***Romeo and Juliet, Overture-Fantasy***

Romeo and Juliet is an [orchestral work](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incidental_music) composed by [Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyotr_Ilyich_Tchaikovsky). It is styled an Overture-Fantasy, and is based on [Shakespeare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Shakespeare)'s [play of the same name](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romeo_and_Juliet). Although styled an 'Overture-Fantasy' by the composer, the overall design is a [symphonic poem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphonic_poem) in [sonata form](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sonata_form) with an introduction and an epilogue. The work is based on three main strands of the Shakespeare story. The first strand, written in [F-sharp minor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F-sharp_minor), is the introduction representing the saintly [Friar Laurence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friar_Laurence). Here there is a foreboding of doom from the lower strings.The Friar Laurence theme is heard in F minor, with plucked strings, before ending up in E minor. The introduction is [chorale](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chorale)-like.

Eventually a single first inversion [B minor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B_minor) chord is passed back and forth between strings and woodwinds grows into the second strand in B minor, the strife theme of the warring Capulets and Montagues, including a reference to the sword fight, depicted by crashing cymbals. There are agitated, quick sixteenth notes. The action suddenly slows, the key changing from B minor to D-flat and we hear the opening bars of the "love theme", the third strand, passionate and yearning in character but always with an underlying current of anxiety.The love theme signifies the couple first meeting and the scene at Juliet's balcony. The English horn and viola represent Romeo, while the flutes represent Juliet.

In the development, the battling strand returns, this time with more intensity and build-up, with the Friar Laurence theme heard with agitation in F# minor. This section is then repeated a semitone higher. Eventually, a fortissimo is reached where the trumpets play an altered Friar Laurence theme with the rest of the orchestra having an off-beat gesture, in B minor. This leads into the recapitulation where the strife theme returns.

A transition is heard where the clarinets play an altered love theme over restless violin phrases, before the strings enter with a lush, hovering melody over which the flute and oboe eventually soar with the love theme once again, this time loud and in [D major](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D_major), and finally heard in E major. It is interrupted by two large orchestra hits with [cymbal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cymbal) crashes, which symbolize the families' war disrupting their love, and eventually bringing their deaths, with hate prevailing over love. A final battle theme is played, then a soft, slow dirge in [B major](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B_major) ensues, with [timpani](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timpani) playing a repeated [triplet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triplet_%28music%29) pattern, and [tuba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuba) holding a B natural for 16 bars. The woodwinds play a sweet homage to the young couple, and a final allusion to the love theme brings in the climax, beginning with a huge [crescendo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crescendo) B natural roll of the timpani, and the orchestra plays [homophonic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homophony) shouts of a B major chord before the final bar, with full orchestra belting out a powerful B natural to close the overture.

The Overture's love theme has been influentially used in many television series and movies such as [*Moonraker*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moonraker_%28film%29), [*Columbo*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columbo), [*The Jazz Singer*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Jazz_Singer) (1927), [*Wayne's World*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wayne%27s_World), [*Animaniacs*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animaniacs), [*Taz-Mania*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taz-Mania), [*Tiny Toon Adventures*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiny_Toon_Adventures), [*Scrubs*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scrubs_%28TV_series%29), [*Seeing Double*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seeing_Double_%282003_film%29), [*The Simpsons*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Simpsons), [*South Park*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Park), [*Clueless*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clueless_%28film%29), [*A Christmas Story*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Christmas_Story), [*The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Fresh_Prince_of_Bel-Air), [*SpongeBob SquarePants*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SpongeBob_SquarePants), [*Pushing Daisies*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pushing_Daisies), [*Sesame Street*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sesame_Street), [*El Chavo*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Chavo), [*The Three Musketeers*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Three_Musketeers_%281948_film%29), and [*The Ren & Stimpy Show*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Ren_%26_Stimpy_Show), among others.

This piece is typically played without interruption, but for the children’s concert, the music will pause to allow for narration throughout the piece.

Excerpt #1: “Friar Lawrence” 0:11-5:31

Excerpt #2 “Duel” 5:26-7:41

Excerpt #3: “Love” 7:41-11:14

Excerpt #4: “Tension between families” 11:14-13:55

Excerpt #5: “Inevitable Fate” 13:55-17:40

Excerpt #6: “Epilogue” 17:40-20:07

**Resources:**

[Tchaikovsky: Fantasy Overture 'Romeo and Juliet' - Radio Philharmonic Orchestra - Live Concert HD](https://youtu.be/f6qZUCi7ToQ?si=ecUd6p3bUgyV7YfW)

[Tchaikovsky: Romeo and Juliet, Fantasy Overture, TH 42](https://youtu.be/znKS1QuCUI0?si=4Kn6YDtDwb0t6gBB)