



THE PACK INCLUDES

Synopsis

Meet the characters

Themes

Classroom Activities

Meet the Creative Team

REFERENCES

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SYNOPSIS ACT ONE

Surrounded by his company of actors, William Shakespeare outlines his new play, Romeo and Juliet. His wife Anne Hathaway enters, having come in from the country to see the first performance. When Anne hears the ending of the play, she disagrees with William's choices; Juliet is a teenage girl with her whole life ahead of her! Why should her story end with her death just because Romeo's does?

Working together with Anne, William starts rewriting his play, and we enter the action. At Romeo's funeral, Juliet meets Bianca, Portia and Helena, who have all been romantically involved with Romeo. It emerges that Juliet wasn't the only one for whom he has exclaimed, "I ne'er saw true beauty til this night." Juliet's parents insist that Juliet should enter a nunnery, but Juliet would rather travel the world, and carve her own path.

Defying her parents' orders, Juliet runs away, taking her Nurse with her. They are joined by Juliet's best friends May and April. Anne decides to play April herself, while William enters the play as the carriage driver. He takes Juliet and her friends to Paris, where they attend a Renaissance Ball at the Dubois Castle, home to Lance (a widower) and his son Francois. Francois is shy and reluctant to talk to all of the eligible young women at the ball.

May and Francois meet briefly. There is a spark, but May loses confidence. Juliet reassures May, who is struggling with identity issues, by maintaining that she sees May only as her best friend - not as either male or female. Juliet chats to Francois as several more girls enter talking about what has happened to Romeo, and how they had previously been involved with him. Juliet dismisses these girls, as well as Madeline, who is presented to Francois by Lance. Preferring Juliet's company to Madeline's, Francois dances with her outside. May sees them from afar and walks away, feeling rejected and jealous. Francois and Juliet kiss.

Lance and the Nurse bump into each other. The Nurse had worked for Lance before becoming Juliet's Nurse, but their love for each other had to be denied because Lance was already married. Anne returns to William

to tell him how much she's improved his play. Returning back to the Dubois Castle, we see a bedroom and expect to see Juliet emerging from Francois' bed. Instead it is the Nurse, trying to creep away from Lance's bed. She is determined not to look back into the past.

Meanwhile, Francois and Juliet have spent the night in Juliet's carriage. Francois mentions marriage and Juliet realises that she has got herself into another predicament involving marriage. But when Juliet's parents suddenly arrive, wanting to take Juliet back to Verona with them, Juliet is forced to come up with a plan, and decides to proceed with a quick engagement to Francois. After all, this will mean that Francois can avoid joining the army, and Juliet can avoid the nunnery. Lance plans an engagement party for that night, mirroring the speed at which Juliet became engaged to Romeo. Juliet realises that the Nurse and Lance are romantically involved.

Anne gets frustrated with William for pushing Juliet into another quick marriage. In an aside to the audience, she explains that her marriage to William has reduced her identity and role in life to being a wife, and she wonders why she only receives William's 'second best bed' in his will. Anne is clearly frustrated at being the inferior half of the couple, looking after William's children following their own hasty marriage.

Anne encourages William to keep the new play simple, but William, suddenly concerned that his play is lacking in conflict, decides to add a plot twist, and engineers a chance meeting between May and Francois. There is an immediate chemistry between them that mirrors the original chemistry experienced by Romeo and Juliet when they met, and culminates in a kiss.

Anne re-enters, having finished a costume change, and realises that she has missed an entire scene. William is secretive, refusing to tell Anne about this new plot twist, and decides to take his rewriting of the plot one step further by resurrecting Romeo from the dead.

Romeo makes a grand entrance, travelling to Paris to meet Juliet, and Juliet is shocked.

End of Act One.

CONTINUED... ACT TWO

At Juliet's engagement party, Romeo tells Juliet that he forgives her for not killing herself when she thought he was dead and is surprised when his friend Benvolio tells him that Juliet has moved on to someone new.

Romeo tries to win Juliet back, maintaining that the other women in his past didn't mean anything to him, but Juliet is determined to move on with her life, and tells Romeo he's not allowed to come to her wedding.

