



Romeo And Juliet

David Hewson , Richard Armitage (Narrator)

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Exclusively written for Audible, only available in audio

"I think Romeo and Juliet is the greatest, most tragic love story ever told. What David Hewson did with this script is so exciting to me. I really love the fact that he followed avenues that Shakespeare suggested but didn't necessarily detail in depth. If you want to immerse yourself in a warm bath of Garganega and the heat of Verona and hear a brilliant story about a young woman who is challenging the restraints of her time, listen to this audiobook, which has romance, poetry, politics, and humor to spare." (Narrator Richard Armitage)

It's a story you think you know: the age-old tale of "star-cross'd lovers"; two families at war; a romance, so pure and absolute, fated for a tragic end. It's a story so thoroughly embedded in our culture, and so frequently retold. Yet, nothing captures the spark, the possibility, and the surprise of Shakespeare's work quite like this....

In *Romeo and Juliet: A Novel*, author David Hewson reworks and expands on the classic story so that it becomes something richer, something new and entirely its own. Much more than a simple love story, it is a brilliant examination of young versus old, hope against despair, and, for Juliet, the search for individual identity at a time when women were regarded as little more than chattel.

An original production commissioned by Audible, *Romeo and Juliet: A Novel* marks the second pairing of David Hewson and actor Richard Armitage, whose previous partnership resulted in Audible's 2014 Audiobook of the Year, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark: A Novel*. Hewson's talent for writing for audio is undeniable, and he finds his perfect vocal foil in Armitage, an actor of immense range and absorbing intensity. Together, they bring you a familiar story told in a surprising way - with an ending you might not expect.

Bonus: Audiobook includes an afterword written and narrated by David Hewson.

Romeo And Juliet Details

Date : Published December 6th 2016 by Audible Studios

ISBN :

Author : David Hewson , Richard Armitage (Narrator)

Format : Audible Audio 296 pages

Genre : Audiobook, Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Romance, Classics

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From Reader Review Romeo And Juliet for online ebook

Liz Weasleyhead says

Julia & Romeo ist eine sehr aufwendige Hörspielproduktion. Die Hintergrundgeräusche wurden entsprechend der jeweiligen Szenen eingesetzt. Die Sprecher überzeugen mit viel Gefühl und Variation. Was mich ein wenig gestört hat waren die Schleifen in denen die Hintergrundgeräusche abgespielt wurden. Besonders bei den Marktplatzszenen ist mir das negativ aufgefallen. Hier hätte ich mir dann bei der Bandbreite an Geräuschen mehr Abwechslung gewünscht.

Allerdings war ich von der Charakterisierung von Romeo und Julia sehr positiv überrascht. Romeo ist hier mit seinen 18 Jahren doch sehr naiv und handelt viel zu impulsiv. Julia ist hingegen diejenige, welche für ihre 16 Jahre sehr reif und tapfer ist. Klar wirkt sie manchmal zickig, aber ich konnte das bei ihrer Lebenssituation oft sehr gut nachvollziehen.

Irritiert war ich ein wenig bei dem Ausgang der Geschichte, da es nicht dem klassischen Shakespeare Schluss entsprach.

Alles in Allem ein sehr gelungenes Hörspiel.

Andrea says

Ok, let's make one thing very clear. I knew I was probably going to hate this going in, because I don't like Romeo and Juliet. There. I said it.

There is one reason I listened to this, and one reason only:

That is it. I could listen to that man read his grocery list and I would still gladly pay money for that. Anyone who can make a Dickens book come to life the way he did with David Copperfield has my undying respect. And, let's not forget, the man has such a beautiful voice...

But I digress.

So I gave this book a shot because I thought if anyone could make me care about those two, it would be Richard Armitage. I didn't particularly enjoy Hamlet, Prince of Denmark (which was co-written by this author), but I decided to give this a try anyway.

Basically, the thing you have to know about these novelizations: they have very little to do with the actual play. They take the names, the basic plot and themes, but it is always a very different story than in the play.

