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Bradley Williams and Kenn Woodward will sing the roles of Romeo and Mercutio, respectively, in *Romeo et Juliette*.

## 'Romeo et Juliette' opens at Hult

By Ming Rodrigues  
Emerald Contributor

The face of opera is changing. Where vocals were the tradition, today's opera integrates song, dance and theater to lend fresh dynamism to an age-old performance art.

This weekend, viewers will get a feel of what modern opera is all about when the Eugene Opera presents its unique, ballet-inspired interpretation of the Bard's classic love story, *Romeo et Juliette*.

"The scope of opera lends itself very well to many art forms," said Dorothy Ryan of the Eugene Opera. "Our production of *Romeo et Juliette* has met a great match in fusing both the dramatic and balletic traditions of this classic tale."

With so many elements shaping the opera, choreographer Susan Zadoff, a senior instructor with the University's dance department, worked closely with director James Toland to create a piece that would pull all the elements together into one visually stunning work.

"In my choreography, I had to constantly keep in mind the fact that the cast would be singing while moving at the same time," Zadoff said. "And with singers who are not really experienced dancers, there are limits to the choreography. I had to come up with challenging steps but nothing too fancy." Zadoff plays Lady Capulet in the production.

"We have a huge cast with 12 dancers, and my challenge was to take the cast and create a full,

active, moving stage while keeping to the feel of the period in which the play is set," she said.

Working with a 19th century lyrical opera score, Zadoff had to ensure that the sense of carriage and gestures of the Renaissance period tied in smoothly with the music.

"I think it's great that opera is taking on a more dramatic stance with many opera performers today trained in one degree or another in dance and acting," Zadoff said. "This integrated concept of song and dance is exciting and adds more buoyancy to the richness of opera."

Founded in 1976, the Eugene Opera, now in its 16th season, started out as a community opera. With a cast of mostly local singers, the company performed mainly in high school auditoriums for local audiences.

Conductor Francis Graffeo, who has led many Eugene Opera productions including last season's *Rigoletto* and *Madame Butterfly*, will return to conduct this masterpiece of the French romantic period. For this production, the opera chorus includes 10 University students and seven alumni.

*Romeo et Juliette*, written by Charles Gounod, will be sung in French with supertitles. It opens tonight at 8 p.m. at the Hult Center and will close with a matinee performance Sunday, March 8, at 2:30 p.m.

Ticket prices range from \$7 to \$45 with student and seniors discounts. Tickets are available at the EMU Main Desk or by calling the Hult Center ticket office at 687-5000.

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