TECHNOLOGICAL CHALLENGES : AESTHETIC SOLUTIONS

The impact of technology upon the creative process in the context of the adaptation of non-verbal, solo stage performance to television

CHRISTIAAN H. WILLEMS

Grad. Dip. Arts Administration

CENTRE FOR INNOVATION IN THE ARTS
ACADEMY OF THE ARTS
QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

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Adaptation, Blue-Screen, Cartoon, Mime, Non-verbal, Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare, Solo performance, Stage, Technological, Theatre, Television, Video production

ABSTRACT:

The research study is a self-reflexive analysis of the creative processes of the artist in a particular context - that of the adaptation of solo non-verbal performance created for the stage, to the television screen, utilising advanced video production techniques. Utilising this work as a case study enables the detailed analysis of specific artistic aspects of the adaptation process, how this process was influenced by the different technological medium of television, and how this shaped the final television work.

The purpose of the study is not to illustrate the technical aspects of the production, although these are briefly addressed to provide background and contextual information. The principal focus and intention of the study is to illuminate the creative and artistic processes which take place in the mind of the artist as a response to the particular artistic challenges which arise when the basic art work is placed within the foreign context of a highly technological environment.

CONTENTS:

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP:

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other higher education institution.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signed:…………………………………………………….

Date:………………………………………………………

TECHNOLOGICAL CHALLENGES : AESTHETIC SOLUTIONS
THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY UPON THE CREATIVE PROCESS IN
THE CONTEXT OF THE ADAPTATION OF NON-VERBAL, SOLO STAGE
PERFORMANCE TO TELEVISION

1. INTRODUCTION:

The study examines, in detail, the creative processes involved in the
adaptation of a solo, non-verbal, performance work from theatre
stage to television screen, and some of the challenges faced by the
artist during, and as a result of, the adaptation process from a
minimally technological context, to a highly technological context.
As a principal focus, the study utilises a production by the study's
author, Chris Willems, titled *Son of Romeo* - a solo mime version of
Romeo & Juliet originally created for the stage and which
subsequently formed the basis of the adaptation to television, also
titled **SON OF ROMEO.**

The adaptation evolved as a result of my performance background
and simultaneous training in both mime and design for television
(London 1979 - 1981), as well as my response to the notion widely
voiced in mime circles at the time that 'mime doesn't work on
television' - due mainly to the traditional 'silence' of the artform,
together with its need for the audience to imagine so much of the
environment and detail surrounding the performer. It was my desire
to artistically and technically challenge this notion of the
incompatibility between mime and television which set the
adaptation process in train - researching the technical feasibility,
gauging the interest, seeking the finance, and ultimately re-creating
the work specifically for this 'incompatible' medium.

The stage version of **Son of Romeo** was created and first performed
in late 1984 and toured extensively throughout the southern and
eastern states of Australia, in addition to performances in Europe,
between 1985 and 1987. Initial investigation regarding the technical
feasibility of the adaptation to television began in late 1984 and
culminated in the adapted version's screening nationally on SBS

television in February 1990. This adapted television version of **SON OF ROMEO** also participated in various international festivals and markets, winning a number of awards, and achieving sales to two European territories in 1990 and 1993.

The process of adaptation from stage to screen of this stylised work, highlighted the complexities - both technical and artistic - of taking a performance work out of one traditionally 'high-art' context (Shakespeare/mime/theatre) and preparing it for another, more popular context (cartoon/television) and the changes to the work which were ultimately necessary to achieve a successful artistic outcome. Hence the purpose of this study is to examine, autobiographically, that process and those changes - not to justify the end result.

1.1   WHY AUTOBIOGRAPHY?

> *In the segment* Romeo goes to the Ball, *Willems makes a little show of hand shadows* **to expose the predatory nature of male-female encounters in the modern disco scene** (Nugent, 1986) (emphasis added).

Whilst interpretation of any art is an individual and personal thing and mime in particular, because of its abstract nature, demands more interpretation than many artforms, the 'truth' about the above mentioned hand shadows is much less complex than the Canberra Times reviewer suggested. The 'truth' is that all it represented in reality (or the artist's version of reality) was 'a bit of finger-clicking to a bit of music'. This extract from the Canberra Times review of the stage version, represents the kind of florid mis (or 'over')-interpretation of an artistic work which can have its readers nodding in knowing agreement whilst simultaneously having the artist creased with derisive laughter. Of course any audience member is entitled to interpret aspects of an artistic work in any way they, or their subconscious, chooses - this is in the nature of art - but when such interpretations appear in print or other public forums, one begins to wonder, as the artist responsible, how many others are interpreting

one's art in similar, questionable ways. Is it just out of a professional journalistic need to appear knowledgable about the artwork, is it out of ignorance, or is it out of the failure of the artist to accurately represent and portray their intended meanings and their own creative, artistic, internal interpretation of the ideas, concepts and style of the work?

The raising of these questions brings about a desire in the artist to, not so much explain, academically, the artwork itself, but to illuminate the creative processes which shaped, formed and polished the artwork to its finished, presented form - not from the point of view of an outside analyst, but from the point of view of the artist - from the source of the artwork itself. Clearly, the only true and accurate manner in which to achieve this, is for the artist to simply state, 'I made this artistic decision for this reason, the process of achieving it went something like this, and the artistic problems I encountered during that process were these'. This 'autobiographical' approach, in terms of the relationship between interested audience and artist, has '*the unique potential to illuminate the nexus between character, setting, intellect, personal philosophy,...ideology, the meanings of actions, as well as provide data to explain the origins and consequences of actions over time*' (Macpherson, 1986, p.25).

Whilst one might argue that no one, other than the artist, is necessarily interested in this kind of explication, which could easily be interpreted as self-indulgence, widely respected Australian jazz musician Don Burrows (1987/96), considers, and has proven from his own experience, that '*there is a strong interest in artists speaking about what they do - this 'humanisation' of the work has marked public appeal*'. Audiences do exhibit a fascination with artists and their artistic processes. Whilst as audience members we want to allow ourselves to suspend our disbelief and be taken in by the illusion of the art, many of us simultaneously possess a desire to be shown how the trick works - the mechanics of the illusion become a fascination - whether this is because of some yearning for the vicarious acquisition of artistic ability, or merely some voyeuristic insight - being one of the few 'in the know' who have taken a peek behind the curtain, behind the camera, into the mind of the artist - is not clear. What is clear

however, is that individuals do like to be invited to take this peek - *'one of the great attractions of biography is that no matter how much interpretation may enter into the telling...the reader has a deep sense of entering into another existence'* (Mandell, 1991, p.141). What autobiographical arts research provides is a unique, behind-the-scenes, in-the-brain observation, analysis and insight from the point of view of the artist, of a very private, personal and unique artistic process:

> *Autobiography...derives much of its fascination because...it reaches parts where another mode cannot reach...these private disclosures have come to be seen, not as an alternative to the public record...but its truest expression* (Graham, 1989, p.101)

1.2   THE STAGE VERSION

The stage version of **Son of Romeo** was intended to be a tourable, accessible, entertaining, one-hour, non-verbal version of *Romeo & Juliet* which could be set up in half an hour in any kind of venue - from school halls and classrooms to fully equipped theatres. As such it could rely on only minimal technical input. The show's performance style borrowed heavily from the television cartoon (particularly the Warner Brother's era of Bugs Bunny, Road Runner etc) and was created and performed in such a way as to appeal to a wide age range. This wide appeal was at the heart of the stage adaptation of Shakespeare's classic work - to make it accessible, to popularise it, without the need to understand the language of Shakespeare's day - instead, I used the contemporary 'visual performance language' of the television cartoon to convey the narrative and characters, and to set the tone as one of humour against the tragedy.

In parallel with this desire to popularise Shakespeare, ran a simultaneous desire to illustrate the enormous possibilities of the artform of mime, and that it had more to offer than the 'white-face' tradition so often associated with it, and its 'master', Marcel Marceau - in short, I wanted to extend and popularise mime, as well as popularising Shakespeare. I was also attracted by the challenge of

developing the means by which a play based so heavily on language could be interpreted in mime.

Son of Romeo proved to be enormously successful not only artistically, but also in terms of audience response and critical acclaim (refer Appendix K). Its adaptability to a diversity of performance venues and situations, its wide appeal to a range of audiences types, together with its minimal cast (1), crew (1), rehearsal and set-up requirements, meant that it continued to be an attractive touring proposition over several years to a number of entrepreneurial organisations.

1.3   THE TELEVISION VERSION

Given that the performance style of the stage work was based so much on television cartoons, there seemed to be an inescapable logic in turning the stage work back into a true (one hour) cartoon for television. Whilst all the advice throughout my mime training suggested that mime and television were incompatible, my simultaneous training in design for television convinced me that the concept of combining mime and television was not only possible, but, utilising 'blue-screen' techniques, could provide exciting possibilities for new directions and approaches to the work, and at the same time broaden the popular appeal of Shakespeare's work achieved in ***Son of Romeo*** even further, through television's vastly greater popular reach. To achieve such 'popularisation', these new directions and approaches to Shakespeare's work had to firmly and comfortably place it in the context of a new time and a new medium.

As Sheppard (1987, p.96) reminds us, certain scenes in Shakespeare's plays which indulge in *'punning and verbal sparring...may be boring to a modern audience, but we are told that the Elizabethans enjoyed them'* - that they appealed to their *'original audience's expectations'*. Obviously Shakespeare's works were appropriate for, and emanated from the culture of their time, and were thus a product of their time. Hence the contemporary director and particularly filmmaker must seek a new dimension and voice for Shakespeare's work, whilst at the same time relying heavily on the original text to provide the

inspiration and drama - as Davies (1988, p.185) asserts, to make a successful Shakespearean film it must be *'both derivative and creative',* and in being so, make *'a very old-fashioned idiom alive and meaningful for a modern audience* (in order) *to ensure that Shakespearean drama is not relegated to a museum for classic texts'* (1988, p.4).

Contemporary directors such as Franco Zeffirelli (1965/95), working in both theatre and film, were at pains to ensure that for the contemporary audience Shakespeare *'became a living experience...to bring (his work) alive for the audience of today...to look for some identification'.* Similarly, Dr. Jonathan Miller, also a director of Shakespearean plays for both stage and television, and whose productions *'are particularly noted for his ability to bring classic works vividly alive for modern audiences'* (Bragg. 1995), whilst not believing that *'there is such a thing as an authentic production'* of a Shakespearean play, regards that performance *'which most closely resembled the one which least distressed Shakespeare at the time when it was put on the stage for the first time...the one where he said 'well that'll do'...'* (Miller, J., 1995), as the one which one might copy for the sake of authenticity. However, as Miller goes on to argue, there is really very little point in considering the 'authentic' production because *'during that 300 years, theatrical life itself would have moved on. So our idea of what constituted an interesting, or to use that horrible modern term, 'relevant' performance, would alter our view of what in fact was worth copying in the work'.* And therefore, whilst it has been readily conceded by television writers and producers (Safford-Vela, Vorhaus & Woody, 1993) that 'television is not great art', by re-presenting the work in a comprehensible contemporary context, i.e. through the medium of film and/or television, directors such as Miller and Zeffirelli, and more recently, Australia's Baz Luhrmann, are firmly placing it within the current experience of the audience.

So in placing *Romeo & Juliet* - via an already adapted version, **Son of Romeo** - into the current experience of the broader television audience, both the art work itself, and the 'new' medium into which that art work had to fit, had to be closely examined, assessed, and adapted to accommodate each other.

As discussed elsewhere in this study (Chapter 4), unless it is purely for archival reasons, when one is filming a stage work as television - particularly a non-verbal work - it is simply not sufficient to position a camera or two in front of the stage, record the stage work as it is and then broadcast it - producing what Anthony Davies refers to (1988, p.5) as '*canned and transportable theatre*' - the nature of the camera lens is such that the stage work loses depth and texture on television and thus has to be adapted to suit the different medium through which it is being projected, literally, to an audience (this lack of depth is readily visible on Videotape A (Appendix A) - the stage version of ***Son of Romeo***).

Thus the initial artistic concept, the political/financial justification and the eventual process of the adaptation of ***Son of Romeo*** for the stage to **SON OF ROMEO** for television, relied upon the assumption that there would be significant changes made to the original which would not only utilise the techniques of television, but indeed challenge and advance those techniques, and, perhaps more significantly, challenge and advance the creative processes of all concerned. This study seeks to examine and illuminate those processes.

1.4   CONVENTIONS

Accompanying the written thesis, is a pair of videotapes - one of the complete **stage** version of ***Son of Romeo*** (Appendix A) and one of the complete **television** version of **SON OF ROMEO** (Appendix B) - which permit the reader to access, via time code (T/C), the relevant visuals referred to in the body of the thesis - facilitating the illustration of significant points of visual information and comparison between the source and the adapted versions of the artistic work. Thus the reader/viewer is able to select and readily access particular scenes and moments of performance from the television adaptation, similarly select and access the corresponding scenes from the stage production, and by juxtaposing those images, make direct visual comparisons between the two versions. This allows the

reader/viewer to trace the artistic evolution of the scene and analyse the detail of how and why it has been altered and reshaped in the journey from one medium, through the artistic filter, to the other. Chapter 5 comprises detailed analysis of the artistic decision-making processes and includes an examination of five (5) selected scenes, in addition to a brief overview and explanation of the basic technical aspects of the adaptation. The Appendices contain additional production information, including typical storyboard and schedule pages, selected production photographs and samples of background artwork, which offer further insight into the processes of the adaptation, their evolution and planning.

Given that both the stage and television productions share the same title, in order to distinguish between them, I have adapted a convention employed by Anthony Davies, in his book *Filming Shakespeare's Plays* (1988) - hence all references to the stage version are printed as ***Son of Romeo***, and all references to the television adaptation are printed as **SON OF ROMEO**.

In describing certain features of the technical processes of blue-screen television, the terms, 'foreground' and 'background' are used extensively and have a particular meaning. Therefore, when these terms are used in this context, they are abbreviated to F/G and B/G respectively - e.g. 'F/G camera' indicates the camera which is recording the live, moving performer in the foreground, which image is being superimposed over the graphic or painted B/G (background) which is being recorded by the B/G camera (refer illustration Appendix G)

1.5   TERMINOLOGY & TYPES OF SHOTS

The following terminology and abbreviations follow established conventions in television, and identify the types of camera shots, technical terms and conventions generally used in television, together with some more specific to **SON OF ROMEO**.

ADO	Ampex Digital Optics - a device which enables an image on the screen to be electronically manipulated
B/G	Background - painted graphic inserted behind Foreground (F/G) Performer
Blue-screen	A generic term covering both Chromakey and Ultimatte®, which refers to the use of a blue (or other suitable colour) screen behind a foreground element to facilitate the compositing of different visual elements and/or environments into the one picture on screen
Chromakey	Electronic **insertion** technique for television enabling one image to be inserted behind, or superimposed over another image on screen - also referred to as Colour Separation Overlay (CSO) (refer Section 5.1)
CU	Close-up
Double Pass	Overlaying two characters to create a two-shot by videotaping one character first, then using that character's videotaped performance as a background upon which to overlay the second character
EWS	Extra wide shot
F/G	Foreground - generally refers to Performer overlaid on painted graphic Background (B/G)
First pass	First pass of the double pass process
FLS	Full length shot

Forced Perspective	Creating the illusion of perspective and distance artificially by converging 'parallel' lines
Frame	The view within one screen
HA	High angle
LA	Low angle
LOF	Left of Frame
MCU	Medium close-up
MS	Mid shot
Paintbox	Artwork computer, used much as a palette and brush, but with images and colours digitally formed and rendered, through an electronic tablet and pen, onto a television monitor
pov	Point-of-view
ROF	Right of Frame
Second pass	Second pass of the double pass process
Set-up	Each time the camera is (re)positioned for a new shot
3D	Generally refers to a 3-dimensional Set, Prop or element
¾	Three quarter (knee) length shot
Time Code (T/C)	Electronic numbering system superimposed on videotape - facilitates editing and access to particular 'address' on tape

2D   Generally refers to a 2-dimensional painted graphic (B/G)

Two-shot   Two characters in the same frame

Ultimatte®   Electronic **travelling matte** technique for television enabling one image to be inserted behind, or superimposed over, another image on screen - similar in principle to, but differs electronically from chromakey, and is generally recognised to be of superior quality to chromakey (refer Section 5.1)

VWS   Very wide shot

Wipe   Transition between scenes where one image passes across the screen to reveal another

WS   Wide shot

2.   METHODOLOGY:

2.1   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research takes the form of an **Autobiographical Case Study** which utilises the uniqueness of the particular vehicle - the adaptation of *Son of Romeo* from the stage to **SON OF ROMEO** for television - yet has wider application, both technically and artistically, in the field of artistic performance interacting with contemporary technology. Given that this is a work by an individual artist - initially as a stage production and then redeveloped for the screen - the artistic processes for both are unique to that artist, and whilst in the television version there is certainly collaboration with other artists in the realisation and process of the adaptation, the work is fundamentally that of a single individual performing artist - from initial concept, through creation to final performance.

As a case study, the research, in addition to its intention to *'refute a universal generalisation'* (Burns, 1994, p.314) that 'mime doesn't work on television', illustrates (and foreshadows), through the experience of this particular creative process, the kinds of artistic challenges faced by artists working with increasingly complex and demanding interactions between human artistic performance and technology.

2.2   RATIONALE

As stated earlier, the purpose of the study is not to research the technical aspects of the adaptation - there is already ample material to illustrate what is technically achievable and how it may be achieved. The purpose and focus of the study is to research the creative and artistic processes within the context of the different technological environment and determine how that technological environment impacts upon those creative processes and, conversely, how the creative processes impact upon the technology. Whilst the research is described as 'autobiography', it is not so much the telling of a life, as the telling of a particular artistic process within a life that is deemed to be significant and worthy of detailed analysis - hence its

description as an 'autobiographical case study'. Given the evolutionary artistic nature of this adaptation from stage to screen - that it is essentially the creation of an individual artist drawing together diverse artistic backgrounds in performance and design, and embracing advanced technology - autobiographical research is the only realistic way to plumb the depths of the creative and artistic processes and their justification. That is, the fundamental source of research material is the creator/performer himself, as ultimately the central point through which all the information - artistic, technical, financial, organisational and political - passes, is processed and utilised.

Whilst there may be a danger that the research into an artistic process might be no more than the *'telling (of) agreeable lies'* '(Smith, L.M., 1994, p.288, citing Pritchett, 1977), the reality is that there is ample evidence in the work and the research material, that it will speak for itself to the reader/viewer, and that the analysis of that work may be readily refuted if the images and the analysis of the evolution of those images are not consistent. There is little to be gained by fictional embellishments of the facts and images as presented.

As an artistic process tends more to the subjective than the objective, and since as both artist and author one is inextricably bound to the subject being researched, one must acknowledge some degree of diminished objectivity, however I am of the belief that although *'the degree of intrusion of the author into the manuscript'* (Smith, L.M., 1994 p.292) is in this case complete, the passage of time since the project itself, and continued artistic experience has allowed the writer a greater degree of objectivity and clear-headed analysis. The artistic justifications of moments which were created as they were because they 'felt right at the time' can, after stepping away from the work and viewing it a little more dispassionately, be seen in their true evolutionary light in the context of the myriad influences brought to bear on the artist and his artistic processes, but perhaps not always either consciously realised or acknowledged at the time. It is in this that I believe the true value of the research lies - it has the advantage of intimate and detailed knowledge of the subject matter, together with the benefit of artistic hindsight with which to make rich and

detailed analyses. Whilst technology may change and develop at an alarming rate, I am of the belief that there are fundamental consistencies at the points at which human artistic creation and technology intersect, and, as the performing artist moves further towards embracing technology, it is these points of artistic and technological contact and their impact upon the human creative processes, which will be relevant to other artists as well as scholars of the artistic process.

2.3 OBJECTIVITY/VALIDITY OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

The value of autobiographical arts research and what it offers, that quantitative, measurable research can not, lies not in the repeatibility of the research results, but in its capacity to investigate the uniqueness of the creative and artistic processes. In other words, with this qualitative, autobiographical arts research, we are investigating and analysing the development and evolution of a concept - not just its final manifestation. It is this analysis of the process which determines the value and quality of the research.

All artistic processes are unique - even different productions of the same play demand different approaches by different artists from different cultures at different times in history, it is really a question of personal artistic interpretation - a quality which, in its detail and development can never be cloned or quantified. As stated by Denzin (1989 p.72) *'each teller speaks from a biographical position that is unique',* and hence has a unique perspective, or perspectives, on the process. Therefore in analysing creative processes one has to redefine 'objectivity' and 'validity' in terms of what one is seeking to discover through the research. If research into the creative process is carried out in order to determine the 'correct way' to create an art work, by those who choose to use what Denzin (1989, p. 52), describes as the *'classic objective'* approach, then clearly, by virtue of the infinite number of ways of approaching an artistic problem or challenge, and

the uniqueness of any individual artist's approach, the researcher is going to fail to discover the definitive path to creative success.

There is in art, of course, objectivity in planning, funding, timing and presentation of any work - without these objective structures and constraints, the artwork would be created in a totally subjective vacuum. However these structures and constraints are precisely that - they may have an influential effect on the nature, duration, and complexity of the artistic process and final artistic result, but they in themselves, do not constitute the artwork, and the process of incorporating, accommodating or rejecting these structures and constraints, falls to the artist and their subjective artistic process. In essence, the artist is continually balancing the internal, unquantifiable subjectivity of creation, with the quantifiable objectivity of external structures and constraints, thus there is a constant movement between, and balancing the influences of, the two forces. This movement between the subjective and the objective, is characteristic of much of contemporary artistic practice, and demands of the artist the ability to step away from the artwork in order to accommodate these influences - thereby challenging the artist to continually ask themselves questions of why a particular artistic decision is made. The artist is thus obliged to become even more the objective individual assessor and critic of their own work throughout the creative process. Similarly, extrapolation from the creative process itself to the autobiographical analysis of that creative process, demands an objective approach which means that, ideally, '*as subjectivity metamorphoses into objectivity and impartiality, the self assumes its privileged status as the origin of meaning, knowledge and truth*'. (Smith, S. 1993; pp. 7-8)

The objectivity then that one is seeking in researching an essentially subjective process, is the **objectivity of the knowledge** being imparted by the autobiographer to the reader/consumer - that as the reader, we must know and trust that the information we are reading is a 'true and accurate' representation of the facts **as the artist sees them**. For this to be the case, the (auto)biographer must, as argued by Mandell (1991, p 8), reconcile '*the tension between their contemporary need to present the subject from within, (with) an*

expectation of detachment and impartiality'. So the validity in autobiographical arts research comes not with its ability to be quantified - validity is derived from a truthful relationship between the autobiographer and the reader. A relationship in which the autobiographer undertakes to present to the reader a unique, truthful '*window into the inner life of the person*' (Denzin, 1989, p.14) and their artwork.

Whilst this definition of objectivity may not please the realms of '*positivistic social science*' (Smith, L.M. 1994, p.288), the fact remains that autobiographical research has its own validity in its uniqueness via the perspective of the practitioner:

> *The meanings of these experiences are best given by those who experience them. A preoccupation with method, with the validity, reliability, generalizability and theoretical relevance of the biographical method...must be set aside in favour of a concern for meaning and interpretation* (Denzin, 1989, p.25)

In *Players of Shakespeare 1* and *Players of Shakespeare 2* - edited by Brockbank (1989) and Jackson & Smallwood (1988) respectively - actors of the Royal Shakespeare Company were invited to contribute to a collection of essays about their own personal artistic processes in preparing for, interpreting and portraying various characters in a number of Shakespeare's plays. These essays '*offer a variety of approaches to the plays themselves, and give a vivid sense of the actor's job with its varying proportions of toil, research, and intuition*' (Jackson & Smallwood, 1988, p.11), and further, offer '*the actor's point of view...how the roles were conceived and worked on by the performer and the decisions...made about characterisation and situation..they are...glimpses behind the scenes for those who know that illusions are shaped from realities, that feelings are evoked by art, and that hard work informs the actor's playing of an actor's plays*' (Brockbank, 1989, p.10). Whilst these essays are informative and well written, they represent only a small fraction of the potential for such writings to contribute to the discussions of artists and scholars into their own and others' creative and artistic processes. It is the uniqueness of each of these interpretations which is so fascinating and valuable, and

it is for this reason that I wished to expand on the essay format and present a comprehensive study which illuminates the practice of creation of a complex artistic work - in this case the adaptation of a performance work from stage to screen. The subjectivity of art requires a subjective research approach.

2.4   RESOURCES

However, the research draws from not only the artist's subjective recollections and personal notes, but also the more objective files, videotapes, planning documentation etc (refer Appendices) - providing what Burns (1994, p.314) describes as *'unique historical material'* - with which to explore the various artistic influences brought to bear on both the original stage work, and subsequently its adaptation to the medium of television, thereby enabling the study to also explore the processes which utilised those influences, why they were relevant and how they shaped the final artistic work.

Further, for the purposes of triangulation, the perspectives and expectations of other principal participants have been sought and provided - namely the Broadcaster (SBS Television) together with other participating principal artists - these perspectives on the work take the form of Questionnaires (refer Appendix J). Media critiques of both the television and stage versions have also been included (refer Appendix K) and provide a sense of the marketplace reaction to, and success or failure of, the work.

3.   AESTHETIC/PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK:

3.1   THE SOCIETAL/POLITICAL CONTEXT

At any given time, in creating art or adapting one form of art (traditional) to another (contemporary), one is working within a particular social, cultural and political context. This context is subject to the forces of fashion, popular/political opinion and the economic circumstances which happen to prevail at that time. Thus, in terms of gaining sufficient support to attract the half-million dollar investment required to achieve **SON OF ROMEO**, throughout the journey from concept to broadcast reality the project was subject to all of these forces. The process of achieving the adaptation - first financially and then artistically - and dealing with these forces over the period of some five (5) years, brought into sharp focus the political realities of art, and its subjection to the societal and political whims of the time.

The implicit question which emerged from time to time of whether I was creating a work of art or a work for television assumed that the two were mutually exclusive, yet this was, from my own point of view as the artist, a non-issue - art and television did not, and do not, have to be mutually exclusive, and this was indeed one of the fundamental points the project was attempting to prove. Yet from the point of view of the investors, whilst ostensibly their investment in the work was precisely for the reasons of the innovative nature of the concept and its execution, the commercial realities of world television markets demanded that consideration be given not only to the domestic broadcaster and audience (as well as the personal gratification of the artist), but also to the international broadcast television markets and their expectations - with a view to recouping a significant return on the initial substantial investment. These highly commercial markets, where television programs from around the world are bought and sold in huge volumes, in general, demand the capacity of the program's creator to accurately and very narrowly 'pigeon-hole' their product in order to determine the following broadcast priorities - who the target audience is; what age group; what time-slot it will fit; is it 'art-house' or commercial; whether language will be problem; whether

it is a series or a 'one-off' - and, if its a one-off, can it be shown in the context of other, similar one-off programs which together will comprise a 'de facto' series.

Thus whilst the achievement of **Son of Romeo** for the stage was, culturally and politically, a simple task, its transformation to **SON OF ROMEO** for television involved a global political/cultural complexity which challenged the very notions of what art is, what television should or should not be, and how we relate art to our contemporary culture.

There seems to have been no shortage - from ancient Greek times to the present - not only of art, but equally of its analysis and a search for its definition. This ongoing debate, whether it be from the 'noble' point of view of the philosophy of aesthetics, or the economic rationalist point of view of public funding or commercialism, society (western society at least) has been obsessed with the notion of 'What Art Is', how to justify its existence and how to measure its value. And whilst *'Plato...seeks to exclude the arts altogether, on the grounds that they present a mere copy of a copy of the true reality constituted by the Forms'* (Hamlyn, 1989, p.53), in more recent times a less rigid interpretation of art and its value has been articulated such that *'in the aesthetic moment we encounter a unity of form and content, of experience and thought. This fact...explains its peculiar value'* (Scruton, 1989, p.31) According to Tolstoy (1898/1995, p.165) *'Art is not pleasure, consolation, or amusement; art is a great thing. Art is an organ of mankind's life'.* But if art is such a great thing, what about television, what about the graphic art on a cigarette packet - are these works as great as a Rembrandt painting? - What purpose do they serve? Do they embrace Kant's notion of purposiveness without purpose, or are they purely utilitarian in function? Do they display any of the qualities of 'art'?

3.2   CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is an interesting comment on Australian society's attitude to culture and the arts, that although we believe the arts form an important part

of Australian life (Australia Council (1) 1982, p.24), when it comes to paying artists (Australia Council (2) 1983, p.13 & Appendix - Table 2.1), we find that in comparative terms, artist on average, earn less than half the income of the technical personnel and administrators who work for those same artists. This indicates that we as a society, have established mechanisms which prioritise and guarantee the financial reward for the work of the technician and the administrator, yet we expect the artist to take the risk - not only the artistic risk, but very often also the financial risk. So, whilst it has been somewhat facetiously suggested (Furze, 1985) that '*administrators are often failed artists who have made a Faustian contract with mediocrity*', we feel safer in paying those behind the scenes, the technical, the accountant, the objective 'numbers-(wo)man'. Perhaps it is that the perceived objectivity of these administrators is more palatable to us, or perhaps we simply find it too difficult to place a value on art and the artist, and are less reluctant to put our trust (and money) in the objectivity of administration than the subjectivity of aesthetics.

Yet if we do indeed regard art as an important part of our culture, then surely we are looking beyond the objectivity of the immediate financial return and perceive a more subtle societal and cultural value.

> *To possess a culture is not only to possess a body of knowledge or expertise; it is not simply to have accumulated facts, references and theories. It is to possess a sensibility, a response, a way of seeing things, which is in some special way redemptive. Culture is not a matter of academic knowledge but of participation. And participation changes not merely your thoughts, and beliefs but your perceptions and emotions.*
> (Scruton, 1989, p.27)

So if, through this participation, we exist in and of a particular culture, it is reasonable to assume that our art, which is a product in and of that same culture, exists within and relates to that culture from which it emanates - that our perception of ourselves and the world in which we live, expressed though art, will reflect the cultural values and properties which form the fundamental fabric of that

culture - we might even go as far as Nietzsche who held '*unswervingly the view that the health of a culture was to be estimated in terms of the art it produced*' (Tanner, 1992, p.xii). If this is indeed the case, then we must assume that contemporary social, cultural and political environments have a particular effect - either adversely or positively - not only on the artist's creation, but also the beholder's perception, appreciation of, and reaction to, art.

3.3   ART - A PRODUCT OF ITS CULTURE OR SIMPLY A PRODUCT?

In examining these issues, it may be tempting to divide art into two categories - 'Consumable Art' and 'Appreciable Art'. If we notionally define 'Appreciable Art' - as art which can be appreciated for its own sake - for its aesthetic qualities - possessed of Kant's purposiveness without requiring it to serve any other purpose. And 'Consumable Art' - as art which serves a utilitarian function such as advertising - for the purpose of attracting the beholder, and enticing them to consume - then we are making a clear distinction between 'Art as Art' and 'Art as Commerce'. However, is such a distinction valid? In the case of advertising for example, the purpose of the art is to stand out from the mesmerising myriad of other goods, and entice the 'beholder' to purchase this particular item over that one - the artist creating this 'artwork' is constrained by the design brief - i.e. the practical constraints within which that artist has to work. Therefore, there is a strong element of the utilitarian embodied in the art in the commercial sense. The artist is forced (or chooses) to work within a fixed series of practical constraints which will in large measure determine the look and style of the art produced - and will, if successful, serve its primary, utilitarian function.

