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FEATURE WRITERS SPAWN

Excalibur guilty and condemned

Sorry YUP, we tried to kill you before you were dead.
 Due to a misunderstanding we reported that this is the last year for York University Players. Bill Schyven, producer of YUP tells us that the players have a long life ahead. Please forgive Excalibur's optimism.



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 trio
 together nitely



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 november four to nine

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Photo by Douglas Spillane

Louise Marleau as Juliet and Christopher Walken as Romeo in the Stratford Festival Production.

Romeo and Juliet

by David McCaughna

Romeo and Juliet, currently in its last weeks at the Stratford Festival, is given a clear and lucid production by director Douglas Campbell. The play is devoid of the lush, romantic Italian atmosphere which has come to be its mainstay in so many productions. Campbell's production is straightforward and to the point, indeed it is so straight and plain that the production lacks tempo and zest, a tempo and zest that the Italian director Franco Zeffereilli instills in his Shakespearean productions on the British stage and in his film *Taming of the Shrew*, and also, reportedly, in his new film of **Romeo and Juliet**.

Stratford director Campbell speaks of the Zeffereilli production, "The last time I saw this play on stage was the much praised production by Italian director Franco Zeffereilli — very Italian — very handsome to look at and erotically exciting. The **Romeo and Juliet** were, 'how you say,' in 'luv'. I confess to the sin of thoroughly disliking it. Essentially visual, it entirely ignored the language of the play and the implications of the romantic style of the verse." There should, of course, be a happy medium between production effects and the language. Campbell puts his emphasis upon the words. Although I don't think the language in **Romeo and Juliet** ranks among Shakespeare's best (*Hamlet*, *The Tempest*, *King Lear*) it is still, in parts, strikingly beautiful. Lacking elaborate and colourful production techniques which have often marred other productions of this play, Campbell sticks safely to the language, and in part there is a flair and speed missing.

The first half of Campbell's production is undoubtedly the best, here the play moves on a fast and smooth line to the notorious and clumsily handled balcony scene, and from then on the play seems to lose direction and takes on an almost languid pace.

In his 'director's notes', Douglas Campbell states that his goal in this production is "to give life to the portrait of the adult world's lack of understanding of the world of youth and the consequent tragedy in that lack." Very pertinent, very up-to-date goal. And he does succeed with his goal, although it is hardly through the artfulness of the production but mainly through the very essence of the play itself which embodies this message so strongly that it would be virtually impossible to drown out.

Louise Marleau, a French-Canadian actress, plays Juliet. There has been some comment and criticism upon the incongruity of her French accent amongst the other English accented actors. But I found her very good, and her accent not a hindrance but an asset, for it adds a certain charm to the part. Miss Marleau is perhaps a too-sophisticated actress for this part. I have always thought of an innocent Juliet and Marleau does not give off an air of innocence, but she has the power to give Juliet real life and drive.

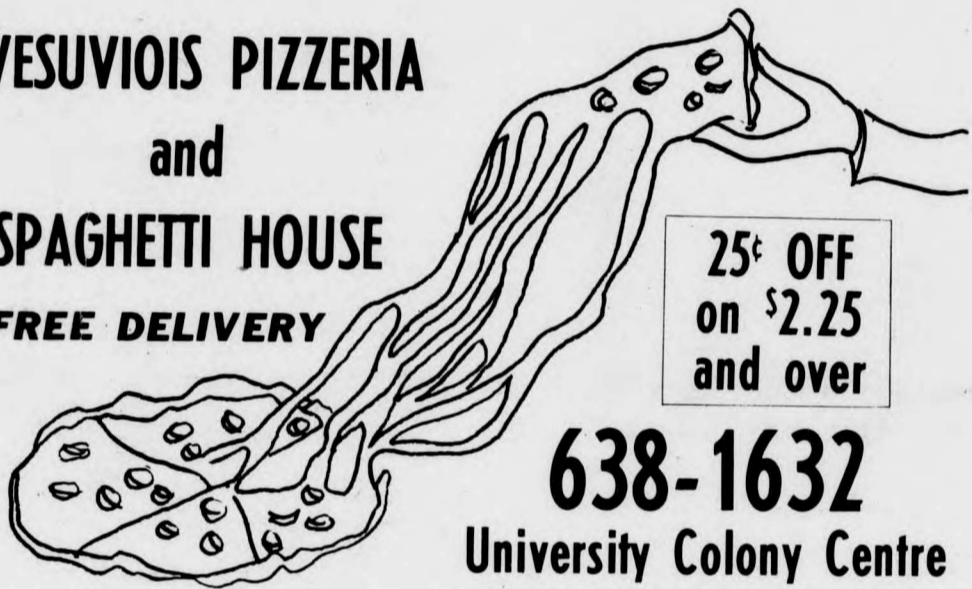
Against a tender and emotional Juliet, Christopher Walken's Romeo is stiff and cold. His bursts of emotion are altogether forced and not in keeping with the coldness and detachment he displays at other times in the production.

This production will not satisfy those of us who conceive of **Romeo and Juliet** as child lovers, for Juliet is obviously not the thirteen-year old Shakespeare writes of, and Romeo is in his late twenties at least. Gone is the sense of innocent young love which I like to associate with the play, and which, apparently Zeffereilli has restored in his forthcoming film version.

Amelia Hall playing Juliet's nurse gives the finest performance in the production. She is called upon to be vulgar and shrewd yet also kind and good. And she brings out the laughter and pathos of her part with true agility.

Against the traditional stage in the Stratford theatre, Douglas Campbell and production designer Carolyn Parker have staged a safely traditional production of **Romeo and Juliet**. It is a good, solid Shakespearean production despite what it lacks in inventiveness and imagination.

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