



OPERA CAROLINA

GOUNOD

ROMEO JULIET

Insights. Highlights.

All that makes for a great night.

Your guide to making the most of these singing star-crossed lovers.

(An awesome cover page, if we do say so.)

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Know How

Get There

Visting Center City doesn't have to be a tough trip.

Blumenthal Performing Arts Center

130 N. Tryon St
Charlotte, NC 28202

Ride. Hop on the Lynx Lightrail. Check out the options [here](#).

Drive. Directions from door to door [here](#).

Park. Participating garages are just \$5. Find details [here](#).

The Belk Theater.

Make any seat in the house the best one.

Attending an opera in the Belk Theater is an experience not to be forgotten. The performance you are attending is the **final dress rehearsal** in which the cast performs one last full run-through of the opera before opening night. Just like a regular performance, there will be an intermission(s) between acts.

Upon entering the theater, notice the production crew's station in the orchestra level seating (the lowest level of seating). The crew is set up with computers and headsets to allow them to communicate with people backstage to ensure that the performance runs smoothly. During this final rehearsal they will be making sure all cues and technical features of the performance are in place. Also notice the supertitles

(English translations of the lyrics being sung) that are projected onto a screen above the stage.

Please remember that this is a **working performance** and the performers on stage are very aware of their audience, especially a distracting audience. The polite audience member should always refrain from talking and stay seated during a performance. Nothing shows more respect and appreciation for the performers on stage than giving them your full attention.

Shout it Out

Give a shout out to the cast after a beautiful aria or at the end of the evening - literally! Shout "**Bravi!**" for a job well done to the whole cast, "**Brava!**" to the diva who aced it, or "**Bravo!**" to the guy who left it all on the stage.

Opera Carolina

Transfixed and transformed by our community.



Then, now, & years from now

Let's take a journey back to 1948: the Charlotte Music Club is formed by a handful of arts enthusiasts who realize that Charlotte's artistic landscape –but more importantly, cultural community– would be enhanced by opera performances. Fast forward to today: Opera Carolina is a 67 year-old company that's still blossoming, hitting new highs with each season of glorious music, drama, and all that encompasses the operatic art form. Your resident Opera continues to bring high-quality standards of the operatic repertoire to stages near you, but is also continually striving to perform lesser-known gems.

What does our future hold? A rich commitment to our community –which we take seriously– to continue enriching the lives of citizens from all walks of life; a continual quest to produce excellent opera from all eras on our stage; and, most importantly, to connect our community.

The people

In the early days of Opera Carolina, volunteers designed the sets, built costumes, sang in the chorus, filled leading roles and, of course, sold tickets and held fundraisers to support the company.

Now a fully professional company that not only produces Opera performances on a large scale but also travels programs into local schools and community venues, we never forget the legacy of the original volunteers who made this company the what it is today. Opera Carolina is rooted

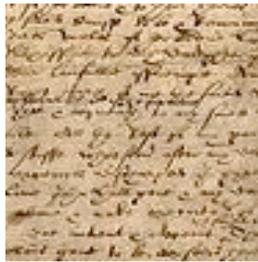
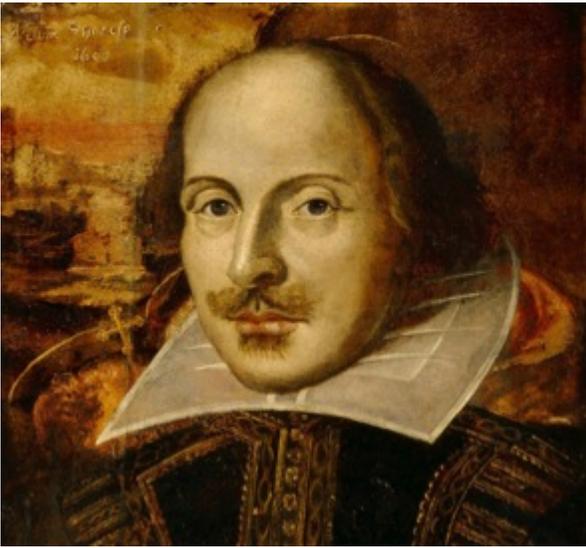
in the Carolinas; 90% of our company live and work right here in our region, complimenting the international artists who join the resident company to perform on our mainstage. We guess you can say we've got Carolina on our mind.