On the other hand, this 'commercial artist' may decide to subvert the process and, in leaning more toward the aesthetic, challenge these practical constraints despite the shape of the contents, might radically alter the shape and dimensions of the packaging to satisfy their own aesthetic curiosity or desire and create something which, whilst it might still house the product, is in itself a statement by that

artist. If the packaging of this same product, by virtue of its more 'aesthetic' nature, attracts more beholders to part with their money - purely because someone 'really liked the design of this package' - then how has this affected our assumed definitions of 'Consumable' and 'Appreciable Art'? Has in fact, the Consumable Art tended so much towards, that it has been 'transmuted' into, Appreciable Art? and in doing so has it, to paraphrase Tolstoy, transmuted people's reasonable consciousness ('I want a packet of chips') into feeling ('I really like this design')? Whilst the end (utilitarian) result might be the same - i.e. to sell products - the significant thing is the extent to which practical considerations, which have previously over-ridden the aesthetic, have now been greatly diminished. Does this mean that the art is less utilitarian and more aesthetic, or does it simply mean that the artist, in giving expression to their artistic voice, has failed their design brief? Where does one draw the line? Or do we not bother to draw the line at all?

Perhaps it is television which provides the best example of this awkward, but widely accepted relationship between art and commerce - between the aesthetic and the utilitarian. If one looks, as John Vorhaus in his lectures on the television 'sitcom' format (Vorhaus 1993), has done, at the evolution of this form, it is not difficult to see why television is as it is. Tracing the evolution from oral storytelling through written language and theatre to the motion picture - where the performers no longer have to be in the same place as the audience - Vorhaus notes that radio, particularly variety shows, whilst they drew heavily from stage variety shows, provided, in contrast to both theatre and the cinema, the first mass medium where the audience stayed home. These radio shows were created and perpetuated by advertising and targeted a large, stable, affluent audience who would return week after week. This is where the situation comedy (sitcom) was developed, representing stable characters in family life, in a story without end - thereby enticing the audience back the following week. Television borrowed heavily from the older forms and, as with radio, presented families (of whatever definition) 'fixed in space'. As Vorhaus observes, the programs presented sameness and stability week after week and reflected the society within which they existed.

Given that advertisers funded the medium, television could not afford to offend anyone (creating negative associations with the sponsor's product), in contrast to stage comedy which set out to offend everyone. In addition, the television audience was no longer poor - television evolved to both create and meet the needs of its monied audience. Thus the 'episode' was developed, where the characters always end up where they started and there is no desire to change the status quo or reach the end of the tale, in fact the sitcom became a program which upheld the status quo for commercial gain.[1]

In broader terms, the resultant commercially generated (and maintained) fundamental conservatism of the television industry goes some way towards explaining the fact that, over the past half-century since its general acceptance and widespread consumption, television, whilst having made enormous technical advances, has, in terms of content, advanced virtually not at all. Discounting the possible exception of the music video clip - which, whilst utilising the available technology to great advantage, is in any case, arguably little more than a 3-minute commercial to entice its 'monied audience' to purchase the musicians' product - even though the medium has the technological and logistical capacity to offer, in terms of innovation and aesthetics, much more than it does, and to be much more than it is, essentially, we are still watching the same Game/Quiz Shows, the same Sitcoms/Cop Shows, indeed some of the very same faces we watched doing the very same thing on screen twenty to thirty years ago.

Thus television has a 'hidden agenda' (although increasingly less hidden) of commercialism, perpetuated and maintained by conservatism - providing a means by which advertisers present their products, and consumers are able to view these products and even purchase them electronically. This 'product placement' is, particularly on commercial networks, increasingly reflected in the type of programs produced, where products or services are presented as 'infotainment'. The commercial or utilitarian nature of the medium takes the beholder increasingly further from the notions of art or the

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[1] Discussion of the evolution of sitcoms draws from both my own notes taken during, together with lecture notes provided at, lectures by John Vorhaus, titled, *Where Do SitComs Come From?* which formed a component of the SITCOM FORUM conducted by the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS) 15-19 March 1993. A precis of this lecture (and the entire Forum) was presented in a Report to SAFIAC (FilmSouth Australia), 30 March 1993.

aesthetic, and it falls to the non-commercial networks such as SBS and the ABC, to provide some balance of approach. However in attempting to do so, to serve these aesthetic and cultural needs, SBS and the ABC are subject to increasing criticism as being elitist or unrepresentative, and under commensurate pressure to either accept commercial advertising or somehow become less elitist and increase their audience share. Paradoxically, at the same time, they are under increasing scrutiny to ensure that '*editorial independence (is not) compromised by the interests of the external funders*' (Commonwealth of Australia, 1995, p.9). However the volume of television product required to satisfy the voracity of the worldwide television audience is such that 'aesthetic' programs come under increasing pressure to provide, as do the more 'commercial' programs, direct revenue to broadcasters through international sales etc. As John Vorhaus rather unkindly, but perhaps accurately suggests, the television audience's addictive voracity is comparable to '*a rat hitting the feeder bar to get the pellet*' (Vorhaus, 1993).

In this context then, particularly in Australia, where, according to an ABA Working Paper, the already comparatively small average number of hours annually of Australian made (Drama) programs declined by more than 12% over the years 1990 to 1993 (Australian Broadcasting Authority, 1994, p.14), the possibility of utilising the television medium to create 'art' is increasingly remote and difficult to achieve politically, and hence financially - the two being inextricably bound together in the context of public (government) funding. Thus there is an inherent resistance, within the highly commercialised context, to producing Australian programs demonstrating a high degree of aesthetic quality or innovation. Does this mean that Australian television is a reflection and/or product of its own culture, or is it rather a reflection and/or product of an increasingly global/American/commercial culture in a time which demands an increasingly global/commercial outlook?

It is against this background that, from the point of view of **SON OF ROMEO**, my initial approach to television broadcasters to gauge potential interest in the concept did not include any of the commercial networks. The ABC was initially approached at various

levels, and finally concluded that they could not, or would not, be involved in the project (this decision-making process took some two and a half years), and I subsequently approached SBS - the response being an almost immediate (two and a half weeks), and positive one. Without actually investigating the possibility, I considered at that time (and have seen no evidence to the contrary since), that to have initially approached the commercial networks with the concept for **SON OF ROMEO** would have proved to be a complete waste of time and resources.

3.4   ART - A PRODUCT OF ITS TIME?

Would a Shakespeare play in Shakespeare's day have been treated with the reverence it is today, or would it have been a piece of commercial art written to be appreciated by the audience of the time and thereby guarantee the Kings Company's ongoing Royal patronage? Would Shakespeare's work have been 'commercial art' which has now been transmuted into 'high art'?

Baz Luhrmann's approach to his recent film adaptation of *Romeo & Juliet* was *'to avoid...a rarified stilted, elitist, stagy version of the classic play'* (Twentieth Century Fox, 1996, p.3) - he *'wanted to make this movie rambunctious, sexy, violent and entertaining the way Shakespeare might have if he was a filmmaker'* (Luhrmann, 1996, p.2). Hence Luhrmann has rejected the 'high art' tag attached to Shakespeare without rejecting the essence of Shakespeare's work, and has yet managed to appropriate elements of both Shakespearean and contemporary society, bringing them together in ways which speak to, and comment upon, contemporary society and its values - whilst at the same time creating a commercially highly successful product - 'purposiveness without purpose'?

Is it just the passage of time since Shakespeare which has diluted his particular 'purpose' and allowed the 'purposiveness' to emerge, or is it that contemporary society views this art in a vastly different way? Perhaps contemporary society is seeking a new and different contemporary 'purpose' to impose upon, appropriate and manipulate

aspects of, or reject the art of the past, in order to make social/political points in the present.

The politicisation of art is the common ground which contemporary movements such as postmodernism and feminism share - that they work and speak in *'inescapably political contexts'* (Hutcheon, 1988, p.4) - that the art represents a conscious political statement. Hutcheon puts this more strongly by asserting (p.3) that *'Postmodern art cannot but be political...however 'aestheticized' (its representations) may appear to be'*. If the primary concern of postmodern and feminist art indeed lies in articulating a particular political position, is this a case of the utilitarian taking over the aesthetic - that the political points to be raised or given voice so dominate the art that the art once again no longer functions as art - that it serves only its utilitarian function and that the aesthetic has been subsumed by the functional, the intellectual, the practical, the political? If so, to what degree is this different to the 'commercial', where, *'in the absence of aesthetic criteria, it remains possible and useful to assess the value of works of art according to the profits they yield'* (Lyotard, 1992, p.145) - whether those 'profits' be financial or political. Is there really any fundamental difference between, on the one hand, an American television network selecting people off the street for 'market research', whose opinions will tell the network what ending the sitcom should have, then writing that ending, and, on the other hand, a community theatre company selecting a particular disenchanted group in the community, doing 'issue research' within that community, and then presenting those issues back to that community as theatre? Each bears the hallmarks of 'give them what they want to hear' for commercial/political gain rather than the artist developing the art from an inner need and then presenting that art to the outside world.

For art - whether postmodern, feminist, community, or commercial - to exist and develop as an 'aesthetic' experience, then no matter what subversive, political or commercial 'profits' it aspires to, the artist must not lose sight of the aesthetic needs in themselves and equally within the beholder, and hence strike a balance between aesthetics and profit.

In the particular case of **SON OF ROMEO**, the social/political climate at the time was such that within both State and Federal investment authorities, there was a perceived need to invest in innovation for cultural and artistic development reasons, balanced with the need to invest across a broad range of projects which would, ideally, by virtue of financial return on investments in 'safer', more commercially appealing works, provide the justification for investment in the more high risk ventures. In addition, there was a perceived need at the time for these State and Federal film/television investment authorities to be, and be seen to be, co-operating with each other (and with broadcast television networks), through jointly funding projects. At the same time there was apparently a receptivity to the particular artistic concept which I was proposing, and this meant that, taking these circumstances together, **SON OF ROMEO**, whilst a commercially high risk venture, was 'an idea whose time had come', whereas on initial approaches two or three years prior, whilst the receptivity to the concept was there, the project could not be realised by virtue of the prevailing circumstances at the time. Similarly, it is likely that the work may not have achieved investment in the economic/political circumstances which prevail today .

Therefore as the artist, one must not only be aware of these political situations, but assess them accurately and exploit them as fully as possible, during perhaps only a brief 'window of opportunity', in order for the work to be able to proceed and to be accepted by the investors, broadcasters and audience of the time. Whilst this approach may appear to be non-creative and overly objective in such a subjective field of endeavour, the reality is that there is a balance to be struck between the creative and the political, the aesthetic and the practical, which one must achieve at all levels - even prior to the work commencing.

Fundamentally, I had an artistic need to proceed with this concept through this means at this time, however that artistic need had to be tempered by, and guided through, the pragmatic 'minefield' of gaining investment under certain economic, cultural, and political circumstances. To have not approached this 'political' task in a pragmatic, objective manner, no matter how appealing the subjective

artistic concept, would have meant that the entire project would have been unable to proceed, simply by virtue of the level of investment required. Paradoxically, it was this fundamental artistic need, which drove the entire political process - the unquantifiable, subjective 'passion of the artist' which ultimately proved to be instrumental in achieving the quantifiable, objective financial support.

Hence if the artwork emanates from an artist's need to 'find a voice' then, no matter what constraints or expectations society might place upon that artist, they will struggle, through whatever form, to make that voice heard.

3.5   THE NEED OF THE ARTIST

In this struggle to give expression to their artistic voice, it would appear that many artists primarily 'do it for themselves' - because of that personal need to create - to express themselves and/or something which is of fundamental importance to them. The most appropriate vehicle through which this need to express finds its voice is often art. Dewey's notion of '*the knower (as) an active experimenter, provoked by some obstacle into the work of enquiry*' (Hamlyn, 1989, p.180) suggests the artist's need to meet some challenge, to overcome some obstacle in order to arrive at a satisfactory aesthetic experience. If we accept the Aristotelian notion that the 'telos' of Drama is to provide society with a cathartic experience, then the need for, and the experience of catharsis for the artist must be immeasurably greater - being the creator of the drama itself. This view is neatly put into perspective by Langer (1942, p.259) in describing the strength of the artist's emotion '*which the artist and the beholder share in unequal parts...the beholder...knows nothing like the exhilaration and tense excitement of an artist ...as the new work dawns in his brain*'. For an artist to succeed in expressing something, to have an aesthetic experience, there needs to be something which comes back from the work. Hence, as Langer (1942, p.251) argues, '*a subject which has emotional meaning for the artist may thereby rivet his attention and cause him to see its form with a discerning, active eye, and to keep that form present in his excited imagination until its*

highest reaches of significance are evident to him; then he will have, and will paint, a deep and original conception of it'. Thus the act of creating, of expressing this deep and original conception of great significance, is in itself cathartic, emotional and aesthetic, where both the artist and, eventually, the beholder, discover *'a peculiar unity and coherence..in aesthetic experience'* (Körner, 1955, p.191).

The artist's need to express, their *'desperate desire to prove'* (Bogarde, 1978, p.151), often borne of personal insecurity and inability to fit into the world as it is (or as it is perceived), is a need which underpins the work of many significant artists - the need to find personal gratification in creating the work. But no matter how passionate the artist's need for such gratification, for cathartic expression, no matter how closely they may approach the 'noumenal' in expressing themselves, they must also develop the skill of communicating their catharsis through their work to the beholder. As no two artists and no two beholders are alike, this process of reconciliation and expression is unique for each artist - demanding that 'v*ariety of approaches'* (Jackson & Smallwood, 1988, p.11) by artists to what might be perceived as the same artistic work - to make it meaningful to a different beholder in a different culture and different time and place in history.

How much the artist's need for catharsis relates to the beholder is determined by how many concessions the artist is willing to make to the beholder and, conversely, how much effort the beholder is willing to expend for the artist - the beholder must also display a certain skill and effort at being open to the notion of being touched by the artist's work.

> *I am a great believer that artists have three over-riding responsibilities: first, to be faithful to themselves as artists; second, to entertain an audience; and third, to develop the art form* (Willems, 1990)

3.6   THE SKILLS OF THE ARTIST AND BEHOLDER

> *A work of art revealing the transcendent must, it is often thought, be a different sort of experience for the believer than the unbeliever* (Diffey, 1994, p.334)

As beholders, we have a range of choices of appreciation - we have degrees of aesthetic acceptance and degrees of experience which we bring to bear on aesthetic offerings - whether those offerings be television sitcoms, art films, hollywood blockbusters, sculpture, the paintings of the masters, or music (classical, jazz or rock) etc., we also have degrees of effort which we are willing to exert in the appreciation of any or all of the above - as Sheppard (1987, p.64) quite correctly states '*Aesthetic appreciation is a complex matter, involving both emotional and intellectual factors*'. The complexity of our personal aesthetic appreciation derives from, and is evolved by, the innumerable permutations and combinations of our individual interactions with, and particular place within, the political and cultural complexity, fluidity and influence of the contemporary society in which we exist. As Dr. Jonathan Miller, who has, in addition to enjoying an outstanding reputation throughout the world in the performing arts and television, '*held academic posts in neuropsychology, on both sides of the Atlantic*' (Bragg. 1995) states,

> *the whole point about perception is that it is <u>not</u>, as John Locke would have had us believe, the experience that is delivered by the structure of the work that is in front of the eye - that its a <u>negotiation</u> between the creative viewer and the object that is in front of the eye - and that hunches, guesses, prejudices, preoccupations, interests and so forth, alter the experience so that what you know, what you think, what you imagine, what you anticipate, have an irreversible effect on what you experience. And this isn't a sign of the fickle instability of the character, its a sign of the structure of perception in general. That's what perception is like, that it's a process of guessing as well as seeing what is out there* (Miller, J., 1995)

Whatever our personal needs, they are precisely that - personal needs borne of our personal 'guesses'. What this means is that art exists partly in the mind and imagination of the artist and partly in the

mind and imaginative skills of the beholder. Each of us draws upon our own personal experience and from that experience we the beholder invest the art work with properties that the person next to us may not - or may invest a different experience or set of experiences, and which, for each of us in a different way, allows the artist's emotion embedded within and emanating from the work to resonate within ourselves in our individual way. Even if we as beholders do not initially fully comprehend the work intellectually (nor indeed wish to), the value and quality of an artistic work is measured by the amount of imaginative effort, as distinct from intellectual effort, which we are willing to expend - and '*once we become accustomed to making the necessary imaginative leap, we may regard as especially valuable art which has given our imaginations new and exciting scope*' (Sheppard, 1987, p.14).

Art is therefore a shared experience - between artist and beholder, between giver and receiver, between creator and consumer - as such, it is the balance of this relationship between artist and beholder which determines the quality of artistic communication. Thus the artist must ask themselves two things - one, whether they themselves are satisfied that they have created a worthwhile work, and two, whether the beholder is satisfied that they have been touched in some way - particularly the way intended by the artist. It is a relationship between imagination, of both artist and beholder, and communication, working together to create an artistic vocabulary which enables the artist to articulate their creation in a particular form, and the beholder to comprehend the work through that form, not just how the beholder relates intellectually to the conscious form of the work, but rather, how they relate, through their conscious and unconscious experience to the 'feeling' of the work, how skilled the artist is in communicating their expression, and how 'skilled' the beholder is at the 'process of guessing as well as seeing what is out there'. As Langer (1942, p.263) states, '*there are no degrees of literal truth, but artistic truth...has degrees; therefore works of art may be good or bad, and each must be judged on our experience of its revelations...there is no immutable law of artistic adequacy*'.

If we return in this context to our previous example of a Shakespearean work, it is perhaps only now that our society has studied Shakespeare's work in detail and has analysed and interpreted the meanings of the Shakespearean language for the modern audience, giving us a greater understanding of it, that the work 'transcends' - that our reverence is an educated reverence rather than being totally subjective. There may be, in the case of Shakespeare, an objective bias to the subjective experience, thus one might argue that artistic appreciation by the beholder of contemporary representations of Shakespeare's works is really a matter of degree - the degree to which the beholder allows their imagination to be involved, together with the degree to which they relate to the work, based on their own education and experience.

In the specific Shakespearean case of **SON OF ROMEO**, the audience's imaginative involvement was a crucial determining factor which shaped the transformation of the work from one medium to the other. Assumptions made about how much an audience would know of Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*, how much they would exercise their imaginations for mime in theatre, and how little they would do so for television, how much their experience of previous productions of *Romeo & Juliet* as well as television cartoons would influence or create visual expectations, determined the conceptual framework for the adaptation and guided its style and content. Indeed informally offered opinions of those who have experienced both the theatre and television works tend to favour the theatre version precisely because it lacks the visual richness and complexity of the television version, and therefore demands more imaginative involvement by the 'beholder', and is hence the more satisfying work to behold. On the other hand, for those having viewed only the television version, no such comparisons are made and the work stands on its own as a work for television and is judged as such - there are no 'live' expectations or preconceptions.

Therefore, in broad terms, it might be argued that art exists as a complex and active, aesthetic, creative, emotional and technical interplay within the work, and between the artist and the beholder. The varying degrees of this interplay are determined by the skill and

experience of the artist in embedding themselves in, and expressing themselves through the work, and simultaneously in the skill and experience of the beholder in identifying (with) those degrees of interplay and embeddedness within, and emanating from the work.

Thus, in an effort to 'touch' the beholder - to entice them to apply their skills and experience to the work - in going through the process of achieving the balance, this reconciliation between the 'varying proportions of the objective toil and research, and the subjective intuition', the artist is dealing with a continuum - with the purely practical at one extreme and the purely aesthetic at the other, and throughout, the artist must occasionally take from the purely practical extreme in order to make the **aesthetic function**, and equally, take from the purely aesthetic extreme in order to make the **practical palatable**. Hence the artist is in constant flux - moving from the aesthetic to the practical to the aesthetic, to overcome the practical constraints, to create and achieve a work which will satisfy the artist and, at the same time, which the beholder will feel in a special way, and which will, within a broader context, satisfy the cultural and economic imperatives of the time.

Purists of course, will be aghast at the suggestion that art is not a pure, distilled essence - that it is somehow contaminated or corrupted by practical interferences and influences - however it is difficult, in contemporary society, to argue that art is such a pure thing, and it is doubtful that it has ever been any different, perhaps just a matter of the degree of impurity. It is an unfortunate, but very real, aspect of our culture that art cannot be this pure aesthetic essence, and perhaps in an ideal world it would be, but, as we live in a far from ideal world, the influences of financial interests, both public and private, as well as the political and cultural, have an impact which will invariably determine to a large extent what we as artists create, and simultaneously, what we as beholders consume as our art - irrespective of how sophisticated we might believe ourselves to be. This constant movement between the purely practical and the purely aesthetic, involves a vast range of philosophical approaches to one's art-making. And whilst the '*abyss between the rational and the spiritual, the external and the internal, the objective and the subjective,*

the technical and the moral, the universal and the unique constantly grows deeper' (Havel, 1995, p.235), one works to maintain some kind of balance between the practical and the aesthetic, the yin and yang - to not lose sight of the 'sensible' whilst catering to the demands of the 'cerebral' - in order that the art work adequately touches other human beings within our increasingly complex personal and cultural contexts.

In the adaptation of **SON OF ROMEO** for television, whilst I was in the fortunate position of retaining complete creative control over the entire project and could indulge my artistic whims to a large extent, I equally had a responsibility to deliver a credible, professional, saleable product to the broadcaster, investors, audience and world market. The adaptation encapsulated and highlighted, for this artist, just how much the 'unaesthetic' factors influenced not only the concept, but also the processes of the art work and its final outcome.

4.   ADAPTATION - LITERATURE/FILM REVIEW:

4.1   THEATRE ON THE SCREEN

The first premise is that all adaptations try to capture and retain certain qualities of the original, or else there is no reason for choosing that particular source...The second premise is that any adaptation must necessarily differ from its source if it is to exploit fully the potentialities of its medium...The third premise is that every adaptation must appeal to a contemporary audience in a different time-space continuum from that of its original...implying that...no adaptation can escape the particular subjective and cultural biases of the artist (Kinder, 1981, pp.100-102)

Adapting a work from stage to screen is not a new idea. It is probably less common than bringing the printed word to the screen - novels, poems, and screenplays written specifically for the media of film and television. As the name suggests, the screenplay is specifically written for the screen and hence the writer has in their mind a visual sense of the words and characters in the cinematic medium. As Horton and Magretta (1981, p.3) assert, '*the camera should be to the filmmaker what the pen is to the writer*' Adapting a stage work on the other hand requires a little more of a shift in emphasis and focus. Whilst on the face of it, one might expect adaptation from stage to screen to be a simple affair - one is after all normally still dealing with a text, and one already has a sense of the visuals - however, the expression of that text and those visuals through a different medium requires a different approach - sometimes a radically different approach.

Cinema is, as argued and elaborated upon by Anthony Davies, much more than '*canned and transportable theatre*' - the two forms of communication require distinctive approaches which '*discern clearly the subtle and significant differences which distinguish the two media in their presentation of dramatic material*' (Davies, 1988, p.5). These differences lie not only in the mode of presentation of the material, but significantly alter the direct relationship of the audience to both the dramatic work itself and their 'sense of audience'. Whereas on the

stage the '*theatrical experience amounts to a reciprocal action between the presenters...of the dramatic work and the audience...*(where) *the theatre audience is playing the game of theatre*' (Davies, 1988, pp.5-6) and in doing so, is entering into a contract with the performers by tacitly agreeing to suspend their disbelief - that the actors are just that. In other words, there is a direct relationship linking performer-audience-performer in which the audience enters '*into complicity with the stage director and the actors*' (Davies, 1988, p.6).   This complicity in and during the performance of the work directly and immediately feeds back to the performer the audience's response to any given moment in any given performance, allowing the performer to make minute and subtle adjustments of timing and other elements to suit that particular audience. As each audience is different, these responses vary in different moments to different degrees, thus subtly adjusting the performance each time the performer steps into the light and enters into a new contract, as they, performer and audience, negotiate their way through the work together. As Davies (1988, p.9) puts it, '*watching a play in the theatre, we the audience are involved at one end of the circuit while the action on the cinema screen is a closed circuit independent of audience response*'. In the cinema audience then, the '*element of collusion undergoes an important change...it does not cease to play its part, but it is at once less conscious on the part of the spectator and less expected by the Film Director*' (Davies, 1988, p.6).

What a cinema audience does share with a theatre audience however, is the 'architecture' of the space. That is, they sit, in a darkened room looking towards what is essentially a proscenium arch which has evolved little from its theatrical beginnings - often also sharing a curtain and 'warmers' prior to the commencement of the show, '*however the architectural similarity of the cinema with the theatre conceal(s) the profound changes in the psychology of the audience response*' (Davies, 1988, p.7). Where the stage audience is 'drawn into the performance, a screen audience is much more separated from, and an outside observer of, the work - by virtue of the fact that '*the camera can, and to some extent always does, induce a passivity in the spectator*' (Davies, 1988, p.8) - therefore, the cinema audience absorbs, more than reacts with, or has any immediate influence over, the

presented image. Davies argues that this 'passivity in the spectator' is created by the dynamics of the camera and its movement amongst the action of the scene - thereby taking the spectator into the scene and thus taking the responsibility away from the spectator, to, in a sense, find their own way in.

4.2   MOVEMENT OF THE CAMERA

Davies argues (1988, p.8) that the audience, through the camera's movement, experiences the *'illusion of horizontal and vertical mobility',* becoming, in a sense, part of the scene, and is hence *'invaded by, and participates in the laws of the artistic structure'.* I am of the belief that it not just the movement of the camera which causes this passivity, but the **selectivity** of the camera, through the director and editor's conscious choices, as to what the camera will permit the audience to see.

In the theatre the stage picture is essentially always in 'wide shot' - the audience is presented with a broad view of the architecture and the characters, and has to choose which elements of that stage picture they wish to focus on, to the exclusion of the surrounding, and, for that moment, extraneous detail. It is through this process that the audience has to work at being involved enough to make those choices. On the screen however, they are handed, through the selectivity of the camera, a close-up which is explicitly stating, 'look at this small part of the action now...you need make no imaginative effort'. Thus the camera (and editing) does most of the work for the screen audience - through camera movement, selectivity, taking away from the audience the responsibility of making the choices of what is crucial to the action, what is crucial for the audience to know and be aware of, and thus, to some extent spoon-feeding the audience and taking away not only the responsibility, but indeed opportunity for a more direct imaginative involvement.

4.3   ADAPTATION OF VISUALS

In the theatre, asserts Davies (1988, p.13), the stage decor is secondary to the actor - its function being to '*give theatrical resonance to the dialogue, to facilitate the centripetal concentration of power in the actor*' - whilst on the screen it '*retains its power through the dynamic reciprocity between actor and spatial detail*'. What he is saying in essence is that the 3-dimensional nature of the relationship between the actor and the scenic elements in the theatre, become a single 2-dimensional picture in a frame on the screen - thus merging the actor and the background to the extent that the scenic elements or background take on profoundly more significance in the screen context. The audience cannot, through their '*stereoscopic visual perception*' (Davies, 1988, p.6) quite so readily, on the screen, separate the various elements - yet '*the screen presents what we accept as depth on a flat surface*' (Davies, 1988, p.6). Thus, the screen image has to artificially create the depth that we would normally register in a theatre by virtue of its 3-dimensionality - transforming the '*3-dimensional reality into a 2-dimensional illusion*' (Davies, 1988, p.6). This significance of the relationship between actor and decor underlines once again the different approaches required - from a design point of view - between the two media. Whilst in the theatre one designs for the 'wide-shot', in designing for the screen one must also be mindful of not only that same wide-shot, but also the close-up, the effect various lenses have on the relationship between foreground and background - perspective distortion, depth-of-field, foreshortening etc., and the particular way the camera lens depicts colour and detail.

> *One of the key questions in any filmed version of a stage drama is the extent to which the filmmaker should accept the physical limitations of the theatre. There is no absolute rule to be applied in this matter* (Steene, 1981, p.296)

4.4   ADAPTATION OF PERFORMANCE

> *For the film actor, even in the cinematic adaptation of a theatrical work, the entire concept is totally different...(their) performance achieves its finished state through a process which*

is not organic as the theatre actor's must be, but episodic (Davies, 1988, p.p. 170-171)

There is the fundamental difference for the performer between performing on the stage and on the screen - a process which on the stage has a chronology, continuity and flow, and which inevitably develops its own rhythm - becomes, on the screen, disjointed, fragmented, anything but chronological, and requires of the performer the ability to relate meaningfully to the 'piece of air' which, for the shooting of the close-up or cutaway, becomes the other person (in absentia) in that scene. For these reasons, the performer, according to Davies, has very little control over the final look of the work, and has great difficulty in developing an innate sense of the character. Whereas for both stage and screen the director maintains overall control, in the context of the fragmented nature of screen creation, the screen director is the one who possesses the clearest and most comprehensive mental image of the overall final product, and hence *has a dual responsibility; both to the actor and to the camera...(the screen director) will seem constantly to require the actor to meet the less flexible demands of the machine'* (Davies, 1988, p.173). Whilst this may indeed be true in terms of the overall shape and look of the film, in the more specific aspects of performance detail I find myself disagreeing somewhat with Davies when he contends that, *'since the control of space and timing are effectively removed from the film actor, it must be agreed that at best he is only in fractional control of what might be termed 'artistic performance'* (1988, p.171). McDougal, by contrast (1985, p.6), asserts that *'the contribution of an actor to a film can hardly be emphasises enough'*. Even if one acknowledges the diminution of overall control of the film actor, surely both film actor and the stage actor - whatever the technical demands of the respective media - share the same fundamental responsibility to portray the essential truth of the character within the essential internal truth of the play's or film's context - that *'we expect these characters to be credible in their own fictive worlds'* (McDougal, 1985, p.113). The performer must possess some notion of the direction, development and stylisation of the character, if not the direction of the film as a whole - otherwise, no matter how clever and resourceful the director and/or editor might be, characters would not

develop or establish themselves sufficiently - they would merely present themselves as rather robotic and shallow manifestations of the written word, strung together as so many disparate fragments.

This brings us to the case of the actor/director - who has the advantage of knowing and developing in detail the character from within, whilst at the same time having a detailed vision and sense of the overall picture and the character's placement, development, and structural significance within that broader contextual picture. They are in '*the privileged position of knowing the details of the director's adaptive strategies*' (Davies, 1988, p.181), and thus the actor/director carries additional responsibilities and the ability, having created the character and performance via all the private, internal creative processes that requires, to then step back from that performance, survey it with the critical and unbiased eye of the director, and then make the necessary adjustments with the **internal** view of the actor making the detail of the present scene convincing, whilst simultaneously being faithful to the **external** view of the director in the context of the broader picture - beyond the immediacies of the present scene. In the context then, of a non-verbal work such as **SON OF ROMEO,** all of the above applies - only more so because one is not dealing with a text as such. One is dealing with visual images which are proven to have been successful on stage - this does not mean that they are automatically going to be successful on television - quite the contrary. As Marcel Marceau (1990) has pointed out, '*if I take this long to do this* (slow, expressive flower-picking movement) *on the stage, the audience is enthralled...but if I do the same on television it is just boring*'.

A television audience has different expectations - of timing, visual information, imaginative input, and spans of concentration. These different expectations have evolved through the camera's different visual perception of, and interactivity with the action of the work. In order to adapt a work successfully from stage to screen this fundamental relationship must change to suit the different medium. Thus, if one begins with cartoon-like stage movement within an audience-imagined, 3-dimensional environment, then one must logically extend this in adaptation to a cartoon-like movement within

a cartoon-like illusory 2-dimensional environment - hence the description of the work as a performance and design-based adaptation. Mime does indeed not work on television, unless it is adapted for the medium of television. As Marcel Marceau (1990) has stated, '*mime and television must join hands, each making aesthetic compromises to the other*'.

