

Lyric

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LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO
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#LyricRomeo

Rediscover Shakespeare's most famous love story through opera!
Charles Gounod's **ROMEO AND JULIET** opens tonight at Lyric
in a new-to-Chicago production
by Tony Award-winning director Bartlett Sher
as a centerpiece of the yearlong **Shakespeare 400 Chicago** festival



PHOTO: Todd Rosenberg

CHICAGO – Lyric Opera of Chicago continues its 61st season with **Romeo and Juliet** in a new-to-Chicago production created by Tony Award-winning director **Bartlett Sher** Monday, February 22 through Saturday, March 19 (nine performances). This is the eighth and final mainstage opera production of the widely acclaimed 2015/16 season.

Gounod's 19th-century interpretation of Shakespeare's immortal young-love tragedy will be sung in French with projected English texts. Lyric's production stars two ardent Romeos, tenors

Joseph Calleja (6 performances, Feb. 22-Mar. 8) and **Eric Cutler** (3 performances, Mar. 11-19), wooing the fair Juliet, portrayed by soprano **Susanna Phillips**. Baritone **Joshua Hopkins** is Romeo's irreverent best pal Mercutio, and bass-baritone **Christian Van Horn** is the well-intentioned Friar Laurence, whose efforts to mend the feud between the Capulets and Montagues have tragic results. Lyric's production also features mezzo-sopranos **Marianne Crebassa/Stephano** (Lyric debut) and **Deborah Nansteel/Juliet's nurse Gertrude** (Lyric debut), baritone **Philip Horst/Capulet**, tenor **Jason Slayden /Juliet's hotheaded cousin Tybalt** (Lyric debut), bass-baritone **David Govertsen/Duke of Verona**, tenor **Mingjie Lei/Benvolio**, and baritones **Takaoki Onishi/Paris** and **Anthony Clark Evans/Gregorio**.

Emmanuel Villaume conducts and **Bartlett Sher** (Lyric debut) directs the production designed by **Michael Yeargan** (sets), **Catherine Zuber** (costumes), and **Jennifer Tipton** (lighting). **Michael Black** is chorus master. Legendary fight director **B. H. Barry** created the fight sequences. **Chase Brock** (Lyric debut) is the choreographer.

The current Broadway hit productions of *The King and I* and *Fiddler on the Roof* are directed by Sher, with set designs by Yeargan and costume designs by Zuber.

"I originally saw Bart Sher's fantastic production of *Romeo and Juliet* in Salzburg, and it was later presented with great success at La Scala," says **Anthony Freud**, Lyric's general director. "Our set, costume, and lighting designers are all Tony Award winners. We have beautiful, lavish costumes designed by Catherine Zuber, loosely inspired by Fellini's *Casanova*; she also designed the marvelous costumes for our productions of *The Barber of Seville* and *Carousel*. The sets by Michael Yeargan are handsomely architectural – he also designed this season's *Nabucco* and our recent *Sound of Music* production. Jennifer Tipton, a MacArthur Fellow, has created beautifully evocative lighting for this production, as well as a number of other memorable Lyric productions."

Freud continues, "This romantic French opera is a wonderful piece for all audiences, and it's a work we haven't done since 2006/07. We are all very excited to be presenting it at Lyric, especially as a featured work in the yearlong **Shakespeare 400 Chicago** celebration. Our Romeos, Joseph Calleja and Eric Cutler, have each had great successes internationally and at Lyric. Susanna Phillips, who has become a Met favorite, has been doing extraordinary work since she left Lyric's Ryan Opera Center – and she actually made her role debut when she went on as Juliet on short notice in our previous production while still a member of the Ryan Opera Center."

Of special note, Freud adds, are the exciting fight scenes created by today's preeminent fight director B. H. Barry, whose work has been seen in more than three dozen Broadway productions, at the Metropolitan Opera, London's Royal Opera House and Royal Shakespeare Company, and in numerous films. Barry has served as fight director for *Romeo and Juliet* nearly 60 times, for stage and screen productions.

*To download a zip file of production images, click [Download Images >>>](#)

A downloadable link to HD footage will be available February 23.

Watch director Bartlett Sher talk about *Romeo and Juliet* at Lyric Opera [here](#).

The Music Information Summary for Lyric's production of *Romeo and Juliet* can be found [here](#).

Performance dates are February 22, March 5, 8, 11, and 16 at 7:30pm; and February 25, 28, March 2, and 19 at 2pm. For tickets and information call (312) 827-5600 or go to lyricopera.org/romeo-and-juliet. Estimated running time 3 hours 5 minutes.

Lyric Opera presentation of Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet* generously made possible by the **NIB Foundation, Julie and Roger Baskes, Mr. and Mrs. W. James Farrell, and PowerShares QQQ**. Production owned by The Metropolitan Opera.

Shakespeare 400 Chicago is a yearlong international arts festival commemorating the quadricentennial of William Shakespeare's death. Several cultural organizations are presenting more than 800 performances, exhibitions, and other events celebrating Shakespeare throughout the year. For more information, go to [Shakespeare400Chicago](#).

About Lyric

Lyric Opera of Chicago's mission is to express and promote the life-changing, transformational, revelatory power of great opera. Lyric exists to provide a broad, deep, and relevant cultural service to Chicago and the nation, and to advance the development of the art form.

Founded in 1954, Lyric is dedicated to producing and performing consistently thrilling, entertaining, and thought-provoking opera with a balanced repertoire of core classics, lesser-known masterpieces, and new works; to creating an innovative and wide-ranging program of community engagement and educational activities; and to developing exceptional emerging operatic talent.

Under the leadership of general director Anthony Freud, music director Sir Andrew Davis, and creative consultant Renée Fleming, Lyric strives to become The Great North American Opera Company for the 21st century: a globally significant arts organization embodying the core values of excellence, relevance, and fiscal responsibility.

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