

Romeo

&

Juliet

In the OPEN AIR



by
William Shakespeare

Programme

18 - 27 July

2024

In the beautiful grounds of
Townhill Park House

Maskers at Townhill Park House

Welcome to Maskers' open-air production of *Romeo and Juliet*.

This is our fifth production at this beautiful location and we hope you enjoy the beauty of the surroundings and get a chance to look around the Gertrude Jekyll garden. We are very grateful to The Gregg School for allowing us to perform here and for all their help in ensuring that the preparations for the show went smoothly.

This is Maskers' 42nd outdoor summer production and we are very proud of our record of bringing award-winning, quality theatre to audiences and locations in the area. Maskers was formed over fifty years ago. During that time we have performed and been based in a number of different places in Southampton but we have had our own studio theatre in Shirley, Southampton, for a good many years now. Do come and see a show there. A performance in its small, intimate space is a very different experience compared with an open-air show. Details of Maskers' next productions are on the back page of this programme. See our website for full details: www.maskers.org.uk.

We respectfully request that you take all your picnic leftovers and empties home. You may remain to finish your picnics at the end of the play but we ask that you vacate the grounds by 10.30pm (5.45pm for matinée). Thank you!!



Please take care when moving around the grounds as steps and paths may be uneven and slippery if wet.

Provision for smoking has been made behind the audience area. Please use the sand buckets provided. Thank you!

Please note that, for privacy reasons, there is no access at any time to the house except for members of the cast and crew. Cast will meet friends and family in the audience area after the show.

Director's Notes

The idea of Directing Romeo & Juliet first popped into my mind a year ago, when I was enjoying the gardens of The Gregg School and my good friend James pointed out the balcony on the western side of the building. "Wouldn't it be great", he said, "to do Romeo & Juliet on the terrace. I can just imagine Juliet on that balcony". I was hooked. I have always loved this tragic story. I went home, dusted off my copy of the play, and started my research. Thanks to another friend, Ken, this included watching the National Theatre's *much* abridged version produced on video during lockdown. It starred Jessie Buckley as Juliet and Tamsin Greig as Lady Capulet, two of my favourite actresses. It was a very gloomy production (just my opinion and, yes, I know it is a tragedy!) but it helped a great deal in producing my own *slightly* abridged version.

Then, yet another friend, Graham, invited me to watch the Franco Zeffirelli film (1968) with the teenage Olivia Hussey as Juliet. Wow! What a fabulous production. (By the way we have two Husseys in our production – Anna & Sam – I wonder if they are related). Now I really was hooked.

As with many of his plays, Shakespeare didn't originate the story - his plot is based on an Italian tale written by Matteo Bandello, translated into verse as *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* by Arthur Brooke in 1562, and retold in prose in *Palace of Pleasure* by William Painter in 1567. Having said that, Shakespeare added numerous characters and much dramatic structure, including elements of comedy, and it is thanks to him that it has taken its place in our culture and heritage and not just in the English-speaking world. In Verona (where the play is set), there is a feature called "Juliet's Balcony" which has become a tourist destination – almost a place of pilgrimage, and yet, as far as we know, it has no connection with this work of fiction whatsoever. (Unless Bandello based his story on some anonymous real-life tragedy). When I was auditioning for the play, I was astonished to receive an email from a young woman in the United States who sent me an audition on video and was willing to travel to the UK to play the part! It wasn't practical to cast her, but the episode demonstrated the passion that many people have for the story.

Finally – thank you, James, for planting the idea in my head and I am sorry that, for practical reasons, it wasn't possible to use the terrace and the balcony that prompted the idea, for purely technical reasons.

I hope you enjoy our production. It is a tragic tale with a very sad ending, but it is about love and passion and long may they thrive!

Brian



Directed by Brian Stansbridge - Brian has been a member of Maskers for fifty years and during that time has performed in many, many productions. His most recent performances have included *Time & Tide* and Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

Brian is also a regular Director for the Maskers. In recent times, he has directed *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *The Servant of Two Masters*, *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Man in The Iron Mask*, as well as several Christmas productions at the Maskers Studio in Shirley.

