



**April 21 - 23, 2017**

**Benedum Center**

**PITTSBURGH BALLET THEATRE**

**AUDIENCE GUIDE TO THE BALLET**

# PITTSBURGH BALLET THEATRE

## Audience Guide for

# Romeo + Juliet

**April 21 - 23, 2017**

**The Benedum Center for the Performing Arts**

**Choreography: Derek Deane**

**Music: Sergei Prokofiev**

**Production Sponsor:**



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## The Synopsis

**Act I Scene I - The Market Square** The city of Verona is split by a feud between the Montague and Capulet families. Romeo, a young Montague, is paying court to fair Rosaline. The town comes to life. Romeo, Mercutio and Benvolio encounter the Capulet Tybalt and his retainers and a quarrel develops. The quarrel is interrupted by the arrival of the Prince of Verona and peace is temporarily restored.

**Scene II – Juliet’s Anteroom** Juliet is playing with her companions and her nurse. Her parents, Lord and Lady Capulet, arrive with Paris, a young man whom they have chosen to be her husband.

**Scene III - Outside the Capulet House** The Capulet family welcomes its guests to the masked ball. Lord Capulet greets his guests including Rosaline, who is pursued by Romeo, and Paris, who is still seeking Juliet’s hand in marriage. Romeo, Benvolio and Mercutio join the ball in disguise.

**Scene IV - Inside the Capulet House** The masked celebration begins. Juliet enters with her friends. Romeo and Juliet meet and are captivated by each other. As they dance together, Romeo is recognized by Tybalt who tries to throw him out of the house. Lord Capulet intervenes and the guests start to depart.

**Scene V - The Capulet’s Garden** Juliet is standing on her balcony dreaming of Romeo. Romeo arrives and they dance, declaring their eternal love for each other.



Amanda Cochrane and Yoshiaki Nakano in rehearsal as Juliet and Romeo, photo by Aimee DiAndrea.

### *Intermission*

**ACT II Scene I - The Market Square** The following day in the market square, Juliet’s nurse arrives with a letter for Romeo. Romeo reads that Juliet has arranged for Friar Lawrence to marry them secretly in his chapel later the same day.

**Scene II - A Chapel** Romeo arrives at the chapel to be greeted by Friar Lawrence. Juliet arrives and the two lovers are married.

**Scene III - The Market Square** Tybalt comes to the market square looking for Romeo. He tries to provoke Romeo to fight and, when Romeo refuses, his challenge is taken up by Mercutio. In the ensuing fight, Mercutio is killed. On seeing his friend slain, Romeo takes his revenge and kills Tybalt. Devastated by Tybalt's death, Lady Capulet seeks revenge. The marketplace empties as Lady Capulet mourns her loss.

### ***Intermission***

**ACT III Scene I – Juliet's Bedroom** Having spent their wedding night together, Romeo wakes to realize that he must leave Juliet and Verona before he is discovered. Lord and Lady Capulet arrive to prepare for Juliet's marriage to Paris. Juliet announces her refusal to marry Paris and her parents are furious. In despair, Juliet runs to Friar Lawrence to seek his help.

**Scene II - A Chapel** Arriving at the Chapel, Juliet explains her predicament to the Friar. He has a solution. She is to drink a potion that will send her into a deep sleep. Thinking her dead, her parents will place her in the family crypt. Meanwhile, Friar Lawrence promises to tell Romeo of the plan. Romeo will return at night to carry Juliet away when she awakes. Juliet foresees herself reunited with Romeo.

**Scene III – Juliet's Bedroom** Juliet agrees to be married to Paris. Left alone, she drinks the potion.

**Scene IV – Juliet's Anteroom** Juliet's nurse and friends arrive to prepare Juliet for her wedding, but when they try to wake her she appears to be dead. The wedding turns into a funeral.