Meanwhile, Francois is having doubts about the wedding, but when Lance tells Francois how proud the engagement has made him, Francois feels like he needs to go through with it. May tries to convince Francois that it's not fair to Juliet, knowing that they have stronger feelings for each other, but Francois feels like he has no choice.

May tries to tell Juliet about what has happened with Francois, but Juliet is too preoccupied with thoughts about Romeo. When Romeo returns to see her the night before her wedding, Juliet tells him that she's made a choice to be with Francois, and is trying to stand behind her choices, but she is clearly struggling with her lingering feelings for Romeo.

William finds a despondent Romeo, and devises a plan for him to sneak into the wedding by posing as one of Francois' brothers. Meanwhile, Lance and the Nurse are rehearsing a surprise for the wedding guests - their own wedding!

As Anne helps Juliet prepare for the big day, Juliet admits that she still loves Romeo and that her feelings for Francois are just not as intense. In return, Anne tells Juliet a little about what her own life has been like.

Francois steps into the armour that Lance wore for his own wedding. The old family band are reuniting for the occasion. William brings Romeo and May with him, to complete the family band. May reveals his identity to Francois but is interrupted by the start of the performance.

Francois makes his wedding vows, but Juliet is unimpressed. Put bluntly, he has made promises "just as long as you love me," which is not enough for her. May steps forward and he and Francois kiss. Seeing that Juliet is now unattached, Romeo reveals his identity, but Juliet declares that she's not going to let anyone else decide her fate, and storms out, leaving the wedding guests stunned.

Francois blames his father for pressuring him into marrying Juliet, and challenges Lance to accept him for who he is. Lance agrees, and asks for his son's forgiveness. At the same time, the Nurse consoles Juliet, reassuring her that making mistakes is part of being human, and that there's nothing wrong with her.

With renewed confidence, Juliet vows to stand up for herself in the future, and to treat herself with more kindness and love. She exits the play, and takes all of William's actors with her.

When the lights return, only William, Anne and Romeo remain. Anne tells Shakespeare that a wedding does not always mean a happy ending. She wanted Juliet to take control of her life where she had none before. William realises that he has been neglecting Anne, and once he apologises, she agrees that maybe the best thing for them - and for Romeo and Juliet - is a second chance.

Together, they write a new start for the star-crossed lovers: a new play that will be called Juliet & Romeo. Juliet and Romeo will have a first date, Lance and the Nurse are given their marriage, and William promises to write a lot of tragedies!

THE MUSIC OF MAX MARTIN

David West Read (the writer of the show) describes William Shakespeare as the rock star of his time. Shakespeare's work reflects the popular culture and beliefs in the time in which his plays were written, but the universal themes that the plays present are still relevant to this day and it's very rare to find anyone who doesn't know of at least one story made famous by Shakespeare. In modern day, many people consider Max Martin's music to be the soundtrack to their own life, representing key moments and memories of times that are important to them. Along with various collaborators, Max has created some of the biggest hits that span over two and a half decades.

His musical awards include The Polar Music Prize, five Grammy Awards (including Producer of the Year) and the ASCAP Songwriter of the Year, which he was awarded 11 times. A prolific songwriter, he is only second to Paul McCartney with number one U.S. singles. Most recently he was inducted in the Songwriters Hall of Fame. & Juliet is his first musical production. Max is not just a musical collaborator with his extensive catalog, but serves as producer overseeing all aspects of the development. He has written a wide range of songs for a huge number of artists, both groups and soloists.

Each of those artists has their own individual sound and so, like Shakespeare, Martin's music is a versatile and constantly evolving way of expressing key emotions, issues and themes.

Therefore, it is fitting that Martin's music provides the electrifying soundtrack to the show. Many of the songs have been chart hits for strong female role models, which is also significant as Juliet begins to explore her own potential in & Juliet. Take a close look at the list of songs that forms the soundtrack for & Juliet and you'll soon see how influential Max Martin has been to contemporary music.

