

SHAKESPEARE'S ROMEO AND JULIET IS FILLED WITH SOME OF the best-known images in literature: a girl on a balcony and a boy below, bathed in moonlight as they express their newfound passion; a secret wedding of young lovers from rival families; a desperate plan to be together in spite of violence and exile; and a reunion in a dark tomb, where the dying hero and heroine prove that love is stronger than death. To these unforgettably romantic scenes, Charles Gounod's operatic adaptation *Roméo et Juliette* adds music that is a thrilling, rapturous, and heartbreaking counterpart to the transcendent poetry of Shakespeare.

Taking inspiration from sources as diverse as 18th-century Italian design and the films of Federico Fellini, Bartlett Sher, director of the Met's new production, sets the passion of Gounod's couple against a world of decadence, wealth, and violence. His staging highlights the title characters' longing, as expressed through a series of four exquisite duets, for an exterior world to match their private universe of love and devotion. Gounod's music masterfully reflects this unrealized hope for beauty, peace, and rest.

This guide is intended to help your students appreciate the Shakespearean roots of one of the greatest French operas in the repertoire. Students will examine how solo arias play a key role in understanding the inner life of the hero and heroine and consider the forces that contribute to their tragic fate. The activities on the following pages are designed to provide context, deepen background knowledge, and enrich the overall experience of this *Live in HD* transmission. This guide will also align with key strands of the Common Core Standards.

THE WORK:

ROMÉO ET JULIETTE

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

Gianandrea Nosedà, Conductor

Bartlett Sher, Production

Michael Yeargan, Set Designer

Catherine Zuber, Costume Designer

Jennifer Tipton, Lighting Designer

Chase Brock, Choreographer

B.H. Barry, Fight Director

STARRING

(In order of vocal appearance):

Diana Damrau

JULIETTE (soprano)

Eliot Madore

MERCUTIO (baritone)

Vittorio Grigolo

ROMÉO (tenor)

Mikhail Petrenko

FRÈRE LAURENT (bass)

Virginie Verrez

STÉPHANO (mezzo-soprano)



DAMRAU

VERREZ

GRIGOLO

MADORE

PETRENKO

Production a gift of
The Sybil B. Harrington Endowment Fund

A La Scala Production, initially
presented by the Salzburg Festival

This guide includes five sections with two types of classroom activities.

- **THE SOURCE, THE STORY, WHO'S WHO IN ROMÉO ET JULIETTE, AND A TIMELINE**

- **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:**
Two activities designed to align with and support various Common Core Standard strands used in ELA, History/Social Studies, and Music curricula

- **PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES:**
Two activities to be used during *The Met: Live in HD* transmission, highlighting specific aspects of this production

- **POST-SHOW DISCUSSION:**
A wrap-up activity, integrating the *Live in HD* experience into the students' understanding of the performing arts and the humanities

- **STUDENT RESOURCE PAGES:**
Classroom-ready worksheets supporting the activities in the guide

The activities in this guide will focus on several aspects of *Roméo et Juliette*:

- The use of arias as a way to reveal characters' inner feelings and thoughts
- The expressive nature of Gounod's music
- 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

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.

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 Paris, 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: SHAKESPEARE'S ROMEO AND JULIET Written circa 1594–6, *Romeo and Juliet* is Shakespeare's earliest tragedy other than the remarkably violent *Titus Andronicus*. For his source material, he turned to an earlier narrative poem by the English writer Arthur Brooke, *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* from 1562. Brooke in turn had been inspired by a story by the Italian poet Mateo Bandello—some of whose other tales made their way into Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Twelfth Night*.

Gounod's librettists Jules Barbier and Michel Carré closely followed Shakespeare's text, often using direct translations of the original's expressions and metaphors. As a whole, the opera condenses the action of the play and focuses it more tightly on the story of the two lovers.

VOICE TYPE

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

SOPRANO

the highest-pitched type of human voice, normally possessed only by women and boys

MEZZO-SOPRANO

the female voice whose range lies between the soprano and the contralto (Italian “mezzo” = middle, medium)

CONTRALTO

the lowest female voice, also called an alto

COUNTERTENOR

a male singing voice whose vocal range is equivalent to that of a contralto, mezzo-soprano, or (less frequently) a soprano, usually through use of falsetto

TENOR

the highest naturally occurring voice type in adult males

BARITONE

the male voice lying below the tenor and above the bass

BASS

the lowest male voice

SYNOPSIS

PROLOGUE A chorus introduces the story of the endless feud between the Montague and Capulet families, and of the love of their children, Roméo and Juliette.

ACT I *Verona, 18th century* At a masked ball in the Capulet palace, Tybalt waits for his cousin Juliette and assures her suitor, Count Paris, that her beauty will overwhelm him. Capulet, Juliet’s father, presents his daughter to the guests and invites them to dance. The crowd disperses and Roméo, a Montague, enters with his friends Mercutio and Benvolio. He tells them about a strange dream he has had, but Mercutio dismisses it as the work of the fairy Queen Mab. Roméo watches Juliette dance and is instantly entranced by her. Juliette explains to her nurse that she is not interested in marriage, but when Roméo approaches her, both feel that they are meant for each other. Just as they discover each other’s identity, Tybalt returns. Roméo disguises himself and rushes off. Tybalt identifies the intruder as Montague’s son, but Capulet restrains him, ordering the party to continue.

ACT II *Juliette’s garden* Later that night, Roméo enters the Capulets’ garden, looking for Juliette. When she steps out onto her balcony, he comes forward and declares his love. Servants briefly interrupt their encounter. Alone again, they vow to marry.

ACT III *The cell of Frère Laurent* Roméo comes to Frère Laurent’s cell at daybreak, followed by Juliette and her nurse, Gertrude. Convinced of the strength of their love, the priest agrees to marry them, hoping that the union will end the fighting between their families.

Outside Capulet’s house, Roméo’s page, Stéphano, sings a mocking song. This provokes a fight with several of the Capulets. Mercutio protects Stéphano and is challenged by Tybalt. Roméo appears and tries to make peace, asking Tybalt to forget about the hatred between their families, but when Tybalt attacks and kills Mercutio, Roméo, furious, stabs him. The Duke of Verona arrives, and both factions cry for justice. Roméo is banished from the city.

ACT IV *Juliette’s chamber* Roméo and Juliette awake after their secret wedding night. She forgives him for killing one of her relatives, and after they have assured each other of their love, Roméo reluctantly leaves for exile. Capulet enters and tells his daughter that she must marry Paris that same day. She is left alone, desperate, with Frère Laurent, who gives her a sleeping potion that will make her appear dead. He promises that she will wake with Roméo beside her. Juliette drinks the potion. When Capulet and the guests arrive to lead her to the chapel, she collapses.



ACT V *The Capulet's cemetery vault* Roméo arrives at the Capulets' crypt. Discovering Juliette's body, he believes her to be dead and drinks poison. At that moment, she awakens, and the lovers share a final dream of a future together. As Roméo grows weaker, Juliette takes a dagger from his belt and stabs herself. The lovers die praying for God's forgiveness.

WHO'S WHO IN ROMÉO ET JULIETTE

CHARACTER		PRONUNCIATION	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Roméo	A young nobleman, member of the Montaigu (in English, Montague) family	roh-meh-OH (in French; in English, usually ROH-mee-oh)	tenor	When he sees Juliette for the first time, Roméo is immediately spellbound.
Juliette	The 13-year-old daughter of the Capulet family	zhoo-lee-ETT	soprano	Although initially uninterested in love and marriage, Juliette soon realizes that she and Roméo are fated to be together.
Mercutio	Roméo's cousin and best friend	mehr-COO-shee-oh	baritone	Impulsive and sardonic, Mercutio is also fond of Roméo and concerned for his honor.
Gertrude	Juliette's nurse	geh-TROOD (In Shakespeare's play, this character is called simply "Nurse.")	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 (called Friar Lawrence in the play)	bass	While Frère Laurent helps the young lovers by secretly uniting them in marriage, his failed plan to help Juliette leads to the opera's tragic outcome.
Tybalt	Juliette's cousin, a Capulet	TIH-bult	tenor	Hot-tempered Tybalt is insulted when he recognizes Roméo at Capulet's ball, and he later escalates tensions between the two families, ending in a deadly duel.
Capulet	Juliette's father	ka-poo-LEH (In French; in English, KA-pyew-let)	bass-baritone	While Capulet's actions are often in opposition to Juliette's own wishes, he has her best interests at heart.
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.



BRESCIA-AMISANO/LA SCALA

1590s 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. It is one of Shakespeare's earlier works, preceding his most famous romantic comedies and tragedies.

1818 Charles-François Gounod is born in Paris, France, to an artistic family: his father is a painter and his mother a pianist and visual artist. Despite this, his mother encourages him to pursue a career in the law.

1823 Gounod's father dies, and his mother opens a piano studio to support the family. Charles shows an early talent for both music and the visual arts.

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. 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, despite the prediction by Gounod's younger contemporary Georges Bizet that "it will not be a success."

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 *Roméo et Juliette* has its first performance at the Théâtre Lyrique during the Paris Exposition Universelle, an international world's fair presented in Paris. It is a spectacular success and sells out for several performances after its premiere.

1868-84 Gounod continues to write operas, but none of his next three works finds favor with the public. After a revised version of *Sapho* also fails in 1884, the composer never again writes for the stage, concentrating instead on sacred music and works for piano and chamber ensembles.

1889 *Mireille* is revived at the Opéra Comique and is well received. It becomes one of the most popular pieces in the company's repertoire and is 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.



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

English Language Arts

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the reproducible resources available at the back of this guide entitled *The Inner Life: Soliloquies and Arias in Shakespeare and Gounod*, as well as the audio selections from *Roméo et Juliette* available online or on the accompanying CD.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

English/Language Arts, Creative Writing, Poetry, Drama, Humanities

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To explore Shakespeare's use of monologues and soliloquies in order to express his characters' feelings and emotional states
- To introduce the expressive power of operatic arias
- To practice close reading and listening in order to analyze literary and musical techniques
- To prompt curiosity about the interpretation of *Roméo et Juliette* as seen in this *Live in HD* production

The Inner Life: Soliloquies and Arias in Shakespeare and Gounod

The score of an opera is made up of many different parts, both musical and dramatic, but one of the operatic genre's most recognizable features is the aria—a self-contained piece for solo voice, typically with orchestral accompaniment. Arias may be sung by one character to another or to a group of people, but more typically they are reflective pieces in which the action comes to a halt and a character provides the audience with a glimpse into his mind. In classic drama, such as in the plays of Shakespeare, we find the spoken counterpart to an aria in the monologue or soliloquy. In this activity, students will compare matching passages from Shakespeare and Gounod to discover some of the ways authors and composers convey characters' innermost thoughts. Students will:

- compose a brief dramatic scene
- closely read and discuss the balcony scene from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*
- explore the nature of operatic singing by listening to Gounod's musical treatment of the same scene
- become familiar with some of the music in advance of the Met's HD transmission

STEPS

In this activity, students will explore the dramatic function of operatic arias. They will begin their exploration of characters' inner thoughts by creating a scene between two characters. They will then examine similar scenes from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Gounod's opera to learn how these artists portrayed characters' interior worlds and emotions in their works.

STEP 1: Introduce the activity by letting students know that you'll be exploring soliloquies and arias, which represent in theatrical terms one of the inherent problems of human communication: it's impossible to know what is in someone else's head or heart. Playwrights, filmmakers, opera composers, and even cartoonists all have developed ways to show what characters are thinking to themselves.

To begin your exploration, ask students to take five to ten minutes to compose a dramatic scene, including stage directions, but using no direct dialogue between the characters. The scene should convey the following situation:

A boy and girl are in a park. They really like each other, but their parents have told them not to socialize, and they are not speaking to one another. They'd like to tell their friends, but they know they will make fun of them. They've individually come to the park trying to figure out what to do about their dilemma.

STEP 2: When students have finished writing, ask two or three groups to perform their scenes in front of the class. After each performance, ask the class:

- What do you know about each character’s thoughts and emotions?
- How did you learn this? What particular lines by each character conveyed these feelings? Did the characters’ style of language and expression match what he or she was saying?
- Briefly wrap up the discussion by asking for suggestions about what each author might have done to express some of these thoughts and emotions more clearly.

STEP 3: Now explain that this preliminary work has been in preparation for exploring how Shakespeare and Gounod solved similar problems of portraying characters’ inner lives. If your students aren’t familiar with Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, tell them that the scenes they wrote in the first part of this activity portray a situation similar to the one in the play.

Distribute the reproducible handout *Shakespeare: From the Balcony Scene*. Explain that this excerpt occurs shortly after the ball where Romeo and Juliet have met. Romeo goes to the garden beneath Juliet’s bedroom window, where she is reflecting aloud on her situation. The excerpt begins when the two lovers start speaking to one another.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND ROMÉO ET JULIETTE

This activity directly supports the following ELA-Literacy Common Core Strands:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5

Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.



BRESCIA-AMISANO/LA SCALA

STAR-CROSSED LOVERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

One of the most enduring of all operatic tropes is that of the doomed lovers. Unlucky couples from across operatic history have met their fate on stage, to the strains of glorious melodies. But the notion of star-crossed lovers isn't unique to the operatic art form: it has deep literary roots. The sources for Gounod's opera stretch back past Shakespeare to a collection of stories by the Italian writer Matteo Bandello—and there are many other tales of doomed lovers found throughout history and in cultures around the world. Here's a sampling:

- **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 mis-reads the signs at their meeting place, believes Thisbe is dead, and kills himself. Thisbe finds him and then follows him in death.
- **LAYLA AND MAJNUN:** This classical Arabian love story recounts how a young man goes mad when the father of his beloved prevents them from marrying.
- **POPOCATÉPETL AND IZTACCÍHUATL:** A Nahuatl 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 folktale, 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, they are transformed into butterflies.
- **TRISTAN AND ISEULT:** This tale of the forbidden love between a Cornish knight and an Irish princess predates the story of Lancelot and Guinevere found in Arthurian legend, but turns on the same themes. It is best known in the operatic version by Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*.
- **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.

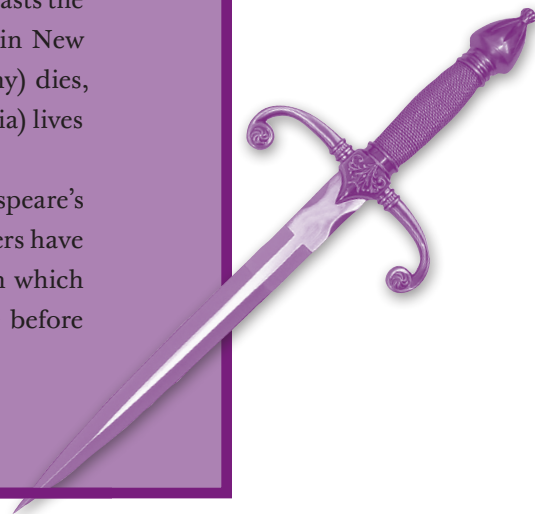
Ask for volunteers to read the scene aloud. Afterward, lead a discussion in which you ask students to paraphrase what has occurred in this scene. It may be helpful to go through it line by line, providing definitions and explanations as necessary. As a group, students can help each other work through unfamiliar vocabulary and sentence structures.

STEP 4: Next, give students five minutes to review the scene silently, this time adding thought balloons next to some of Romeo's and Juliet's lines indicating what the characters are thinking or feeling privately while speaking their lines. The thought balloons may indicate characters' interior thoughts that are at odds with what they are saying out loud; or they may expand on character's statements or explain their motivations. When the students have finished, ask for volunteers to share their insights. Do students agree about what the characters are thinking? Or do they find different emotions behind the lines?

“O Happy Dagger”: *Alternate Endings for Romeo and Juliet*

One of the most famous features of the story of Romeo and Juliet is its tragic ending: Romeo, mistakenly believing Juliet dead, takes poison. When she awakes and finds him dead, she stabs herself with his dagger. Later versions of the tale, however, have often made changes to the lovers' tragic demise. Beginning in the English Restoration, more than a century after Shakespeare's play was written, dramatists and composers presented altered versions of the story to make it more in line with the mores of their times. In bowdlerized versions by the playwrights William Davenant and David Garrick as well as the composer Georg Benda, these changes include the removal of suggestive language, scenes, and even a happy ending in which both lovers survive. The 1957 musical *West Side Story* contains another change, which recasts the feuding Veronese families as rival street gangs in New York City. In it, only the Romeo character (Tony) dies, killed by his rival, while the Juliet character (Maria) lives on to grieve for him.

Gounod himself made his own tweak to Shakespeare's ending: He delays Romeo's death so that the lovers have a brief onstage reunion and sing a final duet, in which they ask for God's forgiveness for their suicide before dying in each other's arms.



FUN FACT Even though the story of Romeo and Juliet is not based on actual historical figures, the town of Verona (where it is set) receives thousands of letters every year addressed to the fictional heroine. Today, a group of people who call themselves “The Juliet Club” answers each letter by hand. You can visit their website at www.julietclub.com/en/

STEP 5: Distribute the next portion of the reproducible handouts, *Shakespeare: Before the Balcony Scene*. Let students know that in Shakespeare’s play, this scene occurs just before the one they have just read, when Romeo and Juliet are speaking only to themselves and expressing their thoughts out loud. Ask volunteers to read the scene aloud. (Again, you may wish to have them work through it line by line or develop a paraphrase to make sure that they all understand Shakespeare’s language).

Lead a discussion about the scene your students have just read. Ask them to describe what is happening. (Romeo enters and talks to himself about his love for Juliet. She does not hear him, and he eavesdrops as she talks to herself about him. Then Romeo, unable to contain himself any longer, reveals that he is there.)

Next, introduce the term soliloquy: an extended speech by a character to him- or herself, in which they reveal their inner feelings, intentions, or character. Ask students what they think of Romeo and Juliet’s soliloquies. You may use the following questions as prompts for further discussion:

- Do these speeches change your understanding of the scene you read at the beginning of this activity? Your understanding of Romeo and Juliet?
- Do these soliloquies make the play seem more or less realistic?
- How do artists in other forms represent these kinds of inner feelings? (e.g. voiceover in films, thought balloons in comic books, etc.)
- Juliet is speaking to herself, but Romeo overhears her. How does she react? Does Romeo’s attitude change when he learns how she feels?

STEP 6: Explains to students that they will now be studying these same scenes in Gounod’s operatic adaptation of the play, *Roméo et Juliette*. Distribute the next portion of the reproducible handouts, *Thinking in Song: From the Barbier/Carré Libretto*. Invite two volunteers to read the translation of the libretto excerpt aloud, and then ask students to compare the situations and language between Gounod’s libretto and the original Shakespeare text.

Now ask students to follow along to their printed texts as you play **Track 1**, Roméo’s aria “Ah! lève-toi, soleil!” You may want to play it through twice to give students the opportunity to become more familiar with it. Invite students to comment on their impressions of the musical atmosphere, asking:

- What feelings does the music convey? Is it peaceful? On edge? Ardent?
- How would you describe the singer’s voice? Tender? Strong? Soft? Romantic?
- What does the music tell us about Roméo that words alone can’t convey? What would you expect Roméo to say and do, based on the sound of his voice alone?

STEP 7: Listen to the continuation of the scene on **Track 2** and ask students to follow along to the accompanying text. After listening, encourage students to comment on their impressions.

- How is this music different from the music in the last excerpt? What does the music tell us about Juliet's character or attitude that is different from Roméo's? (She sounds rather sad and pensive, and sings slowly.)
- How does Roméo's music change once he hears Juliette thinking aloud? (He becomes more confident, and sounds excited.)

STEP 8: Ask students to comment on the differences between Shakespeare's play and Gounod's opera. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion:

- How does Shakespeare show us characters' personalities? How does Gounod?
- Do you feel you know more about a character after listening to a soliloquy or an aria?
- If you were to listen to this aria without knowing the words, would you still be able to understand Roméo's emotional outlook?

FOLLOW-UP: For homework or as a group project, students can continue developing the scenes they wrote at the start of the lesson by creating soliloquies and setting them musically to create arias of their own. They may like basing their creations on the melodies of popular songs and composing their arias by writing new lyrics.

FUN FACT Gounod was quite a prolific opera composer—he wrote a total of 12 works belonging to the genre—but only two of his stage works were successful at their premieres, and have remained in the repertoire: *Roméo et Juliette* (1867) and the earlier *Faust* (1859), an adaptation of the first part of Goethe's play.

Gounod's Marriage of Music and Poetry

Music

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the reproducible resources available at the back of this guide entitled *Gounod's Marriage of Music and Poetry*, as well as the audio selections from *Roméo et Juliette* available online or on the accompanying CD. Students will also need photocopies of the summary or synopsis, the *Ten Essential Musical Terms*, and the chart of *Who's Who in Roméo et Juliette*, provided in this guide.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Music, Music Theory, Humanities, and Arts

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To introduce and/or reinforce knowledge of musical terminology and theory
- To listen to musical examples critically and to analyze their expressive characteristics
- To draw conclusions about the literal, textual meaning of musical examples

Many lines and expressions from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* have entered the vernacular—not only because of their vivid poetic imagery, but also for the sheer musicality of his language. In Gounod's operatic treatment of the story, he and his librettists often adhered very closely to Shakespeare's text, developing direct French translations of these iconic phrases. This activity encourages students to think about the composer's craft in telling a story through music as he brings these famous moments to life in the opera. Students will:

- use musical terminology to describe aspects of melody, harmony, rhythm, tempo, and orchestration
- practice aural skills, working on the ability to recognize abstract musical concepts
- explore Gounod's expressive representation of Shakespeare's characters

STEPS

In this activity, students will first review a list of musical terms for use later in the exercise before studying a selection of excerpts from Shakespeare's play. Using the handout available in the reproducible resources, students will then listen to a series of audio clips from Gounod's opera, eventually determining which Shakespearean moment is represented in the musical example. The audio clips are available on the CD at the back of this guide and also online.

