ACCESS OPERA
EDUCATOR GUIDE

CHARLES GOUNOD

ROMÉO ET JULIETTE

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ROMÉO ET JULIETTE

THE WORK

An opera in five acts, sung in French

Music by Charles Gounod

Libretto by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré

Based on the play *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare

First performed April 27, 1867, at the Théâtre Lyrique, Paris, France

PRODUCTION

Bartlett Sher, Production

Michael Yeargan, Set Designer

Catherine Zuber, Costume Designer

Jennifer Tipton, Lighting Designer

Chase Brock, Choreographer

B. H. Barry, Fight Director

A La Scala Production, initially presented by the Salzburg Festival

Production a gift of The Sybil B. Harrington Endowment Fund

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William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is filled with some of the best-known images in literature: young lovers on a balcony, bathed in moonlight as they express their newfound passion; a secret wedding that flies in the face of longstanding familial strife; a desperate plan to be together despite hatred and exile; and a tragic finale in a dark tomb. For Charles Gounod, a composer in 19th-century France, these indelibly dramatic scenes were the perfect seeds for an opera, and his music for *Roméo et Juliette* offers a thrilling, rapturous, and heartbreaking counterpart to Shakespeare's transcendent poetry.

In adapting *Romeo and Juliet* for the operatic stage, Gounod was taking part in a long tradition of retelling and reimagining Shakespeare's work. Yet even Shakespeare was but one link in a chain of transmission connecting an Italian novella from the first half of the 16th century to a ballet by Sergei Prokofiev, Leonard Bernstein's musical *West Side Story*, and film adaptations by Franco Zeffirelli and Baz Luhrmann. Nor are Shakespeare's lovers unique in the canon of world literature: Tragic stories of impossible love are found around the globe, including the ancient Babylonian Pyramus and Thisbe, the medieval Perso-Arabic Layla and Majnun, and the rural American antics of the Hatfields and McCoys.

This guide thus invites students to take part in the long tradition of storytelling that gave us *Romeo and Juliet*, *Roméo et Juliette*, and countless other works of both page and stage. The following materials offer historical, geographic, and artistic contexts for both Shakespeare's and Gounod's works. They will also challenge students to reach beyond Shakespeare's London, Gounod's Paris, and Romeo and Juliet's Verona to develop a more expansive—and personal—understanding of this story and its enduring tropes. The information on the following pages is designed to provide context, deepen background knowledge, and enrich the overall experience of attending a final dress rehearsal at the Metropolitan Opera.

The Metropolitan Opera is a vibrant home for the most creative and talented singers, conductors, composers, musicians, stage directors, designers, visual artists, choreographers, and dancers from around the world. Founded in 1883, the Met first opened in a lavish opera house at Broadway and 39th Street that, while beautiful, had significant practical limitations. Almost from the beginning, it was clear that the stage facilities of the original theater could not meet the Met's technical needs. But it was not until the Met joined with other New York institutions in forming Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts that a new home became possible. The new Metropolitan Opera House, which opened at Lincoln Center in September 1966, was a technical marvel of its day, and has remained an architectural landmark ever since.

Each season, the Met stages more than 200 opera performances in New York, welcoming more than 800,000 attendees. In addition to presenting the indispensable masterpieces of history's great composers, performed by the world's finest singers and directed by visionaries from throughout the theatrical world, the Met is committed to ensuring that opera remains a living art form by commissioning and staging vital new works that tell modern stories and engage with the issues of today. The Met is also a leader in new media distribution initiatives, harnessing state-of-the-art technology to bring performances from the Met's iconic stage to millions of people worldwide.

This guide includes a variety of materials on Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*.

The Source, The Story, and Who's Who in *Roméo et Juliette*

A Timeline: The historical context of the opera's story and composition

Closer Looks: Brief articles highlighting important aspects of Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*

Ten Essential Musical Terms: Musical terminology that will help students analyze and describe Gounod's work

Student Critique: A performance activity highlighting specific aspects of this production and topics for a wrap-up discussion following students' attendance

Further Resources: Recommendations for additional study, both online and in print

This guide is intended to cultivate students' interest in *Roméo et Juliette*, whether or not they have any prior acquaintance with opera. It includes activities for students with a wide range of musical backgrounds and seeks to encourage them to think about opera—and the performing arts as a whole—as a medium of both entertainment and creative expression.

