

William Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*

Show Summary

Pre-show Demonstration: Tue 29 Jul 6:30pm

Relaxed Performance: Tue 29 Jul 7:00pm

Auckland Theatre Company presents

William Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*

Setting: Verona, 1960s



Content Warnings & Accessibility Information

This production contains intense content that may be distressing:

- Explicit depictions of self-harm and suicide throughout the second half
- Characters contemplate and carry out suicide by poison and stabbing
- Multiple character deaths occur on stage with bodies remaining visible
- Intense grief expressed through howling and emotional outbursts
- Sexual content and romantic relationships depicted more overtly than typical Shakespeare
- Violence including fatal knife fights

Production Elements:

- Consistently loud sound throughout with throbbing bass and sudden whistle blasts
- Intense lighting with frequent changes, strobe/flash effects, and direct lighting into audience
- Haze effects and descending set pieces
- Performance in Elizabethan English

Support Available: If any themes are triggering, contact 1737 or visit

<https://mentalhealth.org.nz/helplines>. Quiet breakout spaces available during performance.

A note on Spoilers:

This document includes spoilers. If you don't want to know details about the show, don't read any further.

Reach out to Sam Phillips, Auckland Theatre Company's Head of Learning and Participation, on sam@atc.co.nz. Sam will also be at the ASB Waterfront Theatre on Tuesday 6 May, and will present the pre-show demonstration at 6.30pm.

Verona. 1960s. Death sits reading a magazine.

Our story begins with young Juliet contemplating a sleeping potion to fake her death, before Death rewinds the narrative to reveal how we arrived at this fateful moment.

Note: The production uses a framing device where the ending is shown first, then Death "rewinds" to explain how events unfolded. Death appears as narrator and guide throughout, also playing the Prince and Apothecary.





Act One

Ancient grudges explode when the Capulets and Montagues clash in the streets of Verona. The Prince (played by Death) threatens death to anyone who disturbs the peace again.

Production note: Fight scenes feature trained choreography with theatrical weapons. Bright pulsing lights and loud drums accompany all fight sequences. Sharp whistle blasts signal the Prince's appearances.



Romeo has been withdrawn and melancholy, lovesick over Rosaline who doesn't return his affections. His friends Benvolio and Mercutio suggest Romeo attend the Capulet ball to forget Rosaline.



This scene contains partial nudity. For a short moment, Paris's bare bum is visible.

Lady Capulet and Paris discuss his proposal to marry Juliet. Capulet is reluctant; Juliet is young, but agrees to let Paris woo her. The Nurse and Capulet tell Juliet about Paris's proposal. Juliet responds dutifully but without enthusiasm.



Romeo crashes the Capulet ball with Benvolio and Mercutio, and fate intervenes. Romeo forgets Rosaline the instant he sees Juliet. Only after their first kiss do they discover their impossible identities—she a Capulet, he a Montague.

Production note: The Ball Scene features strobe/flash effects, colour-changing lights with rapid flashes, dance music including remixed "And Then He Kissed Me" at different speeds with heavy bass, and record scratching sounds.



Unable to leave after the party,
Romeo finds Juliet at her window.
They declare their love and agree to
marry secretly.



Romeo goes to Whaea Lawrence, who agrees to marry them, hoping their union might end the feud. Romeo and Juliet are married by Whaea Lawrence. The wedding is juxtaposed with tender moments between Benvolio and Mercutio, also a lovestruck pair.





Their happiness is short-lived. Tybalt confronts Romeo, seeking revenge for the previous night's intrusion. Romeo refuses to fight his new cousin-in-law. Mercutio, not understanding Romeo's reluctance, draws his sword and fights Tybalt himself.



Tybalt fatally wounds Mercutio. In grief and rage, Romeo kills Tybalt. The Prince banishes Romeo from Verona on pain of death.

Production note: These are intense, emotionally charged scenes with loud sound effects and bright lighting.



The act ends with Juliet eagerly awaiting her wedding night, Romeo hiding in exile, Benvolio cradling Mercutio's body, and the families mourning their dead. Death oversees it all.

*Production note: Red light floods the stage at the end of Act One.
Family mourning scenes feature devastating emotional reactions.*



Interval:

The red curtain returns.

The audience lights will come on, and you can take a break, use the toilet, and get a drink or snack from the bar, or remain in your seat. You can use the breakout space to relax away from the crowds. The break will last about 15 minutes.

During the interval, if you are in the foyer you will hear a recorded “Bing bong” sound and an announcement to return to your seats.

When the performance is ready to begin, audience lights will fade down.





Act Two

Content warning: The second half focuses heavily on grief, despair, and multiple suicides.

Juliet learns of Tybalt's death and Romeo's banishment, ultimately choosing loyalty to her new husband over grief for her cousin.



The lovers share their wedding night but must part at dawn. Their farewell is filled with foreboding.

Production note: Sexual content and romantic relationships are depicted more overtly than typical Shakespeare productions.



Lady Capulet, grieving Tybalt's death, hastily arranges Juliet's marriage to Paris for Thursday. When Juliet refuses, her mother threatens to disown her, and even the Nurse advises her to forget Romeo and marry Paris.




Desperate, Juliet seeks help from Whaea Lawrence, who gives her a potion that will make her appear dead.

Meanwhile, grief-stricken Benvolio seeks poison from an Apothecary (portrayed by Death), contemplating suicide over Mercutio's death.

Production note: This scene depicts explicit contemplation of suicide and self-harm.





Juliet takes Whaea Lawrence's potion and is discovered "dead" the next morning, devastating her family and Paris. Amidst preparations for her funeral, Benvolio goes to warn Romeo of these tragic developments.

Production note: grief is expressed through howling and emotional outbursts.



After hearing Benvolio's news, exiled Romeo resolves to join Juliet in death. When he asks if there's any message from Whaea Lawrence, Benvolio has none. The conflicted Benvolio hands Romeo poison from his own pocket. After Romeo departs for Juliet's grave, Benvolio takes out a dagger and stabs himself in the heart, dying as he speaks of Mercutio.

Content warning: This scene depicts explicit suicide by stabbing, with the character's body remaining visible on stage.



Whaea Lawrence arrives too late,
finding Benvolio's body in the
darkness. Realising her plans have
failed, she knows Juliet will wake to
find Romeo dead.



At Juliet's tomb, Romeo fights and kills Paris, then drinks poison beside his seemingly dead wife. Juliet awakens to find Romeo dead, kisses his still-warm lips, then takes his dagger and kills herself.

Content warning: Multiple character deaths occur on stage including suicide by poison and stabbing. Bodies remain visible throughout these scenes.



The Prince explains the tragic chain of events. Faced with the ultimate cost of their feud, Capulet and Montague reconcile.

The Prince concludes that this gloomy peace brings both pardons and punishments, declaring that: "*Never was there a story of more woe than this of Juliet and her Romeo.*"

At the end of the play, the audience will clap and cheer.

