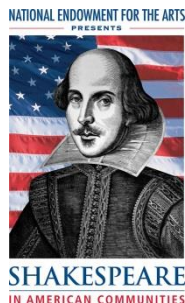


EDUCATOR'S GUIDEBOOK



Directed by Jon Royal / Costume Design by June Kingsbury
Set Design by Morgan Matens / Lighting Design by Anne Willingham
Sound Design by Brenton Jones / Fight Choreography by Eric Pasto Crosby



Education Sponsor:



This production is part of Shakespeare for a New Generation, a national program of the National Endowment for the Arts, in partnership with Arts Midwest.

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Note from the Education Director

Hello!

I am so excited to welcome you into our 26th season at the Nashville Shakespeare Festival. This year's production of *Othello* at the Troutt Theater on the campus of Belmont University should prove to be a wonderful theatrical experience.

This guidebook is to help teachers and students with classroom instruction and generate a healthy curiosity about Shakespeare, the process of theatre, and this play in particular. You will find a synopsis, historical information, lesson plans, links to additional resources such as videos and books, a map to the theater, and explanations of various design and directorial choices for *Othello*. Whether your class is just beginning to read *Othello* or has already finished the play the guidebook serves as a tool to prepare for viewing the work as it was meant to be, on stage, with you in the audience.

If you have any further questions I am always happy to help! To book a workshop or matinee reservation you may reach me at nettie@nashvilleshakes.org.

Enjoy the show!

Nettie Kraft, Education Director

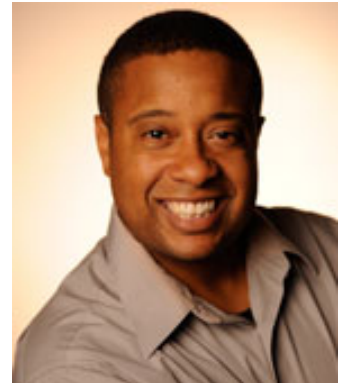


Note from the Director

In this very dangerous world that we live in, the dangers that we face aren't always clear to us on an everyday basis. We depend on a strong military force to fight for our interests abroad, and defend the home-front when necessary. We equip, train, and deploy, our best and brightest, to ensure that our everyday lives continue without a hitch. We rest easier, with a sense of security, trusting that our protectors will do their duty, and uphold the ideals of our culture.

The Venice of Shakespeare's Othello is not so different from our world. When I step into *this* Venice that the Moor, Iago, and Desdemona live in, I'm dogged by many questions, but the most important being; what happens to the protectors, after dedicating their lives to service? Soldiers aren't only defending the land, property, and tangible holdings of the nation that deploys them, but also the hopes and dreams of its citizens. I'm drawn to this play in which everyone has their own idea of Paradise that they hope to secure, hang onto, and defend with all they are. Othello seeks a relationship, and kind of love that he's never known, after spending his entire life as a weapon for others. He has no idea what a high price he has paid over the course of his life. I can't help asking myself, do I? Soldiers are taught to constantly be at the ready. What happens when there is no real threat? What happens when the everyday pieces and events of a person's life, are perceived as danger? Sadly, in my view, I think we have to include the toll of that damage, with all of its consequences, onto our ticket for paradise.

Jon Royal, Director



Note from the Artistic Director

Greetings,

The Nashville Shakespeare Festival deeply appreciates your partnership for our seventh annual Winter Shakespeare production. We are thrilled to return to our winter home in the beautiful Troutt Theater on the campus of Belmont University, and are very excited about sharing this exciting production of *Othello* with you and your students.

The Nashville Shakespeare Festival is dedicated to keeping Shakespeare's works alive and relevant in a society that struggles with meaningful communication and inconsequential entertainment options. We hope that our production of *Othello* offers you and your students a deeper appreciation for Shakespeare's relevance in the 21st century and his power to write a historical and political play that rings true even to this day.

Othello is a terribly sad play. Iago's motivation for ruining lives is as mysterious to me as the motivations for the current spate of mass shootings. In a world where innocence is vulnerable to indiscriminate and irrational violence, a play like *Othello* is always relevant. I hope that *Othello* will offer some great fodder for in depth discussions of honor, loyalty, and acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

Thank you for teaching the works of William Shakespeare. I hope the rewards are greater than the challenges. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the production, your matinee, or workshop reservation, please do not hesitate to contact us: education@nashvilleshakes.org

Enjoy the show!