4.5   SHAKESPEARE ON THE SCREEN

A successful cinematic adaptation of a Shakespeare play must clearly treat the material in the dramatic terms of the cinema itself, but that should never be taken to imply the elimination of that theatricality which is inevitably embedded in the text (Davies, 1988, p.24)

This balance between preserving and presenting the inherent theatricality of Shakespeare whilst at the same time utilising the new medium of the screen to introduce new life into and interpretations of Shakespeare's works, creates interesting dilemmas and challenges. Whilst a mime artist, dancer or choreographer might argue, or at least qualify the point, Davies (1988, p.2) suggests that '*theatre is predominantly a medium of spoken language...and as the years of silent cinema proved, the medium of film is **not** based on spoken language*'. If this is indeed the case, and one looks at Shakespeare in particular - where language, its subtle nuance, colour and artful expression, forms the very essence of the work, then cinema would seem to be fighting a difficult if not losing battle to present Shakespeare faithfully because, as Davies (p.2), arguing the case for cinema suggests, '*the pith of cinematic expression is the moving image*,*' then even Shakespeare presented on the screen must conform to this new language - and that the filmmaker '*must develop a cinematic language which is articulate on a visual level*' (Davies, 1988, p.2)*.*

Dr Jonathan Miller, who has successfully '*transferred Shakespeare to television*' (Bragg. 1995) suggests that '*having done as many of the*

Shakespeares as I have done on television and having done them also on the stage before, I'm aware of the fact that there is a tremendous difference, and I suspect that their natural life is actually on a stage and that something very important gets lost - in spite of all sorts of interesting gains - when you bring it onto television' (Miller, J., 1995). Thus the challenge is to find a way of translating the verbal to the visual - without losing, and indeed heightening the power and meaning of Shakespeare's words - making them relevant and exciting, '*the filmmaker must endeavour to invest (the) cinematic adaptation, on its predominantly visual level, with a complexity and structural force which the medium of film does not naturally project in its dialogue*' (Davies, 1988, p.3). In other words, the filmmaker must not allow themselves to be overcome by such reverence for the text as to miss the essential core of meaning and drama in the original work - that by endeavouring to ensure '*that Shakespeare is not profaned*' (Davies, 1988, p.3) their film does Shakespeare's work a disservice by failing to recognise the difference in the forms of expression of the different media, and consequently the different demands of those respective media on the work. In terms of this faithfullness to the source material, McDougal (1985. p.6) suggests that '*every adaptation is inevitably an interpretation of its source. Some adaptations remain closer in word or spirit to their sources than others, although any ideal of complete fidelity to a source should be dismissed*'.

Thus the filmmaker must find a new dimension and voice for the work, whilst at the same time relying heavily on the original text to provide the inspiration, the essential core of meaning and drama. What Davies has found in analysing a number of film adaptations of Shakespeare's works by the great directors and actor/directors, is that '*a Shakespearean film cannot satisfactorily remain confined to the theatre stage...neither can it abandon that intrinsic theatricality which beats in the heart of Shakespearean drama*' (Davies, 1988, p.184) - suggesting that anyone who chooses to adapt Shakespeare for the screen has to be faithful to their own particular vision of the work and find their own balance between the theatrical and the cinematic.

> *Adaptations...involve the transformation of one art form into another...with a successful adaptation, the original work is*

transformed into something new and different, although retaining
many traces of what it was formerly (McDougal, 1985, p.4)

4.6 SELECTED SCREEN ADAPTATIONS OF SHAKESPEARE

As this study deals specifically with the adaptation of *Romeo & Juliet*
from text to stage to screen, in examining screen adaptations of
Shakespeare's works, I have for the most part restricted myself to
four particular adaptations of *Romeo & Juliet*, as follows:

WEST SIDE STORY - United Artists (1961)
ROMEO & JULIET - Franco Zeffirelli (1966)
ROMEO & JULIET - BBC Television (1988)
ROMEO & JULIET - Baz Luhrmann (1996)

The reasons for this selectivity in choosing particular adaptations are
that these particular screen productions offer not only strongly
contrasting styles of adaptation of the original work, but they also
represent a reasonable span of time, some 35 years between *West
Side Story* (1961) and the most recent film adaptation of *Romeo &
Juliet* (1996). In addition, the range of works cited offer adaptations
specific to both the film and television media.

In considering adaptations of *Romeo & Juliet* it is useful to remind
oneself that Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet* is itself an adaptation of,
and evolution from, similar stories which had '*existed for centuries in
European folklore, especially Italian*' (BBC *Romeo & Juliet* CD-ROM. 1995)
and which developed through various Italian, French and English
interpretations and translations, to Shakespeare's writing of *Romeo &
Juliet* in approximately 1594, and for which he '*borrowed the plot
from Arthur Brooke's ...(1562)...poem*' (Lamb, 1968, p.10). Given that
Shakespeare himself was no stranger to interpretation, it is not
surprising that his work lends itself so well to interpretation and
adaptation, not only on the stage, but also to contemporary media
such as film and television.

WEST SIDE STORY (1961)

Adapted from the Broadway stage production of the same name, *West Side Story* sees *Romeo & Juliet* transformed into a late 50's gang movie musical. It is a stylised, modernised musical version of *Romeo & Juliet* which uses none of Shakespeare's language whatsoever, and sets the action on the streets of a stylised New York, with the feuding Montague and Capulet families becoming instead feuding street gangs. Described variously over the years since its production as *'a triumph of style over substance'* (Cinebooks Motion Picture Guide - Cinemania CD ROM, 1995), *'totally stunning cinema art'* (Johnson, 1962, p.59) and a film which *'discursively articulates racial discrimination in the U.S.A.'* (Sánchez, 1994, p.65), the general consensus seems to be that the work stands on its own - not so much as an adaptation of *Romeo & Juliet*, but as a piece of cinema art in itself, despite, rather than because of, its tenuous links with Shakespeare.

However *West Side Story* **is** an adaptation of *Romeo & Juliet*, and as such has to be judged, to some extent at least, in those terms. From the point of view of plot, whilst Shakespeare's language has been jettisoned and replaced with contemporary dialogue and musical numbers, the plot line very faithfully follows that of Shakespeare - the conflict, the meetings (both social and confrontational) between the adversarial families (gangs), the ill-fated relationship between the lovers and eventual tragedy bringing the warring parties to some degree of reconciliation - fundamentally, the themes are the same as Shakespeare's, and whilst they are expressed in contemporary terms, the faithfulness to Shakespeare is more apparent than the style of the work might initially suggest. The film functions well as a film in its own contemporary right, yet if one cares to make the comparison with Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*, then the work's derivation is sufficiently discernible, but not essential to its appreciation - the essential conflict and drama is there, and, as with *Romeo & Juliet*, builds convincingly to a crescendo.

In terms of its adaptation, the common thread of opinion is one of a confusion of styles, that it represents *'a melange of fantasy and reality that doesn't always work'* (Cinebooks Motion Picture Guide -

Cinemania CD ROM, 1995). Particularly in the early scenes one recognises a marked tendency for the film to slip in and out of stylisation - when the action is initially established in a semi-naturalistic environment, with the usual 'extras' and ambience of the city, yet after some time these naturalistic elements melt away to reveal a city populated apparently only by the principal characters, the gang members and those directly connected with the advancement and playing out of the plot. This *'indecision at the film's centre'* (Taylor, 1962, p.95) is reinforced by the music and choreography further undercutting any sense of naturalism which the film might have initially established, and this, together with the even greater stylisation during the dance (ball) scene - with its dream-like unreality - provide yet another stylistic layer. This stylisation is no doubt a product of the adaptation from the stage, where the environment is totally stylised and artificial, and there are no 'extras'. However a convention which serves the stage, and which may equally serve the film, becomes uncomfortable only when there is confusion about that convention - where the style has not been strongly enough established, and is, in this case, cluttered with naturalism.

Although its creator/chorographer for the stage, Jerome Robbins, left the production of the film part way through due to conflict with co-director Robert Wise, it is clear that its origins as Robbins' musical stage production were carried through onto the screen more or less successfully and more or less convincingly, and retain much of what a stage musical is meant to be.

ROMEO & JULIET - Franco Zeffirelli (1966)

No confusion of styles exists with Zeffirelli's *Romeo & Juliet.* Described more than a decade after its release as *'the most popular and financially successful Shakespeare film yet made'* (Jorgens, 1977, p.80), Zeffirelli's adaptation exudes a richness of colour and texture, a vibrancy of performance - particularly from the young lovers themselves - and a consistently earthy, dusty, gritty realism which, immediately the Marketplace scene opens, *'actively suggests the*

tangibility of this Verona, creating a compelling amalgam of colour, texture, depth, movement, and sound that draws us irresistibly into the fiction' (Pursell, 1986, p.173).

Critics and scholars seem to disagree entirely on the effectiveness of this film as an adaptation of *Romeo & Juliet.* 'Variety' magazine (13th. March 1968 issue) on the one hand describes it as a '*distinct disappointment',* whilst on the other, Pursell (1986, p.173) suggests that '*Zeffirelli offers a lucid and subtle visual interpretation of the...text*' - despite the fact that, according to Halio (1977, p.324) some 60% of that text has been cut. Perhaps the deletion of so much of Shakespeare's text provides the key to the success of this adaptation - that for the contemporary film and television-literate audience, more attuned to visual images than verbal ones, they readily accept, and perhaps even prefer that '*the camera can do swiftly and effectively what language - even Shakespeare's - must sometimes labour to achieve*' (Halio, 1977, p.322).

By using the camera to create this 'heightened naturalism', Zeffirelli has breathed new life into *Romeo & Juliet* - both the play itself and the two leading characters, through his choice of young (17 and 15 respectively), inexperienced but passionate performers. Much has been made of this casting decision, and whether it was the correct one, yet it is my belief that time and other productions of *Romeo & Juliet,* using more experienced, and therefore unacceptably older performers, has borne out the appropriateness of the decision at the time. Whilst well known U.S. critic Pauline Kael (1995) suggests that often the '*lines are unintelligible because the actor's faces and bodies aren't in tune with the words',* my own reading of the film suggests otherwise - that the portrayal of teenage exuberance and youthful passion brings the words to life in a way that no academically correct interpretation ever could. That as human beings we are touched by the emotions emanating from the screen more than we relate intellectually to the precision and nuance of the language, and that this portrayal of emotion (particularly from Olivia Hussey as Juliet) gives new life and meaning to Shakespeare's words. '*What Romeo and Juliet lack in depth of character they make up in energy, beautiful innocence, and spontaneity*' (Jorgens, 1977, p.80).

As Pursell (1986, p.176) claims, '*the film revivifies and makes accessible through its own conventions, the conventions of the speech'.* Not only do the younger performers make their characters live, but both Pat Heywood as the Nurse and John McEnery as Mercutio, bring to their roles a robustness, depth and colour far beyond what the dialogue has provided in other, less skilled hands - their respective interpretations adding, together with Zeffirelli's treatment, to the richness, texture and meaning of the film as a whole. By opting for a more radical approach to Shakespeare's 'traditional' material and perhaps the expectations of a 'traditional' Shakespearean audience, Zeffirelli appears to have achieved his aim of rendering Shakespeare a '*living experience...for the audience of today'* (Zeffirelli, 1965/95)

> *Zeffirelli's Romeo & Juliet is in most ways superior to the films by Cukor (1936) and Castellani (1954). It has energy, humour and a life where the others do not.* (Jorgens, 1977, pp.90-91)

ROMEO & JULIET - BBC Television (1988)

In stark contrast to both *West Side Story* and Zeffirelli's *Romeo & Juliet,* which are both adapted for the medium of film and take great advantage of film's capabilities, this television production is a very 'theatrical' and 'stagy' production, to the extent that one suspects that that has been the intention - to create, (despite what Jonathan Miller claims to be impossible and irrelevant) an 'authentic' production of the theatre work on television - possibly for school audiences or scholars of Shakespeare. In fact this particular production, whether originally intended so or not, has recently (1995) been utilised as the basis of an educational CD ROM issued by the BBC, which explores various aspects of the play, its language, themes, history etc., and is, as the BBC (1995) itself states, '*ideal for students, teachers, or anyone interested in learning more about one of Shakespeare's most popular works'* . The BBC no doubt considers itself, with some justification, to have a responsibility, as some kind of custodian of television culture in Great Britian and beyond, to present a low-risk, conservative version of *Romeo & Juliet* utilising the minimum adaptation of the work to suit the television medium.

The production was apparently shot entirely in the studio, for both interiors and exteriors - the sets are very theatrical, to the extent that on occasions, 'stone' balustrades shake as they are leant upon, and the whole production lacks depth, texture, and is largely lifeless.

Whilst there are some incidental similarities between this production and that of Zeffirelli, such as the design of the ramparts on the city walls, the differences in style, detail and quality well outweigh any similarities - the discernibly artificial environment of the television studio contrasts strongly with both Zeffirelli's bold realism and *West Side Story*'s highly theatrical stylisation. And, whilst both *West Side Story* and the Zeffirelli film would have enjoyed more substantial budgets and the visual richness which film offers as opposed to videotape, the BBC's production suffers badly from the 'flatness' of television, despite the use of foreground pieces by the director in an attempt to create some depth, and also the use of a live horse for the Prince, which, far from countering the studio artificiality, actually reinforces it.

To its credit, the production has attempted to overcome the flatness and lack of depth of television by designing the marketplace in such a way as to encircle and restrict the action, reducing the need for enormous and costly Sets, staging pieces and elaborately detailed scenic cloths, however that same encirclement and restriction, and using the camera as the 'fourth wall' as in a proscenium theatre, limits the opportunities for a broader imaginative scope for the various crucial scenes in the central Marketplace. Together with this theatricality of design, the Marketplace is populated not only by the main characters and action, but also includes a sparse smattering of rather self-conscious 'extras' who appear to have no sense of purpose as characters, and equally, appear to serve little purpose in adding crowd texture - it might almost have been better to dispense with these altogether and acknowledge the theatricality of the production rather than create an awkward compromise between stage and screen.

Whilst the fight scenes in Zeffirelli's film have been described as *'the vicious, dirty, unromantic fight to the death between Romeo and*

Tybalt' (Jorgens, 1977, p.82), the same cannot be said for the fight scenes in this production, which generally display a sense of being contrived and obviously choreographed - 'trick' tables breaking too readily and neatly, and the 'telegraphing' of and preparation for, hits and kicks, renders these crucial scenes less than convincing. Whilst there are moments of interesting use of the Set within the choreography - the archways which encircle the marketplace, and the ballroom, and which are re-used in a number of settings are, if a little overused, generally well utilised - some depth is created by featuring these arches both as background detail and foreground pieces in and around which the characters move and fight - however the flimsy nature of some Set pieces undermines the overall context of the fight itself and enhances it's 'stagy' appearance, rendering the close-up details almost out of context. Significantly, as the production proceeds, the settings in various gardens (Juliet's and the Friar's in particular), together with a more interesting camera treatment, add much needed texture and richness to the production - it is almost as though an entirely different design approach was taken from that of the central Marketplace setting.

In terms of the balance of text and visuals, scrupulous reverence for Shakespeare's text combines with limited imagination (and presumably equally limited budget) to produce a rather dismal failure to serve either Shakespeare or the audience, and whilst I agree with Jorgens (1977, p.ix) that '*we should not come to Shakespeare films to demand impossible perfections and "definitive" interpretations*', it would appear that in attempting the authentic television production of *Romeo & Juliet*, the producers have set themselves that very task, and having done so, whilst Shakespeare's words might faithfully and authentically be spoken, they have fallen desperately short of the target of satisfying the audience of today. The crucial problem with this production is that the producers have failed to use the medium as anything more than the '*canned theatre*' as referred to by Davies (1988, p.5) and others (Jorgens 1977, p.5).

This production provides a very telling example of the difficulties faced by, and the shortcoming of, productions which do not adapt to

suit the different visual language and demands of the medium, or adapt to them insufficiently or superficially.

ROMEO & JULIET - Baz Luhrmann (1996)

Whilst director and co-screenwriter, Baz Luhrmann (1996), insists that the film is '*ninety percent Shakespeare's achievement*', this latest version of *Romeo & Juliet* on the cinema screen is a bold visual and stylistic departure from traditional Shakespeare. According to the film's distributor, Twentieth Century Fox (1996), director Luhrmann and screenplay collaborator Craig Pearce, even in the film's contemporary context, '*resolved to stick absolutely to the Shakespearean text*' and Luhrmann (1996) himself insists that '*every word spoken (in this film) is written by William Shakespeare*'.

The critics seem to agree that, bold as it is, this marriage between Shakespeare's original text and the contemporary setting of '*Verona Beach, a teeming, violent multi-cultural Latin metropolis*', (Ansen, 1996, p.73) works surprisingly well. In the words of one reviewer, who perceives the work as being true to both Shakespeare and '90's filmmaking, '*to see the gang toughs in modern dress and then hear them spit out their threats and quarrels in Elizabethan English makes absolute sense*' (Braun, 1996). Similarly, reviewer David Hunter (1996) states without reservation that in '*seeking to avoid the academic label...they pull off the...tricky manoeuvre of using Elizabethan stage dialogue in a world of guns and cars and overnight delivery services*'.

Whilst not completely at ease with the work which Ansen (1996, pp.73-74) describes as, '*alternately enrapturing and exhausting, brilliant and glib, this is a "Romeo & Juliet" more for the eyes than the ears*', critics appear generally to recognise that what Luhrmann has managed to achieve is that very difficult balance between the verbal and the visual, by developing, according to cinematographer Donald M. McAlpine '*a new film language*' (Twentieth Century Fox, 1996, p.17) which recognises the contemporary audience's visual literacy, without, as *West Side Story* did, denying them the opportunity to comprehend and savour Shakespeare's text.

It is interesting to note, in the pivotal Ball scene, that whilst the Zeffirelli film and the Luhrmann film contrast widely in style, there exists a certain similarity between the two's respective treatment of the first actual meeting of Romeo and Juliet - both make use of a column from behind which Romeo appears, startling Juliet by taking her hand. It is difficult to determine whether Luhrmann's is a direct reference to Zeffirelli's, or that it is simply a convenient device appropriate to both. In this case, however, the Zeffirelli treatment of this brief moment seems the more convincing. The BBC's treatment of the same moment, by contrast, has Romeo striding across the Ballroom and directly confronting Juliet by 'cutting in' on her dance partner, virtually pushing him out of the way. There is little, if any, mystery, subtlety, surprise or passion in their first meeting, as they continue to dance and blandly speak the 'hands' dialogue.

Luhrmann's adaptation is a bold and exciting experiment which challenges and confronts the audience whilst at the same time inviting them into a world with which they are more familiar than that of either Zeffirelli's *Romeo & Juliet, West Side Story,* or indeed the 'authentic' BBC William Shakespeare. Whilst there is a certain, almost excessive theatricality about Luhrmann's *Romeo & Juliet,* it is unlike, and contrasts with, the stylised, musical theatricality of *West Side Story*, the staged theatricality of the BBC's production and the heightened naturalism of Zeffirelli's work. Luhrmann's theatricality is of grand, operatic proportions which takes the audience beyond both their cinematic experience and their Shakespearean experience. Luhrmann encapsulates his own approach to Shakespeare and the film when he states that *'Romeo & Juliet, like all of Shakespeare's plays, touched everyone...he was a rambunctious, sexy, violent storyteller. We're trying to make this movie rambunctious, sexy, violent and entertaining the way Shakespeare might have if he was a filmmaker'* (Luhrmann, 1996, p.2). As Horton and Magretta (1981. p.5) state, '*a creative filmmaker can bring the spirit of the original text to life in a different medium at a different time and, as a result, produce a work with a clear life of its own*' - Luhrmann's bold and adventurous production in this medium at this time, most certainly has a clear life of its own, yet paradoxically retains much more of

Shakespeare's sense and text than the visual style would initially suggest was possible.

The more successful of the screen adaptations - *West Side Story,* Zeffirelli's *Romeo & Juliet* and Luhrmann's *Romeo & Juliet* - appear to have one thing in common, that they all strive to speak to young audiences - to capture the energy, aggression, nihilism and passion of youth whilst remaining, to one degree or another, faithful to the essence of Shakespeare's story. Whilst the BBC *Romeo & Juliet* may successfully represent a more Shakespearean 'correctness' in terms of the language and customs, the singular lack of passion is a factor which I do not believe Shakespeare himself intended to be written into the work, nor, for all its academic authenticity, is this production likely to be one about which Shakespeare might have said *'well that'll do'* (Miller, J., 1995). As Jorgens (1977, p.20) asserts, *'there is nothing more un-Shakespearean than a film which relies solely on the poetry for its power, unity and meaning'.*

> *it would seem therefore sensible to argue that a filmmaker will make the most effective film adaptation of a Shakespeare play if he is faithful to his own vision of what may be called the play's life force...(which)...is not embedded in the text but results from an* **interaction between the imaginative mind and the text** (Davies, 1988, p.4) (emphasis added).

5.   SON OF ROMEO - THE ADAPTATION:

5.1   TECHNICAL OVERVIEW

'BLUE-SCREEN' COMPOSITING:

One of the most commonly used electronic techniques in modern television production is that of electronic insertion of one image over another - a foreground (F/G) superimposed over a background (B/G) and/or a background inserted behind a foreground subject. The most commonly visible version of this technique is the weather presenter

who stands in front of a panel whose pictures change on cue between barometric charts, vision of timelapse views of weather changes etc. Just as for the audience, the weather presenter themselves is only able to view these changing images from a monitor positioned out of frame - not from the panel itself, as the image is a composited one, coming visibly together on screen (refer Appendix G for diagram).

This particular use is both very common and very basic, generally utilising an electronic insertion technique known as chromakey, where the panel behind the presenter is painted a specific cobalt-like shade of blue (other colours may also be used, however blue is the most common, hence the term 'blue-screen'). A foreground (F/G) camera focuses on the presenter and a second, background (B/G) camera, focuses on a graphic (weather map, photograph etc.) and the two images are combined electronically through a mixer in the studio control room. This keying technique, whilst providing, as suggested by Millerson (1990, p.489), endless opportunities and considerable economies - such as utilising relatively inexpensive and readily available graphics, photographs and even moving images on videotape as backgrounds rather than real sets or locations - also possesses inherent limitations and imposes many constraints in its use, some of which include:

·   both F/G camera and B/G camera must generally be fixed in position (locked off) (although currently the technology has been developed which allows movement of the foreground and background cameras which are '*ganged by electronic servo systems*' (Millerson, 1990, p.490)

·   fixed cameras severely limit the movement of performers within the frame as the camera is unable to follow the action beyond the frame without distorting the apparent reality of the relationship between B/G and F/G.

·   the perspectives of B/G and F/G must match

·   the lighting of B/G and F/G must match

- shadows, reflections, smoke and fine detail such as wisps of hair may create problems through inaccurate or indecisive keying

- a blue fringing 'halo' effect surrounds the performer if either the lighting or the key is insufficiently defined

- depth of field disparities between B/G and F/G

- shadows, which normally 'ground' the performer, linking them with their environment, may cause *'poor clipping'* (Millerson, 1990, p.490), and the removal of which, for technical reasons, may have the effect of appearing to 'suspend' the performer above the floor, disconnecting them from their environment and rendering the relationship artificial

A refinement of the chromakey process, known as Ultimatte®, was developed by the Ultimatte Corporation and differs from chromakey in that the chromakey process essentially switches between B/G and F/G images, hence the effectiveness of the process is limited in part by the rapidity with which this switching process is able to take place. The Ultimatte® process however, expressed in the least technical terms possible, generates a 'travelling matte' (or cut-out) from the F/G subject, creating an 'electronic hole' in the B/G. The F/G subject is then superimposed over this 'hole', making the completed, composited image (refer Appendix G for technical information).

In addition to its ability to achieve the same effect as chromakey, Ultimatte® presents distinct advantages over chromakey which include:

- the facility to depict naturalistic shadows, hence 'grounding' the human performer within the artificial environment

- the advanced electronic process permits the use of fine detail, smoke etc

- generally finer definition and resolution of images

In terms of solo performance as in **SON OF ROMEO**, the advantage of utilising these keying/matteing techniques is that it provides the means by which one performer is able to be multi-layered - hence creating the impression that there is more than one performer. This is achieved by shooting character 'A' as the first pass, and then, using the videotaped performance of character 'A' as an inserted B/G, shoot character 'B' as a second pass which is superimposed over the previous vision - resulting in two characters, A and B, appearing to interact directly with each other in the same shot.

Similar to the example cited above of the weather presenter, the performer in this situation is positioned within a totally blue environment (refer Appendix F - Production Photographs), including walls and floor, and is able to see the composited picture only via a studio monitor. The artificial nature of this situation has implications for the performer and their performance which are detailed elsewhere in this study. In broad terms however, the solo performer has no other performers with whom to interact, and, working in this blue, featureless void, is unable locate themselves relative to a piece of scenery, as generally speaking there are none, and hence has to develop unusual techniques to ensure both spatial accuracy in, and 'humanity' of, their performance. However one advantage is that the insertion of graphic B/G's permits the non-naturalistic stylisation of those B/G's, placing the human performer within a selected, stylised environment.

5.2   THE STAGE VERSION

5.2.1 AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS:

When one is dealing with Shakespeare in the theatre, the audience's expectations of tradition are very particular. Equally, when one is dealing with mime, the audience's expectations of tradition are also very particular. In fact, in attempting to bring these classic artistic icons together, the areas where they conflict with each other probably well outweigh the areas where they support each other. The most obvious of these conflicts is the fact that Shakespeare is language-based whilst mime is traditionally wordless. However, it is in the non-

naturalistic realm of the cartoon - where one is able to take 'diabolical liberties' with the rational and the realistic, where one is able to vary the degree of stylisation to suit the particular circumstances of the scene, that the audience may allow itself some latitude of interpretation and expectation - to be the window through which the audience is able to relate to, interpret and enjoy the work as a whole. Therefore in terms of style and inspiration, Bugs Bunny cartoons on television had an enormous influence on both its concept and style.

Whilst the immediate impression of these cartoons might be that neither they, nor their characters are very subtle at all, the fact is that in terms of the characters' **movement** they share much in common with mime - the economy, clarity, and precision of the movement - however bizarre might be the plot and motivations. So *Son of Romeo* for the stage drew heavily on the movement style and sense of humour of these cartoons and their characters, but in presenting it theatrically, the style of the production was minimal - one performer, in a neutral costume, against a neutral background (refer videotape of *Son of Romeo* - Appendix A). As Marcel Marceau has stated on numerous occasions, mime is an artform which *'makes the invisible visible...and the abstract, concrete'* - it does this by utilising the imaginative input of the audience to 'fill in the gaps' and work with the performer to provide the missing visual information. As such, the use of a simple, neutral, non-distracting background provided the blank canvas upon which the audience could paint their own imagined pictures - also to enhance rather than distract from the clarity of the physically drawn characters. If one is going to expect the audience to work imaginatively , then one is obliged to provide for them the clearest possible opportunity to carry out that work. Hence the basic premise was to use the physicality in as uncluttered a manner and visual environment as possible - to convey everything which the audience needed to have conveyed, and at the same time provide entertainment.

5.2.2 FINDING THE COMEDY:

To find comedy within the tragedy and for both to enhance and support each other, one must do what Baz Luhrmann has done and '*not shy away from clashing low comedy with high tragedy, which is the style of the play*' (Luhrmann, 1996, p.3). Thus to find the inherent comedy one must first look at Shakespeare's characters and what they offer. Given that both Romeo and Juliet had to be reasonably identifiable as human beings to an audience, their particular opportunities for cartoon comedy are limited, therefore one looks to the supporting roles to provide a comic contrast to the romance and tragedy of the leading characters. In looking to these supporting roles, one is brought back to the problem of being faithful to Shakespeare's originals - i.e. what purpose do the minor characters serve? How essential are they (if at all) to the narrative?; How do they support or contrast with Romeo and Juliet? Can they effectively be portrayed physically rather than vocally? Do they lend themselves to 'cartoon' treatment?

In attempting to answer these questions, I pared the play down to the barest bones and eventually chose the following of Shakespeare's characters as essential or important for the following reasons:

ROMEO   essential to the plot

JULIET   essential to the plot

TYBALT   microcosm of the families' conflict and a contrast
                to Romeo

PARIS   opposing suitor (conflict) for Juliet and contrast to
                Romeo

NURSE   contrast to Juliet and comic aspects already within
                the character

CAPULET   authority/father figure for Juliet

Perhaps the most notable non-inclusion, was the character of Mercutio. Whilst both the Nurse and Mercutio are often suggested as providing some '*wit and comic relief*' to, and contrast with, Juliet and Romeo respectively - and in this context Lamb (1968, p.12) further

refers to '*the garrulous chatter of the Nurse...and...Mercutio's witty repartee*' - the character of Mercutio presented a practical problem of insufficient contrast to Romeo to clearly define and separate each of these characters in a non-verbal context. Although in Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet* it is in fact Mercutio, not Romeo, who initially duels with Tybalt, and is killed, I considered there to be insufficient grounds in the overall context of the work, to include him, merely to kill him off early - regarding the combination of Tybalt and Paris as providing sufficient contrast to Romeo.

The other notable non-inclusion was Friar Lawrence, who proved to be more difficult to dispense with. Shakespeare uses the Friar as something of a sounding board for Juliet and Romeo (and hence for the audience), and also a father-figure. He is the instigator of the bogus suicide, and provides Juliet with the sleeping potion with which to achieve this deception. The Friar is '*more important for what he does than for what he is... his letter to Mantua which never arrives, leads directly to Romeo's suicide*'. (BBC *Romeo & Juliet* CD-ROM. 1995). He is, in this sense, pivotal in the unfolding of the tragedy, and '*what he actually does is extremely dangerous...the catastrophe is entirely of his devising*' (Greer. BBC *Romeo & Juliet* CD-ROM 1995). Although I did explore the physical and theatrical feasibility and possibilities of including the Friar, his rather central and pivotal role in the plot and his relationships with both Romeo and Juliet, provided the best reason to retain him (narratively, and to be faithful to the original) as well as the best reason to exclude him (cluttering up the clarity and definition of the major characters). His role as Romeo and Juliet's marriage celebrant became irrelevant when the Balcony Scene encompassed their wedding in a stylised manner (the mimed ring). In a sense he represents the subconscious of, particularly Juliet, therefore I decided, in this most minimal of minimalist adaptations, to replace the Friar's 'external' advice to Juliet with an 'internal' conscious decision on her own part to hatch the plot of the bogus suicide herself - thereby making Juliet more responsible for her own actions, and simultaneously overcoming the staging difficulty.

In addition to these essential characters, other, minor characters were developed for specific purposes throughout the work - mostly for comic and/or practical reasons.

RIFF RAFF (x4)	provide mechanical/performance device for transition from Tybalt to Romeo during fight, as well as providing a sense of crowded street spectacle
THE DOG	provides impetus for Romeo to climb wall, as well as comic contrast, prior to Balcony Scene
THE SAMURAI	provides comic contrast, physical punctuation, and an element of surprise for the audience
THE BIRD	provides comic contrast and enhances speed of Paris's suicide drive

5.2.3 PHYSICALITY:

The physicality of the characters had then to be determined - the basic physicality of each, as well as the contrasts between them. That both Romeo and Juliet needed to be particularly identifiable to an audience in a human way to make the romance and tragedy believable, meant that their physicality had to approach the 'normal'. Whilst Romeo did not present much of a problem other than deciding exactly what it was that he did, Juliet, by contrast, being a female character, needed to embody a little more of the cartoon without being offensive or leaning toward the 'drag queen', and therefore needed rather more sensitive treatment. Juliet had to be, or at least suggest, a female shape, without the need to resort to wigs, prosthetics, costume changes or any other such devices. The female body shape had to be unmistakably suggested by the character's body attitude and fluidity of movement - essentially soft, curved and flowing, with the legs moving in such a way as to create and

accentuate a false impression of wider female hips - providing a contrast to Romeo's more crisp-edged, angular and punctuated style.

The character of Tybalt needed to provide a direct and threatening physical contrast to Romeo, with whom he 'shared the stage', therefore Tybalt evolved as a not-too-bright night-club bouncer type of thug. His main purpose being to threaten and intimidate Romeo as the personification of the feuding families. Paris, although he and Romeo never confront each other directly in **Son of Romeo**, for the purpose of identifiability by the audience, still needed to contrast each other - this was achieved largely through Paris's foppish body-attitude. In addition, of the three times Paris appears, in two of those he wears different hats. These hats were not included for clarity in drawing the character so much as - given that Paris is a motoring enthusiast - identifying the type of car he was driving in each respective scene - although in his first appearance (FJ Holden) he wears none. The fact that Paris drives increasingly impressive cars, itself provides a contrast with Romeo who is always the pedestrian. Both the Nurse and Capulet, only make very brief appearances - the Nurse to punctuate the action with a blood-curdling scream at the discovery of Juliet's 'corpse', and Capulet (as a cloud-bound God-like authority figure) to advance the narrative by forcing Juliet to hatch the 'bogus suicide' deception.

