

HOME

ROYAL
DERNGATE &
NORTHAMPTON

**Citizens
Theatre**

**NORTHERN
STAGE**



A NORTHERN STAGE, HOME MANCHESTER AND CITIZENS THEATRE CO-PRODUCTION,
IN ASSOCIATION WITH ROYAL & DERNGATE

EDUCATION RESOURCE

OTHELLO

WRITTEN BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
DIRECTED BY ANTHONY ALMEIDA



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

OVERVIEW & CONTENTS

Here are some resources to support the exploration of this production and give an understanding of how theatre is created and performed.

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"Set within a 1980s landscape, this Othello examines how behaviour, love and identity are shaped under public scrutiny and private pressure. It's a story as much about intimacy as it is about insecurity - and how one begins to erode the other."

- Anthony Almeida, Director of Othello

FREE CPD TEACHER OPPORTUNITY

Approaches to Teaching Othello with Dr Emma Whipday, Senior Lecturer in Renaissance Literature at Newcastle University.

Thu 17 Sep
4pm-5pm
1 hour webinar

FREE to attend when you book tickets for your school to attend a performance of Northern Stage's Othello at your local theatre.

Join Dr Emma Whipday for a 60min introduction to teaching Othello in the classroom – exploring race, gender, staging, domestic violence, and the question of whether the play is 'the tragedy of a handkerchief'.

Contact the box office team to book.

NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR: ANTHONY ALMEIDA



A way in.

Everything began with questions.

How do I want to be seen? How do others see me?

We began with a simple idea: Othello is a tragedy of perception. Every character is trying to close the gap between who they are and who they think they should be. We all perform. Confidence. Competence. Loyalty. Love. Authority. We change depending on the room we're in, the people we're with and the expectations placed upon us.

As rehearsals went on, we became less interested in what the characters believed, and more interested in what they did. How they walked into a room. How they listened. What they hid. What they revealed. It turns out the smallest acts of restraint, adaptation, generosity and care are the very things that hold a community together. Sometimes, they quietly pull it apart.

NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR (CONTINUED)

Why the early 1980s?

Shakespeare made theatre about the world around him. We wanted to do the same.

The Britain of the early 1980s is a country in transition. Institutions still carry enormous authority, but the world around them is changing. It's a society where professionalism, appearance and belonging matter deeply, making it a compelling home for Shakespeare's story. The play's conflict between Venice and Turkey over Cyprus also finds an unsettling echo in Britain's own military and political climate.

For some, the 1980s will be remembered. For others, the 80s exists through photographs, music, television and family stories. Either way, it's a world we recognise. A world where soldiers polish their shoes until they gleam, then wipe their noses on the sleeves of the very uniforms they've spent hours preparing.

Untidy humanity. Immaculate presentation. That's the contradiction at the heart of this production.

What happens when intimacy comes under pressure?

Othello is full of war, politics and public life. Yet the real damage happens between people who love one another.

We've tried to keep our attention on those intimate encounters: the private conversations, the shared silences, the jokes, the misunderstandings, the moments when affection slowly gives way to suspicion. The most devastating violence in this play begins long before anyone reaches for a weapon.

Why gather?

Nothing can replace the experience of sharing a story with other people, in the same room, at the same moment.

From the beginning, we asked how performance, design, movement, music, sound and light could work together to create one living world. Not a collection of separate ideas, but a single experience. We hope you don't simply watch this production but find yourself inside it. Sharing the same space. The same tension. Ultimately, the same questions as the people on stage.

More than four hundred years after it was written, Othello still feels uncannily close to us. Not because it gives us answers, but because it asks us to look more carefully. At how we behave. How we belong. And how easily the worlds we build together can be sustained, or quietly undone.

That's where the evening really begins.

The rest is in how we behave.

A HISTORY OF OTHELLO

Othello was likely written in 1604, after Hamlet and before King Lear. It was performed at court in Whitehall for King James I in November 1604, but may have been previously performed at the Globe.

The play was not published in Shakespeare's lifetime but appeared in a Quarto in 1622, the First Folio in 1623, and a second Quarto in 1630.

The first actor to play the title role in Othello was Richard Burbage, who along with William Shakespeare, was a leading member of the King's Men theatre company.

After the Restoration and the re-opening of the theatres, Margaret Hughes became the first recorded woman to perform on the English stage, when she played Desdemona on 8 December 1660.

Not until the 1830s did a black actor play the title role, when Ira Aldridge toured Europe to great acclaim.

CHARACTERS

BIANCA



Played by Grace Hodgett Young

*"But that you do not love me.
I pray you, bring me on the way a little,
And say if I shall see you soon at
night."*

Bianca is a young woman who is in love with Cassio.