In particular, this guide offers in-depth introductions to:

- Star-crossed lovers across culture
- The print history of *Romeo and Juliet*
- Creative choices made by the artists of the Metropolitan Opera for this production
- The opera as a unified work of art, involving the efforts of composer, librettist, and Met artists

Summary

Two great families, the Montagues and the Capulets, are bitter enemies. Roméo, a Montague, and his friends have secretly made their way in to a masked ball hosted by the Capulets. When he sees Juliette, the two fall instantly in love, and, as they learn each other's names, they realize their love is forbidden. That night, Roméo visits Juliette's garden, where she calls to him from her balcony. They affirm their love and make plans to marry. The next day, they secretly meet at the cell of a monk, Frère Laurent, who marries them. Later, in a street fight between Montagues and Capulets, Roméo's best friend Mercutio is killed by Juliette's cousin Tybalt, and although Roméo initially tries to defuse the situation, he eventually kills Tybalt, and as punishment is sent into exile.

Before Roméo departs, he secretly spends one night with Juliette, but is forced to flee at dawn. When Juliette's father demands that she immediately marry the nobleman Pâris, she meets with Frère Laurent, who devises a plan for her to reunite with Roméo. He advises her to fake her own death with a sleeping potion. Roméo, however, does not learn about the ruse and returns to Verona grief-stricken. Believing Juliette dead, he enters her tomb and poisons himself—just in time to see her awaken. The two passionately declare their love, then Juliette stabs herself and they die in each other's arms.

THE SOURCE: THE PLAY *ROMEO AND JULIET* BY WILLIAM SHAKESEPEARE

The earliest known story bearing similarity to the immortal tale we know today dates all the way back to the 15th century, in the 33rd novel of Masuccio Salernitano's *Il Novellino*, with the two lovers named Mariotto and Ganozza. An adaptation of the story of two warring families appears in 1531, published anonymously and posthumously, though later attributed to the Italian writer Luigi da Porto, who composed the work in 1524. Bearing the whopping title *Historia novellamente ritrovata di due nobili amanti, con la loro pietosa morte intervenuta nella città di Verona nel tempo del Signor Bartolomeo della Scala* (*A Newly Discovered History of Two Noble Lovers, with Their Pitiful Death Occurring in the City of Verona in the Time of Signor Bartolomeo della Scala*), the book relates how two teenagers from opposing households fell in love, chose death over separation, and thereby effected their families' reconciliation. By name-dropping the real-life Veronese nobleman Bartholomeo della Scala in the title, da Porto implied that the book was based on a true story; he also trumpeted the story's "most happy" reconciliation rather than dwelling on the heroes' untimely deaths. Yet by the time an adaptation of da Porto's story hit the boards in London some 55 years later, this "most happy" story was destined to become one of literature's most famous tragedies, and the incidental name of Signor Bartholomeo della Scala was eclipsed entirely by the names of the story's two young protagonists: Romeo and Juliet.

From Venice, where da Porto's story was published, a chain of writers relayed the story across western Europe to England. This path of transmission included a *Romeo e Giulietta* (1554) by the Italian novelist Matteo Bandello; a French translation of Bandello by the writer Pierre Boiastuau (1559); and a narrative poem, based on Boiastuau, by the English writer Arthur Brooke, titled *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* (1562). It was likely Brooke's version that, in the middle of the 1590s, fell into the hands of one William Shakespeare, an up-and-coming playwright and actor

working with the Lord Chamberlain's Men in London. Other writers after Shakespeare would also take up (and in some cases claim to improve upon) Shakespeare's drama. Yet it is Shakespeare's dramatic retelling of this tragedy, rather than the narrative versions of his predecessors, that cemented Romeo and Juliet's place in literary history, the popular imagination, and the operatic canon.

SYNOPSIS

PROLOGUE: *Verona, 18th Century.* A chorus tells of an endless feud between two great families, the Montaigus and the Capulets, and the young Roméo and Juliette, whose tragic love brought the feud to an end.

ACT I: A lavish masked ball is taking place at the Capulet palace. Tybalt, a Capulet gentleman, assures the wealthy Count Pâris that his cousin Juliette's beauty is beyond compare. When Juliette arrives, Lord Capulet presents his daughter to the guests.

Roméo, a Montaigu, sneaks in with his friends Mercutio and Benvolio. Roméo is nervous about entering the Capulet residence: He has had a strange dream that he thinks may be a premonition of some great misfortune. Mercutio dismisses the dream as mere fancy, the work of the fairy Queen Mab. Soon, however, Roméo sees Juliette; he is instantly entranced. Juliette, meanwhile, knows that her father wants her to marry Pâris, and she confides in her nurse, Gertrude, that she has no interest in marriage. But when Juliette sees Roméo, she is deeply intrigued by this handsome stranger. They find a moment to speak alone. Although they are both shocked to discover that the other is a member of the rival family, they cannot deny their mutual attraction.

Tybalt appears. Roméo puts on his mask to avoid being recognized and rushes off, but the proud, quarrelsome Tybalt has already recognized the intruder as Montaigu's son. He wishes to chase after Roméo, but Capulet restrains him, ordering the party to continue.

