MODERN DAY MUSIC FOR AN OLD PLAY

William Shakespeare’s, *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, tells the story of a feud between two families. A teenager from each family falls in love with each other. The secret relationship leads to a secret marriage. However, a battle between the two families leads to death. Romeo is banished from Verona. Friar Lawrence tries to unite the two; however, Romeo and Juliet both die and the families end their feud. Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* have themes that transcend theme and place as his messages can be found in contemporary song lyrics.

The first act in Shakespeare’s play was one of the most important. Romeo is really upset about losing Rosaline. He was talking to Mercutio and had said, “I have lost myself, I am not here: this is not Romeo; he’s some other where”. (1.1.184-185). Mercutio encouraged Romeo to attend the Capulet party and meet a new girl. That is exactly what happened. Romeo seen Juliet and instantly fell in love. He said, “Did my heart love ‘till now? Forswear it, sight! For I ne’er saw true beauty ‘till this night”. (1.5. 50-51). Romeo had forgotten all about Rosaline, Juliet was his new love. The new love in this act went great with the song “what I know” by Parachute. The lyrics, “she said I’m in love with someone else, she said I fell in love with someone else” describes how Romeo fell in love with someone else and forgot all about Rosaline.

In the second act of *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo decides to ask Juliet to marry him. Before Juliet came outside Romeo was out there and had said, “But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?” (2.2.2-3). He wanted to see her. He wanted to spend the rest of his life with her, but they just met. He doesn’t know her too well. Juliet realizes this and is kind of nervous. She tells him that if he is really serious about marrying her to come back again tomorrow. A good song for this act is “Love Story” by Taylor Swift. The lyrics’, “we were both young when I first saw you, I close my eyes and the flashback starts, I’m standing there, on a balcony in summer air”, are saying how young Romeo and Juliet both are. Juliet is only thirteen and they have just met.

In act three Juliet’s set a date for her and Paris to get married. Juliet’s mother said to her, “marry my child, early next Thursday morn’”. (3.5.112-114). Juliet was furious. She went to the nurse, but the nurse had told her she agreed with Juliet’s parents. Romeo has been banished and Paris was better for her. Juliet’s father told her that if she didn’t marry Paris she would be a disgrace to the Capulet family and he would never forgive her. The song “Love Story” by Taylor Swift is the perfect song to go along with Juliet’s big problem. The lyrics, “Romeo save me they’re trying to tell me how to feel,” describe how Juliet’s parents are trying to make her fall in love with Paris when she really does not want to be with him. She wants to be with Romeo.

In act four Juliet still struggles to get out of marrying Paris. She does not want to marry him. She is married to Romeo, but her parents do not know that. She looks to Friar Lawrence for help and he comes up with a plan. She is to drink a potion before bed on Wednesday. This will put her to sleep for 48 hours but she will appear dead. They will put her in the Capulet tomb and when she wakes up Friar Lawrence will hide her until its safe. On Wednesday night she drinks the potion and says, “Romeo, Romeo, Romeo! Here’s drink- I drink to thee” (4.4.58). This quote is important because Juliet drinking the potion is the most exciting part of this act. A song that fit well with this act is “Poison and Wine” by The Civil Wars. The lyrics “You only know what I want you to, I know everything you don’t want me to, oh your mouth is poison, your mouth is wine” describe how Juliet has only told her parents what she wanted to tell them. They have no idea that she is married to Romeo. .

The final act of Shakespeare’s play was really sad. Romeo was told that Juliet is dead. He had no idea that she was just sleeping. He bought poison and went to Juliet’s tomb to die. He took the poison and within a few seconds he was on the floor, lifeless. Juliet woke up to find her husband dead next to her. She was broken. She took his sword and killed herself. The two young lovers had taken their own lives trying to be together. Romeo and Juliet were found not to long after they committed suicide. Their death brought the families feud to an end. The prince had said, “some shall be pardoned, and some punished: for never was a story of more woe than this of Juliet and Romeo” (5.3.308-310). The song “Prepare the Masses” by A Change of Pace is a really good song for this act because of the lyrics, “now sit back and watch this story unfold with the fair Juliet and her Romeo. Two young lovers with one heartbeat in a devoted tomb is where they’ll sleep”. They explain how Romeo and Juliet were in love at such a young age and tried so hard to be together but the hatred between the two families was too much for them. Now they are gone forever and the feud has ended.

Romeo and Juliet were two young lovers who lost their lives too young. The death of these two teens, however, broke the feud between the two families. As I have shown above, Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* have themes that transcend theme and place as his messages can relate to many modern day songs.