
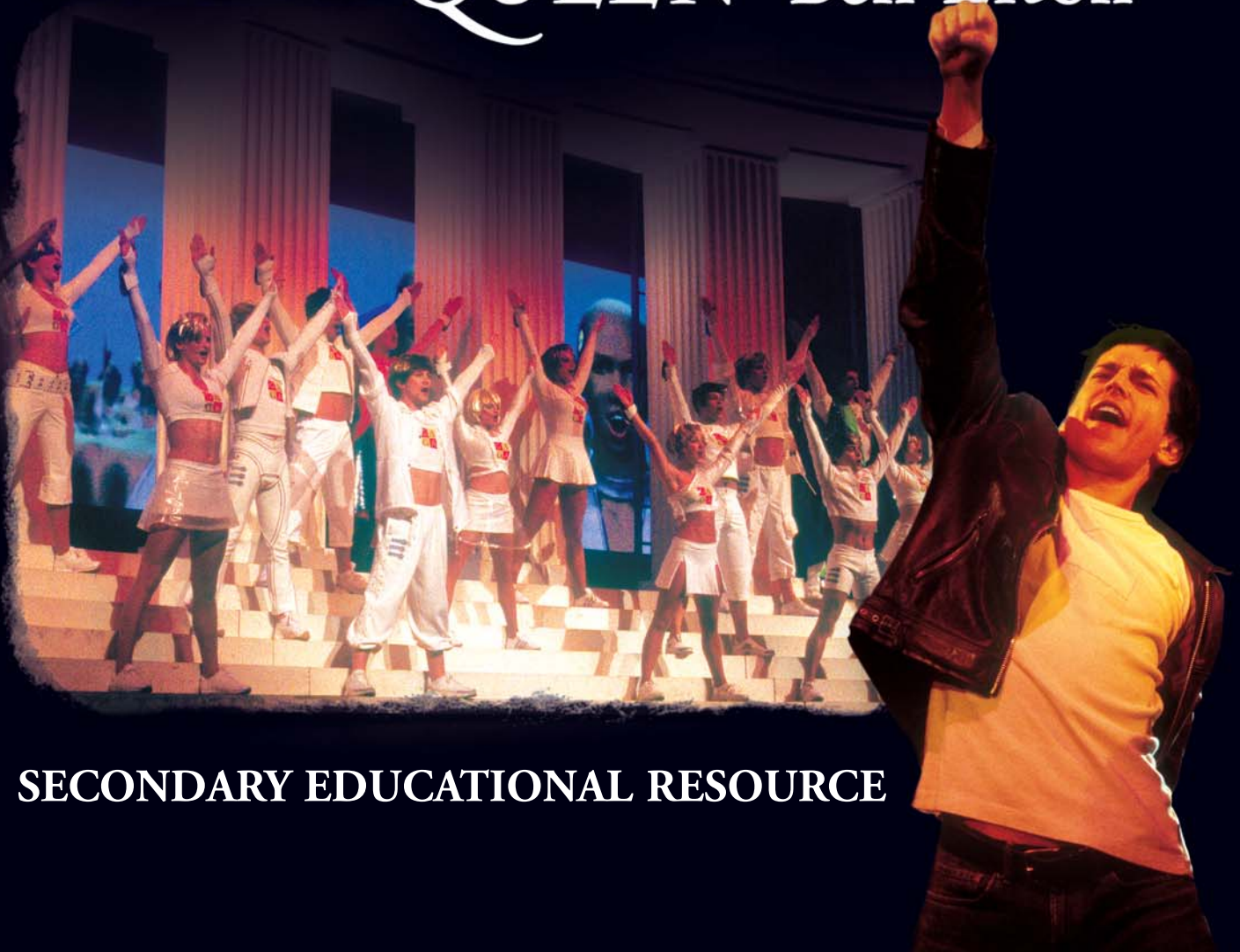


WE WILL ROCK YOU



THE MUSICAL BY QUEEN AND Ben Elton



SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE



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To Book Tickets

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SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



The story

The story begins three hundred years into the future, when the company Global Soft has taken over the world, now known as Planet Mall. Only digitally produced music is allowed and all live music has been outlawed. The head of Global Soft is businesswoman Killer Queen, who is served by the Secret Police and their chief Khashoggi.

The Ga Ga kids download their fun from the internet and live in a consumerist world of constant commercials. Scaramouche and Galileo don't fit in with the Ga Ga kids and they try to rebel, but their rebellion is noticed. They are both captured by the Secret Police. The two meet for the first time in hospital, only to escape and go on the run together.

A band of rebels, called the Bohemians, are attempting to rediscover the music of the past but their only evidence is scraps of old books and posters and their only instruments are made from junk. They have formed a base in a disused tube station and are collecting anything they can find in their search to recreate the music of the past, a time known as The Rhapsody.

The Bohemians are waiting for someone who remembers the old music to show them a way of finding the instruments which the rock group Queen hid hundreds of years ago. They have taken the names of past heroes, such as Paul McCartney, Cliff Richard, Meat Loaf, Britney and even Bob the Builder.

Scaramouche and Galileo find the Bohemians, but what they don't know is that they have been fitted with tracking devices in hospital. The Secret Police follow them and the Bohemians are captured. Their leader, Britney, is killed in the raid. The Bohemians are sent to the Seven Seas of Rhye, a place where their minds are lost.

An old librarian, Pop, who has read the secret texts, has also been captured. Scaramouche and Galileo find the Seven Seas and discover that Pop, who is working in a bar, has not forgotten all that he learned from the old texts. With his help, Galileo remembers the words that will lead them to the place of heroes.

Luckily, because more water is required to fill the giant fizzy drink vending machines on Planet Mall, the water near the Seven Seas of Rhye recedes, revealing a statue of Freddy Mercury, which points the way to Wembley Stadium.

