

William Shakespeare's

# ROMEO & JULIET

Adapted by Robert Richmond

Performed by Aquila Theatre Company



## key notes

Welcome to *Keynotes*, a performance guide created by the Education Department of the State Theatre in New Brunswick, NJ. These *Keynotes* are designed to be used before and after attending the Aquila Theatre Company's performance of *Romeo & Juliet*.

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"To provoke an audience reaction is what we are trying to achieve. There is no 'appropriate' response to a piece of art. We seek to inspire."

—Robert Richmond

## THE AQUILA THEATRE COMPANY

Dear State Theatre Audience,

When we first sat down to put together our production of Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*, our goal was to allow our audiences to experience the play as audiences did in Shakespeare's time—as if it were the first time it had ever been performed, and you don't know what's going to happen, and you're on the edge of your seat.

To re-create that sense of danger and excitement, we've had all six members of our company learn every part in the play. **At the beginning of each performance, the actors will go into the audience with a bag, with every role in the bag, and audience members will put their hand in the bag and pick the roles for the actors.** The actors will not know what roles they are playing until the performance is about to begin!

We believe our production brings out the same sense of danger and possibility that Shakespeare's audiences must have felt more than 400 years ago. We hope our unique approach to the play will help you to become fully engaged and committed, eager to follow the story to its well-known end.

Cordially,  
Peter Meineck, Robert Richmond  
Aquila Theatre Company

## The Aquila Way

Aquila Theatre Company's Founder and Artistic Director Peter Meineck says that his company's philosophy is "the greatest works should be seen by the greatest number of people. We think that everybody, every income level and every ethnicity and every nationality and every social class, can enjoy our work."

He points out that in Shakespeare's day, the theater was for everybody, "from Queen Elizabeth down to the drunk guy who just came from the bear baiting. They were all there, watching this stuff. That's what we are trying to re-create. We are trying to show people that they don't need to be afraid of Shakespeare."

**If you were directing *Romeo & Juliet* and wanted to recapture some of the excitement that Shakespeare's original audiences must have felt, what are some artistic choices you might make?**

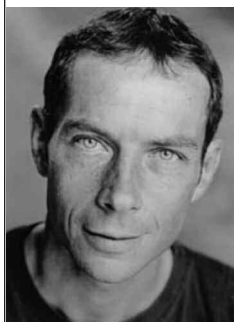
**Looking at Aquila's *Romeo & Juliet* cast (below), try to imagine each of the actors—male and female, older and younger—playing Romeo and Juliet. How do you think the play might change depending on who plays whom? Who do you think has the bigger challenge: the actors or the audience?**

## Did You Know...?

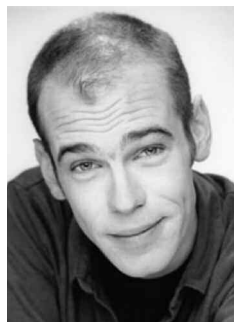
Aquila didn't invent the idea of gender-bending in the theater. In Shakespeare's time, women were not allowed to perform onstage. Male actors played all the roles, including the female parts.

Members of the cast talk about what it's like playing ALL the roles in *Romeo & Juliet*. See page 7.

## The Cast



Kenn Sabberton



Louis Butelli



Lindsay Rae Taylor



Andrew Schwartz



Basienka Blake



Jonathan Brathwaite

*"A plague o' both your houses!"*

## ESCALUS

Prince of Verona (an actual town in Northern Italy).  
Angry about the ongoing feud between the Capulets and Montagues, he warns that anyone caught fighting will be put to death.

## MERCUTIO

A relative of Prince Escalus and a good friend of Romeo's.  
He has a quick temper and clever way with words. He is especially fond of jokes and puns with a sexual meaning. He does not have much patience for Romeo's romantic daydreams.

## PARIS

A young nobleman, a relative of Prince Escalus.  
When he becomes engaged to Juliet, he behaves as if she is already his wife.

## HOUSE OF MONTAGUE

### MONTAGUE

Head of a noble family of Verona, bitter enemy of the Capulets.  
In the beginning of the play, he is worried about his son Romeo's melancholy mood.

### ROMEO

Teenage son of Lord and Lady Montague.  
When we first meet him, he is in love with Rosaline, but then he falls in love at first sight with Juliet. He resists becoming involved in the violent feud between his family and the Capulets, fighting only when forced to defend himself or avenge his friend.

### BENVOLIO

Romeo's cousin and friend.

## HOUSE OF CAPULET

### CAPULET

Head of a noble family of Verona, mortal enemy of the Montagues.  
At first, he is protective of his daughter Juliet's happiness, but when she refuses to marry Paris he becomes enraged at her.

### LADY CAPULET

Juliet's mother, wife of Lord Capulet.  
We find out that she herself married at a very young age and gave birth to Juliet when she was about 14.

### JULIET

Daughter of Lord and Lady Capulet, not yet 14 years old.

Childish and innocent at the start of the play, she matures quickly into a strong-minded woman after she falls in love with Romeo.



