

SHAKESQUEER THEATER TUCSON

PRESENTS

ROMEO & JULIET

@ the BCC, 101 E. Ventura St.

Sliding Scale

\$5 - \$20

no one turned away for
lack of funds

drinks & snacks
for purchase

Contact us for questions
shakesqueertheater@gmail.com

APRIL 8 - 10

FRIDAY, SATURDAY, and SUNDAY

at 7 PM (DOORS at 6 PM)



2022's Romeo & Juliet was built upon a previous 2020 production that was canceled, right before it was set to open, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We'd like to acknowledge the following individuals, all of whom contributed greatly to the play you are seeing tonight: R&J 2020 was directed by Adrian, with technical direction from Adam. The set and the flier, both of which have also been used in the 2022 production, were designed by Olivia May and Jenna Tomasello respectively.

We'd like to offer special thanks to BCC Tucson, the Ventura Street neighbors, Adam & his housemates, People's Theater Collective, the UA Institute for LGBT Studies, and anyone else whose time and resources have made this production possible.

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Cast:

Capulets:

<i>Capulet</i>	GRAY
<i>Cupbearer</i>	LYLE
<i>Gregory</i>	INMN NERUIN
<i>Juliet</i>	MAGGIE
<i>Juliet's Nurse</i>	GLEN
<i>Lady Capulet</i>	CHRISTINA LOTHROP
<i>Sampson</i>	LYLE
<i>Tybalt</i>	EGG

Montagues:

<i>Balthasar</i>	RODIN
<i>Benvolio</i>	LOGAN
<i>Montague</i>	OLIVIA
<i>Romeo</i>	DOMINIQUE GUALAMAN

People of Verona:

<i>Friar John</i>	GRAY
<i>Friar Laurence</i>	HANNAH "HAM" ZWOLENSKY
<i>Mercutio</i>	SOPHIE
<i>Paris</i>	OLIVIA
<i>Unnamed People of Verona</i>	INMN NERUIN SOPHIE VANESSA TOM

Others:

<i>Chorus</i>	ADRIAN
<i>Apothecary</i>	INMN NERUIN
<i>Death Puppet</i>	JULIANA

Production Team:

<i>Bookkeeping</i>	OLIVIA
<i>Choreography</i>	SOPHIE INMN [<i>fight choreography</i>]
<i>Costume coordinator</i>	ADRIAN
<i>Creative direction & writing</i>	INMN NERUIN
<i>Flier</i>	JENNA TOMASELLO
<i>Hairstylist</i>	VANESSA

Production Team [continued...]:

<i>Lighting</i>	DAVE CHRISTINA
<i>Media Team</i>	GRAY MAGGIE WREN
<i>Music</i>	ALYX
<i>Music for Capulet dance party</i>	ADAM
<i>Playbill</i>	WREN INMN NOAH [<i>layout</i>]
<i>Props</i>	ADAM HAM DOMINIQUE INMN
<i>Puppet Construction</i>	JULIANA ELORA TOM ANTHONY
<i>Set design</i>	OLIVIA MAY
<i>Set painting & construction</i>	ADRIAN ADAM JENNA
<i>Site Coordination [BCC]</i>	GLEN LYLE RYAN WREN
<i>Stage manager</i>	HAM
<i>Technical direction</i>	SOPHIE
<i>Technicians</i>	CELESTE EGG

Synopsis



Beware the city of Verona, which hangs on the edge of a great abyss, and whose streets are paved with crystal and stone. The city sounds, at first, blissful: people live communally, sharing all they have according to abilities and needs, and freely exchange bread, herbs, cloaks, tools, and tarot readings in the market at the center of the vertical town. Occasionally, you will see a Veronan peering into the abyss with reverence, for the people of this city believe that demons—sacred creatures of great mystery and knowledge—dwell far below. But, more often than not, their contemplation is interrupted by vulgar yelling and a clatter of swords, for Verona is also the fearsome city of the Montagues and Capulets. These two noble families, clinging to feudal rule, maintain their lavish lifestyles in palaces set apart from the common people. The Veronans, out of pity or disinterest or both, at first agreed to leave them be. But the Capulets and Montagues hate each other, and too often this hatred spills out into the city's jasper and malachite squares. Passersby are, time and again, caught in the fighting and, thusly, the fair-minded and generous Veronans are almost always in mourning: for friends, for kin, and for comrades lost in the senseless bloodshed.