And that's also exactly what didn't work for me here. There is a backstory for every.single.character (and I mean EVERYONE, from Juliet's nurse to the friar's assistant), and they are all very tragic, but ultimately, I didn't care about stuff like why the friar and his twin were run out of their home country and separated. I applaud the author for giving the story a very rich setting, for trying to paint a picture about what was going on in Europe and the rest of the world at the time outside of Verona. That was very interesting, but again, in a love story, I don't really care about what the Pope or the Borgias were up to. And also, I am not very fond of that ending. Let's just leave it at that...

So, all in all, 2 stars for the plot, 5 for the wonderful narration, equals a solid 3 stars.

Cathy says

In *Juliet & Romeo*, the feud between the Montagues and Capulets is of longstanding and born out of a friendship betrayed ('Time had dealt its blows, yet the enmity between them had never wavered') and a trade war over pre-eminence in the wine trade. The uneasy relations between the two families simmer in the heat of a Verona summer, threatening to boil over at any minute. It even extends to each family's servants, 'sharing the same borrowed hatred and never asking why'.

The author brings the reader a Juliet who is intelligent, questioning, spirited and independent-minded. She finds herself rebelling against the expectations of her parents (primarily the expectations of her father) to make a marriage that will advance the family's interests, describing herself as 'a tiny bird in a tiny cage my father and the rest have made for me.' For the reason explained by the author in his Historical Notes, this Juliet is older than depicted in Shakespeare's play, more confident and sure of herself, with a witty sense of humour.

Romeo is thoughtful and longs to be a writer although, again, his family see a different future for him, in the law this time. Although the setting is medieval – 1499, to be precise – there are no 'thee's' and 'thou's' in this book, instead the characters express themselves in modern dialogue, including slang and some juicy insults. For example, Romeo's erstwhile love, the daughter of a livestock merchant, is described at one point as 'randy Rosaline from the knacker's yard.'

The author brings alive the Verona of the period through descriptions of the houses, palazzos, piazzas, clothing and food. I could almost sense the aromas from the dishes at a particularly lavish banquet organised by the Capulets to try to impress their pick of suitor for Juliet, Count Paris. 'Boned roast goat's head covered in white meat sauce and decorated with pomegranate seeds. Fried trout caught in Lake Garda by busy cormorants. Cucumbers with dill. Chicken pie with cherries. Tart with cheese and chard and saffron. And pastissada de caval, horsemeat stew slow cooked until it was near black, seasoned with laurel, nutmeg and cloves, a dish Verona had been eating for so long it seemed as much a part of the city as its old stone walls and the constant flow of the Adige.' (OK, not so sure about the horsemeat stew.)

The novel explores a number of themes, including that of possession and ownership. At one point, Luca Capulet, insisting that Juliet's marriage to Count Paris will go ahead, states: "This marriage is made. Not in heaven. But by me." A chuckle then. "The household god." When Count Paris presents Juliet with a ring as a token of his love, she is shocked to see it bears the inscription 'I have obtained whom God ordained.' Days later, preparing for her wedding against her will, Juliet reflects, 'She felt as if she were nothing more than a cog in the mechanism of a relentless machine, turning to the will of others.' Even Romeo at one point wonders, 'How much of love was the noble sacrifice that verse portrayed? How much a selfish, obsessional need to possess another?' With dread, he recognises in himself 'a man possessed, who craved to possess in return'.

?*Juliet & Romeo* has everything you would expect of a Shakespearean drama – masks and disguises, mistaken identities, chance meetings, fight scenes, thwarted lovers and comic interludes. Speaking of the latter, from the cast of secondary characters, I have to pick out Nurse. With her excruciatingly embarrassing stories about Juliet when she was a baby and her bawdy comments, she reminded me of Nursie in *Blackadder 2* (as played by the wonderful Patsy Byrne).

The publishers describe Juliet & Romeo as 'a gripping romantic thriller' and it certainly fits that bill in terms of its pace and its menu of intrigue, mystery, body count and more than one race against time. The author has written that 'Adaptation means change'. I'm not going to tell you what one of those key changes is, you're going to have to read the book to find out. What I will say is that it's entirely in keeping with the character the author has created.

Whether you have read Shakespeare's play, seen film versions of the play or know only the outlines of the story of Romeo and Juliet, you will find much to enjoy in this "novel retelling". It would also be a superb introduction to Shakespeare's play. The audiobook version of Juliet & Romeo, from which this novel is derived, has been nominated for this year's Audies, the audio Oscars. Reading this novel has certainly made me want to seek out that version.