**Scene V - The Capulet Crypt** Juliet is laid to rest in the Capulet crypt. Romeo arrives. Not knowing of Friar Lawrence's plan, he believes Juliet to be dead. He finds Paris and in the fight that follows, Paris is killed. Overcome with grief at the death of Juliet, Romeo poisons himself. Juliet wakes and finds the bodies of Paris and then Romeo in the crypt. Unable to live without Romeo, she takes her own life.



Yoshiaki Nakano and Amanda Cochrane in rehearsal as Romeo and Juliet, photo by Aimee DiAndrea.

## About Shakespeare's Story

Scholars think William Shakespeare wrote *Romeo and Juliet* between 1591 and 1595. But the idea for the story wasn't completely his—a legend about two star-crossed lovers is actually much older than Shakespeare's play. Like many playwrights of his time, Shakespeare used pieces of myths and folk tales in his work. Here are a few antecedents to *Romeo and Juliet*:

Ca. 8 AD: Roman poet Ovid included the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in his *Metamorphoses*. Ovid is thought to have based his story on even earlier legends. Here you can see the seed of Shakespeare's story: two lovers are forbidden to marry by their parents who despise each other, and Pyramus mistakenly believes Thisbe is dead. They both commit suicide.

1476: Italian poet Masuccio Saleritano published the first-known version of the story that has direct connections to Shakespeare's story, including the character of the friar, the secret marriage, the fake death plot, and the message. In this version, the lovers were named Marriotto and Gianozza.

1530: Luigi da Porto published his version of the story, changing the names to Romeus and Giulietta, and fleshing out characters like Mercutio, Tybalt, and the two feuding families.

1554: Matteo Bandello, the Italian author who is most directly credited as having influenced Shakespeare, introduces many elements Shakespeare adopted, including the family names Montague and Capulet. Also he added the costume ball, at which Romeo and Juliet meet, and the moment in which Juliet viciously kills herself with Romeo's dagger so that she may join her lover in the afterlife.

1562: Arthur Brooke, an English poet, published the *Tragic Tale of Two Lovers*, the first recorded version of the story to be written in English.

1582: William Painter revamped the story, closely followed by Lope de Vega, who published a Spanish version of the story in 1590.

It's likely that Shakespeare drew primarily from Brooke's and Painter's works to create a play that would become one of the most famous stories in all of literature.



Image: Thisbe, by John William Waterhouse, 1909  
[Image Source](#).



## The Composer and the Ballet



Though over the centuries Shakespeare's story has been produced thousands of times on stage—and became the subject of many other art forms, including opera, music, film and more—*Romeo and Juliet* didn't cross over into ballet until the 1930s. It was Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev who took the leap, collaborating on a scenario with several well-known artists in Russian theater. The Kirov Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia, hoped to premiere the ballet in 1935 or '36.

It didn't go easily for Prokofiev. The first performance of the score (sans dancing) was not well-received by audiences (the hall emptied as the recital went on) and was widely criticized in Russian cultural circles. Critics found several problems with the work, but resounding outrage came over Prokofiev's choice to transform Shakespeare's tragic ending into a happy one. His concept was that Romeo would be clued in to Juliet's "fake" death in the nick of time, and the two lovers would live rather than kill themselves.

Why make such a radical change to the story? Prokofiev's Christian Science faith seems to have played a role (he and his wife converted on a visit to the U.S. in 1924)—he felt his works should be life affirming. As a practical matter Prokofiev also noted that "... living people can dance, the dying cannot."\* Conflict over the ending and other issues delayed the production, threatened its cancellation all together, moved the premiere from the Kirov to the Bolshoi (Moscow) and back to the Kirov—with the composer all the while rigorously protesting the calls to change the score.

In late 1938 a single-act version of the ballet was produced in Czechoslovakia, though by that time Soviet authorities had restricted Prokofiev's travel and he was unable to attend the performance. As he continued to struggle to get the ballet produced in Russia, a wave of repression was advancing across the Russian cultural landscape. Among its victims were three men associated with *Romeo and Juliet*, who were arrested and executed.

