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|  | Esperanza High School |
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29 January 2016

**Dear Parents / Guardians, Teachers and Learners,**

**INFORMATION LETTER: DRAMA PRODUCTION 2016 – ROMEO & JULIET**

Every second year Esperanza High puts on a professional theatre production for fundraising and to give our rising stars an opportunity to shine! Our previous production – Little Red Riding Hood – received glowing reports in all the media and went on for an extended run at the Civic Theatre. With your help we can rise to similar heights and give all our participants a taste of amateur dramatics at its best.

As you are already aware, the classic Romeo & Juliet has been selected for this year’s production. We have remained true to the main storyline, but have also introduced a number of topical allusions – some twists and turns to ensure that nobody in the audience will be lulled into an uncritical expectation of the predictable. We have also included a few musical numbers that are decidedly NOT Shakespearian. In short, we think we have put together a potpourri that will have something for everyone.

**Cast**

Auditions for the principal roles were held recently, and the school is pleased to release the following official cast list (one or two minor roles still await confirmation: these will be communicated in a separate letter):

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| *Lwando Dyasi* | *Romeo* |
| *Cehane Tavares* | *Juliet* |
| *Jabu Miller* | *Mercutio* |
| *Nicholas Van der Zwan* | *Benvolio* |
| *Neill Theunis* | *Paris* |
| *Liam Swartz* | *Montague* |
| *Collette Chivers* | *Lady Montague* |
| *Albertus Meyer* | *Capulet* |
| *Jerone Mahleza* | *Lady Capulet* |
| *John Themba* | *Tybalt* |
| *Tara Oelofse* | *Nurse* |
| *Dennis Makoba* | *Peter* |
| *Richard Diaz* | *Friar Laurence* |

**The balcony scene**

The leading roles for a production like Romeo and Juliet are chosen not only for the actors’ individual abilities and charisma, but for the chemistry evident between them – the elusive and indefinable quality that sets them apart as an ‘item’ and that will cause people to remember the production long after the last curtain call.

Bearing this in mind, the audition team set the extract below (taken from the well-known balcony scene) for the two players who would eventually be selected to play Romeo and Juliet. They were required to memorise and ‘perform’ these lines as a team act. Lwando Dyasi and Cehane Tavares acquitted themselves worthily, to say the least: a most impressive performance indeed.

**ROMEO**

She speaks:

O, speak again, bright angel! for thou art

As glorious to this night, being o'er my head

As is a winged messenger of heaven

Unto the white-upturned wondering eyes

Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him

When he bestrides the lazy-pacing clouds

And sails upon the bosom of the air.

**JULIET**

O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?

Deny thy father and refuse thy name;

Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,

And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

**ROMEO**

Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

**JULIET**

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;

Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.

What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot,

Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part

Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!

What's in a name? that which we call a rose

By any other name would smell as sweet;

So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,

Retain that dear perfection which he owes

Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,

And for that name which is no part of thee

Take all myself.

**Production team and crew**

A lot of preparation is needed in order to put a full-scale production like Romeo & Juliet on the stage, even if it is ‘only’ a school version. Our production team was therefore identified as early as November 2015, and they have been very busy putting everything into place – hiring of equipment, contract details, copyright issues, music scores, costume manufacture, and so forth. The names of those involved were announced in a letter sent out last year, and the chief positions appear in various promotional material.

We DO however still need a few crew members to come on board. This is not an arduous position, as it involves mostly small-scale preparation work, both before and during performances. But it IS important: without this ‘backbone’ of the production, even the most talented performer could not give of his / her best. Interested members are please to contact Ms Simmonds as soon as possible.

**A little perspective**

Shakespeare’s play Romeo and Juliet has been around since at least 1597, when the first quarto was published. Acting styles and conventions have changed dramatically over the centuries, and every age has interpreted the story and its setting in its own image. A similar comment applies to artistic representations. Compare the extract from a painting in 1884 (shown alongside), with styles portrayed in later productions, including numerous film and television adaptations, for example the ever popular West Side Story, first performed – believe it or not – in 1957: it continues to be performed in theatres around the world, and is in fact sheduled for a six week season at the Nelson Mandela Theatre in Johannesburg in January 2017. Yes, that is how long it can take to plan and put a production on the stage!