The House

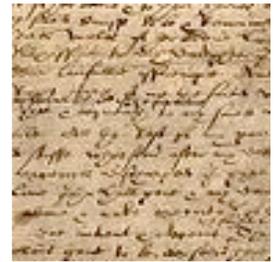
If the paragraphs before didn't sell you on our commitment to our community, maybe information on the Opera Center will. We may be 67 years old, but we've just moved out on our own. Opera Carolina now resides in the historic Biberstein house, in the Elizabeth neighborhood. The last remaining historic home in the Uptown radius, Opera Carolina's new digs are as much a part of the community as is the company.

Built in 1906, the Biberstein House was designed and lived in by R. C. Biberstein, one of the noted mill architects of the Southeast. Mr. Biberstein is credited with building many of the mills in the Charlotte region, including the Highland Park #3 mill. Mr. Biberstein eventually moved his business into this house, his talents and self-designed home playing a role in the New South Industrial movement. Today, the home is registered as a Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmark.

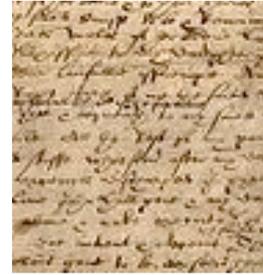
The house has since been adapted into offices and is now the proud home of Opera Carolina. The Opera Center hosts the company's administrative offices but also serves as space for auditions, recitals, and more. *Our doors are always open.*



1700+
words invented



37
plays



154
sonnets

Shakespeare

The Eternal Bard

A brief bit about the Bard, his body of work, and his legacy.

First things first. **What's a bard?** Answer: a poet associated with a style or tradition (and often employed by nobility or patrons). We prefer to think of a bard -especially ours- as a poet of epic proportions.

Now that we've got that clear, let's get into the Bard of Avon, Bill the Bard, or William Shakespeare as he was baptized. Born into Elizabethan England and a strict class system in 1564, our Shakespeare didn't have the cards stacked in his favor. He wasn't born into wealth or nobility and he didn't get to attend university like other notable bards; he grew up a hundred miles from London (the cultural center of England), and, by age 18 he was well on his way to becoming a father and getting married.

When you take his early life into account, his accomplishments and body of work all the more impressive! We won't detail his entire tale here -that's another guide unto itself- but, if you want to know more, check out these sites:

- <http://shakespeare-online.com/>
- <http://www.bardweb.net/>

What's the big deal with Shakespeare?

Admit it - most of us grow up thinking of Shakespeare's sonnets and plays as being too wordy for us to actually take in, much less enjoy or genuinely appreciate. While we can't completely decode his decadent language for you, we can illuminate his contributions to the literary front and (hopefully) inspire you to give Bill the Bard an open mind. In the words of your parents: *Try it - you might like it!*

Why do we think it's so difficult?

- The English Language sounded different 400 years ago. Shakespeare wrote in Elizabethan English, which was the prequel to our version of English today.

- Shakespeare used words in new ways, combinations, and even invented words of his own. He would've approved of our new words and emojis these days.

- Shakespeare is an active experience where preparation helps. Checking out the plot before you go helps you enjoy the drama and emotion to the full extent. Not too different from attending an opera or watching *Lord of the Rings!*

Emotional Trip Guaranteed

Shakespeare is known for his ability to express human emotions so well that it often speaks for us, even today. From his passages detailing pure love at first sight in *Romeo & Juliet* to his lines that express Hamlet's madness in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare was able to lay down lines that still resonate today. Move over Eminem.

Stories, Characters, Plots, Oh My!