### FRIAR LAURENCE

A Franciscan priest (a member of a Catholic brotherhood founded by St. Francis of Assisi).  
He hopes to help end the feud between the Capulets and Montagues by secretly marrying Romeo and Juliet.

### APOTHECARY

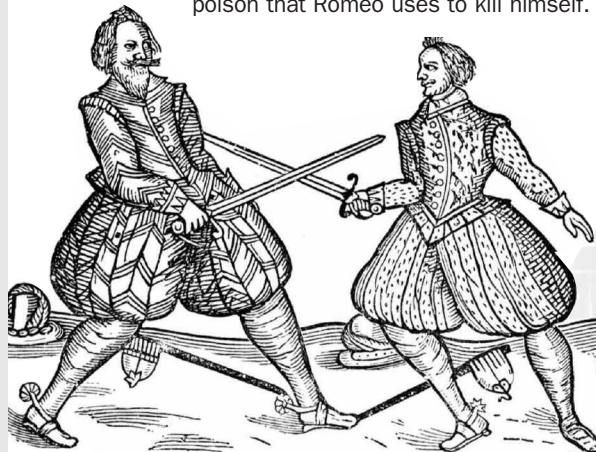
An apothecary mixes and sells drugs and other medicines. This one supplies the poison that Romeo uses to kill himself.

### TYBALT

Juliet's cousin on her mother's side.  
He's quick-tempered and always looking for a fight, especially against the Montagues.

### NURSE

Juliet's nanny, who breast-fed her when she was a baby and has taken care of her ever since.  
She's a talkative and sometimes vulgar woman, but loyal to Juliet. Her view of love is earthy and sexual rather than romantic.



## Missing Persons?

If you've already read the play, you may notice some characters (including Lady Montague and the servants) don't appear on the chart. Aquila decided to leave these characters out of their production. As you watch the performance, try to decide whether this helps or hurts your understanding of the story.

## Did You Know...?

Family feuds appear in lots of cultures, including American popular culture. Think of the feuding Corleone and Tattaglia families in *The Godfather*, or the Sharks and the Jets in *West Side Story*.

*“For never was a story of more woe / Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.”*

## Act One

Members of the rival Capulet and Montague families encounter each other in a street in Verona. They fight. Prince Escalus decrees that from now on, anyone caught fighting will be put to death.

Benvolio tells his uncle, Lord Montague, that he will try to find out what’s been bothering Montague’s son, Romeo. Romeo tells Benvolio that he is suffering from unrequited love for Rosaline.

Lord Capulet consents to the marriage of his young daughter Juliet with Count Paris—but only if she is willing. Lady Capulet tells Juliet that she will have a chance to meet Paris this evening at a party at their house.

Mercutio, Romeo, and Benvolio crash the Capulets’ party. Tybalt recognizes Romeo but is forced by Capulet to endure his presence. Romeo and Juliet dance together, exchange kisses, then discover that they come from families who are sworn enemies.

## Act Two

After the party, Romeo returns to Capulet’s garden. Mercutio and Benvolio search for him. Romeo sees Juliet at her balcony window. They exchange vows of love and plan to marry.

Romeo visits Friar Laurence and tells him that he loves Juliet. Hoping that their union will help end the feud between their families, the Friar agrees to perform the marriage ceremony.

Mercutio and Benvolio meet up with Romeo. Mercutio and Romeo have a battle of wits. The Nurse arrives, looking for Romeo. When his friends have left, Romeo instructs the Nurse to have Juliet meet him at Friar Laurence’s to be married.

The Nurse returns and tells Juliet about the wedding plans. Juliet goes to Friar Laurence’s cell, where Romeo and the Friar are waiting. They go off to be married.

## Act Three

Benvolio and Mercutio meet Tybalt in the street. When Romeo arrives, he refuses Tybalt’s challenge. Mercutio fights Tybalt and is killed. In revenge, Romeo kills Tybalt, then flees.

Waiting in her garden, Juliet looks forward to seeing Romeo. The Nurse arrives and tells Juliet that Tybalt is dead and Romeo banished from Verona for the murder.

Back at Friar Laurence’s cell, the Friar tells Romeo that Prince Escalus has sentenced him to banishment instead of execution. The Nurse arrives and tells Romeo to come to Juliet’s room that night.

Capulet reassures Paris that his wedding to Juliet will take place soon, despite the slaying of Juliet’s cousin Tybalt.

## Act Four

At dawn, Romeo leaves Juliet’s bedroom. Lady Capulet comes in to inform Juliet that she is to be married to Paris in a few days. Juliet refuses. Capulet arrives and threatens to disown his daughter if she does not marry Paris.

Juliet goes to Friar Laurence for help and meets Paris. Paris leaves, believing that he and Juliet will soon be wed.

Friar Laurence gives Juliet a potion that will allow her to fake her own death. The Friar will send a note telling Romeo to go to Juliet’s funeral crypt and wait for her to awaken. The two can then escape together to Mantua.

Juliet returns home and asks her father for forgiveness, promising to marry Paris. Left alone, she takes the potion and falls into a state resembling death. In the morning, the Nurse tries to waken Juliet and finds her seemingly dead.

