Romeo & Juliet Education Pack

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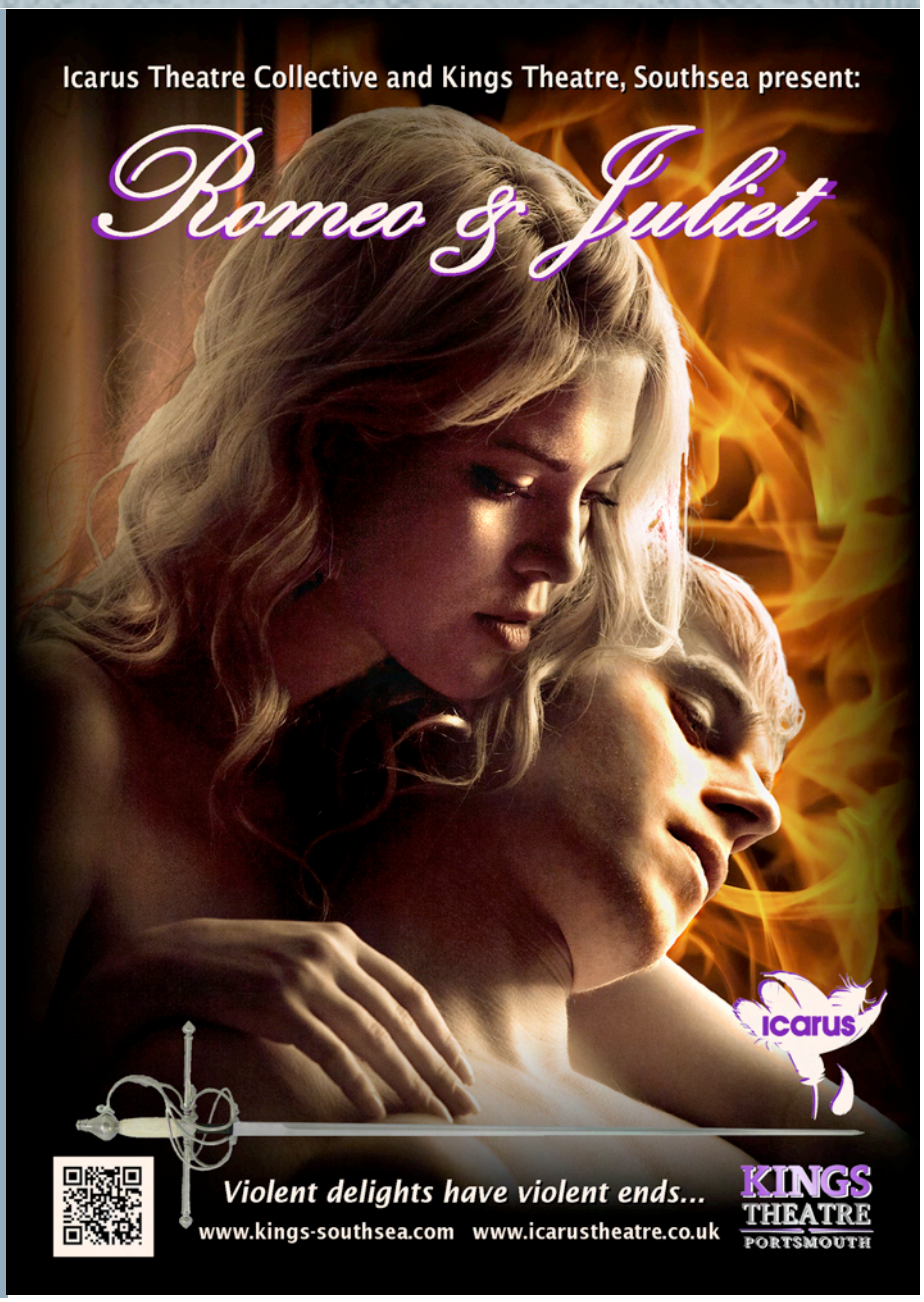


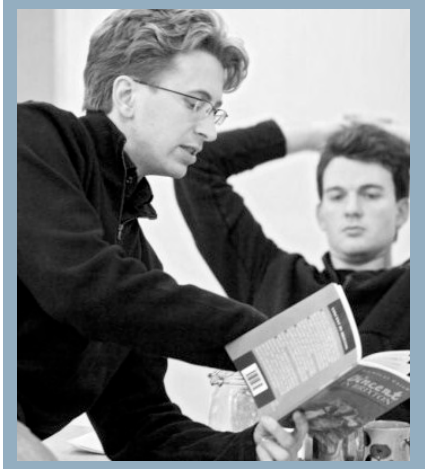
In defiance of their families and in secrecy from their closest friends, hopeful young lives burn amidst a celestial and cataclysmic backdrop. Sun and moon shine down on star-crossed lovers as they hide their passion and sexuality from their warring families and their closest friends. Misadventure, family pride, and ancient quarrels abort and bury the most joyous of beginnings, the most hopeful of love stories as Romeo and Juliet, driven apart, find their world becoming a constricting mausoleum of fate and death.

About Icarus

Supported by South Hill Park Arts Centre and Kings Theatre Portsmouth, Icarus Theatre takes its fourth foray into a national tour of a Shakespeare play since its inception in 2004.

The Icarus Theatre Collective explores the harsh, brutal side of modern and classical drama, creating a contemporary Theatre of the Absurd while maintaining a cohesive, evocative story. Icarus aims to produce two mid-scale tours and one professional fringe production every year using diverse performance formats that are intellectual, visceral or engaging and always kinetic and dynamic: theatre that moves.

Led by Artistic Director Max Lewendel, Icarus teams artists from the international community with British artists, and experienced artists with promising young professionals, to enable both groups to build rapport and grow as artists.



Artistic Director: Max Lewendel

Previous Productions from Icarus Theatre

2004: *The Lesson*, Eugene Ionesco

2004: *Coyote Ugly*, Lynn Siefert

2005: *Albert's Boy*, James Graham

2007/8: *The Lesson*, revival and international tour

2008: *The Time of your Life*, William Saroyan

2009: *Vincent in Brixton*, Nicholas Wright

2009: *Othello*, Shakespeare

2010: *Rip her to Shreds*, Grant Corr

2010: *Journey's End*, R.C Sheriff

2010: *The Madness of King George III*, Alan Bennett

2010/11: *Hamlet*, Shakespeare

2011/12: *Macbeth*, Shakespeare

The Press on Icarus

"It is impossible not to enjoy Icarus Theatre Collective's production of Ionesco's one-act play".
Francesca Whiting, The Stage on *The Lesson*

"Theatre at its best."
Aleks Sierz, The Stage on *Albert's Boy*

"This sexy, steamy drama really hits home, especially after delivering the scorpion sting in its tail".
Philip Fisher, British Theatre Guide on *Coyote Ugly*

"Icarus Theatre Collective's *Macbeth* is an impressive fluid production, with clarity and adroit direction from Max Lewendel. This was a powerful and engrossing production."
Robin Strapp, British Theatre Guide on *Macbeth*

"Icarus Theatre Collective brings vividly to life some of literature's most vibrant language and characters".
Glenn Meads, What's On Stage

Production Style and Influences

Icarus' style is a blend of Stanislavskian psychological probing and physical, kinetic performance inspired by Laban. We work with Shakespeare's text to uncover the motivations of the characters and translate that onto the stage with the help of physical theatre techniques which allow for a dynamic reinvention of the text.

Laban

Rudolph Laban (1879 - 1958)

The Laban Technique is a system of interpreting, describing, visualising and notating all ways of human movement which was created by Laban, a dance-artist, theorist and one of the pioneers of modern dance in Europe. Used as a tool by dancers, actors, musicians, athletes, physical and occupational therapists, it is one of the most widely used systems of human movement analysis. Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) is an outgrowth of Laban's theories that comprises four main categories: body, effort, shape, and space.

1) Body

The body category describes structural and physical characteristics of the human body while moving - which parts are moving, which parts are connected, which parts are influenced by others and general statements about body organisation.