ACT II: Later that night, Roméo enters the Capulets' garden looking for Juliette. When she appears on her balcony, he steps forward and declares his love. Servants briefly interrupt their encounter, but once they are alone again, they make plans for a secret wedding.

The famous soprano Nellie Melba as Juliette at the Met in 1894, the year after the composer's death

ACT III: Roméo visits Frère Laurent's cell, followed shortly by Juliette and Gertrude. At first, Frère Laurent is shocked to see a Montaigu and a Capulet together. But finally, convinced of the strength of their love, the priest agrees to marry them. He hopes that the union will end the fighting between their families.

Outside the Capulets' palace, Roméo's page, Stéphano, sings a song mocking the Capulets, provoking the Capulets to attack him. Mercutio intercedes to protects Stéphano, and soon the skirmish escalates into a violent swordfight between Mercutio and Tybalt. Just then, Roméo

arrives on his way home from the church. He begs Tybalt and Mercutio to forget about the hatred between their families, but when Tybalt kills Mercutio, Roméo furiously stabs and kills him. The Duke of Verona arrives, with the Montaigus and Capulets hot on his heels. Both families are outraged and demand justice—the Montaigus for Mercutio, the Capulets for Tybalt. The duke, for his part, is primarily concerned with preventing future skirmishes from destroying the city's peace. He refuses to execute Roméo, but he does banish the young man from the city, declaring that if Roméo is seen again inside Verona's walls, he will die.

ACT IV: Roméo and Juliette have spent a secret wedding night together in her room. She forgives him for killing Tybalt, and they promise to love each other forever. Then, as a lark outside the window announces the arrival of day, Roméo reluctantly leaves for his exile.

Capulet enters and tells his daughter that she must marry Pâris that very day. She tries to argue with her father, but, unmoved by his daughter's tears, Capulet angrily tells his daughter to prepare for the wedding. Juliette is left alone with Frère Laurent, whom she desperately begs to help her. Although he is at first reluctant to meddle, Frère Laurent finally gives Juliette a sleeping potion that will make her appear dead. He promises to write a letter to Roméo explaining the potion and his plan to help Juliette avoid her marriage. The letter will also invite Roméo to return secretly to Verona; when Juliette wakens, Roméo will be by her side. Together, they will flee the city and embark on a new life. Juliette is terrified, but she drinks the potion. When Capulet and the guests arrive to lead Juliet to the chapel for her wedding, she collapses. Capulet announces that she is dead.

ACT V: Despite Frère Laurent's careful planning, his letter has gone astray, and when news reaches Roméo of Juliette's burial, he believes that she is truly dead. Crazed with grief, Roméo arrives at the Capulet crypt carrying a bottle of deadly poison. He has no desire to continue living, and he drinks the poison. At that very moment, Juliette wakes up. She is overjoyed to see Roméo, and together the young lovers imagine a happy future. Just as they are about to leave the crypt, however, Roméo staggers and falls. With horror, Juliette realizes that he is dying. Drawing a dagger from Roméo's belt, Juliette stabs herself.

VOICE TYPES

Since the early 19th century, singing voices have usually been classified into six basic types, three male and three female, according to their range:

SOPRANO the highest voice type, normally possessed only by women and boys

MEZZO-SOPRANO the voice type lying below the soprano and above the contralto; the term comes from the Italian word "mezzo," meaning "middle"

CONTRALTO the lowest female voice type, also called "alto"

TENOR the highest standard voice type in adult males

BARITONE the voice type lying below the tenor and above the bass

BASS the lowest voice type

CHARACTER	PRONUNCIATION	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Roméo A young nobleman	roh-meh-OH	tenor	A brooding young man perpetually in and out of love, Roméo is thunderstruck when he sees Juliette. Overwhelmed by passion, he soon believes that life without her is not worth living.
Juliette A young noblewoman	zhoo-lee-ETT	soprano	Although initially disinterested in romance and marriage, Juliette falls as deeply in love with Roméo as he does with her. Unfortunately, her father has other plans for Juliette's future.
Mercutio Roméo's cousin and best friend	mehr-COO-shee-oh	baritone	Impulsive and irreverent, Mercutio refuses to let Tybalt insult the Montaigu family. His bellicose nature and pride leads to disaster for all concerned.
Gertrude Juliette's nurse	gehr-TROOD	mezzo-soprano	Gertrude acts as a mother figure to Juliette, protecting her but also helping to conceal her marriage to Roméo.
Frère Laurent A priest	frehr loh-RAWNH	bass	Frère Laurent hopes that Roméo and Juliette's love will end the feud between their families, and he agrees to marry them in secret. Yet when his plan to save Juliette from her marriage to Paris goes awry, it will lead to the opera's tragic outcome.
Tybalt Juliette's cousin, a Capulet	TIH-balt	tenor	Hot-tempered Tybalt seems to be more invested than anyone in the Montaigu-Capulet feud. He is outraged when he sees Roméo at the Capulet ball, and when he picks a fight with Mercutio on the streets of Verona, his fury has a deadly outcome.
Capulet Juliette's father	ka-poo-LEH	bass-baritone	Capulet and Juliette have fundamentally different ideas about what is best for her—especially when it comes to marriage.
Stéphano Roméo's page	steh-fah-NOH	mezzo-soprano	The part of Stéphano is a "trouser role," a term used in opera for the character of a young man played by a woman. His teasing leads directly to the duel that results in Mercutio's and Tybalt's deaths.

