

TOLEDO OPERA
OPERA ON WHEELS

**ROMEO
and
JULIET**



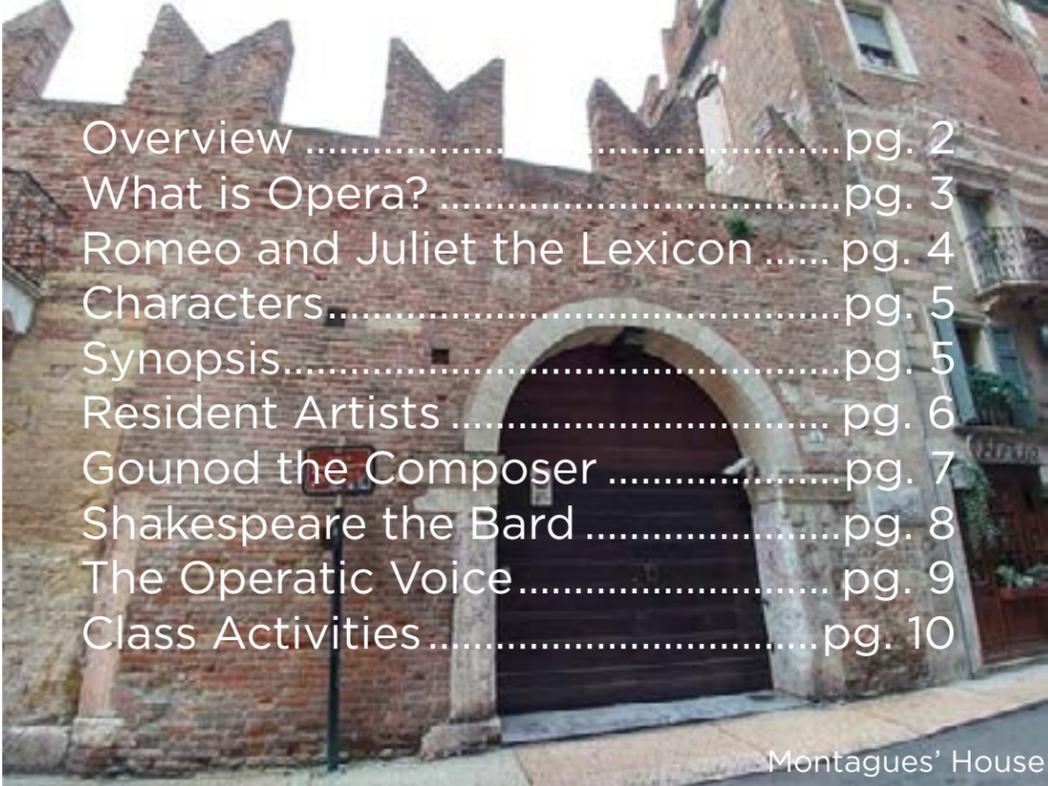
Teacher Guide

Music by Charles Gounod

Directed by James M. Norman

Created for Toledo Opera by Joshua Borths

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Montagues' House

Overview

“Two households... in fair Verona” are rival families, wanting nothing to do with one another. And yet, when Romeo sneaks into a party at Juliet’s house, the two young people meet, fall in love, and change their families’ history forever. Based on the opera by Charles Gounod, the play by William Shakespeare, and every



tale of forbidden love the world over, this adaptation of the classic Romeo and Juliet story deals with the timeless theme of the power of love to overcome hate and conflict. With two possible endings, schools can choose which they prefer, voting in real time at one point in the opera.

What is Opera?

Opera reflects the belief that a story can be better expressed through music and text than by text alone as in a play or a novel. Opera combines many different art forms (music, drama, visual elements, dance and movement) to create an artistic spectacle.

What's the Difference between Opera and Musicals?