2) Effort

Effort, or what Laban sometimes described as dynamics, is a system for understanding the more subtle characteristics about the way a movement is done with respect to inner intention. The difference between punching someone in anger and reaching for a glass is slight in terms of body organisation - both rely on extension of the arm. Isolating the different qualities of these efforts, when combined with our Stanislavski work, is the main way Icarus uses Laban's regime. He identified that all movement was made from three motion factors: Time, Space and Weight. From these factors, he derived effort actions, which are the basic actions used in everyday life. These actions are useful to analyse or describe movement, as a tool to observe, choreograph, or create and define the physical features of characters from a play.

Sudden/Sustained relative to Time: A swift, rapid move (such as a sneeze) is a 'sudden' move – whereas a continuous, uninterrupted movement (such as a yawn) is a 'sustained' movement. Careful – 'sudden' and 'sustained' doesn't necessarily relate to speed - not all sustained movements are slow!

Direct/Indirect relative to Space: A 'direct' movement is like an arrow, finding the shortest and most direct path to its destination (pointing at something is a very 'direct' move – it's straight, economic and spatially restricted). An 'indirect' movement is the opposite; it's curved and spacious.

Pretend to take a stroll through a garden, lingering and wandering without a purpose to experience an 'indirect' use of space.

Light/Weighty relative to Weight: Weight often looks different to how it feels, but relates to your use of muscular tension. If you drop to the floor like a stone, your use of weight is light, but actually you look heavy (a term we try to avoid) which may be perceived as weighty. Whereas if you lift yourself high up onto your tip-toes like a ballet dancer, you seem 'light' and lifted, but your use of weight may be 'weighty' and strong. Another example: If you try to push a car, your use of weight is 'weighty' – you use a lot of muscular action; whereas if you push a bicycle or trolley, your use of muscular tension can be 'light'.

There are eight ways to combine these three effort categories. Below is a table which shows the term we apply to each combination. These are called 'effort actions'.

	Sudden/ Sustained	Direct/ Indirect	Light/ Weighty
Tap	Sudden	Direct	Light
Punch	Sudden	Direct	Weighty
Flick	Sudden	Indirect	Light
Slash	Sudden	Indirect	Weighty
Glide	Sustained	Direct	Light
Press	Sustained	Direct	Weighty
Float	Sustained	Indirect	Light
Wring	Sustained	Indirect	Weighty

So a calm, reasonable character may 'Float', passing through a scene like a cloud in a very smooth and 'sustained' way, 'indirectly' moving around the stage with very 'light' muscular tension; whereas an aggressive or stubborn character may 'Punch', 'suddenly' shifting focus from one place to another, always choosing a 'direct', specific target and getting there in a very 'weighty' manner, very grounded and with a lot of muscular tension.

3) Shape

While the Body category primarily develops connections within the body and the body/space intent, the way the body changes shape during movement is further experienced and analysed through the Shape category. It is important to remember that all categories are related, and Shape is often an integrating factor for combining the categories into meaningful movement.

4) Space

The abstract and theoretical depth of this part of the system is often considered to be much greater than the rest of the system. Laban explored the concept of motion in connection with the environment, looking at spatial patterns, pathways, and lines of spatial tension. He felt that there were ways of organising and moving in space that were specifically harmonious, in the same sense as music can be harmonious; some combinations and organisations were more theoretically and aesthetically pleasing. As with music, Space Harmony sometimes takes the form of set 'scales' of movement within geometric forms which can be practised in order to refine the range of movement and reveal individual movement preferences.

ACTIVITY: Act out an everyday activity (getting ready for bed, making a sandwich, going round the supermarket for example) in a few different ways, (angrily, dreamily, sadly etc) exploring your actions, their dynamics, your body shape and the way you use the space. How do they alter? What changes if something/someone intervenes and alters your inner intention?

Konstantin Stanislavski (1863 - 1938)

"All action on the stage must have an inner justification, be logical, coherent, and real."

Konstantin Stanislavski founded the first acting 'system', cofounded the Moscow Art Theatre in 1897, and was a committed advocate of the naturalist school of thought. Stanislavski questioned the traditional dramatic process, and his approach became one of the most enduring methods of theatre practice to ever develop.

Stanislavski created his 'System' during a lifetime of exploration and experimentation. Some key principles of the System include:

Emotion Memory
An actor should recall a time when they experienced a particular emotion, and transform that moment to become part of a performance. Emotion should not be made-up, it should always come from the actor.

Imagination
The actor's imagination should come into play to create a more detailed life for their character. Improvisation can be used to create a history, or a shared history, of key events that happen outside the parameters of the play, so that the actor has memories of actual occurrences to draw upon.

Magic If Method

Stanislavski believed that the truth that occurred onstage was different than that of real life, but that a 'scenic truth' could be achieved onstage. A performance should be believable for an audience so that they may appear to the audience as truth.

Actors were required to ask many questions of their characters and themselves. Through the 'magic if,' actors were able to satisfy themselves and their characters' positions of the plot. One of the first questions they had to ask was, "What if I were in the same situation as my character?" and "What would I do if I found myself in this (the character's) circumstance?" The "magic if" allowed actors to transcend the confinements of realism by asking them what would occur "if" circumstances were different, or "if" the circumstances were to happen to them. By answering these questions as the character, the theatrical actions of the actors would be believable and therefore 'truthful.'

Objectives, Super objectives and Through-Line
A play can be broken up into a series of 'units', each with their own objective for the characters involved, a verb, an action, or something that needs to be done. These should always lead towards the characters 'Super Objective' or 'Raison d'Etre'; purpose in the play.

All About the Bard

Shakespeare's Plays

- 1590 *Henry VI, Part I*
- 1590 *Henry VI, Part II*
- 1590 *Henry VI, Part III*
- 1592 *Richard III*
- 1592 *The Comedy of Errors*
- 1593 *Titus Andronicus*
- 1593 *Taming of the Shrew*
- 1594 *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*
- 1594 *Love's Labours Lost*
- **1591-1596 *Romeo and Juliet***
- 1595 *Richard II*
- 1595 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
- 1596 *King John*
- 1596 *Merchant of Venice*
- 1597 *Henry IV, Part I*
- 1594-1597 *Love's Labours Won*
- 1598 *Henry IV, Part II*
- 1599 *Henry V*
- 1599 *Julius Caesar*
- 1599 *Much Ado About Nothing*
- 1599 *As You Like It*
- 1597-1600 *The Merry Wives of Windsor*
- 1599-1600 *Hamlet*
- 1602 *Twelfth Night*
- 1602 *Troilus and Cressida*
- 1603 *All's Well That Ends Well*
- 1603 *Othello*
- 1603-06 *King Lear*
- 1603-06 *Macbeth*
- 1603 *Measure for Measure*
- 1606 *Antony and Cleopatra*
- 1607 *Coriolanus*
- 1607 *Timon of Athens*
- 1608 *Pericles Prince of Tyre*
- 1609 *Cymbeline*
- 1594-1610 *The Winter's Tale*
- 1611 *The Tempest*

Shakespeare Facts

Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire in 1564.

• Nothing official is known of Shakespeare's early life before his marriage, at the age of 18, in 1582. His bride, Anne Hathaway, was 26 (and three months pregnant).

• Had three children, Judith, Hamnet and Susanna.

• In his lifetime Shakespeare wrote at least 37 known plays and 154 sonnets.

• By 1592 he was in London working as an actor and a dramatist.

• As an actor, he was associated with the parts of kings and old men. His roles may have included the Ghost in *Hamlet* and old Adam in *As You Like It*.

Shakespeare

• In 1613, Shakespeare retired from the theatre and returned to Stratford-upon-Avon.

• He died in 1616, on his 52nd birthday.

• There is a 'lost' Shakespeare play *Cardenio* which is referenced in contemporary documentation, but the text has never been found, and neither has *Loves Labour's Won*, which may just be an alternative name for one of his other works.

Stratford Upon-Avon today

Who was Shakespeare?

Shakespeare's Birthplace, Stratford-Upon-Avon

Although Shakespeare's works are among the world's most well-known literary creations, very little is known about the man behind them. In his poem *To Shakespeare*, Thomas Hardy described how hard it can be to know Shakespeare, given the little information we have about him:

Bright baffling Soul, least capturable of themes,
Thou, who display'dst a life of common-place,
Leaving no intimate word or personal trace
Of high design outside the artistry
Of thy penned dreams

Shakespeare's father, John was a prominent Stratford worthy, with a successful glove making and leather working business and a civic role in the community; his mother, Mary, was from the wealthy and aristocratic Arden family. Neither could read or write, which makes Shakespeare's achievements even more remarkable.