Netta says

The retelling of Shakespeare's famous story by the end looks more like reimagining with a rather unexpected plot twist. Unlike of pretty average author's performance, the narrator's performance is superb.

Katherine says

I enjoyed the changes DH made from the original Romeo and Juliet. Especially the character of Juliet, being much stronger. The ending was a fun twist and almost needs a sequel. As always Richard Armitage does an awesome job as narrator.

booksofallkinds says

We all know the tale of Romeo and his fair Juliet, young lovers destined for tragedy and heartbreak - it's enough to bring a tear to your eye just thinking about it. So when I got the opportunity to review JULIET & ROMEO by David Hewson which is a retelling of the classic tale written in everyday English and with some surprises and changes along the way, I jumped at the chance!

Set in 1499 the beauty, harsh reality, and that special something of Verona comes alive on the page in front of you. Sixteen-year-old Juliet is intelligent, well-read, and interested in the world of art and knowledge that is coming alive around her but her father has plans to marry her off and he won't take no for an answer. Romeo, whose family are arch enemies of Juliet's, dreams of being a writer but like the lady he will come to love, he is under pressure from his family to follow the path they have chosen for him. And then one fateful night they meet ...

I thoroughly enjoyed this story and the surprises that are hidden throughout and for readers who are put off from reading Shakespeare due to its language, JULIET & ROMEO by David Hewson is the perfect story to introduce you to the bard himself and all of his glory. There is drama, beauty, secrets, violence, and more, poetically described throughout this book and with characters that are so much more than meets the eye, JULIET & ROMEO by David Hewson is a book worth reading.

*I voluntarily reviewed this book from the Publisher

Chrissie says

I dumped the audiobook after listening to half.

I like neither the book's content, i.e. how Shakespeare's tragedy Romeo and Juliet is retold, nor the audiobook performance. Both I have given one star.

Romeo And Juliet exists only as an audiobook. What is delivered is a verbal dramatization, a performance. You must like dramatizations to like this audiobook. Richard Armitage, the audiobook's narrator, dramatizes in spades! What else can you expect from an actor?! I do not like dramatizations. Secondly, I find Armitage's intonations of elderly women, such as Juliet's mother and nursemaid, to be excessively hoarse and gruff. They sound like decrepit old men. I find the elderly men's intonations exaggerated too! Words are slurred and undecipherable at times. I dislike Armitage's reading of dialogs. The setting is Verona, Italy. Armitage will have one believe the setting is England!

Hewson retells Shakespeare's original tale. I dislike the words he puts in the characters' mouths. I dislike how the author turns Juliet into a modern-day feminist. We are told the year is 1499. You would not think that from either her behavior or what she and other characters say.

The author's addition of historical background details does not make sense; he even points out himself that what the Pope and other such dignitaries were doing had little importance in the characters' lives.

What else irritates me? David Hewson fails to draw Verona as the beautiful place it is. He gives too long and too detailed backstories for e-v-e-r-y person in the book.

After having dumped the audiobook, I read that the author has also completely changed the story's ending!

People want different things from the books they choose to read or listen to. Perhaps this will satisfy you more than it did me. How the characters speak grated on my nerves; their language does not properly reflect the time and place of the tale. Anachronistic writing annoys me.

Other retellings I CAN recommend:

*Hag-Seed: The Tempest Retold 4 stars

*Macbeth 4 stars

*Hamlet, Prince of Denmark 3 stars

The last book mentioned here is also read by Richard Armitage. I did not appreciate his performance there either.

Ilaria Tomasini says

So I just finished listening to this audiobook written by David Hewson and performed by Richard Armitage. I confess I am a fan of Richard Armitage and I didn't know David Hewson as a writer before, but I'm deeply impressed by both his writing and Armitage performance.

I'm Italian and I live near Verona, so the story of Romeo and Juliet is set in places I know very well, but I never liked that tragedy so much.