There are two big differences between opera and musicals. First, in musicals actors frequently have scenes without singing where lines are spoken. In opera, however, nearly all the lines are sung. Second, the style of singing is different. In a musical, singers work with microphones and speakers to amplify or make their voices louder so they can be heard easily in large theaters, like they do in pop recordings or in church. But in an opera, singers have to fill large theaters with their voices without amplification, and they often have to sing louder, over large group of instruments, and for longer periods of time in one breath than would be required in a musical. As a result, opera singers tend to sing louder, and with a different tone, or sound, than you're used to hearing or could do yourself without years of special training. Despite these differences, operas and musical theater shows have a lot in common, and the two art forms have existed side-by-side throughout history.

The People Involved in Creating and Producing an Opera

Composer: Writes the music

Librettist: Chooses a story, writes or adapts the words

Conductor: Leads the musicians and singers

Director: Blocks or stages the entire production

Principal Singers: Have the leading and supporting roles

Chorus: Sings as a group

Supernumeraries: Act but do not sing

Repetiteur: Accompanies singers during rehearsal, plays the whole orchestral score on piano

Costume Designer: Designs the costumes for each character

Wardrobe/Costume Staff: Fit, clean, and repair costumes; help singers put costumes on

Wig Staff: Make and fit wigs to the principal singers, chorus, and supernumeraries

Make-up Staff: Apply make-up for principal singers, assist chorus with make-up

Set Designer: Designs the scenery for each scene

Lighting Designer: Designs lighting effects

Prop Builders: Build/buy all the set pieces that are not structural

Stage Manager: “Calls the show” -- cues scenery changes, lighting, and singers so that everything happens at the right time.

Stagehands: Move scenery; run lighting & sound cues

Front of House Staff: Work in the performance venue: seating patrons, operating coat check

Artistic Director: Chooses which shows to produce and which artists to hire

Administrative Staff: Find funding (!); sell tickets; hire artists; take care of the business side of opera.

Audience: Enjoys and appreciates opera from a seat in the hall!

Critic: Writes a critique of performance for newspaper, radio, or TV

Romeo and Juliet the Lexicon

To prepare for Opera on Wheels' adaptation of Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet*, it is important to know the meaning of several words or expressions. Look them up! All of the words appear in the Cast of Characters or the Synopsis in pink text.

- Admonishes
- Apothecary
- Brawl
- Confidant
- Distraught
- Friar
- Feud
- Frivolity
- Make amends
- Pettiness
- Ruse
- Smitten
- Star-crossed lovers



Cast of Characters

Juliet, daughter of the house of Capulet
Nurse, Juliet's personal attendant and **confidant**
Tybalt, Juliet's cousin
Romeo, son of the house of Montague
Mercutio, friend of Romeo
Friar Lawrence, a Franciscan friar and Romeo's **confidant**

Synopsis

Setting: Verona, Italy
Time: The 1300s

"Two households, both alike in dignity, in fair Verona, where we lay our scene," is Shakespeare's way of saying, Once upon a time there were two families in the city of Verona. So we entreat you to look upon the **feud** and love between rival families - The Capulets and the Montagues. At the birthday celebration for Juliet, Romeo and his friend Mercutio have crashed the party of the rival Capulet family. Mercutio sings of Queen Mab, Shakespeare's symbol of freedom. Romeo will have none of the **frivolity** until he lays eyes on the fair Juliet!

As Juliet enters the celebration, she sings about wanting more out of life, to be free. Romeo is **smitten**. They sing of love at first sight until the Nurse interrupts telling Juliet she cannot love a Montague. With the spell broken, Mercutio pleads with Romeo to flee the house of their rival, but Romeo drags his feet as he wishes to stay in Juliet's presence. The quartet sings of forbidden love which tempts fate, but a love that can win over hate!

As the scene changes to the Capulet garden, Juliet appears on her balcony. Romeo spies her in the darkness and questions why must she be a Capulet and he a Montague. Juliet echoes his sentiments, and the two lovers vow to educate their families that their love is stronger than hate.