## Act Five

Benvolio visits Romeo in exile in Mantua and tells him that Juliet is dead. Romeo buys poison from an apothecary and plans to return to Verona to die at Juliet’s side.

The Friar learns that Romeo never received his letter telling him that Juliet is not really dead. He rushes off to the cemetery, hoping to get there before Romeo.

Paris visits Juliet’s grave. When Romeo arrives, Paris challenges him and is killed.

Believing Juliet to be dead, Romeo takes the poison. Juliet awakens, finds Romeo dead, and kills herself.

In bringing a play to life onstage, the director and the creative team often decide to **adapt** the material—make changes in the text, setting, or other aspects—to make it work within a particular set of conditions. Aquila Theatre comments on some of the choices they made in bringing their vision of *Romeo & Juliet* to the stage.

- **CHANGES IN THE TEXT** - Some portions of the play have been cut, a common practice in staging Shakespeare today. (For example, this production ends with Juliet’s words, “This is thy sheath; there rust, and let me die,” and leaves out the final scene of reconciliation between the Capulets and the Montagues.) Additional sections of the text may have been moved or assigned to another character.

We strongly believe that you should never cut something merely because you don’t understand it. But with no cuts, *Romeo & Juliet* would take well over 3 hours to perform. We tried to trim the script down to a time frame that is practical for a modern audience, without losing any essential parts of the story. Our version runs about 2½ hours, including intermission.

- **DOUBLING (AND MORE)** - There are six actors in this production, though there are more parts than that in the play. In adapting the play for the available cast, some smaller roles have been cut, while in other cases an actor will “double”—take on more than one role. (The actor playing Mercutio also plays Escalus, the Nurse, and Paris; the other character “tracks” are Tybalt/Friar Laurence/Lord Montague; Benvolio/Lady Capulet; and Lord Capulet/the Apothecary.)

Doubling the smaller roles gives more to do for the actors who are not playing a lead part. It also challenges those performers to come up with a distinctive way of moving and speaking for each of their characters so the audience does not get confused. And often, it challenges them to play against type and even gender.

### POST-SHOW DISCUSSION

- Did you notice which lines and characters were missing in Aquila’s *Romeo & Juliet*?
- Do you think the cuts helped or hurt the play? Why? Did it change the meaning of the story? If so, how?
- Which lines and characters (if any) would you put back?

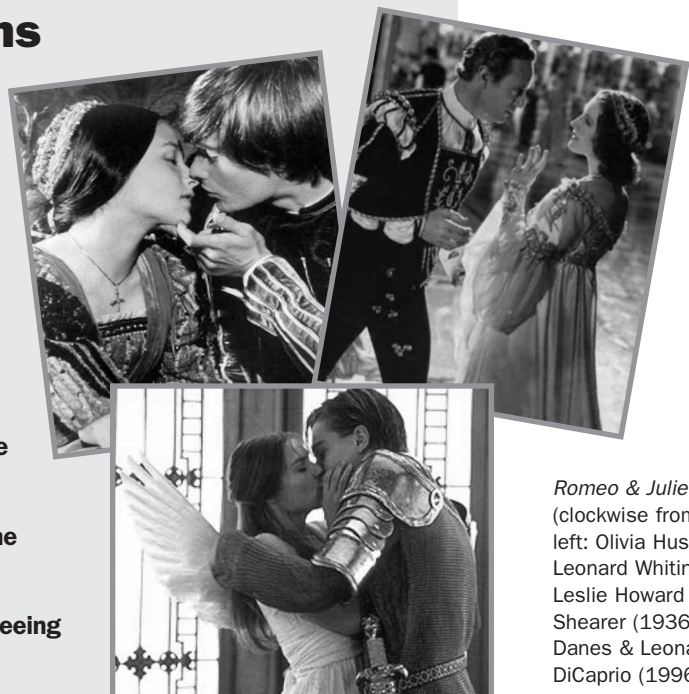
### POST-SHOW DISCUSSION

- Did you notice the actors who played more than one role?
- How did they use their voices and bodies to create the different characters?
- Did the costumes help you distinguish one character from another?

## Same Words, Different Visions

With your classmates, watch three different film versions of the same scene from the play (for example, Act III, scene v, where Romeo and Juliet must part after their wedding night). Discuss the differences among the three films and Aquila Theatre’s staging. Ask yourselves:

- Which version did you think was most effective? Why?
- What were some of the different choices that the directors and actors made about how to play the scene?
- In each production, what time period and location did the sets and costumes indicate?
- Was there any music? If so, what effect did it have on the performance?
- What was different about watching the play on film vs. seeing it performed live onstage?