If you decide, after all, that the lure of Verona is too strong, that you want to admire its amethyst taverns and obsidian-thatched huts, and to witness its sweet everyday anarchy, know this: the daughters of the two noble houses—Juliet Capulet and Romeo Montague—are about to step into the fray.

They will not survive it.

Act I

“From ancient grudge break to new mutiny”



The play opens with the white-and-silver clad Capulets, white-and-gold clad Montagues, and black-clad people of Verona on stage. A demon-like creature called the Chorus steps out of the shadows and, taking center stage, briefs the audience on the long-simmering Montague-Capulet feud and explains exactly what will happen over the course of the play: Romeo and Juliet will meet, fall in love, die.

Next we see Gregory and Sampson, Capulet servants, in the market. As Gregory teases Sampson they encounter Balthasar, a Montague servant. Since the people of Verona have promised to punish whichever noble family instigates yet-another street brawl, Gregory and Sampson try to trick Balthasar into quarreling. Seeing the ruckus begin, a few people of Verona run off to get help but, in their absence, Gregory and Sampson are emboldened by the arrival of Tybalt, a hot-headed and swaggering Capulet. Balthasar is successfully tricked into coming to blows but, shortly after, Benvolio, a Montague, arrives, and—concerned about the consequences—attempts to pacify the situation. Tybalt thinks Benvolio is taking part in the fight and jumps in, and when Benvolio attempts to get Tybalt to help break up the fight he refuses. The heads of the Montague and Capulet households arrive and join the fight, but a group of Veronans also show up to stop it—this is the third citywide brawl that has erupted due to the feud, and the people of Verona are threatening the noble houses with death if they fight again.¹

After the fight is quelled, Montague and Benvolio talk about Romeo who, they’ve noticed, has been sad and withdrawn. Romeo shows up shortly after Montague leaves, frustrated by the constant fighting and heartsick because her crush Rosaline² doesn’t seem at all interested in her. Benvolio offers to help Romeo forget Rosaline by introducing her to other possible suitors.

¹ *Aristocratic dueling was a huge problem in Renaissance-era Europe and many efforts attempted to suppress it. It caused disruptions in urban life and allowed aristocrats to threaten people of lower classes when disagreements occurred, presupposing any small protections the already noble-favoring law provided.*

² *One historical suggestion is that Rosaline, described by Shakespeare as choosing chastity and “forsworn to love,” was trying to become a nun. Many people sought out convents or monasteries as an escape from compulsory cis-hetero-sexuality and monogamy either because they were gay, trans or non-binary, a-sexual, or un-interested in marriage, or the particular marriages they were assigned to. Women and people viewed as women would also*

Capulet invites Paris, an upstart commoner who hopes to take his place among the nobles, to marry Juliet. Through this, Capulet aims to gain favor with the people of Verona and an advantage over the Montagues. The Capulets host a masquerade ball in an effort to introduce Paris and Juliet. Capulet commands a servant to distribute invitations throughout Verona. The servant encounters Benvolio and Romeo, but is having a hard time reading Capulet's penmanship, so Romeo has to read the invitation. Romeo learns that Rosaline has been invited to the ball, and sees it as a further opportunity to woo her. The servant tells them they're welcome as long as they aren't Montagues, so Romeo and Benvolio make a plan to disguise themselves and attend.

At the Capulet palace, tucked deep within the abyss, Lady Capulet tells Juliet that her family would like her to marry Paris. Juliet is unsure about the idea, but agrees to meet him. Meanwhile, Juliet's boisterous nurse revels in embarrassing anecdotes about Juliet when she was a child.

Romeo, Benvolio, and their friend Mercutio, a beloved Veronan, wend their way through the abyss and toward the party. Romeo complains about heartsickness and doesn't get the hint when Mercutio flirts with her. Mercutio, frustrated, hears Romeo make a comment about a dream she had and launches into a speech about Queen Mab, the fairies' midwife, intended as another form of flirtation. Mercutio dreams of love with Romeo, but Romeo dreams of the grim consequences that could come from attending the party. Still, their spirits high, the three friends journey on.

