

# Rock Bottom

Junior Script

by

Craig Hawes

Speaking Roles 41

Minimum Cast Size 25

Duration (minutes) 80

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## PRODUCTION NOTES

Welcome to ***Rock Bottom!*** I am sure you will enjoy rehearsing and performing this musical comedy, but to aid you in your production it may be helpful to consider the following notes.

### CASTING

The script is written for 41 individual speaking characters and 10 non-speaking characters (Tiddles, the Growlers and the Dinosaur). These range from principal parts to smaller supporting roles. For productions with fewer cast members, condensing of characters is possible. This can be done in numerous ways, but the following example reduces the cast number to 25:

- Reduce Growlers to just Ying, Yang and Klik.
- Reduce Caveys to just Gerty, Glenda and Gladys (reallocating other Cavey lines)
- Reduce Eggheads to just Edison, Edgar and Edwin (reallocating other Egghead lines)
- Double role of Gerty, Glenda and Gladys with Edison, Edgar and Edwin (with costume changes)
- Combine Zig and Zag into just one part, Zig.
- Reduce Mini Miners to just Morris, Argie, Bargie, Cheeky, Grouch (reallocating other Miner lines)
- Use a stuffed animal or puppet held/operated by Lady Lava for Tiddles.
- Use an adult to play the Dinosaur.

To expand the cast, unlimited chorus parts may be used as additional Caveys, Growlers, Eggheads (and possibly Miners) optionally redistributing some lines. An off-stage choir can also be used for chorus backing on songs.

The Growlers work well being smaller as they are the cave children, and if you have a group of younger performers in your cast this role would be ideal for them. Cliff and Coral require a comical and exaggerated portrayal of an eccentric elderly couple with appropriate body language and voice. The role of Lady Lava could be very effectively played by a male actor, as could Gerty, Glenda and Gladys! Please note that as Rex is a baby dinosaur inside an egg, he is not a character but written as an operated puppet with recorded dialogue as part of the tracks provided.

### COSTUMES

The costuming of Rock Bottom can be really simple but effective by keeping most costumes in the same style but in different colours, and by adding Stone Age accessories. Try to avoid the 'explosion in a paint factory' look by picking out a few bright colours for each group of characters. This not only helps the audience identify who is who, but also helps everyone backstage organising the cast!

Most characters can wear the same basic costume: black trousers cut with a zigzag at the knee and an oversized t-shirt on top with bottom and sleeves again cut with a zigzag. Each t-shirt can be decorated with a simplified Flintstone-style animal-print design (randomly

scattered small, rounded black triangles). The colours of these t-shirts identify individual character groups.

Caveys could be in blue with girls wearing a large bone on the top of their head gripped into the hair to look like a bow. Rocky Rockefeller could be dressed similarly but with a giant bone necklace, almost like a Mayor's chain of office. Gerty, Glenda and Gladys could be in pink with matching fur handbags and headscarves. Growlers could be in green with huge, brown caveman-style wigs, each carrying an optional caveman club.

The Timekeepers need to stand apart from the others, so perhaps purple tops with green triangles rather than black. A colourful “steam-punk” style can be achieved with a purple top hat dressed with a green material tie around it and funky green glasses.

The Miners could be in red with huge bright yellow initials on their shirts and a plastic helmet painted or decorated to look stone or wood-fashioned. A pickaxe also makes a fun optional extra for each miner!

The Cobblestone Family could be in yellow, Cliff in an old man's wig and glasses with an orange tie, Coral with a bone in her hair and a bone necklace with an off the shoulder Wilma Flintstone-style dress. Zig and Zag can be dressed like the growlers but in yellow and perhaps with slightly different wigs - hair must be done neatly under their wigs ready for the reveal at the end after they have evolved. At this point, the twins return to stage in the same costume but without the wig and with glasses and possibly a tie. Bobby is slightly different to everyone else with a plain yellow T shirt and furry orange waistcoat over the top - perhaps some fur also tied round his head, and orange rather than black trousers with the triangular pattern on.

