

A mosaic showing masks worn by a female character (on the left) and a comic character

## MIME OR MURDER?

During the Empire, a style of drama known as mime became very popular. Mime actors wore normal clothes, without masks, and women were allowed to take part. Plays were either very rude or very violent, and the action was as realistic as possible.

At the end of one particular play, a criminal took the place of an actor and was actually tortured to death on stage.

## STARS OF THE SHOW

The Romans didn't think acting was a respectable profession, so actors were usually slaves or freedmen.

But famous actors were treated like heroes, and some became so popular that they were mobbed by their fans. Women weren't allowed to sit near the stage, in case they were tempted to run off with one of the performers.

### INTERNET LINK

For a link to a website with a reconstruction of a Roman auditorium and more information about Roman plays, go to [www.usborne-quicklinks.com](http://www.usborne-quicklinks.com)



These are the ruins of a Roman auditorium in Merida, in western Spain. The stage building is in the middle, with the tiered stone seating on the right.