The Creation of *Roméo et Juliette*

c. 1595 William Shakespeare writes *Romeo and Juliet,* with a plot based on *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* (1562), an earlier work by the English poet Arthur Brooke.

1818 Charles-François Gounod is born in Paris, France, to an artistic family: his father is a painter, his mother a pianist, and young Charles soon shows remarkable aptitude in both the visual and musical arts.

1823 Gounod's father dies, and his mother opens a piano studio to support the family. Although she hopes Charles will grow up to be a lawyer, she does permit him to leave his boarding school one day each week for music lessons.

1836 Gounod enrolls at the Paris Conservatory. Although he demonstrates reasonable skill as a tenor and pianist, his real love is composing, which is where he focuses his efforts.

1839 Gounod wins the grand prize in the prestigious Prix de Rome competition in composition, which awards him a three-year stipend to study at the French Academy in Rome and in Vienna. While in Rome, he is impressed by performances of early music at the Sistine Chapel, an experience that informs his musical aesthetics.

1843 Gounod returns to Paris where he takes the position of maître de chapelle (music director) for the Séminaire des Missions Etrangères, a seminary for Catholic missionaries.

1847 Intending to pursue a religious vocation, Gounod enrolls at St. Sulpice Seminary. After only one year of study, he leaves to focus on opera composition. However, he remains committed to his Catholic faith, finding it to be a source of stability during the professional failures and emotional turbulence of his later life.

1851 Gounod's first opera, *Sapho*, premieres at the Paris Opéra, the city's most celebrated opera house. Gounod's engagement by the Opéra—a venue usually reserved for more established composers—is due almost entirely to the intercession of his close friend Pauline Viardot, one of Paris's most celebrated singers. Despite critical acclaim, it is a commercial failure and closes after only six performances.

1859 Gounod's opera *Faust* premieres, based on the play by Goethe and with a libretto by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré, who would go on to collaborate with him on six other stage works. *Faust* becomes Gounod's most popular and frequently performed opera.

1859-64 Gounod produces several operas—including *Philémon et Baucis* (1860), *La Reine de Saba* (1862), and *Mireille* (1864)—but none garners success with either audiences or critics.

1867 Gounod's luck finally changes when *Roméo et Juliette* premieres during the Exposition Universelle, an international world's fair in Paris. The opera is a spectacular success and sells out several performances.

1870 The Franco-Prussian war breaks out. Gounod and his family flee Paris, first settling in the French countryside and then joining a wave of French immigrants to England. During the fighting, Gounod's home in Paris is destroyed. Although Gounod has traveled to England essentially as a refugee, he does enjoy a range of professional opportunities in the country, including a commission for a new composition for the opening of the Royal Albert Hall on May 1, 1871. The resulting motet, *Gallia*, features a biblical text about the destruction of Jerusalem, likely expressing Gounod's sorrow at his own recent experience of war.

1884 In the intervening years, Gounod has continued to write operas but struggled to find any meaningful commercial success. After a revised version of *Sapho* fails in 1884, the composer never again writes for the stage, concentrating instead on sacred music and works for piano and chamber ensembles. Happily, Gounod does occasionally enjoy success from his older works. For instance, when *Mireille* is revived in Paris in 1889, it is well received. It soon becomes one of the most popular pieces in the company's repertoire and a staple on the French stage for the next 75 years.

1893 After experiencing declining health for some time, Gounod suffers a stroke and dies on October 18.

Star-Crossed Lovers from Around the World

For millennia, stories of impossible love have enjoyed a prominent place in oral and literary traditions around the globe. Here is a small sampling of some of these great tragedies.

PYRAMUS AND THISBE In this tale from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, two Babylonian lovers woo each other through a crack in the wall between their families' houses. They arrange to meet, but Pyramus misreads the signs at their meeting place, believes Thisbe dead, and kills himself. Thisbe finds him and follows him in death. (The story of Pyramus and Thisbe is featured in Shakespeare's comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which was written around the same time as *Romeo and Juliet*.)

LAYLA AND MAJNUN This classic love story from Persian and Arabic traditions recounts how a young man goes mad when the father of his beloved prevents them from marrying.

