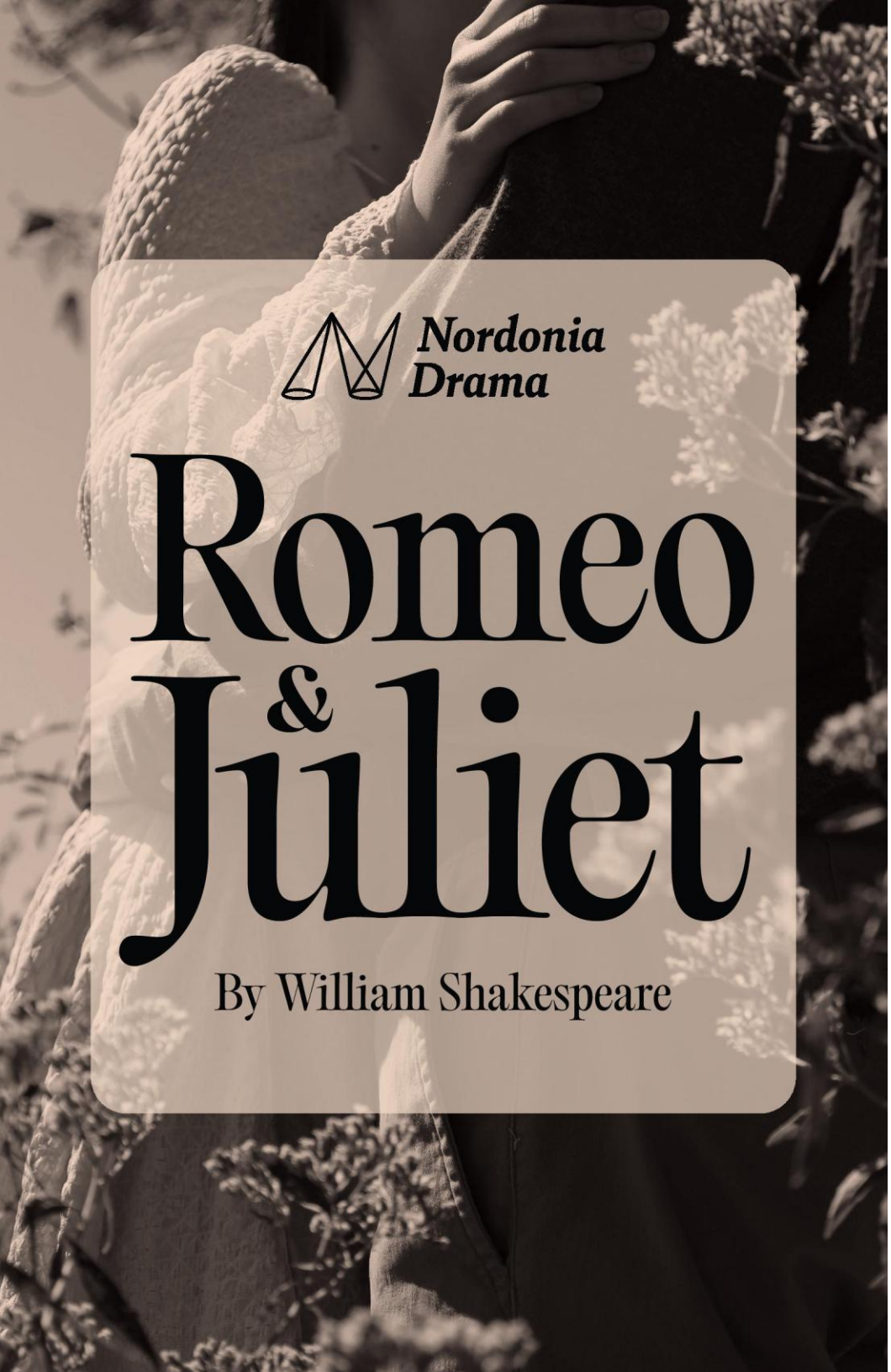

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Thank you for joining us for the second production of our 2025-2026 Drama season! It has been a few years since we have tackled the works of William Shakespeare, and we are so excited to bring the Bard's most famous love story to life on our stage. Jumping from the world of the *Peanuts* gang right into the feuding families of Verona has been quite the feat. I am continuously impressed by the dedication and creativity of my staff, crews and actors as they shift from one to the next alongside me.

Romeo & Juliet is arguably one of Shakespeare's most well-known works. Whether you have read the play, seen one of the many film or stage adaptations, or neither, you all likely have an idea of the events that will unfold before you. Our production stays true to that story. There will be no crazy plot twists or creative dramatic liberties taken here. I would, however, like to draw your attention to one of the themes displayed tonight. Shakespeare touches on many different themes in his works, but I would ask you to pay attention to the theme of ***time***.

Shakespeare based this story on a 1562 poem by Arthur Brooke entitled *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*. In Brooke's version, the star-crossed lovers meet and have a tumultuous nine-month relationship, which is quite a long time to be in a secret romance with your family's sworn enemy. Shakespeare took this tale and compacted it down to just five days. Why? Because, as Friar Lawrence attempts to warn Romeo, "They stumble that run fast."