SHAKESPEARE'S ROMEO AND JULIET

Romeo is a Montague and Juliet is a Capulet. The two families have a longstanding feud. Meeting at a party, the two young people fall in love at first sight. Despite the risk of being severely punished by their families, the pair marry in secret, supported by the Friar and the Nurse. Romeo quickly forgets about Rosaline, with whom he has previously been infatuated.

The ongoing feud causes Romeo to kill Juliet's cousin Tybalt in revenge for the murder of his best friend Mercutio. Romeo is banished to Mantua. Still unaware of his daughter's secret marriage, Lord Capulet arranges for his daughter to marry Paris, who has been asking to marry her for some time. Juliet refuses and Lord Capulet threatens to disown her.

In order to escape the ordeal of marrying Paris, Juliet takes a potion supplied by the Friar which makes her appear dead. The Friar plans to send a message to Romeo telling him of the plan, but the message does not get through. Believing his beloved wife to be dead, Romeo returns to Verona and poisons himself whilst lying next to Juliet's sleeping body in the tomb. Waking shortly after, Juliet realises her husband is dead and uses his dagger to end her own life, unable to live without him.

The Friar confesses to what has happened and the feud between the Capulets and the Montagues is brought to an end.

MEET THE CHARACTERS



JULIET

My parents are kind of the worst. And things with my boyfriend Romeo didn't exactly work out. So I've decided to get out of Verona, and this time, I'm not letting anybody tell me what I'm going to do about my destiny. I'm heading to Paris with my best friends, and living my best life.

This is my story now, and you're gonna hear me roar.

ANNE

As William Shakespeare's wife, I'm often thought of as the woman behind the man. But I'm about to step into the spotlight and show William how much his work could benefit from a little female perspective. I'm a first-time writer, but I'm pretty excited about my ideas for Juliet. In fact, I might just write myself into the story as Juliet's newest friend, April.



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

I don't want everyone referring to me as "the greatest playwright of all time", even if it's true. I mean, really, I'm a simple, humble man, who happens to create heart-shattering plays that forever alter the cultural fabric of the planet. I'm thrilled to have my wife, Anne, come in from the country to see my latest creation, Romeo & Juliet, which might just be my greatest yet.

MEET THE CHARACTERS



LANCE

My son Francois may think that I'm controlling, but really, I just want what's best for my boys. And since the death of Francois' mother, it's been up to me to help guide Francois' choices. I may be getting a little older now, but I know a lot about the ways of love. After all, I used to be quite the "teenage dream" myself!

MAY

I'm Juliet's older friend, and I'm going to be right by her side wherever she goes, and whatever happens... especially if I get a free trip to Paris out of it! I just want to support Juliet the way she's always supported me with unconditional love and acceptance, but if I happen to flirt with random foreign guys along the way, I won't be mad about it.



ROMEO

Some people say I'm "in love with love", and that may be true, but I've also been in love with a lot of women! I'm a hopeless romantic, and I can't help it if I fall hard, and fast. But now that I've met Juliet, I'm determined to convince her that what I feel for her is special, or else we'll be star-crossed forever.

MEET THE CHARACTERS



ANGELIQUE

I've raised Juliet since she was a little girl, and know her better than her own parents. Which is a good thing, since Juliet's parents seem to think her only options are the nunnery or death. If Juliet and her friends want a girls' trip to Paris, I'm happy to chaperone, but you'd better believe I'm not going to miss out on all the fun!

FRANCOIS

Like Juliet, I know how it feels to have an overprotective parent. My father is always trying to set me up with people, and make me perform with the family band. I want to make my own choices, but if I don't do what he says, he's going to send me to the army. With Juliet's help, I'm hoping to start standing up for myself, because really, what's wrong with being confident?



THEMES



LOVE

Like the original play, & Juliet explores various types of love. Parental love, platonic love and romantic love all make an appearance. Whilst Romeo and Juliet's love is romantic, William and Anne's story reminds us that love needs work if it is to survive. Lance and the Nurse are able to rekindle the love they felt for each other at a time when it was forbidden.

The relationship between May and Francois forms another form of love which is potentially 'forbidden' by some characters, in a similar way to that of Romeo and Juliet in their original story. Unconditional love becomes a strong part of this theme, with Francois and Juliet both accepting May for who they are. The love that forms very quickly between Francois and May shows the strength of unconditional love and its survival in spite of the expectations of others. As May struggles to be comfortable with their identity, the security and honesty that eventually exists between them and Francois is an optimistic sign!