POPOCATÉPETL AND IZTACCÍHUATL A Nahua legend describes two star-crossed lovers who are transformed into the two volcanoes that overlook the Valley of Mexico.

THE BUTTERFLY LOVERS In this Chinese folk tale, a young woman disguises herself as a man to pursue her academic studies but then falls in love with one of her fellow students. After dying together, the lovers are transformed into butterflies.

TRISTAN AND ISEULT In this medieval tale, the Cornish knight Tristan is tasked with ferrying the Irish princess Iseult to marry the Cornish King Mark. On the journey to Cornwall, a love potion causes Tristan and Iseult to fall in love. When their secret is discovered, banishment and death ensue. (This story inspired Richard Wagner's 1865 opera *Tristan und Isolde*.)

PAOLO AND FRANCESCA The historical Francesca da Rimini, a contemporary of the Italian poet Dante Alighieri, fell in love with her husband's brother, Paolo. In Dante's epic poem *The Inferno*, Francesca and Paolo have been consigned to hell because of their sinful love. It's worth noting that, in Dante's telling, Francesca and Paolo fell in love while sitting under a tree and reading the story of another (in)famous pair: Lancelot, one of King Arthur's knights of the round table, and Arthur's wife, Guinevere.

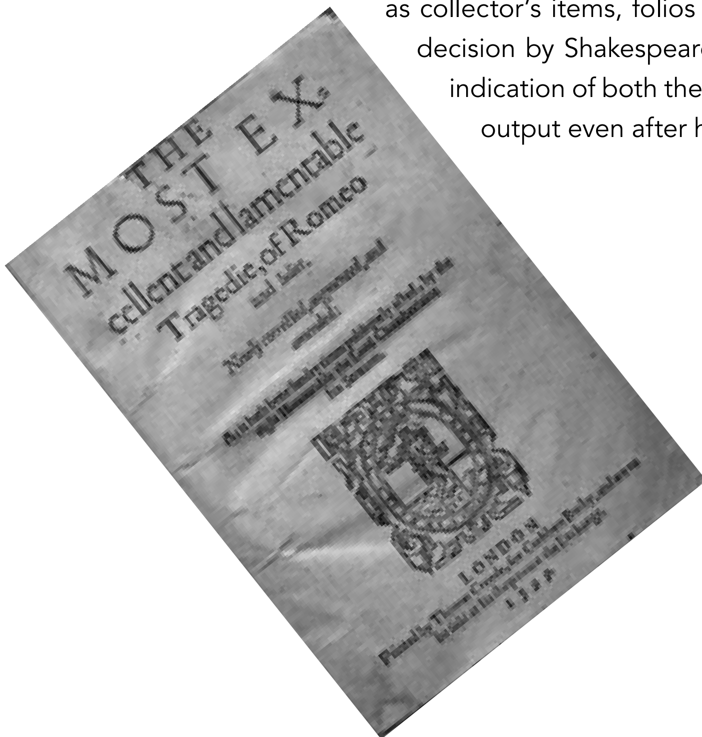
JOHNSON HATFIELD AND ROSEANNA MCCOY The real-life courtship of these 19th-century American lovers did nothing to quell the bad blood between their feuding families, the Hatfields and McCoys of Kentucky and West Virginia.

What's in a Page?

Almost no copies of Shakespeare's plays in his own handwriting exist today, but three publications of *Romeo and Juliet* appeared within a few decades of the play's premiere. Two of these were published during Shakespeare's lifetime: the so-called First Quarto (1597) and Second Quarto (1599). Another version, in a collection of Shakespeare's plays referred to as the First Folio, was published in 1623, seven years after the author's death. To a modern reader, these monikers may seem unnecessarily arcane, but understanding the terms "quarto" and "folio" can offer us vital insights into how books were printed and sold during Shakespeare's day.

Quartos were books made by folding pieces of paper in half (lengthwise) and then in half again (widthwise) to create four individual leaves of paper, each measuring about seven inches wide by nine inches tall; the name "quarto" refers to this four-leaf organization. Counting both front and back sides of the sheets, each printed sheet of paper would result in eight quarto-sized pages. A folio, by contrast, was made by folding the sheets of paper in half once to form two large leaves (four printed pages), resulting in a much larger book; the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays, for instance, measures approximately 13 inches tall by eight inches wide.

Quartos were relatively cheap to produce and purchase, costing roughly sixpence a piece (around $5.00 in modern currency), and their small size made them easy to handle and transport. Folios, by contrast, cost between 15 and 18 shillings ($150 to $180 in modern terms). Treated as collector's items, folios were generally used only for highly respected work, and the decision by Shakespeare's former colleagues to print his plays in folio form is a clear indication of both their respect for his writing and their desire to keep monetizing his output even after his death.