Of the additional characters, the 'Riff-Raff to Verona' were essentially created as a device for overcoming two practical problems. One, of changing from Romeo to Tybalt as they first challenge each other to the duel - instead of using the rather tedious and predictable device of turning round and/or going through a physical 'neutral' to change from one character to another, in order to enhance the swift build up of aggression and tension between them, I changed from Romeo to the intermediate character of a Riff-Raff calling 'Fight!, Fight!' and gathering a group of onlookers around - then changed to Tybalt. Thus the Riff-Raff character, who was very animated, had to contrast not only with Romeo but also with Tybalt who were both quite still in 'sizing each other up' and preparing for their battle. The second practical problem for which I called upon the Riff-Raff, was at the end of the duel/chase when Tybalt is standing centre-stage claiming

victory, as he believes he has driven Romeo off. Romeo has to appear from behind the stage right screen pointing a (mime) blunderbuss at Tybalt. The distance between Tybalt's position and Romeo's position needed to be traversed without losing the sense of momentum and surprise. Therefore the Tybalt-supporting Riff Raff, by swelling their numbers and nudging, winking and celebrating along a line *(T/C 00:26:10:00)*, allowed me to; cover the distance, enhance the sense of crowded marketplace, reinforce the notion of Tybalt having popular (gang) support and Romeo having none, deceive the audience into believing Tybalt had won the duel, enhance the element of surprise (for both Tybalt and the audience), introduce some humorous vignettes by contrasting the physicality of each of them, and achieve my aim - i.e. to appear as Romeo pointing the weapon at Tybalt (or at least where Tybalt had been standing). This may seem a very elaborate device to cover one simple transition, but in fact it was created out of necessity. These characters are very broadly drawn and contrast each other both physically and vocally - they appear for less than two (2) seconds each, and in that time achieve a great deal, doing apparently very little other than being a brainless rabble.

The Dog also served a number of practical purposes - narratively, to initially impede Romeo's progress - making his achievement of reaching Juliet more difficult and therefore all the more worthwhile; artistically, as a humorous contrast to the serious Balcony scene which immediately follows it; as a practical device for eventually providing a sharp impetus which drives Romeo up the wall towards Juliet. The Dog scene as a whole *(T/C 00:14:34:10)*, provides a significant theatrical punctuation mark, and is one of the most 'cartoony' of the work.

> *a noteworthy feature is the constant counter-balancing of scenes...high comedy ..gives way to a very moving sensual encounter between the star-crossed lovers.* (Goldsworthy 1986, p.8).

The Samurai provides no practical purpose other than to punctuate the duel and jar the audience out of any sense of the predictable. He moves in a highly stylised, highly punctuated manner and is fundamentally a piece of purely gratuitous, nonsensical cartoon

humour. Similarly the Bird on the road was intended to be a piece of silliness, but which also punctuated and enhanced, by contrast, the sense of speed and recklessness of Paris's suicide drive.

Thus the cast was assembled, the task from then on was to bring them together in a stylistically coherent, seamless, entertaining whole, which, whilst parodying Shakespeare on the one hand, was a modest tribute to his work on the other, and which would allow the audience to enjoy both of these aspects.

5.2.4 THE SCENES AND STYLE:

Stripping *Romeo & Juliet* down to its absolute bare bones, the story is about two young lovers who, for reasons of a family feud are unable to marry openly - they therefore marry in secret, and, through a number of events of fate and the prospect of Juliet having to marry Paris, find themselves separated and in despair and both commit suicide. Therefore, in the most fundamental terms for **Son of Romeo**, the following needed to be established:- the Feud; the Ball (First Meeting); the Balcony Scene; Juliet's Bogus Suicide; Romeo's discovery of the apparently dead Juliet - leading to his suicide; and Juliet finding Romeo actually dead and her also committing suicide.

Having established which of Shakespeare's scenes was crucial to the piece - largely determined in conjunction with the selection of the characters - it was a case of choreographing the movement such that the essence of the scene was conveyed in a way as to physically allow the various characters to interact with each other, and at the same time relate that interaction to the audience in a meaningful way. This statement may seem to be blatantly obvious, however, when one is the only performer and also the director, one's own artistic ability and grasp of physical technique come under intense pressure - the inability to physically step outside the work and observe it, demands that one has absolute confidence in one's inherent artistic instincts and technique. Therefore as the director of the non-verbal self, one is able to step outside the work only in one's own imagination, and observe it from the audience's probable perspective - what one

imagines the body looks like, does and conveys, has to match the reality of what it actually looks like, does and conveys. What one believes and imagines the body is saying has to match the reality of what it actually is saying - hence the sense of 'body-awareness' has to be very finely tuned indeed. Running through all of this apparently very technical awareness, is the maintenance of the essential 'sense of Shakespeare', as well as the selective use and consistency of comedy and cartoon.

In general, where there is a strong element of Shakespeare, and/or the need to impart a particularly sensitive or tragic aspect, the cartoon style is minimised, or indeed dispensed with all together - e.g. Hands/Balcony scene, Juliet's actual death etc. By contrast, where there is no need for any such sensitivity, an almost ultra-cartoon style is employed to the hilt - e.g. the Dog, Paris's suicide, Tybalt's multiple deaths etc. The only times where the two merge closely and directly in the one scene is in the suicide of Romeo - which, after he discovers Juliet's 'corpse', we see him make the (serious) decision to commit suicide *(T/C 00:38:23:10)*. The actual act, which begins seriously enough, falls into slapstick comedy as it progresses through what Evans (1986) refers to as '*an absurd composite*' of methods chosen by Romeo to take his own life. Conversely, Juliet's suicide begins with the serious, at the discovery of Romeo's hanging corpse, passes through slapstick when she play's 'swings' with it, and back to deadly serious in the '*simple horror and tragedy...in lingering silence*' (Evans, 1986).

These examples offer a 'dangerous' artistic mix within such short moments, however, they serve the purpose of very sharply and brutally contrasting the comedy with the tragedy - hence simultaneously reinforcing both - the sense of comic relief and release emanating from the audience as Romeo begins '*spilling his guts*' (Evans, 1986) - after minutes of contrasting and building dramatic tension, works very effectively. As Vorhaus (1993) notes, in his discussion of 'comedy and risk' '*the more tension you create, the more laughter you generate by way of relief...the funniest comedy is literally a matter of life and death*'. Maintaining this sense of balance between the tragic and the absurd, can only be determined by the artist on the

day, in the creative situation and context of the work progressing along the chosen and ever evolving path. It is not something which can be accurately predicted, until one is 'on the floor' creating, developing and rehearsing the work.   It is, I believe, not realistic to expect to be able to predict all the precise detail in a work, however in a general way, one has a sense of how the work is going to evolve to its final manifestation, and indeed this was precisely the case with *Son of Romeo*.

Thus, throughout the creative process, the artist must find their own unique 'artistic language' which will produce and articulate an aesthetic whole out of a jumbled clattering of disparate, often conflicting artistic and practical requirements. If developing the artistic language of *Son of Romeo* on the stage was conflicting, complex and challenging, developing the artistic language of **SON OF ROMEO** on television was infinitely more so.

5.3   THE TELEVISION VERSION

5.3.1 THE BASIS OF THE WORK:

Whilst the stage version of *Son of Romeo* was, technically, absolutely minimal - by contrast, the television version of **SON OF ROMEO**, is highly technical. Television technology - particularly the use of 'Blue-Screen' techniques (refer 5.1 above) - provided not only opportunities to explore new possibilities, but demanded an entirely new and different approach - an entirely new and unknown 'set of rules' - to be applied to the same basic artistic concept - which, whilst technically relatively simple to achieve, was, from the point of view of performance, extremely complex. This complexity was a result of not only the normally fragmented nature of the process of filming, but even more critically, being the only performer, the extraordinarily high degree of physical precision required to achieve the visual reality, together with a normal aesthetic 'sense' of characters interacting with each other. In other words, retaining the work's aesthetic qualities, its human scale and identifiability, as well as retaining its links with Shakespeare - while all the time being bombarded with technical demands.

So, even though the television adaptation was firmly based on the stage version, the final television work is really an entity in and of itself. The demands of the different medium of television were such that the work changed in so many complex, subtle, and some not so subtle ways, that they might almost be regarded as two entirely different works - which in many ways they are. But one of the strengths of Shakespeare is the fundamental quality of his work - I have always believed that a Shakespeare story will survive no matter what is done to it, or how it is reinterpreted and stylised. As Dr. Jonathan Miller eloquently puts it,

> *Well what I think is interesting about Shakespeare, that one of the reasons why Shakespeare has endured, is that there is a complex ambiguity...which allows one to pull focus at many different levels and to perform a number of interesting, plausible thought experiments, each one of which is incompatible with the other, but all of which are compatible with the text.* (Miller, J., 1995)

5.3.2 AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS:

As argued elsewhere in this study (Chapter 4), the television audience's different expectations - of timing, visual information, imaginative input, spans of concentration and hence their 'sense of audience' - have evolved through the camera's different visual perception of, and interactivity, through movement and selectivity, with the action of the work, significantly altering the direct relationship of the audience to the dramatic work by inducing, as Davies (1988, p.8) puts it, *'a passivity in the spectator'.* In a minimalist, non-verbal artform such as mime on the stage, not only is the performer totally reliant on their ability to rid the performance of any extraneous movement for the sake of clarity, the choreography must also inspire in the audience sufficient imaginative investment to supply around the performer, the visual environment in which the story is taking place. This imaginative effort, willingly expended by a theatre audience, is, as a result of the camera-induced passivity, much less willingly expended by a television audience. The camera (and editing) have taken away not only the

responsibility, but indeed the opportunity, for a more direct imaginative audience involvement.

Given this altered audience perspective, **SON OF ROMEO** for television required an entirely different approach to *Son of Romeo* for the stage. The most fundamental difference being the adding of the visual environment around the performer - the visual environment which, on the stage, is provided by the audience's own imagination. Hence the work is both a performance and design based adaptation - both of these elements determined the basis of the work and each determined and shaped aspects of the other, however in the context of a mime performance, the addition of the detailed, stylised, visual environment created a variety of artistic tensions.

5.3.3 ARTISTIC TENSIONS:

The desire to utilise the performance style of cartoons within the stage version, now had to be reconciled with the visual style of the cartoon as well. Whilst this might seem to be a fairly natural marriage, the fact of a human performer and characters existing within a cartoon environment, provided a constant source of artistic challenge in the exquisitely subtle determination of the degree of 'cartooniness' with which one performed - bold enough to be distinguishable and identifiable to the audience, bold enough to be 'cartoony'; yet subtle enough to retain the romantic/tragic essence of Shakespeare's original work. Thus the adaptation for television presented infinitely more layers and levels of subtle and conflicting complexities and tensions which included:

On a philosophical level, the desire to:

· remain faithful to Shakespeare's original text

· remain faithful to the notion of 'mime', within a medium demanding almost incessant sound.

· make the piece work as comedy competing with the desire to retain the essential tragedy.

· remain faithful to the essential qualities of the original stage version

· emulate via television, the success of the original stage version

· cohesively incorporate the visuals of the television cartoon as well as the sense of cartoon in performance

· prove that television has the capacity to be an 'artistic' medium, not just one which exists largely to sell household products through advertising

· prove that mime and television are not mutually exclusive

On a presentational/performance level:

· the constraints of one performer playing all of the roles - the physicality required to define the increasing numbers of characters (more than twice as many as the stage version) - their identification and distinguishability from each other

· the non-verbal nature of the work conflicting with the fundamental 'talking heads' style of television

· the need to incorporate full length body shots conflicting with the 'talking heads' MCU style and conventions of television

· the high degree of stylisation of the work conflicting with the 'kitchen-sink naturalism' style and expectation of television

· fragmentation of filmed performance - both between characters and within each character

· retaining a freshness, vigour and sense of spontaneity in performance whilst concentrating on 'hitting the mark' for F/G camera position - in relation to B/G camera image (refer 5.1)

- costumes, props and make-up - how elaborate should these be? Conflicting physical, performance, logistical and visual demands of mimed (invisible) and real (visible, tangible) costumes and props.

On a practical level:

- the availability and cost of the technical facilities required to produce a highly technological hour of television

- filling one hour of television with entertaining solo performance

- one performer being every character, in every shot, in every scene.

- time to change character's make-up, costumes etc. between set-ups, in addition to rehearsing and preparing for the next day's shoot.

- conflicting artistic, practical and logistical demands of the individual artist suddenly becoming, simultaneously, both leader and integral member of, an ensemble of more than sixty (60) artistic, technical, and administrative personnel.

5.3.4 FINDING THE COMEDY - THE CHARACTERS:

Given that in *Son of Romeo* there had been a delicate balance between the comic and tragic, that this balance had come about through the characters themselves, because, as a non text-based work, what the characters are and do, essentially provides the detail of the plot - the non-verbal 'script' in a sense - for **SON OF ROMEO**, I turned

once again to the characters to find a further richness and complexity. Of the *Son of Romeo* characters, there were still the crucial ones, the minor ones and their reasons for being.

Not only did all of these existing characters need to do more both within themselves, and also in their interactions with each other (now that they could directly interact with each other), they still did not provide sufficient flesh to the bones of the story. Thus, in addition to creating more material for these existing characters, new characters were created, for the following reasons;

MERCUTIO	as a companion for, and contrast to Romeo
JUDGE	as an authority figure to banish Romeo and become Paris in disguise, thereby heightening the sense of competition between them and also portray Paris as not just a 'brainless fop' but also as someone capable of premeditated evil.
NIGEL (Used Car Salesman)	to provide a device by which we are shown that Paris, through being convinced to buy a vehicle beyond his driving capabilities, is after all a 'brainless fop'.
PARKING COP	to add to the texture of this Verona and provide comic relief and continuity - a running gag each time Paris appears.
VERONESE ITALIAN	as a bit of nonsense to point out Romeo's mistaken landing place (Italy's rather than Australia's Verona) and heighten the tension during Romeo's return to the 'dead' Juliet.
THE PRINCE	as a running gag/authority figure bringing pressure to bear on the relationship

MASKED BALL GUESTS	represented by floating Sunglasses only - to provide texture, depth and a sense of 'crowd'
ROMEO'S SAXOPHON E ALTER EGO	to provide another facet of Romeo's character - a rather literal acknowledgment of Jung's (1961, pp.262, 367) notion of the 'shadow' of a personality, and to pay homage to Fred Astaire's use of a similar device.

5.3.5 PHYSICALITY:

There are some 20 characters in **SON OF ROMEO** and they are, to varying degrees, based in style on television cartoon characters - even though they are performed by a human performer rather than as cel or electronic animation. Whilst true animated cartoon characters are more often than not based on animals (Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Coyote/Road Runner etc) - with an animal's inherent economy of movement - they are an intriguing mix of the animal and the human, and the economy of the animal movement has been incorporated into, and enhances the human aspects of the respective characters. For instance a four-legged animal (Rabbit; Coyote etc) will mostly walk upright, and yet will revert to its 'animal' posture when the situation demands.

Whilst the content of the cartoons themselves may not be particularly subtle, the body language of the participating characters makes for fascinating observation and determines to a great extent, the personalities of, and interaction and contrasts between the characters and the overall degree of stylisation. Thus in **SON OF ROMEO**, as a non-verbal work, the body shape and language of the participating characters determines to an even greater extent, the personalities of, and the interaction and contrasts between the characters, and the overall degree of stylisation.

5.3.6 INTERACTIVITY:

Probably the most demanding aspect of the entire television production from a performance point of view was the interactivity between the characters. On stage as a performer, one merely uses rapid changes and contrasting physicality to portray a scene between two characters. Part of the charm and attraction for the audience of a solo artist performing interacting multi-characters on stage is that of switching between characters instantaneously before the audience's very eyes - not by costume changes but by rapidly changing physicality, eyelines and direction on the spot. Whilst on stage one is able to play out one character, physically switch to another character in response, and then switch back again to continue - on television the technology not only allows one the opportunity to multi-layer the various characters at the same time, but demands it - in other words, the characters must interact with each other simultaneously rather than in turn.

At first glance, this may seem a minor consideration, however in reality the performance implications are enormous. One has not only to create and choreograph more 'business' for each of the characters to do in reaction to another interactive character, but also the timing of both 'active' and 'reactive' performance becomes crucial and infinitesimally detailed. This is the area which has most impact on the performer and most affects their ability to function technically whilst maintaining the creative and artistic integrity and continuity required by the piece.

5.3.7 EYELINES:

Of crucial significance - in terms of both television and mime - were the eyelines of the various characters in performance. Given the solo nature of the performance, the multi-layering of the characters demanded a precision of eyeline such that the characters could be seen by the audience as relating to each other in a normal way, both when looking out of frame, but, more crucially, in frame when two or more characters shared the screen.

In 'live' mime performance on stage, the audience's perception is extremely keen - they will subconsciously remember with uncanny precision the exact position of the invisible door or wall the mime performer has created out of thin air. Equally, the precise shape, size, weight and location of invisible Props will be subconsciously calculated by the audience based on how the mime performer manipulates the piece of air which forms that imagined Prop. The same applies to any invisible characters with whom the mime performer populates the stage. The performer's body attitude and eyelines looking at, and reacting with, these imagined characters provide the only means by, and medium through which the audience is able to determine who the imagined characters are, how they move, how close or far away they are, and how they relate to the visible, on stage character (performer). The precision of placement of these imagined characters on the stage is determined entirely by the accuracy of the performer's eyelines - that is, not only the direction of the gaze, but also the precise focal length of the performers eyes in relating to those unseen, but strongly present characters. If the performer wishes to create a character standing, say, 3 metres away, their focal length must be precisely at 3 metres, if they wish to depict the reading of an invisible book held at arms length, then the focal length must be that precise distance - otherwise the audience will interpret the performer looking 'through' the book to the floor or vaguely off into the universe.

SON OF ROMEO's solo performance, together with its overlaid multi-character nature, demanded even greater focal accuracy throughout - particularly in CU, where the detail of the eyes is much more visible, therefore requiring much greater precision - this is clearly visible in all instances where the various characters interact directly, or even pass by each other such as Romeo's eyes when Juliet strolls past (**T/C 00:05:31:00**) and the Riff-Raff's eyes when Tybalt walks past (**T/C 00:26:59:00**). There are also times when the eyes are discernibly looking out of frame at the monitor for accuracy of placement within the shot, rather than relating to the character in the frame - it is occasionally apparent (**T/C 00:27:43:20**) that the focal length is not accurate for the other character. Thus the need for accurate eyelines

often conflicted with the need for the performer to 'hit the mark' for both first and second pass.

5.3.8 CHARACTER ANALYSIS:

ROMEO (a young man):
(Stage & Television version)

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:
Romeo is essentially the most 'normal' of the characters of **SON OF ROMEO**.

Whilst needing to be smitten with Juliet, he also needed to be wily at the same time, maintaining enough aloofness not to become directly embroiled in the fracas between Mercutio and Tybalt - a microcosm of the conflict between the feuding families. To establish and maintain some kind of emotional link to, or extract empathy from the audience - an ability to relate to the character on a human level in the context of the cartoon style of the work as a whole - it was important to provide in Romeo, a contrast between himself and other more 'cartoony' characters. Even though the character of Romeo is still consistent with the cartoon style, as the central character, some kind of fundamental 'human believability' in Romeo was essential to underpin the romantic moments as well as the genuinely tragic moments.

MOVEMENT STYLE:
Romeo moves and behaves, generally speaking, in a much less cartoon style than most of the other characters. This is not to deny him his place in the cartoon Verona - he also does some immensely stupid, and uniquely cartoony things (particularly in his efforts to impress Juliet) - to make him entirely human would have been inconsistent with the feel of the piece and the visual and movement environment/style created. In overall terms of pure physicality, Romeo is essentially 'straight lines and angles', and moves in a precise, clean, generally well-punctuated style.

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:
The transition saw in Romeo little, if any, stylistic change. The fundamental difference lay in the amount of additional material created and performed.

As the main character, appearing in the majority of scenes, the real test of Romeo's performance came with the precision and accuracy of his interactions with the other characters. Romeo regularly makes not only eye contact, but also direct physical contact with Juliet, Tybalt, the Dog, as well as electronic transitional 'wipes' (**T/C 00:42:41:10**), visual effects and Props which had to be manipulated. As discussed above (Sections 5.3.6 and 5.3.7) the precision required to interact directly with a non-existent character - both in a first pass relating to a character which has yet to be performed, and/or as a second pass, relating to a character which has been performed but whose timing needs to be matched, when one is performing in the featureless void of the blue-screen studio, made greater performance demands upon Romeo's character simply due to his more frequent direct interactions.

One particular illustration of note is Romeo's discovery of the (apparently) dead Juliet - Romeo appears to actually touch Juliet's cheek (**T/C 00:43:42:10**), when in fact she exists as nothing more than the first pass of a composited picture - invisible during performance other than via the studio monitor. The degree of accuracy of placement, body attitude and touch, together with accuracy of camera angle, lens width to match first and second pass, made performance demands seldom, if ever, experienced in theatre, or even in conventional television terms.

JULIET (a young woman):
(Stage & Television version)

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:
The difficulty in a male playing a female convincingly - without a significant make-up effort - is to portray a credible sense of female shape and movement. One is of course always at risk of being

perceived as offensive in parodying anything, however in the cartoon context there is a certain amount of leeway an audience will accept.

Juliet's distinctive face has invariably provided much initial hilarity in audiences, together with the assumption that it is Juliet's facial expression in particular (and facial expressions generally), which provides the essence of the character. This could not be further from the truth.

MOVEMENT STYLE:
Beyond just the face, Juliet's character is created by the way her body moves (as are all the characters). Her movement is essentially soft, curved and flowing, with the legs moving in such a way as to create and accentuate a false impression of wider female hips. The face, whilst successful in creating an initial comic impression, and certainly providing an element of identifiability, creates a difficulty in that, being so distinctive, one cannot allow oneself to change that facial expression significantly during the course of Juliet's journey through the piece - no matter what her emotions are at the time. Much as with a mask one is, in a sense, stuck with Juliet's face, and therefore has no option but to utilise the rest of the body to define and express her character and emotions.

As well as being a credible (if cartoony) female character, Juliet also needed to provide a physical contrast to the character of Romeo - hence if Romeo was to be 'almost normal' and male, Juliet needed to be more 'cartoony' and female, and provide a curved, soft and flowing contrast to Romeo's more crisp-edged, punctuated style. Nowhere is this more apparent (and more deliberately utilised) than when they are in direct juxtaposition in the immediate lead-up to the Balcony Scene, when we see both Romeo and Juliet in wide shot about to touch hands.

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:
Whilst stylistically, her character remained essentially the same, Juliet's transition required more to be made of her relationships with Romeo, Paris, Tybalt and the Nurse, and she is seen much more

interacting directly with these other characters and reacting to their various demands of her.

In contrast to **Son of Romeo**, Juliet's vastly increased presence demanded not only much more material, but also a consistency of her physicality across a much wider range of circumstances in which she found herself. Whilst Juliet's trademark facial expression served her very well for the stage version, her need to express an increased range of emotions, within an expanded range of circumstances, often conflicted with this rather comic look, and thus demanded even more of her physicality, and equally demanded some more flexibility in her facial expression.

The addition of costume had the effect of both enhancing her 'female' shape and disguising it, therefore painstaking attention had to be given to the subtlety (or otherwise) of her movement, together with analysis of how the particular fabrics would drape and flow as she moved - when the fabric/costume amplified her movements and when it rendered them invisible.

MERCUTIO (friend to Romeo):
(Television version only)

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:
As with most analysis and productions of *Romeo & Juliet,* Mercutio exists to provide '*wit and comic relief*' (Lamb, 1968, p.11) - a comic contrast to the tragic business of the piece as a whole - in the case of **SON OF ROMEO**, a little more comic than most productions - although in the comic context of this production, his comedy is really in being 'in the way' - particularly in Tybalt's way - hence reminding the audience of the ongoing conflict between the families. In a sense Mercutio is the lightning rod which attracts the wrath of the Capulets (through Tybalt*)* and which initially protects Romeo from becoming directly involved in the conflict. Mercutio is basically a good-natured friend to Romeo, and is not overly endowed with either charm or intelligence. His desperate efforts to be 'cool' in a fifty's rocker kind of way, fail dismally and he is happy to tag along with Romeo to the

Ball, get involved in the odd fight, and even profit from the inevitable moment when the stoush between Romeo and Tybalt finally eventuates.

Unlike other, more 'normal' productions where Mercutio's death during the fight with Tybalt provides one of the turning points of the play, Mercutio in this case, although he does fight Tybalt, does not die, but merely carries on in his usual way with the occasional appearance to provide a comic cameo.

MOVEMENT STYLE:
Mercutio's physicality is one of put-on 'cool' which fails him when things get unpleasant. He takes his hairstyle and ability to flip-and-catch a coin very seriously (even when drunk) - a skill which fails him at crucial moments such as Paris's incongruous car wheel bouncing through Verona (**T/C 00:41:48:10**). His style of movement, given his proximity and similarity in general appearance to Romeo, had, of necessity, to be sufficiently contrasting without being so dramatically different that it placed the more 'normal' Romeo well outside the cartoon context.

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:
Mercutio does not appear in the stage version, however what Mercutio's character provides are opportunities for 'comic business' which might normally have been attributed to Romeo, but would have been inappropriate given Romeo's established character.

TYBALT (brother to Juliet):
(Stage & Television version)

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:
Tybalt is essentially a thug. He is cartoony in the extreme, is one-dimensional and moves in an apparently inarticulate manner - much like his speech. It is thus rather ironic that Tybalt is one of the very few characters to actually speak any words.
He was made a brother to Juliet, rather than a cousin (as in *Romeo & Juliet*), as his threat to Romeo to 'leave my Sister alone' (stage version

only) simply sounded a more convincing and direct family link than 'leave my cousin alone' - the stakes seemed higher and the threat more menacing with a closer immediate family relationship to Juliet.

MOVEMENT STYLE:

Tybalt's character was created physically by lifting the chest and widening the shoulders to an exaggerated extent. This gave the impression of both more body bulk and strength, whilst restricting its agility and speed of movement. By stripping Tybalt of a shirt, and having his muscles more obviously pumped up and sculpted, he became more thug-like, less intelligent (with the possible exception of his gang of Riff-Raff), and more threatening than any other character. This sense of rather clumsy, gross and inarticulate movement heightens his brutal, mindless thug-like quality which provides a strong contrast to all the characters with whom he comes into direct contact - including Mercutio, Romeo and Juliet. His only other direct contact is with the Riff-Raff - all of whom are physically smaller than, and subservient to, Tybalt himself.

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:

Stylistically the same, but with more to do and say. Tybalt interacts more with other characters, and more is made of his direct family relationship with Juliet (aligning him directly with Capulet's wishes for her), rather than merely being connected via his hatred of Romeo. His presence is more constant and more directly threatening to both Romeo and Juliet, as well as being more discernible in relation to the other minor supporting characters.

Increased direct interactions with other characters demanded more precision, such as his various hits of Mercutio (**T/C 00:04:31:05** and **T/C 00:17:30:10**). Tybalt's stage business is stylised even further by the addition of various television effects, such as low camera angles (**T/C 00:27:05:05**) where possible, to give him more visual power, the addition of hand grenades, post-produced explosions and bullets in the final stages of the duel, to enhance his physical reactions to these violent occurrences. His presence is supported more consistently by the ever present 'fight-cloud' of Riff Raff.

NURSE (to Juliet):
(Stage & Television version)

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:
Like the role of Mercutio, mention is often made of the comedic value
of the character of the Nurse. Certainly in Zeffirelli's film version the
Nurse is described by Jorgens (1977, p.87) as *a delightful mock
nun...who steals wine at the ball...(and) is human throughout*. She
provides a contrast as well as a constant source of annoyance to
Juliet's more ponderous and love-sick character. What has often
struck me as an overall impression of *Romeo & Juliet* is that the Nurse
prattles on interminably without ever saying anything of substance.
When faced with the difficulty therefore, of creating a character -
particularly a female character - which needed to provide a contrast to
Juliet, the overriding feeling to be created was one of a vacillating,
empty-headed prattler.

MOVEMENT STYLE:
Physically the Nurse contrasts with Juliet - the only other character
with whom she directly interacts - by moving in a more animated and
gangly 'X-legged' manner - a different and less flattering
manifestation of wider female hips. This is particularly apparent in
full length shots where she runs screaming from the house after
discovering Juliet's 'corpse' (**T/C 00:36:50:20**). She constantly carries
a handkerchief in her hand which amplifies her movement and which
she uses for physical emphasis from time to time.

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:
Whilst in the stage version the Nurse appears only once *(T/C
00:33:16:10)*, and very briefly, screaming a blood-curdling scream and
chewing the corner of a handkerchief to signify the horror of Juliet's
'death', in the television version she appears much more consistently
throughout as both companion, and contrast to, Juliet. Therefore, in
order to sustain her presence and, to be consistent to some extent
with Shakespeare's original, the television version required the Nurse
not only to carry out menial tasks to put her in her proper societal
place in relation to Juliet, but also to give her volumes of largely

meaningless dialogue. The prospect of writing actual dialogue for the Nurse in a cartoon style, in the context of a non-verbal piece, provided a creative challenge which was met by acting upon the realisation that whilst talking constantly, she rarely actually says anything - hence the rather empty-headed and incessant 'prattle prattle prattle', with the vocal inflections providing sufficient music and rhythm, together with matching physicality, to sustain both interest and comic irritation for the audience. Similarly, when called upon to inform both Paris (from behind the semi-open front door), and Romeo (via the Koalaphone telephone) of Juliet's (apparent) death, the 'prattle prattle prattle' becomes instead a 'weep weep weep...' reflecting the *'blubb'ring and weeping, weeping and blubb'ring'* of the Nurse in Shakespeare's original text (Act 3 Scene 3).

When the Nurse discovers Juliet's (apparently) dead body and runs screaming from the house, the obvious place for her to run is out of the house and into the Marketplace, however this was highly stylised by utilising a particularly recognisable cartoon device which not only reinforced the cartoon style, but provided an inexpensive transition from interior upstairs to exterior street level - by tilting the camera down the B/G graphic from a shot of Juliet's chamber window to the front door at street level, together with both musical and cartoon footsteps sound effects, and having the Nurse burst through the front door out into the street, a wildly improbable speed of descent of the stairs, as well as her breaking through the door, was able to be created in a way which could never have been matched in real time and real pictures.

Similarly, once out of the house, rather than her having to relate to the 'realism' of even the cartoon Marketplace environment, the Nurse runs down a time-warp tunnel (**T/C 00:37:19:10**) into despairing oblivion - heightening the sense of unreality of both her circumstances and mental state.

PARIS (suitor to Juliet & motoring enthusiast):
(Stage & Television version)

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:
Paris is a wealthy, armchair motoring enthusiast devoid of either true driving skills or passion. He considers Juliet to be suitable for 'family connections' reasons and, possessing no discernible personality himself, believes he can create and express a personality through his succession of increasingly expensive and flashy automobiles. Despite his efforts, Juliet, of course, remains unimpressed. Overcoming several rejections by Juliet, Paris's character does indeed develop a personality through his vehicles - beginning with the quaint FJ Holden, and progressing through an MGA sports car to a stylised Maserati/Lamborgini/Ferrari/Le Mans type conglomeration referred to as Megadeath.

The FJ Holden provides a character background for Paris which can be built upon and influenced by each successive faster, flashier, and more dangerous car - finishing with the ultimate ride to oblivion. Ironically, the only time Paris ever displays any true passion or control over his situation or vehicle is when he, 'insane with grief', drives Megadeath off the cliff to end his own existence.

MOVEMENT STYLE:
Paris's movement style - both at the wheel and walking - reflects the growing confidence he feels as a result of his perceived capacity to initially purchase, and subsequently tame these savage mechanical beasts. His driving technique changes radically between the FJ Holden and Megadeath (he is never seen at the wheel of the MGA, only emerging from it) - with the former being driven utilising the inefficient and rather clumsy 'push-pull' steering technique, whilst for the latter he adopts a much more 'racing position' and general body attitude - reflecting both the type of vehicle and his increased confidence. Although it must be said that this confidence is more a case of false bravado, as once the car takes off, it is much more a case of the car controlling Paris rather than vice-versa, and it is only after exiting the machine rather clumsily that he regains his composure.

