



**GUILDFORD
SHAKESPEARE
COMPANY**

 **GUILDFORD SHAKESPEARE COMPANY**
presents

**ROMEO
&
JULIET**

Directed by CHARLOTTE CONQUEST | Designed by NEIL IRISH | Original Music Composed by MARY McADAM
Sound by MATT EATON | Lighting by PETER HARRISON

3 - 24 FEBRUARY 2018
HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, GUILDFORD HIGH STREET
Box Office 01483 304384 | www.guildford-shakespeare-company.co.uk

Saxton Bampfylde  

EDUCATION PACK



INTRODUCTION

This education pack has been written by GSC to complement the stage production of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, staged at The Holy Trinity Church in Guildford for our Winter Season 2018.

The information contained in here can be used as preparation material before seeing the performance or as follow-up work afterwards in the class room. This pack is aimed at final year GCSE or A-level students (or equivalent).

This pack contains:

1. GSC: Our Approach to Theatre
2. The Cast and Creative Team
3. The Story of Romeo and Juliet
4. Our Georgian Setting
5. Romeo and Juliet Facts
6. Violence in Shakespeare's England

School Workshops

Whether you're studying Shakespeare, Priestley, Marlowe, or Chaucer, our bespoke practical workshops will get your students up on their feet experiencing these wonderful plays in the spirit they were created.

"There was clear focus on the dramatic elements of the play, but rooted in the text itself, which was perfect for the GCSE candidates."

Jonathan Parsons, Tormead School.

Our team of professional actors and experienced facilitators deliver a range of techniques from the 'rehearsal room', to explore themes, characters, scenarios, historical context and use of language.

For more details, please see [our website](#), [email us](#), or call **07956 000759**.

GUILDFORD SHAKESPEARE COMPANY OUR APPROACH TO THEATRE

"This company is nothing short of miraculous"

Brian Blessed OBE, GSC Honorary Patron

Guildford Shakespeare Company is an award-winning professional theatre company. A registered charity, we are based in Guildford, Surrey. Established in 2006, GSC is one of the largest producers of home grown theatre in the region.

As well as our main performance programme, we run a huge range of in-house education classes for all ages, develop community Outreach projects and actively work in and with schools across Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire.

Our Vision is to be a centre for performance and production excellence, and go-to the providers of Shakespeare education in the South East.

"This is why British theatre is such a marvel"

Daily Telegraph

We want our 21st Century audiences to experience the same thrill and excitement that Shakespeare's original audiences must have felt when they first saw the Ghost appear in *Hamlet*, the rousing battle cry of Henry V, and edge-of-your-seat anticipation in *The Comedy of Errors*.

At GSC we use diverse and unusual non-theatre venues to create dynamic and challenging productions. From castles to lakes, churches to pubs, our approach merges the audience and acting space so that you're given a visceral, stimulating and, above all, unique theatre experience.

"I am so thrilled to be able to bring my grandchildren to such quality theatre right here on our doorstep. I also think that the proximity to the stage makes the action all the more real and compelling for youngsters" Audience member.

GSC productions are fresh, fast and modern. Our interpretation of Shakespeare is always in the original text and NEVER dumbed down.

We hope you enjoy these fabulous stories as much as we enjoy re-telling them.

