

NEW ADVENTURES AND SADLER'S WELLS PRESENT

Matthew Bourne's

ROMEO +

**JULIET**

Music by PROKOFIEV

**Visual Guide**



# Introduction

This visual guide is designed for any audience members who would benefit from familiarising themselves with what to expect from Matthew Bourne's Romeo + Juliet before they get to the theatre. It contains images and information about the characters, story and the production in general. We hope this resource makes your visit more enjoyable.

If you have any comments, or would like this resource in larger print, please get in touch at [office@new-adventures.net](mailto:office@new-adventures.net)

# Show Notes

Themes within the show:

**Forbidden Love, Desire, Power, Sacrifice, Friendship, Fate**

Please be aware:

- **Romeo + Juliet is approximately 2 hours long, including a 20-minute interval.**
- **The age guidance for this show is 14+**
- The production contains loud sound effects including a gun shot and has some flashing lights (not strobe).
- There will be scenes of a disturbing and a sexual nature, including stabbing and strangulation.

- Lots of scenes will be intense or uncomfortable and might be distressing to some audience members.
- The piece is set in the Verona Institute, which resembles a prison or asylum.
- Multiple characters are shown dying violently.
- A prop gun and prop knife are used.
- The dancers playing the characters in this guide may not be the same dancers on the day you see the show, but the character costumes will be the same.

# Meet the Characters

The story centres around:

- Romeo
- Juliet
- Tybalt

There are lots of other characters in the story too. Here are some of them:

- Reverend Laurence
- Mercutio, Benvolio, Balthasar
- Senator and Brie Montague
- Governor Escalus
- The other inmates

# Romeo + Juliet

Romeo and Juliet are both inmates at the Verona Institute.

Romeo is the son of a powerful Governor and has been sent to the Institute to be 'straightened out'.

They usually both wear the plain white outfits of the inmates.



# Tybalt

Tybalt is the guard at the Verona Institute. He is an imposing, menacing and unpredictable character.

He usually wears a guard's uniform, with black trousers and a white shirt.





# Mercutio, Benvolio and Balthasar

These are inmates at the Verona Institute and become Romeo's friends when he arrives.

They wear the plain white tops and trousers of the inmates.





# We also meet:



**Senator and Brie  
Montague**



**The other inmates**

# The Story

If you don't want to know what happens in the show, stop reading now!



***The Verona Institute, in the not too distant future.***

As the music slowly builds in the darkness, the lights reveal a silk curtain which falls to the floor of the stage to reveal a crime scene.

The bloody bodies of Romeo and Juliet are seen lying together on a mortuary slab.

## Scene One

A bell rings and lights come up on the Verona Institute. The stage is suddenly filled with people wearing white 'uniforms'.

Male and female inmates are clearly divided with separate spaces for the 'boys' and 'girls'.

The action within is overseen by Tybalt, a powerful, menacing and unpredictable presence.

It is clear that the institute's residents are nervous around him.

The space is filled with activity as the inmates carry out the repetitive labour activities that have been enforced by those in charge, before collapsing exhausted on the floor.

## Scene Two

Tybalt approaches one of the female inmates but she clearly does not wish to be the object of his focus. Led by Juliet, some of the other girls challenge Tybalt, and the girl is set free.

Frustrated by Juliet's interference Tybalt decides to single out Juliet instead and drags her to a private room.

With the rest of the staff and the inmates out of the way Tybalt continues his emotional and physical abuse of Juliet.

Her friend sees Tybalt carrying a struggling Juliet to his private quarters and hits a panic button to try to put an end to Tybalt's actions, but it doesn't work.

Enraged by Tybalt's assault on Juliet, the inmates kick up a frenzy within the institution, with lights flashing and alarms sounding.



All of a sudden, a distressed and traumatised Juliet appears from the door of Tybalt's room.

She has her top in her hands and the mental and physical pain she is experiencing is clear for all to see.

Behind her, in the doorway, leans Tybalt, half-undressed and satisfied.



## Scene Three

Cheers can be heard and camera flashes light the gloom as three figures appear at the entrance to the Verona Institute. Senator and Brie Montague wave robotically to the gathered crowds, whilst their son, Romeo, follows on reluctantly behind. They are greeted by Governor Escalus, the head of the Verona Institute. Romeo's parents have brought him to the Institution to be 'cured' of his odd behaviour.



While the Governor walks the Montagues around the grounds, Mercutio, Benvolio and Balthasar arrive to strip Romeo of his own clothes and dress him in the plain white trousers, top and shoes that are issued to all inmates. Left alone momentarily, Romeo does his best to make himself invisible against the back wall as he hears Juliet approach, immediately struck by her beauty.



It is clear that Juliet is still nursing the pain of her recent abuse. Consumed by her own pain and sadness she does not spot Romeo and exits when she hears the Governor and The Montagues return to bid Romeo a formal and cold farewell.



## Scene Four

One by one the inmates appear in poorly fitting party clothes. In stiff frocks, shirts and bow ties they prepare for the monthly social event by practising social dances that are clearly meant to be performed with a partner.

They dutifully go through the steps looking more and more awkward as they dance alone – the boys on one side and the girls on the other – before they all exit the stage.





## Scene Five

Rev. Bernadette Laurence - the institute chaplain – arrives to set up the decorations for the dance. Romeo is introduced by Tybalt and Rev. Laurence gives Romeo a hearty welcome.



Rev. Laurence is delighted to see everyone, instantly encouraging the two sides to mix but as the young people do so they are warned off by the guards. But Rev. Laurence manages to convince Tybalt to let them do one partnered dance and the pairs dance stiffly, becoming more relaxed when the guards wander off to patrol elsewhere. Rev Laurence is led out of the room by Mercutio, allowing the inmates to be left alone with each other.