It is proposed by many that Shakespeare had a Catholic upbringing. In this period of English history, the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England had acrimoniously divided, and great pressure was put on all Catholics to renounce many tenets of their religious practice. If the Shakespeare family was indeed Catholic, they would have been no strangers to secrecy and oppression, and this may have been a factor that lead to John's ultimate decline into bankruptcy.

What is more questionable is what faith – if any – Shakespeare maintained into adult life. His life and works have been probed and studied, and evidence to support Catholicism, Protestantism, and even Atheism, has been brought forward.

That he had to leave school at fourteen due to his father's financial troubles, and was therefore not able to continue his education at university, is thought to have been a matter of insecurity for Shakespeare in his later life. In contrast to playwrights such as Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Kyd, Shakespeare was not always highly regarded by his contemporaries. Kyd, Marlowe and many other playwrights of the sixteenth century were prominent figures of their day, who revolutionised Elizabethan theatre, and later became known as the 'University Wits' due to their affiliation with Oxford and Cambridge Universities. Greene, a prominent 'Wit' is known to have looked down upon Shakespeare due to his lack of education, and famously referred to him as an "upstart crow".

The years between the end of his school career and his marriage are a 'lost period' in Shakespeare's life. It is likely that, as this coincided with his father's financial problems, the young William was simply busy helping him with his business and supporting his family. However, it has been proposed that during this time he had taken on an alternative profession – soldiering, teaching or working as a law clerk - or that, as a devout Catholic, he served a prominent Catholic family in Lancashire, or even that he took a pilgrimage to Rome to escape persecution. Although there is very little supporting evidence for any of these theories, it is evident from his plays that he had an extensive knowledge of the world, and particularly Italy, and how a leatherworker from Stratford, with illiterate parents and a limited education, had this knowledge is certainly rather mysterious.

Anne Hathaway

Shakespeare's relationship with his wife is also rather unusual and open to speculation. Anne Hathaway was eight years his senior; it has been suggested that the marriage was hurried through due to the fact that she was pregnant with their first child. At the time of his marriage, Shakespeare's family was bankrupt and Anne, although rather older than many Elizabethan brides, came from a financially secure family and would have been considered a good match, so possibly the arrangement was based on pecuniary interests rather than romantic ones. Some would argue that this would not be surprising as they believe that Shakespeare was in fact, homosexual. Some of his sonnets are thought to reflect a same-sex relationship between Shakespeare and the elusive W.H. to whom they are dedicated with 'all happinesse and that eternitie promised'. Possibly, this referred to the boy actor, Willie Hughes. Consider the following, addressed to a young attractive male youth in Sonnet 20:

Till Nature, as she wrought thee, fell adoting,
And by addition me of thee defeated,
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.
But since she prick'd thee out for women's pleasure,
Mine be thy love and thy love's use their treasure.

Whatever the truth about Shakespeare's sexuality, it is known that he and Anne had three children. Following this, in 1585, another period of 'lost years' begins, at the end of which we find him, seven years later, transformed from a humble Stratford citizen to an actor and playwright living in London. One proposed reason for leaving Stratford is that he was involved in a legal wrangle over poaching and had to escape to avoid prosecution.

An alternative theory is that, sometime between 1585 and 1592, he was recruited by the Leicester's or Queen's men, touring players who were known to have visited Stratford on several occasions.

Whatever led to Shakespeare's relocation and change of career, by 1593 things were going well for him. The theatres had been reopened after being closed due to health concerns – there had been an outbreak of plague in 1592 - and he had caught the attention of a young but wealthy patron, the Earl of Southampton.

Henry Wriothesey, 3rd Earl of Southampton

The Earl of Southampton was a controversial figure- his involvement in Shakespeare's career has added more fuel to the fires of gossip about the more controversial aspects of Shakespeare's life. Southampton was a Catholic. He was involved in a plot to start a rebellion to overthrow Elizabeth I, but narrowly escaped being executed, and spent many years imprisoned in the Tower of London. He was also, allegedly, bisexual, and believed by some to be the object of Shakespeare's romantic affections in certain sonnets.

The creator of Falstaff could have been no stranger to tavern life, and it is known that Shakespeare was among those who drank at the Mermaid Tavern in Bread Street, along with the playwright Ben Jonson and his friends.

Inside an Elizabethan tavern

Thomas Fuller, a contemporary historian, referred to Jonson and Shakespeare and their meetings in the Mermaid in his book 'Worthies of England' (1662).

"Many were the wit-combats betwixt [Shakespeare] and Ben Jonson, which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man of war; Master Jonson (like the former) was built far higher in learning, solid but slow in his performances. Shakespeare, with the

BEN JONSON.

Englishman of war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention."

But even Shakespeare's wit and invention could not continue for ever, and after writing his final play, 'The Tempest' in 1611, Shakespeare returned to his wife in Stratford, where five years later he died. Even his death has an air of mystery to it. Dying exactly fifty-two years after his birth, (which is quite strange in itself!) of an unknown illness, his will famously bequeaths his 'second-best bed' to his wife. Historians and Shakespeare scholars over the years have wrangled over what this implies. Did he detest his wife, and leave his best bed to someone else to spite her? Or, rather, was the best bed the one used only by visitors, and his second best in fact the marital bed, and therefore a sign of his lasting affection for her?

QUESTION: Do you think that understanding Shakespeare the man is important in understanding his plays? How would it affect our interpretation of them?

Why is Shakespeare so popular today?

"He was not of an age, but for all time!"
Ben Jonson, preface to the *First Folio*.

Amanda Mabillard, in her article 'Why Study Shakespeare?' highlights four aspects of Shakespeare's work that she believes have led to his continued popularity around the world.

1) Illumination of the Human Experience
Whatever emotion you want to express, she argues, "Shakespeare can speak for you." He captures every facet of human experience, deftly describing it in such a way that even today his work resonates with audiences.

2) Great Stories
They may not have been original ideas, but Romeo and Juliet is an excellent example of Shakespeare's talent for recognising and bringing to life a story that will stand the test of time and appeal to people of all ages and cultures.

"William Shakespeare was the most remarkable storyteller that the world has ever known. Homer told of adventure and men at war, Sophocles and Tolstoy told of tragedies and of people in trouble.
Mark Twain told cosmic stories, Dickens told melodramatic ones, Plutarch told histories and Hand Christian Andersen told fairy tales. But Shakespeare told every kind of story – comedy, tragedy, history, melodrama, adventure, love stories and fairy tales – and each of them so well that they have become immortal. In all the world of storytelling he has become the greatest name." (Marchette Chute, *Stories from Shakespeare*, 11)

3) Compelling Characters
Elizabethan acting style may have been far from realistic, the sets and costume non-existent, the female characters played by boys, and the stories sometimes far-fetched and magical, but there is truth at the heart of Shakespeare's central characters that speaks to audiences and actors alike. They are complex, fallible beings, reacting in a truly human way to their situations.

4) Ability to Turn a Phrase
Shakespeare had such a talent for summing up a situation in a neat, concise way that four hundred years later our language is peppered with expressions of his invention.

QUESTION: Why does Shakespeare appeal to you?

Actor Joseph Fiennes as Shakespeare in the film, Shakespeare in Love

Critical Approaches to Shakespeare

So we might say that when it comes to Shakespeare, *anything goes*. In fact, this might even be an illuminating way of thinking about Shakespeare in the context of twentieth-century criticism.

The critic Roland Barthes argued in an important essay *The Death of the Author* that to give a text an author was to limit its meaning and that as a result of this we should try and separate texts from their authors if we want to understand them. In some ways this idea echoes the views of an earlier literary movement called New Criticism.