IDENTITY



Juliet is keen to develop her own identity, rather than simply being added on to the name of a man. May is struggling with his gender identity, and Francois' role as a loyal son almost forces him into a marriage of convenience and misplaced loyalty. The Nurse is finally able to break out of her identity as an employee and surrogate mother and be the boisterous and sensual woman that she truly is.



AMBITION & EXPECTATIONS

The characters in & Juliet are striving to meet the expectations of parents, society and themselves. Whilst the parents of Juliet and Francois have the best of intentions, they risk driving a wedge between them and their children by imposing their own ideas and priorities. Meanwhile, William Shakespeare is so distracted by his success as a playwright that he risks losing the love of his wife, who has made her own sacrifices so that he can thrive.

MARRIAGE



Seen as the romantic conclusion to a love affair, the potential for disappointment is also explored in & Juliet. Anne reveals her own experience of marriage to the world's most famous playwright and Juliet nearly finds herself in a second hasty and ill-advised marriage. Juliet and Romeo are given a second chance at the end of the play, and Shakespeare promises to pay more attention to his wife.



LOYALTY & FRIENDSHIP

April and May accompany Juliet to Paris to help her recover from the loss of Romeo and enable her to create her own happy ending. There are moments where being a loyal friend requires personal sacrifice, but it is the bonds of friendship that ultimately enable all of the characters to find love and happiness.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

WRITE YOUR OWN PROLOGUE

At the beginning of *Romeo and Juliet*, a Prologue tells the audience what to expect. It's a bit of a plot spoiler, but also helps us appreciate the tension and drama that happens along the way!

The original Prologue tells us:

**Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.**

← Each line has **TEN** syllables and is in **iambic pentameter**

← You'll notice that alternate lines rhyme with each other until the final two lines, which are a **rhyming couplet**



The Prologue has 14 lines and is written as a **sonnet**

A **sonnet** is a 14-line poem which is associated with love. Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets, as well as his 38 plays.

Iambic pentameter uses 10 syllables per line, with the stress placed on syllables 2,4,6,8 & 10.

Rhyming couplets are two lines which rhyme with each other. They signify the end of a sonnet and were also often used by Shakespeare in his plays to signify the end of a scene.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

HERE'S A HELPING HAND FOR YOUR SONNET:

- Three best friends
- Giving a story a different end
- A trip to Paris
- A lot of dance
- Love that is lost and found
- An old story covers new ground
- Fathers, daughters, mothers and sons
- Shakespearean word play (also called puns)
- 2 parties (or balls)
- A former lover comes to call

Extra challenge:

How can you include your favourite pop lyrics?

DEVISING FROM SONG LYRICS

Many of Max Martin's songs have been performed by women whose image inspires confidence, independence and standing up for what you believe in. One of Juliet's songs is Confident in which she asks, "What's wrong with being confident?" In groups of five/six, improvise a short scene in which a character (male or female) asks this question. What is the outcome of this character asking this question? Do those around him/her answer positively or negatively? Is age a factor in the way that these characters respond?

Taking this one step further:

In Act 3, Scene 5 of *Romeo and Juliet*, Lord Capulet insists that Juliet will marry Paris (who has been asking for Juliet's hand in marriage for quite some time). Juliet refuses (she's already secretly married Romeo) and Lord Capulet threatens to disown Juliet if she does not obey.

- Taking this moment as a starting point, improvise a scene in which Juliet confesses what she's done to Lord Capulet, and asks "what's wrong with being confident?" How does this change the scene, and how does this change the rest of the entire play!?
- If you were creating a soundtrack to a new film/stage version of *Romeo and Juliet*, what song would you choose to accompany this moment? Why?

Taking it even further...

Write a new song for one of the characters, using a pop style.

CHOREOGRAPHY

WRITE YOUR OWN PROLOGUE

The choreography in the show is inspired by pop and hip-hop styles. You will often see this style of movement in music videos and in advertising, too.

