

Romeo & Juliet Synopsis

Courtesy of Opera News

ACT I

At a masked ball given by Capulet, Juliette's cousin Tybalt and her suitor Paris eagerly await her appearance. When Capulet presents his daughter, the guests exclaim at her beauty; Juliette responds with joy at attending her first party. Capulet urges the guests to enjoy themselves and, after a ballet, leads them to another room. Roméo and his companions, masked, steal into the empty room. When Roméo reports an ominous dream, Mercutio hails Queen Mab, the mistress of fantasy. At Juliette's approach, Roméo hides with his friends, and she enters with her nurse. Reveling in the freedom of youth, she is immediately entranced when Roméo un.masks and addresses her. She responds sweetly to his advances until Tybalt interrupts their encounter. Roméo rushes off, but Tybalt has recognized him as a Montague and calls together a group to follow him. Only Capulet's intervention prevents bloodshed, and the party continues.

ACT II

Under Juliette's balcony, heedless of his friends' voices calling him, Roméo hails her as the sun, the purest and brightest star. She appears, distressed at her feelings for an enemy of her family, but when Roméo steps forward, the feud is forgotten, and the two ecstatically pledge their love. Roméo hides briefly as a group of Capulets passes, looking for him. When they are gone, he and Juliette plan to meet the following day for a secret marriage, then bid each other a rhapsodic farewell.

ACT III

In Frère Laurent's cell, Roméo and Juliette arrive with her nurse and ask the friar to marry them. He does so, hoping their union will bring peace to warring families, and asking God's mercy for them.

That same morning, Roméo's page, Stéphano, plants himself outside the Capulets' palace to insult them with a mocking song, provoking a fight. When Tybalt challenges Mercutio, Roméo arrives to stop the quarrel, answering Tybalt's belligerence with offers of friendship. Enraged by his friend's apparent cowardice, Mercutio draws his sword to uphold the Montague honor and is fatally wounded by Tybalt. He dies cursing both families. Roméo furiously challenges Tybalt and kills him as the square fills with outraged citizens. Capulet calls for revenge, and the Duke of Verona appears. Tired of the endless bloodshed, he banishes Roméo from the city. Roméo cries that he will brave even death to see Juliette again.

ACT IV

That night in Juliette's bedroom, the lovers are united, but when day dawns, Roméo reluctantly departs. Capulet and the friar greet Juliette with the news that she is to marry Paris that very day. Alone with Laurent, Juliette appeals for help, and he gives her a potion to simulate death, promising she will wake with Roméo beside her. Draining the vial, she collapses as her parents arrive to lead her to the altar.

ACT V

Roméo, having heard of his beloved's supposed death, arrives at Juliette's tomb and gives way to despair. Unwilling to live without her, he takes poison. Juliette awakens, and the pair ecstatically hail a new life together, but the poison begins to take effect, and Roméo bids Juliette a tender farewell. Snatching his dagger, she stabs herself. Praying for forgiveness, they die in each other's arms.