New Criticism was an important academic movement that began in the 1920s. Literary critics such as F.R. Leavis established a close-reading approach which focused on the multiple meanings in any text, and allowed readers to look into the formal and structural characteristics of texts (a practice called practical criticism, which informs the GCSE and A Level exams of today). This critical approach owed much to T.S. Eliot's argument that writers must surrender themselves and develop an impersonal approach to writing if they are to produce great poetry. Writing about Hamlet in a 1919 essay, Eliot spoke of an 'objective correlative', and argued that a formulaic approach to writing was necessary to induce the right response from a reader or spectator. According to Eliot, Shakespeare fails to achieve this in Hamlet because the emotional response does not match up to action of the play, and so in Eliot's opinion Hamlet is an 'artistic failure'. Barthes' argument was different because he believed that the reason we should disassociate texts from their authors was because nobody can claim to be the sole author of a work; their work is woven out of the fabric of myth and language in any given society that helps to make a text what it is.

This the basis upon which the critic Susan Sontag was able to argue that we shouldn't be looking for meaning in artworks, but for an 'erotics of art'. By this she meant, a way of dressing up art works; of making them have meaning for us (and even sex appeal). If we conclude that Shakespeare's works do not belong to Shakespeare, either because he wrote them impersonally or because they were actually the result of the society and the language that produced them, then we can begin to dress them up and turn them into whatever we want them to be. We all write Shakespeare, rewriting his works every time we read them. We don't have to walk down the lonely road of feeling that there is something we are missing; that we should be reading Shakespeare in a particular way. We rewrite him as we choose.

However, recent shifts in academia have tended towards a new academic movement called New Historicism, which involves a greater emphasis on placing works of literature back into their historical contexts. Stephen Greenblatt wrote on Hamlet that 'nothing comes from nothing' and that the important thing is to know what Shakespeare's inspirations were, given the context in which he wrote.

Ultimately, we can all find our own resonances within Shakespeare's work, but we must not lose sight of its original meaning.

QUESTION: Do you agree with Greenblatt? Or Sontag? Or do you have your own ideas about how Shakespeare's work should be explored?

Shakespearean Theatre

The British theatre building as we know it evolved in a very specific way. European Theatre, which has its origins in the amphitheatres of Greece, is a theatre of spectacle, large happenings and specific movements to indicate stories to audiences that were often very far away. British Theatre has its roots in the troupes of travelling players, who would tour the country performing on village greens.

An artist's imagining on an Elizabethan touring company performing

As a result, props and set would be very minimal, meaning performers often gave speeches that were very descriptive to allow the audience to imagine their setting. British Theatre thus developed in the oral tradition, which is reflected in many works of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period, such as Shakespeare's description of Cyprus in *Othello*, or Marlowe's description of Troy in *Dido, Queen of Carthage.*

In towns and cities, companies performed in innyards. Audiences would purchase sitting or standing places, or hire rooms from which to view the stage; the further away from the ground, the more expensive, like the Dress Circle in most theatres today. And when the first theatres were constructed – the Red Lion in 1567, and The Theatre in 1576 – they evolved from this arrangement, with the stalls area being similar to the inn yard and the tiers of seating stemming from the rooms and walkways of the inn itself.

The Cross Keys Inn-Theatre

Shakespeare's plays were often staged in an open-air theatre, during daylight hours. Costume and set, with the travelling players, was minimal, and, as it was considered highly amoral for women to appear on the stage, all female parts were played by young men. The audience was divided with wealthier spectators purchasing seats, and the "groundlings", who paid less to stand in a crowd around the stage, were notorious for their rowdy behaviour.

The theatre atmosphere was closer to that of a modern-day carnival or sporting event. People sold concessions and even openly solicited clients (the theatre was in the same area as the brothels). A show was an afternoon's entertainment, and there were often several intermissions. The audience in a Shakespeare play would have been very closely packed with seats being taken on a first come, first served basis. If the spectators disapproved of an actor they would pelt him with oranges or just about anything, booing, hissing and shouting. However, they were always ready with their applause and would clap and cheer when they approved. A visit to the theatre in Shakespeare's day was a rousing, noisy and very lively experience.

The most famous Elizabethan playhouse or theatre was the Globe Theatre (1599). It was built by the company with which Shakespeare was associated, which is why its modern-day counterpart is called Shakespeare's Globe. The original theatre was destroyed by fire on 29th June 1613.

A second Globe Theatre was built on the same site by June 1614 and closed, along with all the English theatres, in 1642 during the brief Puritan administration of Oliver Cromwell.

The Modern Globe today

The interior of the original Globe Theatre

After many years of struggle, American actor Sam Wannamaker's ambition was realised, and in 1997 a modern reconstruction of the Globe was built. It sits approximately 230 metres from the site of the original theatre.

The current Globe Theatre is a universal resource, dedicated to the discovery of Shakespeare's work and the playhouse that he worked for, through the connected means of performance and education.

QUESTION: Thinking back to any Shakespeare productions you may have seen, did they reflect the irreverent way in which the plays would have originally been seen? Or was it performed in a more formal manner? Do you think that anything is lost if a production follows this latter approach?

Shakespearean Language

Verse

Blank verse - unrhymed iambic pentameter in poetry. Although blank verse has no rhyme, it does have a definite rhythm.

Rhyming verse - when the last word of each line of verse rhymes, such as,

"O, where is Romeo? saw you him to-day?
Right glad I am he was not at this fray".
Lady Montague, Act I Scene I

Prose - the most common form of natural speech and writing. Although sometimes rhythmic in sound, it is unlike verse in that it does not have a regular metrical structure or pattern of rhyming line. Different to blank verse, it often induces the speaker to speak more slowly and is often used for lower class characters or when a character breaks down emotionally.

Rhyme Scheme - the sequence in which the rhyme occurs. The first end sound is represented as the letter 'A', the second is 'B', etc.

"Two households, both alike in dignity, (A)
In fair Verona where we lay our scene, (B)
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny (A)
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean" (B)
Prologue

Rhyming couplets - two rhyming lines of verses with similar or identical meter.

"Bear hence this body and attend our will:
Mercy but murders, pardoning those that kill."
Prince, Act III Scene I

Meter - from the Greek word for "measure" - the regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a poem.

Scansion - the process of marking the stressed and unstressed syllables in verse. On a very fundamental level the purpose of writing speech in verse in the first place is not to be "poetic" but to give the language a pulse that makes it easier to speak and hear.

The actual sound of lines written in verse can be comprehended more easily by a listener than prose, because in addition to the tones and pitches, rhythmic clues help convey the message. Scansion, despite the imposing sound of the word itself, is just the simple practice of checking the verse to be sure you understand its rhythm.

Foot - a metrical unit composed of stressed and unstressed syllables. The most common form in Shakespeare is the iambic foot (or just iamb), which is an unaccented syllable followed by an accented one. For example;

"The clock struck nine when I did send the nurse;
In half an hour she promised to return."
Juliet, Act II Scene V

Below are the different forms of stress possible in a foot.

Iamb (iambic): da/dum
Trochee (trochaic) : dum/da
Pyrrhic: da/da
Spondee: dum/dum

Iambic pentameter - Shakespeare wrote most of his poetry in iambic pentameter, with five units of iambic beat to a line:

"But soft, what light through yonder window breaks."
1 ***2*** ***3*** ***4*** ***5***

This releases the physical pace and momentum of the verse and illuminates the meaning through the stress. Shakespeare used iambic pentameter as a framework and sometimes added emphasis by putting an important word in an offbeat position.

Iambic tetrameter - A number of the songs in Shakespeare's plays are written in iambic tetrameter, with four units of iambic beat to a line:

"Oh he's a lovely gentleman."
1 ***2*** ***3*** ***4***
Nurse, Act III Scene V

Feminine ending - in meter, a line of verse that ends with an unstressed syllable.

Elision - the joining together of two syllables in a word by omitting a vowel sound.

Rhetorical Devices

Alliteration - the repetition of the same sound or letters at the beginning of words or in stressed syllables.

"Come, come, thou art as hot a Jack in thy **m**ood
As any in Italy and as soon **m**oved to be **m**oody
And as soon **m**oody to be **m**oved"
Mercutio, Act III Scene I

Ambiguity - when a word or phrase could have more than one meaning, and a sense of uncertainty as to the meaning emerges.
Ambiguity is an effective method of creating tension, uncertainty and unease; or humour.

"Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man." *Mercutio, Act III Scene I*

Antithesis - a contrast or opposition of ideas; the exact opposite of something.

"O heavy lightness! serious vanity!
Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming forms!
Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health!" *Romeo, Act I Scene 1*

Assonance - deliberate repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds.

