

# *Romeo and Juliet*

By William Shakespeare

Adapted by Eric L. Magnus

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**Original Production**

*This adaptation was originally performed May 3rd & 4th, 2001 at Frontier Trail Junior High in Olathe, Kansas by a cast made up entirely of 7th, 8th, and 9th grade students.*

**STORY OF PLAY**

The classic and timeless tale of Shakespeare's two star-crossed lovers takes on new life in this clear and concise adaptation. The language of Shakespeare's beautiful poetry remains, but this adaptation makes our greatest play more accessible for modern audiences. This re-working of the timelessly beautiful love story reduces the show to two acts, yet the entire story remains. The audience will understand and love this adaptation with its lack of archaic phrases or dated references. This is a Romeo and Juliet for a new millennium.

Running time is between 90 minutes and 120 minutes, depending on the cuts you decide to make. Possible cuts to reduce the running time and cast members are boxed in the script.

The play's original five acts are reorganized into two acts.

|                  |        |                         |
|------------------|--------|-------------------------|
| ORIGINAL ACT I   | is now | ACT I – SCENES 1 TO 5   |
| ORIGINAL ACT II  | is now | ACT I – SCENES 6 TO 11  |
| ORIGINAL ACT III | is now | ACT II – SCENES 1 – 5   |
| ORIGINAL ACT IV  | is now | ACT II – SCENES 6 – 10  |
| ORIGINAL ACT V   | is now | ACT II – SCENES 11 – 13 |

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**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

As many as 41 actors or as few as 28 actors can be cast with doubling and cutting. It is also possible to cast girls/women in male roles to turn the tables on Shakespearean times when men played all the roles.

**PRINCIPLE ROLES:** 8 males/3 females or 5 males/6 females.

**SUPPORTING CAST:** 19 or as few as 12 with many roles unisex.

(See next page for doubling possibilities. See end of script for scene breakdown chart. Symbols: \* principle roles / # non-speaking roles / @ roles can be cut / ^ roles can be played by a female.)

**CHORUS ^**

**SAMPSON** ...Capulet's servant

**GREGORY** ...Capulet's servant

**ABRAHAM** ...Montague's servant

**BALTHAZAR** ...Romeo's servant

**BENVOLIO** \* ^ ...Montague's nephew, Romeo's friend

**TYBALT** \* ...Lady Capulet's nephew

**OFFICER** ^ @

**CITIZEN** @

**CLOWN** ...Capulet's servant

**LORD CAPULET** \* ...Montague's enemy

**LADY CAPULET** \* ...Montague's wife

**LORD MONTAGUE** ...Capulet's enemy

**LADY MONTAGUE** ...Capulet's wife

**ESCALUS** \* ^ ...Prince of Verona

**ROMEIO** \* ...Montague's son

**COUNT PARIS** \* ...Young nobleman, Escalus' kinsman

**NURSE** \* ...to Juliet

**PETER** ^ ...Servant to Nurse

**JULIET** \* ...Capulet's daughter, an only child

**MERCUTIO** \* ^ ...Prince's kinsman and Romeo's friend

**VIOLETTA, ROSE, and LIVIA** all @ # ...Young ladies at party

**FRIAR JOHN** ...Franciscan monk

**FRIAR LAURENCE** \* ...Franciscan monk

**ANTONY** @ ^ and **POTPAN** @ ^ ...Servants

**PAGE** ^

**OLD COUSIN CAPULET**

**APOTHECARY**

**WATCH ONE**^, **TWO** and **THREE**

**SERVANT ONE**

**SERVANTS TWO** and **THREE** both @

**MUSICIANS ONE, TWO** and **THREE** all@ ^

**ASSORTMENT OF CITIZENS, PAGES, GUARDS, WATCHES, MASKERS, YOUNG LADIES, ETC.**

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**DOUBLING POSSIBILITIES**

CHORUS ^ / POTPAN @ ^  
SAMPSON / WATCH TWO  
GREGORY / WATCH THREE  
ABRAHAM / SERVANT ONE  
CITIZEN @ / CLOWN / SERVANT TWO @  
VIOLETTA @ # / WATCH ONE ^  
ROSE @ # / SERVANT THREE @  
ANTONY @ ^ / PAGE ^  
OLD COUSIN CAPULET / APOTHECARY