All best wishes

Matt & Sarah

Joint Artistic & Executive Producers

THE CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

CAST

The PRINCE

MERCUTIO, kinsman of the Prince & friend of Romeo

PARIS, kinsman of the Prince, suitor to Juliet

Matt Pinches

Jack Whitam

Rikki Lawton

The Montagues

MONTAGUE, head of the Montague family

ROMEO, son of Montague

BENVOLIO, nephew of Montague, friend of Romeo

Jack Whitam

Ricky Oakley

Robert Elkins

The Capulets

CAPULET, head of the Capulet family

LADY CAPULET, mother of Juliet, wife of Capulet

JULIET, daughter of Capulet

TYBALT, nephew of Lady Capulet

NURSE, of Juliet

Gordon Cooper

Sarah Gobran

Lucy Pearson

Rikki Lawton

Harriet Thorpe

FRIAR LAWRENCE

FRIAR JOHN

Noel White

Matt Pinches

CREATIVE TEAM

Director

Designer

Assistant Designer

Sound Designer

Lighting Designer

Choreographer

Fight Director

Choral Music Composer

Assistant Director

Charlotte Conquest

Neil Irish

Anett Black

Matt Eaton

Peter Harrison

Stuart Winter

Philip d'Orléans

Mary McAdam

Indiana Lown Collins

STAGE MANAGEMENT

Production Manager

Company Stage Manager

Deputy Stage Manager

Assistant Stage Manager

Chris Wilson

Beth Sweeney

Vicky Jukes

Emily Arnold

ROMEO AND JULIET OUR STORY

The ancient feud of two rival families, the Capulets and the Montagues, spills out on to the streets of Verona, fuelled by the fiery Tybalt Capulet. It is broken up by the Queen who threatens death for anyone “who disturbs our streets”.

Later that evening the Capulets hold a great celebration to which everyone in the town is invited, except the Montagues. The reason for the ball is to introduce their daughter, Juliet to a young count, Paris, whom they wish her to marry. The young members of the Montague family, Romeo and his cousin, Benvolio along with their friend Mercutio, decide to attend the event in disguise.

During the ball Romeo sees Juliet from across the room, and is instantly enchanted by her. He woos her to such an effect that Juliet only has eyes for him. Juliet’s cousin Tybalt notices the presence of the Montagues, but Capulet reminds him of the Queen’s the warning and the party comes to an end without a fight.

Romeo sneaks back into the garden, where he hears Juliet on her balcony talking to herself about the danger of loving an enemy. Their overwhelming attraction for one another results in the exchange of vows of love and they plan to marry in secret the next day.

That morning Romeo confesses his love to Friar Lawrence and begs him to marry them. The Friar considers that the marriage might end the feud between the families and bring peace to Verona and agrees to marry them. Once married, they go their separate ways, until they may be secretly together that night.

However, before they can meet, Tybalt tries to pick a fight with Romeo, but when Romeo refuses to fight, Mercutio takes up his sword and a street fight ensues. Mercutio is killed and Romeo, enraged at the death of his friend, kills Tybalt and is banished by the Queen.

Before he flees Verona, Romeo and Juliet have their one night together. The strength of their love transcends the uncertain future, yet a shadow hovers over them.

Unaware of this secret marriage, the Capulets continue to go ahead with their plans for Juliet to wed Paris. In a panic, Juliet goes to Friar Lawrence for help. He gives her a sleeping potion that will make her appear “as though dead” and assures her he will get word to Romeo of the plan. When she awakes they will be reunited.

Tragically, the message goes astray; from Benvolio, Romeo receives word of Juliet’s supposed death and blinded by grief, he returns to Verona, determined to be with her in death. At the tomb he meets Paris who has also heard of Juliet’s death. To stop Romeo entering her tomb Paris challenges him and is killed. Then at the side of Juliet’s body, Romeo drinks a fatal draught of poison.

Just as the poison takes its effect, Juliet wakes up. Seeing Romeo dead beside her and using his dagger, she takes her own life.

OUR GEORGIAN SETTING OF ROMEO AND JULIET

Matt Pinches considers the Georgian setting for Romeo & Juliet...

The late 1700s marked the beginning of a change for women in society –equal opportunities started to be talked of for the first time as well as the notion of independence both in action and in thinking. In 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in which she argued that women were not inferior to men; writers such as Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, Ann Radcliffe and George Eliot were reaching new audiences; whilst the Duchess of Devonshire became an active participant in Whig politics. Of course, the most famous name in this period is Jane Austen, who has given us a window into their daily lives; hopes and fears of the daughters, wives and mothers of the middling classes. Today it is Austen's creations of characters like Elizabeth Bennett, Mr Darcy and Mrs Bennett that bring to life this period for us.

In fact, Jane Austen's views on marriage are not greatly dissimilar to those in *Romeo and Juliet*. In *Pride and Prejudice* "The business of her [Mrs Bennett's] life was to get her daughters married", which is not greatly dissimilar to Lord Capulet's, whilst in the same novel Jane urges her sister Elizabeth Bennett to "Do anything rather than marry without affection.", which echoes Juliet's own thoughts of Paris: "I'll look to like, if looking liking move".

