



ROYAL  
COLLEGE  
OF MUSIC  
*London*

# RCM SPARKS

## Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet



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In this section you'll learn about the main themes of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Prokofiev's adaptation and an arrangement for Wind Octet.

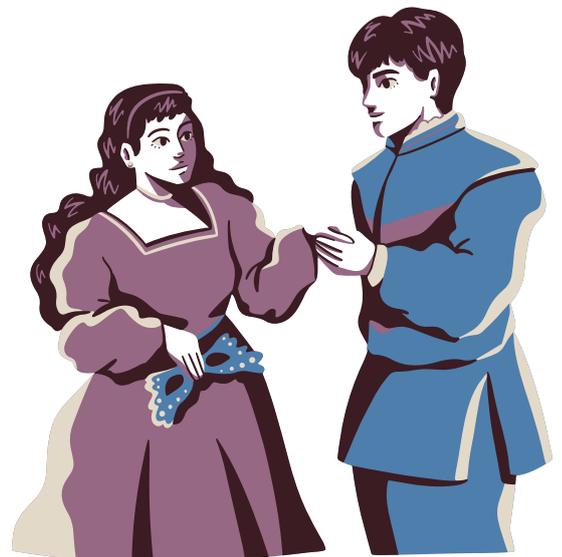
## Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

The story of *Romeo and Juliet* is all about two, fiery families: the Montagues and the Capulets. They absolutely hate each other and are always coming to blows about one thing or another.

The play follows the story of Romeo and Juliet who fall madly in love but are faced with a massive dilemma: Romeo is a Montague and Juliet is a Capulet! If their families found out, they would be furious!

The rest of the story has lots of twists and turns, some of which we'll dip into later, the bare bones that are good to know are:

- The Montagues and Capulet hate each other.
- Romeo (a Montague) and Juliet (a Capulet) fall madly in love.
- It all ends in tragedy.



## **Prokofiev's Music for the Ballet**

Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet has become one of the most famous plays of all time and since it was written over four hundred years ago many other writers, artists and musicians have been inspired to create new work all about this tragic love story.

The music you're coming to listen to was written nearly 60 years ago by a Russian composer called Sergei Prokofiev. He was part of a team turning the story of Romeo and Juliet into a ballet - and it was Prokofiev's job to write the music.

The whole ballet is about 2 hours long, so we're going to play a special selection of pieces from the score to give you a snapshot into a few scenes of the story:

Romeo and Juliet Playlist - [\*\*Spotify\*\*](#)

Romeo and Juliet Playlist - [\*\*YouTube\*\*](#)

### **The Street Awakens**

This piece paints a picture of the early morning hustle and bustle of Verona. I wonder what the music makes you imagine happening in the street?

### **Morning Dance**

Tension builds as members of the rival families spot each other in the street.

### **Madrigal**

Listen to the first time Romeo sets eyes on Juliet at a masquerade ball and falls madly in love.

### **Montagues and Capulets**

This powerful, rage-filled music paints a picture of the two warring families.

### **Friar Lawrence**

This stately music plays for the secret marriage between Romeo and Juliet, behind their families' backs.

### **Mercutio**

Mercutio is a talented swordsman and this energetic, swashbuckling music



## Listen

If you listen to the 'Montagues and Capulets' piece above, you might recognise the music for this next song.

We'd like you to have a go at learning this chant and when you come to the concert in May, you'll have the chance to perform it accompanied by RCM Musicians

Click on the link below to learn the songs all about the angry Montagues and Capulets:

### **Montagues and Capulets Chant: [YouTube](#)**

#### ***Spoken:***

*Montagues and Capulets are always very angry  
Romeo and Juliet, it wasn't meant to be  
They met each other at a party  
Behind their masks they fell in love in secrecy*

*Montagues and Capulets are always very angry  
Romeo and Juliet, it wasn't meant to be  
Against the odds they risk it all and Romeo proposes  
they will wed but it will end in tragedy.*