Under enormous pressure Prokofiev relented in the end: he added, deleted, re-orchestrated and rewrote. Other changes, which Prokofiev didn't even know about until he heard the music at the ballet's 1940 premiere, were made by the Kirov's choreographer and conductor. Still, the ballet was an instant, unequivocal success. Despite years of turmoil, Prokofiev had managed to produce a score of remarkable beauty—a yearning, poignant interpretation of Shakespeare's great love story. The ballet soon drew international notice and acclaim. And while Prokofiev was never allowed to travel outside of Russia again, his *Romeo and Juliet* "went in his stead," to become one of the most produced and beloved ballets in the world.\*

\*Simon Morrison, "[Romeo and Juliet's Happy Ending](#)"; [Photo source](#).



Dancers rehearsing for the premiere of the ballet rebelled against the music, complaining that it was too complex and dissonant. Prima ballerina Galina Ulanova pronounced it "undanceable"—though it ended up being the role that defined her career.

Galina Ulanova and Yuri Zhdanov. [Photo Source](#).



In addition to operas, symphonic works, film scores, and more, Prokofiev composed nine ballets. The most famous are *Prodigal Son* (1929; choreography by George Balanchine), *Romeo and Juliet* (1940), and *Cinderella* (1944).

Eva Trapp and Alexandre Silva in *Prodigal Son*; Alexandra Kochis in Septime Webre's *Cinderella*. Photos by Rich Sofranko.

A brief timeline of Prokofiev's life, along with some "Fun Facts," can be found at [sfcv.org](http://sfcv.org).

## Romeo and Juliet Ballet Productions

Numerous choreographers have created ballets to the Prokofiev score. PBT presented the first American version in 1971, created by founding artistic director Nicolas Petrov. Here is a sampling of a few more *Romeo and Juliet* ballet productions.

- |      |   |      |  |
|------|---|------|--|
| 1940 | Leonid Lavrovsky, Kirov Ballet; first full production.  | 1996 | Jean-Christophe Maillot ( <i>Romeo et Juliette</i> ), Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo (PBT performed this version in 2010)  |
| 1955 | Frederick Ashton, Royal Danish Ballet   |      |  |
| 1962 | John Cranko, Stuttgart Ballet   | 1998 | Derek Deane, English National Ballet (in the round staging). Deane's traditional stage version was choreographed the next year—this is PBT's current production. |
| 1965 | Sir Kenneth MacMillan, Royal Ballet (England)   |      |  |
| 1971 | Nicolas Petrov, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre; first American production (watch a clip <a href="#">here</a> ) | 2008 | Mark Morris, Mark Morris Dance group; used restored original Prokofiev score   |
| 1977 | Rudolf Nureyev, London Festival Ballet  |      |  |



Left: First U.S. production of the ballet, choreography by PBT founding artistic director Nicolas Petrov, photo by Michael Friedlander, 1971.  
 Right: Alexandra Kochis and Christopher Budzynski as the leads in *Romeo et Juliette*, by Jean-Christophe Maillot, in PBT's 2010 production, photo by Rich Sofranko.



## The Choreography



Choreographer Derek Deane trained at the Royal Ballet School from 1970 to 1972 and was invited to join the professional company at age 18. He was promoted to soloist, principal and finally to senior principal dancer by 1982. He danced most of the major roles in the Royal Ballet's classical repertoire and in works by the most important choreographers of the 20th century. He began choreographing during his performing career, creating ballets for the Royal Ballet, Sadler's Wells Ballet and Birmingham Ballet. After retiring from the stage he worked independently as an international teacher and choreographer and, in 1990, became resident choreographer and assistant director at Ballet di Roma in Italy. Deane returned to England and from 1993 to 2001 was artistic director of the English National Ballet (ENB). He premiered new productions of major classical works – *Giselle*, *Swan*

*Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Paquita*, *The Nutcracker* – as well as his own original works. He pioneered ENB's acclaimed "in the round" productions. He was awarded the Order of the British Empire for Excellence in Dance in 2000. Deane created three world premieres for PBT: *Hungry Heart . . . We All Have One!* (2004), *Simply Simon* (2005) and *Anything Goes!* (2006). His most recent work, *Hamlet*, had its world premiere at Shanghai Ballet in 2016.