THE
MOST EX-
cellent and lamentable
Tragedie, of Romeo
and Iuliet.

LONDON

The Guided Listening Activities are designed to introduce students to a selection of memorable moments from the opera. They include information on what is happening dramatically, a description of the musical style, and a roadmap of musical features to listen for. Guided Listening Activities can be used by students and teachers of varying levels of musical experience.

IN PREPARATION

Teachers can access recordings for these Guided Listening Activities at metopera.org/aoromeomusic.

"Je veux vivre dans ce rêve"

This aria (it is called an "arietta," or "small aria," in the score) occurs early in the opera and is our musical introduction to Juliette. Her father, Capulet, is hosting a masked ball, and unbeknownst to him, members of the rival family of the Montaigus are in attendance. While they surreptitiously observe Juliette, her nurse hints that Juliette should consider the young Count Pâris for her husband. Juliette responds with the aria "Je veux vivre dans ce rêve," in which she commits herself instead to youth, beauty, and freedom.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR:

- Gounod's depiction of Juliette's emotional state
- The virtuosity of Juliette's music
- The strongly rhythmic triple meter

(00:00) The aria opens with an ebullient orchestral introduction, establishing the vivacious tone of the piece. Rising chords in the strings are accompanied by the distinctive timbre of the triangle. The voice then enters with a brief cadenza on the word *"Ah!,"* marked by trills and a falling chromatic line.

BETH BERGMAN/MET OPERA

(00:17) Following this brief introduction and cadenza, Juliette launches into the text of her first line, "I want to live in the dream that intoxicates me." Her music is almost breathless, as she presents her pleasure-seeking philosophy of life. Note how her first notes are followed by rests. These are also good moments to hear the strong oom-pah-pah rhythm in the accompaniment. This pattern makes the triple meter particularly easy to hear.

(00:32) Juliette continues with a second phrase, which begins by repeating exactly the music from her first line. Here, however, she continues to an even higher pitch as she continues, "Sweet flame, I keep you in my soul like a treasure!"

(00:48) Juliette returns to the opening text and repeats her music from the beginning. Her second phrase now features a different cadential pattern, ending in the home key. This literal repetition of text and music makes it seem like Juliette is completely fixated on her plan to have a carefree, pleasure-filled life.

(01:21) A contrasting section begins. The mode turns to minor as Juliette's text takes on a more plaintive tone: "This intoxication of youth lasts only one day, alas!" She repeats this phrase a second time as she continues, "then the time comes when one weeps and the heart surrenders to love." Juliette views falling in love as the end of youth and something to be lamented.

(01:39) Juliette continues with a new phrase that acts as a transition. At the close, she engages in a lengthy chromatic scale up to a high register, and back down again.

(01:55) With the twinkling of the triangle, the music leads directly into a return to the major mode and a repeat of Juliette's text and music from the top.

(02:26) A sudden change to a much slower tempo begins another contrasting section. The relentless oom-pah-pah accompaniment in the orchestra drops out, replaced by dreamy arpeggios performed by the harp. Juliette sings, "Let me sleep far from sad winter, and breathe in the rose before it loses its petals." The music creates a mood of pensiveness and wistfulness.

(03:03) The tempo gradually accelerates, and Juliette now launches into a series of rapid scales, all on the word *"Ah!"* It is as if she is overcome with ecstatic joy in her youth. Much of the remaining concluding section of the aria is made up of scalar material that drives towards an ecstatic close.

“Ah! lève-toi, soleil!”

Roméo and Juliette met briefly at the ball and instantly fell in love, just before discovering each other’s last name. At the beginning of the opera’s second act, Roméo secretly enters the garden at the house of the Capulets and speaks to himself of his love for Juliette. This scene corresponds to Shakespeare’s famous balcony scene, one of the most well-known passages in all of literature.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR:

- Gounod’s depiction of Roméo’s emotional state
- The similarity of Gounod’s language to that of Shakespeare

(00:00) Roméo is reflecting on how his new-found love has stricken him to his core. “Love, love!,” Roméo declaims, against drawn-out chords in the strings. He continues with

his line in a relatively rhythmically free style called recitative. This brief first line moves through different key areas, almost as if Roméo is searching out his feelings.

(00:17) The key settles in a new area, and the woodwinds enter with a gentle, pianissimo figure. Roméo continues in a recitative-like style with his famous words, "But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?" After a response with the woodwind ensemble that modulates to another new key, he continues, "It is there by night that her beauty shines." Note how Gounod's French translation differs from Shakespeare.

(00:51) A solo clarinet enters with a gentle arpeggio. This introductory section of recitative closes out with ascending chromatic chords and a final fermata with harp accompaniment.

