

Save Our Theatre

By Tony Howell

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SYNOPSIS

The Templeton family bands together to save their theatre from destruction and to stage their comeback performance of *Romeo and Juliet*. The chaos grows rapidly as Grandma keeps playing characters from various Shakespeare plays, three women compete for the part of Juliet, the tax accountant tries to hide the embezzlement of theatre funds, and the gangster is determined to get a loan shark's money. Complicating things even further, the real estate agents are ready to tear down the building and local protestors are fighting to save the theatre. Amid this mess, the Templetons are trying to rehearse *Romeo and Juliet*. No set is needed as the show takes place in a theatre. Costumes start in modern-day and then move into period clothes. These can be pieces or more complete costumes as the director desires. About 90 minutes.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

The show was performed by the Albion Community Theatre on July 17, 18, 19 and August 1 and 2, 2026 at the Centerstage Auditorium under the direction of the playwright with the following cast:

Gertrude Buckingham Templeton: Amy Dreibelbis
Catherine Cornwall Templeton: Lana Hoard
Viola Templeton: Sydney Rigsby
Rosalind Templeton: Austen McGlothlin
Venus Degrand: Abby Carpenter
Laurel Hamilton: Savannah Phillips
Angel Masters: Rebecca Lesley
Lexie Granville: Elizabeth Erazo
Maxine/Millie/Maybelline: Tearuh Rice/Kayla Keirn/Lydia Skinner
Adam Templeton: Jarrett Jordan
Orlando Templeton: Owen Howell
Benedick Templeton: Carson Keibel
Robin Templeton: Tucker Jordan
Joshua Coleridge: Josh Isaac
Joe Columbo: Sean Bolling
Aunt Ethel/Uncle Eddie: Bre Ann Weeks
Donahue: Anika Cupp
Wellington/Windsor: Brian Fry/Jacob Luneke

CAST OF CHARACTERS

21-23 characters. (6 m, 10 - 11 w, 5 - 6 flexible and extras.)

MEN:

ADAM TEMPLETON: Theatre owner. Plays Lord Capulet.

ORLANDO TEMPLETON: Adam's brother. Plays Mercutio.

BENEDICK TEMPLETON: Adam's brother. Plays Tybalt.

ROBIN TEMPLETON: Adam's brother. Plays Benvolio / Paris.

JOSHUA COLERIDGE: Dating Rosalind. Plays Romeo.

JOE COLUMBO: Gangster.

WOMEN:

GERTRUDE BUCKINGHAM TEMPLETON: The matriarch who relives her roles.

CATHERINE CORNWALL TEMPLETON: Adam's wife. Plays Lady Capulet.

VIOLA TEMPLETON: Adam's oldest daughter. Plays Nurse.

ROSALIND TEMPLETON: Adam's daughter. Plays Juliet.

LAUREL HAMILTON: Came with Orlando and wants to be Juliet.

ANGEL MASTERS: Came with Benedick, wants to be Juliet.

LEXIE GRANVILLE: Came with Robin, wants to be Juliet.

VENUS DEGRAND: Showgirl here with Joe.

MAXINE HIGGINBOTTOM: Costumer.

MILLCENT "MILLIE" HANOVER: Another.

MAYBELLINE MCCRORY: Another. The three costumers could be reduced by splitting Millie's lines between Maxine and Maybelline.

FLEXIBLE:

UNCLE EDDIE / AUNT ETHEL: Adam's relative. Claims to hate the theatre.

DONAHUE: Accountant, actual embezzler.

WELLINGTON: Real estate investor.

WINDSOR: Another.

DEWINTERS: Another. The three real estate investors can be reduced to two by splitting Dewinters' lines between Wellington and Windsor.

SCATTINGTON: Foreman of the work crew.

EXTRAS: CREW (ACT I) and PROTESTORS (ACT II)

SET

The show is designed to be performed without a set and instead uses the entire theatre as the acting space. The original production had entrances from SR and SL from behind the grand drape, along with a curtain halfway back that was partially open. We also used the doors from the lobby to the house as additional entrances, and the chase scene at the end of ACT I took place in the house as well as on stage. Entrances / exits are intentionally vague so that you can utilize your space as thoroughly as you desire.

COSTUMES

Characters wear modern clothing and are quickly dressed by the costumers. Costumes include: Lady Capulet, the Nurse, medieval garb for the brothers, Juliet, Romeo, medieval servant.

Gertrude wears various costumes: Katherine from *The Taming of the Shrew* (this is the scene right after the wedding, so she's dressed crazily as Petruchio ordered); all black from *Macbeth*; Judge costume from *Merchant of Venice*; and a witch.