During Covid lockdown, Brian wrote a short play, *Parklife*, which a Maskers presented in parks in and around Southampton.

When not busy with Maskers and grandparent duties, Brian sings and plays guitar and keyboard in a covers band, which he absolutely loves. We guess that performing is just part of his DNA

The Cast



Romeo played by **Neil Forster** — This is Neil's fourth show with Maskers since 2022, after appearing in *Almost, Maine*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Four Weddings and an Elvis*. A native Geordie(ish), Neil grew up in South Shields and studied at York University, where he performed in various productions including *Cider with Rosie*, *Arcadia*, and *Journey's End*. He later moved to London, where he appeared in many other shows including *A Clockwork Orange*, *Oh What a Lovely War!* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.



Juliet played by **Katherine Evans** — Katherine is extremely thankful for whatever stars aligned to give her the opportunity of playing the iconic, star-crossed heroine, Juliet! She also likes to think it a favourable omen that her mum got a dog last year called Montague (aka Monty), who has proved a trusty practice companion. Previous roles with Maskers include Anne Page (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*), Hero (*Much Ado About Nothing*), Eliza Doolittle (*Pygmalion*), Emily (*Our Town*) and Cecily (*The Importance of Being Earnest*). Katherine studied Classics and English at university and is a big Shakespeare fan. Other passions include singing, music, birdwatching and crochet.



Lord Capulet played by **Jez Minns** — Jez has been a member of the Maskers for nearly thirty years now. His last performance was as Mr Jenkins, the fuddy duddy benefits inspector in *Cash on Delivery*. Other recent performances include the corrupt Lord Henry Wotton in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and the drunkard Borachio in *Much Ado About Nothing*. When he isn't doing theatre, Jez enjoys painting and sketching and writing poetry.



Lady Capulet played by **Kate Grundy-Garcia** — Kate has been a Masker for many years and most recently played Ruth in *Blithe Spirit*. She is loving playing the rather selfish and demanding Lady Capulet but, as a mother of four, cannot quite comprehend how any mother can be so dismissive and cruel to her one and only daughter!



Nurse played by **Abi Linnartz** — Abi last appeared at Townhill Park House as Aramis in *The Three Musketeers*. Abi has performed with a variety of drama companies throughout the area such as Southampton University Players, RAODS and with Titchfield Festival Theatre, where she also directed *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* at the Great Barn. Having always been at the wrong end of the age scale for Romeo and Juliet, she's delighted to finally have been deemed old enough for the Nurse!

The Cast



Lord Montague played by **Philip de Grouchy** — Over the last fifty years, Philip has played a large number of varied characters with Maskers, including Scrooge in *Christmas with the Cratchits*, East/Man in *Almost, Maine* and Mr Forbight the Undertaker in *Cash on Delivery*. Philip also directs; his most recent production was *Blithe Spirit* last year.



Lady Montague played by **Jenni Watson** — Jenni is delighted to be cast as Lady Montague and to be directed again by Brian Stansbridge. Over the last 55 years she has performed for Maskers, as well as many local groups, in a variety of settings. Her favourite roles include: Lady Booby (*Joseph Andrews*), Nancy (*Sitting Pretty*), Mrs Pearce (*Pygmalion*), Bottom (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) the Contessa (*An Italian Straw Hat*), Margaret (*Much Ado about Nothing*), and Mrs Reed and Mrs Fairfax in last year's summer production of *Jane Eyre*. More recently she appeared as Beatrice in *After Life* for SUP and as Yvonne in *Hi-de-Hi* for RAODS. It will be a pleasure to be acting with such a talented cast!



Benvolio played by **Rob Iliffe** — “Dad, why are YOU playing the only sensible one in the play?!” “You'll have to ask the director...” Rob has previously performed for Maskers in *Murder in the Studio*, *Almost, Maine*, and *Jane Eyre*.