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:
What the two versions mostly share in common is that we see Paris's increased confidence with each respective car in the way he

approaches Juliet's door. The greatest difference between them is that on stage it is Paris's physicality and body attitude alone which determines and portrays the type of car he is driving, whereas in the television version the distinct visual images of the cars are provided by the combination of Graphic and Set/Props (refer Appendix D - Construction Drawings & Appendix F - Production Photographs). And whilst Paris's physicality enhances and highlights these distinct shapes, styles and speeds of the vehicles, the aspects of Paris's physicality and performance which, on stage, define those various vehicles, become, if not totally redundant, then certainly superfluous to some degree. This new 'reality' of the vehicles in **SON OF ROMEO** significantly altered Paris's choreography, and two of the vehicles in particular demanded a different approach between stage and screen - the MGA and 'Megadeath'.

In particular, the arrival of Paris in the MGA (**T/C 00:33:10:10**) was radically amended in the editing where the entire sequence of electronically operating the MGA's opening roof, which had been shot complete with Paris operating the 'remote control' and the (graphic) roof sliding back, was dispensed with altogether as being redundant in view of having a 'visible' car of a particular sporty style - the audience did not need the additional physical information as per the stage version, because they already had the additional visual information provided by the graphic of the car.

Paris's emergence from the MGA (**T/C 00:33:18:15**) was also significantly amended from the stage version *(T/C 00:29:12:05)* and also from the workshop rehearsals, being altered on the day due to a technical difficulty. Because of the particular combination of real car door, graphic and height of performer, the car seat in which Paris sat was much lower than expected, hence getting out of it at the appropriate height felt, looked, and was, extremely awkward. Therefore, using one of the most basic mime techniques - the 'fingertip fixed in space' - I made a feature of Paris's flower, which emerges from the car before Paris, is fixed-in-space, looks around as if it were a periscope surveying the scene in search of Juliet, with Paris following and moving upwards behind the still fixed-in-space flower. Not only did this feature the flower as more significant - representing

it (and Paris) more romantically than it otherwise would have - it enabled Paris to emerge from the car at an absurdly distorted angle without appearing awkward.

Similarly Paris entering and exiting the Megadeath car (**T/C 00:38:18:09** and **T/C 00:39:01:10**) was fraught with physical difficulties due to the combination of real gull-wing door, height of seat and steering wheel, requiring Paris to put his leg over, rather than under the steering wheel as normal (and as rehearsed) simply due to the fact that his leg did not physically fit between the underside of the steering wheel and the top of the seat. This physical/technical difficulty created a certain awkwardness which, rather than being hidden and distracted from as in the case of the MGA (refer above), was not only incorporated into the character but stylised even further to enhance the notion of Paris being out of his depth in, and out of control of, this very fast sports car, in addition, overcoming a practical problem in this way, also had the effect of enhancing the confined and claustrophobic sense of the racing cockpit, as well as Paris's difficulty in coming to terms with the physical realities of the vehicle. Further changes were also made in the editing process where Paris's uncertainty as to how to get into the car as depicted on stage, whilst shot for television, was edited out as being redundant and simply taking too long - hence much of the physical preamble of working out (and taking instruction from Nigel) how to get inside was eliminated and in a sense replaced by the cut directly to Paris's body arriving in the seat behind the steering wheel and into the cramped racing cockpit.

Whilst significant changes were made to Paris's choreography in these instances, there are also instances within the same scene where the choreography remains much more similar to the stage choreography, but still with some subtle changes, for instance when Paris is paying (**T/C 00:38:03:00** and *T/C 00:33:50:00*) Nigel the used car Salesman.

Paris's purchase of Megadeath from Nigel illustrates once more a mix of real and mimed Props - writing, with a mimed pen in a mimed cheque book, then presenting a 'real' cheque to Nigel, being handed in return a 'real' 3D car key, and inserting that into a 2D graphic car but

with a 3D car door. Instances where mimed Props were used, the framing of the shot was such that the detail of the activity was just out of frame. As with Romeo being thrown out of the Ball by Tybalt, the body's movement as a result of the activity could be seen, but not the detail of the activity itself.

JUDGE (Paris in disguise):
(Television version only)

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:
The character of the Judge provides a vital pivot. Consistent with Shakespeare's original plot, it provides an authority figure for the banishment of Romeo from Verona, however, by making the Judge a disguised Paris, rather than the Prince, the sense of competition for the hand of Juliet between her two suitors is brought into sharper and more immediate focus. This devious and underhanded trick of Paris's gives us a glimpse of some inherent sense of evil and manipulation within Paris's fundamentally empty personality.

MOVEMENT STYLE:
The Judge's movement differs radically from that of Paris in that he moves in physical slow-motion (i.e. not electronically manipulated slow-motion). This movement provides both the physical contrast between the characters/personas as well as a more evil, imposing and powerful appearance. This sense of power in the Judge is further enhanced by utilising forced perspective - the building in of an artificial perspective by converging 'parallel' lines - in the design and construction of the Judge's Bench (**T/C 00:31:59:20**).

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:
The Judge does not appear in the stage version.

CAPULET (Godfather):
(Stage & Television version)

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:

The character of Capulet - Juliet's father - is rather more stylised (even within this already highly stylised piece) than many of the other characters. In his brief appearance (**T/C 00:34:16:15**), through the clouds (of either reality or Juliet's imagination), he exists as a conglomeration of Juliet's real-life father; a Prince-like Veronese authority figure; a God-like authority figure emerging from the heavens; and Marcel Marceau (at times interpreted by some viewers as a Harpo Marx). Whilst his appearance in this guise is only brief, he is one of the few characters to actually speak dialogue with, and exert authority over Juliet, when he commands her that:

GODFATHER: *'you will marry Paris...tomorrow!.'*

JULIET: *'but, but'*

GODFATHER: *'no buts'*

...and promptly disappears back into the clouds.

This brief cameo provides an opportunity for some non-verbal acknowledgments of powerful artistic influences in both the creation and eventual style of the work.

MOVEMENT STYLE:
The Godfather's movement style is limited to upper body movement as he appears through a hole in the cloud. Essentially moving in slow motion so as to enhance his sense of authority, he peers down on Juliet.

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:
The essential difference is that on stage the Godfather traced the cloud in the air *(T/C 00:30:27:05)* to define it prior to appearing through it, on television the 'fibre-fill' and smoke provided the cloud. From a performance point of view, the two are essentially the same with the exception of the addition of costume.

THE DOG:

(Stage & Television version)

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:
Whilst appearing to be just a bit of irrelevant nonsense, the character of the Dog plays an important role in providing Romeo with additional impetus to clamber rapidly up the wall to Juliet's balcony, as well as providing some comic contrast to both the tension of Romeo sneaking undetected through Juliet's garden, which precedes the Dog's scene, and the heightened romanticism and stylised choreography of the Balcony Scene which follows it. Although existing largely for comic contrast, the Dog also provides a physical contrast for Romeo - further enhanced by electronically diminishing the size of the Dog slightly - as well as yet another impediment to his reaching Juliet.

MOVEMENT STYLE:
The physicality of the Dog is intended to give the impression of an animal on all fours, whilst in reality being two-legged - in a sense the reverse of most television cartoon characters (refer 5.3.5 above). Animals tend generally to move in a very economical way - they have evolved to the extent that they only move what they need to move and hence their 'body language' is very clear and uncluttered - most dogs do not misinterpret each other's non-verbal signals. The exception to this is in the case of puppies or young animals who have not yet lost their playfulness. As with young children, their sense of fun and discovery overtakes the 'sensible' and they expend much more playful energy than an older animal or indeed human.

Thus it is with this particular Dog - he has a playful energy which, far from being a watch-dog, he merely wants to have a game with Romeo. Hence he 'follollops' about in an apparently unfocused and carefree way - it is only when the confrontation ceases to be playful that his movement becomes more still, focussed and intent. After he has successfully bailed Romeo up and forced him to clamber up the wall, he is distracted by the sound of a distant cat - he then once again reverts to his playful, if a little more 'stroppy' self, and his movement reflects this.

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:

As well as some additional Costume, the television version afforded the opportunity to add a prosthetic (half) mask which, in retrospect, may not have been as necessary as first believed.

From a purely performance point of view, the Scene between Romeo and the Dog, from a relatively simple two character interaction in the stage version *(T/C 00:14:34:10)*, proved to be one of the most complex and demanding to perform for television (**T/C 00:19:32:10**). The fundamental difference being that, as with other multi-character interaction, in the television version, it is the direct interactivity and contact of the two characters, who each, at different times, both drive and react to, the actions of the other. Consequently, the timing demands and restrictions are much more complex - simply because one character is not 'leading' and the other 'following' - they both do both and in quite rapid succession. In order to achieve the degree of timing accuracy required to make this interaction work, concentration on the detail of the performance content becomes secondary to concentration on the rather mechanical aspects of timing. This intricate interaction was achieved by rehearsing with a stopwatch to accurately plot out and notate, for both characters, their respective bits of 'business', and then play the other's business in one's head whilst at the same time performing the primary character's business. (refer Appendix D - Strip Script)

This rather laborious and mechanical exercise proved to be the only realistic way of achieving the precision of timing required to make the scene and the interactions work. The perception of 'reality' of two characters interacting on screen, and the character's need to look in various directions at various times (throwing sticks etc.) meant that a monitor was not as useful in this instance as it was in others, and therefore demanded that the details and precise timing of all of the movements of both characters in relation to each other be accurately committed to memory. Assistance during the shooting of this segment was provided by co-director Jasek watching the monitor and calling out the (first pass) Dog business whilst I performed the (second pass) Romeo interaction - a helpful but at the same time

distracting necessity, splitting the performer's brain very clearly into the artistic and the technical, on a moment by moment basis.

THE BIRD:
(Stage & Television version)

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:
The particularly Australian icon of a Galah on a desolate road, which, in addition to its intention as a piece of pure silliness, provides a mechanism which, with astute editing, enhances the speed at which Paris, driving Megadeath, hurtles down the highway to his suicide off the cliff.

MOVEMENT STYLE:
The Movement style of the Bird is essentially quick, start-stop, punctuated pecking. The fact that the Bird does not actually peck anything off the road surface is irrelevant - the movement itself is the crucial element in creating the character. By juxtaposing the precise, punctuated pecking of the Bird on the road with Paris's frantic sawing and hacking at the steering wheel, and making each edit shorter and closer together, a heightened sense of tension is rapidly built up - culminating in the final 'splat!' as they come together.

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:
The addition of both a prosthetic half-mask, and a small Special Effect by way of the Bird's Comb going erect with surprise (**T/C 00:40:41:00**) at seeing Paris's rapidly approaching vehicle, allowed a close-up - as opposed to a full-body reaction - of the Bird which would otherwise have not been as effective. In addition, other subtleties such as the trail of feathers in the car's slipstream assist the audience's perception of a 'connection' between cause (impact) and its effect.

NIGEL (Used Car Salesman):
(Television version only)

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:

Nigel is the quintessential sleazy used-car salesman, selling 'Pre-loved Glamour Cars at Classic Prices'. He instantly sees, in Paris's arrival at his Used Car yard, a gullible fool with too much money, not enough sense and no concept of how to avoid being conned. He knows he can mesmerise Paris and sell him anything. His costume adds to his overbearing garishness and lack of taste.

MOVEMENT STYLE:
Nigel's physicality, with its hunched over attitude, and incessant stylised rubbing together of signet-ringed hands, reflects the oiliness of his personality. Nigel never stops moving - a physical parallel for the salesman never letting up on the barraging verbal sales pitch. He provides a physical contrast to both the hysterical screaming run of the Nurse, which precedes his appearance, and also to Paris's more upright, fop-like attitude.

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:
Whilst Nigel does not appear as a separate character as such in the stage version, he is an unseen presence, both acknowledged and paid by Paris in much the same manner as in the television version. We sense, in the stage version - through Paris's reactions to him - what kind of Used Car Salesman Paris is dealing with, but the television version permitted the creation of a more substantial, detailed and visible character.

Television provided an opportunity to enhance the character even more than intended by virtue of a difficulty in choosing, during post-production, between four different versions (all equally oily) of Nigel's non-verbal sales spiel to Paris, the decision was made in the editing to overlay all four of them. The usually restrictive nature of the fixed camera was in this case an advantage in that all four performances were done in precisely the same spot in relation to the camera, so that when overlaid, the B/G position was consistent and hence the shot still retained a sense of continuity even though they are in fact four separate and distinct shots. This 'blur' of moving salesman (**T/C 00:37:55:00**) heightens the mesmeric quality of Nigel's sleazy sales technique.

PARKING COP:
(Television version only)

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:
The Parking Cop's sole purpose is to provide a recurring visual gag, a sense of a regulated society, and reminder of Paris's wealth and stupidity. (That Paris is willing to dent his beloved FJ Holden for the sake of a Parking Meter with 3 minutes left on the clock, indicates a penny-pinching attitude which has no doubt contributed to his wealth). The Parking Cop does very little other than appear, evil, slimy and serpent-like from behind the Parking Meter - providing a physical contrast to the character of Paris and at the same time indicating a sense of impending doom to befall his hapless quarry - who is not even aware of the Parking Cop's existence. That he does not succeed until the latter stages of the story, at the bottom of the cliff with Paris's car in a shattered heap, bears testament to the fundamental tenacity and persistence of Parking Cops the world over. The sense of triumph and satisfaction in finally achieving his small-minded goal - despite the fact that Paris is dead - is overwhelming.

MOVEMENT STYLE:
The Parking Cop's body attitude in stillness is vulture-like - awaiting the appropriate moment to lick his pencil and pounce - in movement he exhibits a serpent-like quality, created by leading with the head and following with the neck and chest in turn. When he finally gets the opportunity to book Paris for illegal parking (in death only), he displays a demented sense of triumph and achievement which has been frustratingly denied him for the duration of the entire piece. In this context, the seemingly small act of licking his pencil (**T/C 00:41:34:20**) indicates a huge achievement.

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:
The Parking Cop does not appear in the stage version.

RIFF-RAFF to Verona (x4):
(Stage & Television version)

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:
The Riff-Raff were initially created in the stage version as an artistically acceptable device for moving across from centre to off stage in order to change from the character of Tybalt, triumphant in victory, to Romeo, appearing from off stage aiming a Musket with which to shoot Tybalt. The physical distance required between the two characters made a walk and change too long and ponderous, therefore this distance was covered by the 'Crowd' cheering and looking along the line to each other *(T/C 00:26:10:00)*. Four of these cheering characters standing next to each other provided not only the coverage of distance but also the sense of celebration of Tybalt's (false) victory in battle over Romeo.

The Riff-Raff are essentially 'low-lifes' who mindlessly and fearfully follow Tybalt around as his support gang and mobile cheer squad. They love nothing better than a good stoush and when they sniff the whiff of a 'fight, fight', they gather instantly to shout encouragement to Tybalt. They are a cross between a *'West Side Story'* style teenage gang - without the choreographic ability - and football hooligans without the Match of the Day.

MOVEMENT STYLE:
In order to be able to distinguish one Riff-Raff from the next during their brief appearances, they each needed to contrast with the next very strongly - by height, physicality, comic business and vocal inflection. This effect was able to be further enhanced in the television version by the addition of contrasting pieces of costume, but the fundamental physicality at work within the costume still provides the essential differences and contrasts.

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:
A major change in the television presentation of the Riff-Raff was the ability to create the 'Fight-Cloud' - a Cartoon style moving, seething mass of dust, weapons and fighting bodies which follows Tybalt closely (often bumping mindlessly into him). The 'Fight-Cloud' enabled the sense of a gang of the proverbial 'thousand extras' to be created as one discrete element, which could then be manipulated

electronically across the screen. This eliminated the need to repeat the 'layering' of the individual Riff-Raff as in Act 3 Scene 1 (**T/C 00:27:13:00**) where the individual Riff-Raff are called by, and one-by-one join, the rampaging Tybalt on route to finally confront Romeo.

This particular scene illustrates the usefulness of the technology - unlike in the stage version *(T/C 00:22:20:13)* where they gather behind Tybalt only in the imagination of the audience - the Riff-Raff are here able to be layered behind Tybalt - working from the furthest from, to the closest to, camera, and giving a strong sense of the gathering of the troops. Once thus gathered, they then become the 'fight cloud' to enable them to be manipulated as one cohesive element in post-production.

SAMURAI:
(Stage & Television version)

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:
The Samurai appears briefly and incongruously during the sword fight between Romeo and Tybalt. His sole purpose is to throw the audience off the predictable path which they have been following - already knowing the outcome of the fight. This character is based (very loosely) on Samurai characters from a 60's Japanese television series who were capable of performing amazing and gravity-defying physical feats - including appearing and disappearing at will - together with characters from Akira Kurosawa's classic 1954 film, *The Seven Samurai.*

MOVEMENT STYLE:
In the best Martial arts traditions of his Samurai forbears he moves in a highly stylised, controlled, choreographic performance which includes the flicking of 'star knives' at the camera and slicing a Rubbish Bin clean through. He is in every way a cliche - a very deliberate one.

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:

Television provided the opportunity to create modest Special Effects such as electronically generated Star-Knives - shattering (after an appropriate Kabuki pause) a false 'television screen' (**T/C 00:30:08:00**), and the appearance of actually slicing through a 'trick' Rubbish Bin (**T/C 00:30:12:05**) - implied in the stage version *(T/C 00:26:09:10)* by flipping off the lid.

The Samurai was indulged by the technology - not only could we have the Samurai himself landing incongruously, from an impossible height and improbable trajectory, in the middle of the Australian outback, but he could bring a stylised Japan with him and dump Mt Fuji in the outback setting by virtue of the B/G graphic which appears, and disappears, just as incongruously.

VERONESE ITALIAN:
(Television version only)

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:
The Veronese Italian appears to let Romeo know that he has, on his flying journey back to Juliet, mistakenly landed in Verona, Italy - instead of Verona in outback Australia. The Verona which we see in the background (**T/C 00:43:04:10**) is a composite of every Italian city and tourist attraction one could possibly visit - which is in stark contrast to the Australianness of the established visual environment. Whilst dressed in a highly stylised period Italian costume, the Veronese Italian, holds aloft his 'short black' coffee cup to provide a contemporary link.

MOVEMENT STYLE:
The Veronese Italian's presence is a cartoon indulgence which requires him to make only one small Italianesque gestural movement - questioning/indicating to Romeo that whilst he is certainly welcome, he has landed in the wrong place on the planet.

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:
The Veronese Italian does not appear in the stage version.

THE PRINCE (Escalus):
(Television version only)

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:
The Prince appears as a separate character only in Print (the Verona 'Struth!' newspaper) and Poster ('Do not Litter'; You will get a Job') form as some vague but omnipresent Veronese authority figure. He is also remarkably similar in appearance to, and is really a conglomeration of the Capulet/Godfather character.

MOVEMENT STYLE:
(Refer Capulet/Godfather above)

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:
(Refer Capulet/Godfather above)

MASKED BALL GUESTS:
(Television version only)

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:
The Masked Ball - where Romeo and Juliet first truly confront each other, and fall passionately and reciprocally in love, is a crucial point in the story, and as such, required a sense of the two of them making eye contact 'across a crowded room'. A stylistically appropriate device was required to provide the sense of the crowded Ballroom full of well-heeled, partying, dancing Guests and was achieved by suggesting the other Guests at the Masked Ball through their masks alone. Thus, the only indication we see of these 'other Guests' is the floating sunglasses (masks) in the foreground (**T/C 00:16:00:25**) as Romeo moves amongst them.

MOVEMENT STYLE:
The Masks (sunglasses) are electronically manipulated to imply a crowd in partying mood and move across the screen providing a foreground to Romeo 'bopping' through to his featured place on the bandstand.

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:

Television provided both the opportunity and the means by which to electronically realise the scene as I had always imagined it. This stylisation of the crowded Ballroom created the suggestion of many guests, without the additional technical tedium, loss of videotape 'generations' and significant expense of multi-layered characters for the sake of a few masked 'extras'. In addition, it accentuates Romeo as the unmistakable focus in the ambient 'wide-shot' of the crowded Ballroom.

5.3.9 SCENES - DETAILED ANALYSIS OF SELECTED SCENES:

For the purpose of comparison between stage and screen versions, five (5) specific scenes have been selected for detailed analysis in the context of this study, and each may be identified by reference to videotape 'A' - *Son of Romeo* (Appendix A) and videotape 'B' - **SON OF ROMEO** (Appendix B), together with **Table of Scenes - with Time Code** (T/C) (Appendix C). The Time Codes referred to in the Table identify the particular 'address' on the respective videotapes where those scenes may be found. Direct comparisons between the Stage and Television treatments of those particular scenes are therefore able to be made in conjunction with the analysis which follows below. This scene analysis examines specific aspects of the adaptation to television - and are set out in the following format:

- Identification: Timecodes; Details & Synopsis
- General
- Stage to screen reworking
- Characters
- Performance
- Shot selection
- Design
- Sound & Music

These particular scenes have been selected to illustrate complementary and contrasting aspects of the adaptation of the work to the television screen.

ACT 1 SCENE 1

Act 1 Scene 1:

T/C (TV):	**00:01:27:20**
T/C (Stage):	*00:00:08:10*
Set:	Cinema, Landscape, Marketplace, Statue
Characters:	ROMEO
Props:	
FX:	Through cinema doors
Synopsis:	

Camera moves through Cinema doors into cinema interior, revealing screen, Verona (Australia) landscape, Posters *(Les Enfant, West Side Story)*, camera arrives at Marketplace with Romeo sitting at base of Anzac statue.

GENERAL:

The program begins with a long and elaborate camera move beginning outside the Globe Cinema, and finally coming to rest revealing Romeo sitting at the base of the Anzac statue, watching the passers-by.

He is introduced first in wide shot to establish both the Marketplace and also Romeo's full-length physicality and costume which, as we realise through progression of the piece, is colour-coded (green tones). Romeo is more explicitly identified by way of a mid-shot freeze-frame caption reading '*Romeo - a young man*' . The introduction of the 'Dramatis Personae' using this freeze-frame/caption convention is thus established immediately and is followed throughout the piece for the major characters. This convention is directly taken from the cartoons on which the entire show is stylistically based - particularly the Warner Brothers Road Runner cartoons - and, with no dialogue and one performer playing

all the roles, also helps the audience to initially identify the characters.

We hear the sound of (high heeled) shoes walk past and we see, by Romeo's eyeline and expression that he is casually interested in the female walking past. By the interested but unmoving attitude of Romeo, we assume that this unidentified female is not Juliet (but could well represent Shakespeare's Rosaline). This establishes immediately the fact that Romeo is in search of love.

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING :

Unlike the stage version where Romeo simply appears from off stage and sits down in the Marketplace, in the television version the audience is introduced to the style and setting of the piece via an elaborate 'tracking shot' which begins outside a cinema, moves into a **SON OF ROMEO** poster depicting Romeo and Juliet; passes through the cinema doors (complete with portraits of Shakespeare engraved on circular glass panels) to reveal the cinema screen upon which we see what is later revealed to be the House of Capulet, which is awakening to a dawn sky. The shot dissolves to a detail of Juliet's balcony and pans across the countryside of Verona (Australia), past old buildings depicting movie posters of *West Side Story* and *Les Enfant du Paradis*, acknowledging some of the artistic influences upon the work, and finally resolves into a WS of Romeo sitting at the base of the Anzac statue in the centre of the town square (Marketplace).

The inclusion of this elaborate tracking shot introduces the audience in a fairly gentle way to the style of the piece, and is intended to undercut any preconceptions they might hold about what is to follow - the rationale of gently but quickly introducing the audience to the style and context was similar for both versions, but the techniques were vastly different - we only see Romeo as a 'human being' after the cartoon style of the piece has been strongly established, thus alerting the audience to the mix of real and cartoon within the first 30 seconds or so.

CHARACTERS:

ROMEO:
Romeo is a little bored - he is happy to merely watch the world go by.

PERFORMANCE:

Romeo's eyelines establish the direction of 'traffic' flow and his physicality establishes his relatively neutral character at this early stage.

SHOT SELECTION:

The wide establishing shot allows the audience to see not just Romeo and his overall physicality, but also the cartoon context in which he exists, as well as something of the layout and geography of the town of Verona. We see immediately that Romeo looks from (his) left to right (screen right to left) which establishes the direction that the pedestrian traffic is following, and which Juliet will follow when she appears.

There is a change from wide shot (WS) to mid-shot (MS) for the caption and also to show details of Romeo's facial features, expressions and upper physicality as this is, so far, the only featured movement - the eyes ('eyelines' are crucial throughout) and direction of the head.

DESIGN:

The opening shot of the cinema immediately states that this is meant to be a 'screen' offering, and not a filmed stage performance. Whilst Shakespeare's portrait in the glass door through which the camera moves links the work back to *Romeo & Juliet* as early as possible, there is no question, as the camera moves into the cinema screen and

across the Australian landscape, that this work is not in the Elizabethan tradition. Apart from the caption stating that this Verona is in Australia, the landscape, buildings and townscape are unmistakably Australian in look, style and texture - even though they have been given a cartoon treatment.

Thus Romeo appears as the camera moves through the painted B/G townscape, from behind a painted F/G with Romeo as middle ground in between. The Anzac statue is also part of the painted B/G and is a reworked photograph of Chris Willems in Anzac costume.

SOUND & MUSIC:

A fanfare introduces the piece musically just as the cinema introduces it visually - there is a sense of Hollywood epic about to begin. As the tracking shot progresses, the music settles into a gentle introduction, with hints of *America,* as the *West Side Story* poster appears. As the shot pans across the Australian landscape and the *'Verona, Australia'* caption appears, we become aware of Australian bush sounds.

There are as yet no identifiably cartoon sounds - these do not become evident until the more overtly cartoon characters and movement appear.

ACT 2 SCENE 4

Act 2 Scene 4:	
T/C (TV):	**00:15:25:05**
T/C (Stage):	*00:08:21:18*
Set:	Ballroom Doors; Pedestals
Characters:	ROMEO; JULIET; (OTHER GUESTS); TYBALT; MERCUTIO
Props:	Sunglasses (Other Guests)
FX:	Sax Shadow; Other Guests (Sunglasses floating through Ballroom)
Synopsis:	

Romeo arrives, flings doors open - goes through sunglasses (other guests) to podium & plays Sax; sees Juliet - hearts meet; Tybalt intervenes - tosses Romeo out, collects Mercutio

GENERAL:

This represents the classic scene (*Romeo & Juliet - Act 1 Scene 5*) where the lovers first truly meet and fall in love.

Romeo and Mercutio arrive at the Ball, Romeo flings the doors open - the music which has been playing throughout the previous scenes during the lead up to the Ball, also provides the opportunity for an abrupt stop to dramatise Romeo's entrance - much like the classic Western cliche of the gunfighter entering the saloon halting the piano player. The music continues after Romeo enters the Ball room and contributes a continuity to the celebratory sense of the scene which has been built up in the approach. Romeo and Juliet's eyes (and hearts) meet, and Romeo is thrown out by Tybalt. Mercutio, who, standing by the door surveying the room, by this time is a little drunk, and is tossed aside in Tybalt's rush.

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:

Romeo is the only character to appear in this scene in the stage version of **Son of Romeo** - with all the other characters such as Juliet, Tybalt and the other Ball Guests, existing only in the imagination of

the audience as interpreted through Romeo's reactions to those other characters surrounding him, as is the detail of the Ballroom.

Thus, on the screen, this scene has been substantially reworked in terms of the visibility of those other characters; the addition of Mercutio and the interactions between those characters and Romeo, and the inclusion of the visual environment - the Ballroom and a number of special effects. In choreographic terms for Romeo however, the two versions are virtually identical. The music, whilst re-recorded for the television version, is essentially the same as the stage version, limiting the choreographic changes which could be made - there was little reason to change the choreography - the fundamental difference lies in the environment and characters surrounding that choreography.

The doors are suddenly real - with weight and substance; the 'other (masked) guests' are able to be physically represented by their masks (floating sunglasses); the saxophone sequence is able to be visually enhanced by the addition of a huge shadow of Romeo, which continues to play a real saxophone behind the foreground Romeo - even after he finishes playing his mime saxophone; not only do we see eye contact between Romeo & Juliet, but animated cartoon hearts float across the room from one to the other; additional characters, present but unseen on the stage, are now visible and interacting.

The floating hearts - two of which join in centre screen - are the device used to introduce Tybalt into the scene. Tybalt appears out of nowhere to brutally crush this conjoined and 'consummated' floating heart, and toss it aside - a metaphor for his simultaneous anger at Romeo and disgust at his sister Juliet for having anything to do with a Montague. Torn up strips of red paper in Tybalt's hand were used as a visual and textural transition between the post-produced animated cartoon heart and the 'real' environment of the Ballroom - providing, in the manner of the crushing, and subsequently the throwing away, a visual sense of dismissal of the entire affair.

When Romeo is thrown out of the Ballroom by Tybalt, the act of throwing him out is portrayed in exactly the same way as on the

stage. Even though it is only in the television version that we actually see Tybalt preparing to physically throw Romeo out, such direct and continuous interaction and physical contact as would be required between two overlaid characters would have proved to be technically extremely complex and almost certainly not realistically achievable, therefore what we see in both versions, is the **physical effect** the act of being thrown out has on Romeo's body, rather than the entire act itself. This is achieved by Romeo being positioned to the extreme right of frame such that Romeo's arm which Tybalt has twisted up behind Romeo's back is already out of shot, together with Tybalt himself, and it is the directional momentum which Tybalt establishes in moving towards Romeo, together with selective and rhythmically consistent editing, that is utilised to achieve continuity of both purpose and direction. There is a 'sense' of scuffle and movement towards the doors, rather than necessarily the reality of it.

In *Son of Romeo*, for reasons of comedy and to emphasise what has occurred, Romeo returns immediately and is thrown out a second time - whereas in **SON OF ROMEO** with its additional (visible) characters, there is no doubt. However Romeo makes something of a return appearance via a 'thought-bubble' showing him taunting Tybalt - who believes he has finished with Romeo by having thrown him out - and enticing him outside for a stoush. This has the desired effect of angering Tybalt to the extent that he immediately pursues Romeo at a pace which establishes the rhythm and purpose of the chase, which is not resolved until much later.

CHARACTERS:

ROMEO:
Romeo enters dramatically, surveys the room, decides on his chosen path, and, far from sneaking in quietly, struts to the podium and promptly performs a loud and very public saxophone solo which announces his presence. Upon leaping down to dance, he espies Juliet and is smitten and frozen still the moment he makes eye contact. He reaches out for Juliet, but is seen by Tybalt and thrown out of the Ballroom, only to taunt Tybalt and entice him to make chase outside.

JULIET
Juliet makes a brief appearance - enjoying the music, bopping along - until she makes eye contact with Romeo. Unlike their first meeting in the Marketplace, she no longer plays hard-to-get. She immediately transmits animated cartoon hearts in response to Romeo's and is shocked and distressed when Tybalt throws Romeo out. She runs off, back to her chamber.

TYBALT
Tybalt is at the Ball both as family member/guest and bouncer - he sees Romeo and immediately wants to throw him out. His act of grasping the floating hearts in mid air and crushing them, indicates his callous contempt towards both his sister Juliet, and Romeo and their love for each other. Tybalt looks in anger at both Juliet, and at Romeo and then in his thug-like manner of moving, proceeds to toss Romeo out.

MERCUTIO
Mercutio is along for the ride. He has been quietly standing by the door drinking (unseen) and observing the 'talent' and is oblivious to either the love between Romeo and Juliet or the hatred between Romeo and Tybalt.

BALL GUESTS
The other guests at the Ball are represented by sunglasses/masks floating through the ballroom. In addition to being 'extras' at the Ball, these provide a foreground texture which adds a depth to the screen image, and give Romeo a crowd to pass through and someone to ignore the threat of.

