



William Shakespeare's

Romeo and Juliet

Directed by Allen O'Reilly, Education Director

Adapted by Richard Garner, Producing Artistic Director

On tour throughout the Southeast United States

January 28th-March 28th, 2008



Pictured: Bobby Labartino as Romeo, Kate Graham as Juliet. Photo by Bill DeLoach.

Romeo and Juliet cast

| | |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| Bobby Labartino | Romeo/Fighter |
| Kate Graham | Juliet/Fighter |
| Dave Quay | Tybalt/Peter/Friar Laurence |
| Scott Warren | Mercutio/Apothecary |
| Enoch King | Benvolio/Father Capulet/Friar John |
| Erin Considine | Nurse/Lady Capulet/Prince |
| Amee Vyas | Female Understudy |
| Eric Mendenhall | Male Understudy |

There are six actors in our tour who play all of the characters in our fifty-minute adaptation. While Shakespeare's words and plot remain the same, the tour is a wonderful opportunity to place Shakespeare's timeless themes of love and hate in a more contemporary context. With that idea in mind, this year's production is placed in the vibrant and diverse city of New Orleans during.....

MARDI GRAS!



Capulet Family

Lady Capulet
Lord Capulet
Juliet
Tybalt
Peter
Nurse
**Employee and friend*

Montague Family

Lord and Lady Montague
Romeo
Benvolio
Mercutio **Friend only*
**Prince is the cousin of Mercutio!*



SYNOPSIS

As *Romeo and Juliet* opens, a petty skirmish is on the verge of erupting into violence between servants of two noble Verona households “both alike in dignity.” The two families, the Capulets and the Montague’s, have been feuding for a long time, perhaps generations. Not even the local government is successful in curtailing the feud. In an act driven as much by frustration as policy, the Prince gives the brawling parties an ultimatum: end the violence or suffer the penalty of death.

For the young Romeo, a Montague, the feud is an annoying distraction. His attention is focused instead on the delightful Rosaline, a girl for whom he has developed an intoxicating infatuation. He is so taken with this girl that his friends, Benvolio and Mercutio, tease him relentlessly about it.

When old Capulet holds a ball where Paris, the Prince’s cousin, is introduced to Juliet, Romeo and his friends crash the party to catch a glimpse of Rosaline. On seeing Juliet, however, Romeo forgets all about the other girl; he is so smitten by Juliet, that she displaces poor Rosaline completely in Romeo’s mind. Moreover, Juliet falls immediately for Romeo.

Later, Romeo sneaks into the garden below Juliet’s window and, overhearing her confess her feelings for him, declares his love and devotion to her. They decide to marry secretly the next day, aided by Juliet’s nurse and are wed by Romeo’s confessor, Friar Lawrence, who agrees to perform the service in the hope that the marriage will bring about an end to the family violence.

After the ceremony, the feud between the two families begins again. Romeo discovers his friends in a fight with Juliet’s cousin, Tybalt. When Tybalt kills Mercutio, Romeo kills Tybalt, an action for which he is banished from the city, narrowly escaping death sentence.

Prompted by the outbreak of violence, and unaware of Juliet’s marriage to Romeo, old Capulet expedites his plans for his daughter’s marriage to Paris. He arranges the wedding for the next day. Desperately seeking an answer to this impossible situation, Juliet approaches Friar Lawrence for help. He convinces her to take a sleeping potion that will make her appear dead to her parents and allow her, as if reborn, to reunite with her banished husband. The well-meaning Friar promises to get word of this plan to Romeo so the young lover will understand the situation and know what to do.

Unfortunately, the Friar’s effort fails and Romeo never receives the crucial message. On hearing the news of Juliet’s “death,” he goes to the tomb where she has been prepared for burial. Stricken with grief, he drinks a vial of poison and dies. Juliet’s sleeping potion wears off and she wakes to find Romeo dead. As she realizes what has happened, she stabs herself with Romeo’s dagger and dies, just as Friar Lawrence arrives at the tomb.

The tragedy has an enormous effect on the Montague and Capulet households. The families are so devastated by the deaths of their children that they agree never to fight again.

THE SETTING

New Orleans is a place rich in culture, diversity, and romance; a perfect setting for Shakespeare's masterpiece of young love. This city is often referred to as one of the most unique city in America.