Because their love is now sealed, the couple appear at **Friar** Lawrence's **apothecary** to exchange matrimonial vows with the Nurse as witness. Meanwhile across town, trouble is brewing again between the two families. Tybalt and Mercutio encounter each other on the street and a **brawl** ensues. Romeo breaks up the fight and implores the two to **make amends**. Instead, Mercutio and Tybalt break out into yet another fight which Juliet stops. She **admonishes** them for their **pettiness** and warns that they all must flee because her father, Lord Capulet, has heard of her marriage to Romeo and wants him dead. **Distraught**, Juliet visits Friar Lawrence for advice. The good Friar counsels her to take a potion of his making which will make her sleep. He will send word to Romeo that it is all a **ruse**, so as not to startle him. After much soul searching, Juliet takes the potion and sleeps. Our opera's end depends on the will of the audience. We will leave it up to you to decide the fate of our **star-crossed lovers** - Romeo and Juliet.

Resident Artists 2018-2019

Alicia Russell (Juliet), soprano



Alicia Russell, soprano, has been singing throughout the United States since 2013, making her debut performance in her hometown with the Asheville Symphony Orchestra. Ms. Russell's recent performances include *The Great Gatsby* (Daisy Buchanan), *Service Provider* (Charlene), *Don Giovanni* (Donna Elvira), *Savitri* (Savitri), *Later the Same Evening* (Elaine), *Die Fledermaus* (Rosalinda), and *Die Zauberflöte* (Pamina). She has also performed as the soprano soloist in Honneger's *King David*, Handel's *Messiah*, Mozart's *Requiem* and *Missa in C Minor*, and Vivaldi's *Dixit Dominus* rv. 807. Ms. Russell is the recent winner of the 2018 Northwestern University Aria/Concerto Competition, the Ginger Meyer Scholarship in the 2018 Musicians Club of Women Competition and was a semi-finalist in the 2017 Bel Canto Foundation Competition. She is a graduate of Northwestern University (Master of Music, 2018) and Furman University (Bachelor of Music, 2016). Her past summer residencies have included Boston University Tanglewood Institute, SongFest, CoOPERative, and the Brevard Music Center.

Katherine Fili (Nurse, Tybalt), mezzo-soprano



Heralded as "hilarious & impressive" by DC Metro Theater Arts, Katherine Fili is a graduate of The Maryland Opera Studio. While completing her master's degree, Katherine performed the Nurse in Lee Hoiby's *Romeo and Juliet*, both Nancy and Florence (*Albert Herring*), and Prince Orlofsky (*Die Fledermaus*). During her undergraduate studies at Carnegie Mellon University, she performed roles including The Sorceress (*Dido and Aeneas*) and Bessie (*Das Kleine Mahagonny*). Katherine has been seen in Tobias Picker's *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (Mrs. Fox) with the Microscopic Opera Company and has performed with The Pittsburgh Opera Theater. Ms. Fili spent the 2015 - 2016 season as the resident mezzo soprano with The Florentine Opera Company before returning to The University of Maryland as a guest alumni artist to sing Bianca (*The Rape of Lucretia*). She debuted with the In-Series Company as Puck (*Oberon*) and the Second Lady (*The Magic Flute*) during its 2017 season.

Gibran Mahmud (Romeo), tenor



Indonesian-American Tenor Gibran Mahmud has recently earned acclaim for his musical performances in the Los Angeles area. At home in opera, concert, and musical theatre, Gibran's recent credits include the West Coast premiere of Frank Martin's *The Love Potion* (Kaherdin), *Pacific Overtures* (The Fisherman/Dutch Admiral), and the world premiere of *Hail Poetry!* (George Power). Mr. Mahmud has also joined the Principal/Education Artists of Long Beach Opera and the company of Opera A La Carte, along with singing in the professional opera choruses of LA Opera, Cincinnati Opera, and Dayton Opera. He has sung with the summer programs of Angels Vocal Art, SongFest as a Professional Fellow and for The VOICE Experience Foundation with Sherrill Milnes. Mr. Mahmud has placed in competitions and received awards from the Center Stage Opera Vocal Competition, Classical Singer Competition, and Buckeye NATS. Mr. Mahmud hails from Dayton, OH and is an alumnus of USC Thornton School of Music (MM) and Miami University (BM). www.gibranmahmud.com