All the 'Baddies' could be dressed within the black/white/red colour scheme. The Juans in black tops with red triangles, red trousers and huge Mexican sombreros and moustaches. Eggheads in white tops with 'mad scientist' wigs and glasses. A black top with white triangles, a bowler hat and little black moustache for Gravel - a sort of Charlie Chaplin look. He may even sport a small white apron for his domestic duties. Tiddles can be played by a small child in a tiger costume with full face paint and a collar and lead. Finally Lady Lava in a long black Cruella De Vil-style dress, black and white animal print around the collar, and mad, bright-red wig, reminiscent of an erupting volcano, to emphasise her hot-headed, explosive personality!

Finally, the Dinosaur (Rex's Mum), could be a giant mascot costume, but would work just as well as an art project using a papier-mâché box head with blue onesie and gloves.

## **STAGING**

This production can be staged effectively with very simple scenery. Large flats, brightly painted to look like rocks and caves, are incredibly eye-catching set against a simple black background. A central section at the back can incorporate the place sign for 'Rock Bottom' painted on a huge rock stack or arch. Add brightly coloured doors and letter boxes to the caves to give them a fun, Flintstone cartoon look. In amongst the rocks can be enormous,

brightly-coloured, exotic trees and plants. These flats can remain in position for the entire show, with other pieces of scenery brought in front to represent other scenes. For instance, a large cauldron and wall section with a mammoth on could be positioned in front for the Lady Lava sections. Choosing a different colour for the stones on these pieces would help convey the change of scene, for instance using a purple for the rocks and cauldron. Putting these on wheels helps to make scene changes quicker and easier. For Lady Lava's Loathsome Larval Labyrinth, just adding a large painted sign is a very simple way of conveying the scene change, though other flats depicting tunnels and rock walls could be added if you want to make more elaborate scenery.

This production works well as a one-act musical, but some directors may prefer to split the show into two acts and this is perfectly acceptable. Rock Bottom can easily be performed as a two-act production with an interval following the song "Down Low" in Scene Four. In doing this, "Track A60 Down Low Play Off" can serve as the Act One play off music, then be repeated after the interval as the Entr'acte music for Act Two which would begin with Scene Five.

## **PROPS**

The props in this show can be made as simply or as elaborately as you like, though as with most props, the bigger they are, the better! Many of the props can be made simply using large 2D painted cardboard props or card-mounted prints, such as the light bulb and futuristic objects. The selfie stone block and eye chart could be flats also, but may be more effective as 3D narrow cardboard boxes painted to look like stone.

The mammoth head could be painted onto a large piece of card or wood with a hose for a trunk; it could be a Henry Hoover covered in fur; or it could be a large foam or wire structure covered in fur with huge moving polystyrene eyeballs and a gigantic ducting hose trunk! The cauldron, again could simply be painted as a flat, or could be a large 3D prop.

The Time-Turner is an enormous egg timer and could be created with two plastic goldfish bowls stuck together between a circular polystyrene top and base, sprayed stone-grey. Three large bones instead of wooden struts give it that caveman look, perhaps with some artificial ivy wrapped around. Fill with little golden polystyrene balls and a central mesh inside for them to fall through, and you have an effective working Time-Turner. A painted piece of wood or card would work just as well although would not quite portray the effect of the timer filling at the bottom.

The Juans' rock/stone section during their first appearance is always well-received by the audience if done well, but may initially seem a little complicated and daunting. However, a good bit of prop-labelling and organisation prior to their entry will ensure it is actually as easy as Juan-two-three! To make the rocks, use A2/A3 sheets of stiff card cut and painted to look like rocks and stones. Simply stick or paint a large picture onto each card to depict the rocks eg. a picture of a bed on bedrock, a safety pin and coloured spiky hair for punk rock etc. Then label the back of the cards with a number (identifying which order to hold up the cards), the name of the rock (to assist the performers in getting the names in the correct order) and with a colour allocated to each Juan so they know which rocks are theirs. This way the Juans would have a set of rocks with labels in the colour they have been allocated,

and in the correct order with number one face down on top, then 2, 3, and 4 underneath in order.