You can research the work of choreographer Jennifer Weber here:

<http://www.jenniferwebernyc.com/jenniferdecadancetheatre.com>

Jennifer has updated other traditional stories using her style of choreography, including *The Nutcracker*, which is a traditional Christmas ballet. You can find out more here:

<http://hiphopnutcracker.com>

Whilst you're watching the show, observe the choreography carefully and consider the following questions to help you with your own choreographic ideas:

- What dance styles and motifs are in the show? Do certain characters have their own style of moving, for example?
- There are a number of different locations in the show, including Shakespearean England, a modern nightclub and a wedding. How is each location created through the choreography and movement? How are groupings used, for example?
- How have some of the ensemble numbers been influenced by Renaissance dance?

RESEARCHING OTHER ADAPTATIONS:

The story of *Romeo and Juliet* has inspired a number of iconic adaptations. It is also a traditional ballet story, famously choreographed by **Kenneth MacMillan** for the Royal Ballet, for example.

Jerome Robbins choreographed *West Side Story* in 1957 and the choreography is used for productions to this day. Robbins was inspired by the dance styles of the different cultures and nationalities in the story (*The Puerto Rican 'Sharks'* and the American '*Jets*'). He also used ballet and musical theatre in his choreography.

Matthew Bourne and *New Adventures* have recently created a new production of *Romeo and Juliet* and have updated settings and used contemporary and ballet style movement.

Avant Garde Dance Company created a hip-hop version of the story in conjunction with the Royal Opera House, which includes roller skating and spoken word in the performance.

CREATING MUSIC VIDEOS

The music of Max Martin is performed by a wide range of artists, each with their own individual style as expressed in music videos. In *& Juliet*, the way in which the story is told is very much informed by popular culture. What aspects of the “music video” style can you notice in the show?

In groups, and using the song list from *& Juliet* to guide your viewing, watch a range of videos performed by:

- Backstreet Boys
- Britney Spears
- Ke\$ha
- P!nk
- Katy Perry
- Adele
- N Sync
- Ariane Grande
- Demi Lovato
- Jessie J
- Bon Jovi

Discussion:

What do these videos have in common? Take a close look at the kind of shots that are used and the locations in which they are filmed.

Watch several videos by the same artist. Is there a particular style that the artist always uses? If so, why do you think that is? How does it conform to the artist’s image?

Choose one of the characters in *& Juliet* and choose a song that you feel represents their journey throughout the play. Storyboard the video that you would make for this character, in the style of one of the performers listed above.

Consider:

- Location
- Types of shot
- Use of a narrative thread running through the video
- Abstract imagery/computer generated images
- Choreography
- Lighting
- Props
- Costume and make up

LET'S MEET THE CHARACTERS

& Juliet includes real life people and familiar characters from Romeo and Juliet and other Shakespeare plays.

ANNE HATHAWAY

In Shakespeare's time, women married at the age of about 26. Anne was therefore in her prime when she became pregnant with Shakespeare's child and they had to marry swiftly in order to avoid scandal. Anne gave birth to three children: Susanna was born in 1583, 6 months after the wedding. Twins Judith and Hamnet were born in 1585 and Hamnet died at 11 years old.

Many people are intrigued by the fact that Shakespeare's will only bequeathed his second best bed to Anne when he died. The first best bed would have been considered a family heirloom (and was only used for guests), so it was probably passed to Susanna. The second best bed would have been William and Anne's marriage bed, and so perhaps it was a more romantic gesture than we give him credit for!

JULIET

In the original play, Juliet meets, falls in love with and marries Romeo within five days. After Romeo is banished and her father insists that she marries Paris, Juliet fakes her own death using a potion provided by the Friar. Romeo is not aware that she is not really dead and swallows a poison to end his own life.

Waking moments later, Juliet uses Romeo's dagger to kill herself, as she cannot live without him. In & Juliet, Juliet is allowed to explore life after first love as well as escaping the confines of Verona and her family home. In this version, she becomes even more independent and is able to appreciate herself for who she is, not who she's married to.