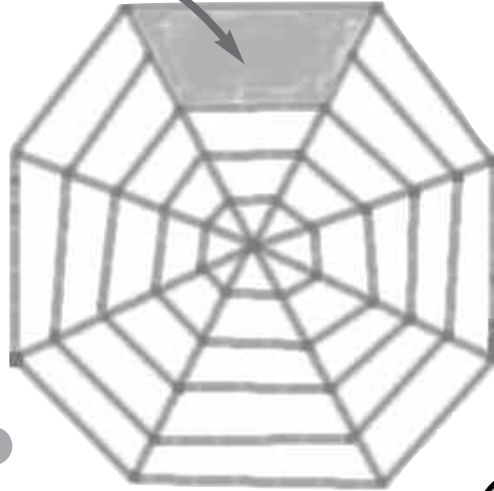


*Romeo & Juliet* on film (clockwise from upper left: Olivia Hussey & Leonard Whiting (1968), Leslie Howard & Norma Shearer (1936), Claire Danes & Leonardo DiCaprio (1996))

This is our ENTIRE set: an eight-sided wooden platform, about a foot high. It comes apart in sections to fit easily into the touring truck.

This section of platform detaches to become Juliet's balcony, coffin, etc.

Chairs on each side of the stage. Actors are seated when not in the scene... They can do sound effects from here.



Tony,

We've decided that we want the music and sound effects in our production to be performed live, rather than recorded. What kinds of simple instruments can we use to create an appropriate atmosphere? In a few key places, we were thinking about underscoring the spoken text with singing. And there's one place in particular that seems to call for a song. Can you compose something extra-special for us?

—Peter

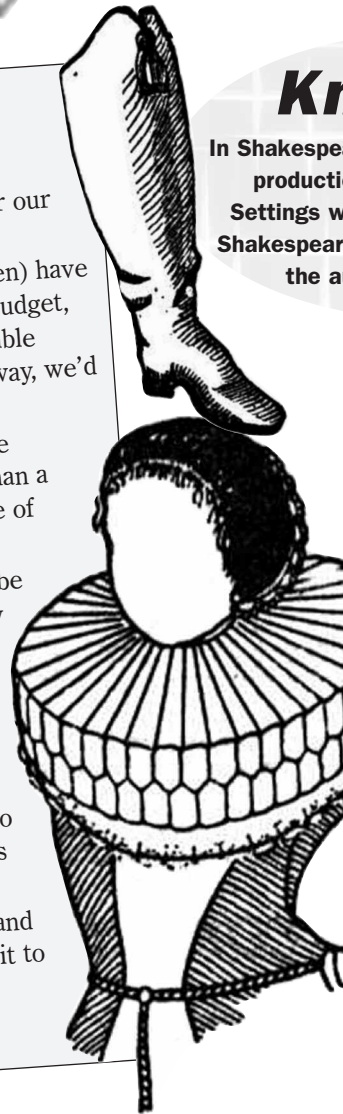
## THE AQUILA THEATRE COMPANY

Megan—

We've given you quite a challenge in creating the costumes for our *Romeo & Juliet*. Here are the problems you'll need to solve:

- At any performance, our six actors (two women and four men) have to be ready to perform any of the roles in the play. On our budget, there's no way we can afford to build costumes for six possible Romeos, six possible Juliets, six possible Tybalts, etc. Anyway, we'd never be able to fit all that wardrobe in the tour truck!
- Additionally, at each performance some of the actors will be playing two or three different roles. They may have less than a minute to change from one character to another. And some of the changes will be in full view of the audience.
- Depending on the luck of the draw, the male actors could be playing women and the female actors will almost certainly have to play men. We need to make sure the audience doesn't get confused about who's who in our play. At the same time, we want the audience to be able to accept Kenn or Louis or Andrew or Jonathan as Lady Capulet or even Juliet, without bursting into hysterical laughter.
- Our set design is very simple—we'd like the costumes to be that way, too. The style should suggest Shakespeare's time without being too fussy or literal.
- We're picturing a limited color palette—perhaps coffee and cream?—but we're open to discussion on this. Can't wait to hear your ideas!

—Peter & Robert



## Did You Know...?

In Shakespeare's time, even the grandest productions had very simple sets. Settings were created mostly through Shakespeare's descriptive language and the audience's imagination.

What are some possible ways you could solve the unique costume-design challenges that this production presents? Illustrate your design ideas with original sketches, or images pulled from magazines or the internet.

After you've seen the show, discuss Aquila's design choices. Did they allow the actors to make smooth and clear transitions from one character to another? What about the choices they made about hair and makeup?

Two members of Aquila Theatre's *Romeo & Juliet* company, Louis Butelli (**LB**) and Lindsay Rae Taylor (**LRT**), along with director Robert Richmond (**RR**) spoke to the State Theatre (**ST**) about the process of creating their unusual production and the challenges and rewards they're discovering as actors in the ensemble.

**ST:** You've used a smaller ensemble, a simpler set and lighting design, and less music than we've come to expect from Aquila. What drove these decisions?

**RR:** This past summer Aquila performed at the Globe Theatre in Nuess, Germany. Our experience working in a reconstruction of Shakespeare's original theater gave us all a greater understanding of the original conditions that the play would have been performed in. We came to realize just how much the audience at the Globe is present. They cannot be ignored. Indeed, the more one acknowledges their presence in the drama, the more successful the show. The visual and sound elements in our *Romeo and Juliet* are designed to increase the intimacy between actor and audience.