Check out an interview with Deane at [Gramilano.com](http://Gramilano.com). (photo source)

Derek Deane created *Romeo and Juliet* in 1998 as an in-the-round production for English National Ballet, to be performed at the Royal Albert Hall in London. A year later he produced the version PBT is performing—virtually the same production retrofitted for a traditional stage setting.

Deane was coming off the huge success of an in-the-round production of *Swan Lake* for ENB when he was asked to create another "big ballet." The idea was to find a recognizable story with great appeal and marketability. Deane wanted to "get away from tutus" and dive into a world without swans or fairies, but with real people, complex emotions and tangled, troubled relationships.

Shakespeare's story certainly fit the bill. It was very familiar to him—he had danced the roles of Romeo, Tybalt, Mercutio and Benvolio in Sir Kenneth MacMillan's *Romeo* for the Royal Ballet. And at first it was difficult to extract himself from the pull of that choreography: the steps had imprinted so fully on his memory. There was lots of "tossing out" as he worked on his new version of the ballet. His creative method became one of exploration and analysis first—what emotions are at work in a particular scene? What are the characters feeling and reacting to? The aim of his choreography became less about ballet and more about visually explaining the complexity of experiences.

So for Deane, line and shape—of paramount concern in a strictly classical ballet—are not as important in his *Romeo and Juliet*. His choreography places feeling above form, with an urgency and immediacy that sweeps the audience along as the story hurtles toward tragedy.

### It Takes a Village

Deane and two répétiteurs, Amanda Eyles (large scenes and group dances) and Ivan Gil-Ortega (principals and sword fighting), spent a combined 12 weeks at PBT coaching and rehearsing the ballet.

Here are a few elements to watch for in the choreography:

**Market Square Dances** – these dances set up the rift between the Montague and Capulet families. You can see from the interactions here that this is a division that will never heal. The choreography is fast-moving and athletic; be sure to notice the sizzling and energetic steps of the harlots.

**Sword Fighting** – the sweat flies during these intense battles, which are choreographed as carefully (perhaps even moreso!) as any of the dance movements.

**The Ball Scene Opening Number** – set to probably the most recognizable music from the score (called the “Dance of the Knights”), the Capulet clan dances with incredibly rigid positions and movements, perfectly symbolizing what Romeo and Juliet are up against: the harsh societal norms of the period and the unyielding status quo of the families’ feud.

**Tybalt and His Death** – Shakespeare called Tybalt the “King of the Cats,” and you see that characterization in his choreography. Through the first part of the ballet he’s predatory, on the prowl, ready to pounce. His dancing is explosive and simmers with an anger he can just barely control. When Romeo kills him (by accident), watch Lady Capulet—her hysterics at first seem like a massive overreaction, until it becomes clear (when Lord Capulet tries to comfort her) that her relationship with Tybalt was much more than that of aunt and nephew.

**Balcony Scene** – this instantly recognizable moment has some of the most beautiful choreography of the ballet. The main characters declare their love in a pas de deux that is meaty and challenging for the dancers, including airborne jumps, running lifts and complicated twirls. But Deane designed it so that we (and he hopes, the dancers too) ultimately forget about technique and instead are caught up in the immediacy of the moment, and the breathless passion the choreography so vividly exudes.

**The Crypt** – the most haunting and visually dramatic scene in the ballet. Romeo dances with the utterly limp and (supposedly) lifeless body of his lover—a difficult feat for both dancers. The choreographic image is both chilling and heartbreaking.



