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You gotta have faith

BY MEREDITH DELISO

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In this "Romeo and Juliet," the young lovers have faith, as well as feuding families, to contend with.

Theater 2020, anew Brooklyn Heights-based company, puts a new twist on Shakespeare's enduring love story with a Hindu Romeo and Muslim Juliet in its production of "Romeo and Juliet," running at Saint Charles Borromeo on Sidney Place

starting July 14 and then later this month at Brooklyn Bridge Park's Pier One.

The producers were inspired to add this religious element to the play after reading about a Muslim girl in India killed by her family for dating a Hindu boy. When the boy found out, he killed himself.

"It was 'Romeo and Juliet,'" said Judith Jarosz, who runs the company with her husband, David Fuller.

This isn't the first time the bard's classic has been staged with some poetic license; last year, Bensonhurst's Genesis Repertory did a Brooklynized version of the play, where the star cross'd lovers were a Russian-Jewish Romeo from Sheepshead Bay and a Palestinian Juliet from Bay Ridge. The modernized version had the cast in baseball caps, sneakers and hijabs, and the men wielded swords instead of guns.

Theater 2020's production doesn't take as many liberties, though there will be hijabs sported by the Capulets, as well as Middle Eastern dancing and music, and some Jim Henson-style puppets.

"Obviously 'Romeo and Juliet' has lasted for hundreds of years, but I was just looking for some contemporary feel," said Fuller, who directs. "The idea of a girl falling in love with boy whose parents don't approve of is just timeless. I think everyone in the world can relate to that."

Theater 2020's "Romeo and Juliet" at Saint Charles Borromeo [21 Sidney Pl. at Livingston Street in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 624-3614], July 14 to 24, Thursdays at 7 pm, Fridays and Saturdays at 8 pm, and Sundays at 3 pm. Tickets \$18. Also at Brooklyn Bridge Park's Pier One (at the foot of Old Fulton Street in DUMBO), July 30 at 6 pm and July 31 at 2 pm. Free. For info, visit www.theater2020.com.



Photo by David Fuller

Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" gets a new twist in a production by Theater 2020 in Brooklyn Heights opening July 14 and starring Vandit Bhatt as a Hindu Romeo and Poonam Basu as a Muslim Juliet.