Capulet welcomes his guests—including Romeo and friends, all masked—to the ball. The Capulets and many guests wear elaborate, decorative horns—an attempt to, for a brief moment, find themselves a little bit closer to the sacred demons that haunt the abyss. After Juliet is introduced to Paris, everyone takes their places for a traditional court dance. Rosaline deflects Romeo's attempt to dance with her, and Romeo is paired with Juliet by chance (of course, attraction sparks!). Tybalt recognizes Romeo's voice and wants to fight, but Capulet intervenes, suggesting that the ball is not the time and place. Romeo asks Mercutio and Benvolio to distract Paris so she can spend time with Juliet alone, and they profess their attraction to one another,³ then make out. The nurse interrupts them, saying Juliet's mother would like a word with her, and Romeo learns from the nurse that Juliet is a Capulet. After the ball, Juliet asks the nurse about Romeo's identity and discovers that she's a Montague.

become nuns to obtain an education or escape their social strictures. Any of these are possible explanations for Rosaline's disinterest (or she just didn't like Romeo).

³ *Fun fact: the fourteen-line conversation before Romeo and Juliet kiss forms a shared sonnet.*

Act II

“Swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon”



In an interlude, Romeo and Juliet stand on stage. The Chorus, brandishing a dagger, scampers out of the shadows to move the plot along.

Back in the action, Benvolio and Mercutio chase after Romeo, but can't catch up to her. Romeo hops the fence into the Capulet's crystal orchard, and by chance happens upon Juliet's window.⁴ In a soliloquy, Romeo compares Juliet to the sun, to bright gems, to a cave of bats. Romeo overhears Juliet saying that she wishes Romeo weren't a Montague, and that—although it shouldn't matter—she longs for Romeo to throw off her name so they can be together. Romeo speaks up, agreeing to forsake her Montague name, and, in doing so, alerts Juliet to her presence. Juliet reminds Romeo of the mortal danger she is in by sneaking onto Capulet property. They flirt, and Romeo swears by the moon to love Juliet. Juliet warns of the futility of promises, especially ones made by inconstant things like that waxing and waning orb. Their conversation is interrupted by Juliet's nurse, and they make plans to communicate the next day, using the nurse as a go-between.

Romeo visits Friar Laurence, the spiritual leader of the city and a skilled botanist, who is Romeo's friend and mentor. The friar expounds on the ways in which life and death, medicine and poison, are double-edged and intertwined. Romeo asks the friar for advice on her newfound love for Juliet. Although the friar chides Romeo for how quickly her affections have shifted from Rosaline to Juliet, they say they'll assist Romeo and that it might be a good thing, since the discord between the two noble houses has caused so much tragedy for the people of Verona. As he speaks, he motions toward a portrait of a loved one who was killed during a Montague-Capulet brawl.

In the market, Benvolio tells Mercutio that Tybalt has challenged Romeo to a duel to the death. Mercutio is worried, since Tybalt is one

⁴ Yes, this is the famous balcony scene. But listen carefully—it's far more beautiful than you might expect.

of Verona's best fighters and Romeo likely can't win against him. When Romeo arrives, Mercutio teases her about disappearing after the party.⁵ They wrestle playfully until they're interrupted by the nurse, who asks to speak to Romeo. The nurse warns Romeo that he'll harm her if she treats Juliet poorly, and Romeo demonstrates her good intentions by suggesting that she and Juliet marry that very afternoon, at the friar's, if Juliet agrees. The nurse leaves to share Romeo's proposal with Juliet.

Juliet sits at the tarot table in her bedroom, shuffling and turning over cards. The nurse arrives and, after teasing Juliet, shares Romeo's proposal. Juliet, given leave to go to confession, decides to meet Romeo at the friar's and marry her. As she rises from her table to get ready, Juliet reveals one of the tarot cards from her spread: the Lovers. With Juliet gone, the Chorus crawls out from behind the bed and picks up another card, revealing it to the audience: it is Death.⁶

At the friar's, Romeo dresses for the wedding ceremony. The friar has a moment of foreboding, but writes it off as mere anxiousness. Romeo and Juliet kneel before Friar Laurence, who marries them in a traditional Veronan chain-exchanging ceremony.

