladiator. Walk round: what do you see? See other Gladiator. Slow motion mimed fight.	Rosie Glow and Simonus in SC in performance space then exit USC. Sing 'Into the arena' from ensemble stage. V1: use feet clap rhythm from QMS apart from 'antelope' lines, which is just stamps. Final line back to normal rhythm. Repeat for V2. In Coda, ensemble - apart from 4 gladiators (2 others plus Wimpus, Giganticus, VIP & Compere) form 2 semi circles, SL & SR, leaving a gap USC. Fight timed as per script. VIP & compere come forward DSC to deliver lines. The gladiator fights are done in slow motion and weapons mimed. Amphitheatre remains.	Microphone Wooden sword Trident
Scene 22 C5th Roman Empire was crumbling. Romans left Britain in 410 AD.	22 Map of Europe with arrows from Holland and Germany.		Marching and drilling and stop and starting, with various children being company sergeant, giving calls.	Amphitheatre semi circles now form straight Testudo Hakka lines as Roman soldiers. March on spot, facing audience. On 'We're being attacked over here' - turn stage left. On 'What about us?' turn stage right. On 'Can't help you all' turn back to face front and stop marching. 1 step back for each line in 'Goodbyee' song. Stop and freeze.	
Scene 23 Modern day, how we know the Romans were here by place names etc and their meanings.	23 Roman Map of Britain with all regions named on.		Team game: word tennis. Get into 2 teams and shout the place names out at each other. Make them up and they can be as crazy as you like! Only rule - no hesitation!	Unfreeze on 'Yes' Testudo Hakka splits in 2 to SL & SR. Shout out 2 lines each of Roman Place Name Rap.	Narrators whistle
RTV: late night quiz show, Latin Legacy Challenge. Discover how much of our language comes from the Romans.	24 Mastermind chair.	31 32		As script. DSC.	Bicycle bell / hooter.
Scene 25 Sum up of the other facts about Roman times.	25 Amalgamation of all Romans have done for Britain.	33		Ensemble come into performance space for final song: 'It's Roman fact!' Each verse brings selected performers DS for a bow. Final line brings on RTV and Narrators for bow.	

The Romans TV scenes:

Scene 3: Life in Ancient Britain - documentary (think David Attenborough)

Scene 5: Football Focus - discover the testudo formation

Scene 8: Location, Location - where is the best place to build your fort?

Scene 12: First Gear - what were Roman roads like?

Scene 14: The Refurbishers featuring Pickaxo! - how to decorate with mosaic tiles (including the song 'Make a mosaic')

Scene 16: Slave Time - what did those slaves make for us?

Scene 19: Roman Riches - the beauty treatments programme

Scene 21: *Into the arena with Rosie Glow* - prime TV show, watching gladiator fights (includes the song 'Into the arena')

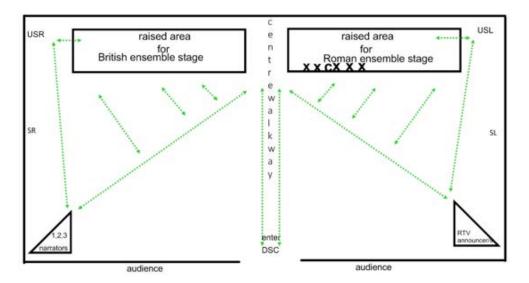
Scene 24: Latin Legacy Challenge - quiz show about how Roman language is still used now

How to use simple costume:

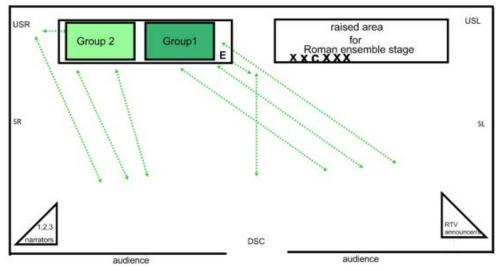
- Uniformity is the key. See it as two teams. It could be the school football kit / PE kit for Romans and school uniform for the Britons. Alternatively, Romans could be red and British brown T shirts.
- Narrator/s in togas, like philosophers (eg Cicero, Seneca, Virgil, etc.) A simple bedsheet wrapped around is ideal.
- RTV Announcer/s: Roman headress like a TV aerial, made from twisted pipe cleaners or a white T shirt with RTV fabric sign neck (in red / gold).
- Caesar wreath: leaf shapes cut from gold card or painted gold. Hole punch one end of leaf. Thread and twist pipe cleaners through to make a pliable band.
- · Claudius: wreath like Caesar but bigger leaves ultra glitzy.
- · Plautius: one ultra-sparse wreath with one gold leaf!
- Boudicca: sash / cape / brooch.
- Elephant: two large grey elephant ears and white tusks.
- Driver: Roman helmet with goggles. Helmet bought from a toy shop / online. Goggles made from cut egg carton, painted and elasticated.

Staging plans for Rocking Romans!

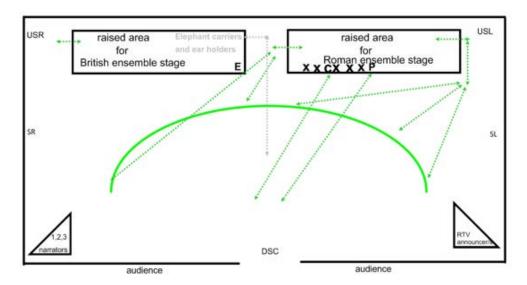
Staging plan for Scenes 1 & 2:



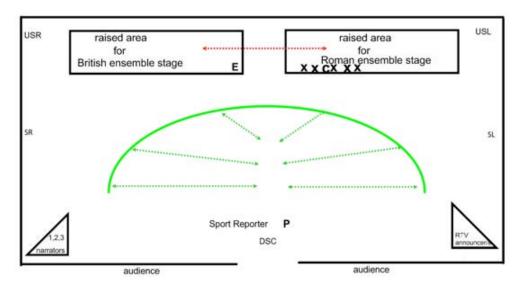
Staging plan for Scene 3:



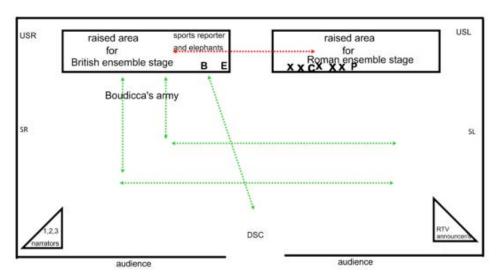
Staging plan for Scene 4:



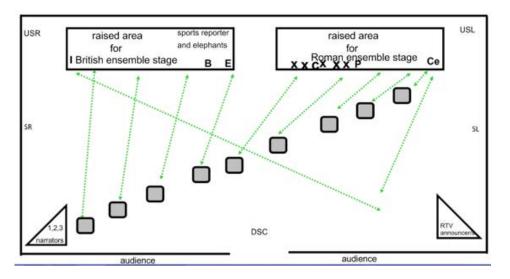
Staging plan for Scene 5:



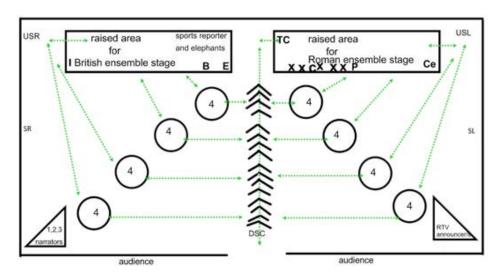
Staging plan for Scene 7:



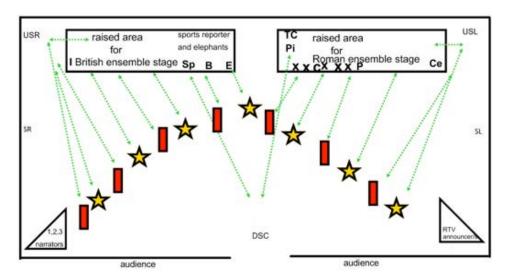
Staging plan for Scenes 8 and 9:



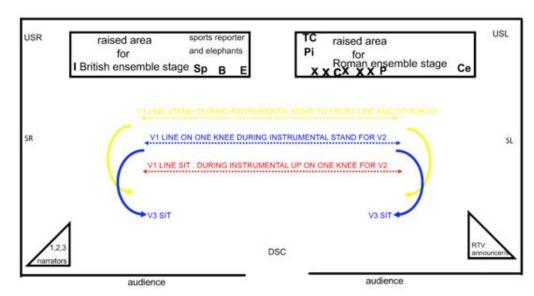
Staging plan for Scenes 10 & 11:



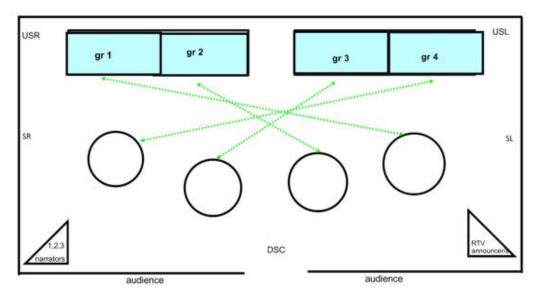
Staging plan for Scene 14:



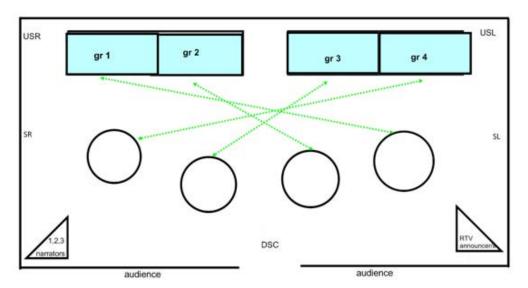
Staging plan for Scene 15:



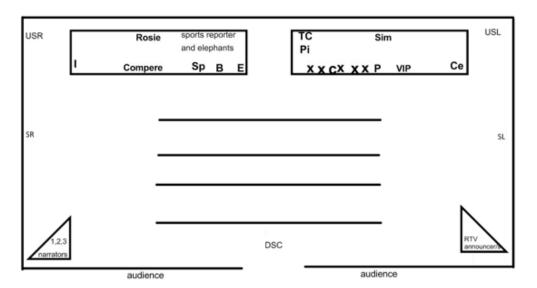
Staging plan for Scenes 17 and 18:



Staging plan for Scene 21:



Staging plan for Scene 22:



Abbreviations used in the Staging plan diagrams:

X = Roman soldiers

C = Caesar

E = Expert

P = Plautius

B = Boudicca

I = Ivor

Ce = Centurion

Tc = Tax Collector

Sp = Sponsor

Pi = Pickaxo

Sim = Simplus

How to create backdrops:

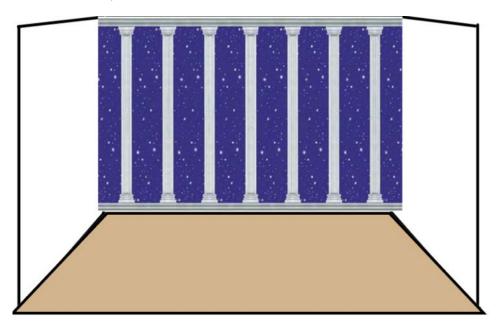
Locate high resolution images - an internet search will likely provide plenty of possibilities but be mindful that many images will be subject to rights restrictions. Copy and paste these, in order, into a Powerpoint or other software - eg Prezi Board / Smart Board / ActivInspire board. Annotate according to requirements: eg add text / annimation.

There are some suggestions for backdrops you could create in Column 2 of the performance guidance table above. We've included some examples below - for illustrative purposes only - but creating your *own* backdrops will allow you to give your performance of *Rocking Romans!* your own personal touch!

About Cheryl Mitchell-Morgan:

Cheryl Mitchell-Morgan was originally an actress then went on to become a director and teacher. She has wide experience of staging performances for children of all ages. Recent productions include *Joseph and his Amazing Technicoloured Dream Coat*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Romeo and Juliet* and the BBC production *Archie Dobson's War*.

General backdrop with Roman columns:



For Scene 12:



For Scene 14:



For Scene 7:

