

EDUCATION PACK

Original Theatre and South Hill Park
presents:

SHAKESPEARE'S

R&J

South Hill Park 

CONTENTS:

1.The Company- Original Theatre

- The people
- Upcoming projects

2.Joe Calarco's Shakespeare's R&J- Why not just do the original play?

- On Shakespeare
- On the world of the play
- On "the boys"
- On theatricality
- On playing women.
- On the staging
- A final thought

3.Directors Introduction

4.HOMEWORK- An Actors Perspective

- What is a rehearsal process like?
- Kissing a Boy

5.Staging the Show

6.Set for R&J

7.A Play within a Play

8.Romeo & Juliet – Family Trees

9.Romeo & Juliet - Character Breakdown

10.Shakespeare's Theatre and the Male Actor

11.1950s - The Birth of the Teenager

12.Adaptations of Romeo & Juliet

13.Activities and Suggestions

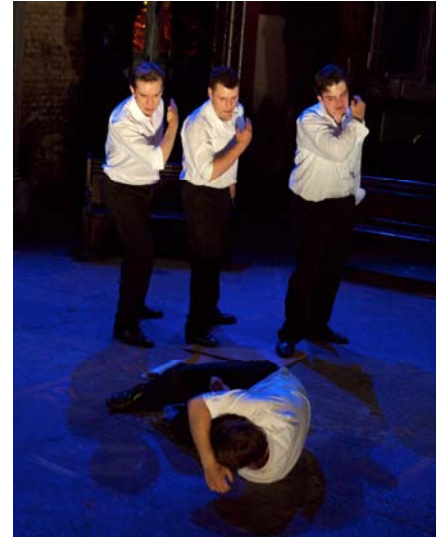
14.Resources



THE COMPANY – ORIGINAL THEATRE

The Original Theatre Company was set up in 2004 with the aim of bringing the magic of Shakespeare and theatre to all four corners of the British Isles, to revive it as it once was. We envisaged not only creating theatre, but also sharing the creative processes through hands on, practical workshops made accessible to all.

As a company we believe that Theatre is not a passive form of entertainment, but rather it should actively awake the audience through a sensory enlightenment. Theatre is not film; it is not a set of still images watched in a multiplex. It is live and it is in your face, it should provoke and disturb but primarily it should entertain.



Original Theatre wishes to bring Shakespeare and theatre outside the monochromatic world of the West End and into people's lives, not just those who can afford expensive theatre tickets or have the luxury of access to education, for whatever ways and means.

For general enquiries please email us at info@originaltheatre.com or please call us on 0870 803 0158.

The Original Theatre Company, Dovedon Hall, Chedburgh Road, Whepstead, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP29 4UB.

The People

Alastair Whatley - Creative Director

A director, actor and producer, Alastair founded The Original Theatre Company in 2005 having graduated from Royal Holloway, University of London. Directing credits for the company include *Twelfth Night* (2005), *The Taming of the Shrew* (2006) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2006). For South Hill Park Alastair directed a modern update of Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and more recently a promenade production of *Henry V* in the Wilde Theatre.

As a producer he has worked on all the Company's past shows including last years *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Forthcoming work includes collaborations with Icarus Theatre Collective on the award winning *Vincent in Brixton* and Shakespeare's *Othello* and collaboration on Bart Lee's knock out ghost play, *Norfolk's Rose*. He is a resident creative artist at South Hill Park and an associate artist of the ground breaking Flashpoint Project based at The Royal Armouries.

Max Lewendel - Associate Producer

In 2004 Max Lewendel founded The Icarus Theatre Collective (www.icarustheatre.co.uk) where he directs most of their plays. The Finborough Theatre commissioned Max to direct James Graham's *Albert's Boy* (which won the Pearson Playwright Award) starring Tony Award winner Victor Spinetti. Max also directed *Coyote Ugly* (no relation to the film) and co-produced the British premiere of Frank McGuinness' *Gates of Gold* for the Finborough. He is developing a World Premiere of Philip Ridley's next play and first British revival of the Pulitzer Prize winning *The Time of Your Life* by William Saroyan. He is also directing the two mid-scale touring collaborations for Original Theatre in 2009. Last year Max directed an international tour of Ionesco's *The Lesson*, which transferred to the Assembly Rooms, Old Red Lion Theatre, and Romania. He also co-directed Engage's production of *Lost Children* in September, which will tour East Anglia, Holland, and Kenya.

Victoria Spearing - Associate Designer

Victoria has designed Original Theatre's touring production of *Shakespeare's R+J*. Before this she worked with Alastair on their landmark production of *Henry V*. Victoria is the resident designer at South Hill Park Arts Centre, where she has produced sets for countless Christmas shows, musicals and community performances.

Fiona Davis - Associate Designer

Fiona was educated at The North Oxfordshire College of Art and Design. She graduated with both HND and a BA Honours degree in Design Crafts. Keen to pursue a career in costume and design she then worked with the Pegasus Theatre production of Phillip Pullman's *I was a rat* where she worked as prop and mask maker. She has worked as a designer and prop maker for their production of Norton Juster's *The Phantom Toll Booth* and was set and costume designer for *Wonky Towers*, an adaptation of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. As well as working as a production tutor for Pegasus, Fiona has assisted in a number of independent projects, including costume design and wardrobe for The Null Youth Arts Festival, and in the past year has been heavily involved in many of South Hill Park's productions, including the popular *Oliver!*

Incredibly passionate about costume, Fiona continues to work as a freelance costume designer who enjoys working closely with directors and performers to capture their vision.

Upcoming projects

Spring '09: *Vincent In Brixton*

Winner of the 2003 Olivier Award for best new play, this great play wrenches home the destructive qualities of both love and art and the sacrifices made by those who create it. Based on the life of Vincent Van Gogh, we will open at South Hill Park in Bracknell and have dates scheduled all over the UK.

JOE CALARCO'S SHAKESPEARE'S R + J - WHY NOT JUST DO THE ORIGINAL PLAY?

Joe Calarco is an award-winning American writer and director, who has toured plays throughout America, the U.K and as far as Tokyo. Productions written, adapted or directed by Calarco include: *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, *My Fair Lady*, *Of Mice and Men*, *In the Absence of Spring*, *Boy*, *Side Show*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. His most well-known production is undoubtedly *Shakespeare's R&J*. This production has received high acclaim throughout, winning a Lucille Lortel Award for it's year run in New York, several nominations for the Jeff Awards, including Best Play and Best Director (awarded for the premier's in Chicago), and subsequently received rave reviews for its tour of the U.K in 2003.

Below are Joe's accompanying notes to the play.

On Shakespeare

His plays are not boring! They are filled with lust, jealousy, murder, rape, incest, hope, joy, and above all humanity. Therefore his characters should be played as human. They have sex. They go to the bathroom. They are like you and me. I tackled this project because I had seen so many productions of this wildly passionate play that were boring. First love (lust?) is not boring.

On the world of the play

An all male *Romeo & Juliet*? The first problem was where to set it. More than anything, I hate a conceptual show that has no concept. If you have a cast made up of men, they better inhabit a world made up of men. The setting of "R & J" is what makes it work. Many people assume that the inspiration for the adaption came from *Dead Poets Society*. I actually tried to avoid the comparison in order to avoid sentimentality. My inspirations were actually *The Crucible*, where repression leads to psychosis (Romeo's and Juliet's actions are not exactly rational after all), and *Lord of the Flies*, where separation from ordered society leads to primal violence. Both pieces also deal with mob mentality which I think is a strong factor in the energy of "R & J". *Romeo & Juliet* is in many ways about sexual hysteria. I wanted to fully capture this. The world of "R & J" is a world full of danger. What could be more dangerous than that first forbidden kiss of literature's most famous lovers? The first forbidden kiss of two schoolboys. Put those boys in a school where Catholicism reigns, patriarchy rules, and where simply reading Shakespeare is forbidden, and you have a world pulsating with repressed hysteria.

On "the boys"

This is a play about men. It is about how men interact with other men. Thus it deals with how men view women, sex, sexuality, and violence. This play is not nor should any other production of it be strictly about homoeroticism. Nor should it be strictly about homophobia. These seemed to be the obvious choices when approaching the project,

and I purposefully avoided them. Of course these issues exist in the piece. The act of two men kissing is by definition homoerotic, and how can you depict a group of boys acting out a play about romantic love without homophobia rearing its head? However the thought of seeing a production of this play with a cast of pre-pubescent looking actors running around the stage half naked or in drag is enough to send me screaming into the night. The goal is to simply tell these boys' story. That is the other key to a successful production. The actors cast are not doing *Romeo and Juliet*. They are doing "R & J". Therefore they are playing students first and foremost, students who are acting out *Romeo and Juliet*. This is the key to establishing the right tone of the piece of it should radiate with a very young, very male, energy. I also told my actors that I thought the strongest choice to make was to make the students heterosexual. To me it makes the aversion to male romantic love more palpable. It also makes the student's acceptance of a definition of love without boundaries more moving and monumental.

On theatricality

The piece is thrilling because it goes to the essence of pure theatre: just four actors with no set, no costume changes, and no props, save composition books, a copy of the play, and a large piece of red fabric.



On the cloth: it seemed illogical for these boys to pull rapiers out from underneath their "desks". They must use what they have on hand to create their play. A piece of fabric that their "sacred text" is hidden in seemed a practical "prop" for them to use. The key is that it is very practical. It should not be considered abstract. As long as the actors use the fabric in a very concrete, practical way, the audience will accept whatever purpose it must take on.

On playing women

This was by far the most challenging aspect of the project. The most rewarding comments we got for the New York production dealt with this gender issue; many people said that they quickly forgot the one gendered nature of the cast and that they never saw the actors as women or as men playing women. They forgot about gender all together. This is the goal. Now ask me how to achieve that and I would be at a loss. I think basically that I cast it well. The one thing I told the actors over and over is that they were playing a male student first. Once the students get over their initial embarrassment of playing women they play the female characters "straight". They never try to become women. We were astonished, though maybe we shouldn't have been, at how strong these women are. They are written as powerhouses. Our twentieth century view of women has caused us to play them weakly; they are not written that way. That's the best advice I can give: just play the character, without physical or emotional stereotype.

On the staging

The evening should feel like a communal event. The more you can create the effect that this group of students is a community, or tribe, the more heartbreaking it will be at the end when they realize their “dream” must end. When the students are not playing a character in the scene being acted out, they are actively watching it, waiting for the next event to happen. This “watching” adds immeasurably to the energy of the piece; it gives it an urgency that only occurs when people can’t wait to see what is going to happen next. The announcements of scenes also add to the energy of the play; it is as if the students are announcing the next game they are going to play.

A final thought

The preceding notes and following text tries to give an impression of the New York production and the qualities that made it work. However, I hope future directors feel free enough to bring their own ideas to the table without it going against the intended vision of the piece.



HOMEWORK – An Actor’s Perspective

What is a rehearsal process like?

Chris Hogben (Student 1)

Every play is different! And every director has their own vision of how they see the play being performed, so a rehearsal process is never the same.

I am a geek, so I LOVE the early research part of a play. For instance, if you're staging *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller, you'll want to know all about the early settlers in America in the late 1600s - where they came from, what they believed, ate, how they spoke, what the land and weather were like, in short, every bit of background information that's hinted at in the text. Research acts like a rock-solid foundation, informing what choices I make about how to play a scene or say a line and makes me feel much more immersed in the world of the play, which means that my instincts in a scene have more ammunition to play with!



For *Shakespeare's R&J*, our director decided to immerse us so completely into the world of the boy's boarding school, that during rehearsal days and trips we wore school uniforms at all times, referred to all of the production team as Mr or Miss so-and-so, went to formal churches together and played a lot of sports together to tap into the competitive, disciplined world we were trying to create. Then, when the play gets onto its feet, you just have to dive in, work out how Shakespeare wants you to say your lines from the rhythm, and try and understand as best you can exactly what is going on outside and inside of the characters. Over time, relationships get deeper, emotions become more real, thoughts and actions become clearer and you start to really flow through scenes as if it were real life.

Then you're ready for the final layer of the process - a real live audience! I love performing in front of an audience for the first time, because it's as if you're watching the play for the first time too. You realise things that don't make sense or that you're saying them the wrong way, or somewhere the timing was wrong so it wasn't as funny as it could be. A great actor once told me to have my 'ears out on stalks' at all times onstage - to understand exactly how the audience is receiving what you're doing, so that you give them best experience possible! It's a two way relationship!



Kissing a Boy

Thomas Hackney (Student 2)

I thought I'd be very worried about kissing a boy because it's not something that I, personally, am inclined to do. But when uncomfortable issues like this come up, you have to be very professional and realise that the person whom you are kissing is probably just as nervous as you are. During the rehearsing of the show Chris and I became friends and had a very good working relationship, which is always a bonus, especially when it comes to difficult scenes of any kind. So once you've laid the ground work, you then have to start looking in the text and trying to figure out why these two characters do what they do and why they let themselves get carried away to this point. It would be a very easy choice for both actors to just say "these two characters kiss, therefore they must be gay," but if you look at the text there is no innuendo or 'campness' in either character that might suggest that either of them feels anymore then a strong brotherly love or affection for the other. You also have to take into account their surroundings; they are in a boarding school with no girls and the few women that they do know are much older and have more of a parental influence (like a dinner lady or matron,) so they have all the emotions and feelings developing that all adolescents go through and they haven't anyway to vent it. All the students have a very sheltered and strict life at the school, with religion playing a big part in their daily lives. So sneaking out of the dormitory late at night is a risky thing to do, which I think plays into a very rebellious side of all the students. They are wanting to brake free of the shackles of the school and the "kissing" in its rawest form is in my opinion is the most extreme form of defiance or rebellion against the system. Both the students mirror the characters they play; Romeo and Juliet (being Capulet and Montague) are forbidden to be together because it is against the laws of both the church and society, which echoes the journey the students make in performing the play as both sets of characters are swept always by their emotions.



STAGING THE SHOW

The staging of a show relies on

1) The style of text

Some shows rely on a very specific staging set out in the text, which requires the designer to include certain things. For example, if the text specifies a sofa, unless the director says otherwise, the designer needs to include a sofa for the show to be able to progress in the intended style. Some plays are very difficult to perform for this reason (see Sarah Kane's *Blasted*) or playwrights will not give permission for their work to be interpreted in any other way (eg. Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days*). In these instances, a designer has to work very hard with the space and budget they have available, to interpret the writer and director's ideas in ways that are both possible and appropriate.

2) The time and place in which it is set

If a show is set clearly in a specific era, a particular climate or a certain place, the designer may have to adapt his or her set to include indicators of this. It's sometimes difficult to create 'realistic' set pieces, as they may be too heavy, too expensive or very difficult to find, so you may find that a set is an approximation of where you are, with a few objects from the era. If you look closely at walls, tiles or windows, they are often made from molded plastic rather than the genuine article. Our version of 'R n J' is set in the 1950's so costume and props had to be thought about carefully to make them seem authentic.

3) The Director's 'vision'

The director may want to produce a show in a different way to the one set down in the text. They might choose to use the text but alter the setting, often done with Shakespeare, or use minimal, abstract or shorthand concepts as indicators for place and atmosphere.

SET FOR R&J

Victoria Spearing worked with Alastair and the cast to produce a suitable and artistic setting for the show. The Chapel setting was selected as a place that, at night in a 1950's school, would be deserted enough for the boys to revel in their enjoyment of the text. The Chapel also provided plausible and diverse props and costume in the pews, vestments, windows and choir robes, to allow the actors to create different places within the scope of their interpretation of the play.

THE PLAY WITHIN A PLAY

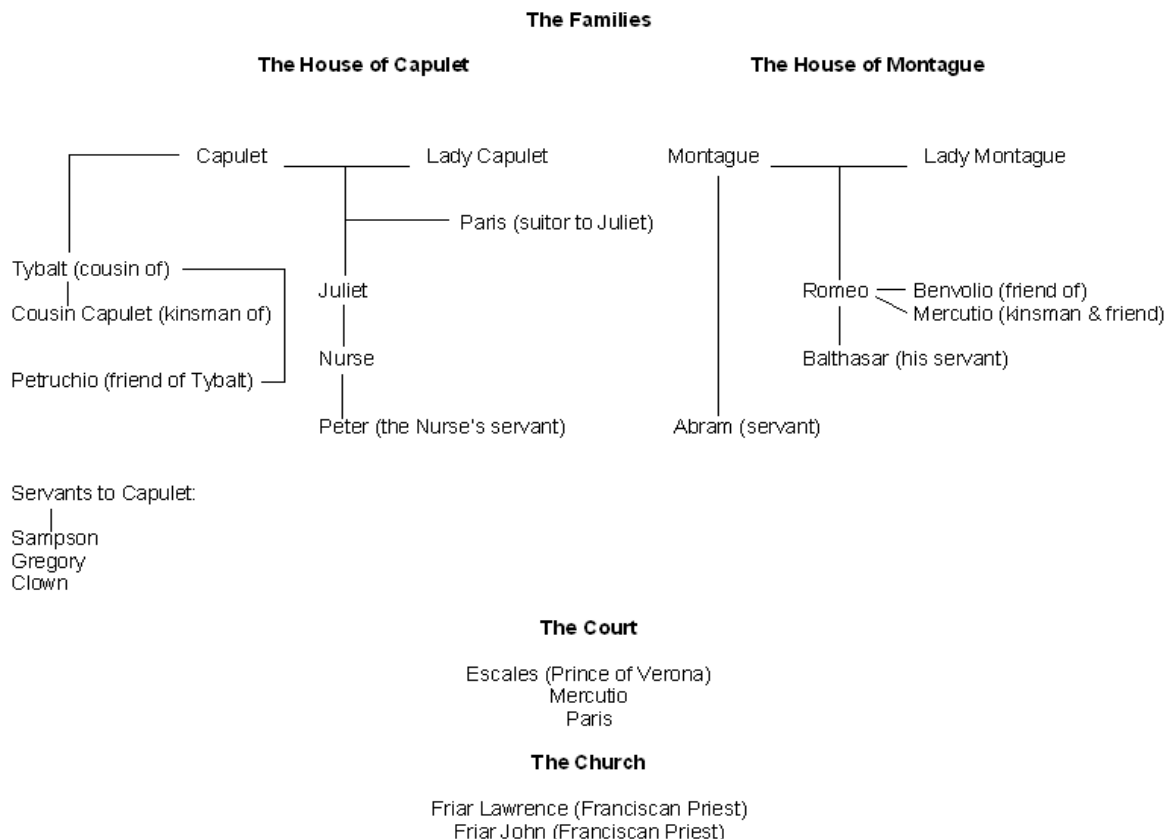
Shakespeare's *R+J* is not just a play. It's also a play within a play, a theatrical technique that has been used by playwrights for hundreds of years. We, the audience, watch actors

performing as 4 schoolboys, who in their turn are performing an illicit version of *Romeo and Juliet*.

The first documented incidence of this dramatic device takes place in Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. Written around 1587, the play is presented before two of the characters, who comment upon the action in a form of mediation between the audience and the performance.

William Shakespeare used this device repeatedly – famously in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (The Mechanicals' 'Pyramus and Thisbe'), *Love's Labours Lost*, and *Hamlet*. In *Hamlet* the Prince of Denmark, Hamlet himself asks some strolling players to perform 'The Murder of Gonzago' in an attempt to entrap his Uncle into confessing to the murder of Hamlet's Father. The action and characters in the play mirror some of the events from the play itself, and Prince Hamlet writes additional material to emphasize this. Hamlet wishes to provoke his uncle and sums this up by saying "the play's the thing/wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king." Hamlet calls this new play 'The Mouse-trap' (a title which Agatha Christie later took for the long-running play *The Mousetrap*). Almost the whole of *The Taming of the Shrew* is a play-within-a-play, presented to convince a drunken beggar that he is a nobleman watching a private performance, but the device has no relevance to the plot (unless Katharina's subservience to her "lord" in the last scene is intended to strengthen the deception against the beggar) and is often dropped in modern productions.

ROMEO & JULIET- FAMILY TREES



ROMEO & JULIET- CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

Juliet

Juliet is only thirteen and seems to be innocent, modest and docile. However, through her meetings with Romeo her maturity rapidly develops. At their very first meeting she allows him to kiss her and when she appears on the balcony she is full of longing for him. Through her meetings with Romeo she becomes increasingly eloquent (speaking twice as many lines as him in the Balcony scene). The defiance of her Father's demand that she marries Paris, taking the lead in proposing marriage to Romeo and her decision to bravely enact the Friar's plan to appear dead, all demonstrate an unusual display of courage, strong-mindedness and passion. Juliet's increasing confidence and determination throughout the progression of the play, creates a character of incredible strength - a turnaround from the quiet, innocent Juliet of the first scene.

Romeo

From the onset Romeo appears to be a very hasty and impetuous character. Upon declaring his love for the unattainable Rosaline, Romeo is seemingly cast as a rejected, melancholy and moody young lover - a stock character of traditional drama. He could be seen as a hopeless romantic, without direction and sporadic in his decision-making. However, upon his meeting with Juliet there is a progressive deepening of his character. His lines and style of expression become of greater maturity.

Despite this, throughout the duration of the play, Romeo repeatedly demonstrates his haste and impetuosity. His moods change quickly; he falls in love at first sight, marries Juliet the next day, and revenges Mercutio's death by immediately slaying Tybalt. In Friar Lawrence's cell he becomes emotionally childlike and distraught; he consistently seems to lose all self control in his hysterical outbursts and actions. Romeo's use of hyperbolic language ('that vast shore washed with the farthest sea') mirrors his actions taking extreme paths.

Although his state of mind can swing to extremes, his dialogues with Juliet and his soliloquy before taking poison, display maturity and incredible commitment to Juliet, highlighting the depth and complexity of his character and feelings.

Friar Lawrence

Friar Lawrence is a puzzling character as his language and actions can be interpreted in a number of ways. He is chief mentor to Romeo, a father figure to replace Romeo's own father and talks of concern to heal the breach between the Montagues and the Capulets. He can be seen as shrewd and level-headed, a mark of hope within the foreboding nature of the play. He advises caution and hopes that the marriage of Romeo and Juliet will bring peace to Verona.

Yet, his actions do not necessarily match his words. His haste in illegally marrying Romeo and Juliet, the risks within poisoning Juliet, and further abandoning her in the tomb at her moment of greatest need, suggest an impulsive, foolish character; one which eventually

helps cause the death of the two lovers. Hence, his hasty and risky actions can sometimes be played in the form of a cunning and dishonest character.

The Nurse

The Nurse, similarly to Friar Laurence, plays a mentor figure within the play - though this time to Juliet. The Nurse fits the character type of classical Greek and Roman drama, the garrulous and bawdy servant. Her honest, earthly, and rambling style, gives her great stage presence, and her frank enjoyment of sexuality brings humour to the play. She is a mother figure to Juliet and close confidante, demonstrating clear love and compassion for Juliet's wellbeing. She helps Juliet to deceive her parents by acting as a go-between for the lovers, sometimes appearing as the most sympathetic character within the play. Yet her final advice that Juliet should marry Paris seems somewhat like a heartless act of betrayal, leaving Juliet isolated and in the position of taking great risks alone.

Capulet

Capulet appears to be friendly and generous, a contrast to the first appearances of his wife. At the party he reminisces on his youth and advises Tybalt not to make trouble. A different side of his character is soon shown when Juliet refuses to marry Paris. He becomes incredibly short tempered and aggressive, exploding in uncontrolled fury when Juliet refuses to obey him. His character is somewhat renewed at his display of genuine grief and remorse at the death (both in pretence and reality) of his daughter.

Lady Capulet

Lady Capulet displays little or no affection towards her daughter. She lacks all sympathy for Juliet's own feelings and desires and is determined that she marry Paris, despite this course of action being clearly against her daughter's own wishes. Further to this, she shows no signs of comforting or supporting Juliet when she is at the mercy of Capulet's attack. Yet, like Capulet, Lady Capulet also grieves at the death of her daughter.

Paris, Prince Escalus and Benvolio

Paris, the Prince and Benvolio all have important functions within the design of the play, helping to punctuate particular moments of drama, and also to hasten the tragic development of events. Paris as the rival suitor to Romeo, Benvolio as peacemaker, and the Prince as a kind of nemesis for Romeo (by sentencing him to banishment), form a collection of opposing forces which help to mark out the structure of the play and the contrasting issues of love and hate within it.

Tybalt

Tybalt plays the stereotypical angry and fiery figure of traditional drama. He is the hotheaded quarreler who feels only anger and a mistaken sense of honour. Within the 63 lines that he speaks throughout the entirety of the play, a very consistent character is created: a man of anger and aggression.

Mercutio

Mercutio is perhaps the most complex character within the play. He is an entertainer, clever and witty but also earthly and coarse. He loves playing with language and is full of invention, yet much of his imaginative creativity can be seen as feverish and neurotic. Mercutio is a loyal friend to Romeo and feels an intense friendship for him. His courage in defending the honour of his friend results in his death. There is a sense of loss at his death but also a great sense of foreboding, as it sparks the inevitable tragedy, spurring Romeo to revenge.

SHAKESPEARE'S THEATRE AND THE MALE ACTOR

Shakespeare's *R&J* is performed solely by male actors. It may seem odd today when male actors play female parts 'straight' - that is, not for comic purpose, but simply performing the role assigned. It's interesting to bear in mind, however, that we often see female actors playing male parts. Where did this stigma come from? All actors in Shakespearean England were male; female parts would have been played by young men, clean shaven and with high voices, or sometimes by an older, comic, turn (the Nurse may be a classic example of this). In Elizabethan England women were banned from acting onstage, and women's roles were taken by boys (Shakespeare played with this boy-playing-girl extensively, and often had his comic heroines dress as boys). It wasn't until the Restoration that this prohibition was officially lifted.



Little is known about the actors - or Players - themselves. However, we know that actors played several parts, depending on their physical characteristics. For example, a tall, fair boy and a short, dark boy would have taken the parts of Helena and Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or Celia and Rosalind in *As You Like It*. Or it might have been that a tall, thin man played such a part as Don Armado in *Love's Labour's Lost* and then the part of Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night*. Note that all the parts - female as well as male - were taken by boys and men. Women were never employed.

The audience itself was very closely-packed with no reserved seats. It was first come, first served. If the paying spectators disapproved of an actor they would pelt him with oranges or just about anything, booing, hissing and shouting. However, they were always ready with their applause and would clap and cheer when they approved. A visit to the theatre in Shakespeare's day was a rousing, noisy and very lively experience.

Theatre historians have argued both that the acting style in Shakespeare's day was realistic and that it was formal.

Conditions that suggest a formal style:

- Female roles are performed by male actors
- The scripts are non-realistic
- The stage background is conventionalised
- The repertory is large, making detailed characterisation difficult



Conditions that suggest a realistic style:

- Shakespeare's "advice to the players" in Hamlet
- Contemporary references to the convincing characterisations given by such actors as Burbage
- Emphasis on contemporary life and manners in many comedies
- The truthfulness of human psychology in the serious plays
- The proximity of spectators to actors during performances.

Shakespeare's plays were often (though not always) staged in an open-air theatre, during daylight hours. The audience was divided into sitting and standing room, and the "groundlings", who paid only to watch, not to sit, were notorious for their rowdy behavior. The theatre atmosphere was closer to that of a modern-day carnival or sport event – people sold concessions and even solicited clients (the theater was in the same area as the brothels) openly. A show was an afternoon's entertainment, and there were often several intermissions.

In Shakespearian theatre, sets and props were minimal, or non-existent (although the Globe did employ effects involving a balcony and trap-doors), and so a scene was painted for the audience using text. In general, text was the key component of plays in Elizabethan England – the expression "going to HEAR a play" was common.

1950s- THE BIRTH OF THE TEENAGER

The first British teenagers appeared in the 1950s. The term 'Teenager' was created in the 1950s because young people starting gaining more independence and freedom, entering situations to set them aside from the behavior and social networks of their parents. They were the first generation to dress noticeably differently from their parents and they listened to the exciting new rock'n'roll and pop music records.

Up until and throughout the war young people were expected to support their families and country, either by fighting or working towards the war effort. Young women were expected to consider family to be the central aspect of their life ambitions, and interaction between young men and women tended to happen within the confines of the girl's home under the supervision of her parents; young women and men were expected only to show interest in the opposite sex if marriage was going to be a likely outcome.

However, upon the end of the war, it was the general attitude that young people should strive for a better quality of life than that of their parents, by attending colleges, universities and entering professions at a greater volume than ever before, across both genders. Increased activity and mobility across varying social situations lead to a much greater independence of young people. Teenagers were also able to buy more things like food, clothes and music because of an increase in spending.

Increased independence amongst young people led to males and females being able to mix socially outside of the confines of their parent's supervision. Dating etiquette radically changed, from the confines of a man 'calling' on a woman to entertain her in the presence of her parents, to the man actually taking the woman out of the home on a 'date'. Dating became a new trend in which couples were to be regularly seen out together in public. An increase in social entertainment such as gigs, dance halls, eateries and cinemas enabled dating to be more easily practiced.

Despite greater independence of both sexes, within the etiquette of dating, power became in the hands of the male; they were expected to decide upon the venue, pick the girl up and pay for everything. Many young men began to expect in return (for their expense!) an experience of sexual interaction, which before that time would have been unacceptable between unmarried couples. Although sex before marriage was still considered a taboo, experimentation between males and females was increasingly common.

Increased independence, through social activities such as dating, attending dance halls, and listening to the new phenomenon of rock'n'roll, created a new generation of young people who were seen as unruly and rebellious. Many parents began to think that society was rapidly disintegrating and saw the rise of the 'teenager' as a real threat to social normality. Many parents didn't understand that such 'rebellious' behaviour was a stage that would soon be passed.

The 1950s was the moment in which a clear divide was created between adult, teenager and child. The teenage years became a moment in which young people defined their own views as different to that of their parents, challenging former values and ideals.

ADAPTATIONS OF ROMEO & JULIET

Baz Luhrman's *Romeo + Juliet*

This adaption of *Romeo & Juliet* takes place in the 1990s in a fictional Los Angeles area called Verona Beach. The Montague/Capulet animosity is represented through mob or gang culture, with swords replaced by guns called 'Swords' or 'Daggers'. Leonardo Di Caprio plays Romeo and Claire Danes, Juliet, but the star performances are undoubtedly John Leguizamo as Tybalt and Harold Perrineau as Mercutio.

Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo & Juliet*

This film adaption is a period piece set in the 16th century. The film sticks as close to the original text as possible and the clothing is authentically styled to the period. Franco Zeffirelli was insistent that the roles of Romeo and Juliet were played by Shakespeare's specified age groups. 13-year-old Olivia Hussey played Juliet and 17-year-old Leonard Whiting played Romeo.



West Side Story

This successful stage musical adaption of Romeo and Juliet celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 2008. The musical is set in mid 1950s Manhattan, with the American 'Jets' and the Puerto Rican 'Sharks' prowling the streets. The 1961 film won 10 Academy Awards. Tony and Maria replaced Romeo and Juliet as the starcrossed lovers to Leonard Bernstein's music and Stephen Sondheim's lyrics.

Charles Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*

This is the best-known opera version of Romeo and Juliet and is still performed frequently. The opera was first performed on April 1867 in Paris. Tenor Pierre Michot played Roméo and soprano Marie Caroline Miolan-Carvalho played Juliette in the first performance. The opera was recently adapted for film by Canadian Yves Desgagnes in 2006 with Thomas Lalonde as Roméo and Charlotte Aubin as Juliette.

Shakespeare in Love

Written by Tom Stoppard and directed by John Madden, this fictionalized account of Shakespeare's love affair with a young noblewoman won seven Oscars. The film tells how Shakespeare came up with *Romeo & Juliet*, placing him in the midst of his own tragic romance as he writes it. The movie creates other parallels to the play as well, such as a quarrel between two playhouses, The Curtain and The Rose, and an antagonist with similarities to both Count Paris and Tybalt

Other interesting Romeo & Juliet adaptations

- *High School Musical* is loosely based on Romeo and Juliet, placing two young lovers in rival high school groups.
- The 2001 film *Romeo must Die* was created to introduce Jet Li to an American audience with Asian-Americans as Montagues and African-Americans as Capulets.



ACTIVITIES AND SUGGESTIONS

Why don't you...?

- Try doing a scene from *Romeo and Juliet*, reversing the gender of the roles. What happens if Juliet and the Nurse are played by boys, or Tybalt and Mercutio as girls?
- Try setting the play in another time or space? What if Romeo and Juliet were in a modern school? How would their 'houses' be divided? What would the roles of the monk, Friar Lawrence, or Juliet's Nurse become?
- Script a scene from the Shakespearean text in modern day English – what insults can you include? What modern slang?
- Try and decide who is at fault for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. Should Friar Lawrence have known better? Was the Prince to blame? Did Tybalt force on a quarrel he should have known to withdraw from? Do you blame the parents? Pick a character and argue their role in the deaths of Romeo and Juliet.

RESOURCES

<http://joesjapanjournal.blogspot.com/> - Joe Calarco's journal from Shakespeare's R&J

www.joecalarco.net

Stage Beauty (2004) – A female theatre dresser creates a stir and sparks a revolution in seventeenth century London theatre by playing Desdemona in Othello. But what will become of the male actor she once worked for and eventually replaced?

Romeo Must Die (2000) - An avenging cop seeks out his brother's killer and falls for the daughter of a businessman who is involved in a money-deal with his father.

Shakespeare in Love (1998) - A young Shakespeare, out of ideas and short of cash, meets his ideal woman and is inspired to write one of his most famous plays

Romeo + Juliet (1996) – Shakespeare's famous play is updated to the hip modern suburb of Verona still retaining its original dialogue

Romeo and Juliet (1968) - When the now famous "star crossed lovers" of two enemy families meet, forbidden love ensues.

West Side Story (1961) - Musical about two youngsters from rival NYC gangs who fall in love.

The Spanish Tragedy by Thomas Kyd - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Spanish_Tragedy or find a free copy online at books.google.co.uk