Galileo releases the instruments from the ruined towers and the Bohemians are saved.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Main characters

Galileo (Gazza)

A misfit who keeps hearing strange voices and songs in his head which deliver messages he can't understand, Galileo won't dress like a Ga Ga kid and has been caught trying to make music. He is confused and unaware that he is the one the Bohemians have been waiting for, who will lead them to the place where the last remaining live instruments have lain hidden for hundreds of years.

Scaramouche

Another misfit, who also gets into trouble with the Secret Police, Scaramouche meets Galileo in hospital and they run away together. Her sharp wit keeps Galileo (or Gazza as she names him) on his toes and gradually they fall for each other.

Killer Queen

Killer Queen is a ruthless businesswoman and is in charge of Global Soft, the worldwide corporation which is responsible for the suppression of all live music. She's power crazy and tough as well as beautiful.

Khashoggi

He works for Killer Queen, getting rid of any original or creative musical thoughts and going after the Bohemians. His victims are sent to the Seven Seas of Rhye.

Secret Police

These semi-automated characters carry out the bidding of the Killer Queen and Khashoggi.

Ga Ga kids

Living in a world of consumerism and downloadable music, the Ga Ga kids don't notice their own soulless-ness.

Pop

Pop is an old librarian and a hippy who has studied the sacred musical texts to the extent that even the Seven Seas of Rhye cannot entirely erase them from his mind. Usually played by Nigel Planer, he's a comic character who acts as a foil to Galileo and Scaramouche towards the end of the play.

The Bohemians

A group of rebels, determined to fight against Global Soft and its downloadable music. Their base is Tottenham Court Road Tube station and they have taken the names of musical heroes from the past, such as Paul McCartney, Cliff Richard, and Britney.

Britney and Meat

Two of the Bohemians who are intent on discovering the secrets of live music and who believe that someone will come who will show the Bohemians the way. When they find Scaramouche and Galileo they are unsure at first but are eventually persuaded that Galileo really does have strange musical lyrics in his head over which he has no control. When the Secret Police attack the Bohemian hide out, Britney is killed and Meat is captured along with the other Bohemians.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Background to the Music

Queen were formed in the early Seventies and have had a huge influence on popular music all over the world, especially in the UK. The original members of the band were Freddy Mercury, Brian May, John Deacon and Roger Taylor.

Music critics place Queen somewhere between the genres of Glam Rock and Progressive Rock and they are well known for their exuberant costumes, extravagant live performances and music videos that were often ahead of their time. Queen became popular after the release of their second album, *Queen II* in 1974 and a successful Top of the Pops appearance with the single *Seven Seas of Rhye*. The following two albums, *Sheer Heart Attack* and *A Night at the Opera*, firmly established Queen as rock stars. The first release from *A Night at the Opera* was *Bohemian Rhapsody*, which has now become one of the most widely recognised songs in the history of rock music. The song shows the influence of both opera and heavy metal guitar and it originally spent nine weeks at number one in the UK.

In those days, Queen were well known for living the rock and roll lifestyle and lead singer Freddy Mercury was particularly flamboyant and extravagant. Queen weren't taken seriously by the music press at first and were often scorned by journalists, especially with the arrival of punk in 1976, in the shape of The Damned single *The New Rose*. However, Queen demonstrated that they have a wide and lasting appeal. Their success continued into the 80s, when *Under Pressure*, produced with David Bowie in 1981, went to number one, a song which has been endlessly sampled and has become part of British popular consciousness almost as much as *Bohemian Rhapsody*. Other memorable Queen milestones during the 80s were the video for *Radio Ga Ga* and their performance at Live Aid in 1985. They continued to release regular successful albums including *Innuendo* in 1991, which went to number one in the UK charts and *Made in Heaven*, with previously unheard Mercury vocals, released in 1995.

During the 1980s a new disease was discovered which was to go on to be a worldwide killer. When Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and the development of it – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) – first made an impact in the US and the UK, much publicity and media attention was attached to it. The world was shocked when, on 22 November 1991, Freddie Mercury issued a statement confirming that he was HIV positive and had developed AIDS. He died two days later, effectively ending Queen as the world had come to know them. A year later there was a huge tribute concert in Freddy's honour, raising money for the newly formed charity, The Mercury Phoenix Trust. The legend lives on in two ways. Firstly, members of Queen continue to make music and to release albums. Secondly, the legacy of Queen's twenty-one year history while Freddy was alive continues to make an impact on music today.

The Albums

Queen July **1973**
Queen II **1974**
Sheer Heart Attack **1974**
Night at the Opera **1975**
A Day at the Races **1977**
News of the World **1977**
Jazz **1978**
Live Killers **1979**
The Game **1980**
Flash Gordon **1980**
Greatest Hits **1981**
Hot Space **1982**
The Works **1985**
Complete Vision **1985**
A Kind of Magic **1986**
Live Magic
The Miracle **1989**
Innuendo **1991**
Greatest Hits II
Live at Wembley '86
Made in Heaven **1995**
Queen Rocks
Greatest Hits III

The Singles

1973
Keep Yourself Alive / Son And Daughter
1974
Seven Seas of Rhye / See What A Fool I've Been
Killer Queen / Flick of the Wrist
1975
Now I'm Here / Lily of the Valley
Bohemian Rhapsody / I'm In Love With My Car
1976
You're My Best Friend / '39
Somebody To Love / White Man
1977
Tie Your Mother Down / You and I
We Are the Champions / We Will Rock You
1978
Spread Your Wings / Sheer Heart Attack
Bicycle Race / Fat Bottomed Girl
1979
Don't Stop Me Now / In Only Seven Days
Love of My Life / Now I'm Here / Crazy
Little Thing Called Love / We Will Rock You
1980
Save Me / Let Me Entertain You / Play the Game / A Human Body / Another One Bites the Dust / Dragon Attack / Flash