⁵ *While teasing Rome, Mercutio uses the phrase "wild-geese chase." Shakespeare is often credited as the originator of this phrase, among many others (including "heart of gold," "in a pickle," and the entire knock-knock joke genre). But, as Graeber and Wengrow write in The Dawn of Everything, "many of Shakespeare's most brilliant turns of phrase turn out to have been common expressions of the day, which any Elizabethan Englishman or woman would be likely to have thrown into casual conversation, and whose authors remain as obscure as those of knock-knock jokes – even if, were it not for Shakespeare, they'd probably have passed out of use and been forgotten long ago."*

⁶ *If Juliet at her tarot table reminds you of the wedding-dress-clad vampire in Angela Carter's "The Lady of the House of Love," this is intentional. In fact, much as this staging of Romeo & Juliet alludes to Carter, the Carter story references Romeo & Juliet, calling the vampire's bedroom in a crumbling castle, "the heart of Juliet's tomb." In Carter, the Lovers and Death cards also make an appearance, laid out and turned over by "a girl who is both death and the maiden."*

Act III

“A plague o’ both your houses”



Here’s where things get messy.

Benvolio and Mercutio are in the market, despite Benvolio’s nervousness about being in public—tensions with the Capulets are high. Mercutio teases Benvolio for his concerns, suggesting that Benvolio is incredibly prone to aggression (despite always trying to break up fights), a joke that Benvolio does not get. Tybalt and a servant arrive and ask about Romeo. Mercutio responds antagonistically, attempting to bait Tybalt into a fight that they believe will inevitably occur between Tybalt and Romeo. Romeo shows up and expresses a deep love for Tybalt, although she doesn’t explain why, unable to reveal that she’s now married to a Capulet. Tybalt, outraged, tells Romeo that he will kill her if she doesn’t defend herself. Mercutio steps in and fights on Romeo’s behalf, hoping to kill Tybalt so that Romeo will never have to fight him. As Romeo attempts to break up the sword fighting, Mercutio is mortally wounded. In their dying breaths, Mercutio curses both the Montagues and Capulets, outraged that the feud has killed them. Tybalt, shaken that he’s killed a prominent Veronan, runs from the scene and Romeo chases after him. They fight and, after Tybalt refuses to yield, Romeo plunges a knife through his throat and flees. A crowd shows up, including the Montagues and Capulets. Lady Capulet insists that Romeo be executed for killing Tybalt, but the people of Verona counter that Tybalt’s life was forfeited when he slayed Mercutio. Still, they hold Romeo responsible for fighting, but are merciful and banish her in lieu of execution. If Romeo returns to Verona, however, it will be on pain of death.

Intermission



Juliet is in her room, excited to spend the night with Romeo, when the nurse arrives and tells her of Tybalt's death and Romeo's banishment. They are both distraught, and the nurse agrees to find Romeo and bring her to the house so she can say goodbye to Juliet.

Romeo, after fleeing the scene of Tybalt's death, goes to the friar for council. The friar informs her that she's been banished and urges her to leave—once everything has cooled down, the friar will figure out how Romeo and Juliet can be together. The nurse arrives and asks Romeo to say goodbye to Juliet before leaving for nearby Mantua. Meanwhile, Capulet meets with Paris and accepts his marriage proposal, decreeing that Juliet and Paris should be married that coming Thursday. Capulet drapes Paris in a silver chain, signifying his acceptance into the noble house.

Romeo and Juliet spend the night together,⁷ awakening before daybreak to the sound of birds. Romeo lingers, kissing Juliet, until the nurse tells him to leave. Moments after Romeo departs, Lady Capulet arrives to inform Juliet that she'll be married to Paris in just a few days, and they'll send an assassin to kill Romeo. Juliet doesn't consent to the marriage, despite Capulet, mid-toxic masculinity tantrum, threatening to disown her unless she agrees. Although the nurse urges Juliet to consent she, now distrusting her nurse, says she'd like to go to the friar for confession⁸ (hoping to ask them for advice rather than absolution) and, if that doesn't work, she'll kill herself. The Chorus crawls out of the shadows and puts a dagger in Juliet's hand.

