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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
MORRIS

UMN Morris Theatre Season Opens with *Romeo and Juliet*

The University of Minnesota Morris opens its 2022-23 season with Shakespeare's romantic tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*. Follow the star-crossed lovers, Romeo and Juliet, as they navigate the gritty yet poetic drama of feuding families, forbidden love, and tragic death.

Directing the production is Professor of Theatre Arts Ray Schultz. Schultz comments on the play's dramatic strengths. "Romeo and Juliet is usually considered one of Shakespeare's most accessible plays, and I hope that people will respond to the passionate emotions the characters experience, as well as the play's language. The play contains some of Shakespeare's most beautiful, soaring poetry, but it's also at points witty and funny, and its plot in large part deals with such issues as teen suicide and generational conflict, which can't help but strike a chord in modern audiences."

Designing the production is Assistant Professor of Theatre Arts Lucas Grandholm. He describes his overall approach to the play's design: "'Gritty Pretty' is the term used to describe the set in our production of *Romeo and Juliet*. The intention behind the set design is to immerse the audience within the action of the play. The flexibility and ample size of the George C. Fosgate Black Box Theatre allowed us to do just this, giving the audience and the actors a unique theatrical experience."

Assisting Grandholm is Assistant Sound Designer Tierra Flesner '24, Rapid City, South Dakota, and Assistant Costume Designer Ruby Wittmayer '23, Cleghorn, Iowa. Costume Shop Supervisor Zoë Johnson will be crafting the costumes of the show, and Scene Shop Supervisor Benjamin Fink is supervising technical elements. The stage management team is led by Madison Kessel '23, St. Cloud, with Emily-Rose Severson '25, Brainerd, as assistant and production stage manager, and Dana Voss '24, Hartford, South Dakota, as assistant stage manager.

In the cast of 16 actors, playing the titular roles are Bria Teasley '24, Blaine, as the young Romeo, and Madison Ferguson '25, Milaca, as the fair Juliet. Alaina Deutsch '26, Lakeville, appears as Romeo's quick-witted counterpart, Mercutio, with Hal Johnson '24, Aberdeen, South Dakota, portraying Romeo's peacekeeping cousin, Benvolio. Of the House of Capulet, Michael Oberton '25, Little Falls, portrays Lord Capulet and Abby Koel '25, Pillager, is Lady Capulet. Kinsman to the Capulets, Tybalt, is played by Kendra DeRosa '23, Ramsey, with Evan Anderson '26, Chanhassen, debuting as Juliet's rival suitor, Paris. Amaya Henry '26, Appleton, acts as Friar Lawrence, Romeo's confidant, with Gabby Holboy '24, Cambridge-Isanti,

performing as Juliet's nurse. The neutral governing body of fair Verona, the Prince, is played by Matthew Gearou '25, Zimmerman. Rounding out the ensemble are: Jules Burke '23, Minneapolis, as Lord Montague, Keeley Gardner '26, Pocatello, as Friar John, Siri Koplín '26, Rochester, as Balthasar, Aidan Lester '24, Cambridge, as Peter and Jack Strong '25, Minneapolis, as the Apothecary.

This production of Romeo and Juliet will open in the recently named George C. Fosgate Black Box Theatre, on Thursday, Nov. 10 at 7:30 p.m. with further performances on Friday, Nov. 11 and Saturday, Nov. 12 at 7:30 p.m., and a matinee performance on Nov. 12 at 2 p.m. Tickets are available at z.umn.edu/RandJ and at the door. General admission tickets are \$10 and students and seniors tickets are \$5. Please direct any questions or accommodations requests to thrupub@morris.umn.edu or call (320) 589-6274.