

Shakespeare

Feisty, Funny and Determined

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What is *Romeo and Juliet* all about?

I think there's so much in it. I mean the first thing that you think of is young love. The idea of falling in love for the first time. The excitement of that, the danger of that in many ways. That idea of when you're a teenager those first kind of arguments you start having with your parents. The first times you start realising you think something different to your mum and dad. And also the idea of young people like the guys, and they're getting into fights all the time. And there's kind of unnecessary bloodshed, and unnecessary arguments I think is something that happens as a teenager. Maybe it doesn't lead to death, but it's these unnecessary arguments and people growing up and not knowing how to necessarily deal with their emotions, and it all spiralling out of control. There's also the idea of these two families that are at war, that are fighting against each other. And this is an argument that has gone back so many years nobody even knows why, and yet still it's the young people, it's the next generation who suffer.

Juliet's character

I loved Juliet actually. And what I found interesting playing her is that before you hear a lot about Juliet and actually when I read the play I realised how feisty she is. How determined she is. And how funny she is. I found her really funny. And I found that really exciting to kind of find different parts of her, different elements of her. She's a good girl at heart. She wants to obey her parents. She wants to be good but she has this ... when she meets Romeo and she falls in love she has this desire that's kind of stronger than her parents. And I think a lot of teenagers get to that point when suddenly they go, 'There are things that my parents are saying that I don't necessarily agree with. Or that I want to challenge, or I want to ...' you know, you want them to understand your side of the story. And I love, in the balcony scene where Juliet is saying, 'Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo? Deny thy fortune,' you know. It's really quite ... she knows exactly what she wants. And it's not 'Oh, where are you Romeo? Ah, you're so lovely.' It's 'Come on, Romeo, come and find me. Forget about the fact that our families are against each other, fight all the time. If you want me, come and find me.' She knows what she wants and I love that. She's very determined.

Performing *Romeo and Juliet* in the Middle East

So we performed in Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Again most of those performances were for teenagers out there as well, which was incredible. It's always great to tour and to perform to different communities and in different countries. It's fantastic. We had to change some of the

production a little bit, just out of respect. When we were in the Middle East we didn't kiss on the lips, *Romeo and Juliet*, we kissed on the hands. And we just adapted it a little bit just so the teenagers, again so it could be more relatable to them and less alien. There was a bit of a difference I suppose with the audiences in the Middle East compared to London. They were a lot quieter in the Middle East. You could see them and they were with us, they were responding. But at the end, the uproar and the applause was incredible. And the smiles were incredible. And then when we performed in London the young people particularly were very loud and engaged vocally throughout, shouting. Really going with the production, shouting along with the show.

My favourite lines from *Romeo and Juliet*

There's this line that always sticks out. 'My bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep. The more I give to thee the more I have, for both are infinite.' And I just love that line. I remember having such joy saying it. It's one of those moments when she says that in the play where she is at her most happiest and her most joyful. Both of them. It's that kind of moment where at that point everything is going well. And I think that kind of sums it up.