At first, I was interested in the audiobook mainly because of Richard Armitage, but, after it was announced, I began following the blog of David Hewson and everything became much more interesting. To promote the book, he created a sort of a treasure hunt in twelve weeks: every Saturday he wrote an article about Verona or about history and art of that times and then there were questions to answers. It was very interesting and every one of the questions was related to the background of the novel.

The author made a lot of research and the Verona of his novel is life-like and so real. Listening to the book I could recognize the places I know so well, I could imagine the characters in the streets of Verona and "see" the scenes in my mind.

Another thing I loved are the characters: every one of them has their own personality and Armitage was very good at giving them a different voice, accent and way to speak. I really loved Juliet and I feel she is the main character of the story, I loved her strong will and her witty replies (and her love for books!). The original story is a tragedy, but this novel has tragic and funny moments well mixed together. Often I found myself laughing because of the dialogues, then after a while I was moved or afraid for the characters. It gave me emotions and this only happens when a novel is good.

I'll read other works from David Hewson for sure, I really liked how he writes. I hope a paper version of this book will come out sooner or later.

Richard Armitage performance was perfect, his voice is always clear and easy to understand even for me (I'm not English mother tongue) and it was very nice for me to hear him saying Italian words :)

So thank you to both David Hewson and Richard Armitage for this audiobook, I really, really loved it.

Eva says

I've never actually read Romeo and Juliet. I've tried but Shakespeare tends to go right over my head. I am of course familiar with their story, as I'm sure most of you are as well. Two rivalling families in the city of Verona, Italy. The son of the one family falls in love with the daughter of the other. Chaos ensues. Everybody dies. Something like that anyway. ?

Admittedly, I was a little unsure about picking this one up. Proof of how shallow I am, lies in me confessing to you that I pretty much only opted to read this book as it was endorsed by Richard Armitage. Incidentally, he also apparently did the audio version which, even though I'm not a fan of audio books, I've been eying for a while now because Richard's voice does funny things to me. He could read a good old fashioned phone guide to me and I'd be a puddle of goo. I'm sure you didn't really need to know that so let's quickly move on. (Note that the audio version has been nominated for this year's Audies)

Seeing as I don't have any previous experience with this story, I was pleasantly surprised by this retelling. Sixteen year old Juliet is a fierce and fabulous young lady. However, her father is trying to arrange a marriage for her and this doesn't sit well with Juliet at all. There's more to life than getting married, after all. During a banquet, Juliet meets Romeo. Aw, young love. But then Romeo is banished from the city and everything goes to pot.

The atmosphere and the setting in Verona drew me in from the start. I could almost see myself wandering around the market stalls, smelling meats and whatnot, hear the horses and the chiming of the bell tower. The characters were really well written. Romeo, the quiet kind, the dreamer, the wanna-be poet. Although quite frankly I didn't think he was very good with words at all. His family wants to send him off to study to become a lawyer.

But the one who stole the scene every single time was most definitely Juliet. She's intelligent, wants to be independent and questions everything. I adored her spirit, her determination, her sheer belief that in that particular era, she could be whomever she wants to be. And let's not forget Nurse, who made me chuckle numerous times with her endless and sometimes rather embarrassing ramblings.

This modern retelling works really well. Sure, there's a lot of drama and I was actually stunned to see how many things happen in a really short period of time. But I was utterly enthralled and captivated. Even the author's notes held my interest and if you grab yourself a copy of this, you should definitely read them.

For those, like me, who wanted and have tried to read Shakespeare, this is a fabulous way of being introduced to his stories without suffering a major headache and thinking your knowledge of the English language is non-existent all of a sudden. Although it does bear pointing out that David Hewson did make changes from the original Romeo and Juliet and based his interpretation more so on previous versions than the one we all know.

Intrigue, murder, sword fights, a dash of romance and a few chuckles ... what more could you possibly want? I found this to be thoroughly entertaining and enjoyable!

Wendy says

I enjoyed it, but it kind of dragged in some spots. The ending was a bit strange, but I think I liked it? I'm not sure. It's a little different from the play.

Still love Richard Armitage narrating. That got me through the draggy parts.

Pamela says

This is the weakest of the series of novelizations of Shakespeare's plays. As with the others, there have been some changes to WS's version, but unlike the others, the changes in this are major. And by major, I mean MAJOR! Think of something major that could be changed...something REALLY major...yeah! That's it!