The three actresses add bizarre versions of Juliet and modern-day hoods/drug dealers.

PROPS

Several large ledger books
Four fencing foils
Worker items, tape measure, note pads, calculators, etc.
Large sword
Four guns
Protester signs that read "Save the Theatre," etc.
Briefcase

ACT I

(AT RISE: Nothing but a GHOST LIGHT onstage. EDDIE enters from the lobby. He turns on the LIGHTS; perhaps he has to open the grand drape. He walks around, eyeing the place. He's worried. Then he moves up to the stage and looks around again. DONAHUE enters from the lobby after a moment.)

DONAHUE: Mr. Templeton? Are you sure that your nephew will sell this place? The Templetons have owned this theatre since 1833.

EDDIE: Don't worry about my nephew. He doesn't have a choice.

DONAHUE: Good. *(Pause.)* I've risked everything to arrange this deal, you know.

EDDIE: I know that.

DONAHUE: But once these papers are signed, your family will have the money to start whatever business they want.

EDDIE: I know that.

DONAHUE: It does seem strange that they want to get out of the theatre. I mean, your family has been stage people for over 200 years.

EDDIE: And it's always been a curse. My nephew and I used to be very close, but when my brother handed the theatre over to him instead of me, well, we've been at each other's throats ever since.

DONAHUE: Because you're so jealous that he got the theatre and you didn't?

EDDIE: No! Because he's making terrible decisions! If I were running this place, we wouldn't be broke and headed for bankruptcy!

DONAHUE: Are you sure about that?

EDDIE: Positive! I'm very good with money. You're our tax accountant. You know what a genius I am when it comes to the dollar.

DONAHUE: Yeah. You're a real genius, all right.

EDDIE: Money matters, you know.

DONAHUE: Yes, it does. Sometimes it decides who lives and who dies.

EDDIE: Exactly! And I'm going to make sure my family gets a real life by getting them out of the acting business and into a steadier way of life, like the life you have!

DONAHUE: Yeah. Because accounting has made me rich, powerful, and not stressed at all.

EDDIE: Everyone has stress.

DONAHUE: Does everybody live on antacids? Does everybody wake up screaming in terror? Does everybody panic when they pick up their mail because it's nothing but past due notices?

EDDIE: Are you talking about yourself?

DONAHUE: Ye... No. No, of course not. My life is nothing like that. I have a great career, a fantastic future and never have to borrow money from loan sharks and gangsters because I'm so far in debt.

EDDIE: That would be awful, wouldn't it?

DONAHUE: You have no idea.

EDDIE: Well, once this theatre is sold, my family will never have to worry about anything like that.

DONAHUE: So, what about this production your nephew is supposed to be working on? If he's selling, why is he talking about staging a production of *Romeo and Juliet*?

EDDIE: It's under control, Donahue. Now, what about your investors?

DONAHUE: Don't worry about them. Wellington, Windsor, and DeWinters are ready to level this place and put in their condominiums.

EDDIE: Then everything is going as planned. Now, let's get down to your office, grab those papers and wrap this all up!

DONAHUE: (*Following EDDIE to the lobby.*) All right. But remember, you can't sign anything. It has to be your nephew. The Royale Theatre is officially owned by Adam Templeton, not you.

EDDIE: Why are you explaining all of this to me? You sound like someone at the beginning of a play trying to fill the audience in on what's happening.

DONAHUE: Just trying to make sure that there isn't any confusion. When Wellington, Windsor, and DeWinters get here, they're going to demand action!

EDDIE: And you'll be ready to give it to them. Now, let's go get those papers!

(EDDIE heads for the exit, but DONAHUE lingers behind.)

DONAHUE: I always wondered what it would be like to be an actor. To take center stage and stare up into the lights. To feel the audience out there in the dark.

EDDIE: It's not nearly as great as it sounds, believe me.

DONAHUE: You should know. You belong to the first family of the American Theatre.

EDDIE: I hate the theatre! Now, shut up and let's get going!

(THEY exit as ADAM comes storming in from backstage followed by CATHERINE, his wife.)

ADAM: What were you thinking? You had to know it would be a disaster!

CATHERINE: I don't know that! And if this is going to be our last production in your family's theatre, I just thought you might like your brothers to be here!

ADAM: If my brothers cared about the Royale Theatre, then they would have been here already!

CATHERINE: They wanted to try other jobs, see other places. They have the right to do that!

ADAM: And abandon their family? And now you want me to welcome them back with open arms?

CATHERINE: All right, then tell me this. You want to do *Romeo and Juliet*?

ADAM: You know I do.