Our Bard is the master of storytelling in any and every kind of story from comedy, love, tragedy, drama and more. No one's stories have been retold and adapted more than those of Shakespeare. Here are a few tidbits on why his stories are so successful to this day:

- Complex yet completely relatable characters.** Hamlet was a gentle soul pushed to the edge; who can't relate to that? Juliet was driven to despair at the death of her beloved. Shakespeare found the good and not-so-good in all his characters which lets us put ourselves in their shoes.

- Stories in touch with human experiences and emotions.** Shakespeare wrote his stories to get reactions out of his audiences, so laugh, cry, or even boo at that nasty character. It's what he wanted!

- Simple themes that still exist today,** such as love, honor, bravery, treachery, political intrigue, etc.

Transcend

(Re)Settings.

Successful stories are able to travel time and transcend history.

What makes artwork stand the test of time? Aside from masterful craftsmanship, it requires a story that remains relevant to the human experience. A tale transcendent of time.

Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet* has been told for more than 400 years. Here are a few updated versions you may know.

Romeo + Juliet

Film by Baz Luhrman (1996), starring Leonardo DiCaprio & Claire Danes

West Side Story

Leonard Bernstein's musical (1961)

Gnomeo & Juliet

Touchstone Pictures film (2011)

What versions, before or after Shakespeare's time, can you add to the list?

Capulet Cast

Juliette (*soprano*), daughter of Lord Capulet
Gertrude (*mezzo-soprano*), Juliette's nurse
Tybalt (*tenor*), Juliette's cousin
Lord Capulet (*bass-baritone*), head of the Capulet family
Gregorio (*baritone*), servant of the Capulets

Montague Cast

Romeo (*tenor*), son of Lord Montague
Stephano (*mezzo-soprano*), Romeo's page
Benvolio (*tenor*), Romeo's cousin
Mercutio (*baritone*), Romeo's good friend
Friar Lawrence (*bass*), priest
The Duke (*baritone*), ruler of Verona

Synopsis

It's no mystery how this tale is told from beginning to end whether musical or otherwise, but that doesn't make it any less magical.

Act I

A grand party at chez Capulet. Tybalt and Count Paris –both of the Capulet persuasion– are searching for Juliette, daughter of Lord Capulet, when the father-daughter duo arrive welcoming their guests.

In come Romeo, Mercutio, Benvolio, and a mess of other Montague men who unmask themselves when Romeo, shaken up by an ominous dream, questions whether they should be here. Mercutio nags Romeo about his dream, which he thinks is much ado with his break up with Rosaline. No sooner than the teasing, Romeo's concern of Rosaline is outshone by the mere sight of Juliette.

The Montagues move on and Juliette enters trying to escape her nurse, Gertrude – she wants no part of marriage to Count Paris until she's been able to have her youth to herself. Romeo wanders in and, as we all know, it's love at first sight. Tybalt meets Romeo and unmasks the pedigree of our star-crossed lovers, calling for an attack on the Montagues. The old Capulet quiets the fuss and calls for the party to proceed.

Romeo makes his way to the Capulet's garden and, with the help of his page Stephano, climbs to Juliette's balcony where he revels in her beauty. At the same time, Juliette appears and frets over how she can hate his name and love Romeo so much all at once. Head over heels, Romeo makes himself known to Juliette, offers to throw away his name for her love, and the two pledge themselves to each other. But no moment of pure devotion can go uninterrupted, right? In come Gregorio and his men searching for Romeo; nurse Gertrude assures them that if she encounters the rascal Romeo, she'll put an end to all this nonsense for good. The search party moves on and, for our love-struck pair, parting is such sweet sorrow as they bid each other goodnight.

The next morning Romeo and Juliette (with nurse Gertrude in tow, of course) meet at the Chapel of Friar Lawrence. After updating the Friar that Rosaline is old news, Romeo asks the Friar to marry them; he consents and they are now married star-crossed lovers.

Meanwhile, young Stephano is in the court of the Capulets and teases them about Juliette flying the Capulet coup. Gregorio doesn't take kindly to Stefano's jesting and things get heated, with Mercutio stepping in to defend Stephano, and Paris and Tybalt adding fuel to the fire when swords are drawn. Romeo arrives, explaining why his hatred for Tybalt and his namesake is no more. Refusing the news, Tybalt resumes his battle with Mercutio and stabs him. As he lay dying, Mercutio curses "A plague on both your houses".