PERFORMANCE:

ROMEO:
Romeo's overall choreography was virtually unchanged and already well rehearsed from the stage version, however some performance

challenges were provided by the need to create the shadow playing the real saxophone. This shadow was created not by casting a true shadow in the normal sense, but by utilising the travelling matte shape, shot separately, of Romeo playing a real saxophone.

When shooting the shadow with the real saxophone, the physical weight of the instrument altered the centre of gravity and the speed at which one could move as Romeo, and so whilst Romeo's shadow in the background more or less matches the movement of Romeo in the foreground, there is a discernible difference between the two. In the context of the Ball/Video Clip feel of this part of the scene, and the fact that when Romeo leaps down from the podium, the shadow continues to play, despite these small technical differences between the two, they still remain stylistically consistent due to their overall choreographic similarity. Essentially, the movement of both Romeos, rather than being choreographed to the music, simply 'physicalises' the pitch and phrasing of the saxophone melody.

The physical size and overt nature of Romeo's movement in this early part of the scene is contrasted sharply by his absolute stillness at seeing Juliet. This contrasting stillness is a very useful and powerful movement device to depict the overwhelming power of the effect that seeing Juliet has upon him - she literally stops him in his tracks.

In performance terms, the bogus camera move described below (Shot Selection) drew heavily on mime technique in needing to lock the parts of the body together rigidly, whilst pivoting the feet around (out of shot) at the required speed to match the unseen B/G and F/G moves. The timing was achieved by co-director Jasek calling the move cue for all three elements - whilst complex to co-ordinate, the shot was achieved in two takes.

JULIET:
Juliet is at first oblivious to Romeo (even though he has announced his entrance by saxophone). She is in a corner quietly bopping to the music, not realising that it has already stopped, when she sees Romeo and is equally lovestruck. Juliet's movement is at first more contained than Romeo's. Whereas Romeo moves from large movements to

absolute stillness, Juliet by contrast moves from smaller, more fluid, contained movement to sharper, punctuated and slightly tense movement in recognition of Romeo. This smooths out again as the animated floating hearts pass between them, and, as they reach towards each other, we see the first stylistic hint of what emerges more fully later in the Balcony Scene. At the throwing out of Romeo by Tybalt, Juliet's body shows her building distress and despair as she runs out of the Ballroom, in the opposite direction to Romeo, and back to her chamber.

TYBALT:
Tybalt is pure thug throughout. His typically pumped up manner of moving is maintained and added to by his flailing arms in pursuit of Romeo. The manner in which he moves is intended to be threatening and less than perfectly co-ordinated - to match his aggression, coupled with limited intelligence. In shooting Tybalt, as a second pass, leaving the Ballroom in pursuit of Romeo, his movements had to be timed with Mercutio, as the first pass in the composited shot, (refer below) both with hitting Mercutio, and subsequently, timing it such that he stayed visible outside the open doorway until just before Mercutio reappears from out of frame.

MERCUTIO:
Mercutio, who is by now a little tipsy, is amazed at his own skill at still being able to flip-and-catch his coin whilst hiccupping under the influence. His body moves even more loosely than normal and he is sent cartwheeling off by a hit from Tybalt who is in pursuit of Romeo. Mercutio reappears, stunned and groggy after Tybalt has gone through the doors. Mercutio, who was shot as a first pass to be run as a moving B/G for Tybalt's second pass, had to cartwheel out of frame as a result of Tybalt's hit, hold out of frame for the (imagined) time it would take Tybalt to pass through the shot, and then reappear immediately after Tybalt had cleared the open doorway in pursuit of Romeo.

OTHER GUESTS:
The sunglasses depicting the Other Guests were subtly manipulated to move in time with the music. The intention was to have them

moving across the frame in various layers to provide depth and the sense of crowded room. Each pair of sunglasses was shot individually, and then manipulated in post-production to move across the screen at varying sizes and speeds to indicate the crowded room full of dancing guests.

SHOT SELECTION:

The opening shot of the scene is a direct cut from the closing shot of the previous scene - shot as a FLS reverse angle from inside the Ballroom looking to the doors rather than from outside the Ballroom looking to the doors. In keeping with, and to enhance the Video Clip style of these scenes, the editor 'stuttered' the doors open by reinserting and slightly overlapping the same cut several times in quick succession.

The shot remains mostly WS or FLS until such times as Romeo and Juliet see each other - with the demands of the intimacy, the shots revert to MCU's for both of them. This has the effect of seeing them more closely, yet still allowing room in the frame for the passage of the hearts between them. Similarly, we see Tybalt in MCU for the heart crushing and throwing Romeo out, but in MS from behind as he approaches the doors, hits Mercutio, in matching MS, and leaves in pursuit of Romeo - as the movement of the characters is quite large, the MS allows room in the frame for the flailing arms of Tybalt and the cartwheeling of Mercutio.

We decided to challenge the technical limitation of being unable to move the camera in a blue-screen situation, as we wished to include a sweeping camera move through the ballroom, with Romeo as the central focus, which would have the desired effect of changing the orientation of the camera/Romeo from profile to more front on. Rather than do a predictable and disruptive cut, it was decided to attempt to give the impression of a complex camera move across the ballroom.

As outlined elsewhere (Section 5.1), blue-screen techniques with a keyed-in background, generally make it impossible to move the camera without changing the apparent spatial relationship between the performer and the background so radically as to render it totally artificial. However, by keeping the foreground camera still, and instead simultaneously move all three elements in the shot - the background; Romeo; and the electronically manipulated foreground column, the sense of movement of the foreground camera was achieved (**T/C 00:16:39:20**). This involved the B/G camera slowly panning across the B/G artwork - Romeo swivelling/pivoting the feet on the spot whilst holding the upper body position - and the F/G artwork (column) electronically panning more quickly across the entire screen - utilising the fact that to a moving eye/camera, a distant landscape appears to move very little, in comparison to foreground objects which appear to move more quickly across the same field of vision. (This principle was also utilised in Act 1 Scene 6 for the profile shot of Paris's FJ Holden driving through the Verona countryside - **T/C 00:10:19:15**).

DESIGN:

Aside from the painted B/G in tones of grey to depict the Ballroom, there are also 3-dimensional Set pieces. Unlike most circumstances where the design is done separate from the performance, in this case all Set pieces were designed and made to suit the choreography, the physical size of the performer, and the performance details.
The doors to the Ballroom through which Romeo bursts were designed and constructed in accordance with the size and range of Romeo's movement. The doors had to be tall and wide enough to appear grand and imposing, yet narrow and light enough to still allow Romeo his dramatic entrance by flinging the doors open fully (even so, to gain the dramatic effect, two crew members had to sit on the floor out of frame (refer Appendix F - Production Photographs) and catch the flinging doors before they smashed back against the flats which contained them), yet still be touching each leaf with outstretched arms. This was crucial for the finger-tapping on the doors to remain part of the action as choreographed - the doors were,

literally, made to measure based upon the full stretch of Romeo's arms.

Similarly, the broken pedestals upon which Romeo stands to play the saxophone, were based, in terms of height and positioning, on the timber box used in the stage version, and then enhanced by the addition of some dressing.

The Sunglasses as Masked Guests was a feature which was one of the first design concepts for the adaptation (refer Appendix D - Preliminary Storyboard), and in addition to being a relatively simple and inexpensive device to include extra characters, they add foreground and depth to the overall picture.

SOUND & MUSIC:

The early part of the scene is played to the 'Ball Music' - with the addition of the saxophone accompanying Romeo and his Shadow who both 'play' the saxophone solo, with the Shadow continuing after Romeo has jumped off the pedestal. The music comes to an abrupt halt to match Romeo's being struck by the 'lightning bolt' at seeing Juliet, and then reverts to a more romantic rather than 'rock and roll' feel to match the floating hearts.

Once Tybalt enters the scene to crush the hearts, and throw Romeo out, the cartoon sounds become evident - the crushing of the hearts, Tybalt's footsteps, Mercutio being bowled over. This more cartoony soundscape provides a contrast to the melodic and romantic music which has been evident up to this point, and serves to underline the harsh reality of the family feud, bringing Romeo and Juliet back to earth after their brief romantic interaction. In addition, electronically enhanced vocalisations - various grunts and growls - add aural texture as Tybalt throws Romeo out.

ACT 2 SCENE 9

Act 2 Scene 9:
T/C (TV):   **00:23:05:05**
T/C (Stage):   *00:18:44:20*
Set:
Characters: ROMEO; JULIET (Hands only)
Props:
FX: Ring sparkle
Synopsis:
Close-up Hands/Marriage Scene Broken by tearing apart as...

GENERAL:

This Scene represents the essence of the production - for both stage and screen. The 'Balcony Scene' provided not only the inspiration for the initial stage production, but also the central stylistic focus around which the general style of the work was developed, and to which it returns in the 'serious bits' - where the cartoon style is too flippant to convey the tragedy in any real or human way. This scene was the very first moment of the show to be created.

Obviously inspired by a detail from Michalengelo's Sistine Chapel, the core of the scene is played in close-up - using just the two hands representing Romeo and Juliet. As well as representing the lover's first actual physical contact and acceptance of each other as lovers, it also portrays their marriage - thereby conveniently eliminating or condensing several of Shakespeare's scenes which deal with Friar Lawrence, the Nurse, messages going back and forth and the arrangement of the wedding in secret - thus enabling numerous pages of text to be dispensed with by the simple addition, at the end of the scene, of the wedding ring - and a mimed one at that. The elimination of those pages of text had no discernible detrimental effect on the narrative - the end result is the same.

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:

The choreography of the hands remains precisely the same for both stage and screen. I made a deliberate decision to not tamper with one of the most successful and memorable scenes from the stage production, basing this decision on the fact that what had been performed as a physical 'close-up' on stage, demanding the visual isolation of the choreography from the rest of the visible body, could now be shot as a camera CU on screen. The camera could thus be utilised to best advantage by eliminating the surrounding detail (which, no matter how isolated, still visually distracts from the essential choreography), and exploit to the maximum, what Jonathan Miller (1995) describes as the *'enormous advantage to getting in close, ..(the) ..enormous advantage to directing your attention in a way that will focus you on one particular encounter'.*

To clarify further which hand was which character, given the tightness of the CU and the consequent visible detail, my Right arm was shaved to soften the appearance of Juliet's arm, thereby further enhancing the contrast between the two, and, even though the choreography itself remained virtually identical, the technical demands of the medium did have an additional impact, however subtle, upon the art (refer 'Performance' below).

CHARACTERS:

ROMEO:
In keeping with Romeo's general physicality, his hand moves in clean, well punctuated, straight lines and angles initially - establishing the direction of approach - softening as the lovers become more involved to enhance the tenderness of the moment.

JULIET:
In keeping with her established physicality, and in contrast to Romeo, Juliet's hand movements are much more curved, fluid and continuous.

PERFORMANCE:

Performing this scene on screen was in one sense liberating in that, in wearing the puppeteers black Beekeepers suit, complete with its gauze full-face covering, allowed me to watch the monitor more closely - not so much to see that the hands were doing the correct choreography, but in order to keep the choreography within the very tight confines of the CU frame. The performance is therefore, generally speaking, a little more contained - particularly towards the end of the scene, where more of the arms are involved and intertwined whilst still remaining completely in frame.

Another adjustment to be made was that due to the brightness of the lighting reflecting off my hands, my face was just visible - even through the black gauze of the puppeteer's suit - in the background of the shot, so I had to lower the whole choreographed assembly in order to maintain the pure black background. This added a little to the restriction of the movement.

As with the stage version, it was vital to strongly establish not only the directions, but also the angles of approach of each of the respective hands. These angles, established full-body in the wider shot leading up to the CU, reinforce the relative positions of Romeo and Juliet to each other, thus reinforcing the identification of which hand belongs to which character - no matter how they subsequently move and intertwine during the scene, and no matter that what is Juliet's left hand in the WS is a right hand in the CU (and vice-versa for Romeo) - the angles of approach are sufficiently strong to overcome this anomaly in continuity.

SHOT SELECTION:

This scene was always envisaged as a tight CU against a black background, to maximise the stylisation by taking up a large proportion of the screen. However, in the fashion of television Director's apprehension about remaining on the same shot for too long, we simultaneously shot the scene in a MS with the second camera. This allowed us the possibility of soft mixes between shots to cover ourselves if the CU became tedious to watch. Ultimately

however, initial artistic instincts proved correct and it was an easy decision to stay with the CU - hence the MS was not used at all.

DESIGN:

Given the more serious nature of this scene, it was always the intention to not attempt to insert a cartoon B/G. Whilst to do so may have been stylistically consistent with the cartoon, it would have worked against the clarity, definition and emotional intent of the choreography, hence cluttering the scene and possibly the narrative. As B/G Artist, Nick Stathopoulos (1996) states, *'Whenever the focus had to be on the mime, the B/G was softened or faded entirely to black...the simpler B/G...captur(ing) the mood and emotion of the moment'*.

SOUND & MUSIC:

The music as written for the stage version, was rearranged very slightly and re-recorded. In addition to the basic choreographical accompaniment, music is used to highlight specific points in the choreography, such as the ring sparkle.

ACT 3 SCENE 2

Act 3 Scene 2:	
T/C (TV)*:	**00:27:32:00**
T/C (Stage):	*00:24:38:00*
Set:	Street
Characters:	ROMEO; TYBALT; FIGHTCLOUD; MERCUTIO; SAMURAI
Props:	Flower; Bookie bag; Swords; Armour; Bin (sliced) Handcuffs; Blunderbuss; Machine Gun; Hand Grenade; TNT.
FX:	Background changes; Shadows
Synopsis:	

Romeo with flower (Loves me/not). Tybalt arrives with Fightcloud; slap, slap; Armour; Swords - fight ensues; Mercutio runs a book; Samurai; Romeo kills Tybalt; gets arrested

GENERAL:

Tybalt's pursuit of Romeo, with the Riff-Raff in tow, culminates in the 'challenge to a duel'. They draw swords and the fight begins - taking them across a number of visual environments which provide the opportunity to inject some very obvious sight gags into the deliberately cliched fight. Ultimately, Romeo kills Tybalt by means many and various, and is consequently arrested and brought before the Judge.

This scene is the most blatant expression and culmination of the feud between the Montagues and Capulets, as such, it is a crucial *Romeo & Juliet* scene - and provides the vehicle for Romeo's banishment, whilst the cartoon context lends itself to the more outrageous aspects of the swordfight.

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:

This scene represents the kind of instance where the technology not only came into its own, but was pushed to its technical and artistic limits.

THE PURSUIT:

Tybalt pursuing Romeo, with the Riff-Raff in tow, provided the opportunity to actually show the gang in full (unlike the stage version where Tybalt gathers an imaginary gang together) by means of, rather than a two-pass composite, a five-pass composite (4 Riff-Raff plus Tybalt). Beginning with the Riff-Raff furthermost from camera, shooting his entire sequence, then using that tape as B/G, each successive Riff-Raff was precisely positioned on the floor and in the frame to be slightly in front of the previous one. Thus the gang was built up layer by layer from the back to the front, finally positioning Tybalt at the head as their unmistakable leader.

This number of passes was really at the limit of technical acceptability, as each pass lost another 'generation' of picture quality. The fact that Tybalt was in the foreground, as the final (technically freshest) pass, taking up a significant portion of the screen, meant that we could afford to lose some picture quality in the background without it being too noticeable. Steam emanating from Tybalt's ears and nostrils was added in post-production to enhance both the cartoon effect and Tybalt's rage.

THE CHALLENGE:

Tybalt's arrival to face Romeo and challenge him to a duel, is based very much on the stage choreography. Television allowed Tybalt's glove to appear from nowhere as it would in a cartoon, and Tybalt shares with the audience the question of 'where did this come from?' as he throws the glove away. The most significant difference is that when Romeo goes out of frame to construct his suit of armour, the suit of armour he returns wearing is a very home-made one - comprised of various household items such as rubbish bin lids, colanders etc. Practical reasons prevented a real suit of armour being considered, and would in any case not have been in keeping with the style of the piece as a whole. The decision was based on partly practical, partly artistic and partly financial considerations, and illustrates another example of the dilemma of the real verses the mimed - the question of whether this kind of visual interpretation of the mimed suit of armour, would match that of the one imagined by an audience.

THE SWORDFIGHT:

The stage version of the swordfight was deliberately choreographed to include the kinds of cliches which stage fight manuals strongly suggest one should avoid at all costs - up the stairs, the duck to avoid the high swing, the jump to avoid the swing aimed at the legs, the kick away, the swing on the rope with the sword held between the teeth. The only cliche not used was the close clench which provides the opportunity for the combatants to exchange some harsh words, eyeball to eyeball, through gritted teeth - all these cliches developed from watching countless swashbuckling Errol Flynn movies. Adapting the work for the screen provided the opportunity to emulate, not only the choreography of those classic swordfights, but also the environments in which they took place.   The simplicity of the stage setting demanded of the audience that they also draw upon all those movie cliches whereas the screen allowed us to provide all the visual clues.

Probably the most dramatic illustration of the utilisation and artistic extension of the medium, is that part of the swordfight which takes place within the medieval castle. Visually inspired by a sequence from the 1938 Erroll Flynn film, *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, it features Romeo and Tybalt fighting their way up the spiral stone stairs which wind around a circular stone column (refer Appendix D - Production Storyboard; Production Schedule; Construction Drawings, and Appendix F - Production Photographs).

Romeo's shadow first appears in the shot, then Romeo himself. He parries and thrusts in his fight with Tybalt, who also appears in the frame swinging his broadsword. Romeo, still fighting, makes his way up the stair towards the first landing, casting his shadow upon the curved surface of the column - with Tybalt in pursuit. As they both pass beyond the border of the frame, Tybalt's shadow is also cast on the curved face of the column. Both characters are now out of shot, but their respective shadows, fighting, remain visible on the column, with the occasional glimpse of Tybalt's swinging broadsword in the frame right foreground.

This sequence required an immense amount of careful and detailed planning - utilising the basic stage choreography, but building upon it and altering the spatial relationships and direction of travel. The range of technical elements had to be incorporated such that not only would both the characters appear in the shot, but that both their shadows could also be realistically cast, over two separate passes, against the same background without merging or interfering with each other, or being masked by the movement of the characters in the foreground (except where intentional). Hence the lighting, always a crucial element in the blue-screen context, became even more critical and more specific in this highly specialised situation. A clean, clearly defined shadow needed to be cast of both Romeo and Tybalt, in the two separate passes, whilst at the same time this same lighting set up had also to be appropriate to light the 3-D characters as they moved through the frame. Thus the direction and movement of the characters, and their respective shadows, was forced along a very specific, and accurately determined path - taking account not only of the normal parameters of the size of shot, but also the very specific lighting requirements, the position of Romeo on each tread of the spiral staircase, and the position of Tybalt in relation to Romeo as Romeo's level changed.

The Samurai's business is essentially the same as on stage, however his arrival is electronically assisted by an ADO move which allows him to fly in from an unrealistic and physically impossible height and trajectory. The opportunity was also taken to build, around the movement, the effect his actions have on his surroundings - the B/G changes to a cliched composite Japanese scene/painting; the mimed star-knives which he throws hit the screen and shatter it; the rubbish bin he slices is actually cut through rather than just suggested. The Samurai's rising sun headband also provides a convenient source of a wipe to another shot, overcoming an awkward transitional moment.

THE KILLING OF TYBALT:
By this stage in the piece, the cartoon elements are increasingly utilised and heightened in stylisation to present the more bizarre aspects of the narrative. Whilst on stage there were no props to contend with, once again television created a dilemma of how to

incorporate Props and Death without becoming bogged down in the problems created by naturalism within the cartoon context. The compromise solution was to overlay, in post-production, various pre-planned cartoon Paintbox effects such as the 'ratatat' of bullets leaving the machine gun, providing the link between a 'real' weapon and its cartoon effect. Similarly, when Tybalt is shot, cartoon bullet-holes appear across his abdomen (in the following frame they are sutured and healing), and Tybalt is dismembered by an electronically generated, horizontal screen-split, whereas on stage this split is purely a performance element achieved by a sideways translation of the chest.

CHARACTERS:

ROMEO:
Just as in Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet,* Romeo had to become many things - from gentle lover to the aggressive brawler within a short space of time.

Having consummated his love with, and married Juliet in Act 2, Romeo is deliriously contented, doing his usual 'she loves me, she loves me not' with a yellow flower. He is surprised, but not threatened, by Tybalt's arrival and goes along with duel challenge. At being challenged to the duel, Romeo, in true Bugs Bunny style, makes Tybalt wait while he goes offstage to construct a suit of armour. The purpose of the suit of armour is not to protect himself, but to over-elaborately provide a glove with which to return Tybalt's glove-slap-across-the-face to accept the challenge. The fact that Romeo's glove is made of armour, rather than fabric, provides the 'payoff' for the gag. Upon slapping Tybalt across the face, he discards the suit of armour, draws his sword and taunts Tybalt. As the swordfight progresses, Romeo becomes a quasi Erroll Flynn - aggressively fighting Tybalt on a fairly equal basis.

By the end of the sequence, after the interruption of the Samurai, his bravado has deserted him somewhat, and he chooses to withdraw - throwing his sword at Tybalt in the process. Romeo returns rather

sneakily, with more fire power, winning the fight by foul means rather than fair. While he is celebrating his victory, he is arrested and dragged up before the Judge.

TYBALT:
Tybalt gathers the Fightcloud/Riff-Raff together and pursues Romeo - looking for a fight. Furious steam pours from his ears and nostrils as he crunches his way along the streets. He challenges Romeo to a duel and, after being slapped in return by Romeo's armour plated glove - which leaves Tybalt battered and groggy with various nuts and bolts protruding from his head - draws his enormous broadsword and the fight begins. Apart from a short interruption due to the Samurai, the fight finally comes to a halt with Tybalt, having not seen Romeo hiding with his weaponry and believing he has won, being then slain comprehensively.

FIGHTCLOUD/RIFF-RAFF:
The composite of Riff-Raff with flailing weapons of destruction, follows Tybalt dutifully until it bumps into him as he comes to a halt. It exists to enhance the sense of gang warfare. The Riff-Raff also appear separately - both following Tybalt, and later during the fight, to cheer him on and celebrate his (apparent) win.

MERCUTIO:
Ever the opportunist, Mercutio runs a book, taking bets from the unseen crowd, with a view to making a tidy profit at the possible expense of Romeo's life. His presence here adds to the sense of excitement and anticipation established by the Riff-Raff.

SAMURAI:
The Samurai appears incongruously, flinging star-knives at all and sundry (including the camera) and slicing through the rubbish bin with deft precision. He exists purely as a piece of nonsense derived from the 60's television program.

PERFORMANCE:

ROMEO:

The timing of the poke in the back by Tybalt was a fairly simple case of watching the monitor and reacting to Tybalt's actions in the 1st pass. However because of the comparatively long time Tybalt takes to get to Romeo, there is evidence of my looking at the monitor in preparation. This is always a danger in such a situation, and highlights the importance not only of eyelines themselves, but also the focal distance which - whether on stage or screen - is able to be read by an audience.

From a performance point of view, Romeo's suit of armour really provided no new opportunities, and was in some ways a performance distraction. In theory it should have married well with the robotic choreography, but its initial impact is lost during the too lengthy path back to Tybalt. The stage version required this length of time and distance to establish and reinforce physically what Romeo was wearing, but on screen, in providing the visual elements via costume, that need to establish the reality through physicality became largely superfluous and could have been cut down in length quite substantially. Once the challenge has been accepted, Romeo's physicality changes dramatically, as he becomes 'Errol Flynn'.

Given the cartoon context and build up to the swordfight, the swordfight itself becomes a deadly serious affair, and Romeo's physicality reflects this as he ducks to avoid Tybalt's sword. Romeo's movement is a finer, parry-riposte, rapier-like movement in contrast to Tybalt's more thuggish and cumbersome swinging of the broadsword.

The moves up the stairs required an accuracy and consistency of placement and direction relative to the camera, the scenic elements (stairs and column) and the single light source (providing the sharp-edged shadow), as well as the 'space' to be allowed for Tybalt in the second pass. As only a single light source could be used to create the shadow, placement on the landing for the shadowplay was crucial, as was the precise moment of both the kicking away of Tybalt (in shadow), and subsequently the kick to Tybalt's back (in mid-frame foreground), in mid-rope swing. Despite the complexity of the shot

and its numerous elements, and as a result of careful and detailed planning and rehearsal, Romeo's pass was achieved in two takes (refer Appendix F - Production Photographs).

Romeo's arrest utilises a similar performance technique to that when he is thrown out of the Ball (refer Act 2 Scene 4 above) - what we see is the physical effect of the arrest - being grabbed by the arm from behind - through Romeo's physical reaction, rather than the detail of the arrest itself. The prospect of the arrest has already been suggested by the silhouette of the Cop immediately prior, and thus makes sense in that context. By Romeo being positioned to the extreme left of frame, we are able to dispense with the technical complexity of including another minor, and largely superfluous character, by virtue of the fact that Romeo's arm which has been twisted up behind his back is already out of shot. To enhance Romeo's abrupt movement out of left of frame, the flower Romeo is carrying is briefly 'left behind' in mid-air (fixed in space) in the centre of frame (**T/C 00:31:41:10**), giving it a very strong focus, and which gives the effect not only of Romeo's being swiftly pulled out of the shot, but is also symbolic of his about-to-be destroyed relationship with Juliet.

TYBALT:

Tybalt's pursuit of Romeo illustrates the usefulness of the classic mime technique of walking on the spot. His distorted, heavy, trudging walk - gathering his troops as he goes - reinforces his lumbering, inelegant character, and his determination in seeking Romeo. The restriction of camera movement demanded that Tybalt did not cover any ground during this walk, with the highly distorted, revolving cartoon B/G providing the warped sense of distance travelled. It is not until Tybalt arrives at the place where Romeo is that he actually takes any forward steps.

Upon arrival, he is once more bumped into by the Riff-Raff which have by now melded into the Fightcloud. Tybalt's reaction to being bumped into was shot first, and the Fightcloud, as one composite element, was added in post-production to match the timing of

Tybalt's reaction. Tybalt's approaching Romeo from behind was the first pass and as such determined the timing of Romeo's later (2nd pass) reactions. Tybalt's eyelines are important here as they determine Romeo's subsequent height and position and have to 'pre-match' them.

After Tybalt pokes Romeo in the back to gain his attention, he pulls a glove out of nowhere with which to slap Romeo. This cartoon convention required a device to dispense with the glove once it had been used, so Tybalt, in his simple-minded manner, sees the glove in his own hand, and with his enquiring look, wonders, on behalf of the audience, 'where did this come from?' and simply tosses it aside. This small moment serves the purpose of not only getting rid of the inconvenient 'real' glove prior to what follows, but also reinforces Tybalt's unpleasant character by illustrating his civic disregard for Verona's littering laws. An additional benefit is that it adds interest and fills a certain amount of the time during which both Tybalt and the audience are awaiting Romeo's return.

Tybalt's being hit by Romeo's armour plated glove provides a good illustration of the need to 'hit the mark'. With the high angle CU restricting the frame, Tybalt's head was required to stop precisely in the middle of frame, sharply finishing a violent turn. The resulting small margin for error, required 6 takes to achieve the necessary precision.

As Tybalt draws his broadsword, in order to accentuate its size in comparison to Romeo's, by initially swinging the sword precisely across the lens of the camera, its already stylised proportions were able to be greatly enhanced by the combination of the forced perspective built into the sword, and its closeness to the camera - resulting in the sword appearing massive to the viewer and equally threatening to Romeo.   Whilst Tybalt's choreography appears to be fairly lumbering and uncoordinated, in performance terms it actually required even more precision in placement and timing than that of Romeo because, as the fight proceeds into the castle, Tybalt's choreography, as the 2nd pass over Romeo's swordfight action, is utterly dependent upon Romeo's position within frame as well as his

timing. Romeo's position - in reality and shadow - his sword swing to Tybalt's head, Tybalt's sword swing to Romeo's legs, Tybalt's reaction to Romeo's various kicks, are all determined by Romeo, until such time when, in the reverse angle as they disappear behind a column, Tybalt's action becomes the 1st pass and determines Romeo's timing. After the interruption of the Samurai, the remainder of the swordfight does not involve such direct contact between Tybalt and Romeo and hence demands much less precision.

As Tybalt arrives back at the town square and realises that Romeo is nowhere to be seen, he assumes he has been victorious and his physicality displays this sense of triumph. As each successive version of his assassination by Romeo manifests itself, Tybalt's body reflects the type of aggression being inflicted upon it - even though in some instances such as the TNT explosion this movement is superfluous as he is not visible behind the fallout from the blast. Tybalt body finally shows that it has succumbed to the onslaught by letting the limbs flop loosely as he drags his way offstage.

RIFF-RAFF/FIGHTCLOUD:
The Riff-Raff first appear as individuals as they gather in behind Tybalt. As this sequence required 5 passes - one for each of the four Riff-Raff plus Tybalt, the placement of each of them within the frame and in relation to each other was critical.   The position of each was determined by the first position at the rear, and then all the others set from that reference point on the floor. Therefore, each of the Riff-Raff, whilst moving excitedly following Tybalt, had to strictly contain their movement to one spot or at most move only in a lateral plane.

By the time Tybalt arrives to confront Romeo, the Riff-Raff have amalgamated into their customary Fightcloud which provides another opportunity for the running gag of the Fightcloud always bumping into Tybalt when he comes to a halt. The drawing of Tybalt's sword is the cue for them to shout encouragement and bay for blood, just as they shout congratulation when they also believe, as Tybalt does, that he has been victorious.

MERCUTIO:

Mercutio's brief appearance as the bookie demanded little more than the performance ability to gather many handfuls of money at one time from various proffered hands.

SAMURAI:
The Samurai's appearance is marked by 'cartoonified' Kabuki-style, strongly punctuated movement. His clean, precise, considered actions explode suddenly between brackets of absolute stillness, and aside from having to co-ordinate his arrival and departure with electronic ADO moves so that his leaps are inhumanly large, he actually does somewhat less than in the stage version due to judicious editing.

SHOT SELECTION:

THE PURSUIT:
The low angle highlighted both the distorted B/G and Tybalt's power and anger. The WS, with its inherent depth of perspective enhanced the sense of large gang of Riff-Raff gathering and travelling quite a distance both behind and with Tybalt. The subsequent LA CU of Tybalt allowed the steam issuing from his ears and nostrils to be clearly seen.

THE CHALLENGE:
For Tybalt's arrival, the WS was the preferred option, as we had also shot the scene from a high angle in EWS - which took a disproportionately large amount of time to set up satisfactorily - but it would not edit well and was therefore not used. A high angle CU for Tybalt provided the opportunity to push the gag of Romeo's iron glove leaving Tybalt with bolts in head after Romeo's slap, and, having wanted to include 'whip-pans' somewhere in the program, this provided the ideal opportunity, as they heightened the sense of both crowd and excitement building.

THE SWORDFIGHT:
The start of the fight was initially set up in EWS showing Romeo hacking at Tybalt and Tybalt not reacting. In the final cut, this shot

was used only briefly just prior to the combatants exiting ROF to emerge in the castle. The WS is utilised as the swordfight moves into the castle in order to encompass both characters as well as their shadows as they move out of frame. The WS is maintained for the entrance of the Samurai, and remains so through the star-knives - to get the impact of the star-knives on the screen.

The shattering glass is then used as a wipe to a LA MS with the bin in the foreground to change the perspective and heighten the effect of the sword's impact on the bin. Although this choice, in strict television terms, created what would normally be considered a continuity problem, the pace and heightened stylisation of the fight generally permitted a fairly 'loose' approach to the whole question of continuity.

A profile WS is used to encompass both Samurai and bin as the top half slides off it, and the shot then reverts to the original WS enabling a triple pass of the Samurai, in the centre background, with Romeo and Tybalt in foreground L and R respectively. Then, cutting between a MS of Romeo throwing his sword at Tybalt, Tybalt arrives in the WS in the Marketplace once again, and apart from some MCU's showing the effects of Romeo's various assassination devices, finally Tybalt exits frame in WS to show the full body and its lack of cohesion.