The author justifies this by saying he is going back to the source material upon which WS based his play. I call "FOUL!" The title of this work is "Romeo and Juliet." The series of which it is a part is a series of novelizations of WS's plays. If he wanted to do an audio version of the source material, then he should have called this "Jack and Jill: A Novel."

I am so disappointed with this that I am hesitant to try another--if another is released. Trust me, don't waste your time. Watch "West Side Story" instead.

Selah Pike says

I loved the setting, historical details, and *some* of the backstories. I hated what Hewson did to Count Paris, rolled my eyes at Juliet's anachronistic feminism (I mean, feminism is cool, but anachronisms are not), and groaned at the end! The ending was SO wrong!

Kate Scott says

This is the first audiobook I have ever listened to that was written specifically for audio (there is no printed copy) and I have to admit, I was just a teensy bit skeptical. My skepticism quickly vanished when I started listening. Hewson breathes new life into this classic tale of tragic love with a beautifully written narrative that is perfectly suited to Armitage's particular vocal talents. I especially like how Hewson reimagines Juliet as a forward-thinking woman pushing back against the patriarchal mores of her day.

Ce says

Narration was superb, as it's a trend with Richard Armitage. The style and character development is well done, though the ending left me thinking... wasn't this Juliet stronger, "independent"? The ending different from what we are used to, was a bit disappointing. I thought sailing across the sea would be an option. Author has also too many preconceived ideas about Catholicism, but I guess that's typical among those who do not know much.

Josiah Hawkins says

Let me be clear, I really really dislike Romeo and Juliet. When I was in school I had to read the play three times for some reason and my dislike of it only grew each time. I don't dislike Shakespeare however, I think that *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Henry VIII* are all fantastic pieces of literature. For some reason it isn't any of his vastly superior works that keep his name relevant to today, it's *Romeo and Juliet*, probably his worst play, that gets the spotlight.

I've always found the characters in the play sorely underdeveloped, the story doesn't really flow well, the story itself is also pretty hard to believe. Overall I think that Shakespeare's general failings in the matters of the heart in his personal life led to the failings of that particular play. So why would I go back in for a fourth experience of a story I already don't like? I can't really explain why I did, but I'm sure glad that I did.

Mr. Hewson decided to adapt the play into a novel, and this fixes some major problems that I had with the source text. Extra length gives us more time with the characters, and thus leads to more characterization. Extra length also gives Mr. Hewson more time to give an explanation to major events that actually make major plot beats flow easier and make more sense. Extra length also gives Mr. Hewson time to fully flesh out exactly why it is that the Capulet and Montague houses are embroiled in their conflict.

Perhaps the greatest thing Mr. Hewson could of done was give a complete setting of the time period the story will take place in. Mr. Hewson's novelization sets the story in a period of time mired in sadness, a time when a madman was installed as pope, a time when war with the Turks was almost assured, and a time when plague was on it's way. In Verona, and Italy as a whole, there is so much despair and so much death that everyone feels downtrodden and boxed into a city on lock down.

When things are terrible, when almost nothing seems to be going right, people want something special to

happen. This deep desire for something special makes people more apt to dive head on into the first thing that starts to go right, and this telling of star crossed lovers represents exactly that. Take just how bad the world is, add a love that isn't reciprocated and a desperately unwanted arranged marriage, and the result is two people who are predisposed to fall in love fast and hard.

The absolute genius is that the book never says whether or not the romance they had was real, and there is a moment where Juliet actually wonders as much. Mr. Hewson displays this horrible state of affairs and then shows us something that seems so powerful, so magical, and then we watch it fail. It fails because of public perception, because of missed information, and because of the tragedy of how a bad world happens to infect the people that live in it.

This novelization truly is something special. Mr. Hewson took a story, that to me, never worked and then with a heavy amount of context and retooling actually made the story work. Armitage does an amazing job with the voice work, the text is rich in sadness, humor, faith, reconciliation, and thought. To me this represents the best possible translation of a story that was written a very long time ago, and I think that everyone who either likes or hates the original should give this a listen because it really is an incredible work.