1981
Under Pressure (with David Bowie) / Soul Brother
1982
Body Language / Life Is Real / Las Palabras De Amor / Cool Cat / Backchat / Staying Power
1984
Radio Ga Ga / I Go Crazy
I want to Break Free / Machines
It's A Hard Life / Is This the World We Created / Hammer To Fall / Tear It Up
Thank God It's Christmas / Man On the Prowl / Keep Passing the Open Window
1985
One Vision / Blurred Vision
1986
A Kind of Magic / A Dozen Red Roses for My Darling / Friends Will Be Friends / Seven Seas of Rhye / Who Wants To Live Forever / Killer Queen
1987
Pain Is So Close To Pleasure
1989
I Want it All / Hang On In There
Breakthru / Stealing / The Invisible Man / Hijack My Heart / Scandal / My Life Has Been Saved / The Miracle / Stone Cold Crazy
1991
Innuendo / Bijou / I'm Going Slightly Mad / The Hitman / Headlong / All God's People / The Show Must Go On / Keep Yourself Alive / Bohemian Rhapsody / These Are the Days of Our Lives
1995
Heaven for Everyone / It's A Beautiful Day / It's a Winter's Tale / Thank God for Christmas
1996
Too Much Love Will Kill / Spread Your Wings / Let Me Live / Fat Bottomed Girls / You Don't Fool Me
1998
No One But You (Only the Good Die Young) / We Will Rock You

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



The concept

The musical is written by Ben Elton and by Queen, thus merging the influences of a top comedian with the originators of the music. The idea was to make a show that resembled a live concert. First of all, this has been achieved through the lighting and sound designs, both deliberately similar in style to that of a rock concert. The high-tech stage design, which includes concert-style video screens, also creates this impression. The most important aspect of this kind of thinking, however, is the inclusion of two live bands, either side of the stage. All the music during the show is live. This, more than anything else, allows the cast to replicate the famously extravagant Queen concerts of the 70s and 80s.

Radio Ga Ga

The storyline for *We Will Rock You* derives from the Queen song *Radio Ga Ga*, which was a massive hit in 1984 and which is also remembered for its ambitious video. *Radio Ga Ga* is a song about the soulless-ness of manufactured pop tunes. The Ga Ga kids in the musical are the result of this *Radio Ga Ga* syndrome. Familiarising your drama group with the song before your visit to the theatre may help when discussing this theme in relation to the play. Although the plot is fun, it does have a more serious side, aspects of which can be used in class discussion and improvisation.

There are two main threads to the message of the musical. The first is about the value of live music and with it, the value of creativity and the creation of music for itself, rather than for profit. Secondly, the play also values individuality, in that it presents us with the dangers of a world where everyone is the same. Both of these themes could be investigated through group improvisation and extended into longer schemes of work.

Consumerism

One of the most memorable numbers from the show is *One Vision*, where dancers perform around huge screens that have been joined to create two levels. Images of popular culture and of commercial and throwaway merchandise are flashed up on the screens. The automated movements of the dancers at this point suggest a society satiated by hyper-consumerism to the extent that it has begun to control the way people think and live. One useful starting point for improvisation around the play is the discussion of consumerism, beginning with the images in this scene. Think about the process choreographer Arlene Phillips went through when she was creating it.

The internet

The internet is seen as one of the engines of the consumerist society in which the world of the play is situated. It is both a marketing device and a way in which Global Soft can control the citizens of Planet Mall. It is also the means by which artificial music is downloaded. This is another opportunity to explore consumerism and how the internet is used for marketing, but could turn into a wider project investigating the uses and constraints of the internet, either through dance drama (in order to express the influence of the musical genre) or through extended group improvisation.

Futurism and science fiction

Planet Mall is an example of a future world gone mad or of an anti-utopia. The topics of consumerism and the internet link directly with the ideas of futurism and science fiction. Students could look at related examples of this kind of treatment of the future (such as *Forbidden Planet*, for instance) or could discuss the theatrical elements that contribute to it. For instance, costume, gadgetry and the mythologisation of the time in which the audience is living are all devices used by this type of genre.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Behind the scenes – a backstage tour

A flying transit van moves around the stage, a motorbike emerges through a trapdoor, and there's even a detailed replica of a tube station, raised from below the stage using special lifts. Wembley stadium appears in ruins to reveal the lost Queen instruments and a statue of Freddie Mercury 'miraculously' rises from the waters of the Seven Seas of Rhye. The special effects in *We Will Rock You* are sensational. All the staging was all built specially for the show – the process took nine weeks, three weeks longer than the rehearsals themselves!

Behind the scenes – quick facts

- There are six trapdoors on stage, two piston-driven, two manual and two which lift like garage doors
- In total one hundred and nine people are employed to work on the show each night
- Twelve dressers work on the show, helping actors with costume changes
- Queen concert sets were used as an inspiration
- The production company wanted the design for the show to be big, and gave designers a budget of six and a half million pounds
- Actors visit the wig department before each performance for the wigs they need to wear at the top of the show to be fitted
- In wardrobe, setting up begins at four pm and goes on for three and a half hours
- On matinee days, cast and crew work to a demanding hour and a half turn around

The design

The design process started with a meeting during which ideas were suggested. Drawings were then made and discussed with the director, Christopher Renshaw. Everyone involved wanted to make the most of the theatre space and the resources available. The aim was to create a rock and roll set. A band on tour is limited because they are travelling from venue to venue whereas a theatre stays put, which gave designers more scope.

Queen were involved throughout the creation of *We Will Rock You*. The show is designed with a rock and roll style lighting rig, moving lights included. Top designers who have worked with U2 and created shows for The Rolling Stones are numbered amongst the production team and Bobby Aitken, the sound designer, set out to emulate a rock and roll concert when he was planning the show. The band is on stage all the time, on two platforms, one on either side of the stage. Everything in the show is live apart from a small amount of backing singing in two songs. This is the principle that Queen worked on: all their concerts were sung live and the stage version aims to create the same effect. In the same way, all of the cast's TV appearances have been performed live, including Parkinson and Children in Need.