(01:05) Roméo enters with his first line of the aria proper, *"Ah! lève-toi, soleil! fais pâlir les étoiles"* ("Ah! arise, o sun! and make the stars pale!"). This corresponds to Shakespeare's text "Arise, fair sun and kill the envious moon." Roméo's music is ardent, with chromatic modulations, and sits relatively high in the tenor range. He is accompanied by the harp.

(01:26) Roméo becomes more passionate, now singing a melody that rises by half steps, as he repeats *"Ah! lève-toi!"* This culminates in a high point as he sings, *"Parais!"* ("Appear!"), on a high B♭.

(01:46) The violins now intrude with a new melody in a brief instrumental interruption. When Roméo sings again, it is almost as if he is the accompaniment to this lush and romantic melody. But he is soon overcome with his feelings as he remarks on a lock of hair that falls to caress Juliette's cheek.

(02:28) A new section begins, marked by repeated, driving notes in the strings with rapid modulation. "She speaks! But I heard nothing," Roméo sings. The music expresses his impatience to know what Juliette is thinking.

(03:00) Roméo returns to the music and text from the beginning of the aria, with a repeat of *"Ah! lève-toi, soleil!"* This ardent and lyrical music is a wonderful demonstration of Roméo's emotional character.

(03:43) In this concluding section, Roméo repeats *"Viens, parais"* ("Come, appear") several times, against a soft and gentle orchestral accompaniment. The aria ends on a high B♭, Roméo's highest note.

Accent/articulation

Accent refers to the prominence given to a note by a change in volume, duration, or attack. Articulation is a related term, meaning the amount of separation between notes, on a range from short and detached ("staccato") to connected ("legato"). To indicate which note should receive an accent, a composer notates a symbol above the note. There are many different kinds of accents in music—for example, "marcato" indicates that a note should be "marked" or stressed; "martellato" indicates a "hammered style" both loud and short, and "tenuto" indicates that a note should be sustained for its full length. Accent and articulation are some of the many elements of composition and performance that combine to create musical expression and meaning.

Chromaticism

Chromatic notes are those that don't belong to the prevailing harmony or scale of a musical composition (so named because in early music notation these notes were colored). Chromatic is the reverse of diatonic, which refers to notes of a scale or harmony derived exclusively from those available in its given key. Chromaticism can add drama and intensity to music by introducing notes or chords that are dissonant to the key and that call for resolution.

Diminished chord

A diminished triad is a chord built from two minor thirds stacked on top of one another (for instance D–F–A♭). "Diminished" indicates that what usually would be a perfect fifth between the lowest and the highest note has been made smaller. The fully diminished seventh chord, which consists of three minor thirds stacked together, is one of the most tonally unstable chords in Western music. Diminished chords and their inherent instability strongly call for resolution, which is why they often are used to create a feeling of tension or foreboding.

Harp

An instrument in the string family. The harp is plucked with the fingers, with each of the player's hands on one side of the instrument. The modern orchestral harp consists of a large frame with strings of various lengths stretched vertically between the ends. The harp's sound is soft, with a delicate timbre, and it is particularly well suited for arpeggios and glissandi (long sweeping runs, performed on the harp by sliding a single finger up or down the instrument).

Legato and Staccato

The term legato comes from the Italian word for "to tie together." It is used in music to describe a series of notes that are played or sung with smooth connection from one note to the next. It is the opposite of staccato, an articulation in which notes are played in a short, detached manner.

Major and Minor

Western music written since around 1600 has been built on two basic tonal principles: major and minor. Although the terms can be used to describe scales, intervals, harmonies, or keys, in their most basic application they refer to the overarching tonal organization of a composition, or its mode. Pieces in the major mode typically sound bright, cheery, or optimistic, while pieces in the minor mode may sound somber, plaintive, or sinister.

Mute

A device used to reduce or dampen the sound of an instrument. Mutes often also change the timbre of an instrument, causing it to have a muffled or covered sound. Called "sordino" in Italian and "sourdine" in French, mutes for string instruments are rubber or wooden devices that fit onto the bridge, whereas mutes for brass instruments fit into or over the bell. Composers indicate in the score when mutes should be used and removed.

Pizzicato

The word pizzicato (Italian for "pinched") is an instruction for string players to create sound by plucking the string with their fingers instead of drawing their bows across it. Compared to bowing, pizzicato produces a softer, gentler sound.

Tremolo

A musical term indicating the rapid repetition of a single note, from the Italian for "trembling" or "quivering." In string instruments, it requires that players move their bows back and forth across the string as fast as possible. A solo string player playing a tremolo may not sound very powerful, but when all the string instruments in the orchestra play a tremolo together, it creates an impressive effect.