CATHERINE: And you're going to do this show with what money?

ADAM: It's Shakespeare. No royalties, you know that.

CATHERINE: And the performers? Are they going to work for free?

ADAM: Well, I can play Lord Capulet. And you can be Lady Capulet. And we'll have my mother, and our girls...

CATHERINE: Well, Viola will do it. She loves this theatre and she'll do whatever you need. But Rosalind is tired of the stage. That's why she moved to St. Louis.

ADAM: Did you call her and ask her to come back like you did my brothers?

CATHERINE: I did, but...

ADAM: Is she coming?

CATHERINE: Yes, she is, but...

ADAM: When she gets here and I ask her to play Juliet, I'm sure she'll do it.

CATHERINE: I wouldn't count on it. And you still have to have actors to play Mercutio and Benvolio. And Tybalt and Paris!

ADAM: I'll think of something.

CATHERINE: I already thought of something! Let your brothers help you!

ADAM: Orlando, Benedick, and Robin will not want to help! They don't care about anything but themselves.

CATHERINE: All I'm asking is that you give them a chance!

ADAM: All right! I'll tell you what! If they show up, and I know they won't, then I'll offer them parts.

CATHERINE: That's all I want.

(VIOLA, their daughter, enters from backstage.)

VIOLA: Dad! Have you seen Grandma?

ADAM: She was in the costume storage area the last time I saw her.

VIOLA: She is not going to be able to do this show.

ADAM: We just need her for some of the small parts. She won't have to learn a lot of lines.

VIOLA: Lines won't be the problem. She knows nearly every line in every Shakespeare play. It's keeping her in the right show that's going to be the problem.

ADAM: Oh, no. Is she entering one of her forgetful phases?

VIOLA: Far from it! In fact, she's remembering everything. Clear back to the beginning of her career. She just spent the morning playing Queen Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*!

CATHERINE: How long ago was that?

ADAM: Decades ago. She's gone back to the beginning of her career.

CATHERINE: Uh-oh! When she starts one of these trips down memory lane, she always reenacts the shows in the order she performed them. It'll be weeks before she gets back to this era.

VIOLA: Exactly. And we don't have enough actors to stage this show without her.

CATHERINE: We don't have enough actors even *with* your grandma.

ADAM: And I thought you solved that problem, darling.

VIOLA: Mom? What did you do?

ADAM: She called Orlando, Benedick, and Robin and asked them to come back and be part of the show.

VIOLA: What a great idea! Good thinking, Mom!

(CATHERINE gives ADAM a look of "I told you so.")

ADAM: It's not a great idea! It's a terrible idea!

VIOLA: They are your brothers. If this is going to be our last show in the Royale, then...

ADAM: You're as bad as she is. They walked out. And now we're just going to let them come waltzing back in here like they never betrayed us?

VIOLA: They didn't betray us, Dad. They have a right to chase their dreams.

CATHERINE: Exactly. Not everyone has to think like you, Adam.

(MAXINE, MAYBELLINE, and MILLIE, the costumers, enter from the side.)

ADAM: Great. I'm trying to save the family and our theatre, and my wife and daughter both think it's time to invite Brutus, Cassius, and Casca back into the fold.

MAXINE: I thought we were doing *Romeo and Juliet*, not *Julius Caesar*!

MILLIE: We pulled costumes for *Romeo and Juliet*!

MAYBELLINE: Now we're doing *Julius Caesar*? I'm so confused.

MILLIE: Catherine! You said you were going to be Lady Capulet!

MAXINE: And Viola was supposed to be the Nurse!

MAYBELLINE: Lady Capulet and the Nurse are not in *Julius Caesar*! I'm so confused!

CATHERINE: We're not doing *Julius Caesar*!

MAXINE: Good!

(The COSTUMERS swarm around CATHERINE, obscuring her from view. When they move away from her, she's wearing a Lady Capulet costume.)

ADAM: We're doing *Romeo and Juliet*! And we don't need my back-stabbing brothers to do it!

VIOLA: Dad! Living life outside of this theatre does not make them traitors and murderers.

CATHERINE: And we need your brothers to stage this show.

VIOLA: It would solve a lot of problems, Dad.

ADAM: *(Starts offstage.)* I already told your mother that if they come back, I'll put them in the show. But it doesn't matter! Because they'll never come back. All they care about is themselves. We will never see Orlando, Benedick, or Robin!

(As soon as the COSTUMERS are done with CATHERINE, they move to VIOLA and swarm around her, transforming her into the Nurse.)

CATHERINE: Now, Adam! Don't get mad! I was only trying to help!

ADAM: I know that! But I also know my brothers!

End of Freeview

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