Juliet, who arrives late, partners with Romeo and they are instantly transfixed with one another.

Everything drifts into a dream-like state as they lose themselves in the blissful presence of one another.





A bell rings and the guards re-enter suddenly. Furious that the inmates have been left alone, they break the couples apart.

Spotting Mercutio and Balthasar entwined on the floor together, Tybalt loses his temper and strikes Mercutio. Everyone, including Rev. Laurence, is subject to his anger and the boys and girls are quickly separated. He is outraged at seeing Juliet partnered with Romeo and kisses Juliet's hand as if to stake his claim on her in front of all the inmates.

The girls and boys exit, leaving just Tybalt and the Reverend. Overcome with his feelings of anger and frustration, and perhaps even hurt, sadness and desperation, he collapses to the floor. He is briefly comforted by Rev. Laurence before he struggles off, claspng his head. The Reverend herself rushes off, distraught that the social has been ruined.

## Scene Six

Unbeknownst to everyone else, Romeo and Juliet had managed to hide themselves en-route back to their dormitories and are now dodging flashlights as guards patrol the corridors. They sneak past Rev. Laurence and finally make it outside, where they enjoy a brief sense of freedom as they get to know one another.



Knowing they must return to their dormitories before they are found out, they reluctantly say goodbye but not before stopping for a long-awaited and heartfelt kiss.

# Interval

The interval will be **20 minutes**.

You can stay in your seat or leave the auditorium. You might want to buy a drink or snack or use the toilet in the interval.

## ***Two Weeks Later***

Romeo and Juliet enter their separate dorms. They are still 'love-sick' for one another and their relationship is the subject of much interest for the other inmates. Whilst the boys pull Romeo's leg for being 'in love', the girls gather round Juliet to elicit all the juicy gossip they can.

As a way of cheering up their friends, the inmates hatch a plot to arrange a secret rendezvous in the institute grounds.

Blindfolded and pushed through the corridors on their dormitory beds, before being led the rest of the way on foot, Romeo and Juliet are overwhelmed with happiness when their blindfolds are lifted and they find themselves standing in front of one another.



However, they are soon discovered by Tybalt who has been drinking heavily and wandering the grounds. In a jealous rage he pulls Romeo and Juliet apart, threatening anyone who tries to challenge him. Tybalt falls to Juliet's feet, crying, and the inmates start to mock him.

Their laughter stops when Tybalt staggers to his feet wielding a gun. Tensions grow and the inmates try to put a stop to Tybalt's reign of terror. However, with Mercutio as hostage, Tybalt grows increasingly unpredictable and dangerous.

In the scuffle, Tybalt shoots Mercutio in the stomach. Enraged, Juliet strangles Tybalt with his own belt.



As Mercutio and Tybalt lay dead in front of them the enormity of what has happened hits Romeo and Juliet and they very clearly blame themselves as the catalyst that has sparked this double tragedy.

The institute lights flash and the inmates gradually disperse. Romeo instructs them to lead Juliet away, since she is now in a state of hysteria too.

When the Nurse and Orderly arrive, they find Romeo alone with two bodies and the incriminating belt in his hand.



## *One Week Later*

Pale, cold light fills the Institute and inside the inmates appear to be in a state of increased sedation. There is little interaction between them and the atmosphere is heavy.



Romeo is led through the space by the Nurse and the Orderly, wearing a straightjacket and looking traumatised. He is walked through his group of friends, before being locked away out of sight of the others.

The distant sound of cheers and applause heralds the return of the Montagues, who have been summoned to collect Romeo. Feigning madness, Romeo does all he can to put a stop to his parents taking him back. His terrified parents get out their cheque book and agree a significant sum for Governor Escalus to keep their son at the Institute.

Meanwhile, Juliet is alone in a separate room where she unveils a knife that she has stashed under the pillow on her bed. As she considers taking her own life, she is interrupted by a visit from the Psychiatric Doctor.

Unable to bear their separation any longer, Juliet runs off to find Rev. Laurence and begs for her help. The Reverend takes Juliet to where Romeo is being held. After an emotional reunion Rev. Laurence gives Juliet the key to the cell before leaving, and they find themselves alone again at last. They grow steadily more intimate before taking to Romeo's bed together.





Suddenly, Juliet lurches from the bed, convinced she can hear a noise in the corridor outside. Juliet is frantic when she sees Tybalt in his guard uniform, who appears to enter the cell. Romeo pleads with Juliet to come to her senses as he cannot see any sign of anyone else in the room. As Juliet's hallucination grows more menacing, she exits the cell and runs away, believing Tybalt to be in close pursuit.

Romeo follows after her, through the open cell door. He pleads for help from the rest of the inmates who follow Romeo in his search for Juliet. In her confused state Juliet is uncertain whether her friends have come to help her or attack her.

As her confusion escalates, she is surrounded by her fellow inmates.

Thinking he is Tybalt, Juliet uses her knife, mortally wounding Romeo.

Seeing the blood on her hands brings Juliet out of her stupor.

She gets Romeo to his feet and takes him to the infirmary, where they are both horrified to see the sight of Mercutio's lifeless body lying on a mortuary slab. Juliet tries to save Romeo, but nothing stops the bleeding. Seeing her anguish, Romeo makes it clear to Juliet, just before he dies, that he loves her and forgives her.

Realising that she has killed the love of her life, Juliet takes the same knife that killed Romeo and stabs herself in the stomach, dying shortly after.

Wrapped in one another's arms, in the same pose we saw them in at the start of the show, Romeo and Juliet are left alone as the rest of the inmates disappear into the darkness.



# The End

When the show ends, there will be loud clapping and cheering. People may stand up as the performers take a bow.

When you leave the theatre, you might want to talk about what you've just seen or quietly think about it on your own.