BRABANTIO



Played by Chris Garner

*"Is there not charms
By which the property of youth and
maidhood
May be abused?"*

Brabantio is Desdemona's father and an important politician in Venice.

CASSIO



Played by Will Stanton

*"Tis my breeding
That gives me this bold show of
courtesy."*

Cassio has just been promoted to lieutenant by Othello and is loyal to him.

DESDEMONA



Played by Phoebe Smyth

*"That I did love the Moor to live with him,
My downright violence and storm of fortunes
May trumpet to the world."*

Desdemona is Brabantio's daughter and Othello's new wife.

CHARACTERS

EMILIA



Played by Rebecca Banatvalath

"Tis not a year or two shows us a man."

Emilia is Iago's wife and works as Desdemona's maid when they travel to Cyprus.

IAGO



Played by Maanuv Thiara

"I know my price, I am worth no worse a place."

Iago is Othello's trusted junior officer. He is jealous of Cassio's promotion.

OTHELLO



Played by Dwane Walcott

*"She loved me for the dangers I had passed,
And I loved her that she did pity them."*

Othello is a general in the Venetian Army and is married to Desdemona.

RODERIGO



Played by Matthieu Sys

"By heaven, I rather would have been his hangman."

Roderigo is young and rich. He wants to marry Desdemona and is friends with Iago.

IN CONVERSATION WITH: LAUREN WATSON, HEAD OF MARKETING

Can you describe your role as Head of Marketing at Northern Stage?

As Head of Marketing I lead the Communications and Sales team to create show campaigns which raise awareness of and sell tickets for Northern Stage shows. I start working on the initial title announcement and then manage artwork shoots, cast announcements, content creation, and more – making sure the show campaign is seen by as many people as possible who then go on to buy tickets!

When you are creating a campaign to support a production, what are the main priorities?

We need to make sure we've worked out who our target audience is - in other words, who are the people that are likely to care about the show and will want to buy tickets? This might be audience members who have visited Northern Stage before, or new audiences to attract. Often it's a mix of both.

We then plan out a campaign using content and messaging that will attract those customers. We want to make sure that our campaign is in keeping with Northern Stage's branding but that the show still has its own individual identity, through strong artwork and interesting content.

We know that lots of people rely on social media advertising to keep up to date with what's happening and what they should buy tickets for, so we make sure that we prioritise creating high-quality and engaging videos and images.

We have a budget for each show and I plan all of our activity to fit within this budget. Throughout the campaign we'll keep a close eye on activity performance to check we're investing in the right areas with the right content.

For example, if a paid Meta ad is getting lots of engagement and driving ticket sales, we may move some of our budget over to continue this ad. However, if the ad is not performing well, we may look to end it sooner and rerun it with new or better content.

Monitoring activity like this means we're more likely to hit our sales target for the show.

IN CONVERSATION WITH: LAUREN WATSON, HEAD OF MARKETING (CONTINUED)

How do you go about creating a concept for a campaign? How does this involve collaboration with the show's creative team?

It's really important to have a clear understanding of the show. Start with reading the script to understand the plot, and then research the director and creative team to see the type of shows they've worked on before.

Hearing from the team making the show as early as possible helps you understand their vision, the key themes, tone and any key moments in the show. The director and set and costume designer are key players here.

It's also important to share your ideas for marketing content with the creative team, to make sure you're all in agreement and work out how you can collaborate to achieve it.

We then work with the company stage manager to sort out the logistics of accessing the rehearsal room to create content, schedule photocalls and facilitate interviews with cast members.

IN CONVERSATION WITH: MATTHEW TUCKEY, SOUND DESIGNER

Can you describe your role as Sound Designer on Othello?

As the sound designer, I'm responsible for everything the audience hears in the production. This encompasses recording and designing sound effects, ambiences and voice recordings, sourcing music and composing soundscapes before and during rehearsals.

I specify the microphones the cast wear, design the sound system for vocal reinforcement and playback, and during technical rehearsals and previews I programme the sound cues into QLab and work with the sound operator to programme the sound desk.

How do you collaborate with the director and other members of the company?

Conversations with the director start months before we begin rehearsing with the company. Anthony and I explored ideas around the varied iconic ear worms of the early 80s pop music scene and, in contrast, the sounds of war and military life.

Early concept drawings of the set design are incredibly useful for establishing a shared design aesthetic for the production, and are the basis of creative conversations with the set designer and lighting designer, as well as more practical technical considerations of where speakers and lighting fixtures can co-exist around the set.

IN CONVERSATION WITH: MATTHEW TUCKEY, SOUND DESIGNER (CONTINUED)

Can you tell us about your career path to date?