"S**o** sh**o**ws a sn**o**wy dove trooping with cr**o**ws
As yonder lady o'er her fell**o**ws sh**o**ws"
Romeo, Act I Scene IV

Hyperbole - exaggeration for dramatic effect. Can appear in prose, verse, or dialogue.

"Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye
Than twenty of their swords: look thou but sweet
And I am proof against their enmity"
Romeo, Act II Scene II

Metaphor - a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable, and the word symbolises the object.

"My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand"
Romeo, Act 1 Scene V

Simile - figure of speech in which two things are compared, often in a phrase using 'like' or 'as'.

"Without his roe, like a dried herring" *Mercutio, Act II Scene IV*

Pathetic Fallacy - When a character's state of mind is projected onto their surroundings, or their surroundings encapsulate the atmosphere or mood of the play, informing the action of the text. For example, a storm may be indicative of bad fortune or a tempestuous mood.

"I pray thee, good Mercutio, let's retire:
The day is hot, the Capulets abroad,
And if we meet we shall not scape a brawl." *Benvolio, Act III Scene I*

Onomatopoeia - when a word's verbal sound resembles the word it is describing, such as 'sizzle' and 'bang'.

"Who nothing hurt withal hiss'd him in scorn"
Benvolio, Act I Scene I

Personification - the attribution of human characteristics to animals, plants, objects, natural forces, symbols or abstract ideas.

"Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon."
Romeo, Act I Scene II

History of the Play

As with many of his plays, Shakespeare was not the sole inventor of the story of Romeo and Juliet. He drew on others' work for inspiration, in this case, principally a rather turgid poem by Arthur Brooke, 'Romeus and Juliet' (initially published in 1562). In Brooke's preface to his poem, the story is summed up very neatly;

"Love hath inflaméd twain by sudden sight,
And both do grant the thing that both desire
They wed in shrift by counsel of a friar.
Young Romeus climbs fair Juliet's bower by night.
Three months he doth enjoy his chief delight.
By Tybalt's rage provokéd unto ire,
He payeth death to Tybalt for his hire.
A banished man he 'scapes by secret flight.
New marriage is offered to his wife.
She drinks a drink that seems to reave her breath:
They bury her that sleeping yet hath life.
Her husband hears the tidings of her death.
He drinks his bane. And she with Romeus' knife,
When she awakes, herself, alas! she slay'th."

But even Brooke was not the originator of the story. He took it from a French poem by Pierre Boaistuau (1559) that was based on an Italian story by Matteo Bandello (1554), which was itself inspired by Luigi da Porto's "Historia novellatamente ritrovata di due nobili amanti con la loro pietosa morte intervenuta già al tempo di Bartolomeo della Scala", or "The history of two noble lovers and their piteous death occurred during the reign of Bartolomeo della Scala." (circa 1530); and Da Porto claimed that he had heard the story from an archer who he had met during his military career, but he is also thought to have been influenced by Boccacio and similar stories in his Decameron, many of which derived from traditional Italian folk stories. But the theme of young lovers and their doomed relationships is universal; possibly the earliest known version is the story of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' from Ovid's Metamorphosis, which he wrote in 8AD, and tells a similar tragedy of love and death

It was fashionable in the sixteenth century for writers to draw upon Italian stories for inspiration, and it is known that Shakespeare also read a copy of Boaistuau's poem. And Shakespeare was clearly aware of Ovid's 'Pyramus and Thisbe', as he retells it in his other famous tale of forbidden love, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.' But it is believed that Brooke's poem was his primary source.

Brooke's poem includes most of the figures we know from the play, with the exception of Rosaline; but Shakespeare develops Brooke's ideas into rounded characters, especially Mercutio, to whom he gives much greater emphasis. In terms of the plot, the main difference between the two versions is the timescale. In the poem, for example, Romeus takes weeks to pluck up the courage to speak to Juliet, and then, when they finally do meet and marry, Brooke allows them several months of wedded bliss. In Shakespeare's version, all this happens in the course of four days and nights. This makes for a much snappier story, with suspense and a sense of urgency that keeps the audience fully engaged from beginning to end, and demonstrates how keenly Shakespeare understood what it takes to create a gripping story. And, of course, Brooke could not match Shakespeare's skill as a writer. His masterful handling of blank verse and grasp of language and character, transformed Brooke's dull work into a masterpiece and one of the greatest loves stories of all time. As J. J. Munro wrote in his introduction to a 1908 edition of Romeus and Juliet; "Brooke's story meanders on like a listless stream in a strange and impossible land; Shakspeare's [sic] sweeps on like a broad and rushing river, singing and foaming, flashing in sunlight and darkening in cloud, carrying all things irresistibly to where it plunges over the precipice into a waste of waters below."

QUESTION: If you were to write your own version of Romeo and Juliet, what changes would you make? Are there any characters you would like to explore further? Any scenes you would like to develop?

Were Romeo and Juliet Real?

De Porto claimed that he was retelling a true story; and the theory exists that there was a real couple who died in Verona in 1303, and that their deaths inspired the original tale.

What is certain is that the fictional struggle between the Capulets and Montagues reflects the very real conflict that plunged northern Italy into civil war throughout the 13th and 14th Centuries. The Guelphs and Ghibellines were the two warring factions; the former largely representing rich mercantile families who supported the Pope, the latter wealthy agricultural families who supported the Holy Roman Emperor, who were fighting over secular power. Some towns, such as Mantua, were staunchly pro-Guelph; Sienna and Pisa, among others, were allied with the Ghibellines. Verona, however, changed its allegiance and must have been a hot-bed of conflict, with families belonging to one faction or the other feuding ferociously. Rather like the Prince in Romeo and Juliet, both the Emperor and the Pope were outspoken of their displeasure with these warring parties. The Montecchi family, which becomes Montague, really existed in Verona, and are believed to have been allied to the Ghibellines; their palace in Verona is now considered Romeo's house. The Capuletti, or Capulets, are thought to have been on the side of the Guelphs.

There is no known link between them, other than via Dante, himself a Ghibelline, who refers to them in the Purgatorio as an example of civil dissention.

"Come and behold Montecchi and Cappelletti,
Monaldi and Fillippeschi, careless man!
Those sad already, and these doubt-depressed!
Come, cruel one! come and behold the oppression
Of thy nobility, and cure their wounds,
And thou shalt see how safe is Santafiore!"

In reality, the Ghibelline Scaligeri family took control of Verona in 1277 and maintained their rule for the next 110 years. The fourteenth century, when Romeo and Juliet is set, was a difficult economic and political time for all of Western Europe, and as well as the civil war, northern Italy suffered with famine, the plague of 1348, and a major flood in 1333.

However, Verona prospered under the rule of the Scaligeri family. They enlarged the city, and transformed it culturally, through a strong patronage of the arts. It was a time of contrast, as is reflected in the play, with the sumptuous ball held by the Capulets contrasting with the violence of the feuding families and their followers.

QUESTION: Who would the modern day Capulets and Montagues be?

Romeo & Juliet painting by artist Ford Madox Brown

Historical Setting

Although some believe that Shakespeare may have visited Italy during his 'Lost Years', there is sadly no evidence that he ever did so. And Shakespeare did not choose Verona as a suitably romantic backdrop for his tragic tale; he was simply adapting what had previously been written. However, Verona has been for many years a centre of pilgrimage for those wishing to see where Romeo and Juliet conducted their short-lived romance, and its architecture and winding streets have influenced many productions of the play.

Verona has been designated a World Heritage Site due to its beautifully preserved architecture and monuments, which reflect over 2000 years of continuous development. It is one of the richest cities in Northern Italy in terms of its Roman remains, one of the most impressive of which is the Arena, the second largest example of such a structure after the Colosseum in Rome.

The Arena

The Romanesque period (8th-12th Centuries) saw the construction of numerous churches around the city, including the magnificent Duomo which was re-built after the original collapsed in an earthquake in 1117.

The façade of the Duomo was not completed until the 14th Century, the same century in which Romeo and Juliet is set. This was during the reign of the Scaligeri family, a prosperous period when, to extend the city, the walls were rebuilt. Romeo makes reference to these newly-constructed walls when he hears of his banishment -

"There is no world without Verona walls
But purgatory, torture, hell itself."

