

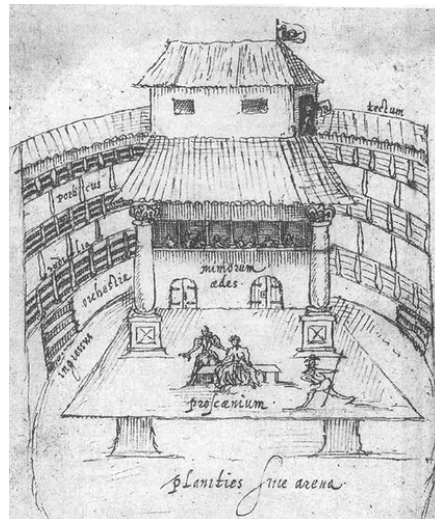
The Elizabethan Theatre

Historical Context

The first Elizabethan playhouse was an open air theatre built in 1567 by James Burbage called "The Theatre". After its success other playhouses were built : in 1577 "The Courtain", in 1587 "The Rose", and in 1595 "The Swan".

In 1599 the Lord Chamberlain's Men rebuilt "The Globe" which became the most important centre of performances.

Elizabethan Theatres



Performances took place during the afternoon and were acted only by man and boys. The audiences were made by all sorts of people, rich and poor who had stand on the ground, theatres were designed as large wooden structures, circular or octagonal in shape, with three tiers of galleries surrounding a yard open to the sky.

The stage was roofed and was very high, and there were railings between the yard and the lower gallery. There was no scenery and the audience had to image the scene by listening to the language of the actors. There was no curtain and no intervals, so they were very quick. The platform stage was pushed out into the audience who stood around in three sides. This create assends of close intimacy between actors and audiences.

Romeo and Juliet

Context

Romeo and Juliet is one of the most famous plays written by William Shakespeare (1564-1616).

When it first appeared on the stage probably in 1595 it was a very popular tale in Elizabethan times, and many versions were available. The sources of the play are Arthur Brooke's poem "The Tragical Historye of Romeus and Juliet" (1562) which was a translation from the French Matteo Bandello's novella "Romeo e Giulietta" (1554). Shakespeare's use of existing material is not a lack of originality.

His play distinguished itself of its predecessor in several important aspects:

- 1- the subtlety and originality of its characterization
- 2- the intense pace of its action (for days)
- 3- a powerful enrichment of the story's thematic aspects
- 4- an extraordinary use of language



William Shakespeare

Plot

Romeo and Juliet is the story of the love between the two young members of the two rival families of the Montagues and the Capulets of Verona.

During a Capulet's ball Romeo, the Montague's falls in love with Lord Capulet young daughter: Juliet. They kiss, not even knowing each other's names. When they both discover who the other one is, they grow upset.

However they decided to exchange vows of love. The day after the ball they meet at Friar Lawrence's cell and get married. After their separate, only his way home, Romeo meet Tybald who is arguing with Benvolio and Mercutio. Romeo, now related to Tybald by his marriage with Juliet tried to prevent the fight but failed. Tybald kills Mercutio and provoked by his friend's death Romeo struck Tybald a fatal blow.

In the middle time Juliet's father tells her that she has to marry Paris. She hurries to Friar Lawrence's and asks him advice. He concocts a plan to reunite Juliet with Romeo in Mantua. Juliet must drink a potion that will make her appear to be dead. After she is lead to rest in the family crypt, the friar and Romeo will secretly retrieve her, so that they will be free to live together, that night Juliet drinks the potion, but Friar Lawrence's message never reaches Romeo who hears only that Juliet is dead. He buy a vial of poisoning and goes to Juliet's tomb. There he meets Paris and kill him. He drinks the poison and, immediately after Juliet awakes however Romeo is dead so, she kisses his poisoned lips and kills herself with Romeo's dagger. Seeing the two young bodies Capulet's and Montague's agree to end the long-standing fight.



Romeo and Juliet – Balcony scene

The main characters: Romeo and Juliet

Romeo

He is the young son of her and lord Montague and lady Montague. He is a young man of about 16, handsome, intelligent and sensitive. He is extremely idealist and a very affectionate and devoted friend of his relative Benvolio, Mercutio, and Friar Lawrence. However he is also very impulsive and immature. His only interest is love for Juliet he lack's all moderation:

- 1- love compels him to go into the garden of his enemy daughter, risking death simply to see her
- 2- anger compels him to kill Tybald
- 3- despair compels him to suicide immediately.

Such extreme behaviour dominates Romeo's character and contribute to the tragedy. Had Romeo restrained himself, matters might have ended happily.

Juliet

She is the daughter of Capulet and lady Capulet. She is a beautiful thirteen-year-old girl. Juliet is of an age that stands on the border of maturity and immaturity. At the beginning, she seems merely an obedient and naïve who has thought little about love and marriage. But she grows up quickly upon falling in love with Romeo. She shows determination strength and courage in trusting her entire life and future to Romeo. When she finds Romeo dead, she doesn't kill herself out of feminine weakness, but out of an intensity of love.

Themes

- 1- **love:** this is the most important theme, it is a violent ecstatic, overpowering force that supersedes all other valves emotions
- 2- **death and violence:** these two things are connected to passion. Love is such a bleeding passion that it can overwhelm. Romeo and Juliet are plagued with thoughts of suicide. Their tragic choice is due to this extreme passion which seems so beautiful that they aren't able to resist its power
- 3- **the individual against society:** Romeo and Juliet go against social, family, and religious law. They defend their love and they oppose to their families wills. For them love is more important than public honor.
- 4- **The inevitability of love:** the fight between Montague and Capulets, the horrible series of accidents that ruin Friar Lawrence's plan and the tragic timing of Romeo's suicide and Juliet's awakening are not mere coincidences, but manifestation of fate.



Romeo and Juliet