

Compare the opening
scenes of luhrmann
and zeffirelli film
adaptation of romeo
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Franco Zeffirelli was born in 1923. He was Educated at the Accademia di Belle Arti, Florence, and Florence University (architecture). It was during his time at the university where he found about his love for the world of opera and theater. Zeffirelli's name is still most closely associated with his next film, 'Romeo and Juliet' (1968). In a bit of inspired casting, Zeffirelli chose two teenage actors, Olivia Hussey and Leonard Whiting, to play the leads.

This version of Shakespeare's tragedy was consonant with the 1960s and included a nude love scene. A box-office smash, 'Romeo and Juliet' also earned Academy Awards for cinematography and costume design. Romeo and Juliet are not his only Shakespearian films; he has directed versions of Hamlet and Othello. Nearly all of Zeffirelli's films are adaptations, in which he uses exotic locations and grand costumes.

Zeffirelli's adaptation of Romeo and Juliet was made for the audience of the 60s who expected a true adaptation of what 'Romeo and Juliet' would have been in the 16th Century Baz Luhrmann was originally born Bazmark Anthony Luhrmann in 1962 in New South Wales. He has taken on many roles in the film industry. During his career he has been an actor, writer, producer, songwriter, and director of theater, television, opera and films. Luhrmann's adaptation of William Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet' gave audiences a new look at the Bard's classic tale of pubescent passion with bright colors, fast-paced editing, stylized sets and costumes, and emotionally intense performances by Clare Danes and Leonardo DiCaprio as the original star-crossed lovers. All of this was necessary to move on with the times. The film was made with the young generation of the 90s in mind.

The opening scene in Zeffirelli's version 'Romeo and Juliet' is very slow, very calm and the actors perform in the manner true to the Shakespearian times. The opening scene of Luhrmann's version of the film is very fast, exciting and the actors perform with a lot of aggression and passion. A prologue or introduction is read out; this is followed by a fight between the Montagues and the Capulets. The fight in Zeffirelli's version is provoked whereas Luhrmann seemed to make the fight happen more by chance. The two films tell the same story but in two completely different styles.

In 1968, if you were going to go and watch Shakespeare film, you would expect authentic English actors, an authentic setting, appropriate costume and no profanities or violence. The film would itself be true to its roots and an accurate telling of the story of 'Romeo and Juliet'. The actors themselves should be jolly, cheerful and expressive. All of these factors contribute to the overall audience expectations in the late 1960s. In 1996, the audience expectations are completely the opposite. The actors have to be well-known or be known to a certain degree.

The setting would typically be North America in a big city. A lot of films released during the 90s such as 'Mission: Impossible', 'Independence Day', 'Batman' and 'Deep Impact' were all set in big cities and grossed millions of dollars at the box-office. The costume would have to be very fashionable, exclusive and desirable. Action, violence and coarse language are the key factors though.

The modern audience wants a film full of adrenaline rushes and special effects. In Zeffirelli's film the actors are clad in tights and tunics. The whole

scene is set in a castle market square and courtyard. The general colours are dull to show the authenticity and sluggishness of the film. Many grey, black and white colours are used. Swords are used as weapons to show clearly that the film is true to the story.

Luhrmann has used bright coloured clothing to represent one family and black and white clothing to represent the others. Clothing is very important in this era. The type of clothes show the type of person you are. They also show your wealth.

Both families appear to be wearing a very expensive form of uniform. The city is a backdrop for the film with many other modern features such as cars and petrol stations. The guns and cigarettes are glamorised to an extent, this is shown when the guns and cigarettes are given close-ups and extreme close-ups. The whole scene is bright and colourful, but more importantly very fast.

The bright colours of the Montague contrast the Capulet's black suits perfectly and they show 'gang war' at its finest. Zeffirelli uses very slow shots. His opening shot is a very slow extreme long-shot, then a tracking shot, followed by a long shot and then another tracking shot. This gives the audience a very calm and relaxed impression of the film. It lowers tension and creates a feeling that the whole film is going to be peaceful. When the actors are introduced, medium shots are used.