An enraged Romeo duels with Tybalt, striking another fatal blow. Lord Capulet arrives just in time to hold his nephew as he whispers his dying wish. The trumpet sounds and the Duke arrives (timing is everything) and banishes Romeo by dawn.

Act II

That night, Romeo pays Juliette a visit after the day's dramatic events. Juliette forgives Romeo for killing Tybalt since it saved his own life. Before they know it, the night is gone and the sun is making its way up. Romeo leaves and Juliette's father enters with the Friar; we learn Tybalt's last wish was for Juliette to marry Paris – *tomorrow*. Juliette is devastated at this fate –worse than death– and begs the Friar to help her find a way out of marrying Paris. He provides her with a vial of potion to put her in a death-like sleep and lays out the plan. She downs the potion and her fears of the plan falling short are outed no sooner than she swallows.

Juliette has been moved to the tomb and all believe she is dead – including Romeo who didn't get the message that her sleep is only temporary. Thinking she is actually dead, Romeo visits her cold body in the tomb, mourning her, and drinks a flask of poison and embraces Juliette. As she awakens, they prepare to escape the tomb when the poison's affects begin to hit Romeo. They say their goodbyes and Juliette scrambles for even a drop of poison left in the vial but she has no such luck. Desperate, she finds a dagger that was hidden in her dress and plunges it into her chest. As they both take their final breaths, Romeo and Juliette proclaim their love one last time and ask God for forgiveness.

Transcend

A tale that has transcended time.

Most reincarnations don't follow the tale to the tee. Explore below how Gounod and his team of writers adapted Shakespeare's tale of tormented teens, perfecting the plot for the operatic stage.

THE BARD'S PLAY

23 Characters

Spoken in
Elizabethan English

5 Acts, 22 scenes,
prologue

Tomb scene

Balcony scene

"A plague on both your
houses."

THE TRANSFORMATION

Juliet's mother is prominent in the play but deleted from the opera (sorry mom!). Also, a Paris's page in the play is converted into Romeo's page, Stephano.

Composers typically wrote in the language of their targeted audience. We doubt English was as widely spoken in Shakespeare's day as it is now. When the French translation is close to Shakespeare's original text, we'll paraphrase the Bard's words.

Gounod and his librettists (writers) **trimmed out most of the scenes that did not directly center on Romeo and Juliette's relationship.** Now we're left with a very personal and intensely emotional experience. And, if we were to sing *every* line of Shakespeare, we'd be in the theater for a whole day!

In the play, Romeo enters the tomb believing Juliet and takes the poison, dying before she wakes up. In the opera, he enters thinking she is dead but Juliette wakes before his poison take effect. Juliette is left to watch him die before ending her own life.

Romeo's first crooning paraphrases the famous "Arise fair sun" line but *the opera leaves out* "But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun." Good thing there's all that beautiful music to get his point across.

This famous oh-so prophetic line just couldn't be left out of the operatic version.

GOUNOD'S TALE

8 Characters

Sung in French

5 Acts, 7 scenes, prologue
(*our version will be present as 2 acts and prologue)

Tomb scene

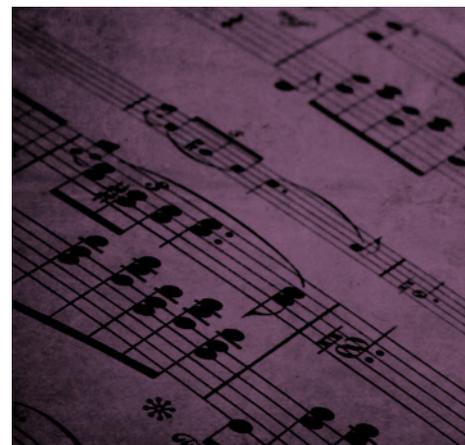
Balcony scene

"A plague on both your
houses."