Word Painting

The musical depiction of the literal meaning of words. Word painting can be simple, as in the imitation of natural sounds such as bird calls and thunder, or more abstract, in which the composer draws a connection between the innate qualities of the word and various musical characteristics. Examples might include setting the word "victory" with snare drums, trumpets, and a military gesture; or setting the word "weep" with falling figures, minor tonality, and chromatic dissonance.

Encouraging Student Response in Attending the Final Dress Rehearsal

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND *ROMÉO ET JULIETTE*

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1
Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1d
Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

Watching and listening to a performance is a unique experience that takes students beyond the printed page to an immersion in images, sound, interpretation, technology, drama, skill, and craft. This performance activity will help students analyze different aspects of the experience, engage critically with the performance, and express their views in a respectful and supported environment.

The enclosed performance activity is called "Opera Review: *Roméo et Juliette*." The handout for this activity, available at the back of this guide, will invite students to think of themselves as opera critics, taking notes on what they see and hear during the performance and critiquing each scene on a five-star scale. Students should bring this activity sheet to the final dress rehearsal and fill it out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. When they return to class, students can use their "Opera Review" sheets as they review and discuss their experience.

DISCUSSION

Students will enjoy starting the class with an open discussion of the final dress rehearsal. What did they like? What didn't they? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? What would they have done differently?

In Shakespeare's version of the story, Romeo and Juliet are famously referred to as "star-crossed lovers." For audiences of his time, this meant that their fate was pre-ordained—they were not born under a "lucky star," and were thus doomed to see their love end tragically. When Gounod wrote his opera nearly 300 years later, the idea that people's destiny is foretold by the stars was no longer valid. In your final exploration of the opera, lead your students in a discussion of its tragic ending and its relation to the notion of destiny. You may wish to share the meaning of the phrase "star-crossed lovers" to help provide a context for the discussion. Possible questions to ask include the following:

- What are the forces that contribute to the deaths of the hero and heroine? Society as a whole? Their families? Specific characters in the play?
- How would you describe the characters of *Roméo and Juliette*? Are there aspects of or faults in their personalities that may contribute to their tragic demise?
- In Shakespeare's play, the deaths of Romeo and Juliet are presented as a result, in part, of the feuding families and the consequential civil unrest. Do you agree with this assessment? Do you think Gounod's version supports this interpretation? Is this also in line with the director's interpretation and staging?
- Can you imagine a version of *Roméo et Juliette* in which the lovers survive? Do you think it would be a more compelling or a less compelling story?

Sum up the discussion by asking whether students think the story of Romeo and Juliet is still relevant today. Would a version of the story set now be tragic, or would it end happily? What contemporary forces would keep the lovers apart? Would destiny or the stars play a role in the story's outcome? In a class discussion or as homework, have students compile an outline of the ways they would adapt Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* to be realistic characters in a contemporary setting.

IN PRINT

Cross, Wilbur L., and Brooke, Tucker. *The Yale Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1993.

A must-have reference volume, including the complete works of Shakespeare as well as copious footnotes and margin commentary.

Giroud, Vincent. *French Opera: A Short History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.

Giroud presents an in-depth study of opera in France from its origins to the present day—or more precisely, from Lully to Messiaen, including composers, performance, performers, and audience.

Huebner, Steven. *The Operas of Charles Gounod*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

One of the only book-length explorations of Charles Gounod, Huebner's work explores not only the operatic world of mid-century France, but also Gounod's life and career. The bulk of the work is a detailed exploration of each of Gounod's operas and a study of his musical style.

ONLINE

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare
shakespeare.mit.edu
Hosted by MIT, this site is an online version of Shakespeare's complete works.

Folger Shakespeare Library
folger.edu/teach
The Folger is the world's largest Shakespeare collection, located in Washington, D.C. Their site is vast resource for Shakespeare research, artwork, and lesson plans.

Metropolitan Opera, "Bartlett Sher on His New Production of *Roméo et Juliette*"
youtube.com/watch?v=3c12GtM7UEk
A video preview of the Met's production of Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, featuring Bartlett Sher, the production's director.

Roméo et Juliette

Performance date:

Reviewed by:

Have you ever wanted to be a music and theater critic? Now's your chance!

As you watch *Roméo et Juliette*, use the space below to keep track of your thoughts and opinions. What did you like about the performance? What didn't you like? If you were in charge, what might you have done differently? Think carefully about the action, music, and stage design. Then, after the opera, share your opinions with your friends, classmates, and anyone else who wants to learn more about the opera and this performance at the Met!

THE PERFORMANCE, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN / STAGING
The masked ball MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Juliette's view on life MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Roméo in Juliette's garden MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Roméo and Juliette marry. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Stéphano's fight MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
A brawl MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

THE PERFORMANCE, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN / STAGING
The death of Mercutio	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:			
Roméo’s response	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:			
In Juliette’s room	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:			
Juliette’s desperate plan	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:			
In the tomb	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:			