⁷ *A common trope in ballads from the 16th-18th centuries involved characters inquiring about musical horns and bird noises while having affairs. Often the 'woman' convinces the 'man' that, "I think I hear the noisy cock. I think I hear the Jay/I think I hear Lord Arno's horn. Away Musgrave, away!...Lie still, lie still, my Little Musgrave. Lie still with me till morn/Tis but my father's shepherd boy, a calling a sheep with his horn." (Ref. Child ballad 81 "Little Musgrave") or Romeo + Juliet's, "It's the nightingale not the lark." In most cases the characters are immediately caught because it was the husband's horn or the lark. In these cases either one or both of the lovers were immediately killed by the jealous husband. So it's likely an Elizabethan audience would have seen this scene as potentially the end of the play, expecting that Romeo and Juliet were about to be caught and at least one of them was about to die. Shakespeare plays on that trope here. The fact that the nurse comes in and Romeo escapes would have been a huge plot twist for the original audience.*

⁸ *Something many upper-class women faced in Renaissance-era society was confinement to their houses outside of chaperoned excursions and social invitations. Juliet uses "going to confession" (called "shrift") as a pretext to leave the house suddenly, without scheduled purpose, and with light chaperonage.*

Act IV

“Ready to go, but never to return”



Paris is discussing their upcoming wedding with Friar Laurence when Juliet arrives at the cell. Paris is excited about the marriage but, when Juliet shrugs him off, he doesn't take the hint. After Paris leaves, a distraught Juliet tells the friar she would rather die than marry him. The Chorus reveals a potion to the friar, and Friar Laurence hatches a plan with Juliet in which she'll take the potion to make her appear dead.⁹ The friar will write a letter to Romeo and inform the exile of this plan, so she can come get Juliet once she has awoken from the poison and they can leave Verona together.

Juliet returns home and tells her parents that she consents to marry Paris. She asks her nurse for alone time that evening and debates taking the potion, worrying about walking up trapped in her tomb, and momentarily doubting the friar's motivations. Slipping into a moment of frenzy, she sees the ghost of Tybalt, and both the Chorus and an avatar of death follow her around the stage. Juliet decides to drink the potion, falling into a deep sleep on her bed. The nurse enters Juliet's bedchamber the next morning and, unable to wake her, believes her dead. Friar Laurence arrives under the pretense of the wedding, but in actuality to hide the potion bottle and ensure that the Capulets don't do anything drastic with Juliet's body. The friar quickly makes arrangements to have Juliet brought to the Capulet's tomb.

⁹ *The fact that the play is set in an Italian Catholic society allows for the friar to have access to strange magic like potions of pretend-death. 16th-century Protestants largely viewed Catholicism as being almost pagan in regards to spiritual practices. So making a protagonist a Catholic friar meant it made sense that they would have access to magic.*

Act V

“I defy you, stars!”



Balthasar arrives in Mantua and tells Romeo, still blissed-out on her wedding, that Juliet is dead. Romeo decides to return to Verona, but first seeks out an apothecary to purchase poison from. Romeo convinces the apothecary—an impoverished resident of highly capitalist Mantua—to sell her the poison, although doing so is illegal, by offering the apothecary much-needed gold.

Friar John—who Friar Laurence sent to deliver the letter to Mantua—returns with Friar Laurence’s letter, telling them he was unable to deliver it to Romeo.¹⁰ Worried that Juliet will wake up in her tomb alone, Friar Laurence heads to the churchyard. Paris arrives at the candle-lit tomb with flowers, where he encounters Romeo and Balthasar. Paris attacks Romeo in vengeance for Juliet’s death—as many think it was catalyzed by Tybalt’s—and, after urging Paris to leave peacefully, Romeo kills him. The friar enters the graveyard, but is waylaid by a ghostly spirit. Meanwhile, Romeo enters Juliet’s tomb, where she drinks the poison and dies on top of Juliet’s body. The friar enters the tomb and sees Romeo dead and Juliet beginning to stir. They urge Juliet to leave the tomb, but she asks for a moment to pray over Romeo’s body. After the friar leaves, Juliet thrusts the dagger, given to her earlier by the Chorus, into her heart.

The people of Verona, the Montagues, and the Capulets are awoken by the noises coming from the tomb. They arrive to find Romeo dead and Juliet stabbed to death, rather than poisoned. The people of Verona see the friar lurking nearby and turn to them for answers, while the Montagues and Capulets begin to heal their enmities, although both noble houses will have to answer for the feud. The Veronans mourn friends and family that have been killed in the fighting, and the Chorus arrives to tie up loose ends.

¹⁰*The original reason given in the play is that Friar John is unable to deliver the letter because he was quarantined due to an outbreak of the Bubonic Plague, a thing that Shakespeare often casually alludes to in works, as it was a regular part of people’s lives in Elizabethan England.*



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