

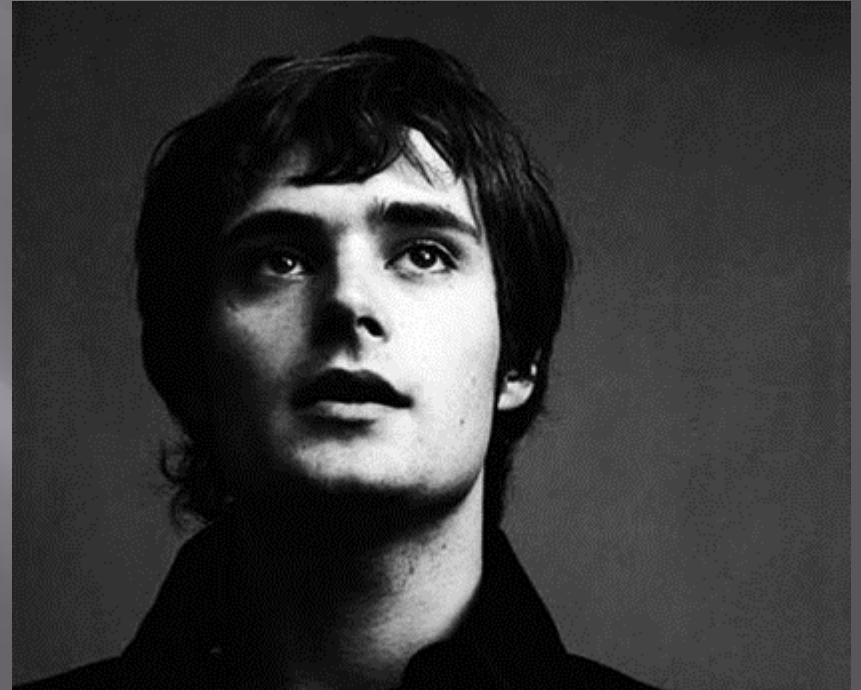
FRANCO ZEFFIRELLI'S  
ROMEO & JULIET (1968)  
AND  
BAZ LUHRMANN'S  
ROMEO + JULIET (1996):  
A COMPARISON

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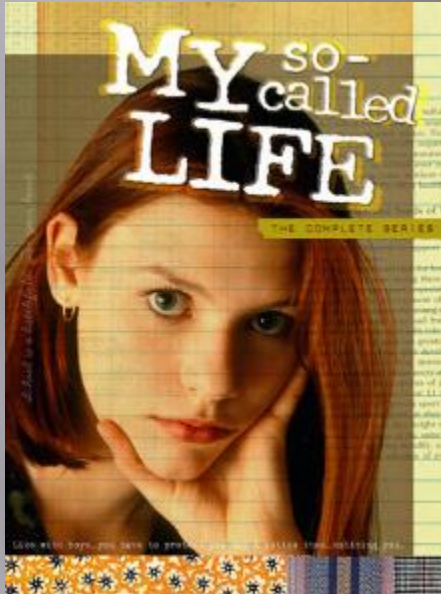
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# Casting



Zeffirelli chose two relatively unknown actors, who were younger, and closer to the actual ages of the characters. Olivia Hussey was 15, and Leonard Whiting was 17 during the making of the film. Neither actor had received wide critical acclaim.

# Casting



Luhrmann chose more established, acclaimed actors. Both Claire Danes and Leonardo DiCaprio had appeared in 5 films and a television series each before *Romeo + Juliet*. Danes and DiCaprio were older than their characters — she was 16 and he was 21 during the filming of this version. Danes had received an Emmy and a Golden Globe. DiCaprio had been nominated for two Golden Globes.

# Setting

Zeffirelli uses the Italian town of Pienza as a backdrop to create a more traditional feel. This is a more literal, authentic look at Shakespeare's play, which is set in Verona, Italy.





# Setting



Luhrmann takes poetic license and sets his modern retelling in Verona Beach, a fictional modern beach town that is reminiscent of a beach community in Southern California. He uses rundown structures and contemporary ruins to create a more gritty feel.