Although marriages based on love and on freedom of choice were becoming more common, the overriding scenario for daughters getting married was through the choice of their parents. Roy and Lesley Adkins in 'Eavesdropping on Jane Austen's England', observe that in *Sense and Sensibility*, Elinor Dashwood's brother is surprised that she remarks "The lady I suppose, has no choice in the affair!" to which he reacts with "Choice! – how do you mean?". Women had no legal status in marriage – everything passed from her father to her new husband, even her children would belong to her husband. Lord and Lady Capulet certainly convey this view of what is expected of their daughter: "Well, think of marriage now" she instructs Juliet at the start of the play, "Speak briefly can you like of Paris love?".

Georgian age of consent was fourteen for boys and twelve for girls, which also matches Lady Capulet's comments that girls younger than Juliet (who is written as 13) "are made already mothers...I was your mother much upon these years...". One way around an arranged marriage was to elope - a theme much used in romantic novels of the time, including *Pride & Prejudice*. Parishes across the border in Scotland were a favourite destination for fleeing lovers, where the Scottish laws on marriage were much more relaxed. In Gretna Green one Joseph Paisley officiated in ceremonies for almost sixty years, and he wasn't even a priest but a farmer and fisherman!

Romeo and Juliet are married in secret and plan to elope, thus one can imagine their story easily in this romantic era of clandestine love. Romeo as a male figure in the play is slightly different to his friends with regards to his views on love and its emotions, seeing amidst the chaos and the feuding, beauty and light.

**“She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight;
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment’s ornament”**

Those words could easily be Romeo’s (and indeed are very similar to his first words on seeing Juliet “Forswear it sight, for I ne’er saw true beauty ‘til this night”), but in fact they are William Wordsworth’s from his poem of 1798. Wordsworth, along with poets such as Shelley, Byron and Coleridge were at the forefront of a pan-European movement that we have now come to know as ‘Romanticism’ – a form of expression that centred on emotion and the individual, as well as glorying in the natural world; something certainly akin to the vocabulary of both Romeo and Juliet.

Theirs is a delicate and dangerous love which is echoed in our chosen Georgian period: a time of constant war with other nations, a society that seeks to uphold and defend honour whatever the cost, a new romantic way of seeing the world and those in it through the beauty of words.

Together these two lovers dream and fight for a better world, and that is what makes this play so beautifully timeless.

Practical ideas

Taking another the rivalry between the Capulets and the Montagues as inspiration, can you think of other great rivalries in history? How would this change the production if you applied this setting to the story of Romeo and Juliet?

FACTS ABOUT ROMEO AND JULIET

Did you know that...

- Written in 1595, Romeo and Juliet was 1st published in 1597 in a First Quarto. The Second Quarto was published in 1599 & is the one on which most modern editions are based.
- The folio version of the play does not feature the 'Star-Crossed lovers' prologue.
- The most likely source for Romeo and Juliet is Arthur Brooke's The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet (1562), an English verse translation of an Italian tale.
- There is reference to 'Montagues and Capulets' in Dante's early fourteenth-century work, Divine Comedy, as two warring Italian families.
- Romeo and Juliet was believed to have been written around the same time as A Midsummer Night's Dream & Love Labours Lost.
- 90% of the Romeo and Juliet is written in verse.
- Juliet is only 13 years old, but we never learn Romeo's exact age.
- Shakespeare's play was adapted by Nahum Tate, who changed the story to give it a happy ending.
- Mary Saunderson became the first woman to play Juliet on the professional stage in 1662. Until 1660, women were not allowed to perform in public.
- Diarist Samuel Pepys wasn't a fan of Romeo and Juliet, as he wrote in 1662: "it is a play of itself the worst that I ever heard in my life."
- There have been many adaptations of Romeo and Juliet but the most well-known are probably the musical West Side Story and Baz Luhrmann's 1996 film.

THESE VIOLENT DELIGHTS HAVE VIOLENT ENDS

Considering the violence in Romeo & Juliet...

In the same way that we flock to the cinema to see the spectacular stunts and special effects in the latest James Bond film or Star Wars, the same could be said for the Elizabethan theatre's audience, who were drawn by a larger than life spectacle...and a key ingredient of that spectacle was the violence. Sword fights and associated on-stage physical action staged by the professional artists was a huge draw. Don't forget that on Bankside, the Globe, Rose, Hope and Swan playhouses all rubbed shoulders with bear and bull-baiting, cock and fighting pits.