Photo: Alexandra Kochis and Luca Sbrizzi rehearsing the balcony pas de deux, by Aimee DiAndrea

[Watch a trailer](#) for Deane’s in-the-round version of the ballet, performed in 2014 by English National Ballet.

## The Design



Renowned ballet, theatre and opera designer Roberta Guidi di Bagno created the costumes and sets for *Romeo and Juliet*. She and Deane collaborated closely on the visual concept for the ballet.

Their starting point was the 1968 Franco Zeffirelli *Romeo and Juliet* film (watch a trailer [here](#)) with its authentic and richly-colored designs. Guidi di Bagno also took inspiration from the old masters—painters like Caravaggio—who worked around the time of Shakespeare. Describing her work for a Houston Ballet *Romeo and Juliet* production, she says her process always includes taking details from those works and washing it “away in my mind. There is still a shadow underneath of what it really is. Then I (create) my idea, my style, my colors.”\*

The scope of the ballet is huge, with many dozens of ornate costumes and large and complex set features. PBT Artistic Director Terrence Orr describes the production as “beyond anything we’ve seen on our stage before.” PBT has recently purchased the sets and costumes, giving the ballet a permanent place in the Company’s repertoire.

Photo by Sheila McKinnon, from the [designer’s website](#).

\*[Broadwayworld.com](#)

Click through these links for photos from ENB’s production of the ballet in 2014: [Patrick Baldwin photography](#); [Photography by ASH](#).

[Guidi di Bagno’s website](#) has more information about her career and work.

## PBT Connects

Join us at the theater to learn more about *Romeo and Juliet*!

**Afterthoughts: Friday, April 21 at 10:30 p.m.** Stay after the show! Artistic Director Terrence S. Orr and Repetiteur Ivan Gil-Ortega discuss the ballet with the audience. No reservations necessary.

**Insights: Saturday, April 22 at 7 p.m.** Artistic Director Terrence S. Orr, Maestro Charles Barker, and Company Pianist Yoland Collin look at Prokofiev’s spectacular score. Mezzanine level. Please reserve a spot: [education@pittsburghballet.org](mailto:education@pittsburghballet.org) or 412-454-9109.

**Talks with Terry: Sunday, April 23 at 11 a.m.** Take this special opportunity to watch the Company as they finish their warm-up class on stage and talk with Artistic Director Terrence S. Orr about the production. In the theater. No reservations necessary.



## Accessibility

In conjunction with the Benedum Center for Performing Arts, we are pleased to offer:

- Wheelchair accessibility
- Braille and large print programs available at the theater
- Assistive listening devices
- Audio recording of the [Romeo and Juliet synopsis](#) and other select program notes
- Sign Language Interpretation and Closed Captioning for select ballets. (These services not available for *Romeo and Juliet*.)
- Audio-described performance: Sunday, April 23 at 4:30 p.m.

For more information about all of these programs please visit the [accessibility page](#) on PBT's website. Should you have a special request that is not listed above or have any questions about our accessibility services, please do not hesitate to contact at 412-454-9105 or [accessibility@pittsburghballet.org](mailto:accessibility@pittsburghballet.org). For more information about the accessibility services at the Benedum Center for the Performing Arts, please visit their [accessibility page](#).

## The Benedum Center



The Benedum Center for the Performing Arts is the crown jewel of the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust and the Cultural District in downtown Pittsburgh. It was renovated in 1987 and is on the National Register of Historic Landmarks. The 2800 seat theatre used to be the Stanley Theater, still visible on the lighted marquees outside. It has the third largest stage in the United States measuring 144 feet wide by 78 feet deep. The Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, Pittsburgh Opera, and Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera all use the Benedum for their performances.

[Learn](#) more about the Benedum Center. [Investigate](#) the Stanley Theatre's role in music history here in Pittsburgh.