The French Quarter

New Orleans is the birthplace of jazz, and jazz music as well as other crescent city music traditions such as zydeco and the blues will play a big part in our production. Georgia Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* will focus on the class differences in the story. The New Orleans setting again serves as a perfect vehicle for this approach. Juliet is from the wealthy Garden district with its antebellum homes, and debutante balls. Romeo is from the other side of the canal, the lower ninth ward. An extremely diverse area recently ravaged by hurricane Katrina.

In fact, because of the high percentage of Katrina evacuees that will see the tour, it is our hope that this approach will resonate with many of those who have been relocated. So New Orleans, like Shakespeare's Verona, is a city divided by culture, class and tragedy. It is a place that holds a special significance in the minds and hearts of many of our audience members.

Perhaps the most interesting similarity between Verona, Italy's Renaissance tradition and modern New Orleans is the yearly carnival celebrations held in each city; in New Orleans it is the world famous Mardi Gras. In Italy, it is called a carnival. In particular the use of masks is a shared tradition, and the use of

Mardi Gras masks will be a part of our production, particularly in the party scene at the Capulet house.



The Lower 9th Ward post Katrina

A New Orleans Glossary:

While Georgia Shakespeare's tour will remain faithful to Shakespeare's original text, it is fun to be aware of some of the terms from an average New Orleanian's life! Here are some terms:

- Ball (bal masque, tableau ball)
A Mardi Gras Krewe's formal event and dance.
- Big Easy
"The Big Easy" became the official nickname for New Orleans after a contest was run years ago. Historically, New Orleans has weathered primitive conditions, yellow fever, hurricanes, floods, wars - Being a survivor was something to celebrate.
- Cajun(kay' jun)
French Acadians that settled here from Canada.
A nickname for New Orleans.
- Crescent City
A nickname for New Orleans, originating from the shape of the Mississippi River as it bends around the city.
- Creole (cree'ole)
Descendants of the French, Spanish and Caribbean slaves and natives; also has come to mean anyone whose ancestry derives from the mixed nationalities in the Caribbean.
- Doubloons (duh bloons')
Aluminum coins stamped with the parade krewe's insignia and theme.
- Flambeaux (flam' bo)
Lit torches historically carried during night parades
- Krewe (crue)
A Carnival organization's members
- Laissez le Bon temp rouler (Lazay Lay Bon Tom Roulay)
Let the good times roll
- Mardi Gras
Fat Tuesday, the day before Lent... the day to celebrate before the traditional Catholic tradition of sacrificing and fasting during the 40 days of Lent.
- Throws
Trinkets such as beads, cups, and doubloons that are tossed from the floats to the crowds during Mardi Gras parades.
- Vieux Carre (View ca ray') French for "Old Quarter"
A term used for the French Quarter including world-famous Bourbon Street.

Mardi gras Colors: ● = Justice, ● =Faith, ● =Power.

Romeo and Juliet Quick Reference Glossary

“Star-Crossed Lovers”
Lovers born under an unlucky star

“Sirrah”
Servant

“Bite my thumb at them”
An insulting gesture

“Wherefore”
Why (not where)

“Queen Mab”
A fairy queen in Celtic literature

“Envious Moon”
Refers to Dianna, Goddess of chastity

“Zounds”
“By God’s wounds”



Romeo and Juliet Quotables!

Some of Shakespeare’s most famous quotes are found in Romeo and Juliet, many of which can be found in the balcony scene: Act II, Scene 2.

But soft, what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east and Juliet is the sun.

Romeo

O, Romeo, Romeo wherefore art thou Romeo?

Juliet

What’s in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet?

Juliet

Good night, good night, parting is such sweet sorrow, that I shall say goodnight till it be morrow.

Juliet

Here are a few others that may sound familiar.....

A pair of star-crossed lovers.

Prologue

My only love sprung from my only hate!

Juliet / Act I scene 5

A plague on both your houses!

Mercutio / Act III scene 1

O, I am fortunes fool!

Romeo / Act III scene 1

Never was a story of more woe, than this of Juliet and her Romeo.

Prince / Act V scene 3

Pre-Show Activities

Romeo and Juliet is a feast of language, from the insults hurled by the quarrelers, to the puns of Mercutio, to the glorious poetry of Juliet. Perhaps the most fun category for students is the insults! Here's an exercise that gets Shakespeare's syllables in their mouths in a fun, interactive way.