From the moment the curtain rises, these characters are running. Running too fast to see the mistakes they are making as they sprint towards the tragedy we all know awaits them. Romeo and Juliet are going to make a series of choices, individually and together, that will end with them feeling inescapably trapped by the consequences of their actions and lead them to their tragic conclusion.

I am in awe of the work that this cast has put into our production. They threw themselves into the world of the Bard and worked together to help us create our own unique Verona. Even though we all know how the story ends, maybe tonight you will find yourself wondering if just maybe, this time it will end differently. Maybe this time Capulet will take a moment to listen to his daughter, letters will arrive where they're supposed to, and Romeo will ask the important clarifying questions. Just maybe, they will take their time.

As always, thank you for supporting the arts here at Nordonia.

Chris Simmons, Director of Drama

CAST

Romeo.....*Ezekiel Rayle*

Juliet.....*Katie Hersh*

The House of Capulet

Capulet.....*Zion Fountain*

Lady Capulet.....*Naomi Weatherlow-Rand*

Nurse.....*London Chapman*

Tybalt.....*Princess Okechukwu*

The House of Montague

Montague.....*Lowell Halfhill*

Lady Montague.....*Isabella Schultz*

Benvolio.....*Xavior Smith*

The House of Escalus

Prince.....*Mera Kasasbeh*

Mercutio.....*Xavier Romero*

Paris.....*Ryan Arieta*

Citizens of Verona

Friar Lawrence.....*Sal Flauto*

Chorus.....*Hailey Cannon, Sophie Gentile, Mykah Rayle & Kate Wojnarowski*

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director.....Chris Simmons & Julia Dulaney

Technical Director.....Carlton Guc & Dylan Maholm

Fight Choreographer.....Dane CT Leasure

Fight Captain.....London Chapman & Ezekiel Rayle

Costumes.....Aubrey Spinetti & Xavior Smith

Social Media.....Ezekiel Rayle & Isabella Schultz

Graphic Design.....Logan Strauss

Production Photographer.....Lexi Majoros

Production Videographer.....Chris Rayle

Production Printing.....Kimpton Printing

Box Office.....Keyshaun Smith

Stage Manager.....Abigail Bendlak

Production Crew.....Elizabeth Ayers, Isabel Bendlak, Liam Bolling, Henry Burt, Macie Champa & Addy Sears

A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU TO...

Casey Wright | Jessy Archer | Amy Strauss

Shannon Conley | Anthony Buckler | Jeff Fox

Cindy Simmons | Ryan Dulaney | Vicki Lester

Eric Vasquez | Julie Kaczmarek | Eszti Pigniczky

Mary Kidd | Julie D'Aloiso | Caeden Bolling

Jen & Chris Rayle | Paul & Glenda Bolling

Mike Kelley and the NHS Custodial Staff

Rubber City Theatre

Dale & Helen Kimpton, Kimpton Printing

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Ryan Arieta (Paris) is in the 10th grade and this marks his second performance with Nordonia Drama, following his debut as Charlie Brown this past fall. He has worked with the Dobama Emerging Actors Program and has been involved in productions of *Gypsy* and *Spongebob Jr* at Aurora Community Theatre and Hathaway Brown. He is also involved in choir and a capella, and he plays piano and sings covers for his YouTube channel. After high school, Ryan currently plans to continue his education in a music related field.

Hailey Cannon (Chorus) is in the twelfth grade this year. She has appeared onstage in the ensembles of *The Little Mermaid, Mamma Mia!* and *The Addams Family*, and has also worked on crews for our shows. She has been a member of Drama's Executive Board for three years. Hailey is currently in the Media Arts program at CVCC and plans to go into film production after graduation in the spring.

London Chapman (Nurse, Fight Captain) is a senior this year. This is her third production onstage with Drama, following appearances in *Mamma Mia!* and *The Addams Family* (Grandma Addams). She also appeared as Deena last summer in *Almost, Maine* with Rubber City Theatre. She is currently serving as the Secretary for Drama and has worked on crews for past productions as well. London is involved with Mock Trial and Band, playing five instruments. After high school, she plans to continue her education in college, studying Music Education.

Sal Flauto (Friar Lawrence) is a sophomore at Nordonia. *Romeo & Juliet* marks his debut on the stage! He has been in Band for five years and participates in Science Olympiad. After high school, Sal plans to attend Cambridge University to study Archaeology and Paleontology.

Zion Fountain (Capulet) is a senior and this is his fourth year with Drama. He has appeared onstage at Nordonia in *Puffs, The Little Mermaid, Mamma Mia!* (Pepper), *Little Shop of Horrors* (Mushnik), and *The Addams Family* (Mal). Zion also spent time in *Almost, Maine* this past summer with Rubber City Theatre, appearing as Phil. He enjoys jokes, has been involved in a capella for 6 years, and is even working to start his own a capella group! Zion plans to attend college after high school, studying either Psychology or Music.