Gounod

The Man & his Music

Getting to know Gounod.



Charles François Gounod

The Man

Gounod isn't always the first name that comes to mind when we think about opera but he's certainly not one to leave out! **Unlike our Bard**, Gounod was born into an artistic family in 1818; his father was a painter and engraver and his mother a pianist. Little Charles took a fairly common route for composers: he began studying piano as a child, moved on to composition lessons, and went to study at the Paris Conservatory, even winning the prestigious Prix de Rome, and then returned to Paris to take a church job.

Gounod wrote a variety of pieces but was most **at home in the vocal world**. His biggest hits were two operas, *Faust* and *Romeo et Juliette*, and a sacred work, *Ave Maria*. Being a very religious man, Gounod wrote a large amount of sacred music and even went to seminary, though he eventually left and married. He wrote twelve operas, numerous pieces of instrumental music, and countless pieces of sacred and vocal music. He continued composing all the way to his death in 1893.

The Music

Composing during the Romantic period, Gounod's music showcased the traits of the era –big contrasts, recurring themes, melodic qualities, and the nature to reveal innermost feelings– but his compositions are also credited for being gentle and notably pleasing to the listener's ear.

Gounod's compositions are known for having clear, pure melodic style to leave you singing along or with an earworm. **It's said that he always wrote his compositions about the same thing: love**. But it was pure love rather than passionate love. Maybe even a Godly love, given he was such a spiritual man. Try giving *Romeo et Juliette* a listen with this idea – does it change your perception of the story? Or does it enhance Shakespeare's message?

His music inspired his contemporary composers of Massenet, Saint-Saëns, and Bizet and, according to Claude Debussy, "the art of Gounod represents a moment in French sensibility...that kind of thing is not forgotten."

Transfixing tunes.

Check out these big hits from the opera – you won't want to miss them.

Je veux vivre

Juliette's longing to enjoy her youth before getting into (an arranged) marriage. Peter Pan would be proud.

[Take a listen.](#)

Ah! lève-toi, soleil!

The "envious moon" is "sick and pale with grief" over Juliette's beauty as Romeo coos over his new love.

[Take a listen.](#)

Va! je t'ai pardonné!

The last of our lovers' four duets, they say their fateful, heartfelt goodbyes and Shakespeare's tale is told. Get your tissues ready.

[Take a listen.](#)

Explore

Shakespeare's play and the many, many adaptations that exist.

Elizabethan England and its class systems.

Marriage customs around the world.

Connect the Curricular Dots

Classroom Connections.

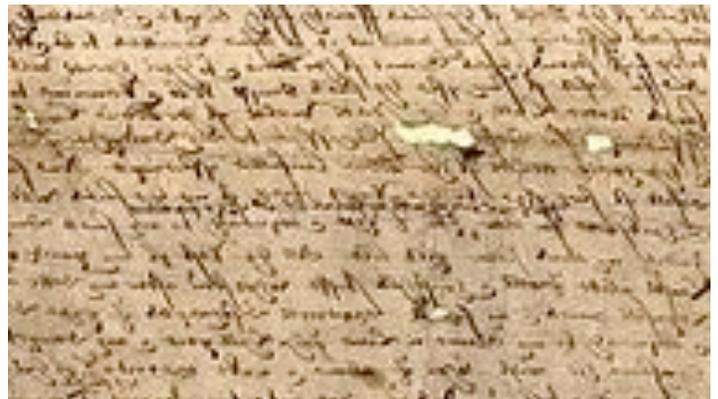
Taking the opera beyond the Belk.

Create

Your own take on the English language like Shakespeare did.

Your own resetting of the story in a different historical period or from your own life.

An alternate ending to the story where one or both lovers survive.



Analyze

The structural qualities needed for a balcony and create your own.

The Friar's Alchemy versus modern medicine.

Now you know it all

See you at the Opera.

Opera Carolina

The Elizabeth Roddey Dowd Opera Center
1600 Elizabeth Avenue
Charlotte, North Carolina 28204

www.operacarolina.org