James P. Held (Mercutio, Friar Lawrence), baritone



James P. Held is a versatile performer "with a ringing voice, superb diction, and a genuine eloquence." In 2018, Mr. Held was an Apprentice Artist with Des Moines Metro Opera where he covered Frank (*Die Fledermaus*). Recent roles include Sacristan (*Tosca*), Marcello (*La Bohème*), and Dulcamara (cover) (*L'elisir d'amore*). In 2017, he was the baritone soloist in Brahms's *Ein Deutsches Requiem* with the Leipzig Symphony. Mr. Held sang Second Priest/Second Armored Man while covering Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*) and sang Paris while covering Mercutio (*Roméo et Juliette*) with Madison Opera. Previous roles include Sacristan (*Tosca*), Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), The Pirate King (*The Pirates of Penzance*), The Father (*Hänsel und Gretel*), Sid (*Albert Herring*), Dick McGann (*Street Scene*), Flynt/Gremio (*Kiss Me, Kate*), and Leporello (*Don Giovanni*). Mr. Held holds degrees from the University of Colorado-Boulder and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Elizabeth Chua, pianist



Pianist Elizabeth Chua received her Doctor of Musical Arts degree in collaborative piano and coaching from the University of Minnesota, and a Masters of Music in collaborative piano and piano performance from Middle Tennessee State University. Her previous productions include Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*, Kurt Weill's *Lady in the Dark*, Benjamin Britten's *Rape of Lucretia*, Mozart's *Idomeneo*, and Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld* with the University of Minnesota; Strauss' *Capriccio* with Apotheosis Opera in NYC; Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* with Garden of Song Opera in St Paul, MN; and Jonathan Dove's *The Enchanted Pig* with Opera Steamboat in Colorado. Ms. Chua was the 2018 Pittsburgh Festival Opera Resident Artist pianist for *La Bohème*. She is also the pianist and music director for the 2019 Mary Ragland Emerging Artist Program with Nashville Opera.

Gounod the Composer



Charles Gounod
1818-1893

Charles-François Gounod was born in Paris on June 17, 1818 to a Prix de Rome award winning painter, François-Louis, and his wife, a pianist. He took piano lessons from his mother and eventually entered the Paris Conservatoire. Gounod followed in his father's footsteps by winning the Prix de Rome in 1839 for his cantata *Fernand*. As part of the award, he stayed in Rome and studied sacred music. Upon his return to Paris, Gounod became the music director of the Missions Etrangères church in 1843 and briefly considered joining the priesthood. He decided instead to pursue composition, although would maintain an interest in sacred music until his death. In 1854, he composed *St. Cecilia's Mass* and the next year wrote two symphonies; his *Symphony No. 1 in D Major* would prove to be an inspiration for future student Georges Bizet's *Symphony in C*.

Gounod revered Bach and used the C Major Prelude to set *Ave Maria*. At the urging of mezzo-soprano Pauline Viardot, Gounod

tackled the world of opera with *Sapho* for the Paris Opéra but it was not well received. After several more attempts, Gounod finally found the right mix of librettists (Jules Barbier and Michel Carré), story (Goethe's 17th century classic *Faust*), producer (Léon Carvalho) and musical inspiration for the operatic version of *Faust* in 1859. It was an immediate hit and his publisher made sure that the new opera was marketed internationally—a genius move that cemented the opera's status as one of the most popular in the repertory.

Four more operas followed on the heels of *Faust*; *Philémon et Baucis* (1860), *La Colombe* (1860), *La reine de Saba* (1862) and *Mireille* (1864) but none met with much success. But Gounod continued to work with his team of librettists and had long considered the idea of turning Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* into an opera. Gounod began work on the new opera in 1865 and his librettists decided to stick closely with the Shakespeare tragedy including some word for word translation into the French libretto. *Roméo et Juliette* opened at the Théâtre Lyrique in Paris on 27 April 1867 during the Exposition Universelle and, like *Faust*, was an immediate success.

Gounod was a prolific composer and wrote many other works including oratorios, ballets, masses, instrumental, motets and songs. In 1870, Gounod moved his family to England to escape the possible fall-out from the Franco-Prussian War. By 1874, the Gounods moved back to France. In 1888, he was named Grand Officer in the Légion d'Honneur (Legion of Honor) and he continued to compose, favoring more sacred music than secular in his later years including a mass inspired by Joan of Arc. On October 18, 1893, Gounod died from a stroke in Saint-Cloud, France. His operas *Faust* and *Roméo et Juliette* remain some of the most popular in the operatic repertory. And surprisingly, a small instrumental piece *Funeral March for a Marionette* (1873), introduced new audiences to Gounod as the theme of the television series *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*.