Mercutio played by **Sam Hussey** — Sam is very excited to be back in an outdoor Shakespeare play again, having debuted with Maskers as Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night*, followed by playing Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*, opposite his wife, Anna, as Beatrice. Most recently he decided to take to the director's chair for the hilarious farce *Cash on Delivery* at the studio but couldn't pass up a chance at another bucket list role in the open-air. It's also an excellent chance to fight his wife with swords, which is generally frowned upon outside of the theatre.



Tybalt played by **Adam Taussik**— Since joining Maskers 20 years ago, Adam has played characters of many ranks, from peasants to kings (with a smattering of vicars, chefs and bears), and now an Italian dandy – though not his first Shakespearian Italian. For this show, Adam will also be keeping up the swashbuckling tone of *Gormenghast* and wields a sword as well as the next man - especially as the next man is Sam, who slayed Chef Swelter last year ("Revenge!" as the ghostly Swelter demanded, and now served 'con ghiaccio')

The Cast



Friar Laurence played by **Duncan Randall** — Duncan started as a character actor at primary school. He has been involved in various community theatre groups. On moving to the south coast, he joined Titchfield Festival Theatre (TFT); creating roles such as: Bri in *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg*, Enobarbus (*Anthony and Cleopatra*), Goldberg (*The Birthday Party*) and the Landlord in Jim Cartwright's *Two*. Duncan joined the Maskers in 2022, playing Athos in *The Three Musketeers*. Since then, he has appeared in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *Gormenghast*, *Time and Tide*, *Blithe Spirit* and most recently *Murder in the Studio*, where he died each night (more accurately his cabbage head was foleyed!)



Samson played by **Anna Hussey** — Anna joined Maskers in 2018 and has been involved both on and off stage. Debuting with Maskers in *Wyrd Sisters* as part of the ensemble, Anna has since played many roles, including her favourite: Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* opposite her husband, Sam, as Benedick. Anna is excited to fight toe to toe with him again as the brash and antagonistic Samson!



Gregory/Friar John played by **Paul Baker** — Paul has been in over twenty-five shows in the open air for Maskers. During that time he has played a variety of roles including Weasel Norman in *The Wind in the Willows*, Thomas Cromwell in *Anne Boleyn* and often multiple parts in the same production, as when he played four different characters in *The Three Musketeers*. This is Paul's first production outside since 2022, ending a run of four consecutive productions in Maskers Studio, where he played Sepulchre in *Gormenghast*, Chris Kriegle, the Santa Burglar in *Sorry, Wrong Chimney!*, Uncle George in *Cash on Delivery* and, most recently, three characters in *Murder in the Studio*. This year he appears in the opening act as a servant and near the end briefly as a hapless Friar John.



Count Paris played by **Robert Osborne** — Robert has been with Maskers since 2011. He has served on the committee as Productions Director, acted in over 10 shows and, most recently, directed Maskers 2023 Christmas show, *Sorry! Wrong Chimney!* He has stage managed several of Maskers' open-air shows at both Hamptworth Lodge and The Gregg School but this is the first time he has acted in a Maskers' open-air production. Despite having a degree in English Literature, this is also his first time appearing in a Shakespeare play. Learning Shakespeare is certainly different to writing essays on it!

The Cast



Prince Escalus played by **Michele Zadra** — *Romeo and Juliet* is Michele's second play for Maskers. In 2021, he played Father Francis in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Apart from Maskers, Michele has been involved in several productions with other amateur companies in the Southampton area. His experiences range from farces, sketch shows, and improv, to murder mysteries, radio plays, dramas, and Shakespeare. Michele is enjoying playing the Prince of Verona in the beautiful scenery of the Townhill Park House gardens.



Petra played by **Tash Priddle** — This is Tash's third time performing with Maskers. She has previously played Brenda Dixon in *Cash on Delivery* and Julia in *Murder in the Studio*.



Apothecary played by **Angela Stansbridge** — Angie has been an active member of Maskers since 1973 and has enjoyed playing a wide variety of parts, including in *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe, Out of Focus, Much Ado about Nothing, Twelfth Night, Ten Times Table, The Comedy of Errors, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Don Quixote*, and *Treasure Island*. She also regularly works on the set dressing for the studio plays. Angie is working alongside her husband Brian as Production Manager for this show, making sure everything runs smoothly! Angie has recently been Chair of Maskers and as a member of the Marketing Team she is rarely seen without a bundle of flyers in her hand promoting our shows!!