The video screens

The eight video screens, at two million pounds, are the most expensive pieces of equipment in the show, and *We Will Rock You* is the only show in the West End with anything like them. Part of the rock concert design concept, the screens are used to give a futuristic appeal, and to project the fast and furious images of consumerist culture, which are shown to the population of Planet Mall constantly by Global Soft. Weighing a tonne each, four of these specially motorised screens are on the ground and four are flown above the stage. The screens also contribute images to the scenery and set. During *One Vision*, the four screens join to create a platform of aluminium treads, so that dancers can walk across it. They even make up Killer Queen's living room at one point, displaying virtual flying ducks, a fire place and a fish tank. There is a camera room under the stage which forms a mini TV studio, for live interaction with the actors on stage. It also contains computer animation equipment. When all the screens are joined together, Killer Queen's face appears huge, just like it would on the screens at a rock concert.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Behind the scenes – a backstage tour (cont.)

The Colonnades

When the show begins there are colonnades at the back of the stage, which are able to move forwards and backwards. The fronts of the columns originally dropped down to reveal lights and the Secret Police emerged from the top, but both of these scenes were eventually cut from the show, even though the colonnades have been designed to perform these functions too. The columns weigh three tonnes, so the process of motorising them had to be carefully planned. In fact, the stage used to be covered by six by four inch timbers but it was found that they weren't strong enough and the whole stage had to be resurfaced in metal – a task that had to be carried out at weekends.

The Killer Queen Table

A raised platform on which the Killer Queen is swung out into the audience as she sings is known by the cast as The Killer Queen Table. This special piece of set took an incredible amount of ingenuity to create as it has to perform so many different functions. The platform is driven by pneumatics, and is supported by a lifting pillar containing a hydraulic lift from which an actor can appear. The platform rises eight feet high and can revolve a full 360°. There are two metal bars attached to it, which raise at a 45° angle, in order for two actors to stand on the end of the platform and clip on safety harnesses.

Tottenham Court Road Tube Station

The largest piece of scenery is an eight tonne replica of Tottenham Court Rd tube station. It sits under the stage until it is needed, then it lifts into place and moves forward, via a chain mechanism, which works a bit like the cogs on a motorbike. The designer has worked hard to recreate the underground, right down to the dirt, the tiles and the original curved walls. Due to its size, the replica was built in bits and assembled under the stage from six sections.

Costumes

The costume designer, Tim Goodchild, worked very closely with the Production Designers Mark Fisher and Willie Williams, watching the show and taking the movements of the characters into account. Comfort and the ability to move and dance freely were important considerations. Adaptations also had to be considered to allow for safety harnesses. Measurements have to be taken carefully and replicas were created for understudies.

The wardrobe village

There is a long room, known as the wardrobe village, behind the stage. Costumes, such as the intricate clothes the Bohemians wear, are laid out carefully and individually labelled. Named chairs enable actors to have a place to dress. The Ga Ga kids wrist gadgets are in labelled pouches (the kind you might use to hang shoes on a cupboard door) so that everyone knows where to find their own. There are wigs at the end of the wardrobe village, on display heads, also labelled with names.

The wardrobe village is mainly for costume changes. Actors also have costumes in their dressing rooms, especially their original costumes (the first they wear).

At the side of the wardrobe village is a sound proof sound booth. In here, actors can sing into the microphones and watch the band leader on screens (these screens also hang in the auditorium). This is so that a chorus member who is changing can join in where he or she is required.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Behind the scenes – a backstage tour (cont.)



The wardrobe department

The wardrobe department, above the wardrobe village, launders and repairs costumes. There are one hundred and thirty costumes and four staff are employed to maintain them. There are plenty of washing machines and seemingly endless supplies of washing powder and sewing equipment.

The costumes are made especially by outside makers, and those awaiting repair hang on rails around the side of the room. Some of the Killer Queen's costumes eg a red spiky leather dress, an elaborate leopard design floor length cloak and a heavy silver belt, need careful looking after.

The twelve dressers assigned to different characters have a 'plot' or a schedule which allows them to cover certain actors. This means that if someone is away they can swap over using the plot as a guide.

TEACHER'S NOTES FOR PROJECT 1



Before you go one:

Laban efforts

Ask the group to sit in a circle. Demonstrate a simple automated movement and ask them to copy it. Now ask everyone to think of their own automated movement. Choose one person to begin, then ask each group member to join in one at a time.

Build a machine using members of the group. Remain in the circle and ask for two volunteers to start. The movements are repeated in the centre of the circle. Each group member's movements are added until a machine has been created. Add sound effects to the machine and vary the speed of the movements.

In small groups, students create their own machines based on similar automated movements and perform these to the rest of the class. Explain that the performances of the machines should have a shape, such as fast, slow, fast, stop or small, tall, fast, small, stop.

Ask each group to freeze certain moments from their machine pieces. Each group should choose three freezes and work on holding them accurately. Now ask groups to move slowly between these freeze frames, concentrating on the quality of the movements.

In groups of four, ask groups to work on a second movement piece, inspired by the machines, using automated robotic movements. Work on the rhythm of the movements in particular. Students can experiment with mirroring (copying each other's movements at the same time) and matching (copying each other's movements directly after each has been completed).

Hand out Project Sheet One *Laban efforts*. This sheet asks students to listen to the Queen song *Radio Ga Ga* and set a movement piece, based on the Laban efforts, to the music. The activity is extended with the students turning their movement piece into a sustained improvisation called 'The Production Line', set the piece in a time when people are identical and made in factories.

A reminder of the Eight Basic Laban Efforts and their time, space and weight: **Gliding:** Sustained, Direct, Light, **Pressing:** Sustained, Direct, Strong, **Floating:** Sustained, Flexible, Light, **Wringing:** Sustained, Flexible, Strong, **Dabbing:** Quick, Direct, Light, **Punching:** Quick, Direct, Strong, **Slashing:** Quick, Flexible, Strong, and **Flicking:** Quick, Flexible, Light.