Shakespeare the Bard

William Shakespeare was a renowned English poet, playwright, and actor born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon. His birthday is most commonly celebrated on April 23 which is also believed to be the date he died on in 1616. Shakespeare was a prolific writer during the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages of British theatre (sometimes called the English Renaissance or the Early Modern Period). Shakespeare's plays are perhaps his most enduring legacy, but they are not the only things he wrote. Shakespeare's poems also remain popular to this day.



**William Shakespeare
1564-1616**

Shakespeare's work includes 38 plays, 2 narrative poems, 154 sonnets, and a variety of other poems. No original manuscripts of Shakespeare's plays are known to exist today. It is actually thanks to a group of actors from Shakespeare's company that we have about half of the plays at all. They collected them for publication after Shakespeare died, preserving the plays in what is known as the First Folio.

Shakespeare's legacy is as rich and diverse as his work; his plays have spawned countless adaptations across multiple genres and cultures and have had an enduring presence on stage, film, and opera! Shakespeare was one of eight children becoming the oldest when his two older sisters died. His elevated status meant that he was even more likely to have sent his children to the local grammar school, where Shakespeare was educated. John was awarded a coat of arms, now displayed on the monument above the Shakespeare grave in Holy Trinity Church. Shakespeare would have lived with his family in their house on Henley Street until he turned eighteen. When he was eighteen, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, who was twenty-six. It was a rushed marriage because Anne was already pregnant at the time of the ceremony.

During his time in London, Shakespeare became a founding member of The Lord Chamberlain's Men, a company of actors. The company would later become The King's Men under the patronage of King James I (from 1603). During his time in the company, Shakespeare wrote many of his most famous tragedies, such as *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, as well as great romances, like *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. In 1597, William Shakespeare bought a home called New Place in Stratford-upon-Avon. Recent archaeological evidence discovered in Shakespeare's New Place shows that Shakespeare was only ever an intermittent lodger in London. This suggests he divided his time between Stratford and London (a two or three-day commute). In his later years, he may have spent more time in Stratford-upon-Avon than scholars previously thought. Shakespeare died in Stratford-upon-Avon on April 23, 1616 at the age of 52. He is buried in the sanctuary of the parish church, Holy Trinity.



**Shakespeare's home in
Stratford-upon-Avon**

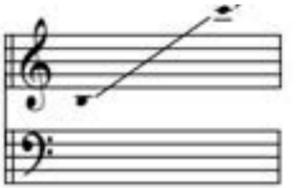
The Operatic Voice

Being an opera singer is hard work! Singers need to be physically strong and have superb technique in order to sustain long phrases (musical thoughts): this means they have excellent control of both the inhalation and exhalation of their breath. Likewise, their voices must maintain a resonance (using the cavities in the face to increase the audibility of the voice, even when singing quietly) in both the head (mouth, sinuses) and chest cavities. All this resonance is necessary to achieve the volume required to be heard above the orchestra that accompanies the singers. Opera singers do not usually use microphones, so they must project their voices throughout a whole theatre using only their muscles and technique! All voices are defined by both the actual voice "type" and the selection of repertoire for which the voice is ideally suited. The range, pitch, and tone of a singer's voice will determine what kind of role they will play in the opera. Below are a list of the voice types (and ranges) commonly found in operas:

Female Voice Types

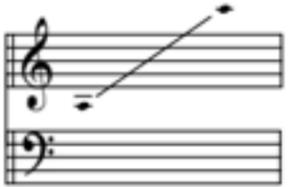
- **Soprano** ("sopra" = "over")

The highest pitched female voice. Soprano voices vary by sound type: there are coloratura sopranos, who can sing very high notes and rapid passages with ease, dramatic sopranos, whose voices have great power, and lyric sopranos, whose voices have exceptional beauty and can sustain long passages. Composers often (but not always) write the female lead role in an opera for a soprano.