STEP 1: For this lesson, students should be familiar with some of the most famous lines and scenes in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Texts of the passages in question are provided in the reproducible handouts at the back of this guide, but first students may benefit from a brief review of the plot. You may like to present or hand out the summary found at the beginning of this guide; a more detailed description of the plot is found in the full synopsis.



BRESCIA-AMISANO/LA SCALA

STEP 2: Distribute copies of the *Ten Essential Musical Terms* sidebar and discuss the terms at the start of class, playing the associated audio clips and/or demonstrating the concepts using your own instrument or voice. Students will be using these terms, among other descriptive language, and applying them to musical excerpts later in the lesson. A guide to the examples on the audio CD can be found below.

TRACK	MUSICAL TERM
3	Chromaticism
4	Diminished chord
5	Harp
6	Legato
7	Staccato
8	Major
9	Minor
10	Mute
11	Pizzicato
12	Tremolo

STEP 3: Now distribute the first page of the reproducible handout found at the back of this guide and turn students' attention to some of the most famous excerpts from Shakespeare's play. Call on student volunteers to read each brief passage aloud, and as a class, discuss the general meaning of the text and identify when each passage occurs in the storyline, as well as what is happening.

STEP 4: Students should now have a firm grasp of the overall meaning and emotional impact of each excerpt from Shakespeare's play. Next, introduce the music by letting students know that you will be playing a series of audio examples from Gounod's opera that correspond to the excerpts from Shakespeare. Without initially having access to the French text or a translation, their task is to assess the musical characteristics of each audio example and to choose which excerpt from Shakespeare is best represented by the music.

First, play the musical examples found on **Tracks 13** through **16** successively. Using the reproducible handout, students should begin to fill in the space provided to list musical ideas they hear in each excerpt. Students may find it helpful to refer back to the list of *Ten Essential Musical Terms*. The goal is for students to capture the musical features that contribute to each passage's expressive character. It will be necessary to play each excerpt several times.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND ROMÉO ET JULIETTE

This activity directly supports the following ELA-Literacy Common Core Strands:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.9

Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1.c

Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

STEP 5: Once students have filled in each space with their musical descriptions, play each clip a final time and have students identify which text from Shakespeare corresponds to each musical example. An answer key is provided below for your reference.

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 1 (TRACK 13):

Staccato, pizzicato, diminished chords, tremolo, chromaticism, minor mode, running scales

Shakespeare text:

MERCUTIO I am hurt. A plague o' both your houses!...
Why the devil came you between us?
I was hurt under your arm...

ROMEO Alive in triumph—and Mercutio slain!
Away to heaven, respective lenity,
And fire-eyed fury be my conduct now.
Now, Tybalt, take the "villain" back again
That late thou gavest me, for Mercutio's soul
Is but a little way above our heads,
Staying for thine to keep him company.
Either thou or I, or both, must go with him.

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 2 (TRACK 14):

Major mode, chromaticism, speech-like text setting, running scales, staccato, pizzicato

Shakespeare text:

O, then, I see Queen Mab hath been with you.
She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes
In shape no bigger than an agate-stone
On the fore-finger of an alderman,
Drawn with a team of little atomies
Athwart men's noses as they lie asleep;
Her wagon-spokes made of long spinners' legs,
The cover of the wings of grasshoppers,
The traces of the smallest spider's web,
The collars of the moonshine's watery beams,
Her whip of cricket's bone, the lash of film,
Her wagoner a small grey-coated gnat,
Not so big as a round little worm
Prick'd from the lazy finger of a maid;
Her chariot is an empty hazel-nut
Made by the joiner squirrel or old grub,
Time out o' mind the fairies' coachmakers.
And in this state she gallops night by night
Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love;



MUSICAL EXAMPLE 3 (TRACK 15):

Minor mode, legato, harp, mutes, diminished chords, chromaticism

Shakespeare text:

O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name.
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 4 (TRACK 16):

Minor and major modes, word painting, tremolo, staccato in flute, legato, tenuto, mutes, diminished chords

Shakespeare text:

JULIET Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day.
It was the nightingale, and not the lark,
That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear.
Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate tree.
Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.

ROMEO It was the lark, the herald of the morn,
No nightingale. Look, love, what envious streaks
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east.
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.
I must be gone and live, or stay and die.

STEP 6: Using the French texts and translations at the end of the reproducible handouts (if desired), work through the audio examples once more, revealing the matching musical attributes and text associations. In a free discussion, have students share their ideas about how the musical elements they identified contribute to the overall expressive nature of the text.

FUN FACT Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* has served as inspiration for countless operas, ballets, films, and many other works of art, including Hector Berlioz's chorale symphony *Roméo et Juliette* (which inspired Gounod as a young man), Sergei Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, Leonard Bernstein's musical *West Side Story*, movies by George Cukor, Franco Zeffirelli, and Baz Luhrmann, and an album by British rock star Elvis Costello, *The Juliet Letters*.

Supporting the Student Experience during *The Met: Live in HD* Transmission

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the Performance Activity reproducible handouts found in the back of this guide.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND *ROMÉO ET JULIETTE*

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3

Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

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. Performance activities help students analyze different aspects of the experience and engage critically with the performance. They will consider the creative choices that have been made for the particular production they are watching and examine different aspects of the performance.

Each Performance Activity incorporates a reproducible sheet. Students should bring this activity sheet to the *Live in HD* transmission and fill it out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. The activities direct attention to details of the production that might otherwise go unnoticed.

For *Roméo et Juliette*, the first activity sheet, *Feuding and Fighting on Stage*, encourages students to pay attention to the ways that the conflict between the houses of Montague and Capulet is represented on stage. The opera includes several situations in which members of the two houses interact combatively, and many aspects of staging that make their enmity clear. In this activity, students will take notes on the fights, taunts, and other representations of the families' feud, as represented physically on stage.

The second, basic activity sheet is called *My Highs & Lows*. It is meant to be collected, opera by opera, over the course of the season. This sheet serves to guide students toward a consistent set of objective observations, as well as to help them articulate their own opinions. It is designed to enrich the students' understanding of the art form as a whole. The ratings system encourages students to express their critique: use these ratings to spark discussions that require careful, critical thinking.

The Performance Activity reproducible handouts can be found in the back of this guide. On the next page, you'll find an activity created specifically for follow-up after the *Live in HD* transmission.

Roméo and Juliette: Star-Crossed Lovers?

Students will enjoy starting the class with an open discussion of the Met performance. 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? The discussion offers an opportunity to apply the notes on students' *My Highs & Lows* sheet, as well as their thoughts about the visual design of the Met production—in short, to see themselves as *Roméo et Juliette* experts.

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 someone'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. The sidebar *O Happy Dagger* explores alternate endings to the story and will aid you in a discussion about the impact of the opera's finale. 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?



BRESCIA-AMISANO/LA SCALA

IN PREPARATION

This activity requires no preparation other than attendance at the *Live in HD* transmission of *Roméo et Juliette*.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To review and synthesize students' understanding of *Roméo et Juliette*
- To assess the ending of the opera and generate interpretations of its meaning
- To apply students' understanding of the opera to modern-day life

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.

- How would you describe the characters of Roméo and Juliette? Are there aspects 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 resulting in part from the feuding families and the related 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.

Ten Essential Musical Terms

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–Ab. (“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 vs. 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.

**Excerpts taken from the
Metropolitan Opera broadcast of
December 6, 1986**

ROMÉO

Alfredo Kraus

JULIETTE

Cecilia Gasdia

FRÈRE LAURENT

Paul Plishka

STÉPHANO

Hilda Harris

MERCUTIO

Brian Schexnayder

Conducted by
Plácido Domingo

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra
and Chorus

- 1 Romeo's aria "Ah! lève-toi, soleil!"
- 2 Juliette responds, "Hélas: moi, le haïr!"
- 3 Chromaticism
- 4 Diminished chord
- 5 Harp
- 6 Legato
- 7 Staccato
- 8 Major
- 9 Minor
- 10 Mute
- 11 Pizzicato
- 12 Tremolo
- 13 Musical Example 1 ("A plague o' both your houses")
- 14 Musical Example 2 ("I see Queen Mab hath been with you")
- 15 Musical Example 3 ("O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo")
- 16 Musical Example 4 ("It was the nightingale")

THE MET: LIVE IN HD
ROMÉO ET JULIETTE

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

The Inner Life: Soliloquies and Arias in Shakespeare and Gounod

Shakespeare: From the Balcony Scene

Act II, Scene ii

JULIET: What man art thou that thus bescreen'd in night
So stumblest on my counsel?

ROMEO: By a name
I know not how to tell thee who I am:
My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself,
Because it is an enemy to thee;
Had I it written, I would tear the word.

JULIET: My ears have not yet drunk a hundred words
Of that tongue's utterance, yet I know the sound:
Art thou not Romeo and a Montague?

ROMEO: Neither, fair saint, if either thee dislike.

JULIET: How camest thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?
The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,
And the place death, considering who thou art,
If any of my kinsmen find thee here.

ROMEO: With love's light wings did I o'er-perch these walls;
For stony limits cannot hold love out,
And what love can do that dares love attempt;
Therefore thy kinsmen are no let to me.

JULIET: If they do see thee, they will murder thee.

ROMEO: Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye
Than twenty of their swords: look thou but sweet,
And I am proof against their enmity.

JULIET: I would not for the world they saw thee here.

ROMEO: I have night's cloak to hide me from their sight;
And but thou love me, let them find me here:
My life were better ended by their hate,
Than death prorogued, wanting of thy love.

THE MET: LIVE IN HD
ROMÉO ET JULIETTE

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

The Inner Life: Soliloquies and Arias in Shakespeare and Gounod (CONT'D)

Shakespeare: Before the Balcony Scene

Act II, Scene ii

ROMEO: He jests at scars that never felt a wound.
(Juliet appears above at a window.)
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:
Be not her maid, since she is envious;
Her vestal livery is but sick and green
And none but fools do wear it; cast it off.
It is my lady, O, it is my love!
O, that she knew she were!
She speaks yet she says nothing: what of that?
Her eye discourses; I will answer it.
I am too bold, 'tis not to me she speaks:
Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,
Having some business, do entreat her eyes
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.
What if her eyes were there, they in her head?
The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars,
As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so bright
That birds would sing and think it were not night.
See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand!
O, that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch that cheek!

