**“Romeo and Juliet”**

**By Matthew Bourne and New Adventures.**

**Saturday 8th June at 2:30pm.**

**Interval notes.**

Welcome back to the **New Adventures’** world premiere touring production of the modern ballet “**Romeo and Juliet** “.

I am Wendy, your audio describer for Act 2. This is a short but very dramatic Act lasting roughly 30 minutes and contains violence, threatening behaviour and bloodshed.

**Sir Matthew Bourne**’s aim for this production was to celebrate youthful energy, talent and creativity both on and off stage.

Following the success of his previous production of an all male “Lord of the Flies “ Bourne wanted to give both young men and women the opportunity to work alongside and be mentored by a professional company.

This includes a group of 6 young Associate Artists working with the creative team in choreography, set and costume design, lighting, sound, orchestration and conducting.

At each venue on the show’s tour, aspiring local dancers were chosen to train and perform with the company. **Maea Morgan** from Helston, **Jessica** **Tarrant** from Torquay, **Ella Roberts** from Dartmouth, **Jamel Maarfi** from Plymouth and **James Knott** from Cardiff ( all only 18 or 19 years old ) were selected to dance here, in Plymouth.

In this radical reworking of **Shakespeare**’s iconic play, Bourne does away with the original theme of two feuding families ( apart from Juliet, the Capulets don’t even appear. ) He focusses instead on the abuse and misuse of power, especially by adults over adolescents. It is timeless and salient in its exploration of teenage discovery and sexuality, vulnerability, repressed emotions and the intensity of first love.

**Act 2** sees a huge difference in atmosphere and the power dynamic – this is subtly conveyed by a change of pace in keeping with the music, lighting and evocative sound effects. The set is essentially the same, with a few tweaks –such as the 3 main doorways now having sliding, white metal gates, while beds, lights and desks appear in different places and combinations.

There are no new characters in this half, but the doctor or psychologist is more prominent, either when surveying his patients from the balcony or when questioning and observing Juliet in her room.

There are few costume changes in Act 2- the young people generally wear white ( either loose or fitted -3 couples also dance in white underwear in a memory sequence. ) Romeo is forced to wear a white leather strait jacket for a while.

Coloured clothing tends to be worn by the adults and signifies authority and the world outside the Verona Institute. Tybalt looms in a black vest and trousers with large, aggressive tattoos visible on his muscly arms as he maliciously wields his leather belt. (He also has a livid red line on his neck caused by the strangulation.)

Lighting is used to great effect to signify changes in mood, time and internal and external settings. Spotlights are used to split the stage as simultaneous action occurs, usually involving Romeo and Juliet. Camera flashes, torchlight and looming shadows of Tybalt act as a visual shorthand and add to the drama. There are also some scary sound effects to listen out for and the music ranges from gentle, passionate to violent and frightening. We leave the auditorium to an archly contrasting blast of Lady GaGa’s “Bad Romance”……oh, how true !

During the interval the young people gradually drift onto the stage in a dazed and stupefied state. Five of the regulation metal hospital beds are arranged diagonally across the stage ( in two rows…one of three beds and the other of two. ) The lighting is very subdued but warm and there is no sound, bar the inmates rocking or repeated movements. Everyone moves in slow motion or as if under water, making no eye contact and seemingly lost within their own heads.

**Act 1** ended with the shocking and violent death of the bullying guard, Tybalt. Juliet may have put his own belt around his neck to avenge herself for his abuse but the other inmates acted as a frenzied mob and joined in with the strangulation- they are all culpable in his murder. It is now one week after this shocking event and the inmates all appear to be traumatised, comatose or heavily sedated. All signs of youthful vitality and excitement have been well and truly extinguished by the authorities. The young people have been chemically controlled…… some even lie on the floor or cling to the walls, gazing into space or repeating basic actions.

The nurse and the orderly gently lead in the patients who are dressed in loose, pyjama- like clothing. As the music filters through to them, some of them sway to the rhythm and become more animated. And so we begin……

Well that was stunning….and exhausting…not a dry eye in the house.

We hope you enjoyed this production by Matthew Bourne and his company New Adventures. They will be returning to the Theatre Royal in the middle of November with “The Red Shoes “.

The next audio described performance will be for “Les Misérables” on Thursday 20th June at 2:30pm.

Thank you for your company – have a safe journey home.

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