

TNT theatre Britain and the American Drama Group Europe presents

ROMEO AND JULIET
By William Shakespeare
Directed and edited by Paul Stebbings

A synopsis

*After a violent clash between Verona's two most powerful families---the Montagues and the Capulets---Prince Escalus orders peace in the land. Lord Capulet, as a show of good faith, promises his daughter Juliet's hand in marriage to the Prince's nephew, Paris. In celebration of the engagement, a masked ball is arranged. Romeo Montague and his friends attend the celebration; there, Romeo and Juliet meet and fall in love. They are secretly wed the next day by Friar Laurence. *

Before the young lovers can settle their plans, more fighting breaks out between the feuding families. Romeo refuses to fight Tybalt, Juliet's cousin. Instead Mercutio, Romeo's aggressive friend takes the challenge himself. He is killed and Romeo, enraged, slaughters Tybalt. The Prince punishes Romeo by banishing him from Verona.

Juliet's father insists that her marriage to Paris go ahead as soon as possible. She begs for Friar Laurence's help; he instructs her to pretend to agree to the wedding, but to take a sleeping potion which will make her appear dead for forty-eight hours. She will be laid to rest in the Capulet family tomb, and when she awakens, Romeo will be there to steal her away.

*The plan nearly succeeds, except that Friar Laurence's message to Romeo explaining the situation is not delivered. Romeo, hearing only of Juliet's "death," hastens to the tomb where he is surprised by Paris.

They fight and Romeo kills Paris. Heartbroken, Romeo takes poison and dies next to Juliet's body. When she wakes and finds him dead, she stabs herself. The families rush to the tomb. They are reconciled over the bodies of their dead children.*

Style and approach;

""Two houses both alike in dignity*

In fair Verona where we set our scene."

(Prologue Romeo and Juliet).

.....

Seite -2- ROMEO AND JULIET

*These two quotations from the opening speech of the play are usually ignored in modern productions of Shakespeare's famous romantic tragedy.

"West Side Story" and Leonardo de Caprio's recent gangster version cast long shadows on this delicate play. But this is not a play about poor urban street fighters, nor a play about racial conflict. The Capulets and Montagues are of the same caste and share the same values. Their retainers fight on the streets. Shakespeare is criticising their joint values, which are those of powerful families. This is, of course, the stuff of tragedy: when the mighty sin the state trembles. The "star crossed lovers" deaths expose the follies of the vicious clan warfare that their families perpetuate. Those families are reformed and reconciled. None of this makes any sense if Romeo is some broke and hip street kid. The Montagues and Capulets are two sides of the same coin.

They are also Italian. And so one starting point of our production is to stay with Shakespeare's torrid Latin setting. We choose to locate the production in an early modern Italy, where clan violence, dignity, aristocracy, Catholicism, arranged marriages and chaste love are all imaginable. *

*The play is highly stylised, masked balls and ritual violence form set pieces. We will employ stylised choreography and once again commission a live musical score from a leading composer. While establishing a rich theatrical environment we will also strive to maintain a Shakespearian style that relies on the actor's skills and audience's imagination rather than complex settings and design. As with our current acclaimed production of TAMING OF THE SHREW, we will attempt to present the play rather than impose a simplistic interpretation on the original. "Romeo and Juliet"

is one of the most popular plays ever written, we aim to present it with its poetry and romance intact, while delivering a powerful, stylised drama. *

Paul Stebbings

Director

TNT theatre Britain

The American Drama Group Europe