

ROMEO & JULIET: A TRAGEDY? (CHILDREN'S VERSION)

Based on the opera *Roméo et Juliette*
by Charles Gounod and Jules Barbier/Michel Carré
and
Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare

Music by Charles Gounod
Libretto/Adaptation by Joshua Borths

Originally written for Toledo Opera's Opera on Wheels, Spring 2018
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Prologue

As the audience enters, a theatrical, red curtain covers the set with an easel holding an ornate cue card reading, "Romeo and Juliet: A Tragedy?"

The overture begins. All performers enter the stage in front of the red curtain. They are in their basic, Elizabethan costume.

ALL

Romeo and Juliet

PERFORMER #1

This classic tale was written down
By a famous writer of great renown.

PERFORMER #2

William Shakespeare (repeat after me): William Shakespeare!

Students Respond.

Wrote this great play in the 16th century.

PERFORMER #3

Since then its captured hearts and minds
Through beautiful poetry and rhymes.

PERFORMER #4

*[It is *my* duty here and now
To tell you how this all goes down:

PERFORMER #1

The story you are about to see
Often ends in tragedy.

PERFORMER #2

And yet, this is not a play!
Our *opera* may conclude a different way.

PERFORMER #3

You are in charge of our story's ends,
So, pay attention and don't talk to your friends.]

PERFORMER #4

Listen to our opera—which you may not know—

With music by the composer, Charles Gounod.

PERFORMER #1

[And together we will learn from *you*
If a happy end can at last come true...

ALL

Or if our tale must end in woe
For Juliet and her Romeo.]

**Bracketed text is omitted when schools chose the ending on behalf of their students.*

Music begins.

ALL

TWO FAMILIES
WHO HATE EACH OTHER AND ARE ENEMIES:
THE MONTAGUES, THE CAPULETS.
NO ONE KNOWS HOW THIS FEUD BEGAN,
BUT THEY FIGHT ON, MAN TO MAN.
THEY DO NOT KNOW THERE IS ANOTHER WAY... UNTIL TODAY.

AS OUR CURTAINS RISE, THEY'RE IN FOR A BIG SURPRISE.
AT JULIET'S BIRTHDAY BASH
ROMEO AND FRIENDS ALL CRASH.
HE'S A MONTAGUE YOU KNOW,
AND THIS IS HOW THE CONFLICT GROWS.

FOR WHEN THEY MEET TODAY, THEIR HATRED MELTS AWAY.

NURSE

Happy Birthday, Juliet!

Music begins. The scene transitions to the ballroom in the Capulet family's palace. The title card changes to "Act 1: Juliet's Party." Everyone puts on masks as if at a masquerade ball.

To be continued...

Contact Opera Classroom for perusal script/score!