ROMEO

At the beginning of Romeo and Juliet, Romeo is in love with Rosaline who does not love him in return. He attends a party given by the Capulets (Juliet's family) and meets Juliet. After killing Juliet's cousin Tybalt in revenge for the death of his best friend, Romeo is banished to Mantua.

Receiving a message that Juliet has died, Romeo returns to Verona and, not realising that Juliet is still alive, ends his own life. In & Juliet we realise that Rosaline was not the only woman with whom he had flirted. He certainly seems to have used the same chat up line several times!

LET'S MEET THE CHARACTERS

NURSE / ANGELIQUE IN & JULIET

Angelique is Juliet's biggest supporter, having looked after her since she was born. Angelique's own daughter Susan died as a baby and she treats Juliet as if she were her own daughter. She plays a key part in arranging the secret marriage between Romeo and Juliet.

Juliet's parents find Angelique frustrating because she talks so much, but in *& Juliet* she is able to relax and enjoy the opportunity to live her own life rather than being restricted by her role as Juliet's nurse.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

William was just 18 years old when he married Anne Hathaway. During his career, Shakespeare wrote 38 plays and 154 sonnets. Sonnets are poems associated with love.

Only Sonnet 145 contains any possible mention of Anne Hathaway, and this is only in the form of a pun, or word play.

HELENA, BIANCA AND PORTIA

These three women are characters from other Shakespeare plays. All three of them are involved in stories about love.

Helena loves Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but he doesn't immediately love her in return. Only after the interference of Oberon, King of the Fairies, does she get her man!

Bianca is a character from *The Taming of the Shrew*, keen to marry but her older sister Katherine's refusal to get married means that she must wait. Bianca is also the name of a woman in *Othello* - the only unmarried woman in the play.

Portia is the main female character in *Merchant of Venice* whose father insists that she must marry the man who chooses the correct casket from a choice of 3. She eventually marries the man of her choice.

Although these character details don't directly influence the plot of *& Juliet*, you may wish to think about the social expectations about marriage in Shakespearean England. Could a woman be considered a valuable member of society without a husband?

INTERVIEW WITH DAVID WEST READ

- WRITER

Tell us about your experience with Shakespeare, and why this story still resonates today:

Shakespeare's writing can be so intimidating! I studied Shakespeare's work at university. The great thing about Romeo and Juliet, though, is that it appeals to young people because the main characters are young.

It's the intensity of that first love and the audience sees young people behaving like young people. Max's music is aimed at young people and so it seems like a perfect coupling, telling the story in the 21st century.

How are you using Max Martin's work to help tell Juliet's story?

Both William Shakespeare and Max Martin have produced a HUGE amount of material, and I'd even go so far as to say that Shakespeare was the pop artist of his time. In the 21st century, Max's work helps us tell the story of a Juliet who wouldn't behave in the same way. We're taking the seeds of empowerment that we see in Romeo and Juliet and in this version, she drives the plot. Max has written for a very diverse range of artists and so we can use the breadth of his catalogue to tell the story and drive narrative forward.

We've chosen the songs to create emotion and narrative - nothing has been used without a purpose. Each of the artists for whom Max has written have individual styles and personalities, so that provides a versatile palette of music to choose from.

Shakespeare's diversity of plays encompass tragedy, comedy and history. In the same way, Max's work also allows us to create a broad range of character, emotion and narrative.

There are a lot of strong female personalities in this play. Can you tell us more about that?

The character of Anne Hathaway is particularly interesting. So little is actually known about her - even less than Shakespeare himself - and it's interesting to explore the woman behind the man.

She was 26 when she married Shakespeare, and was already 3 months pregnant, so she was rushed into the marriage. In *& Juliet*, Anne actually creates a new Juliet for us - Anne lives her life vicariously through Juliet.

Juliet herself isn't so constrained by period in this version, either. She's forging her own path and becomes fiercely independent.

What influences have you taken from Romeo and Juliet in the way that you have written this new play?

There are various structural similarities if you watch carefully and various devices that you might recognise. For example, May and Francois speak in sonnet form when they first meet, just as Romeo and Juliet do. There's a party guest list and this time it's Juliet and her entourage who gatecrash. There are secret conversations, loyal friends, pushy parents, parties and forbidden loves. There are also references to other minor characters from the original. For example, we meet Rosaline (who we don't meet in the original, we only hear about her) as well as several characters from other Shakespeare plays.