This doesn't generate an exciting mood. The medium shots are continually used until the beginning of the fight. The beginning of the fight is when the first close up shot is used. This is the first sign of any action or excitement.
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When the fight dies being a mixture of medium shots and close-ups are used. In the middle of the fight, a new character is introduced. A close-up of his feet is used to create mystery as to who he is. The shot then becomes a tracking shot and moves up his body to reveal his face. This is exciting because the no character before has been introduced with such glamour.

Moments later the quarrel recommences and medium shots and close-ups are used again. The medium shots and close-ups are used to create excitement but the shots aren't very exciting and they don't stray too far away from the calm feeling created at the beginning. Luhrmann uses a zoom in for his first shot. Already a little mystery has been created.

The shot finishes as a medium shot. When this has finished, a very fast montage commences. It fills the audience with excitement and expectation. Because the film is targeted at a youthful audience they want excitement, a fast montage like this is ideal. There are captions showing who the characters in the film are.

The main film beings when the montage finishes, yet the editing is still quite rapid. Many close-ups and medium shots are used and there isn't much combat taking place. Fast zoom-in shots are used as well. These shots were not used in the Zeffirelli version. As soon as the action does begin, an extreme close-up is used. The camera appears to be moving very unsteadily, giving the impression that the film is like a 'home movie'.

A fast forward shot is used to add comedy value. This is then followed by a contrasting slow motion shot. Then there is a medium, close-up, extreme close-up combination that works very well because it adds anticipation. As <https://assignbuster.com/compare-the-opening-scenes-of-luhrmann-and-zeffirelli-film-adaptation-of-romeo-and-juliet/>

the action continues many medium shots and close-ups are used with slow-motion shots in between to create drama and tension, which is just what the audience wants to see.

The scene finishes with a point of view shot then a slow motion shot. This is rarely used and makes for a good end to the opening scene. Zeffirelli's extra-diegetic music is very slow and soft. The diegetic sounds consists of 7 white males. The narrator himself sounds white, aristocratic and he uses Standard English. The tone the actors themselves use is cheerful, elegant and animated.

All the characters appear to be merrily getting along, even when they are at knife-point. The whole atmosphere that is created doesn't seem very aggressive when the actors are quarrelling. The character Benvolio is stabbed in the eye and even then, the perpetrator seems quite happy. This doesn't create much tension. The narrator in Luhrmann's film is a black female with an American accent. This is a complete contrast to Zeffirelli's film.

This shows how society has evolved and developed since the Shakespearian times. Black women are socially accepted. The main actors speak with much aggression. The Montagues have deep, white male, American accents. The Capulets on the other hand have very strong Latino, Hispanic accents.

To introduce the Montagues, Luhrmann decided to use a very controversial band's song. This song is played while the Montagues are just seen on screen till they enter the petrol station. The way the actors who play the

Monatgues speak perfectly compliments the extra-diegetic sounds. The <https://assignbuster.com/compare-the-opening-scenes-of-luhrmann-and-zeffirelli-film-adaptation-of-romeo-and-juliet/>

music in the background is from the 'punk' genre. The way the Montagues are portrayed as 'punks', adds to the feel that they are part of a clan. When the Capulets are introduced, western music begins to play, Guitars are the main element.

The Capulets speak with very strong Hispanic accents and dress immaculately, this combines very well with the western style music. This works well because typically Hispanic people are associated with Guitars and western music. As soon as the tension begins to escalate the tones become more aggressive and emotional. At one point, all of the sounds are blanked out except for two noises. A technique called 'foregrounding' is used for this.

The noises of the wind rushing by and a swinging sign create tension. And prepare the audience for some action. The extra-diegetic music used during the montage is operatic, classical, and extremely dramatic. Operatic music is itself Italian. The play is set in Verona, this helps create an atmosphere for the audience. The feeling that encompasses the audience when watching the Zeffirelli film is an overall aura of calmness and tranquillity.

The actors are very jolly and cheerful and not a lot of excitement or tension ensues. The Luhrmann film gives the modern audience what they want: action, lots of it and generally fast and loud. Luhrmann has met all the expectations that are required for making his film yet it is very different to what Zeffirelli and his audience would have expected.