I always wanted to work in theatre; as a GCSE and A-Level drama student I was an aspiring theatre director and writer. When I left school I worked as a casual theatre technician whilst making my own fringe level shows and interning in a recording studio as an assistant engineer/producer. Eventually the theatre maker part of me and the sound engineer/music producer part of my career merged to become a sound designer.

I've worked as a sound operator, fit up crew, assistant and then associate sound designer to get to where I am now. I still associate for other sound designers that I admire to continue learning and developing as a sound designer.

IN CONVERSATION WITH: GIAELE MATTIOLI, MOVEMENT DIRECTOR

Can you describe your role as Movement Director on Othello?

On Othello, my role is to help the cast tell Shakespeare's story through physical movement. I draw on physical theatre, dance, and animal work to give actors clear tools to inhabit their characters naturally and fully. By supporting the shaping of both group scenes and individual moments, I ensure the energy on stage directly supports all the drama and emotion of the show.

How do you collaborate with the director and other members of the company?

I work closely with the director from early prep to turn their vision into clear, physical staging. In rehearsals, I give actors practical tools to help them find their characters' instincts—always linking movement back to intention—while coordinating closely with design, sound, and costumes. This open, collaborative approach helps build a shared physical language across the whole production.

Can you tell us about your career path to date?

Rooted in physical theatre training, I earned a First-Class BA from the London Contemporary Dance School and an MFA with Distinction in Movement Directing from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. My career spans movement directing across theatre and opera—including Wolfie at the Orange Tree Theatre and Dido & Aeneas for the Waterperry Opera Festival—alongside teaching at institutions like East 15. Today, I continue to expand my practice through research in animal studies, sacred dance, motion capture, and parkour.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1

Look at the poster for the production.

If you were going to design an alternative poster for the show, what concept would you create? Have a go at redesigning your own version.



TIP: Which characters would you want to show?
Is there a particular moment in the play you'd want to show?
How will the image capture people's attention?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 2

In this production of Othello, the character of Rodrigo is a journalist, reporting from the Falklands war.

As inspiration, here's an image of a real news report on the Falklands war.



Imagine you were writing a 60 second news report on one of the key scenes from Othello.

How would you structure it? How much of the 'truth' do you know at that point in the play?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 3

These images were used as for research and inspiration by the show's designer for costumes inspired by the 1980s UK setting.

OTHELLO INSPIRATION



DESDEMONA INSPIRATION



Imagine you're the designer for a new production of Othello, set in a time period and/or country of your choice.

Create your own set of images as inspiration for Othello and Desdemona's costumes at this time.

TIP: You could choose a decade from the past with a distinctive fashion style such as the 1920s or 1960s or perhaps your show is set in the present day but in a different country – what are military uniforms in China or India like?

EXPLORING THE THEMES

Here are some additional activities for your students, to help them to explore the themes of the play:

HOT SEATING CHARACTERS

Theme focus: dual identities, hypocrisy

Students take on roles, such as:

- Desdemona
- Iago
- Othello

The class interviews each character, asking them questions like:

“What do you believe versus what you show society?”

“Is it ever acceptable to lie?”

FREEZE FRAMES (TABLEAUX)

Theme focus: public versus private selves

In groups, create two still images:

1. A “perfect” public image
2. The hidden truth behind it

The rest of the class must guess what’s really happening.

SECRET LETTERS EXERCISE

Theme focus: deception, truth, and consequences

Each student writes a secret letter one character might send to another.

Letters are then swapped and acted out as dramatic readings.

THEME SCULPTING

Theme focus: abstract ideas (honour, corruption, love)

In groups, students create physical sculptures representing a theme portrayed in the play.

Others must then interpret the meaning.

ALTERNATE ENDINGS

Theme focus: justice and redemption

Ask students to consider alternative endings to the play, like:

- What if Desdemonda survived the attack from Othello?
-
- What if Othello didn't take his own life?

Students develop and perform these alternative final scenes.

CAST

Emilia	Rebecca Banatvala
Brabantio	Chris Garner
Bianca	Grace Hodgett Young
Desdemona	Phoebe Smyth
Cassio	Will Stanton
Roderigo	Matthieu Sys
Iago	Maanuv Thiara
Othello	Dwane Walcott

CREATIVE TEAM

Director	Anthony Almeida
Designer	Natasha Jenkins
Lighting Design by	Jack Hathaway
Based on original lighting concept by	Sinéad McKenna
Composer & Sound Designer	Matthew Tuckey
Video Designer	Erin Guan
Movement Director	Giaele Mattioli
Casting Director	Karishma Balani
Costume Supervisor	Sara Mackenzie
Production Manager	Suzie Normand
Video Programmer	Jamie Wardrop
Re-lighter	Kevin Murphy