

THE CAPULETS AND THE MONTAGUES SYNOPSIS



Music by Vincenzo Bellini

Libretto by Felice Romani

ACT I

Scene 1 – Supporters of the Capulets gather at Capellio’s palace, anticipating new fighting with the Montagues, their traditional enemies. Capellio informs them that Romeo, the leader of the Montagues, is sending an ambassador to offer peace. Lorenzo, the family physician and friend of the Capulets, tries to persuade Capellio that a pact to end their long rivalry could be useful and honorable, and reminds him that enough blood has already been shed. Capellio, however, scorns the idea and vows to avenge the death of his son whom Romeo killed in battle. Since Romeo left Verona as a boy, none of the Capulets recognize him, although there had been rumors that he has entered Verona several times. Tebaldo, a partisan of the Capulets, vows to avenge Capellio’s son, swearing in the name of Giulietta, Capellio’s daughter, whom he loves. Capellio suggests they be married that very day. Lorenzo pleads with him that Giulietta is ill, but Capellio refuses to change his mind. Tebaldo expresses his love for Giulietta while Capellio sends Lorenzo to prepare Giulietta for her marriage. The ambassador from the Montagues, Romeo in disguise, enters and offers peace and friendship between the two families, a pledge to be sealed by Romeo’s marriage to Giulietta. He tells of Romeo’s sadness over the death of Capellio’s son and explains that Capellio will find another son in Romeo. Capellio informs him that his daughter is already promised to Tebaldo. The Capulets demand war, and Romeo accepts the challenge.

Scene 2 – Giulietta reflects on the contrast between the joyful preparations for her wedding and her own misery. She longs to be with Romeo. Lorenzo enters with Romeo, whom he has brought into the palace through a secret entrance. Romeo tries to persuade Giulietta to flee

with him since it is their only chance to be together. Julietta, despite her love for Romeo, cannot desert her family. Music is heard in the distance signaling the beginning of the wedding festivities. Again, Romeo begs her to leave with him, but Julietta again refuses. Defeated, Romeo leaves.

Scene 3 – Guests gather for the wedding and proclaim their happiness over the impending marriage. Romeo, still disguised, enters with Lorenzo, who warns him that his disguise will not conceal his identity. Romeo vows that he will not let Tebaldo marry his beloved and tells Lorenzo that his followers have infiltrated the palace, planning to stop the wedding. Fighting is heard. Romeo leaves to join his forces and Lorenzo departs. Julietta enters alone, happy at the interruption but despondent over the fighting. As she prays for Romeo's protection, he appears and again pleads with her to escape with him, but she refuses. Capellio and Tebaldo enter, recognize Romeo as the enemy ambassador, and ask him to identify himself. Romeo replies that his is Tebaldo's rival. The Montagues rush in, calling for Romeo, while the Capulets appear in pursuit of the Montagues. The Capulets now realize Romeo has deceived them. The two families exchange accusations and threats of further battles while Romeo and Julietta pray that they will meet again, if only in heaven.

ACT II

Scene 1 – Julietta laments the fate of Romeo and her kinsmen. Lorenzo enters to tell her that Romeo is safe, but that she will be sent to Tebaldo's castle. He is prepared to help her, however, and offers her a potion that will induce a death-like sleep. She will be taken to her family tomb, where Lorenzo and Romeo will come to her. She is confused and afraid, but quickly drinks the potion as Capellio enters. He orders her to prepare to accompany Tebaldo at dawn. Already weak from the potion, Julietta begs forgiveness from him and faints.

Scene 2 – In a deserted spot near Capellio's palace, Romeo is alone, uncertain where to turn. Tebaldo suddenly appears and they exchange threats. As their duel begins, Julietta's funeral procession appears. Both are shocked. Romeo begs Tebaldo to kill him, but Tebaldo, full of remorse, cannot.

Scene 3 – The Montagues enter the tomb of the Capulets with Romeo, who places a rose on Julietta's tomb. Seeing Julietta, Romeo desperately pleads for her to awaken. He tells his followers to leave him alone for a few moments, and they depart. Romeo pours out his grief, begging that she take him with her to heaven. In desperation he poisons himself. At the same moment, Julietta awakens and explains what has happened to the incredulous Romeo, but it is too late. He responds, "I must stay here for eternity." Julietta, realizing what he has done, begs to die with him and asks for his dagger; Romeo refuses. She then asks for poison but Romeo tells her he has none left. As he exhorts her to live, she prays to heaven to cut her life short. Romeo dies and Julietta falls lifeless beside him. The Montagues and Capulets, with Capellio and Lorenzo, enter and find the dead lovers. Capellio cries out, "Killed! By whom?" All reply, "By you, ruthless man."