DESIGN:

THE PURSUIT:
The distorted B/G - painted on a disc which was slowly rotated - provides an effective context to the twisted rage of Tybalt. Its circular nature enabled Tybalt to apparently travel a long distance without requiring any camera moves or long panels of travelling B/G to be painted. As a consequence of the editing, despite the rotating B/G's repetitious nature, the same building details never appear twice in the scene.

THE CHALLENGE:

As discussed above, the suit of armour provided a not entirely successful link between the real, the cartoon, and the performance.

THE SWORDFIGHT:
Romeo's sword, which was in fact an extendable car radio antenna, was designed to match and enhance Romeo's movement. A rapier-like 'whippy' movement which could be easily manipulated. By deliberate contrast, Tybalt's broadsword, which equally matches his movement, is intended to be somewhat cumbersome and heavy.

The Castle, by virtue of its change of levels and shadow requirements (refer Appendix D - Production Storyboard and Appendix F - Production Photographs), proved to require a curious combination of real Set and painted B/G. By using a half gum tree/half curved stone column as a 'wipe' from the previous shot, it establishes the visual environment for the castle part of the swordfight. The 3-dimensional curved column upon which the shadows of Romeo and Tybalt are cast, had to be blue so as to insert the painted B/G, yet the steps surrounding the base of the column were finished as stonework (refer Appendix F - Production Photographs). This finish had to be painted over in blue at the completion of Romeo's pass so as not to interfere with Tybalt's image as he moved between the steps and the camera in the subsequent pass.

The Japanese B/G appears just as incongruously as the Samurai himself, and disappears even more incongruously by being physically pulled out of the top of the frame to reveal the original Verona B/G.

SOUND & MUSIC:

A point of note here is the discrepancy between the movement of the swords and the sounds they make. As Romeo cuts and thrusts, his sword never makes contact with Tybalt's, yet we are aware of the sound of a normal swordfight - with similar swords. There was no attempt to synchronise the swords' sounds with their movements - to do so would have been impossible, given the vastly different sword shapes and swings and the resultant vague nature of any possible

points of contact. The point to be noted is that whilst the sound is certainly relevant to the ambience and intent of the swordfight scene, its detail and accuracy is not. In contrast, much of the Foley work - particularly in the Challenge part of the scene where Romeo appears in the suit of armour - is, whilst cartoony, extremely accurate.

Musically the entire scene has been composed to be consistent with, and merge into each of the visual images - the medieval challenge, the Hollywood swashbuckling epic, the Samurai's Japanese accompaniment.

ACT 3 SCENE 17

Act 3 Scene 17:	
T/C (TV):	**00:43:31:10**
T/C (Stage):	*00:38:22:17*
Set:	Juliet's Chamber
Characters:	ROMEO; JULIET (Corpse)
Props:	Pistol, Petrol Can, Rope
FX:	Guts, Flames
Synopsis:	

Romeo bursts through Juliet's door; arrives at her 'corpse' - touches her face - recoils; turns; decides; Slashes Wrists; Guts; Pistol; Fire; Hanging - Romeo swings...

GENERAL:

This scene brings Romeo back to Juliet's chamber after having been informed by the Nurse, via the Koalaphone, that Juliet is (apparently) dead. Romeo bursts through the repaired door, remaking the hole left by the Nurse's rapid exit in Act 3 Scene 8 (**T/C 00:43:31:05**), and arrives at Juliet's 'corpse'. Believing her to be dead, he decides to commit suicide and subsequently kills himself by various means, culminating in hanging himself.

Upon Romeo's arrival in Juliet's chamber, the scene takes on a very serious and dramatic tone - dissolving into a dark and ominous mood as Romeo decides his fate. Once he begins the work of performing his various suicides, the tone changes quite quickly back into a highly cartoon mode.

STAGE TO SCREEN REWORKING:

This scene presented the greatest number and variety of instances, within the shortest possible time span, of the 'mime prop vs. real prop' dilemma. Whilst the stage version provided no such dilemmas, for television the question of which aspects of the suicides should be mime and which 'real' demanded detailed examination and resolution,

with the final artistic decision being a compromise between, and utilisation of, the two. In choreographic terms little intentionally changed, however the impact of props and special effects altered aspects of the choreography by default - some of the detail of which became apparent only on the day of shooting the scene.

Romeo's bursting in through the door of the house of Capulet, rather than appearing immediately in Juliet's chamber, enhanced his sense of determination whilst also providing a brief but very cartoon image in juxtaposition to the dramatic part of the scene to immediately follow. Once Romeo arrives in Juliet's chamber, as in *Son of Romeo,* he is brought to an abrupt halt (stopped dead in his tracks as it were) at seeing Juliet's 'corpse' - the significant difference being that Romeo's touch of Juliet's face needed to be much more precise in **SON OF ROMEO**, because of the visible physical contact between the two.

Unusual in a blue-screen production, and in what would generally be a quite 'theatrical' device, the decision was made to alter the lighting as Romeo's mood darkened and he turned away from Juliet. Blue-screen lighting tends not to be altered due to the necessity to maintain continuity of lighting intensity and direction with that depicted in the B/G however in this case the B/G was changing and this allowed the lighting cross fade.

The various forms of suicide - slashing wrists, hara-kiri, shooting, self-immolation and hanging, whilst choreographically already in the cartoon style of *Son of Romeo*, all had to be depicted in the visual cartoon style as well, hence this scene provided some unique resolutions to the artistic problems and requirements of more visual information, some of which work better than others, but all of which demanded a great deal of discussion, planning, forethought, adjustment on the day, and input in post-production weeks later.

The wrist-slashing and hara-kiri presented the problem of a real dagger - would Romeo have to wear it throughout all of the scenes? What kind of depiction of 'blood-and-guts' would be required to look

convincing? Would it be practical? Would we need complex and expensive prosthetics to be made? Would it still look 'cartoony'? The resolution of the problem was to mime the dagger in the shoot, but to later depict it in post-production as a brief animated glint along the blade - giving the audience a hint of the dagger's size, type and substance, whilst freeing the production and the performance from the practical problems of the real prop. The resulting slashed and bleeding wrists were depicted (as in the stage version) by the hands stretching and relaxing in the rhythm of a human pulse, suggesting the spurting of blood, rather than depicting the reality of it. More significantly, this established the convention, for the scene, that, as in cartoon reality, real blood was not seen as a result of the act of slashing, stabbing or other self-inflicted acts of violence.

Whilst this convention was very useful, it did not quite satisfy the hara-kiri part of the scene, which is, significantly, the moment which turns the scene from high drama, instantly into high comedy. On stage, the moment of the guts-spilling releases the built up tension in the audience and they are instantly back in the mode of cartoon comedy - to ensure that the moment retained this pivotal role in the television version, there needed to be more of a concession to both the cartoon style and the television medium. 'Real' blood-and-guts would be too naturalistic, no blood-and-guts would be too mime/theatrical, so the compromise reached was a post-produced animated effect which would provide the sense of blood-and-guts, without the naturalistic mess, and place the moment well within the cartoon style - in a similar vein to the cartoon 'SPLAT!' established earlier in the piece. The resultant visual 'BLAH!', matching the vocal one, and animated toward camera to fill the screen, not only had (to a reasonable extent) the desired cartoon effect, but also provided a convenient wipe which enabled a cut to a closer shot for the next part of the scene.

In contrast to the dagger, the pistol shot to the head depicts a real pistol, yet does not show the detailed result of pulling the trigger - only the physical reaction of the head and body to the impact. Once again the prospect of prosthetics was not feasible, therefore this presented a similar problem, yet quite different kind of compromise

between real and mime prop. In addition, for editing purposes, the impact of the 'bullet' had to throw Romeo's body completely and cleanly out of frame to enable him to reappear in frame within an improbably short time holding the can of petrol, for which a similar solution was chosen - we see the petrol can being tipped up, but no petrol pours out of it, yet the connection must be made for the audience, by Romeo's physical reaction, that there is in fact petrol pouring out of the can and all over his body.

The reverse was utilised for the match with which Romeo lights the petrol - where the matchbox and the match are both mimed, however unlike the dagger used earlier where the object itself is a post production effect, in this case the result of the object's use is a post-production effect by way of the flames which engulf Romeo. Also, unlike the animated BLAH! used earlier, the flames are not animated as such, they were shot in the normal way in the studio, against black, then superimposed over Romeo - the result being a more 'naturalistic' than animated cartoon element.

Finally, Romeo's pulling of the unseen rope from off-screen in **SON OF ROMEO** reflects exactly his similar actions in pulling the rope from off-stage in *Son of Romeo* - the timing being precisely the same. However, the cartoon comedy created on stage by the super fast action of winding the rope around his neck, could simply not be reproduced using a real rope on television - therefore the rather odd compromise struck was that the winding of the rope around the neck would be done in mime, whilst the final pull up to tighten the noose would be done with a real rope. Despite the edit between knee length (¾) shot with mime rope, and MCU with real rope, partially distracting from the strange mix of images, the result is not the most satisfying moment of the work, however we relied on the fact that the scene itself, together with the images within it, up to this point had been getting increasingly bizarre and as a result the audience would, by this stage, probably accept almost any image - no matter how improbable.

Therefore, within the space of less than two (2) minutes of screen time, the following transitions and compromises had to be made in

such a way as to be consistent with and acceptable to the cartoon style of the work, acceptable to the medium of television, and convincing enough to be acceptable to the audience within the established internal reality of the work:

WEAPON TYPE:	RESOLVED AS:
mime dagger (wrist slash)	paintbox glint
mime dagger (hara-kiri)	animated special effect of result (BLAH!)
real pistol	no real or animated effect, just physicality of result
real petrol can	no real or animated effect, just physicality of result
mime match	naturalistic flames - superimposed
mime rope	mime rope/real noose

Some of the above resolutions of practical difficulties proved to be more successful than others - either technically or artistically - however each presented a particular combination of circumstances and images which had to be resolved in their own unique manner and style, and within the overall constraints of the production budget.

In resolving these difficulties, ultimately, the visual and stylistic requirements of the television cartoon, as opposed to any sense of the naturalistic, biased the decision-making to the cartoon/absurdist end of the spectrum. Once the 'serious' bits of the scene had been dealt with in a fairly naturalistic way, the cartoon would always re-emerge in situations of artistic conflict, to win the stylistic balance between the two. In keeping with the cartoon style, the results of the horrific injuries which Romeo experiences are not visible - we merely see the final successful result in his hanging, but undamaged body.

CHARACTERS:

ROMEO:

Romeo is distraught and panicking as he bursts into the house, and into Juliet's chamber. Upon discovering Juliet's apparently dead body he decides to commit suicide and does so by various means, finishing with his hanging himself.

JULIET (bogus corpse):
Juliet, for all intents and purposes of the scene, is dead.

PERFORMANCE:

ROMEO:
Romeo's burst through the door demanded the physicality of the impact of the door on Romeo's body, with, conversely, the impact of Romeo's body on the door being depicted in post-production by animation of the planks flying off. Within the void of the blue-screen studio, the point at which Romeo hit the door had to be particularly accurate for the purposes of matching his scale to the scale of the door in the B/G.

His arrival in Juliet's chamber was even more critical - his position in relation to Juliet had to match not only scale and eyelines, but the detail of Romeo's touch to Juliet's cheek demanded millimetre-fine accuracy in order to convincingly appear to make actual contact in the foreground of the shot. Of great assistance in this instance was the fact that the monitor could be positioned, out of frame, but in line with where Juliet's face would be, therefore Romeo's eyeline, looking more or less directly at the monitor, but at a shorter focal length to Juliet's position, did not create the problem it normally would have.

As in the stage version, by virtue of the non-verbal nature of the work, we 'see' Romeo's suicide decision being made, through the manner in which Romeo's body, face and eyes change from an attitude of defeat and despair to that of growing resolution and determination. His act of drawing his dagger shows us the means by which he will achieve his suicide, and is highly dramatic, in keeping with the circumstances. The paintbox glint depicting the dagger required that in performance

the mime dagger had to be held quite still in order that the animated glint in post-production would not have to be manipulated across the screen - the cost in time and facilities to match even a small move would have been wildly out of proportion with its screen time - thus demanding the performer to once more *'meet the less flexible demands of the machine'* (Davies, 1988, p.173). Upon Romeo spilling his guts, suddenly the comedy floodgate is opened and from that point onwards, the cartoon movement once again takes over and continues until the end of the scene.

The introduction of real props into the sequence altered both the timing and the perception of the mime performance - the petrol can had weight and substance and was therefore difficult to manipulate as rapidly as the stage 'piece of air'; the match, with its visible, post-produced television flame, was held up for an unnecessarily long time, as the audience no longer needed to work out what the illusion was; the rope created both performance and stylistic difficulties (refer 'Reworking' above).

SHOT SELECTION:

A low angle was used in order to create a 2-shot showing Juliet in the foreground with Romeo in the background standing over her. After Romeo touches Juliet's cheek and he recoils back, the shot changes, edited on Romeo's turn away, to a CU in order to see the detail of his decision-making process. Once again, the 'rules' of blue-screen shooting were broken by the camera zooming out on Romeo to encompass his chest and arms within the frame in order to show him reaching for his dagger and drawing it. This was enabled by the B/G initially fading down to black, and, once the zoom was completed, subsequently fading up an out-of-focus red light behind Romeo.

Once the suicide sequence begins, the choice of shot size is determined by the amount of Romeo's body necessarily in frame to fully depict his actions, props and consequences - for instance the pistol shot is shown in MCU to show the detail, and also that Romeo might fall out of the frame, only to appear back in the same frame in

the same sized shot holding the petrol can. The strike and throw of the match in MCU to show the detail, cuts to a FLS showing the flames engulfing his entire body.

The ¾ length shot which allows Romeo's rope-pulling actions to be clearly seen, cuts to an MCU to not only distract from the strangeness of the real rope suddenly appearing, but also to eliminate the need to laboriously fashion a noose, as well as hiding from view the attachment of the rope overhead. Romeo's hand falling from the rope down to his side provides the momentum for his body to begin swinging in the MCU which swinging then matches the swinging of his shadow in FLS, with which Juliet interacts in the following scene.

DESIGN:

The front of the house of Capulet with the broken (but temporarily repaired) front door, matches the same B/G for Act 3 Scene 8, where the Nurse bursts forth through it. As Romeo arrives in Juliet's chamber, the B/G of a section of Juliet's chamber wall remains until it fades to black as Romeo's mood changes and he decides to suicide. This fade to black enabled the camera to zoom (refer above) by negating the need to match a B/G or to retain its perspective relationship with Romeo in the F/G, hence enabling more flexibility than usual for a blue-screen situation.

Just prior to the suicide sequence beginning, a red light fades up, gradually filling the entire screen and remains the B/G for the remainder of the sequence - reinforcing the unreality of the scene.

SOUND & MUSIC:

The sound of metal on metal is crucial to the identification of the mime dagger as Romeo draws it, and then a musical sound effect highlights the glint of the dagger as it is held both before and after the first wrist slash. Throughout the suicide sequence sound often provides the linking clue between mimed prop and physical reality,

such as the wrist slash, the pistol shot, the petrol sloshing and the strike of the match. It also enhances the reality of the swinging rope by providing appropriate, rhythmic creaking noises. The musical accompaniment, which begins as an eerie and ominous presence as Romeo's despair is apparent, changes radically, at the point of guts-spilling, to a cartoony ragtime tune which increases in tempo and intensity to match the scene's increasing absurdity.

5.4   SUMMARY

5.4.1 PERFORMANCE:

From a performance point of view, the adaptation demanded some quite significant changes - not so much to the existing individual choreography, but in terms of substantial additions to existing choreography. The tendency of television to 'gobble up' time, to demand a greater richness and compression of moments into ever more brief snatches, required perhaps some 70% more material and/or characters to be created. In addition, the technical ability to overlay the characters, as discussed earlier (refer Interactivity - Section 5.3.6) required additional material to be choreographed not just for the new characters but also the existing ones, in order that in a two-shot both characters had business to do which related one character to the other.

There were also numerous times when conventions in the stage choreography simply did not function in the same way on screen and became either redundant by virtue of the additional visual information provided, or simply no longer worked due to differing timing demands of the medium. Paris's arrival in the MGA and operating the electric folding roof, whilst planned, choreographed, adapted from the stage choreography *(T/C 00:28:52:00)*, designed and shot, was made redundant by the fact that the audience could see the sports car and did not need the additional 'business' to define the type of car for clarity's sake - nor did we need a long and only mildly amusing moment which did not significantly advance the story or add depth to the character, and which slowed the pace for

television. As it happened technical/physical reasons demanded new business to be created with the red flower (**T/C 00:33:18:15**) which proved to be more amusing, added richness to the character and the moment, and overcame a problem at the same time.

Similarly Juliet's hair brushing on stage *(T/C 00:17:04:10)* was no longer applicable as a device to underline the definition of the character as her hair was, in **SON OF ROMEO**, of a very specific style and hence no longer compatible with the previous choreography of the hair brushing. The hair brushing had, at short notice, to be replaced by the mimed removal of earings (**T/C 00:21:06:10**), providing an equivalent effect - Juliet, after the ball, preparing for bed.

The increased use of props to suit the television audience and the altered television reality, presented particular performance challenges by virtue of the need to manipulate real props of weight and substance, rather than manipulating a 'piece of air' as a mimed prop - this additional weight and substance had a marked effect on timing of choreographed moves, at times rendering those choreographed moves impossible without significant amendment. Similarly, what at times was clever performance on stage was disguised by the surrounding environment provided by television, such as the (physical) slow motion run through the field of yellow flowers (**T/C 00:07:39:00**), yet other times, such as Juliet's suicide spiral into the floor (**T/C 00:48:26:00**), that same physical slow motion was enhanced by the ability to mix through other images - enabling a certain surreal quality to be projected to the audience.

Of crucial significance throughout, as discussed elsewhere in this study (Section 5.3.7), were the 'eyelines' of the respective characters - particularly instances in which they shared the frame, however the single most challenging aspect of the performance was the precision of placement demanded by the combination of fixed cameras, and characters interacting directly within the small frame. This 'hitting the mark', both spatially and temporally, within the context of presenting a credible character performance of not one, but (at least) two characters in the same frame, proved on numerous occasions to

be a case of the artistic giving way to the technical in order for the performer '*to meet the less flexible demands of the machine*' (Davies, 1988, p.173) and/or the 'first pass'. The implications of these technical demands were such as to require 'over-preparation' in performance/rehearsal terms such that the technical devices which would provide the precision, did not contaminate the performance. This lack of spontaneity in performance was a direct function of the highly technical environment and in bold contrast to the stage.

The technology thus demanded not only a different overall conceptual approach, but also a different detailed approach to the minutiae of the content and performance, rendering the process an increasingly 'cerebral', rather than 'sensible' one.

5.4.2 DESIGN:

As my training and experience in both mime, and design for television, had inspired **SON OF ROMEO**, it was inevitably both a performance and design-based adaptation - the influence of each over the other was inescapable. There were instances where the choreography required the design to suit, and equally, instances where the design required the choreography to suit, and each had to be minutely planned, designed and choreographed in order that the two did not conflict.

In addition to the mix of performance and design, the mix of real 3-dimensional Sets with 2-dimensional cartoon B/G's, added another element of complexity which required a careful and deliberate blending of styles and treatments in order that all the design elements belonged to the same visual cartoon environment.

STYLISED CARTOON GRAPHIC BACKGROUNDS:
These are, as discussed elsewhere, based on animated cartoon B/G's (refer Appendix F - Background (B/G) Artwork), and hence the choice of an artist with experience in animated cartoons was a crucial factor

to the entire style of the work. Nick Stathopoulos had had a great deal of experience in painting B/G's for animated cartoons and hence his work was particularly appropriate - not only for the painting of the B/G's but also contributing to the lengthy and detailed philosophical discussions which were part of the evolutionary process of the work from the stage.

As Stathopoulos (1996) himself states, the B/G's had to perform many functions:

a:	*To preserve the charm and vitality of Willems' original live mime show on tv.*

b:	*To create the world in which his range of characters could interact.*

c:	*To create a "Grecian Chorus" with the background so that they reflected, enhanced, but never dominated Chris's mime.*

Thus the challenge was to create a visual environment which was consistent with not only my own preconceptions as the originating artist, but also, the evolving collective artistic conception of the work as its planning progressed.

REAL SETS:

Whilst not great in number due to the use of painted graphic B/G's, 3-dimensional Sets (refer Appendix D - Construction Drawings and Appendix F - Production Photographs) played an important role not only in adding to the visual environment, but also providing foreground pieces, levels off the ground, and the occasional 'naturalistic' element which assisted in providing a link between the 3D performer and the 2D cartoon environment. On rare occasions the use of a 3D Set permitted the camera to move as it might in a normal television production, thereby allowing a greater degree of movement for the performer, as well as a little more flexibility for the director(s). This is particularly evident in Act 2 Scene 7 - where Juliet emerges from her chamber on to the balcony (**T/C 00:21:26:00**) and the camera tracks back in one continuous move to follow her from her position at the window, through the french doors, and out to the balcony. However most of the Set pieces were less elaborate than this particular one, and provided only a hint of 3-dimensionality combining with a 2-dimensional graphic.

COMBINATION OF SET/GRAPHIC:

Whilst providing a strongly 3D Set, the Juliet Balcony Set also provides a good illustration of this 3D/2D combination, where, once the tracking shot had been completed, the styrofoam overlay which provided 'stone' texture (refer Appendix D - Construction Drawings and Appendix F - Production Photographs) was removed from around the archway of the french doors to reveal a 'blue' flat which would then allow a graphic image to be keyed into - thus the Set served both 3D and 2D purposes.

However Paris's various cars provide the clearest example of the combination of 3D/2D, where the only 3D components of the cars were the opening door, driver's seat and steering wheel - the rest being provided by an overlaid graphic which not only gave the car visual style, shape and definition, but also served to disguise the framework and mechanisms which allowed the doors to be suspended and opened (refer Appendix D - Construction Drawings and Appendix F - Production Photographs).

The precise blend of 3D/2D was determined by, and resulted from, both detailed analysis of the choreography of **Son of Romeo**, and the discussions which took place during the storyboarding process. Each moment had to be examined in infinitesimal detail and, through a combination of performance choreography, graphic style, Set possibilities, camera movement/static shot and budgetary constraints, the degrees of 'combinability' of all the technically possible elements had to be determined within the overall cartoon style.

PROPS:

Similarly, 3D props presented another source of detailed analysis and determination as to just how much 3-dimensionality was required. The decisions of when to use mimed and when to use real props created an enormous number of artistic challenges during the course

of planning the adaptation. What should be real, what should be mimed, and to what degree would it be possible to combine the two?

In 'normal' speaking acting, a prop obviously has an effect on the physicality and movement of the character - one has to not only deal with the prop physically, but endow it - make it live and become part of the character's everyday existence and appear to be comfortably so. In a work as stylised as **SON OF ROMEO**, any effect a prop might normally have on performance is magnified enormously. Whilst in conventional performance one is able to modify the detail in a fairly subtle way to incorporate the prop into the flow and meaning of that performance, in this more stylised context the prop has a much greater effect on the physicality and timing of the performance. Once one starts to significantly adjust one's performance timing merely to incorporate a prop, then one begins to alter the very meaning of the movement. The cartoon nature of **SON OF ROMEO** demanded a degree of visual stylisation consistent with the surrounding environment - painted B/G's etc - without taking over the physicality or conflicting with the highly stylised nature of the performance.

Why use props at all then? If the work is so stylised, why then just not take the stylisation to the limit and make the work totally in mime? Once more we come back to the fact that the work was not, and was not intended to be, a filmed stage performance - it was an adaptation to a different medium which demanded a treatment consistent with that medium and the demands and (at least some of) the expectations of the audience of that medium. There were certain advantages to using props in certain instances, and equally there were disadvantages in others. Props could provide additional visual information for the audience, clarifying the meaning, reducing the ambiguity of interpretation and, in some instances, enhancing the movement of the character.

The disadvantages proved to be the determining factor in many cases - what to do with the prop once it had been used - a problem overcome by an un-civic-minded Tybalt simply by throwing it away (Newspaper, Glove). More difficult were the instances where both Romeo and Juliet had to stab themselves - to use real daggers would

have demanded expensive and complex prosthetics, special-effects and would have been inconsistent with the cartoon style - the resulting blood being too 'realistic' for a cartoon. Similarly, where some props could enhance the movement and shape of some characters, (such as with Romeo's light, whippy, rapier and Tybalt's bulky broadsword), they could equally be detrimental to the movement of others (the Samurai's sword, Romeo's Shadow saxophone) - the weight and substance of the prop adversely affecting the ability to make a super-fast, cartoon move.

As may be discerned from the comparative props list (refer Appendix E), **SON OF ROMEO** saw an overwhelming increase in the number of 'real' props over *Son of Romeo* - as well as a general replacement of *Son of Romeo*'s mimed props with real props. A perhaps more interesting observation is that in the few instances where a mimed prop has been utilised in **SON OF ROMEO**, the visual reality for the audience has been created electronically in post-production - Mercutio's flipping coin, Romeo's dagger-glint and, perhaps most interestingly, the rope with which Romeo hangs himself.

Of all the artistic decisions over props, the rope with which Romeo hangs himself proved to be the most difficult to resolve (refer detailed analysis, Section 5.3.9 - Act 3 Scene 17, above) . Romeo needed to be able to twirl the rope around his neck in a fast and frenzied cartoon movement, yet end up with a functional noose neatly tied around his neck - both as a foreground reality, and later as background swinging shadow for Juliet to discover as she woke. Whilst the resolution of this moment is one of the least satisfying of the piece, it proved to be the only realistic solution - part of the artistic rationalisation being that the character of Romeo and his actions by that time had become so bizarre that the audience would accept almost any kind of reality which was thrown at them.

This small but far from insignificant moment, perfectly illustrates the kinds of artistic dilemmas one faces in mixing art forms, media and styles - one has, at times, to force one set of conventions upon another, and simultaneously, test one's assumptions of audience response and interpretation to a much greater extent.

COSTUMES:

The main purpose of utilising more elaborate costumes in **SON OF ROMEO** was, as solo performance, to assist in the identification of the increased numbers of characters, together with the additional benefit of providing the capacity to 'colour-code' the rival families for clarity (Capulets in tones of red, and Montagues in tones of green) - much as in *West Side Story*. Bold, almost primary colours, gave a strong identification of each character and suited the bold blocks of colour generally used for television cartoon characters.

Costume was also carefully designed to enhance the female shape of Juliet, and to emphasise the respective physicality of the characters - Tybalt for instance wears no shirt, revealing his musculature, his trousers are too short, revealing Doc Martin style boots, and he wears a tattoo ('Muvver') - all of which work together to enhance his thug-like qualities. The most significant challenge in the costume design was the requirement that the costumes were to enhance the physicality of the characters, not camouflage it - thus for the main characters the costumes are generally fairly close-fitting.

5.4.3 SOUND:

MUSIC:

The greatest enemy of television is silence - the theatre thrives on silence, using it to great effect to build tension and expectation - television, by contrast, has traditionally been a medium of incessant sound. The prospect of mime on television is not an attractive one to the television industry, hence **SON OF ROMEO** features a continuous music soundtrack.

Much as television cartoons feature continuous music for both background and specific effect, similarly, composer/musical director, Stuart Day (1996), found that the '*biggest challenge was the compositional one deriving from the decision to "Mickey Mouse" it (i.e. every second of action on the screen to be marked or commented upon by the music)*'. Thus whilst the stage version was punctuated

here and there by approximately 5-6 minutes of music in total, the television version required music for the full 53 minutes - the total duration of the visuals - not only for continuity of sound, but also to point various bits of action and visual gags. Thus the music provided both background and musical sound effects which, together with the vocal, cartoon, and electronic sound effects, provided texture, accents and punctuation for the physical actions and interactions of the characters.

VOCAL SOUND EFFECTS:

A departure from tradition for the stage version was the use of vocal sound effects - the show was, after all, described as mime, which is traditionally both wordless and soundless, however *Son of Romeo* includes both words and vocal sound effects as, and when, appropriate. For example, vocal sound effects were put to particularly good effect in instances such as Juliet opening her french doors to step out on to the balcony - the creaking sound of the french doors *(T/C 00:17:36:10)* having an upward, enquiring inflection, matching Juliet's enquiring look, body attitude and approach to the sound of Romeo below.

The decision to utilise these vocal effects for **SON OF ROMEO** was taken with the original expectation that they would be just as appropriate as they were in *Son of Romeo*. In the event however, they proved to be too 'human' in their sound within their visual cartoon context, and had generally to be enhanced electronically to match both the electronically achieved visual richness, together with the electronically enhanced cartoon sound effects. The above example of the opening french doors is a case in point, where in **SON OF ROMEO (T/C 00:21:50:00)** the vocal was electronically manipulated and enhanced.

CARTOON SOUND EFFECTS:

In the true spirit of the television cartoon, **SON OF ROMEO** is peppered with 'hoits-boings' and many other, similarly oddly described sound effects which add not only to the cartoon feel of the piece, but contribute much to its subliminal aural texture. The majority of these cartoon sound effects were drawn from

commercially available and specialist cartoon Sound Effects recordings, and were at times also electronically sampled, manipulated and enhanced to better suit the requirements of particular moments within the hybrid style of **SON OF ROMEO**.

FOLEY:

An unexpected (and unbudgeted) audio requirement, was the Foley component - it was also one which proved to be surprisingly creative and provided an element of flexibility and spontaneity which the technical nature of the production had not generally permitted up to that point. Foley recording is simply the creation of live sound effects to match the pictures on screen. The sound of footsteps, for instance, is added to the soundtrack by the Foley artist, walking on a microphoned, resonant floor, guided by both the pictures and the time code, to match the timing of the footsteps as they appear on the screen.

Somewhat surprisingly, the means by which these sounds are created in the Foley studio, does not necessarily bear any relation to how they are created in reality, and this is where one was able to indulge in some spontaneous creativity. Whilst in the example cited above of footsteps, one might wear shoes as normal, one is able to exercise greater control of timing and inflection wearing the shoes - particularly high heeled shoes - on one's hands rather than one's feet. Thus solutions to particular audio problems, such as the creaking of Romeo's swinging rope (**T/C 00:46:30:00**) , were provided rather laterally - in this case by manipulating a canvas and timber deck chair, which, in addition to producing a clean, consistent creaking sound, could be better controlled and manipulated to produce variations in pitch which matched the rope as it swung through its pendulous arc.

Thus, for a wordless, silent art form, the audio component of the adaptation proved to be almost as complex as the visual component - requiring a number of layers of sound - some of which were more naturalistic than others, but all of which contributed to the richness and texture of the work, and which were subject to many of the same artistic conflicts as the visual and performance aspects - mainly the

need to reconcile the 'naturalism' of aspects of the human characters, blended with the need to portray the appropriate degree of 'cartooniness' consistent with the visual cartoon style.

5.4.4 STYLE - THE ARTISTIC LANGUAGE:

It is my firm belief, based on experience, that in performance, there is no such thing as naturalism, merely 'degrees of stylisation'. It is these degrees of stylisation which one must explore and determine what degree of stylisation is artistically appropriate for a particular moment within the degree of stylisation of the work as a whole. Where does one draw the line? How much does one merely parody Shakespeare and how much does one retain of the original? Where is the point at which reverence to the text becomes an insurmountable hurdle? Where do the traditions and expectations of mime become a distraction to the work's evolving, emerging and unique 'artistic language' and the audience's perception of that language? Does the cartoon provide all the answers to all the problems which require solution before one is able to proceed further, or does it also provide conflict?

As is normally the case with artistic decisions, one has to trust one's artistic instincts and apply what 'feels right at the time' in the context of how the particular moment sits within the overall evolution and flow of the piece and how that piece is progressing artistically - there are no hard and fast rules other than to rely on one's own artistic judgement. It is possible, but unsatisfying, for both artist and audience, for the work to jump between styles merely for the sake of it - one has to find the artistic solutions and devices which blend the contrasting and conflicting styles and demands and thereby construct a stylistically coherent whole. Once one has found the practical solution to the immediate artistic conflict, it remains the task of the artist to then turn that practical solution of the problem into art. Turning solutions to 'practical problems' into 'art', as discussed elsewhere in this study (Section 7.4), defines the successful artist - the ability to turn the solution to a practical problem into more than just a practical solution, to transform that practical solution into

something which is not only just aesthetically acceptable, but something which is artistically outstanding. In other words, one must discover, or create and develop, the particular artistic language required by the conflicting demands of the particular work, and which will make that work unique. An artistic language providing an internal logic and consistency which, once established for, and accepted by the audience, will 'take them on the journey' - preferably the same journey as the artist, and the artist's intentions - no matter how unusual or outrageous those intentions might be.