Consider the first eight plays of Shakespeare's career – The 3 parts of Henry VI, Richard III and Titus Andronicus are blood-soaked tales. A Midsummer Night's Dream, written in the same year as R&J, opens with a threat of death.

Shakespeare's society was a violent one. During her reign, Elizabeth I faced down numerous assassination attempts – a word that Shakespeare himself coined in Richard III. Throughout her reign there was a very real fear from religious fanatics seeking to upturn the established faith, a fever which would culminate 10 years after R&J in the famous Gunpowder Plot. England was almost at constant war – whether it be Spain, France or Ireland.

Weapons were fairly easy to come by. Most young men, even servants, carried a knife or similar. In 1592, the Lord Mayor had to travel to Southwark to quell a riot of apprentices from the Feltmakers Guild at a playhouse.

In the year of Romeo & Juliet, London saw the largest riots for 80 years, when 1000 apprentices took to the streets around Tower Hill to protest about social inequality. A curfew was imposed and the theatres closed. The Lord Mayor even requested that the Theatre and Rose playhouses be pulled down.

The Italian Fencing Master Vincentio Saviolo from Padua had recently set up his fencing school in Blackfriars, and in 1594-5 published the first manual on the art of using the rapier and dagger (many of the terms Mercutio mentions in the play can be found in this manual). Given the number of fights in plays, one of the pre-requisites for being an Elizabethan actor was skill in swordsmanship. R&J has three major sword fights, two of them resulting in loss of life.

Actors also seemed to take their "mad blood", as Benvolio calls it, into the taverns and streets. Christopher Marlowe famously died from an argument over a bill and died from a dagger through the eye in 1593; Ben Jonson, Shakespeare's friend and rival playwright, actually killed a man in 1598; whilst one William Whyte claimed to have

been set upon by four assailants outside the Swan playhouse in 1596, one of them being a Mr William Shakespeare!

Being in the audience could be equally dangerous it would seem. In 1587 there was the report of a child and a pregnant woman being shot from the stage, and in 1613 William Bestry was stabbed in a stage fight at The Fortune playhouse.

But the violence in R&J is not only confined to the streets and the young bloods. Indoors there is also the threat of domestic violence. Lord Capulet is particularly visceral in how he will “drag” Juliet on a “hurdle” to her wedding with Paris if he has to. ‘Carting’ was a regular punishment especially for those who had committed infidelity or incest, where you were dragged through the streets for all to see, with a sign announcing the crime tied to you or the horse.

Capulet also comments that his “fingers itch”: a wonderfully written phrase with terrifying connotations. Wife-beating, although illegal and condemned by everyone, was still prevalent in families. In 1589 Simon White admitted he had beaten his wife and “corrected her with a small beechen wand”, whilst the astrologer Simon Forman said of his wife that “she would not be quiet till I gave her 2 or 3 boxes” – as in a boxing of the ears.

Mothers and daughters were principally seen as the property of their husbands and fathers, and although his role was primarily to protect and nurture, the way a man conducted himself was largely up to him. Capulet himself says he has worked “tirelessly” in his “care” to ensure Juliet be well “matched”. The vitriolic tirade that pours out of him at her disobedience is truly shocking...but again, possibly not as unusual to the audience as it might seem to us watching today.

Common punishments for breaking the law included standing in the pillory, having your ears cut off or even having them nailed to the pillory. The death penalty could be given for crimes ranging from egg stealing to treason. Given these retributions, Lady Capulet’s fervent desire to seek out one she knows can find Romeo and poison him, is perhaps not such a surprise.

The Friar’s solution to Juliet’s plight even proposes a death-like scenario, whilst Juliet herself in the end commits suicide – something which was abhorred at the time as a crime. Those who took their lives were refused Christian burial, buried outside the city walls, and their family’s honour forever tainted.

R&J on the one hand is a time-less, tragic love story with some of the most exquisite poetry about the tenderness of the heart. On the other hand it typifies the aggressive world which in our heroes not only are pitched against but also what Shakespeare and his audience lived with on a daily basis.