Gender is a very prominent topic at the moment. How have you reflected this issue in the show?

Gender's interesting because there's a historical basis to it, too. In Shakespeare's day, men played all of the roles, including the female ones, so cross dressing is nothing new. In 2019, it's much more interesting to talk about sexual fluidity. The costume choices also explore this - they're not reflective of male OR female.

cont.

INTERVIEW WITH DAVID WEST READ

- WRITER

Who's your favourite character in & Juliet?

As well as Anne Hathaway, it's got to be the Nurse. She has her own love story in the show. In the original, she's utterly devoted to Juliet and has lost her own child, but we only see her within the confines of her relationship with Juliet. It's great to be able to develop her storyline and allow her to find love.

What do you want the audience to feel when they leave the theatre at the end of the show?

Joy! The music is so powerful and will help create that joyousness, but this isn't a show that's just fluffy fun. We want the audience to feel for the characters and invest in them. In the show, we're watching people struggle and we want to root for them and see them thrive.

In using Max's music, we're not trying to improve on it. We're celebrating it, just as we're celebrating the work of Shakespeare, and when we come to London, we'll be in the city in which he truly made his mark.

INTERVIEW WITH LUKE SHEPPARD

- DIRECTOR

How did you get involved in the show?

I was sent an email asking if I would be interested in working on the show, and I love a challenge! I like projects that require you to think outside the box, and this was definitely one of those. The music of Max Martin is the soundtrack to our childhood, teenage years and life now, so I was really keen to get involved.

What research have you done for the show?

We've done a huge amount. There is so much written about Romeo and Juliet, and David Read West is also a massive Shakespeare fan, so there are references littered throughout the play which add an extra element for those in the audience who know their Shakespeare!

I'd studied Shakespeare at university but that's often done at a very purist level. I don't think Shakespeare would have been a purist and so it's a great challenge to be able to tell the story of the lovers in a new light. I think Shakespeare would approve how we've used pop, and pop culture (from throughout the ages) to work on a new telling of the story.

In rehearsal, we're also sharing the original Romeo and Juliet play so that all of the company have a good grounding in the foundation of the show. You also have to be careful to continue to be open minded in rehearsal. You can't afford to get 'stuck' in your research because you're working with hugely talented performers (and we've got a huge cast!) and there are lots of creative possibilities.

The workshops that have taken place during the planning and development process have also been invaluable in finding out how to put this show on stage. By the time the show opens, there will have been numerous changes and tweaks, and that's an important part of the creative process.

In the rehearsal process, how do you balance working with a choreographer, and the songs, to tell the story?

The story is at the heart of everything. The songs that have been selected are those which add an element to the movement of the narrative, rather

than being put in for the sake of it.

We've had a very egalitarian way of running the rehearsal rooms in which we believe in collaboration without boundaries. We discuss choices and experiment with them. We have a saying in our rehearsal room which echoes a phrase that Max Martin uses in the studio.

We "dare to fail." It's important to try things and not be afraid that it might not work. I come to the rehearsal room with a plan and a strong idea of what I want to achieve, but it's also important to work with the performers to find the best way through. All it takes is one person to deliver a line a little bit differently and it opens up a whole new set of opportunities and possibilities!

As a director working on a show that has its roots in a play by the world's most famous and prolific playwright, what are the challenges?

I like to think we're playing Shakespeare at his own game. There's a saying that plays aren't written, they're rewritten, and our research found that Shakespeare himself used the Romeo and Juliet story that had been written before (Arthur Brooke's 1562 poem *The Tragicall Historie of Romeus and Juliet* was the first English translation of an existing 15th and 16th century story and was certainly one of Shakespeare's sources.)

In *Romeo and Juliet*, we're continuing this cycle. One of the creative challenges is that we've rooted the story in the original period, but it's very much operating in a 2019-2020 arena.