The Duomo

Verona's walls today

Much of the action of the play takes place in the open air, in the palazzos and orchards around the city. Many of these open spaces, typical of Italian urban design of the period, were created during this time of expansion, and would have been frequented by the citizens of Verona looking to escape the stifling heat of an Italian summer.

Castelvecchio is the fortified residence of the Scaliger family, built as a home and a defensive structure. The swallow-tail merlons (like crenellations on a British castle) reflected the political allegiance of the family within. It is a beautiful emblem of the conflict that rampaged through Northern Italy in the middle ages.

Juliet's House, showing her balcony

Castelvecchio, showing the merlons on the right of the picture

The House of Juliet is a small genuine medieval palace; a balcony was added in the 1930s, and is now a pilgrimage destination for tourists from all over the world who leave messages and presents for Juliet. In contrast, The House of Romeo, although also a genuine medieval complex, has not been made open to the public, as it was greatly transformed in later periods, and relatively little remains from the original building.

A gated Verona palazzo

QUESTION: So how might Verona have looked to Romeo and Juliet?

The Arche Scaligere is the cemetery of the Scaligeri family, a series of gothic tombs containing several sarcophagi. Perhaps this is what the Capulet family tomb, where the lovers met their tragic end, would have looked like.

Arche Scaligieri

When Romeo receives his punishment for killing Tybalt and is exiled from Verona, Frair Lawerence sends him to Mantua, a town just over twenty miles from Verona; near enough to be recalled in a hurry, but far enough to escape Prince Escalus' wrath.

A view of Mantua

QUESTION: Where else could you set a production of Romeo and Juliet? What locations have been used for other productions?


Kaiden Dubois as *Romeo*


Nicole Anderson as *Juliet*


David McLaughlin as *Mercutio*


Gabrielle Dempsey as *Tybalt*

Character Breakdown

Romeo is the son and heir of Montague and Lady Montague. A young man of about sixteen, Romeo is handsome, intelligent, passionate, creative, and a charismatic lover and fighter. He is however naïve to both love and the hatred between the two families. Though impulsive, his idealism and passion stand him apart from the other young men caught up in the feud, since Romeo is more interested in love than violence. At the beginning of the play he claims his love for Rosaline, but then instantly falls for Juliet. The seriousness of this new vow of love comes into question but Romeo proves his love by secretly marrying Juliet, the daughter of his father's worst enemy; refusing to fight her cousin Tybalt; and inevitably through his own death in refusal to live without his beloved.

Juliet is the daughter of Capulet and Lady Capulet. A beautiful thirteen-year-old girl, Juliet begins the play as an innocent child who has thought little about love and marriage. She grows up quickly upon falling in love with Romeo, the son of her family's great enemy, and shows amazing courage in trusting her entire life and future to Romeo. She proves her love for Romeo by defying her father's wishes for her to marry Paris and also by not deserting Romeo after he avenges Mercutio's death by killing her cousin Tybalt. In the same way Romeo demonstrates his last act of love for Juliet, she also takes her own life unable to continue without him.

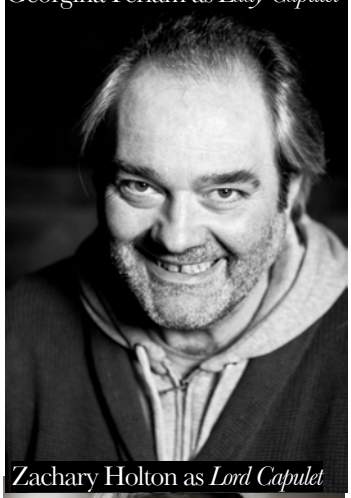
Friar Lawrence is a Franciscan friar and friend to both Romeo and Juliet. He is kind, civic-minded, wise, and a proponent of moderation who can also be seen as unorthodox by secretly marrying the impassioned lovers in hopes that the union might eventually bring peace to Verona. As well as being a Catholic holy man, Friar Lawrence is also an expert in the use of potions and herbs, and it is his idea to fake Juliet's death in hopes of reuniting her to Romeo.

Mercutio is a kinsman to the Prince, and Romeo's close friend. Mercutio overflows with imagination, wit, and, at times, a strange, biting satire and brooding fervour. Mercutio loves wordplay, especially sexual double entendres, and can be very charismatic, but also arrogant and aggressive. This aggressive behaviour can be ignited by people who are pretentious, pompous, or threaten his friends. He finds Romeo's romanticised ideas about love tiresome, but demonstrates a great deal of love for Romeo before his final moment in an attempt to rescue Romeo from Tybalt's rage.

Friar John is Franciscan friar charged by Friar Lawrence with taking the news of Juliet's false death to Romeo in Mantua. Friar John is held up in a quarantined house, and the message never reaches Romeo.


Christopher Smart as *Benvolio*


Georgina Periam as *Lady Capulet*


Zachary Holton as *Lord Capulet*


Gemma Barrett as *Nurse*

The Nurse is Juliet's nurse who has cared for Juliet her entire life. A vulgar, long-winded, and sentimental character, the Nurse provides comic relief with her frequently inappropriate remarks and speeches and acts as Juliet's mother figure throughout the play. The Nurse is Juliet's faithful confidante and loyal intermediary in Juliet's affair with Romeo. She provides a contrast with Juliet, given that her view of love is earthy and sexual, whereas Juliet is idealistic and intense. The Nurse believes in love, but the idea that Juliet would want to sacrifice herself for love is incomprehensible to her.

Tybalt is a Capulet and Juliet's cousin on her mother's side. Vain, fashionable, proud, prejudiced, and supremely aware of courtesy and the lack of it, he becomes aggressive, violent, and quick to draw his sword when he feels his pride has been injured. His hatred of the Montagues tends to lead him to put aside better judgment in search of a fight and leads to his murder of Mercutio and death at the hands of Romeo.

Benvolio is Montague's nephew, Romeo's cousin and thoughtful friend. He is noble, level-headed, and makes a genuine effort to defuse violent scenes in public places. Though Mercutio accuses him of having a nasty temper in private. He spends most of the play trying to help Romeo get his mind off Rosaline, even after Romeo has fallen in love with Juliet.

Lord Capulet is the patriarch of the Capulet family, father of Juliet, husband of Lady Capulet, and enemy, for unexplained reasons, of Lord Montague. He truly loves his daughter, though he is not well acquainted with Juliet's thoughts or feelings, and seems to think that what is best for her is a "good" match with Paris. Often prudent, he commands respect and propriety, but he is liable to fly into a rage when either is lacking.

Lady Capulet is Juliet's mother and Lord Capulet's wife. A woman who herself married young and is proud, composed, and obedient to Lord Capulet rather than to her daughter's wants or needs. She is an ineffectual mother, relying on the Nurse for moral and pragmatic support.

Lord Montague is Romeo's father, the patriarch of the Montague family and bitter enemy of Lord Capulet. At the beginning of the play, he is chiefly concerned about Romeo's melancholy demeanour.

Lady Montague is Romeo's mother, Montague's wife. She dies of grief after Romeo is exiled from Verona.

Paris is a kinsman of the Prince, and the suitor of Juliet most preferred by Capulet. Once Capulet has promised him he can marry Juliet, he behaves in a very presumptuous manner toward her, acting as if they are already married.

Prince Escalus is the Prince of Verona. A kinsman of Mercutio and Paris. As the seat of political power in Verona, he is concerned about maintaining the public peace at all costs.

Gregory is a servant of the house of Capulet, who, like his master, hates the Montagues.

Abram is the Montague's serving woman, who taunts Gregory in the first scene of the play.

The Apothecary works in Mantua and is greedy, malicious, and cruel. Had he been wealthier, he might have been able to afford to value his morals more than money, and refused to sell poison to Romeo.

ACTIVITY: Choose a character from Romeo and Juliet and write a Character Study for them. This can take the form of either a list of facts and questions about the character that runs chronologically throughout the play, or can be made up of three separate lists - what the character itself says, what others say about the character and what others say to the character. Using the information you have built up from your knowledge of the character throughout the play, write two diary entries for them. One for before the play starts and one for when it finishes (it doesn't matter if they are dead at the end!).