JULIET: Ay me!

ROMEO: She speaks:
O, speak again, bright angel! for thou art
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head
As is a winged messenger of heaven
Unto the white-upturned wondering eyes
Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him
When he bestrides the lazy-pacing clouds
And sails upon the bosom of the air.

JULIET: O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

ROMEO: *(Aside)* Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

JULIET: 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for that name which is no part of thee
Take all myself.

ROMEO: I take thee at thy word:
Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized;
Henceforth I never will be Romeo.

JULIET: What man art thou that thus bescreen'd in night
So stumblest on my counsel?

ROMEO: By a name
I know not how to tell thee who I am:
My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself,
Because it is an enemy to thee;
Had I it written, I would tear the word.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

The Inner Life: Soliloquies and Arias in Shakespeare and Gounod (CONT'D)

Thinking in Song: From the Barbier/Carré Libretto

Romeo's aria "Ah! lève toi, soleil!"

TRACK 1

ROMÉO: L'amour, l'amour!
Oui, son ardeur a troublé tout mon être!
(A light comes on in Juliet's window.)
Mais quelle soudaine clarté
Resplendit à cette fenêtre?
C'est là que dans la nuit rayonne sa beauté!

Ah! lève-toi, soleil! fais pâlir les étoiles
Qui, dans l'azur sans voiles,
Brillent au firmament,
Ah! lève-toi! paradis! paradis!
Astre pur et charmant!
Elle rêve! elle dénoue
Une boucle de cheveux
Qui vient caresser sa joue.
Amour! Amour! porte-lui mes vœux!
Elle parle! Qu'elle est belle!
Ah! Je n'ai rien entendu!
Mais ses yeux parlent pour elle,
Et mon cœur a répondu!
Ah! lève-toi, soleil! fais pâlir les étoiles, etc.
Viens! paradis!

Love! Love!
Ay, its intensity has disturbed my very being!

But what sudden light
through yonder window breaks?
'Tis there that by night her beauty shines!

Ah, arise, o sun! Turn pale the stars
that, unveiled in the azure,
sparkle in the firmament.
Ah, arise! Ah, arise! Appear! Appear,
O pure and enchanting star!
She is dreaming, she loosens
a lock of hair
which falls to caress her cheek.
Love! Love, carry my vows to her!
She speaks! How beautiful she is!
Ah, I heard nothing.
But her eyes speak for her
and my heart has answered!
Ah, arise, o sun! turn pale the stars, etc.
Come, appear!

Juliette responds

TRACK 2

JULIETTE: Hélas! moi, le haïr! haine aveugle et barbare!
Ô Roméo, pourquoi ce nom est-il le tien?
Abjure-le, ce nom fatal qui nous sépare,
Ou j'abjure le mien.

ROMÉO: *(coming forward)* Est-il vrai? L'as-tu-dit?
Ah! dissipe le doute
D'un cœur trop heureux!

JULIETTE: Qui m'écoute
Et surprend mes secrets dans l'ombre de la nuit?

ROMÉO: Je n'ose, en me nommant, te dire qui je suis!

Alas! I—to hate him! Blind, cruel hatred!
O Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?
Refuse that fatal name which divides us
or I'll refuse mine.

Is it true? Did you say it?
Ah, dispel the doubt
in a too happy heart!

Who listens to me
and surprises my secrets in the darkness of night?

I dare not, by naming myself, tell you who I am!

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Gounod's Marriage of Music and Poetry

Shakespeare Excerpt 1:

O, then, I see Queen Mab hath been with you.
She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes
In shape no bigger than an agate-stone
On the fore-finger of an alderman,
Drawn with a team of little atomies
Athwart men's noses as they lie asleep;
Her wagon-spokes made of long spinners' legs,
The cover of the wings of grasshoppers,
The traces of the smallest spider's web,
The collars of the moonshine's watery beams,
Her whip of cricket's bone, the lash of film,
Her wagoner a small grey-coated gnat,
Not so big as a round little worm
Prick'd from the lazy finger of a maid;
Her chariot is an empty hazel-nut
Made by the joiner squirrel or old grub,
Time out o' mind the fairies' coachmakers.
And in this state she gallops night by night
Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love;

Shakespeare Excerpt 2:

O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name.
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

Shakespeare Excerpt 3:

JULIET: Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day.
It was the nightingale, and not the lark,
That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear.
Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate tree.
Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.

ROMEO: It was the lark, the herald of the morn,
No nightingale. Look, love, what envious streaks
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east.
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.
I must be gone and live, or stay and die.

Shakespeare Excerpt 4:

MERCUTIO: I am hurt. A plague o' both your houses!...
Why the devil came you between us?
I was hurt under your arm...

ROMEO: Alive in triumph—and Mercutio slain!
Away to heaven, respective lenity,
And fire-eyed fury be my conduct now.
Now, Tybalt, take the "villain" back again
That late thou gavest me, for Mercutio's soul
Is but a little way above our heads,
Staying for thine to keep him company.
Either thou or I, or both, must go with him.

THE MET: LIVE IN HD
ROMÉO ET JULIETTE

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Gounod's Marriage of Music and Poetry (CONTINUED)

Musical Example 1: _____

Which Shakespeare text is set here? _____

Musical Example 2: _____

Which Shakespeare text is set here? _____

Musical Example 3: _____

Which Shakespeare text is set here? _____

Musical Example 4: _____

Which Shakespeare text is set here? _____

THE MET: LIVE IN HD
ROMÉO ET JULIETTE

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Gounod's Marriage of Music and Poetry (CONT'D)

TRACK 13

MERCUTIO: Ah! blessé!