Sophie Gentile (Chorus) is a junior. After *Mamma Mia!* and *The Addams Family*, this is her third performance with Drama. She also worked with Rubber City Theatre this past summer on their production of *Almost, Maine* (Gayle). Sophie has also worked on crew and is currently the Tech Manager for Drama. She currently plans to attend The University of Akron after high school to study Entomology and Botany.

Lowell Halfhill (Montague) is a senior. Montague is his first role with Nordonia Drama, but he has previously been onstage with Ellet CLC and Rubber City Theatre, serving on the Advisory Committee for their Teen Takeover program. Past shows include *Peter Pan* (Smee) and *Almost, Maine* (Jimmy, Man). Lowell plans to go to college after graduation to study History, while continuing theatre. He likes coffee. (Same Lowell).

Katie Hersh (Juliet) is in the twelfth grade and has been involved with Nordonia Drama all throughout high school. Juliet marks her sixth performance onstage, following: *Puffs, The Little Mermaid, Mamma Mia!, Little Women* and *The Addams Family*. Katie is the Vice President for Drama this year and has also been involved in a capella for eight years. Katie currently plans to continue her education after graduation, studying Film or Theatre.

Mera Kasasbeh (Prince) is a freshman this year with no previous experience with the theatre. Welcome to Drama Mera! She is involved with Mock Trial, plays violin, loves photography and has also practiced martial arts. Mera speaks English and Arabic, is currently learning French, and plans to enter the medical field after high school. She became a vegetarian as a New Year's resolution!

Princess Okechukwu (Tybalt) is in the 11th grade and this is her fourth production with Nordonia Drama, following appearances in *Mamma Mia!, The Addams Family* and *Little Shop of Horrors* (Audrey II). Princess is also involved in Band, Choir and the Red Cross Club. After high school she plans to attend college to study Biochemistry and Music. Princess likes chocolate.

Ezekiel Rayle (Romeo, Fight Captain) is a senior appearing in his ninth production for Drama. He has also worked with Rubber City Theatre on several productions, and currently serves on the Advisory Committee for their Teen Takeover program. Some of his favorite roles include: *A Murder is Announced* (Inspector Craddock), *Mamma Mia!* (Sam), *Freaky Friday* (Adam), *Little Shop of Horrors* (Orin, and Everyone Else), *Charlie Brown* (Snoopy), *Little Women* (Laurie) and *The Addams Family* (Gomez). In addition to being the current President of Drama, he is also active with choir and a capella. After high school, Ezekiel plans to continue his education, studying Pharmaceutical Science.

Mykah Rayle (Chorus) is a freshman this year. She has been onstage with Drama at the middle school as well as many of our summer camp programs. She currently takes voice lessons from Vicki Lester and has been involved in many activities in the past, including track, dance and tae kwon do. Mykah is also an avid photographer and videographer who just loves to make people laugh. Her current future plans are to attend CVCC for Cosmetology to eventually work in a hair salon for theaters!

Xavier Romero (Mercutio) is in the tenth grade and is returning to the stage at Nordonia after making his first performance with Drama in *Charlie Brown* as Schroeder. His previous theatre experience includes productions of *Elf Jr* (Walter Hobbs), *Beauty and the Beast Jr* (Beast) and *Moana Jr* (Maui). He is involved with the Young Explorers program with the Twinsburg Fire Department, and is learning to play golf. A fun fact, Xavier was belting Aerosmith and Queen before he could speak full sentences!

Isabella Schultz (Lady Montague) is in the 11th grade this year. She has been dedicated to Drama for three years, both onstage and off. She has performed in *Mamma Mia!, Little Women* and *The Addams Family*. Isabella has been dancing for 11 years, and is also involved with Yearbook and the Future Educators Club. She is Drama's Publicity Manager and helps produce media content for several groups. Isabella currently plans to study Early Childhood Education in college.

Xavior Smith (Benvolio) is currently a tenth grader and this is his tenth show he has been involved in, his fourth with Nordonia Drama. He has also appeared in *Mamma Mia!, Little Women* and *The Addams Family*. He is also involved in Tennis and Future Problem Solvers. Xavior would like to continue his education after high school, studying Marketing and Graphic Design, while also continuing to be involved in theatre.

Naomi Weatherlow-Rand (Lady Capulet) is a sophomore. Following last spring's *The Addams Family*, this marks her second performance with Nordonia Drama. In addition to Drama, Naomi is involved in Band, Choir and Science Olympiad, and also studies piano. While she still has some time to decide what life after high school will hold, she is currently considering a liberal arts school to major in an English related field.

Kate Wojnarowski (Chorus) is in the 10th grade this year and this is her third role with Drama, having been onstage in *Little Women* (Beth) and *The Addams Family*. She was also active in Drama at the middle school and participated in our summer camps. Kate is active with a capella and works at Chick-Fil-A. While her plans after high school are still undecided, she is currently considering college but not sure what she wants to study just yet.

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION

There will be one 15-minute intermission.

Please silence your cell phones.

The taking of photographs or video with or without a flash is prohibited.

Concessions and Candy-Grams are available in the cafeteria.

If you do not wish to keep your program, please recycle them at the back of the auditorium after the performance.

Following the performance, we will be collecting donations to support **Our Community Hunger Center**. Thank you!!