Act Breakdown

Act I

After the prologue, which sums up the tragic story of the play, the scene shifts to the streets of Verona where two of Capulet's men, Sampson and Gregory, discuss the tension between their lord and Lord Montague. They notice Abram and Balthasar, two of Montague's men, and their bickering becomes violent. The fight builds, until the Prince arrives with his men to break up the fight, and he announces that if anyone from either house disturbs the peace once more, they will be put to death.

Benvolio (a Montague) finds his cousin Romeo brooding that the object of his love Rosaline does not love him, and tries to cheer him up. During their conversation, a Capulet servant passes and asks if they could read the note that he is carrying. It is a list of people that are invited to Capulet's house for a party. Benvolio, seeing Rosaline's name on the list, persuades Romeo to go to the party and compare Rosaline's beauty with that of other women.

At the House of Capulet, Lady Capulet tells her young daughter Juliet that Paris, an eligible young count, wishes to marry her. Juliet assents to look upon him as a suitor.

Romeo, Benvolio, and Mercutio make their way to the party. Romeo is spotted, but Lord Capulet prevents his headstrong nephew Tybalt from challenging him, fearful of the Prince's wrath. It isn't long before Romeo sees Juliet, and both are instantly attracted to one another. Of course, as the guests leave, both Romeo and Juliet learn that each have fallen in love with their enemy.

Act II

After the party, Romeo hides below Juliet's window and is overjoyed as he overhears her talking of her love for him. Unable to contain himself, Romeo leaps out from hiding. They talk and each vows love to the other. Juliet says she will send her Nurse to Romeo tomorrow, and he is to tell her when and where they will be married.

The next morning Romeo tells Friar Laurence about his plans to marry Juliet. The Friar agrees to help the two lovers because he hopes that the marriage will end the feud between the two houses. Using the Nurse as messenger, Romeo arranges for Juliet to meet him at Friar Lawrence's cell, and they are married.

Act III

After his wedding night, Romeo finds Tybalt in combative mood, and refuses to fight him. Mercutio takes up Tybalt's challenge instead, and is murdered. Angered, Romeo turns on Tybalt and kills him in turn. The Prince learns of the deaths, but because Tybalt was himself a murderer, Romeo's punishment is reduced to exile. However, if he is found within the city he will be executed.

Juliet grieves for both Tybalt and Romeo, suffering from conflicting emotions about the events that have taken place. Meanwhile, Romeo goes to Friar Laurence in a state of hysteria. The Friar and the Nurse scold him into a more sensible frame of mind, and send him off to say farewell to Juliet. The young couple spend their last night in Verona together and he leaves as the sun comes up.

Lady Capulet tells Juliet that her marriage to Paris will happen that week. When Juliet refuses, her Father Capulet threatens to disown her if she does not marry him. She asks the Nurse what she should do; she advises Juliet to consider herself a widow and marry Paris. Seeing that the Nurse will not help her, she decides instead to turn to Friar Lawrence.

Act IV

Juliet finds Paris at the Friar's cell, telling him of his impending marriage to Juliet. Once Paris leaves, the Friar tells Juliet of his plan. He gives her a potion that put her in a death-like sleep for forty-two hours; her family will think she has died, and he will tell to be there to let her out of the tomb.

Juliet returns home with the potion, convinces everyone that she is going ahead with her wedding to Paris. While everyone is busy with the wedding preparations, Juliet takes the poison. They find her body the next morning.

Act V

Waiting in Mantua, Romeo learns of Juliet's death. Distraught, he convinces an apothecary to sell him a deadly poison, and rushes back to Verona, missing Friar Lawrence's explanatory letter.

In Verona, Romeo slays Paris who is guarding the Capulet tomb. Reaching Juliet's side, he takes the poison and dies. The Friar, having heard that his message had not got through, races to the tomb, just as Juliet awakens to find Romeo dead beside her. The town guards can be heard so the Friar leaves. Juliet takes Romeo's dagger and stabs herself.

Montague, Capulet, and the Prince arrive and Friar Lawrence explains everything that has happened. Montague and Capulet finally see how much damage their feuding has done so they decide to end the war between their houses.

Themes

Love

Perhaps the most obvious theme in Romeo and Juliet is love, and its many manifestations.

Romeo's early love for Rosaline is a puppy love, which Friar Lawrence calls 'doting' and 'not loving' and is easily eclipsed when he meets Juliet.

Paris' feelings towards Juliet are rather different. He is sincere in his offer of marriage, but follows the form of the day and approaches Lord Capulet, making no attempt to approach Juliet herself. He does not really show any deep feelings for her, and even says he has 'little talked of love'. This suggests that he is seeking the relationship based on his desire to make a 'good' marriage, rather than any romantic attachment.

The relationship between Juliet and her Mother Lady Capulet does not appear to be particularly loving, and to a modern audiences comes across as rather cold and distant. Juliet calls Lady Capulet 'Madam', and behaves with a deference that seems, by today's standards, strained and unnatural. And while Lady Capulet is clearly doing her best to ensure her daughter's future happiness in suggesting the alliance with Paris, when Juliet appeals to her mother for support later in the play, this is met with impatience rather than compassion, and Lady Capulet defers to her husband rather than helping her child. It is the Nurse who is the figure of maternal love in the play, but ultimately, even this bond falls under the force for Juliet's love for her husband.

Olivia Hussey as Juliet and Leonard Whiting as Romeo

Juliet represents idealised, romantic love; and this contrasts with the more physical side of romance which is referred to throughout the play, and serves to highlight the purity of the relationship of the central couple. Mercutio's bawdy, innuendo-laden encounter with the Nurse is particularly representative of this. Mercutio may seem like a swaggering, frivolous character, but he is deeply devoted to his friends. He, Benvolio and Romeo may make fun of each other, but ultimately, he is willing to die to protect Romeo's honour. Similarly, the love that Friar Lawrence bears Romeo leads him to take drastic risks to help his young friend.

But it is, of course, the love of Romeo and Juliet that is central to the play. They reflect the true romantic ideal; they fall in love at first sight, pledge their lives to each other, and are unable to face the world without the other by their side. Looking at their relationship dispassionately, their love seems mad, obsessive and doomed to self-destruct. Cynically speaking, could we say that, if their lives had not been prematurely ended, they would still love each other five years later? Or ten? But their love remains untouched by mundane concerns and as such remains pure and beautiful.

Fate

From the outset of the play, we know that their relationship is doomed; their fate has been decided, and there is nothing they can do to change it.. Romeo and Juliet's ill-fated lives are described as 'death-marked', and they are a 'pair of star-crossed lovers'.

The couple have a feeling that things will go badly for them. Romeo thinks something is 'hanging in the stars', while Juliet says a 'faint cold fear thrills through my veins' and has a premonition of Romeo's death. In Shakespeare's time, fate was taken very seriously. An audience would have appreciated what he meant by all these references.

Death

Death is mentioned a lot in many different ways, such as 'we were born to die' or 'cold death', and 'death-darting eye'. Mercutio, Tybalt, Paris, Romeo and Juliet all die during the play. Death even becomes a person, one who has married Juliet (with 'Death is my son-in-law'). In Shakespeare's time people generally died much younger than they do now. The subject of death was familiar to everyone whereas nowadays, we often shy away from talking about it.

Leonardo Di Caprio as Romeo & Claire Danes as Juliet

Time

Romeo and Juliet is bursting with references to time passing. In the prologue, the audience is even told how long the play will take to perform. Time is crucial to many aspects of the plot: the plans for Juliet's marriage are brought forward, the sleeping potion only lasts a certain time, and Romeo kills himself just before Juliet wakes up. Even in her dying moments, Juliet says that she "be brief". The audience might well feel the two lovers are racing to their deaths and there is nothing anyone can do to stop this.

Light/Darkness

One of the play's most consistent visual motifs is the contrast between light and dark, often in terms of night/day imagery. This contrast is not given a particular metaphoric meaning—light is not always good, and dark is not always evil. On the contrary, light and dark are generally used to provide a sensory contrast and to hint at opposed alternatives. Icarus' production explores this idea through costume and set design, the Capulets being represented by the Sun, the Montagues by the Moon.

Romeo's lengthy meditation on the sun and the moon during the balcony scene, in which Juliet, metaphorically described as the sun, is seen as banishing the "envious moon" and transforming the night into day. A similar blurring of night and day occurs in the early morning hours after the lovers' only night together. Romeo, forced to leave for exile in the morning, and Juliet, not wanting him to leave her room, both try to pretend that it is still night, and that the light is actually darkness: "More light and light, more dark and dark our woes".