Extension activities

Discuss what the world would be like if everyone were exactly the same. Ask the class if they think everyone is different. What does it mean to be different?

Work on a group improvisation called *The Ga Ga kids*.

Ask the group to research the music of Queen. Add this to a display if possible.

TEACHER'S NOTES FOR PROJECT 2



Before you go two:

What to look out for

Students get into pairs and imagine that they live in a future society where all live music is banned. Only digital music, downloaded from the internet, is allowed. What would it be like? Ask the pairs to improvise a scene where a police officer has arrested someone for attempting to make music.

In the same pairs, students discuss the adverts they have seen recently. What goes into an advert? (Suggest things like: the product, jingle, slogan, logo, comedy, sentiment, thought provoking images, key words, music, advice, famous people, models.)

Ask students to create an advert which might appear in the future society of the first exercise. This could be for any item: coffee, clothes, washing powder or perfume, for instance. Students can go on to create an advert for a downloadable track of digital pop music.

Distribute the Drama Alphabet (see below). With the students, discuss the elements which students have witnessed at work in performances they have acted in or been to see. Ask the group about the kinds of things we look for when we are going to write about a visit to the theatre. Some of the things you might discuss are: Actors, audience, character, costume, dance, dramatic techniques such as tableaux, facial expression, gesture, language, lights, make up, movement, music, rhythm, scenery, set, sound, space, special effects, status, story, video, voice, wigs, words. Discuss the elements they are going to look out for on their visit to *We Will Rock You*. Give out Project Sheet Two *What to look out for*, which will allow students to make notes on their visit immediately after (not during!) the show.

The drama alphabet

Acting – participating in drama

Action – doing something with a particular purpose on stage

Absurd – Theatre of the Absurd

Alienation – A Brechtian technique

Artaud – twentieth century theatre practitioner and founder of Theatre of Cruelty

Audience - people watching a play

Beckett – twentieth century playwright

Boal – founder of Theatre of the Oppressed

Body language – the way we communicate with our bodies

Breathing – the most basic technique an actor learns. Helps with voice and movement.

Brecht – twentieth century practitioner who developed Epic Theatre

Character – a fictional person in a play

Choreography – putting a dance together

Chorus – a group of players who speak and act together

Comedy – theatre which makes us laugh

Commedia – sixteenth century comic improvisers

Communication – getting a message across

Concentration – thinking hard about one thing

Conflict – fighting over an issue, physically or emotionally, for instance.

Cooperation – working with each other

Costume – clothes worn by an actor on stage

Creativity – a talent which helps us to be artistic

Crisis – a problem or difficult situation

Dance – a pattern of movements

Dance drama – a technique where movement and normal acting are used together

Dilemma - a difficult situation where the possible outcomes are also difficult

Director – the person in charge of the artistic side of a play
Dream sequence – a part of a play which is made to look like a dream

Empathy – knowing what it's like to be in someone else's shoes.

Epic Theatre – type of anti-naturalistic theatre developed by Brecht

Evaluation – deciding what was good and bad about a piece of theatre

Facial expression – using your face to portray your character

Fool – in Shakespeare, the fool was often the wisest character

Form – the building blocks for a piece of theatre

Forum theatre – theatre developed by Boal where the audience judges the play

Freeze – stopping the action and holding very still

Genres – the different types or styles of theatre

Gesture – a small movement with a special meaning

Group Work – working together to produce theatre

Grotowski – a twentieth century theatre practitioner who pioneered Poor Theatre

Hot seating – putting a character on the spot and asking him or her questions

Imagination – the part of you that has creative ideas

Improvisation – making it up as you go along

Inspiration – getting an idea

Judgement – Boal gets his audiences to decide on the endings of his plays

Juggling – a circus skill

Kabuki – a type of Japanese theatre

Kathakali – a type of South west Indian theatre

Laban – a dance practitioner who developed ways of describing movement

Language – part of how we communicate to the audience

Lighting – the special lights that contribute to a piece of theatre

Make up – worn so that actors faces are distinct or to form a character mask

Mask – worn over the face to represent a character

Matching – a dance term. Repeating someone else's movement after it has finished.

Mime – acting silently without many props.

Mirroring – a dance term. Copying movements as they are performed.

Motivation – the reasoning that drives a character

Movement – either the way a character moves, or a sequence like a dance or mime

Mummer – a pageant originating in the middle ages.

Musical – a performance which includes music, and usually dance

Narration – telling the story as the action is performed

Naturalism – trying to make theatre look like real life or a Twentieth Century movement

Noh theatre – a type of Japanese theatre

Objective – what a character is trying to achieve

Opera – a piece of theatre involving classical music and singing

Pace – the variations in speed and rhythm found in a piece of theatre

Pantomime – a special play performed at Christmas

Performance – showing your play to other people

Performance poetry – a rhythmic poem written to be performed

Play – the depiction of a series of fictional events in front of an audience

Plot – the story of your play

Props – things that characters carry around with them

The drama alphabet (cont.)

Questions – asking for information from characters, actors or during evaluation

Quandary – a situation where all the options seem to cause problems

Rhythm – a repeated pattern or beat

Ritual – a special ceremony. One of the ways in which theatre started.

Reportage – using journalistic techniques on stage

Role play – taking on a role in a particular situation or dilemma

Scenery – the things on stage which set the scene

Script – written words which actors follow

Set – movable pieces of scenery, like tables or sofas

Sequence – things happening one after another

Shakespeare – a famous writer from the sixteenth and seventeenth century.

Sound – anything you can hear on stage

Space – the area in which a performance or rehearsal takes place

Special Effects – extra, often astonishing, elements of a play, such as fireworks

Stage – the space where the play is performed

Stage fighting – choreographed to look like fighting but actually no-one is hurt

Stanislavski – a theatre practitioner who developed naturalism

Status – do you treat other characters with respect or are they beneath you?