Robert Richmond

**ST:** Tell us about the process Aquila used in this production.

**LRT:** During rehearsals, we spent a lot of time as a group discussing each character. There was much debate as to whether or not to color the characters in broad strokes, (meaning, for example, if you are a woman playing a man, do you walk with a wide stance, deepen your voice, etc.) This was the most difficult part of the process, and we are still working through it. We each found our way into a character from a physical point, either a posture or gesture, and are now allowing ourselves to let that go and trust what is going on with the character internally.

**ST:** Did you all come to an agreement about each of the characters in the play so that you'd be on the "same page" no matter who was playing which role?

**LB:** While we sought a sort of consensus about who the characters "are" exactly, we found that the best person to consult, centuries later, remains the author. Shakespeare drew such incredibly clear characters; each one has their own unique speech pattern, thought process, sense of logic, charisma, and objects of obsession, all hard-wired into the words Shakespeare gave them to speak. Whether Juliet is being played by a petite young woman or a bald man with a beard, the playwright reminds us that she is a 13-year old girl caught in the throes of a first love; that she's very

intelligent and hyper-articulate—she can run verbal circles around Romeo.

We did not decide that each Romeo should say "But soft! What light through yonder window breaks," in a particular way every time. But we did decide, for the sake of unity (and safety!), that he should probably stand in a similar place every time, no matter who was playing him.

**ST:** Which role(s) are you finding most difficult? Easiest?

**LRT:** I find playing the men very difficult. Benvolio has been a major challenge for me, because he is not a very clearly defined character. I find it hard to make him interesting. He is very male, more so than any of the other boys, so as a female, that is a big challenge for me. At the moment, I probably enjoy playing Juliet the most, perhaps because she is the character that I most connect to. She is very rich, but has quite a tough journey, which has been incredibly challenging, as well.

**LB:** Ironically, both the most difficult and the easiest role for me are assigned to the same character "track." This means that when I play either one, I play them both on the same evening. My most difficult role is the Nurse, and my easiest is Mercutio.

The most obvious difficulty with playing the Nurse is that she is physically so different from me. That said, Shakespeare gives us very specific clues as to what she might actually be like and how to play her. She is a great chatter-box with a self-deprecating sense of humor. She is continually making jokes and off-color remarks about sex. Her enthusiasm and quirkiness are infectious, and she is all the more tragic for having started out at such an entertaining high.



Louis Butelli as Feste in Aquila Theatre's *Twelfth Night*

The role that comes most easily to me is Mercutio, Romeo's best friend. A great outcast and weirdo, Mercutio is Romeo's polar opposite—where Romeo is romantic, Mercutio is trashy. When Romeo is portentous, Mercutio cuts him down to size. Romeo himself likes to talk and joke, but when Mercutio is onstage, Romeo can't get a word in edgewise. Mercutio is so full of life that no one expects him to die halfway through the play. Shakespeare cunningly uses that surprise to heighten the tragedy of his story.

**ST:** What are some of the challenges of having to be ready to play any part on any given night?

**LRT:** It is very difficult not playing the same character throughout the tour. Normally, you would use each performance to build on what you have created, but since you hardly get the opportunity to do the same role twice in a week, you find yourself unable to remember what you wanted to work on. The advantage of this is that the actors listen more to each other. It creates a more ensemble-based show that's less about an individual actor's performance. You feel so dependent on each other each night, which can be a beautiful thing to be a part of, and hopefully, a beautiful thing to watch.

**ST:** Most of the cast is onstage throughout the entire play. Even when their characters are not in a scene, they have other things to do, such as making music. Does this make your job harder?

**LB:** Being onstage for most of the play, whether in a scene or not, helps us all feel more connected to and invested in the story, and allows us to actually listen to the whole of the play, rather than just the parts with which we are directly involved. Contributing percussion and singing from the sides of the stage keeps everyone involved, and helps to keep our bare stage charged with energy at all times.

**ST:** How have audiences been responding to your approach to the play? Has there been a difference in their response based on who's playing whom?

**LRT:** Audiences seem to be responding quite well to the production so far. They enjoy picking the names and being a part of the production in some way, and also taking the journey with us. They have been very supportive of the non-traditional casting, and sometimes take delight in seeing a male Juliet or female Tybalt.

**ST:** What do you hope the audience will understand about the play that's new or different from what they'd experience in seeing a more conventional production?

**LRT:** By taking away any preconceived ideas about who these characters are, we hope that the audience will hear this play in a new way. The performance is missing elaborate costumes, sets—and *stereotypes*. We focus on the language, and the idea that, if it is spoken well, is shouldn't matter which actor speaks what part.

**ST:** What have you learned as an actor/person from the experience of playing roles you'd probably never have otherwise been cast in? And what are you learning from the experience of going into each performance not knowing which role(s) you'll be playing and who you'll be playing against?

**LRT:** I am enjoying the challenge and the opportunity, and am loving the ensemble feel of the show. No one is comfortable, but there is a great sense of teamwork involved, which I love. I am loving getting to fight some nights, and also wear a dress and be a young girl. The possibilities are very exciting, and I look forward to working on all of the roles more extensively.