QUESTION: Can you think of any other themes or motifs that occur in the play?

Production Design

The Director, who has the overall vision of how the show should look and feel will combine with the designers – set, costume, sound and lights - to create the world in which the play is set. What an actor wears on stage can also affect how they move – when you're used to wearing jeans and a t-shirt every day, suddenly finding yourself in tights and a sword can be a bit of a shock to the system!

The Royal Shakespeare Company often needs to teach male actors how to bow and bend in a doublet and hose, so they don't tear them on stage. Items like shoes, corsets and swords have to be introduced into the rehearsal process as early as possible so the actors can get used to them and make sure they're comfortable and won't hurt themselves, or other people.

Costume Design

It is very important that the set and costume designers work together to create the overall look of the show. During production, there will be regular production meetings so that the creative team can meet with the director and everyone can ensure they are working to one strong vision.

Our costume designer also had a number of other considerations to take into account:

- The costumes need to differentiate when multi-roling actors are playing different parts.

- They need to fit in with the time period that the production is set in.

- The costumes need to be durable as they will need to last the whole of a lengthy tour.

- The costumes need to be easy to clean as a large amount of stage blood is used in the play!

- It needed to reflect the moon/sun, light/dark theme that the director wanted to explore.

Here are the initial sketches of the costumes for some of the characters:

Romeo

Lady Capulet

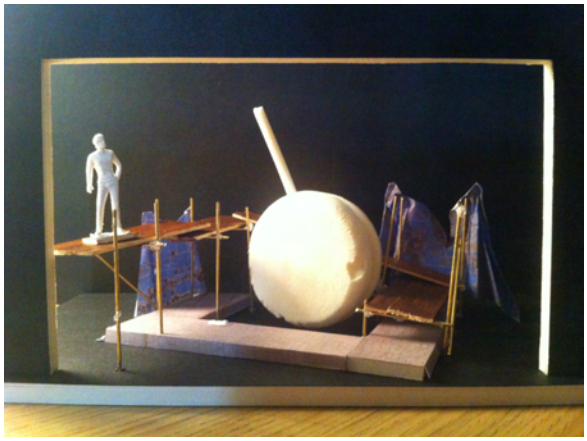
Juliet

Set Design

Our Set Designer had to create the set for our production of Romeo and Juliet with certain requirements:

- The set needed to be able to show a number of locations for example, Juliet's balcony, The Capulet's house, and The Tomb.

- It needed to reflect the abstract quality of Icarus' Romeo and Juliet, rather than be a naturalistic set.



Early set design ideas

- It had to be an easily durable set, suitable for many different sized venues and for being dismantled and stored in a van by the company.

- As with the costumes, it needed the sun/moon, light/dark theme.

Set Designer Adam Purnell at work

Final concept

ACTIVITY: What do you notice about the colour palette used in the costumes? Why might the costume designer have used these colours? And, looking at the set designs do you notice any recurring themes, colours and motifs? What do you think these signify? Design a costume for a character in Romeo and Juliet. Consider the appropriate costume for the era, how might it fit in with an overall design concept. How would you design a set for Romeo and Juliet? Research and design a model box for your own production. Remember to think carefully about practical requirements as well as artistic value.

Production History

Stage...

The play has been extremely popular since it was first performed in the Sixteenth Century. Over the years, as with many of Shakespeare's plays, it has been widely adapted, reflecting the sensibilities of the time of the production.

Ellen Terry as Juliet, with Mrs Stirling as the Nurse

One alteration that seems particularly incredible to modern audiences is the way in which, in many productions from the seventeenth century onwards, directors created a happy ending, with the lovers surviving to live a fulfilled and happy life. Some directors, such as the famous Actor-Manager David Garrick, also added material from other Shakespeare plays, and removed some of the bawdier elements of the play.
But his version was so well-liked, that it was performed for over a hundred years, and made Romeo and Juliet the most popular of Shakespeare's plays through the late eighteenth century—though it was Garrick's version and not Shakespeare that held the stage. Subsequent nineteenth-century productions restored Shakespeare's text, but often cuts were made so that famous actors in the title roles would be assured more stage time than anyone else.

In 1882, Henry Irving and Ellen Terry took the lead roles in a celebrated production at the Lyceum, which delighted the audience with its lavishly Italianate settings, processions and crowd scenes but was nonetheless considered a foolish move for Irving; it was said that the part did not suit him, and that Ellen Terry "did not shine" as Juliet. Other critics felt that the lavish costumes and set overwhelmed the performances.

The stellar cast of Geilgud, Ascroft and Olivier in the RSC's 1935 production made it one of the most celebrated stage productions of the play. Gielgud (who also directed) and Olivier alternated the roles of Romeo and Mercutio, to great acclaim.

Peggy Ashcroft and Laurence Olivier

More well known for his film version, Franco Zeffirelli also directed Judi Dench and John Stride as the lovers at the Old Vic in 1960. This was a controversial production, with a heavily edited script in which he put the emphasis on creating believable characters, using a very detailed depiction of Italian street life and intense fight sequences. Some critics felt that this realism was at the expense of Shakespeare's lyricism, while others considered that it breathed new life into the story.

The timeless, universal themes that are expressed Romeo and Juliet means that the play lends itself to interpretation that highlights current social and political concerns. The National Theatre's 2000 production with Chiwitel Eijofor as Romeo and Charlotte Randle as Juliet, featured Black Montagues versus white Capulets; and in 2009, the Globe Theatre produced a schools version, in collaboration with the Metropolitan Police, that aimed to tackle the issue of knife crime among young people.

Norma Leslie and Shearer Howard

... and screen

Judi Dench and John Stride

With the advent of motion pictures the play reached mass audiences, and since the making of the first film version, made in France in 1900, many film directors and producers have sought to put their artistic stamp on the story, and it has inspired many adaptations, from West Side Story to High School Musical. It is thought, in fact, that it is the most filmed play of all time.

In George Cukor's 1936 production, his intention was to recreate fourteenth century Verona as accurately as possible, and "make the production what Shakespeare would have wanted had he possessed the facilities of cinema."

It was, at the time, the most expensive film that MGM had ever made; but the fact that Lesley Howard, playing Romeo, was forty-five, and Norma Shearer, as Juliet, was in her thirties, and were leading a cast of other excessively mature actors, opened the film to critical disparagement.

Franco Zeffirelli's film, released in 1968 and starring Olivia Hussey and Leonard Whiting, famously featured very young actors in the central roles, and did not shy away from portraying the physical aspect of their relationship.

Olivia Hussey as Juliet and Leonard Whiting as Romeo

In recent years, Baz Luhrmann, known for his flamboyant, theatrical aesthetic, transformed fourteenth century Verona to modern day 'Verona Beach' in Miami for his drug-fuelled, gun-toting version.

QUESTION: What would you be looking for it you were casting for the roles of Romeo and Juliet? Which actors do you think would suit the roles?

Leonardo di Caprio as Romeo and Harold Perinneau as Mercutio

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Education Workshops 2012 - 2013

We provide workshops alongside our production of Romeo & Juliet, touring September 2012 - May 2013.

For information on group ticket discounts for students, visit www.icarustheatre.co.uk/shows/romeo.html and contact the theatre near you for more information.

Building a Shakespearean Character: 'Vaulting ambition'
Through practically exploring the Stanislavskian approach to creating characters in Romeo & Juliet, students will bring the characters to life themselves, culminating in a greater understanding of how to move Shakespeare from page to stage.

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'I dare do all that may become a man'
In this workshop we will introduce students to elements of Shakespearean etiquette, physicality and gender. We will directly relate this to the text, enabling them to better understand the context in which Shakespeare wrote.

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Shakespeare the Icarus Way: 'Double, Double, Toil and Trouble'
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For full tour dates and box office details, please see www.icarustheatre.co.uk

*Subject to the performance schedule of the actors.

This education pack was researched and compiled by Holly Holman and Tania Ecca

For more information, please contact the Icarus Theatre Collective:

Icarus Theatre Collective

32 Portland Place

London

W1B 1NA

Tel: 0207 998 1562

info@icarustheatre.co.uk