Story – ideas about characters which fit together and have conclusion

Storytelling – a special performance where one person tells a story

Symbol – anything which communicates an extra meaning to the audience

Tableaux – a kind of freeze a bit like posing for a photograph

Technique – all the things that you use to get your play across

Text – words on a page or the elements of a performance

Theatre – a building where plays are performed, or the play itself

Theatre history – looking at theatre from the past

Time frame – the time in which the play is set or how the play uses time

Thought tracking – a character speaking his or her thoughts

Tragedy – a type of Greek or Shakespearian theatre, which teaches us something

Trust – the ability to work with other actors

Understanding – when the message you are communicating sinks in

Universal – values that are supposed to be held by everyone

Video – filming part of your play

Voice – speaking on stage in different ways

Visiting the theatre – going to see plays so that you can be inspired

Wigs – hair pieces used to turn an actor into a character

Words – part of a script or a play which communicate meaning

Writing – setting down the play for others to follow

X in LX, SX and SFX – lighting, sound and special effects

Yes let's – a game where every movement suggested by the teacher is performed energetically

Your story – Boal suggests putting yourself on stage

Zoom in – highlighting a particular action

Zoom out – showing the whole picture.

TEACHER'S NOTES FOR PROJECT 3



Inspired by the music

Discuss the students' overall impression of the show. Talk about the particular aspects they had decided to look out for. How were these devices used? Talk about the way in which the Queen songs are integrated with the story. For instance, how is the lyric 'I'm just a poor boy, from a poor family' (*Bohemian Rhapsody*) interpreted?

In groups of four or five, students create freezes from their favourite scenes in the show.

Students find a space on their own and imagine they are Galileo, one of the main characters in the musical. Ask them to hold a freeze for the character after a count of five. Next students think about what is going through Galileo's mind as the play opens. Use thought tracking to encourage the students to speak these thoughts out loud. Next ask students to imagine they are Scaramouche at the start of the play and to hold a freeze for her. Again, use thought tracking to discover her thoughts and feelings.

Ask students to choose whether to play Scaramouche or Galileo and to move around the room as the character. When the teacher freezes the action and points to a member of the group, he or she should be prepared to speak what the character is thinking.

Next, students sit in a circle, with a chair at the centre. A volunteer sits down and, in role as either Scaramouche or Galileo, he or she answers questions from the group. This is called hot seating. To follow, ask pairs to hot seat each other.

Take the line 'I'm just a poor boy, from a poor family' and ask groups of three students to improvise a scene where someone speaks these lines.

Hand out Project Sheet Three *Inspired by the music*. Ask students to get into groups of five and to take some words from one of the songs in the musical as a starting point for an improvisation.

TEACHER'S NOTES FOR PROJECT 4



Future World

Ask students to sit in a space on their own and to imagine what the world might be like three hundred years into the future. What would be different? What would be the same?

Next, students stand in the space and create a freeze of a character from this future world. Do this over a count of five. Ask students to imagine what this person looks like in their heads, and also to imagine what the world around the person is like: where does he or she live and work or go to school?

Students work on a mime, showing this character going about their business, either at work or school or at home. Be more specific if necessary by saying that the character is getting ready to go out, or is doing his or her homework.

Ask students about the characters they created and the places they live and work.

In pairs, students improvise a meeting between two of these future characters. Ask students to think about where they are and why they are meeting. Watch some of these interchanges. Or ask students to improvise a scene between someone from the early twenty-first century and the future character.

Hand out Project Sheet 4 *Future world*. Scaramouche and Galileo have discovered a range of artifacts from the twentieth and early twenty-first century. When students have written down what they think the objects are and what they were used for, ask pairs to create a piece of drama where an expert explains the findings of the dig. They could also dramatise either: the discovery of the artifacts, or: a museum lecture on how the artifacts were used three hundred years ago.

In small groups, ask students to work on an improvisation called 'Future world' which shows how people live and work three hundred years in the future.

TEACHER'S NOTES FOR PROJECT 5



Different or the same?

Work on some mirroring. Students face each other and copy each other's movements precisely and slowly.

Now ask students to remember the movements so that they can mirror each other whilst standing side by side. Once the group is happy with this, ask them to get into fours and to repeat the exercise so that all four students can perform a sequence of identical movements, derived from the mirroring exercise.

Remind the class of the work they did on machines and on 'future world' and ask them to work on a movement piece where everybody is the same, in small groups. Next ask them to introduce one person whose movements are different.

Discuss how it feels to be the odd one out. Why might someone feel like the odd one out? How can we demonstrate how this feels on stage? Try out some techniques.

Discuss the staging for the first scene of *We Will Rock You* and the use of the moving colonnades. Discuss the costumes and movements of the Ga Ga Kids. What elements are used to indicate their sameness? How can we tell that Galileo and Scaramouche are different?

Hand out Project Sheet Five *Different or the same?*. Students have to imagine they are going to create a piece of Theatre in Education for a group of younger students to watch, which will be called 'Different or the Same?' Which of the techniques used in the first scene of *We Will Rock You* could they use in their piece of T.I.E.? On the project sheet they write down the aspects that they could use in their work. They then use the tips on the sheet to plan their TIE project. Extend this work by going on to create polished improvisation on the topic which could be shown to another class.

TEACHER'S NOTES FOR PROJECT 6



Stage Fighting

Carry out a physical warm up with the whole group, include work on breathing techniques, and on centring the body.

Play a fast warm up game, such as Find a Chair: Ask students to sit on chairs in a circle. Name them alternately Britney, Bob the Builder and Galileo around the circle until everyone is one of the three. Check the class knows who they are by asking students to call out their names. Remove one chair so there is one less than the number of players. Choose one person to stand in the middle and call out one of the names, either Britney, Bob the Builder or Galileo. Everyone of that name has to swap places. The person in the middle attempts to sit down leaving someone else to call out a name.