# Costuming

Zeffirelli color codes his cast to make it easier for the audience to differentiate the two families and their central characters. Both families are in traditional medieval clothing: the Capulets appear in warm colors, mostly reds and golds. The Montagues appear in dark colors, mostly blues, purples, dark green, black.



CAPULETS



MONTAGUES

# Costuming



The device that Luhrmann uses is not color, but cars, weapons, and family crests to distinguish the two families. The Montagues dress more like “punks” with loose, casual clothing and drive brightly colored sports vehicles, while the Capulets dress like mobsters in black pants, suits and vests; they drive modified hot rods.



# Directing

Zeffirelli frames the characters in close ups to feature their emotions.



The result is a more intimate telling of the story. You feel as though you are “in” the conversation between characters.





# Directing

Luhrmann uses setting in wide shots to emphasize the character's emotions in larger frames.

- When we first meet Romeo, he is on a sunny beach, his future filled with promise.
- When Mercutio dies, the skies turn dark, and Romeo's anger seems to blend with the coming storm.



# Acting

Claire Danes' Juliet is a more mature, worldly, clever Juliet.

- ▣ Claire Danes' facial expressions are smooth smiles, furtive glances at Romeo's advances.
- ▣ When the two are almost seen by the guard in the pool courtyard, she hides Romeo behind her.
- ▣ When her parents insist that she marry Paris, she protests, then is thrown by her father. Juliet cries after, but not in front of her abuser.



# Acting

Olivia Hussey's Juliet is more innocent, immature, and child-like.

- Olivia Hussey's facial expression at Romeo's advances is blushing, wide-eyed, innocent.
- In the balcony scene, Juliet talks of Romeo in an idealized way, and giggles childishly.
- When she argues with her parents over marrying Paris, she whines, whimpers, and turns to the nurse for comfort.



# Symbolism

Luhrmann uses water as a symbol of purity in his film.



- When we first see Juliet, she is underwater.
- When Romeo and Juliet first meet, it is through a large fish tank.
- Instead of the traditional balcony scene, Romeo and Juliet discuss dismissing their names and being “new baptized” in the pool outside Juliet’s window.
- When Romeo is without Juliet, he is living in a dry, parched land – the absence of water.
- When Tybalt is killed, he falls into a fountain, and his blood flows into the water.



# Music

Both versions of Shakespeare's tale include a featured soloist during the first meeting of Romeo and Juliet. Both films use music to create a soundtrack to their playful flirting.



Glen Weston sings lyrics that focus on youth, beauty and how youth is fleeting.



Des'ree's song is more intimate. The lyrics, "I'm kissing you" mirror the characters' desire for each other.

# Comparison of ending

Franco Zeffirelli decided to stick close with Shakespeare's script. The setting of the catacomb is dark and macabre. In this version, Romeo finds Juliet dead and takes his own life. Friar Lawrence comes in, Juliet awakes, but refuses to leave, because she sees Romeo. She then commits suicide with Romeo's dagger. Romeo is not made aware of Juliet's scheme to fool her family. This tragic ending leaves the audience surprised by the couples bad timing.

Lurmann took liberties with the script and timing of the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. In this version Juliet witnesses Romeo's death, and Romeo is aware that Juliet is alive. It is a cruel irony for Romeo to be aware that he has died in vain. The result of this treatment is more emotional for the audience.



# My opinion

- ▣ I liked both versions of Romeo and Juliet. But I liked the 1968 version directed by Zeffirelli better. I felt that he kept the script true to how William Shakespeare intended. I also had a hard time with the modernization of the 1996 version by Baz Luhrmann and the use of guns to represent the swords. When I think of Romeo and Juliet I feel it should be set in simpler times. I also think that by Zeffirelli using actors that were not known helped me be more interested in the movie. With Luhrmans version using known actors I was expecting a great performance but was a little disappointed. What I did like about the 1996 version was the more dramatic and emotional ending especially when the director had Romeo's performance more emotional to heighten the experience with the viewer.