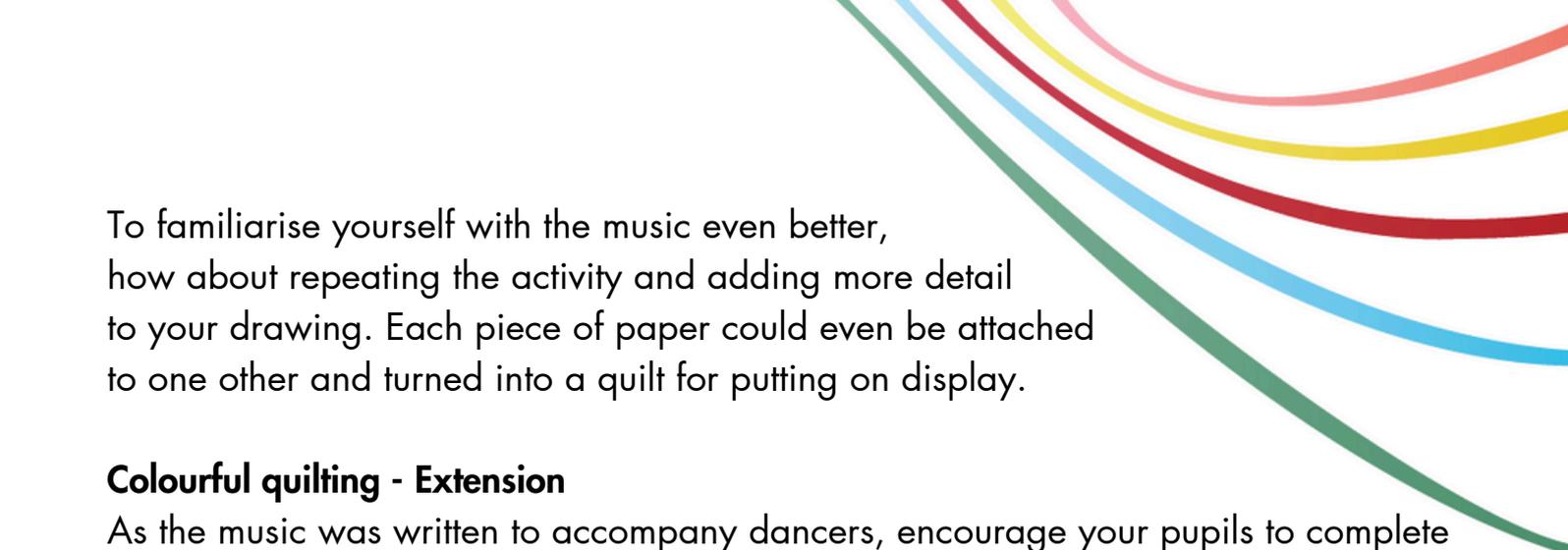


## Create

### **Colourful quilting**

Start with an A4 piece of paper and divide it into 6 - one square for each piece of music. Listen through to the tracks on the playlist one at a time and read the accompanying sentences to set the scene.

How does the music make you feel? Can you hear any patterns in the music?  
What colours come to mind? Maybe you can imagine a scene,  
a particular place, or a character?



To familiarise yourself with the music even better, how about repeating the activity and adding more detail to your drawing. Each piece of paper could even be attached to one other and turned into a quilt for putting on display.

### **Colourful quilting - Extension**

As the music was written to accompany dancers, encourage your pupils to complete this task again, but instead of drawing ask them to create movements in response to the music they hear.

### **Masks**

Romeo and Juliet first meet at a masquerade ball. Behind your mask, your identity is kept secret and Montagues and Capulets can mingle without being detected.

Use the template below to create your own venetian masks, you may even wish to bring them along to the concert. You might be inspired by the swirly patterns on Venetian masks, or choose to add beads and feathers.

### **Body Percussion Battle - Montagues and Capulets**

Body percussion is where you create music using sounds you can make using your body like clapping, stamping or hitting your chest. I wonder how many other sounds you can come up with?

Once you've shared your ideas together as a class, explain that the task is to create their own 8 beat body percussion pattern in groups, and later they will do battle with the rest of the class. Count 8 beats together as a class so that everyone knows how long they have - it's quite short!

Split into groups of 5 or 6 and start coming up with a pattern. We're looking for punchy, energetic moves to represent the angry **Montagues and Capulets**.

Once everyone is ready, pick two groups two come to the front and let the body percussion battle commence!





## Explore

### Useful Links

In this video Jeneba Kanneh-Mason performs *Montagues & Capulets* in a masterclass with world renowned pianists Lang Lang at the Royal College of Music.

**<https://youtu.be/9fnf1Q6l6Kk?t=4063>**

Explore these useful adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare in nine short animations. The videos are ideal for classroom literacy activities for pupils aged 9 plus.

**<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/english-ks2-ks3-romeo-and-juliet-index/zg339ty>**

Watch dancers from the Royal Ballet perform the Dance of the Knights (*Montagues & Capulets*).

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SyDo3h1Tu7c>**



## Create

### Venetian Masks

Decorate your own venetian mask. You may wish to add string to both sides to wear it or attach a lollipop stick or skewer to hold it.