Play Yes Let's. In this game, the teacher suggests a movement. For instance, let's run around the room. The group reply: 'Yes, let's' and perform the movement. Once the group become confident at the game, choose other people to select the movements.

Ask the students to have an argument, in pairs, using only numbers. This means using inflection to show anger. In the same pairs, using only the words for fruit and vegetables or made up words, students create a comic scene where they insult each other ridiculously.

Ask students to use the sound of their voices to make the meanings clear as well as the words and actions. Remind them that there should be no physical contact, although they should use body language and movement to show that they are arguing, for example: turning their backs to each other, standing a long way apart or very close together. Also remind students that they don't have to shout in order to threaten someone or show anger. It can be more frightening to talk in a very soft voice.

Ask the class to think back to their visit to the theatre. Who were the main rivals in the play?

Divide the class into Bohemians and Secret Police. Ask Secret Police to find a partner who is a Bohemian. Spend time hot seating the characters if possible.

Secret Police imagine that they have an electric current coming from the palms of their hands. By holding this hand a few centimetres from any part of the Bohemian's body and moving it, the Bohemian must follow them with that part of the body. Secret Police can move the Bohemian's feet, and arms etc in this way, as if they were a puppet. Ask students to do this as carefully as possible, so that it looks like the pairs are moving each other around the room. Try the same thing in slow motion.

Teach the class some basic stage fighting techniques, in the same pairs. Hand out Project Sheet Six *Stage fighting*.

TEACHER'S NOTES FOR PROJECT 6



Stage Fighting (cont.)

Start by asking students, in pairs, to react to pushes where the pushing hand doesn't make contact but remains an obvious distance (a metre) from the other person. Next try pulling, doing the same thing. It is better to demonstrate this first. Now try the same thing but in slow motion. Try the pushes on different parts of the body, such as shoulder, hip, chest, head and arm. Remember to maintain an obvious distance. It should look as if an invisible force, attached to the hand, is moving the other person. Once students are happy with this, ask them to practice a series of slow motion pushes, taking it in turns, in order to create a movement piece.

Some other non-contact fight movements and reactions to try, in the same way are: jumping, ducking, turning, jabbing, slashing, punching, kicking, leaning and dodging. Once you have developed a range of stage fighting techniques, make the sequences more complex.

The project sheet then asks students, in small groups, to plan a recreation of the scene where the Secret Police attack the Bohemians in their Tottenham Court Road base. This piece should be choreographed carefully as stage fighting. Remind the group that no contact should be made with any of the other characters. Slow motion will make this piece more effective.

Extend the work by designing a dance drama or a stage fighting scene for other pieces of theatre, such as the ending of Willy Russell's *Blood Brothers*, or create a movement piece to show emotional conflict, such as that in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* or Charlotte Keatley's *My Mother Said I Never Should*. Other scenes you might like to try to choreograph include: *Macbeth* Act 5 Scene 1 where MacDuff finally challenges the king, Act 3 Scene 2 from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where the lovers argue after Puck has made a mistake with his magic potion, Act 2 scene 5 from *Twelfth Night*, where Sir Toby tricks Andrew and Viola into fighting each other. You might also like to look at some of the early scene in *Romeo and Juliet* and co-ordinate some of the fighting between the Montagues and the Capulets.

TEACHER'S NOTES FOR PROJECT 7



Status

Discuss the idea of status with the group. What is social status? What does status mean on stage?

Explain that someone with a high status is number 10 and someone with a low status is number 1. Ask the class to move around the room as number 10 and then as number 1. Ask them to think about how they use the space, move and communicate with others in the room.

Use playing cards or slips of paper for this activity. Give numbers to three students and ask them to walk into the drama space playing that status number. Ask the group to suggest a situation for the improvisation.

In pairs, play a number of situations where one character is a low status (3 or 4) and the other is a high status (8 or 9). Scenes could be in the following locations:

- At school
- In the supermarket
- At the hospital
- In the post office
- Piloting the first space craft to land on Mars

Hand out Project Sheet Seven *Status*. This sheet lists numbers 1 to 10, where 10 is the highest status and 1 is the lowest. Students are asked to describe how they could play that number, thinking about: body language, eye contact, amount of space character takes up, ways of moving, language and voice, confidence, ways of relating to other characters.

Then next to each number they write down the name of a character from the musical that they think has that status.

Other activities

Think about the scenes between Killer Queen and Khashoggi. Who has the most status? How is it demonstrated?

Work on a scene where pairs take the roles of Killer Queen and Khashoggi.

Work on a scene between Khashoggi and a member of the secret police or Khashoggi and Galileo.

In threes, work on a scene set in the Bohemians hide out. Decide which character is highest status.

Develop one of the pieces you have worked on and ask the students to emphasize the use of status, thinking particularly about:

- body language
- voice
- use of space
- movement
- eye contact

Show this piece to the rest of the class and evaluate it.

What other pieces of theatre have the students taken part in where status is important?

TEACHER'S NOTES FOR PROJECT 8



Video-tronic

You need access to video equipment and television screens for this work.

Video some adverts and show them to the class at the start of the session. Discuss the content of the adverts.

Ask students to create a room in a house three hundred years into the future. Incorporate the idea that there are large video screens in the houses of the future. Ask a student to stand in for the video screen in each the houses. This student can stand at the front of the stage and answer when the video screen is addressed. Create scenes in which the members of the household interact with the video screen and show what it is used for (for example, futuristic telephone conversations, internet connection, sending email, household computer, television, broadcasting adverts, the shopping channel.)

Try setting up a television, connected to a video camera, on the stage. Repeat the scenes in the houses of the future, with the actor playing the video screen speaking into the camera so that his or her face appears on the TV screen on stage. After a demonstration of this technique, ask students to work together on a piece which uses TV screen interaction. Show the pieces to the rest of the group.