SON OF ROMEO's artistic language was developed out of an amalgam of mime, puppetry, music, Shakespearean traditions, television cartoons, 2-dimensional design, 3-dimensional design, high-tech television wizardry, digital technology, degrees of stylisation from tragedy and quasi-naturalism to high farce and slapstick. The bringing together of all these elements into a cohesive and consistent whole, determined and created the artistic language appropriate, and unique, to the piece.

So what is this language then? Is it able to be defined or quantified or replicated? Unlikely, as this unique artistic language represents the style of that particular artist doing that particular work, within that particular set of circumstances at that particular time - another project which might utilise similar elements is unlikely to display precisely the same artistic language simply by virtue of a different artist's vision and execution of the work - and however that language is constituted - whether it is verbal or takes some other form - it requires its own grammar, syntax and punctuation and is the language through which that particular artist speaks to the audience. The object of the speaking is not the language itself, but what that language is conveying to the audience in its own unique way, which is the most important.

> *I do believe if you are ever conscious of the beauty of the language, rather than the cogency of the thought, Shakespeare has been defeated. The whole point about any language, is that if in fact it is used correctly and is fitting the thought which is being expressed, you should never be aware of the medium*

through which it's being expressed - you should be only aware of the fact that such thoughts are inexpressible in any other way - that they are in fact unparaphrasable, that that's what Shakespeare was saying, and there's no other way of saying it...you should simply be aware that there is a totally integrated feeling of appositeness, that that's the way it has to be if that's what you're talking about (Miller, J., 1981/95)

6.   RESPONSES & DISCUSSION:

6.1   MEDIA

Media responses to the television adaptation (refer Appendix K) were somewhat mixed but generally positive overall - if a little uncertain as to what to make of it. Whilst some television columnists appeared to have difficulty in coming to terms with the non-naturalistic style, and particularly the cartoon characters (refer 'The Age', Appendix K), others seemed prepared to look beyond an expectation of *'kitchen-sink naturalism'* (Jasek 1996) and analyse the piece as *'an unlikely combination of art and technology',* considering that combination, in this case, to be *'one which works superbly'* (Polglaze, 1990).

The unusual, non-verbal Shakespeare, human/cartoon nature of the work was a feature which attracted much media attention and comment, with inevitable comparisons of style being made between **SON OF ROMEO** and the film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* - with its mix of cartoon/human performance - which was coincidentally released close to the same time. Even though in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* the single human performer interacts with various cartoon characters, speaking dialogue within a 3-dimensional environment, while in **SON OF ROMEO** the single human performer plays all human characters within a non-verbal, 2-dimensional cartoon environment, comparisons (despite wildly incomparable budgets) were inevitable, and with some justification. Much cartoon physicality and humour was utilised in both productions and the influence, both direct and indirect, of the television cartoon was certainly evident in both to varying degrees.

6.2   KEY PARTICIPATING ARTISTS

From the responses to Questionnaires forming part of this study (refer Appendix J), sent to the key participating artist on the project - co-director Richard Jasek, designer Nick Stathopoulos, costume designer Chris Wood and composer Stuart Day - the common thread running through their approaches at the time, and their assessments

after the event, is that the unusual nature of the project is what attracted them to it in the first instance - what Richard Jasek (1996) describes as a *'blessed freedom from kitchen-sink naturalism altogether unique for Australian T.V.'*

And whilst **SON OF ROMEO** presented enormous artistic, logistical and technical challenges to all those artists, it also represented a unique experience for all who were involved in its realisation. In the questionnaires, as well as in various informal discussions since the program was made, what has been revealed is that, even with the benefit of hindsight, very little would have been done differently to the way it was done at the time. There are certainly moments to which one might make minor adjustments, however the overwhelming sense is that, as designer and B/G artist Nick Stathopoulos (1996) observes of his own involvement, *'I always believe you make the right decisions at the time, and - at the time - what I produced seemed right. We took the mediums (mime, art, music, tv) as far as we could with the time and money we had'.*

In the context of **SON OF ROMEO**, where no precedent existed, and there where hence no artistic rules to follow, each of us, in our various artistic roles, had to trust our own artistic instincts, whatever challenges the technical demands and peculiarities that the piece might present. Ultimately, this is no different to any artistic situation - every artist must trust their own creative sense and resolve the difficulties of the particular work through the particular medium in the most appropriate manner at the time and under the particular circumstances of the time - the difference lies only in the degree of difficulty which the technological challenges might present.

6.3   BROADCASTER (SBS TELEVISION) & PUBLIC

Art works are a product of their time and the prevailing climate and circumstances in which those works are created and exist. The fact that **SON OF ROMEO** was made at all bears testament to this - had the program been proposed even now, just a few years later, it is unlikely that it would see the light of day due to the changed

circumstances of funding and investment, and broadcast policies. The combination of circumstances, which up until the time the program went ahead, had conspired to thwart the production, evolved over several years of adversity to eventually bring together a set of circumstances - political, financial, artistic, geographical, technical, and personnel - which not only enabled the work to proceed, but which eventually produced a program which was far superior, artistically and technically, to what it would have been if it had been produced when, and by whom, initially proposed.

The one circumstance which finally set this complex and delicate process in motion was a meeting with that rarest of types - an imaginative television executive who was prepared to take a very significant risk on a very risky and comparatively expensive proposal. Like the key participating artists cited above, Ian Hamilton, then Head of Production of SBS Television, was, as may be determined from his response to the questionnaire (refer Appendix J), also attracted by the unusual nature of the project. Whilst recognising the limited commercial appeal of the piece, SBS were in a position to invest in a project which would not only *'extend the technical boundaries of the medium',* but which would also present *'a constructive challenge technically and artistically...by taking a concept designed for theatre (twice - Shakespeare & Willems) and using what Television can do and theatre can't, to create a new work'* (Hamilton 1996). From Ian Hamilton's response to the program, it would appear that the broadcaster's expectations were met, stating that he was *'delighted at the quality of performance and visual standards achieved'* (Hamilton 1996). Another, European broadcaster, Österreichischer Rundfunk (Austrian Broadcasting Corporation), which purchased and broadcast the program in 1993, also responded to the work in an unsolicited letter (3 February 1993), commenting on the program's quality, both artistic and technical - that it was *'exceptionally well done - from all points of view...simply fantastic'.*

Thus one has to say, from the available information, that from a broadcaster's point of view the program was certainly successful. The fact that it was a finalist in competition in various international festivals, winning a number of awards, and being selected for inclusion in the permanent collection of the Museum of Television

and Radio in New York - established *'to preserve...distinguished programs'* (1991) - indicates another significant area of appreciation of the program's artistic and technical achievements, despite the fact that it is not a work of commercial success.

Given that the program is a one-off special as distinct from an ongoing series, it is difficult to gauge the public's response, however one indication may be gleaned from a comment to SBS Television viewer feedback program '*Hotline*' a week or two after its 15 February 1990 broadcast, which stated that, *'one program you did like was 'Son of Romeo' - quote, 'SBS should be congratulated for showing this absolutely brilliant production'* ('Hotline', SBS Television).

7.   CONCLUSION:

7.1   LEAVING SHAKESPEARE BEHIND

One of the most interesting things to become apparent to me in this analysis of the adaptation from stage to screen, is the realisation that, having worked out in the stage version what the essence of *Romeo & Juliet* was - picking the bones out of each scene such as the Ball; Balcony; Suicides etc, once I began thinking about the television version, I did not go back to Shakespeare to fill in the additional material which was necessary to flesh out the television version - this decision was, I believe, partly conscious and partly unconscious.

When one views a work such as *Romeo & Juliet,* one draws upon one's experience and the sense of the work developed and evolved through that experience - be it intellectual (from an academic study of the details and structure of the work), or aesthetic/emotional experience (from allowing the work to wash over one in various performed productions) - or a combination of the two to varying degrees. In addition to which, one's personal perceptions fashioned by who we are as individuals - that *'what you know, what you think, what you imagine, what you anticipate, have an irreversible effect on what you experience...that's what perception is like'* (Miller, J., 1995). This experience, in the context of our particular cultural consciousness of Shakespeare generally, and this, probably his best known work, combine to evoke an overall sense of the shape, texture and flow of both the work as a whole, and the characters within that work as they pass through the story. This sense of the work which we individually possess - even without being fully cognisant of many of the details - provides a shape, even a blurred one, which is sufficient to recreate that same sense in a different form of presentation. Thus, whatever the mode of presentation and interpretation, there is sufficient sense and rhythm retained of the original to strike a chord of recognition within the beholder. Not unlike observing a cityscape or landscape through squinted eyes - we cannot necessarily pick out the detail, but we recognise, in the broad sweep of the view, enough icons such as to confirm that what we are observing is indeed within our range of

experience, and recognisable as belonging to a particular experience. As Jorgens observes,

> *Because the artist has chosen to work with Shakespeare and knows the audience will come to this new work with knowledge of the earlier one, there must be important points of contact between Shakespeare's vision and their own, some resonance when the two works are juxtaposed, lest adaptation become travesty.* (Jorgens, 1977, p.15)

However, as an artist, one has a licence to play with the original, to shuffle the icons as it were, as long as enough of these icons still exist strongly enough within the work and still relate to one another in a recognisable way, we can, by maintaining the overall sense of shape and rhythm of the original work, if not 'get away with murder', then certainly invite the beholder into this new world without the fear of them becoming totally lost for lack of recognisable signs. If they squint their interpretive eyes they will still see the shape which they recognise to be the shape of Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet.*

In terms of research then, in initially developing the stage version, I limited myself to re-reading *Romeo & Juliet* to clarify details in my own mind of significant plot milestones and details of characters and their relationships, and determine which of these 'icons' could successfully be translated to a movement or visual, rather than written or spoken, vocabulary. I made a conscious and deliberate decision, for both stage and screen versions, **not** to watch filmed versions of *Romeo & Juliet*, entrusting instead much of the interpretation to my subconscious 'sense' of the shape of the work drawn from viewings of several productions over many years of *Romeo & Juliet* on the stage, as well as one viewing, a decade or more before, of Franco Zeffirelli's film version. In fact it was not until I was 'scripting' **SON OF ROMEO** for television, that my script editor reminded me that *West Side Story* was in fact a contemporary version of *Romeo & Juliet* - and just as *West Side Story* contains sufficient icons, in its contemporary setting, to be recognised as a thinly disguised *Romeo & Juliet*, so too does **Son of Romeo** on the stage and **SON OF ROMEO** for television.

The decision to deliberately not study and research various interpretations of the work prior to launching into my own, was determined by the belief that I possessed enough of the sense of shape of *Romeo & Juliet*, and wished to bring other kinds of influences to bear on the work such as television cartoons and mime, that I did not wish these previous interpretations to overwhelm the particular combinations of elements I was intending to draw together. The other aspect of this was probably a certain amount of fear that if I looked into it too deeply, I would be overwhelmed by the enormity of the task of having to convey all those traditional cultural expectations which audiences and scholars bring to bear on their interpretation of any production of *Romeo & Juliet* - the strength of these cultural expectations being such that virtually all contemporary proscenium theatres are designed and constructed with their inevitable 'Juliet Balcony' - making manifest in concrete and steel, this play's powerful influence on traditional theatre culture.

Thus I relied on the overall, squint-eyed shape of the original work - these fleeting images of scenes and characters from stage and film productions etched in the subconscious. From this sense of the work, I selected those icons which were sufficiently recognisable to me, and would hopefully be similarly recognisable to an audience - even if they had not observed the same productions over the years as I personally had (it was very unlikely that they would have), and used those icons against a cartoon background, literally, to create the work. Now, through researching, reflecting upon and analysing these creative processes, I am astounded by the power of these images and influences and how they manifested themselves during, and became incorporated into the work. So, with the possible exception of the Nurse's character - re-examining her actions and relationships, given her increased involvement - essentially what I did was to look to other visual and filmic influences (e.g. *The Adventures of Robin Hood,* and *Bugs Bunny* cartoons etc) - things that were not Shakespeare, that were of a different 'visual language' than Shakespeare, and which utilised some of the television techniques which I intended to use myself. There was literally no point in going back because I was working in a different medium and in a broad-brushed cartoon idiom.

The realisation of just how much I had been deeply yet unconsciously influenced by what Davies describes as *'a knowledge of Shakespeare's language...based on inherited cultural tradition'* (1988, p.176), and which has manifested itself in the detail of **SON OF ROMEO** - the essentials of the plot, aspects of the characters, and the fundamental drama which is inherent in Shakespeare's work - explains why, whilst one might be able to rationalise at a later date the artistic decisions in adapting a work from stage to screen, one still has to trust one's instincts at the time and trust that this intrinsic cultural awareness of Shakespeare's drama will translate into whatever medium one chooses for it.

7.2   THE INDIVIDUAL ARTIST BECOMES THE ENSEMBLE

> *Many factors that are extrinsic to the medium also shape the creation of any film. Unlike most forms of literature, film is generally a co-operative art, requiring in its production the efforts of many. In addition, the materials of production are very expensive. As a result, economic forces have a greater importance in the making of a film than, say, in the writing of a poem. Financial supporters are rarely willing to take risks...because such risks threaten their profits. Subjects of limited appeal or of a volatile political or social nature will not easily obtain backing*
> (McDougal, 1985. p.5)

As may be discerned from the Timeline (refer Appendix H), there comes a moment when, in the context of a complex technical work such as **SON OF ROMEO**, the individual artist must involve other personnel, who, by virtue of their particular areas of expertise, are in a position to assist in facilitating the process of realising the original, individual artistic concept - be that expertise technical, artistic, or a combination of the two. In a highly technical medium such as blue-screen television, there is simply no escape from the fact that the individual artist is not capable of doing everything and must rely on additional input at some stage and to some degree. On the one hand this is little different to the theatrical context where, even for a solo show there is generally some backstage/technical crew, however

minimal, with the individual artist remaining central and very much in control of all aspects of the production. Television on the other hand, being inherently more technical in even its basic form, demands that more technical people are involved. The more technical people and equipment involved the more expensive the exercise becomes and, flowing from this, the organisational aspects have an increasingly important role to play, hence more administrative staff are required.

Given the vastly increased costs of developing and presenting television programs over theatre, the process involves yet another layer of outside involvement - the political/financial layer - where broadcast pre-sales must be negotiated, development and production funding secured, promotional work carried out, and marketing both domestically and internationally to be followed through and reported to investors who have a responsibility to invest judiciously, and to justify that investment.

Therefore, in broad terms, the stages of achieving the work (refer Timeline Appendix H), whilst merging and overlapping in a continuous process, may be arbitrarily broken down as follows:

STAGE 1 FEASIBILITY & INTEREST (Dec 84 - Feb 88)
Based on the success of the stage version, assessing the technical feasibility of the adaptation concept and developing the interest of potential broadcasters and investors, and following up that initial interest with applications for investment, presale and production involvement.

STAGE 2 SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT (April 88 - Jan 89)
Initial development funding achieved and invested in the concept to develop the basic stage work for television - involving the creation of additional characters and material and seeking potential key collaborative artists who would be interested in the work, possess the required technical and artistic expertise, and share the vision. Application for production funding based on success of development

process. Production funding approved 23 November 1988. Key artistic collaborators appointed.

At this point the **individual artist** begins to merge into an **ensemble** of personnel of which he is both leader, and integral member. This ensemble continues to grow to a total of more than sixty (60) artistic, technical and administrative personnel as the production progresses.

STAGE 3   PLANNING: TECHNICAL & ARTISTIC (Jan - April 89)
Choreographing and workshopping of new material and characters. Collaboration with key artistic personnel in developing detailed storyboards (refer sample page Appendix D - Production Storyboard) based on additionally developed choreography together with technical opportunities and constraints. Artwork, sets, costume, props, and technical requirements determined. B/G artwork painted, sets, costumes, props designed and made. Key technical staff appointed, together with preliminary assessment of various alternative technical facilities.

STAGE 4   FINAL DETAILED PLANNING (April - May 89)
Comprehensive shooting schedule compiled (refer sample page Appendix D - Production Schedule) containing detailed description of each camera set-up (in excess of 300) and its associated performance, direction, lighting, technical and design requirements. Technical staff selected, appointed and briefed. Technical facilities selected and tested.

STAGE 5   PRODUCTION & POST-PRODUCTION (May - October 89)
Six week studio shoot of performance, plus additional visual effects shooting and paintbox compositing. Offline and online editing completed, music composed and recorded, sound effects selected and recorded, Foley work recorded.

STAGE 6   PRESENTATION, BROADCAST & PROMOTION (Oct 89 -
            Feb 90)
Finished program presented to investors and broadcaster. Pre-broadcast screening to open *Traditions and Visions International Film*

Festival in Adelaide. Initial national television broadcast in prime time (7:30 pm) on SBS Television on 15 February 1990.

STAGE 7   MARKETING - DOMESTIC & INTERNATIONAL (Feb 90 - ongoing)

Entered in various international film and video festivals and markets, winning a number of awards. Follow up marketing, promotion both domestically and internationally. Selected for inclusion in the permanent collection of the Museum of Television and Radio in New York (1991) Sales to two European territories (1990 and 1993).

Thus what might begin as a simple artistic idea, very quickly becomes a highly complex, administrative, political, financial and technical exercise, with the individual artist somewhere in the middle, involved in all aspects by virtue of their central creative role, and at the same time in danger of being overrun by the rapidly exploding non-creative aspects of the work.

The precise stage at which the individual artist becomes 'the ensemble' is difficult to pinpoint, however it does emerge and it presents to the individual artist the dilemma of wishing to retain control of their own creative work, yet knowing that unless they hand over part of the responsibility, ownership and therefore control, the work will simply never see the light of day. A balance must therefore be struck between retaining absolute control, and delegating degrees of control to others whose input the artist is able to monitor and make adjustments where necessary to serve the original artistic vision. The skill in attaining this balance lies in finding the right person - the person who is, in the first instance, able to comprehend the individual artist's artistic vision, will share that artistic vision, and work to achieve that individual artistic vision in a co-operative way.

The individual artist must equally recognise that, even though they may retain overview control of the entire process, there may be instances when their artistic vision is forced to compromise, or that there is simply a better, if slightly different way of achieving the concrete manifestation of their artistic vision, and they must allow

the expertise of the particular collaborator to take precedence over their preconceived notion of how the work might proceed. This is a delicate balance to achieve and provides yet another distraction for the artist from their purely artistic task at hand, yet provided the appropriate artistic collaborators have been chosen and are all swimming in the same creative waters, there develops a level of trust in, and co-operation between all concerned, which short-cuts many laborious, conflicting, and time-wasting processes. However there will inevitably be mis-appointments, often administrative rather than artistic ones, which work to make an already difficult and complex process even more difficult and complex, and far from facilitating the work of the artist(s), actually increase it.

No matter what the nature of the creative collaboration, and whatever the distractions to the individual artist's work and vision, it is vital that the artist retains overall artistic control. With **SON OF ROMEO** the more than sixty (60) names on the final credit roll, illustrate the degree of involvement beyond just the central individual artist. Each of these people and/or organisations has their own perception of how the work is envisaged, how the production will proceed, and how the piece will finally emerge, and all of these individual perceptions and visions exert influence over the work to varying degrees. However, it remains the task of the originating individual artist to determine to what degree, if any, these other visions are incorporated into the work. These other visions and perceptions must ultimately all be filtered through the artist and their own vision of the work, and so it must be. Inevitably there comes a time when one individual has to take artistic responsibility for, and make the final artistic decision about, particular details as well as overall direction of the work, and the individual artist, as original creator, must be that person - perhaps on occasion overriding the artistic sensibilities and considered opinions of others.

In terms of the broad scope of the work the individual artist must not divest themselves of so much ownership of the work in the interests of the co-operative process, that they then fear 'pulling rank' from time to time. If the individual artist's vision ultimately proves to be incorrect or they make poor artistic judgements and

decisions along the way, then they must of course accept the responsibility and the consequences, however attempting to incorporate everyone else's vision at the expense of one's own, amounts to artistic suicide. A complex art work such as **SON OF ROMEO** could simply never have been achieved by a 'committee mentality'.

So at the point at which the individual artist becomes the ensemble, it is crucial that they remain focussed throughout on their own '*deep and original conception*' (Langer, 1942, p.259) of the work and, even if the original conception and vision evolves and changes during the process, the artist should not allow themselves to be distracted from their own overall artistic vision which created and drove the process in the first instance.

> *Even in as co-operative a venture as filmmaking, strong directors, writers, or producers can create works that reflect their own visions* (McDougal, 1985. p.6)

7.3   PRACTICAL CONSTRAINTS ON THE ART AND AESTHETIC

In working to achieve one's artistic goals - to satisfy oneself, to entertain the beholder and to develop the art form - the artist is invariably constrained by some kind of practical consideration - the size of the stage; the texture of the canvas; the number of pages in a book; the limits of photographic processes; the range of a musical instrument; the memory storage capacity of a computer; the optical scope of a lens; the hardness of marble; the timeslot allocated to a television program; the budget of a film. It is a very rare artist indeed who is able to truthfully claim to work entirely without practical constraints - as if in some kind of pool of a 'pure aesthetic'. As these practical considerations impact - consciously and unconsciously - upon the artwork and the artist's creative processes, they are instrumental in shaping not only the artwork in finished form, but also the artist's vision of the work as it progresses, or indeed at the time of conception.

Thus the artist is forced to confront the dilemma of desiring to express an inspiration - something purely emotional or sensory - whilst at the same time needing to give some recognisable form - for the sake of both the investor and the beholder - to that expression. Consequently, the artist needs to determine the balance between the purely aesthetic and the purely practical in order to communicate their art - to transcend the self-indulgent, transcend the practicalities of the everyday, and in doing so, transcend the conflict between these two contradictory and opposing forces in order to create an aesthetic whole. It is this duality which the artist must reconcile in order to create a meaningful aesthetic experience for both artist and beholder such that for both, '*the object is progressively distanced from practical concerns*' (Sheppard, 1987, p.69) - therein lies the skill of the artist.

> *Just as the reproduction of the species depends on the duality of the sexes..these two very different tendencies walk side by side...inciting one another to ever more powerful births, perpetuating the struggle of opposition only apparently bridged by the word 'art'* (Nietzsche, 1872/1992, p.14)

An important realisation emanating from the creation of this particular work and also the research several years after the event, is the fact that as the technological component increases, the practical aspects assume more significance and therefore the creation of the artistic work involves as much intellectual and organisational input as artistic input. So whilst Collingwood may indeed claim (Sheppard, 1987, p.24) that '*in true expression, the artist...cannot see the end result in advance*', I find myself in total disagreement. For a work such as **SON OF ROMEO**, not only does the artist have to know the final form in general terms, but has to be sufficiently conversant with the detail and mechanics of that form - in this case 'blue-screen' television - and its capabilities, before one can even begin to realistically plan, create and execute the work.

Indeed the process of securing investment to begin realising the artistic process demands of the artist the ability to articulate to potential investors not only the overall form and vision of the work, but also the detail of how that vision is technically going to be

achieved, and in addition, that the work will cost precisely this much, be precisely of this duration, and will be completed by and presented upon, this particular date.

7.4   IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON THE ARTISTIC/INTELLECTUAL CONTINUUM

In the case of **SON OF ROMEO**, the use of technology was not only the means to an end, but was a particularly significant feature of securing investment and presale - the unusual artistic/technical interaction of the work was an attribute which attracted the broadcaster (SBS) who invested in the work because it constituted '*a constructive challenge technically & artistically*' which would '*extend the technical boundaries of the medium*' (Hamilton, 1996). The innovative use of the available technology, together with the particular combination of creative elements, formed the justification for the investment in, and public funding of, the work. A commercially profitable return on investment was, in this instance, not the primary reason for investment - the innovation of concept and utilisation of the medium was considered to be a higher priority. Thus as artist one had to be conversant with, and be able to articulate to sometimes sceptical investors, not just the broad conceptual sweep of the work, but also many of the technical details, in order to convince those investors that the concept was not only workable, but that it would be successfully achieved using these particular techniques, in this particular combination.

Similarly, beyond the investment stage, the securing of the other collaborative artists for the project, and their subsequent involvement also required the ability to articulate the vision and the technical details prior to and during the execution of the work. The overriding technical nature of the piece demanded a particular type of collaborator, with a particular creative approach to, and collective consistency in, visualising, planning, detailing and executing the work.

This same highly technical nature of the adaptation, together with time and budgetary constraints, demanded a detail and thoroughness

of planning seldom required in other projects. The restrictions meant that in virtually every moment of every movement in every scene, in addition to the instinctive and artistic decision, a conscious, deliberate and collaborative decision had to be made regarding camera angles, size of shot, real or mimed props, Set and/or graphic, direction of light to match the painted B/G etc. As designer and B/G artist Nick Stathopoulos (1996) recalls, *'much time was spent agonizing over how far the tv effects should go',* and co-director Richard Jasek (1996) confirms, *'in this time our approach to everything, from the use of handprops, to choices of artwork imagery, was thrashed out. Extensive debates on (the) nature of mime and nature of TV were had, as performance needed to adjust sometimes to suit (the) new medium'.* As this planning became increasingly complex and minutely detailed, the 'room to move' creatively became increasingly restricted. As a result, the artistic freedom and spontaneity which one might normally enjoy on set, could only be indulged in in rehearsals and discussions prior to the storyboarding and scheduling stage. The studio shoot would, in general, simply not allow changes to be made on the day. As Jasek (1996) points out, *'one thing that our Blue Screen approach meant was that there was limited room to manoeuvre once a shot had been planned - a piece of artwork, once painted, has only a few shot's potential within itself and this in turn restricts the playing space...this is a major area of restriction for performance in a highly technological context, and meant that we could not easily change our minds on set if a better idea popped up'.* In the most fundamental terms, the camera could not move, the B/G could not change, so we had to work within those very tight constraints.

Hence this extraordinarily detailed planning demanded an equally detailed choreographic process, and once scenes, characters and movements were choreographed, it was virtually impossible to change that choreography - particularly in those scenes which involved physical interactions between characters, where matching the timing and position in frame was critical and one minor change might have implications setting in a motion a chain reaction which could potentially unravel the entire piece. This kind of restriction places such enormous practical and logistical demands on the artistic work and the artist, that the creative is in danger of being utterly overwhelmed by the

intellectual, the technical, the logistical and the organisational. That the artistic work becomes so far removed from the aesthetic that the work ceases to be a human work of art and becomes instead an exercise in robotic, technical efficiency.

There were occasionally however, choreographic changes made in the studio on the day, due mostly to unexpected practical challenges and problems which could never have been predicted. On those occasions, the fact that the planning had been so thorough, rather than restricting change, confirmed the notion of 'the freedom of self-discipline' - that the detailed planning had ensured the process was so well-tuned and efficient (to the extent that we achieved, on average, a 'set-up' every 33 minutes, in contrast to the accepted blue-screen set-up time of one every 3 hours), that we were so in control artistically, technically and organisationally, and the foundation of the work so strong, that within the envelope of constraints we were able to create new opportunities - whether out of necessity or desire. Thus the notion of spontaneity, enjoyment and creative satisfaction which one associates with the creation of art, whilst very contained within strict parameters, was not entirely lost by a process so highly technical. The sense of creative satisfaction in this case was significant in a very different way - perhaps the **process** was more satisfying intellectually, but the achievement of the final product still provided a certain overall artistic satisfaction. So in contrast to the original stage version of *Son of Romeo*, the adaptation constantly moved between the two extremes - artistic/instinctive and technological/intellectual - of a continuum, with a tendency more to the technological/intellectual. The more the work tended towards the technological, the more intellectual and organisational input was required. Thus in creating a piece of art such as **SON OF ROMEO**, not only did this intellectual and organisational input prove to be equally important and equally valid as the input of unrefined, spontaneous creativity, but also served to hone that unrefined, spontaneous creativity into a product which had to be very finely tuned indeed, to satisfy all of the demands made of it by its various and sometimes conflicting constituents.

In the highly technological environment, it is therefore seldom, if ever, a case of pure art or pure technology, it is the mix and blend along the

continuum which makes both the aesthetic (artistic) function and the practical (technological) palatable.

> *Adaptations...involve the transformation of one art form into another. For the filmmaker, theoretical problems of adaptation require practical solutions.* (McDougal, S. 1985. p.4)

7.5   THE RESEARCH

Whilst artists, as Brockbank (1989, p.3) states, '*have traditionally been suspicious of theory or analysis, ascribing...creation...to decisions instinctively made, perceptions unconsciously arrived at, fine discriminations mysteriously achieved*', I have found a great deal of value in reflecting upon and analysing the process. Part of this value is a function of the amount of time which has elapsed since the work was created - allowing a more detached and dispassionate view of the work both from the distance of time and also filtered through the experience of other works in which I have been involved. It is, I believe, the only way one can realistically assess one's own artwork - much after the event - when all the passion, effort, pain and elation has been distributed throughout, and woven into the work, presented to the world, and hence left the artist. And whilst one argues the case for qualitative research that its value lies in the uniqueness of the processes or issues being researched, I believe that, beyond the uniqueness of this particular case study, there is a broader applicability of some of the findings. Findings which may indeed be very personal to this particular artist in this particular set of circumstances, but as technology is increasingly incorporated into art, and art increasingly embraces technology, there are some fundamental issues which will continue to recur, such as:

· retaining the 'humanity' within the technological environment

· retaining the links of identifiability with, and for, the audience or beholder

· coming to terms with the inevitable artistic compromises demanded by a foreign environment or medium, and finding the balance between the need to express aesthetically, and the practical demands, or constraints on the expression of that need

SON OF ROMEO - its adaptation and analysis - provides a rich and fertile bed of experience and knowledge from which to extrapolate beyond just the immediacy of that particular work. The 'decisions made', 'perceptions arrived at', and the achievement of those 'fine discriminations' may not be quite as 'mysterious' when one examines just how much they were based in, and were informed by, the prevailing political, financial and technological circumstances of the time.

This interdependence between the artistic and the functional is an element which will always influence, to a significant degree, both the expression of the artist and the appreciation of the beholder - the artistic and the functional are inextricably bound together. The issue to be resolved by the artist throughout the creative process, is the degree to which the functional demands or constraints are permitted to diminish the artwork or the degree to which they are regarded as opportunities to enrich the artwork.

It is the final manifestation of this resolution which determines the quality of both artwork and artist.

CHRIS WILLEMS   27 March 1997

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9.   APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Videotape 'A' - *Son of Romeo* **(Stage version):**

Appendix B: Videotape 'B' - SON OF ROMEO (Television version):

Appendix C: Table of Scenes - with Time Code (T/C):

Appendix D: Production Details and Planning:
Preliminary Storyboard - post script development (sample pages)
Storyboard (sample pages)
Schedule (sample page)
Strip Script (sample pages)
Construction Drawings of Sets and large Props (sample pages)

Appendix E: Props List Comparison:
Props List Comparison

Appendix F: Background (B/G) Artwork:
Selected samples of artwork (colour photocopies)
Selected production photographs (colour photocopies)

Appendix G: Technical information - Blue-Screen technology:
General Arrangement - Blue-Screen Shoot
'Ultimatte vs Chromakey' - Ultimatte Corporation

Appendix H: Timeline & Processes:
Timeline 1984 - 1996

Appendix J: Questionnaire responses from key collaborators:
Richard Jasek   - Co-Director & Associate Producer
Nick Stathopoulos- Production Designer & Background Artist
Chris Wood   - Costume Designer, Wardrobe, Props
Stuart Day   - Composer & Musical Director
Ian Hamilton   - Executive Producer for SBS Television

Appendix K: Media:

Media articles and critiques - **SON OF ROMEO** (television version)

Media critiques - ***Son of Romeo*** (stage version)