

Question 7 – Romeo and Juliet

- 7 Evaluate a live performance you have seen, explaining how closely the production reflected the conventions of that performance style of drama. At the start of your answer state the name, venue and date (month and year) of the live performance you have seen. [40]

Romeo and Juliet, Immersion Theatre, Venue, MM YYYY

The piece of theatre I am going to evaluate is Immersion Theatre's modern adaptation of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. Director James Tobias set the story in 1984-5 during the miner's strike. My main impression of the show was that as the play progressed I was increasingly impressed by the adaptation represented. I was aware that the play was going to be set in the 1980's era, and although I was apprehensive as to whether the story could have the same influence as the original setting, I was pleasantly surprised with the direction and production of the show.

The set designer used a static set throughout the whole show, made of scaffolding, corrugated iron sheets to make two raised platforms accessible by ladder and steps, with a main entrance in between. The set was an open set, no part of it was moved or changed, however it was used in different ways to create different surroundings for the actors.

The lighting switched between light and dark depending of the time of day, as with a story like this with vital events happening in difference time frames, it's important to establish whether the characters are in night or day. Lighting was used symbolically at some points, for example I found that the use of dim red lighting over the final death scene between Romeo and Juliet helped set the mood and portray the danger and loss in the scene. There was also coloured lighting when the characters were at the party. Different flashes of pink, green and blue lights showed the pandemonium of the evening, and represented how no one was showing their 'true colours'. Symbolic lighting such as this made the play easier to understand, if an audience member struggles to understand the Shakespearian language they can still gain an insight into the atmosphere of the scene through lighting.

As the play went on the set was interpreted in different ways, using Brechtian techniques of reusing set and creating different environments with it. For example, throughout the play the set became the Capulet household, the Montague household, a church and a courtyard. This use of minimal set being used in different ways was a good method of allowing the audience to focus on the storyline and the characters instead of what was around them. The fact the set used dull colours made this possible as well, representing the brutality and darkness of the miners' strike. As this production was on tour the set had to be cheap and minimal so that it could be moved around easily, and despite this I thought that the set was perfect, and didn't need any more adding to it.

It was obvious that the costume designer wanted to portray the modern twist on the story through the character's costuming. It was apparent throughout that the characters were wearing costumes from the 80's era. Romeo wore a red t-shirt, denim jacket and trainers to represent his youth, similarly Juliet wore a short girly red dress, reflecting her young, feminine and romantic side. An aspect of costuming I liked was through Romeo, Mercutio and Benvolio wearing 'Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle' masks to the Capulets party, which I thought was effective as it was a comedic way of modernising the costumes. The costuming was also important to keep the audience understanding the adaptation of the play. The miner's wore costumes that indicated their jobs, whilst holding protest signs to make clear the position they were in. The outfits also signified solidarity, all the men wearing dark green coats and grey hats, with dark trousers all holding orange signs.

I think the director made a wise choice setting the classic story in the 1980's miners' strike. The story was told in a bold and original way. It was a time consisting of power, passion, community and solidarity but also contrasting with danger and conflict. This period reflected love and loss, fitting perfectly with the storyline of Romeo and Juliet. It was a volatile time, so setting the production in that era was a tangible thing for the director to do. He kept to the Shakespearian language and didn't include any new language, which I thought was an effective way of keeping the authenticity of the play intact, even though he set it in the 80's. The Movement Director and Fight Director very skilfully choreographed

movement that broke up the dialogue and kept the audience engaged by keeping the production fast-paced.

I found that the director and the actors did an excellent job of telling the story of Romeo and Juliet. Tybalt was aggressive as well as conserved when he needed to be, and made the audience believe everything he was saying through his exceptional use of vocals when delivering lines. The characters that I found most engaging were the stars themselves, Romeo and Juliet were outstanding at delivering the story. I couldn't help but feel entirely convinced that these two characters were madly in love. The selfishness and foolishness of young love come to life through this great example of casting. By the interval I was at the edge of my seat, anticipating the second act to follow this couple through their tragic events. I left the theatre satisfied and more educated on Shakespeare's classic tale.

The whole company did a very good job at communicating the story of Romeo and Juliet. The director made the right choice casting the actors that he did, they were all perfect for their roles and allowed me to understand and connect with their characters. The fight scenes and the choreography kept me engaged with the play and the set and costuming brought the whole play together. I believe that overall the story of Romeo and Juliet was effectively communicated to the audience both through performance and production.



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