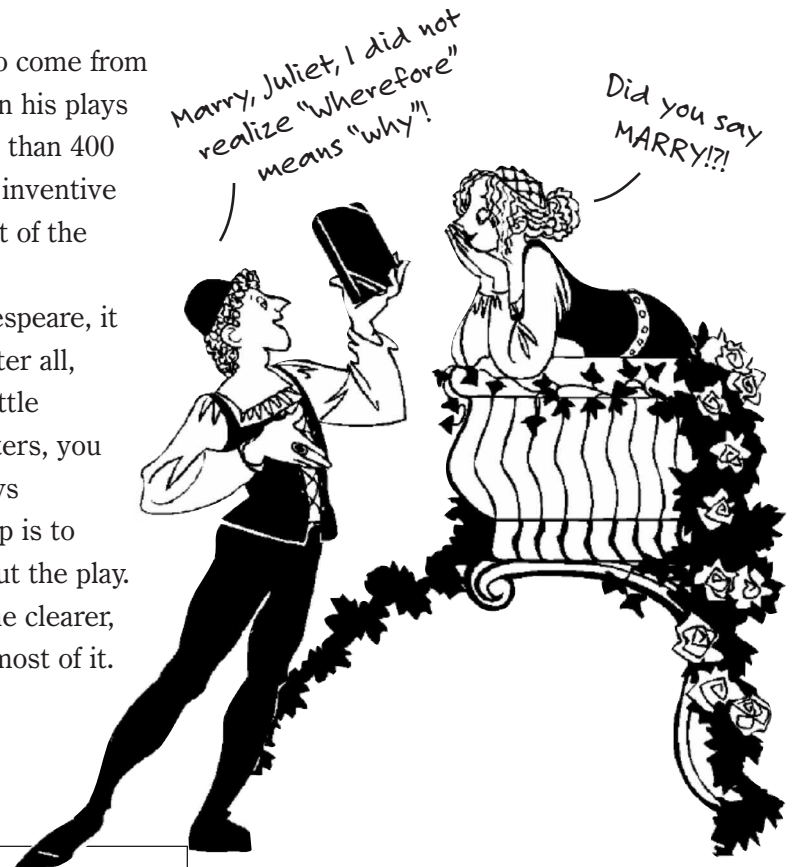
**LB:** The great joy for an actor, in working with Aquila, is the freedom to escape from preconceived notions of who particular characters "are," or "should be," and of being afforded the opportunity to play roles that I might not have the chance to play otherwise. With the company, I have played fools, clowns, jesters, priests, villains, servants—and can now add many more to the list! It is the very fact that Aquila strips away so many of the traditional trappings of Shakespearean performance that makes the work so liberating for the actor. In essence, this type of work focuses attention on the marriage between actor and text, and allows the performer to breathe life into these huge, extraordinary characters. The joy I've found in working for Aquila is the awareness that Shakespeare's epic tales are the story of extraordinary people living through the most extraordinary events of their lives.



**Lindsay Rae Taylor**  
in Aquila Theatre's  
*The Importance of*  
*Being Earnest*

Ever wonder why so many famous quotations seem to come from Shakespeare? Language is the most important element in his plays and one of the main reasons they have endured for more than 400 years. When performed by skilled actors, Shakespeare’s inventive words and poetic imagery—more than any other element of the production—bring his stories to life.

Though language is often what draws people to Shakespeare, it can also be the biggest obstacle to enjoying his plays. After all, nobody speaks “Elizabethan” anymore. But if you do a little homework and become familiar with the plot and characters, you should be able to follow the story even if you don’t always understand what the characters are saying. The next step is to go back to the text and apply what you have learned about the play. Some parts may still be confusing, but others will become clearer, until eventually you should be able to understand all or most of it.



## Say **WHAT!?!**

Making sense out of Elizabethan language is easy if you learn some basic vocabulary. Here is a list of words from *Romeo & Juliet* you should be familiar with before you see the show.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>AN, AND</b> - if                       | <b>NAY</b> - no                          |
| <b>ANON</b> - soon                        | <b>NE'ER</b> (pronounced 'NAIR') - never |
| <b>ATTEND</b> - listen to                 | <b>NOUGHT</b> - nothing                  |
| <b>AYE</b> - yes                          | <b>PEEVISH</b> - irritable; complaining  |
| <b>BESEECH</b> - beg                      | <b>PLAGUE</b> - curse                    |
| <b>BUT</b> - only, except                 | <b>PRAY</b> - beg                        |
| <b>COUNSEL</b> - advice                   | <b>RESOLVE</b> - plan                    |
| <b>DECREE</b> - order                     | <b>RUNAGATE</b> - fugitive; runaway      |
| <b>DIGNITY</b> - rank, class              | <b>SOFT</b> - wait a minute; hold on     |
| <b>DISCOURSES</b> - speaks                | <b>STAR-CROSSED</b> - ill-fated          |
| <b>DISPATCH</b> - kill                    | <b>THOU, THEE</b> - you                  |
| <b>DOFF</b> - take off; remove            | <b>THITHER</b> - there                   |
| <b>ERE</b> (pronounced 'AIR') - before    | <b>THY, THINE</b> - your                 |
| <b>HAPLY</b> - perhaps                    | <b>TIDINGS</b> - news                    |
| <b>HAPPY</b> - fortunate; lucky           | <b>WHENCE</b> - where                    |
| <b>HEAVY</b> - sad, depressed             | <b>WHEREFORE</b> - why                   |
| <b>HENCE</b> - away from here             | <b>WILL</b> - desire                     |
| <b>HIE</b> - hurry, go                    | <b>WILT</b> - will, will you             |
| <b>HITHER</b> - here                      | <b>WITHAL</b> - in addition, besides     |
| <b>MARK</b> - pay attention to            | <b>WOE</b> - misery                      |
| <b>MARRY</b> - an exclamation of surprise | <b>WOO</b> - pursue romantically         |
| <b>MORROW</b> - morning; tomorrow         | <b>WOULD</b> - wish                      |