**SET DESIGN**

The set design can be very simple. Construct one wall of flats across the stage with three archways. The center entrance is for Friar Laurence's cell; the right entrance is for the all scenes in the Capulet home; and the left entrance is for various other locations. The play can be staged environmentally, using the aisles of the theatre for outdoor scenes, and the staged sword fights. Four large wooden boxes can be used for beds, chairs, etc. When not being used, they should be placed against the flats, two in between each door. The set design and props are very simple, and were inspired by the configuration of the stage at The Globe Theatre in London. Most of the focus should be given to the story and the characters.

**PROPS**

Props can be as simple as a few swords and daggers, a couple of vials, a money bag, instruments (if you have the musicians in the cast), etc. The director should use his or her own discretion in determining how elaborate the production should be. By keeping these elements of the production simple, you can focus on period costuming. Of course, as with any Shakespearean production, the director is only limited by his/her imagination.

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**PROLOGUE**

*(Before the play begins, the CHORUS addresses the audience.)*

CHORUS: Two households both alike in dignity, in fair Verona, where we lay our scene from ancient grudge break to new mutiny, where civil blood makes civil hands unclean. From forth the fatal loins of these two foes, a pair of star-crossed lovers take their life; whose misadventured piteous overthrows, doth with their death bury their parents' strife. The fearful passage of their death-marked love, and the continuance of their parents' rage, which, but their children's end, nought could remove, is now the two hours' traffic of our stage. The which, if you with patient ears attend, what here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: As CHORUS exits, the play begins with the entry of SAMPSON and GREGORY, two servants of the Capulet family. THEY are armed with swords and small shields and look ready for trouble.)*

SAMPSON: Gregory, on my word, they'll not rub our noses in the dirt.

GREGORY: No, for then we should be as grimy as miners.

SAMPSON: I mean, if we get angry, we'll draw.

*(HE grips his sword to show he is ready to draw it.)*

GREGORY: *(Agreeing.)* Ay, while you live, draw your neck out of the noose.

SAMPSON: I strike quickly, when angered.

GREGORY: But thou art not quickly angered to strike.

SAMPSON: A dog of the house of Montague moves me.

GREGORY: To move is to stir, and to be valiant is to stand; therefore, if thou art moved, thou runn'st away.

SAMPSON: A dog of that house shall move me to stand; I will take the wall of any man or maid of Montague's.

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GREGORY: (*Unhappy about the morality of this.*) The quarrel is between our masters and us their men.

SAMPSON: 'Tis all one, I will show myself a tyrant: when I have fought with the men, I will be civil with the maids; I will cut off their heads. Me they shall feel while I am able to stand: and 'tis known I am a good swordsman.

GREGORY: 'Tis well thou are not fish; if thou hadst, thou hadst been a poor catch. (*HE sees two MONTAGUE MEN approach and unsheathes his sword in readiness for trouble.*) Draw thy weapon; here comes two of the house of Montagues.

(*ENTER two other servingmen, ABRAHAM and BALTHAZAR.*)

SAMPSON: My weapon is out: quarrel; I will back thee.

GREGORY: How, turn thy back and run?

SAMPSON: Fear me not.

GREGORY: No, marry, I fear thee not.

SAMPSON: Let us have the law on our sides; let them begin.

GREGORY: I will frown as I pass by, and let them take it as they like.

SAMPSON: Nay, as they dare. I will bite my thumb at them; which is disgrace to them, if they bear it. (*HE makes a quick rude gesture.*)

ABRAHAM: (*With forced politeness.*) Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

SAMPSON: I do bite my thumb sir.

ABRAHAM: (*Very deliberately.*) Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

SAMPSON: Is the law on our side, if I say ay?

GREGORY: No.

SAMPSON: No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I bite my thumb, sir.

GREGORY: Do you quarrel, sir?

ABRAHAM: Quarrel, sir? No, sir.

SAMPSON: But if you do, sir, I am for you; I serve as good a man as you.

ABRAHAM: No better.

SAMPSON: (*Sensing a trap.*) Well, sir ...

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