

ROMEO & JULIUS, SOUTHSEA SHAKESPEARE ACTORS

Thank you for your interest in the production of 'Romeo & Julius', which is looking to be a really dynamic, interesting and impactful show in Southsea, which has already had a fantastic reception since it was announced a few weeks ago.

It's being directed by Aaron Holdaway, who has previously directed *The Tempest* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, amongst others. You can contact him with any questions you may have on aaronholdaway@gmail.com, or by calling or texting 07928622653. If you are on Facebook, we'd highly recommend following our company page 'Southsea Shakespeare Actors' in addition.

Romeo and Julius is being staged at **Groundlings Theatre** from **March 15th - 18th, at 7:30pm nightly**. To be part of this production, you need to be free on Sunday 12th March 2023, and every evening (except Sunday) on the production week.

The following document outlays some details of the production and some expectations, which should hopefully be beneficial if you are interested in being part of it.

What is it all about?

Romeo and Julius is a reinterpreted version of Shakespeare's classic 'Romeo and Juliet' which will cast Juliet as a male called Julius, meaning Romeo and Julius will enter a same-sex relationship and a same-sex marriage.

What's the plot?

In a nutshell, an age-old vendetta between two powerful families, Montagues and Capulets, erupts into bloodshed. A group of masked Montagues risk further conflict by gatecrashing a Capulet party. A young lovesick Romeo Montague, in love with Rosaline - a girl, falls instantly in love with Julius Capulet, realising he is gay or bisexual. Love at first sight. Julius is due to marry her father's choice, the County Paris. With the help of Julius's nurse, Romeo and Julius arrange to get married. Romeo's attempt to halt a street fight leads to the death of Julius's own cousin, Tybalt, for which Romeo is banished. In a desperate attempt to be reunited with Romeo, and avoid being forced to marry Paris by his family, Julius follows the Friar's plot and fakes his own death. The message fails to reach Romeo, and believing Julius dead, he takes his life in her tomb. Julius wakes to find Romeo's corpse beside him and kills himself. The grieving family agree to end their feud.

How is it being set?

We are going to be setting the play in a modern, contemporary style to make it accessible, particularly for younger viewers, but also so gay marriage is legal and acceptable for plot purposes. The weapons of choice will be daggers and swords however - no guns and no mobile phones is the rule! So lots of fun fights to get involved with!

What changes are being made?

The following changes will form part of this adaptation:

- We'll use Shakespeare's original script, although this has been edited and reinterpreted accordingly;
- Julius will be gay, but closeted from his family
- Paris will be cast as a female
- Romeo will have a Heartstopper moment and realise his sexuality upon meeting Julius for the first time, which will be an iconic moment in the play.

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It should be an interesting show!

Yes! It adds a new, interesting and ambitious angle to one of the most famous plays in the world

Shines a light on issues in the modern world, despite being c.430 years old (knife crime, male suicide, LGBTQ+ issues), whilst still keeping most of the issues scholars still discuss about the play

Creates impact in new places

Will allow us to interpret Shakespeare's text in new and exciting ways in the rehearsal room

Will deliver a show which is inclusive, diverse and interesting in the city, which has already had an incredible amount of interest and excitement since we announced it.

What characters are available?

Ages and genders are not entirely fixed!

Sampson (M) & Gregory (M/F) [any age]: Two servants of the House of Capulet, who hate the Montagues. At the outset of the play, they successfully provoke some Montague men into a fight.

Abram (M/F) [any age]: Montague's servant, who fights with Sampson and Gregory in the first scene of the play. Can double up as ensemble.

Tybalt (M) [25+]: Capulet. Julius' cousin on his mother's side. Vain, fashionable, supremely aware of courtesy and the lack of it, he becomes aggressive, violent and quick to draw his sword. He loathes Montagues.

Romeo (M) [18 approx, must have a young playing age]: The son and heir of Montague and Lady Montague. A young man of approximately eighteen in this production (16 in Shakespeare's original), Romeo is handsome, intelligent and sensitive, although at times a bit erratic. He is a likeable character. He lives in the middle of violent feud centred on his families, but he is not interested in violence.

At the start of our play, he is in love with Rosaline, a girl, but upon meeting Julius everything clicks into place and he realises his true feelings and sexuality. He is good friends with Benvolio, Mercutio and Friar Lawrence.