**Advertising and ticket sales**

A web page advertising the production has been created for the school’s website (go to the Events page): a commendable effort by the Grade 11 CAT class, I think you will agree. A PowerPoint slideshow has been put together for showing at our next Monday morning assembly. It can be used for promotional purposes at any of our cultural club meetings at the school: the more exposure the better. The slideshow may be viewed here.

Ticket can be bought from any of the Grade 8 learners – yes, Mrs Metcalfe has involved them all! Please support the ticket-selling drive.

This production will also serve as a fundraiser. An SMT Committee member has suggested that we make available (for purchase) a series of artifacts designed around the Romeo and Juliet theme. This will have the double benefit of advertising the production and of raising funds. We have a number of talented members in our school, both on the Staff and as learners. Pictured alongside is an idea for a placemat design, that was put forward by the same learner who designed the official logo for the production, Susan Jacoby.

**Practise times for learners**

The schedule for our practise times is shown below. All parents and guardians are asked to ensure that their children attend these rehearsals on the dates and at the times indicated.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | **Mon** | **Tue** | **Wed** | **Thu** | **Fri** | **Sat** |
| **4 April** | **5 April** | **6 April** | **7 April** | **8 April** | **9 April** |
| **TIMES** | **13:00** |  |  |  |  | Lead  Cast | Full Dress Rehearsal  Cast and Crew |
| **14:00** |  | Support Cast |  | Support Cast |
| **15:00** |  |  |
| **16:00** |  | Lead  Cast |  | Lead  Cast |  |
| **17:00** | Music  Ensemble |  |  |  |
| **18:00** |  |  |
| **19:00** |  |  |  |  |

**Competition time!**

In order to build interest and get everyone ‘into the mood’ for our production, we have decided to run a small competition. Trivial in itself it may be, but I suspect that the excitement is going to run high when the results are announced in the next Assembly. And remember: the first correct set of entries drawn from the hat will be the winning one. Here are the details:

The entire text of the play Romeo and Juliet is available electronically from a number of websites, including the English page on the intranet. Use this resource to answer the two questions below, entering your answers in the spaces provided. Then cut along the dotted line below, and place your answer slip in the Competition Box in the Drama Room (Room 34). Don’t forget to include your own details. Good luck!

✂

Question 1: Enter in the light green cell the character in the play who said ‘*Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast*’.

Question 2: Enter in the light blue cell the number of times the name ‘Romeo’ appears in the document Romeo and Juliet.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Character who said: ‘*Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast*’? | Number of occurrences of ‘Romeo’ |
|  |  |

Name: Surname: Grade: Class:

**Hoodies**

It has been suggested that we make available a special ‘hoodie’ which everyone involved in the production will be able to purchase at a nominal cost . This will have the advantage of promoting esprit de corps among both cast, crew and members of the production team. Please encourage your son (or daughter or learner)to order one.

**Closing thoughts**

Romeo and Juliet can perhaps best be described as a romantic tragedy. It contains all the explosive ingredients that combine to make it a first-class story – the impetuosity and reckless abandon of youth, the timeless values of love and devotion, the devastating but ultimately therapeutic effects of rivalries finally put to rest. It is both full of darkness and full of light. It is all about the life-giving energy of our deepest commitments, and this of course spills over into our play. Charles Wells sums up the concept nicely in his book: “Whatever love is, it is clearly energising. This energy expresses itself in many ways and may be creative or destructive. In ***Romeo and Juliet*** love’s energy is a blaze of light."

We’re all set for wonderful, fun-filled and exciting time ahead. Lots of work, to be sure, but if we all pull our weight and keep focused on the goal, the rewards will be ample and self-evident. Excellence and teamwork are our watchwords.

Ready . . . steady . . . GO!

Best wishes,

J.R. Terblanche

**Esperanza High School: Principal**