The play is set largely set in the streets of Verona, around and about the residence of Lord and Lady Capulet, the parents of Juliet.

There will be one interval of 20 minutes



MASKERS
theatre company
maskers.org.uk

We hope you enjoy our Show!!

We welcome your comments on
tonight's show for marketing purposes
Email: feedback@maskers.org.uk



Many Thanks! See you again soon!!

The Production Crew

Director	Brian Stansbridge
Production Manager	Angie Stansbridge
Stage Manager	Kathryn Salmon
Stage Crew	Simon White, Meri Mackney
Lighting Engineer	Tony Lawther
Production Engineering	Clive Weeks
Sound Engineering	Jamie McCarthy
Sound Design	Brian Stansbridge, Emily Smith
Lighting and Sound Operators	Emily Smith, Ashley Martin
Lighting Assistant	Martyn Welch
Properties	Adam Taussik
Costume Design	Sheana Carrington, Susan Wilson,
Costume Team	Lucy Lockyer, Jo Fox
Fight Arranger	Ian Rowsell
Set Design	Brian Stansbridge, Clive Weeks
Set Construction	Maskers' Team
Set Painting	Zoe Harris and Team
Set Dressing	Angie Stansbridge
Front of House Manager	James Lawson
Car Parking	Brian Stansbridge, James Lawson
Catering	Bandy Smith, Chris Baker, Ruth Smith
Show Photography	Ian Wilson and Marketing Team
Rehearsal Prompt	Jenni Watson

Acknowledgements

Thanks to

Hazel Burrows for the banners.

Express Yourself, RAODS, Costume Workshop and **Bristol Costume Services** for the hire of costumes.

Chesil Theatre for the lighting rig.

Help us save the environment and over £1000 in postage.

Join the Maskers' online mailing list - visit our website and click the box provided.

Townhill Park House



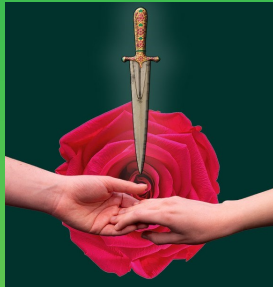
From early Norman times until the dissolution of the monasteries, Townhill was held by the Bishop of Winchester. In 1536, it was granted to Sir William Paulet and became known as Townhill Farm. Nathaniel Middleton of the East India Company acquired it in 1787 and turned it into a private home. The estate became known as Townhill Park. Middleton enlarged the farmhouse and it was later remodelled following a fire. For twenty years, from 1820, it was home to William Hallette and then, in 1842, it was purchased by the Gator family, who also owned Gator's Mill, near Mansbridge.

Townhill Park was bought by Samuel Montagu, 1st Baron Swaythling, in 1897 as a residence for his newly-married son, Louis. Extensive modifications took place in the Italian style under the architect Leonard Rome Guthrie. He and Gertrude Jekyll were asked to design the gardens to complement the new style of the house and the arboretum.

Her Majesty Queen Mary visited the house in the 1920s. Stuart Montagu became 3rd Baron Swaythling in 1927 and began hybridising rhododendrons with his gardener, the aptly named Mr Rose.

During World War II, the estate was loaned to the Red Cross as a convalescent home for British soldiers, after which the house was sold to Middlesex County Council and became a boarding school for underprivileged girls. The rest of the land became the housing estate known as Townhill Park. Southampton City Council took over the house and grounds in 1969 as a hostel for merchant navy cadets. In 1994, it became The Gregg School, as you see it today.

In 1997, The Friends of Townhill Park Gardens volunteer force was formed to restore the Gertrude Jekyll Garden, the Herb Garden and the Herbaceous Borders. More recently, work has been done to restore the Arboretum and Orchard. The gardens are open to the public free of charge on advertised dates through the year. The next is open day is Heritage Day on Sunday 8th September, from 2pm- 5pm.