## Dear Diary...

Put yourself in the shoes of a character from *Romeo & Juliet*. Explore the text for clues to what this character is like and what he or she is concerned about. Look at their words, their actions, and also what the other characters say about them.

As your character, write a journal entry depicting a day in your life as well as summarizing some of the events in the play from that character’s perspective. Use at least 5 words from the vocabulary list on this page. While writing in your journal, think about:

- *Who are you? What do you look like? How do you act?*
- *How do you feel about the other characters? Who is your strongest ally? Who is your enemy?*
- *Were you involved directly with the action in a particular scene? If not, how did you hear about the events that transpired? What was your reaction?*

## Speaking from the Heart

### Iambic Pentameter

Shakespeare's plays are written mostly in a poetic style called **iambic pentameter**. Iambic pentameter is a line rhythm made up of 5 iambs (EYE-amb). One iamb has two beats or syllables: an unstressed beat followed by a stressed beat. A line written in iambic pentameter contains 10 beats (1 iamb x 2 beats x 5 = 10 beats). The rhythm alternates unstressed and stressed beats: dah-DUH, dah-DUH, dah-DUH, dah-DUH, dah-DUH. If you're reading lines of iambic pentameter correctly, the rhythm sounds like a heartbeat.

Look closely at the lines below from *Romeo & Juliet*. First, read the stressed words aloud. Then read only the unstressed words.

But **soft!** What **light** through **yonder window breaks?**  
 It **is** the **East**, and **Juliet is** the **sun!**  
**Arise**, fair **sun**, and **kill** the **envious moon**,  
 Who **is** already **sick** and **pale** with **grief**  
 That **thou** her **maid** art **far** more **fair** than **she**.

Notice that the most important words are the ones that are **stressed**. This makes the language easier to understand. Whenever Shakespeare breaks the rules—by adding or subtracting syllables or putting the stress in an odd place—it's because he wants to call attention to something unusual in the story. Keep your ears tuned for these changes during the performance!

Why do you suppose Shakespeare wrote in iambic pentameter?



## Rappin' With Will

Suppose *Romeo & Juliet* was being performed in a modern setting and style. Write a rap song for one of the following:

- The opening speech by the Chorus introducing the play to the audience
- Mercutio's "Queen Mab" speech
- Romeo and Juliet's meeting at the Capulets' party
- Friar Laurence telling Escalus what happened to Romeo and Juliet

Working with a partner or two (one person as your "beatbox"), perform your rap for the rest of the class.

## Thinking Metaphorically

Another feature of Shakespeare's language is his use of metaphor—using a word or words to represent something entirely different. For example, Juliet says to Romeo, "Thou knowest the mask of night is on my face." Of course, she's not actually wearing a mask; she means that the darkness of night is hiding her face like a mask.

Can you build a metaphor comparing *Romeo & Juliet* to a sandwich? Create an R&J Sandwich, complete with recipe, illustration and instructions. Some questions to guide your creation:

- What kind(s) of bread would you use? Would you toast it? What would be in the middle of the sandwich?
- What does your sandwich taste like? Does it taste like the play feels?

What other metaphors can you think of that could be used to describe the play, its themes, or characters?





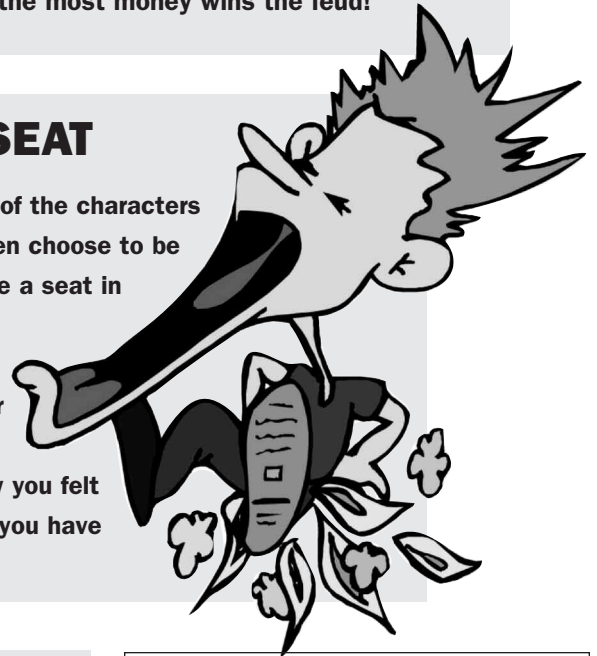
## Family Feud Meets Jeopardy — Verona Style!