- **Mezzo-Soprano** ("mezzo" = "medium")

Lower than the soprano and higher than contralto. Usually plays either the character of a young boy (this is called a trouser role) or a complex character with energy and awareness of life, or an evil character. Bizet's *Carmen* is one of the most famous mezzo roles in opera, and is a rare lead role for a mezzo.



- **Contralto** ("contra" = "against" & "alto" = "high")

The lowest pitched female voice, these singers have a deep, well rounded sound. Contraltos more rare than sopranos or mezzos, and they are usually given the role of a maid, mother, or grandmother. Olga in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* is one such role.



Male Voice Types

- **Tenor** ("tenere" = "to hold" - central notes of harmony)

The highest sounding male voice: often the leading role. Tenors, like sopranos, can have lyric or dramatic sound quality. Luciano Pavarotti was one of the world's most famous lyric tenors. Tenors typically play characters that fall in love with Sopranos, such as Alfredo in Verdi's *La Traviata*.



- **Baritone** (from the Greek term for "deep sounding")

These voices are more mellow-sounding and slightly lower than tenors. The roles sung by baritones are usually father figures or counts and other nobles, and these are often important roles in the story (like Rigoletto in Verdi's *Rigoletto*).



- **Bass** ("low")

Basses are the lowest sounding human voices, and they often play roles of wise and older characters in opera, like kings, emperors, or gods. They can also play profoundly evil characters, like Satan in *Mephistopheles* or *Faust*. The basso profundo is the lowest voice in singing, and is commonly heard in Russian opera. One of the most recognizable bass roles in opera is Leporello in W.A. Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.



Class Activities K-8

Before the Opera:

Grades K-3: An opera is a story told in song. What other stories have you experienced or seen that were told in song? How did the music help you to understand or like the story?

Grades K-3: Arias, Duets and Quartets: Listen for them in *Romeo and Juliet*.

- In an opera, one artist may sing alone for a while to express his or her feelings or to comment on the action. At the beginning of *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet sings an aria. What feelings and hopes is she expressing?

- In *Romeo and Juliet*, all four artists sing together several times as a quartet. While the quartet members are singing the same words, each of their different opera voices sings a different pitch. Can you hear all four pitches?

After the Opera:

Grades K-3: During the performance of *Romeo and Juliet*,
 What did you see?
 What did you hear?

Grades K-3: Personal response to the performance: Describe in writing and/or drawing what you liked best about the performance of *Romeo and Juliet*. For example:

- My favorite character in the opera was...
- My favorite part or scene in the opera was...



Before the Opera:

Grades 4-8: Review the list of all the people who are involved in creating and producing an opera (p. 3 in the Guide). Which “job(s) would you liked to do or have as a career and why?”

Grades 4-8: Arias, Duets and Quartets: Listen for them in *Romeo and Juliet*.

- In an opera, one artist may sing alone for a while to express his or her feelings or to comment on the action. At the beginning of *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet sings an aria. What feelings and hopes is she expressing?

- In *Romeo and Juliet*, all four artists sing together several times as a quartet. While the quartet members are singing the same words, each of their different opera voices sings a different pitch. Can you hear all four pitches?

Class Activities continued

After the Opera:

Grades 4-8:

1. Plot Relationships Chart

Completing a Plot Relationships Chart helps you identify the major parts of the opera’s story and develop an understanding of the relationships among characters, problems and solutions. For *Romeo and Juliet*, complete charts for Romeo, Juliet, and the Nurse You can write a summary using the information in each chart.

Plot Relationships Chart

Somebody	Wanted (Goal)	But (Problem)	So (Solution)

Summary:

2. Write Your Own Review

Those who write reviews of performances of an opera consider various aspects of the particular production that they experienced. Write your own review of *Romeo and Juliet* by using the following guidelines.

- Give the music (vocal and piano performance) a grade and provide support for your grade.
- Give the dramatic elements (staging and acting) a grade and provide support for your grade.
- Give the visual elements (scenery and costumes) a grade and provide support for your grade.