Why not join Maskers?

Maskers are keen to welcome new members with an interest in any aspect of theatre - all things technical, directing, costumes, props, set design and construction, front of house, marketing and, of course, acting!

Enjoy the challenge of making theatre happen.

To find out more about Maskers Theatre Company, go to www.maskers.org.uk or speak to any of the Front of House staff.



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Find us on
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POP IN AND GET TO KNOW MASKERS BETTER



OPEN HOUSE

Technical demos, costume displays, behind the scenes chats to more

Shirley's own studio theatre opens its doors to everyone!

FREE ENTRY - All welcome!

Ever wondered what goes on offstage at a play?

Every show has a host of people working away out of sight of the audience.

Maskers is welcoming people into the theatre to see the bits the audience doesn't usually get to see. Come and learn a little about the workshop, the technical department, the costume department and how we go about marketing our shows.

Or just drop in for a cup of tea and a chat on the first Saturday of every month.

Saturday 3rd August

Running from 10am – 1pm.



YOUTH THEATRE CLASSES AT MASKERS

20/4/2020 Company (7-16 years) - 4:00 - 5:00
Advanced 7+ (20/09 - 7:00)

LEARN TO SHINE ON & OFF THE STAGE WITH **LIGHT UP**

WEDNESDAY - ADVANCED/LAMDA

THURSDAY - MUSICAL THEATRE

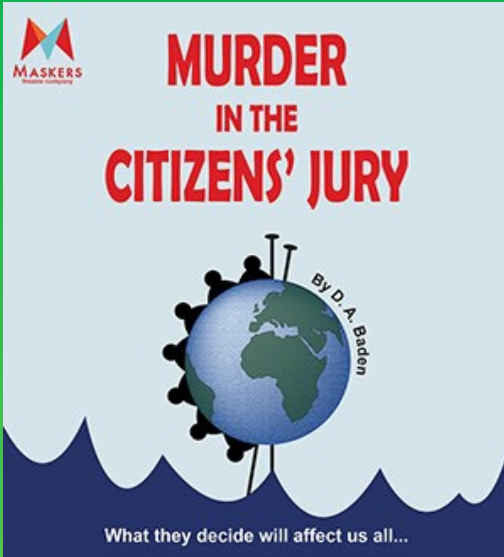
FRIDAY - COMPANY 7+ (WAITING LIST)



MASKERS STUDIO, SHIRLEY



Upcoming Productions



Who is the assassin
and who are they there
to kill?

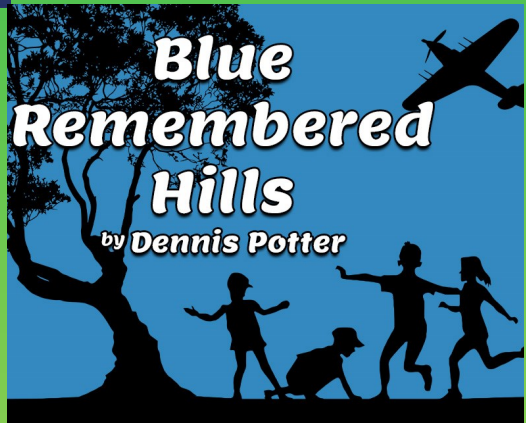
17 - 21 September
2024

at The Maskers
Studio

Five children at play—
how deadly can it be?

21 - 26 October
2024

at The Maskers
Studio



BOOKING: Via link on our website or 0333 666 3366

For the Maskers

Technical Manager:- Jamie McCarthy; **Lighting Consultant:-**
Clive Weeks; **Sound Consultant:-** Jamie McCarthy;

Marketing Team:- Jenni Prior; Angela Stansbridge, Clive Weeks, Meri Mackney, Paul Baker, Rachel Di Nucci, Emily Smith, Maddy Cope, Tash Priddle; **Front of House Manager:** James Lawson

Box Office Manager: Chris Baker; **Photographer-** Clive Weeks,

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