First, establish a list of categories pertaining to *Romeo & Juliet*: characters, plot, vocabulary, etc. Under each topic, create a list of questions and their answers. Next, assign a dollar amount to the answers within each topic.

Divide your class into Capulets and Montagues. Your teacher will serve as the host/moderator. Three students from each family will face off at the front of the room, while team members rotate from their desks. Teams work collectively to respond, with responses phrased in the form of a question. Ex. “What is Verona?” The family with the most money wins the feud!

## IN THE HOT SEAT

Put yourself in the role of one of the characters in *Romeo & Juliet*. You can even choose to be a character who has died. Take a seat in front of the class—this is the “hot seat.” Let your classmates ask your character questions about who you are, why you acted as you did, how you felt about the situation, and what you have learned from your actions.



## The Perfect Mate?

In *Romeo & Juliet*, Shakespeare shows that teenagers and their parents have very different ideas about what makes a perfect mate. Do you think things have changed 400 years later?

Create a two-sided survey form. One side is for you to fill out, the other is for your parent/guardian to complete. (The questions are at the right.)

Fill out your side of the survey first. Then take the form home and ask your parents to fill out their side, *without looking at your answers*. When all the surveys are completed, appoint a group to compile the answers and then report back to the class. Did you find differences between: a) What students want in a mate and what parents would want? b) What students think their parents want for them versus what parents really want for their children? c) What parents think their children want for themselves and what students really want for themselves?

### STUDENT QUESTIONS

1. If you had to list the traits (physical, personality, etc.) of your perfect mate, what would they be? Be specific.
2. What traits do you think YOUR PARENTS would list if they were choosing the perfect mate for you?

### PARENT QUESTIONS

1. What specific traits (physical, personality, etc.) would you consider most important if you were choosing the perfect mate for your child?
2. What traits do you think YOUR CHILD would consider most important if they were choosing the perfect mate for themselves?

## Do You Know Your Part?

As a member of the audience, you are a crucial part of the performance. Before you arrive at the theater, make sure you know your role!

- When you enter the theater, follow an usher to your seat.
- Once the house lights (the lights in the part of the theater where the audience is sitting) go down, focus all your attention on the stage.
- Attending a live theater performance is not the same as watching television at home. At the theater, talking, eating, or moving around disturbs the performers and other members of the audience. So watch and listen carefully to the performance. And please no food or beverages!
- Don't bring cameras, camcorders, tape recorders, or any other recording equipment to the performance. You will not be allowed to use them.
- If something in the play is funny, go ahead and laugh. And of course, please applaud at the end of the performance if you liked what you saw!
- After the performers are finished taking their bows, stay in your seat until your group gets the signal to leave the theater.

### key notes

Keynotes are produced by the Education Department of the State Theatre, New Brunswick, NJ.

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## Resources

### BOOKS:

*The Friendly Shakespeare : A Thoroughly Painless Guide to the Best of the Bard*, by Norrie Epstein. Penguin USA, 1994.

*Romeo and Juliet* (Cambridge School Shakespeare), by William Shakespeare, edited by Rex Gibson. Cambridge University Press, 1998

*The World of Shakespeare*, by Anna Claybourne & Rebecca Treays. Usborne, 2001

### WEBSITES:

Absolute Shakespeare  
[www.absoluteshakespeare.com](http://www.absoluteshakespeare.com)

ArtsEdge: Discovering Romeo and Juliet  
<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/exploring/randj/artsedge.html>

Aquila Theatre Company  
[www.aquilatheatre.com](http://www.aquilatheatre.com)

Folger Shakespeare Library  
[www.folger.edu/](http://www.folger.edu/)

Romeo and Juliet Navigator  
[www.clicknotes.com/romeo](http://www.clicknotes.com/romeo)

The Shakespeare Resource Center  
[www.bardweb.net](http://www.bardweb.net)

William Shakespeare Biography (and more)  
[www.william-shakespeare.org.uk/index.htm](http://www.william-shakespeare.org.uk/index.htm)

### VIDEO:

*Romeo + Juliet* (1996), starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes, directed by Baz Luhrmann. A modern re-telling of the story using Shakespeare's text. (rated PG-13)

*Romeo and Juliet* (1968), starring Leonard Whiting and Olivia Hussey, directed by Franco Zeffirelli (rated G)

*Romeo and Juliet* (1976), starring Christopher Neame and Ann Hasson, directed by Joan Kemp-Welch (not rated)

*Romeo and Juliet* (1936), starring Leslie Howard and Norma Shearer, directed by George Cukor (not rated)

*Shakespeare: A Day at the Globe*. Guidance Associates Video, 1990

*William Shakespeare: A Life of Drama*. A&E Television Networks, 1996