ROMÉO: Blessé!

MERCUTIO: Que le diable
Soit de vos deux maisons!
Pourquoi te jeter entre nous?

ROMÉO: Ô sort impitoyable!
(to his friends) Secourez-le!

MERCUTIO: *(staggering)* Soutenez-moi!

(Mercutio is carried away, and dies. Romeo, having gazed after him for a few moments, comes back downstage and, giving himself up wholly to his rage, he shouts.)

ROMÉO: Ah! maintenant remonte au ciel, prudence infâme!
Et toi, fureur à l'œil de flamme,
Sois de mon cœur l'unique loi!
(drawing his sword)
Tybalt! Il n'est ici d'autre lâche que toi!
(They cross swords.)

Ah! I am hurt!

Hurt!

A plague
o' both your houses!
Why came you between us?

O pitiless fate!
Help him!

Hold me up!

Ah! Now away back to heaven, infamous caution!
And thou, fire-ey'd fury,
be my conduct now!

Tybalt! There's no other coward here but you!

TRACK 14

MERCUTIO: Mab, la reine des mensonges,
Préside aux songes;
Plus légère que le vent
Décevant;
À travers l'espace,
À travers la nuit,
Elle passe,
Elle fuit!
Son char, que l'atome rapide
Entraîne dans l'éther limpide,
Fut fait d'une noisette vide
Par ver de terre, le charron!
Les harnais, subtile dentelle,
Ont été découpés dans l'aile
De quelque verte sauterelle
Par son cocher, le moucheron!
Un os de grillon sert de manche
À son fouet, dont la mèche blanche
Est prise au rayon qui s'épanche
De Phœbé rassemblant sa cour!

Mab, queen of illusions,
presides over dreams;
more fickle
than the deceiving wind;
through space,
through the night,
she passes
and is gone!
Her chariot, drawn through the limpid ether
by swift atomies
was made from an empty nutshell—
an earthworm was the cartwright!
The harness, a delicate lacework,
has been cut from the wing
of some green grasshopper
by her coachman, a gnat!
A cricket's bone serves as the handle
of her whip, whose white lash
is fashioned from a moonbeam shed
by Phoebe assembling her court!

THE MET: LIVE IN HD
ROMÉO ET JULIETTE

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Gounod's Marriage of Music and Poetry (CONT'D)

TRACK 15

JULIETTE: Hélas: moi, le haïr! haine aveugle et barbare!
Ô Roméo, pourquoi ce nom est-il le tien?
Abjure-le, ce nom fatal qui nous sépare,
Ou j'abjure le mien.

Alas! I—to hate him! Blind, cruel hatred!
O Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?
Refuse that fatal name which divides us
or I'll refuse mine.

TRACK 16

JULIETTE: Roméo! qu'as-tu donc?

What is it, Romeo?

ROMÉO: (*rising*) Écoute, ô Juliette!
L'alouette déjà nous annonce le jour!

O Juliet, listen!
Already the lark is telling us it's day!

JULIETTE: Non! non, ce n'est pas le jour,
Ce n'est pas l'alouette
Dont le chant a frappé ton oreille inquiète,
C'est le doux rossignol, confident de l'amour!

No, no! It is not morn,
'tis not the lark
whose song hath pierc'd the fearful hollow of thine ear,
it is the nightingale, love's confidant!

ROMÉO: C'est l'alouette, hélas! messagère du jour!
Vois ces rayons jaloux dont l'horizon se dore;
De la nuit les flambeaux pâlisent, et l'aurore,
Dans les vapeurs de l'Orient,
Se lève en souriant!

It is the lark, alas, herald of morn!
See those envious streaks gliding the horizon;
night's candles are burnt out and the dawn
breaks smiling
in the mists of the east!

At the Met: *Feuding and Fighting on Stage*

Roméo and Juliette are set on their tragic path by external circumstances: the ongoing feud between their two families. Just as in Shakespeare’s play, Gounod’s opera includes many instances of members of these houses coming into conflict, either physically or verbally. Director Bartlett Sher’s interpretation of the story shows several direct representations of this conflict. This performance activity encourages students to notice the physical aspects of the feud between the Montagues and Capulets in the production and to take notes on how these elements contribute to their understanding of Roméo and Juliette’s situation.

Describe the staging. What is going on? What are the characters doing physically? Describe how the action is placed in the set.

How do these choices about the staging contribute your understanding of Roméo and Juliette in their world?

Roméo et Juliette: My Highs & Lows

JANUARY 21, 2017

CONDUCTED BY GIANANDREA NOSEDA

REVIEWED BY _____

THE STARS	STAR POWER	MY COMMENTS
DIANA DAMRAU AS JULIETTE	*****	
VITTORIO GRIGOLO AS ROMÉO	*****	
ELIOT MADORE AS MERCUTIO	*****	
VIRGINIE VERREZ AS STÉPHANO	*****	
MIKHAIL PETRENKO AS FRÈRE LAURENT	*****	

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/STAGING
THE MASKED BALL MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
JULIETTE'S VIEW ON LIFE MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ROMÉO IN JULIETTE'S GARDEN MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ROMÉO AND JULIETTE MARRY MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
STÉPHANO'S FIGHT MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
A BRAWL MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
THE DEATH OF MERCUTIO MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ROMÉO'S RESPONSE MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
IN JULIETTE'S ROOM MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
JULIETTE'S DESPERATE PLAN MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
IN THE TOMB MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5