There's a kind of montage language where we play with history and period, but through a contemporary lens and via the pages of popular culture. What we have retained, though, is a believability and integrity, based in theatricality to marry both of those worlds together.

Do you have a favourite character?

That's impossible! I love them all for different reasons and the great thing about rehearsal is thinking that these characters are going to be one thing, and once we've explored them, we see them in a totally different light.

INTERVIEW WITH BILL SHERMAN

– MUSIC SUPERVISOR, ORCHESTRATOR AND ARRANGER

What have been the challenges of creating a musical from songs that are so popular and iconic?

One of the issues is that many pop songs have no definite ending – they tend to fade out. For theatre audiences, we need clear endings in order to move narrative forward and, at a more basic level, to tell the audience when to clap!

How do you work with songs that are so well known?

At first, it's terrifying! Songs are so important to people – they play such an important role in memory, identifying time and place. These songs are really well known, and it's a bit like coffee: people know how they like it and aren't keen on changing it!

However, Max has actually been integral to this creative process and loves experimenting, so it's become less intimidating. We're working with the best pop music of the last 25 years, and it has such a huge energy to it.

How do you take a stand-alone pop song and use it to assist with the narrative?

A lot of that comes from instrumentation. For example, taking a fast song into a ballad. We consider what emotion needs to be communicated. In *I Want It That Way*, it communicates an argument and so we've taken a beautiful ballad and altered it to include rock guitar and beating drums to create that sense of conflict and aggression.

Again, Max has been invaluable in this process. One of the challenges for the performers is trying to work with the vocal power of Max's songs: they are usually strongly connected to individual performers.

What do you want your audience to feel when they leave the theatre at the end of the show?

Happiness and excitement. It should be really difficult to leave without a smile!

INTERVIEW WITH PALOMA YOUNG

- COSTUME DESIGNER



Tell us about designing the costumes for this show.

This show has been exciting to work on. We're creating a combination of comedy, using a narrative that has classical roots and also immersing it in the world of pop. The design reflects that.

With a show like & Juliet, there needs to be a delicate balance between how the costume contributes to the storytelling, without undermining the work that Jennifer (Jennifer Weber, the choreographer) has done. There are issues such as skirt length that need to be considered carefully.

Obviously, the design helps create period and setting as well as character. What should we look out for?

The colour palette changes as the location changes. So, for example, with Shakespeare and his actors, the colours are a lot more earthy - look out for browns, oranges and ochre colours, whereas the party and celebration scenes will be much brighter and bolder.

Interestingly, there is no pink in the telling of Juliet's story! There are, however, a lot of pastels, as it's a youthful story. The colours get brighter as the show progresses.

It must be difficult to create a balance in a show that takes a Shakespeare play as its basis but is also very much based in 2021?

There's certainly a contemporary feeling to the design and in our theatrical designs there's

a fashion overlap. We've been influenced by some of the Renaissance fashion though - long sleeves and square necklines for example. I'd say we have a balance of 80% contemporary and 20% Renaissance in our costume designs.

Can you tell us a little more about some of the specific character designs? What elements do you have to consider?

May's character is an interesting one to explore. We need to include the element of non-conformity and cross-dressing. May is much less confident than Juliet and the character has a much more vulnerable side. Traditionally, this narrative would have been the heroine's storyline.

Take a look at May's costume during Not A Girl - for this ballad, we had to think carefully about the emotion being conveyed. Fabric choices are important: how do we create a sense of stillness, for example? Do we need a soft, flowing fabric, or something with less movement in it?

There are a number of interesting female characters in this show. Their emotional arcs are very influential in the design and evolution of their costumes. In the end, only the Nurse gets married. We have to consider how their costume moves with them as the play progresses.

What research takes place during the design process?

It's about creating the world of the play. We might look at fashion designers, for example, and ask ourselves, 'what is in this world?'

I've looked at paintings and photographs, too, and found out what resonates with other members of the creative team as well. Considering the story and the settings, there needs to be a sense of opulence. Max Martin has also been a major part of the creative process on & Juliet, and I've had discussions with him - the music comes from the pop world, after all, and our story is set in the present. Some of the costumes could be described as 'The Renaissance goes to the gym!'

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