The giant egg and Rex dinosaur puppet can be achieved simply using a large papier-mâché balloon and a puppet made from a sock. If you want something more elaborate then plastic eggs and dinosaur puppets can be bought. Paint the egg cream or beige, with darker brown speckling for the authentic look. You might choose to make 2 versions of the giant egg, a complete one for before Rex hatches, and one with a hole for after he hatches so he can pop through it. The string of sausages should be made as large as possible - swimming woggles cut into small sausage shapes and stuffed into a pair of knotted tights is a simple but effective way to create this prop.

Several large bones are used throughout the production as props in various guises—these can be made from large white card, but inexpensive, large plastic bones are easily obtainable from fancy-dress suppliers and can be more effective and time-saving.

Three large bird puppets are used by the Timekeepers in this production, which can either be made or easily and inexpensively purchased. However, for the song “Welcome To My Life”, having the chorus enter with additional bird puppets to operate and perform the song with adds a very effective magical and colourful twist. An alternative would be for the chorus to enter in brightly-coloured bird costumes or feathery headpieces for this song.

Lady Lava’s wrinkle mask is simply an old lady latex mask cut to cover just the top of the face (forehead, eyes, nose and cheeks) allowing the performer to speak freely. To make this mask easier to apply on stage whilst wearing a wig, it can be attached to a pair of glasses so that it can be popped on and off quickly.

Finally, at the end of the production Lady Lava gets her wish for youth as she becomes a baby. This is represented by a baby doll with a nappy and if possible a small scale version of Lady Lava’s wig.

## **CHOREOGRAPHY**

Each musical number is designed to have movement, and even simple choreographed moves will bring the songs to life. For maximum effect, the whole cast is intended to perform most of the songs and dances on stage as chorus, whether they are in the preceding drama or not. Of course this is at the discretion of the director and can depend on available space. Choreography of musical numbers is left to the creativity of your own director/choreographer so that moves can be designed to more accurately match the ability of the individual cast. However, excellent example choreography and useful advice for all the musical numbers in this show can be found on the highly recommended Choreography DVD, **Dance It!**

## MUSIC

All the music required to stage this production, including sound effects, is found on the two Backing Track CDs. Incidental music including Overture, Play On, Play Off and Scene Change tracks, are provided to allow cast and chorus entrances, exits and scene changes to occur smoothly without pauses, resulting in a slick performance. A vocal recording is provided as a guide and to enable the swift learning of songs. The backing tracks without vocals are ideal to use in rehearsals and performances. Directors may, if they wish, allow a choir or separate character to accompany or replace a soloist in a song or section intended for a soloist. This may be necessary if certain cast members are unable to perform the solo themselves or a larger chorus is required to be employed more fully. However, I highly recommend the use of 'sound cue' software or iPad app (such as Go Button) which allows for instant playback at the touch of a screen. This results in smooth and seamless playback of all sound cues for an entire show and is often easier, more flexible and more reliable than using a CD player.

*Note from the editors: for technical reasons the backing tracks and vocal tracks have each been split onto two CDs, with tracks A1-A70 on disc A and tracks B1-B35 on disc B. The final 15 tracks on disc B are SFX (sound effects) and VO (voiceovers) for use in conjunction with a live pianist. See the Performance Score for more details of how and where to use these.*

A brand new product; a CD-ROM or download of all the songs called **Sing it!** is also available. This CD-ROM or download can teach the songs to the children without any teacher input. Children can use it at school or at home - think of the time it will save you! Most schools use it in class on an interactive white board or in the school hall on the overhead projector to allow full cast practice.

## LOCAL AMENDMENTS

The director may, at their discretion, amend Lady Lava's spoken potion ingredients in the song "Spell On You" to include local references such as teachers' names (eg. "The stinky socks of Mr Smith") on the proviso that the new lines rhyme and scan appropriately. In addition to the obvious [LOCAL TOWN] mention, you may need to localise other names such as Specsavers opticians, Birdseye or Black and Decker, and also change the word nappy to diaper!

## AND FINALLY...

This musical comedy is intended to be a fun show to rehearse and perform, so remember to enjoy yourselves and your audience will, too! My very best wishes for a successful and enjoyable production.

**Craig Hawes**