If possible, position a second television on the stage and play the video recording of advertisements that was shown to the class earlier, with the sound turned down, to accompany the drama.

Hand out Project Sheet Eight *Video-tronic*. This project sheet asks students to imagine that they are watching television three hundred years into the future. The adverts have just been interrupted with a special announcement from Killer Queen and Khashoggi announcing the take-over of the world by Global Soft and the outlawing of live music.

In groups students should work on a short scene dramatising this event. They should practise videoing each other's scenes, and will need to work out if they can film in one take or whether they will have to cut in between sheets. Storyboarding can be used to plan a longer scene, which can then be rehearsed and videoed.

Extension activity

Ask students to write and rehearse some Science Fiction or Futurama. Allow them to use the video technique if possible, but also encourage them to introduce other sci-fi elements. Show the drama to another group and ask them to comment on the relationship between the actor and the audience.

TEACHER'S NOTES



The Interactive Drama Lesson

We Will Rock You is a play set three hundred years in the future and references to the enhanced use of the internet are one of the ways in which this is communicated to the audience. What better way then, to link Drama and the Key Skill of *Using Information Technology*. Not only does this allow you to discuss the benefits and limitations of the internet, which is a topic wide enough to turn into a scheme of work on its own, it also allows you to conduct online research, which can contribute to both written coursework and group improvisation.

The first session is designed to be carried out in the IT room, the second in the Drama Studio.

Session 1

1. Ask students to work out particular questions about the show or about Queen which they want to find the answer to online. Or ask them to write questions relating to a piece of group improvisation (based on the show) which they wish to research.
2. Ask the students to add the following questions to their lists: is the internet a bad influence on young people? In what ways is the internet useful in everyday life? What are the dangers of the internet? Do you think that the world will one day be like Planet Mall with only digital and downloadable music available?
3. Spend some time familiarising students with how the internet works and set some ground rules for its use. Although some students will no doubt be proficient, some will not have a computer or an internet connection at home. Working in a small group with those who need extra help might be a way round this.
4. Ask the students to visit some of the sites below in pairs and to write down the answers to the questions on their lists.
5. After fifteen minutes, ask students to shut down their computers and to discuss with the rest of the group which sites they found useful, difficult or fun.
6. Now ask the pairs to plan a movement piece called 'The Website' in their notebooks. Students should concentrate on what the piece will look and sound like. Ask the class to bring these to the next session. They may also wish to bring in music for the work.
7. Pairs discuss their ideas for their piece with the pair next to them and ask for comments. Any additional ideas should be noted.
8. After another fifteen minutes, students turn the machines back on and continue with their research. At the end of the session, allow students to discuss the answers to the questions they posed at the beginning of the session.

TEACHER'S NOTES



The Interactive Drama Lesson (cont.)

Session Two

1. In small groups, students work on a piece called 'The Website'. These should be developed from the planning in the last session. Ask students to use tableaux, mirroring, matching, slow motion, freeze frames and dance drama to create these pieces.
2. Next discuss, as a whole class, the findings from the last session. Use this discussion to refresh the group's memory. Decide how the research will be used. (For example, in a display or in essays about the rehearsal process, or to add to the narration needed for a work in process.) Use this as an opportunity to discuss the use of the internet in more detail.
3. On a large sheet of paper, ask the class to contribute words which describe the uses and problems associated with the internet. Pin up the words so that everyone can see them.
4. Back in their groups, students add some or all of these words to their movement piece. A narrator or a 'surfer' could be used for this purpose, or the whole group could have lines to say.
5. Ask each person to develop their own 'web person' character. Practise some automated movements or gestures with the group. Next ask them each to find a freeze frame for that character with the rest of their group. Groups then add these character freeze frames to the piece they have already created.
6. Ask that when you point to a frozen 'web person' they should speak a line commonly found on the internet. Give the groups some time to work this out. For example, some lines might be: Click here for more information, Return to Top, Email me, Enlarge image, Skip intro, Downloading file. A simple gesture or movement, such as a bow or a wave, should accompany the line. Pin up the lines on the display board if you can.
7. Allow groups to put all of these elements together into a movement piece. Explain that they should end with the freeze frame of web characters, when you will point to (or click on!) each actor in turn to bring them to life. (Alternatively, the 'surfer' / narrator could perform this function.)
8. Evaluate the work in pairs asking students to note down successes and problems in their notebooks.

TEACHER'S NOTES



The Interactive Drama Lesson (cont.)

Interactive sites

www.queenonline.com/wewillrockyou

Click on the menu for information on the show, including music. On this site you can get story background, information on Queen and all the creative team and cast. You can also find out how to get to the theatre, see images from the show, and buy tickets and souvenirs. There's an interactive section which lets you enter questions for the cast, post reviews and go on a backstage tour.

<http://queenzone.com/queen/quiz/mercury.html>

An interactive Quiz about Queen, with music.

<http://www.queenonline.com>

To hear tracks from the We Will Rock You cast album, click the banner: 'Hear the new WWRV Cast Album!' Click the play button and on the track required. Make sure speakers or headphones are on and the volume is adjusted.

<http://www.wvry.com>

The Official Queen Radio Station. Listen to Queen tracks.

The History of Queen

<http://www.queenzone.com/resources/biography/default.asp>

The history of Queen

<http://www.queen-interviews.com/21-magic-years.htm>

Queen timeline

<http://www.classicqueen.com/charts/singles.html>

More about Queen and their singles

Other Queen Sites

<http://www.queen-interviews.com/articles.htm>

Links to lots of different articles about Queen.

http://www.queenwords.com/gallery_albums.shtml

Information on Queen's albums.

<http://www.scaruffi.com/music/chrono.html>

An Italian website about the history of rock music

<http://www.queenfind.com/>

Search for official and unofficial Queen sites

<http://www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Arena/4268/Queenlyrics>

<http://www.lyricsfreak.com/q/queen/lyrics.htm>

Queen lyrics

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