Julius (M) [18 approx, must have a young playing age]: The son of Capulet and Lady Capulet, who smother him somewhat in our version. He has a different upbringing to Romeo, with a Nurse looking after him and pressures from the Capulet parents. In our production, he is seventeen, and pressures from his family means they want him to marry noble Paris (F). He is secretly and closeted gay and knows it throughout, but is in conflict because he does not want to disappoint his family traditions. Meeting Romeo changes all this, and love changes the way he behaves, trusting Romeo implicitly.

Friar Lawrence (M) [45+]: Friend to both Romeo and Julius. Kind, civic-minded, a proponent of moderation and always ready with a plan, Friar Lawrence secretly marries the two lovers hoping it might reunite the conflicting families.

Mercutio (M) [18 - 35]: Romeo's close friend and kinsman to the Prince. Mercutio is hotheaded and loves a sexual double-entendre. He finds Romeo's romanticised ideas about love tiresome and thinks he should look at it as a simple matter of sexual appetite. He is bold and extroverted.

Nurse (F) [40+]: Julius's nurse. Sentimental, long-winded and vulgar, but in the nicest possible way. She is a faithful confidante and loyal friend of Julius, supporting him through his love for Romeo.

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Capulet (M) [50+]: The head of the Capulet family, father of Julius, husband of Lady Capulet, and enemy of Montague. He truly loves his son, but wants him to marry the right status and thinks he knows best, and matches him with Paris.

Lady Capulet (F) [50+]: Julius's mother, Capulet's wife. Also eager to see her son marry Paris. She is quite an ineffectual mother, relying on the Nurse for moral support.

Montague (M) [50+]: Romeo's father, patriarch of the Montague clan and bitter enemy of Capulet.

Lady Montague (F) [40+]: Romeo's mother. She dies of grief after Romeo is exiled from Verona.

Paris (F) [30+]: A suitor for Juliet arranged by Capulet due to the titles and nobility Paris has. She is presumptuous once Capulet informs her she can marry Juliet.

Benvolio (M/F) [18 - 30]: Montague's nephew/niece, Romeo's cousin and thoughtful friend, s/he makes a genuine effort to defuse violent scenes in public places. Spends most of the play trying to help Romeo get his mind off Rosaline, even after Romeo has fallen in love with Juliet. There are hints here that Benvolio might realise Romeo is gay before he does, which can be explored to add more depth.

Prince Escalus (M/F) [30+]: Prince of Verona. A kinsman of Mercutio and Paris. Concerned with maintaining public peace at all costs.

Friar John (M/F) [any age]: A brief appearance in the second half, Friar John is responsible for taking news of Juliet's fake death to Romeo, but doesn't get there. This character will double up as ensemble.

Balthasar (M) [any age]: Romeo's dedicated servant, who has a brief appearance in the second half. The character will double up as ensemble.

Ensemble (M/F) [any age]: There are some ensemble roles up for grabs for those interested in taking part but not wanting to get too involved or have too many lines to learn.

How Do I Audition?

You can put yourself forward for any roles by attending one of our workshops on Monday 5th (7:30pm), Wednesday 7th (7:30pm) or Sunday 11th of December 2022 (1pm) at the Omega Centre Annexe (HQ), Omega Street, PO5 4LP. These will be fun and pressure free!

If you want to play Romeo or Juliet, please email aaronholdaway@gmail.com or text/call **07928622653** in advance in case we want to pair you with another performer to play opposite on a specific date. You can also do this if you want to audition for other roles and cannot make the dates above.

Rehearsal Schedule

The rehearsal schedule will work around the availability of the cast, and will be held on selected weekday evenings and occasional Sunday mornings. We will ask cast members for unavailable dates and then work around those to get the best possible schedule. Obviously, the larger the role you are cast in the more rehearsal time you can expect to have, although we'll always endeavour to make sure you're not rehearsing all the time!

Show Dates

The show is being staged at Groundlings Theatre, Old Portsmouth, from March 15th - 18th 2023.

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You must be free every evening that week, and for the get-in on Sunday 12th March 2023.

Does It Cost?

Membership to the SSA costs a minimum of £3 per month, payable by Direct Debit. This three month project would therefore cost you a minimum of £9, but we hope you stay with us afterwards. The SSA are a lovely bunch of people - honest!

See you at the workshops, and feel free to get in touch if you have any other questions!