

Newham's Every Child a Theatre Goer



ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA **At the Barbican Centre, London**

Antony and Cleopatra written around 1606 is one of Shakespeare's great historical love stories. Antony is captivated by Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt. Gossip and scandal leads to plots of murder and battles.

Mark Antony, Octavius Caesar and Lepidus, having defeated Julius Caesar's assassins at Philippi, now rule the Roman Empire as a triumvirate.

While in Alexandria however, the ageing Antony has become captivated by Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt (and mother to Julius Caesar's illegitimate son, Caesarion). The gossip and scandal this is creating both amongst Romans in Alexandria and at home in Rome gives rise to dissention between Octavius and Antony, whose behaviour is felt to be debauched and 'un-Roman'. At the same time as the power of the triumvirate is being challenged by a dissatisfied senator, Pompey, Antony hears news from Rome that his wife, Fulvia, is dead. These two issues together force Antony to return to Rome and take up his responsibilities as a triumvir again.

Once back in Rome, Antony seems less controlled by his fascination for Cleopatra and, in an attempt to strengthen the triumvirate and cement his political alliance with Octavius following a quarrel, he agrees to marry Octavius's sister, Octavia. This news drives Cleopatra into a jealous rage.



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BROKEN ALLIANCES

On the brink of another bloody civil war against Pompey's forces, Antony and Octavius manage to negotiate a peace and they, along with Lepidus, feast with Pompey in celebration.

Antony and Octavia then leave for Athens, where Antony has been summoned to quell a rebellion by the Scythians. No sooner have they arrived there than Antony learns that Octavius has ignored the agreed peace treaty, has taken arms against Pompey once more, is plotting against Lepidus, the third member of the triumvirate, and has also spoken critically of Mark Antony. Enraged, Antony sends Octavia back to Rome to act as a go-between but also prepares for war against Octavius.

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WAR

Octavius learns that Antony has returned to Alexandria and, with Cleopatra, has appeared enthroned in the market place, crowning themselves and their children as kings and queens. Octavius declares war on Egypt and, despite warnings not to fight at sea, Antony agrees that the two navies will meet for a sea battle at Actium.

The Egyptians, under Antony's command, lose when he deserts the battle to follow Cleopatra's fleeing ships. Antony is ashamed and in despair at his own unsoldierly behaviour. But when he hears that Octavius is planning a secret peace with Cleopatra at the expense of Antony's own life, he has Caesar's messenger whipped and rouses himself for a second battle in which he is victorious.

Before the third and decisive battle, many of Antony's soldiers desert him fearing bad omens,



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including his most loyal friend Enobarbus. A disappointed Antony sends after Enobarbus all the treasures he had left behind on his desertion, and Enobarbus is so stricken with shame that he dies.

Having won the initial battle by land, Antony prepares to face Octavius's forces again at sea.

THE ENDING

The Egyptian navy deserts, leading the defeated Antony to believe that Cleopatra has betrayed him to Octavius. She is so angry that she retreats to her monument and sends false word to Antony that she has committed suicide.

Appalled, and echoing the suicide of the conspirator Brutus at Philippi, Antony begs a faithful servant to hold his sword while he falls upon it. Unwilling to do so, the servant, Eros, kills himself. Antony then attempts suicide but fails, leaving himself badly wounded.

A messenger arrives from Cleopatra, telling Antony of her deception. Antony instructs his guards to take him to Cleopatra's monument where he is raised up to the top of the monument to die in her arms.

Having persuaded Octavius that she will surrender, but fearful of capture and the shame of being exhibited as a defeated enemy through the streets of Rome, Cleopatra holds a poisonous snake to her breast and dies, along with her faithful maids.



'This Antony & Cleopatra is the best I've ever seen'

EVENING STANDARD

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PERFORMANCE TIMES

Antony and Cleopatra
30 November 2017, 7.15pm

Schools may book subject to availability.

TEACHER PRE-SHOW INFORMATION AND ACTIVITIES

The RSC 2017 production of Julius Caesar is a timely portrayal of an empire in political crisis, searching for leadership and questioning the political system. We suggest you visit www.rsc.org.uk/antony-and-cleopatra to find out more about the play and try one of the introductory exercises in our **Antony and Cleopatra pack** before watching the performance, to introduce the story and the themes in the play.

A-Level students may also want to explore some of the films we created on our **For the Good of Rome** web pages and take part in our Film Challenge.

TICKETS AND BOOKING

To book free tickets for year 8 or 9 pupils for any of these productions, please contact the Barbican on **020 7638 8891**, and quote everychild. Please specify how many tickets are required for pupils and how many for accompanying adults. The allowance for schools is one free ticket for every child in the year group the offer is made to, with a notional ratio of one adult ticket for every 10 pupils. If a higher adult ratio is required, please speak with the box office about this when booking, specifying your requirements. Tickets are subject to availability at time of booking.

CANCELLATION

Once tickets are secured and booked, the expectation is that school groups will attend the performance(s). In previous years of this programme, there were a small number of occasions where tickets were booked by schools but not used; ie 'no shows'. Clearly, this is completely unacceptable, both for the theatre and in terms of the reputation of Newham Council.

For this reason, bookings may be cancelled a minimum of eight weeks in advance. Cancellation at short notice, or non attendance by a whole group or a significant proportion of a group, will result in a charge to the school concerned of £10 per unused ticket. NB a significant proportion is defined as 10% of the tickets booked.

Acceptance of this cancellation process is a condition of taking part in the Every Child a Theatre Goer ticket offer.