1. Split the class into two groups and have each student compose their own insult from the three columns below. The students should select a word from each one of the columns A, B & C. Have them precede their insult with the words "thou art a".

Example: "thou art a knavish lily-livered manikin!" Have the "A's" hurl their insult at the "B's" and then switch!

| <i>A Adjective</i> | <i>B Adjective</i> | <i>C Noun</i> |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| bawdy | bunch-backed | canker-blossom |
| brazen | clay-brained | clot-pole |
| greasy | fat-kidneyed | dogfish |
| queasy | iron-witted | malkin |
| saucy | onion-eyed | pantaloon |
| reeky | rump-fed | waterfly |
| waggish | horn-mad | gull-catcher |
| prating | sour-faced | rudesby |
| wanton | eye-offending | moldwarp |
| unmuzzled | pale-hearted | scullion |

2. A pun is described in Webster's dictionary as: "The usually humorous use of a word in such a way as to suggest two or more meanings, or the meaning of another word similar in sound." In *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare uses many puns, most notably by Mercutio, who when fatally wounded, responds with: "ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a *grave* man." Note the pun on the word "grave," meaning both "serious" and "dead." The pun use here is both ironic and appropriate, because Mercutio is about to die. Ask your students to construct their own puns enabling them to have fun using words, and to explore the "double meanings" of those words. However, unlike Mercutio and his puns, (the majority of which are bawdy), you can keep it clean!
3. One of the more famous verse lines in Shakespeare is Romeo's:

"But soft, what light through yonder window breaks."

Shakespeare uses both iambic pentameter and blank verse in his writing. However, this is a perfect line of iambic pentameter because it has five stressed syllables and five unstressed syllables. Example: **stressed syllables in bold:**
*"But **soft**, what **light** though **yonder** **window** **breaks**."*

As you can see, there are five **stressed** syllables and five unstressed syllables; hence the name iambic *pentameter* as the prefix "*penta*" means "five." Have your students construct their own verse lines, with five stressed syllables and five unstressed syllables, example: "I **went** to **school** with **my** best **friend** **today**." Students will find this fun and challenging, but just remember it wasn't always easy for Shakespeare either!

Post-Show Activities

1. The Prince states in the final scene of the play “that some shall be pardoned and some punished.” Discuss who you think should be pardoned, and who should be punished. Who is most responsible for the deaths of the two lovers? Is it Capulet and Montague? Are the Friar and the Nurse to blame? Certainly they *meant* well, but their wishful thinking proved disastrous. Do their actions deserve a pardon from the Prince? What about the neglectful Friar John? Should he get off without punishment? Romeo and Juliet are certainly guilty in their own way, but they end up being punished through their own deaths. Who else should be punished or pardoned? No easy task for a Prince or any judge to determine when all, in one way or another, are responsible.
2. Now that you have seen this particular production of *Romeo and Juliet*, compare or contrast other versions of this timeless classic. For example: Franco Zeffereilli’s 1968 film version set in Elizabethan England, or Baz Luhrmann’s 1996 modern retelling set in contemporary Miami. Where does the musical *West Side Story* fit into the picture? It’s fascinating to see where Shakespeare left off and where modern film directors and composers like Leonard Bernstein pick up, taking Shakespeare’s words and ideas to create something vibrant, controversial, and sublime. Compare and contrast Georgia Shakespeare’s version with these other famous treatments.
3. Now it’s time to take the stage! You’ve seen Georgia Shakespeare’s production, you’ve discussed other versions of the play either in film or musical form, and you’ve most likely read the play. By now, you should be experts! Put your expertise on display: have your class act out scenes from *Romeo and Juliet!* Try the balcony scene or the palmer’s scene when Romeo and Juliet first meet. Get your bravest actor to attempt the “Queen Mab” speech, or get the entire class involved by staging one of the plays many duels, utilizing safe weapons like cardboard or balloon swords. Remember, it doesn’t have to be a certain way, so take the words and situations and create your own new version of *Romeo and Juliet!* It is easier than you think! When students act out these wonderful words as opposed to just reading, the possibilities for discovery and understanding are limitless!



Study Guide Creation

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