Denice Hicks, Artistic Director



Othello Synopsis

by Nettie Kraft

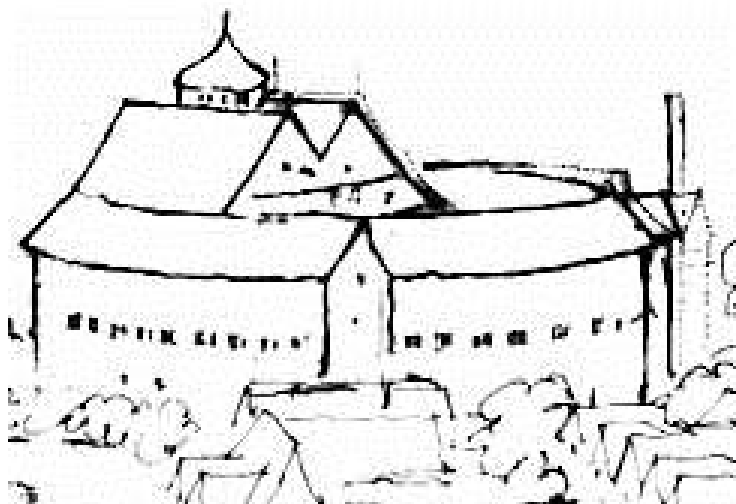
Act I

In Venice the Duke and Senators discuss the plan against the Turks in Cypress agreeing Othello should lead the battle. Othello has chosen Cassio to be his Lieutenant over Iago. For revenge, Iago and Roderigo wake Desdemona's father Brabantio, scaring him with news of Othello and Desdemona's marriage. Brabantio summons his guards to hunt down the lovers. Iago pretends to have defended Othello against Brabantio's rage. Cassio arrives, summoning Othello to the Duke. Brabantio and his men enter demanding they go to the Duke with Othello in custody. The Duke asks for an explanation. Othello tells of how he and Desdemona fell in love. Her father swears if Desdemona was a willing participant he will give her to Othello. Desdemona arrives, confesses her love, and tells of their marriage. The Duke appoints Othello to run the war and Desdemona is allowed to follow him to Cypress. Iago urges Roderigo to follow and swears Desdemona will soon be sick of Othello and he will have his chance. Iago reiterates his hatred of Othello and vows to use Othello's gullibility to make him suspect Cassio and Desdemona of being lovers. On Cypress a storm destroys the Turkish warships. Iago witnesses Cassio's familiar behavior with Desdemona and incenses Roderigo with talk of Desdemona's love for Cassio. At a celebration Iago gets Cassio drunk and provokes the fight between the lieutenant and Roderigo. Othello demands to know who started it. Cassio is framed and Othello demotes him. Iago comforts Cassio, suggesting he ask for Desdemona's help with Othello. Roderigo threatens to go back to Venice but Iago convinces him to stay. Desdemona agrees to aid Cassio and her pleas for forgiveness help Iago plant doubt in Othello's mind giving him a headache. When Desdemona attempts to ease his pain with her handkerchief he pushes it aside and it drops to the floor unnoticed which Emilia finds and gives to Iago. Iago schemes to plant it in Cassio's house and trick Othello. Othello returns, tortured with jealousy and doubt, demanding Iago prove Desdemona's betrayal or suffer the consequences. Iago lies to Othello about Cassio possessing the handkerchief. Othello flies into a rage, vowing revenge and Iago swears to help him kill Cassio and Desdemona. Desdemona worries over the lost handkerchief and Emilia claims ignorance. Desdemona informs Othello she has summoned Cassio to speak with him. Othello asks for her handkerchief but she lies and claims it isn't lost.

ACT II Desdemona and Emilia discuss Othello's strange behavior, Emilia contending it is jealousy. Cassio asks his girlfriend Bianca to make a copy of the handkerchief mysteriously found in his room. Iago bids Othello to hide and overhear their conversation. Othello believes the talk of Bianca is about Desdemona. Bianca returns with the handkerchief, jealous. Othello thinks he has proof of Desdemona's betrayal and decides to strangle her. Iago vows to kill Cassio. Lodovico delivers a letter to Othello summoning him to Venice and replacing him with Cassio. Desdemona's happiness for Cassio provokes Othello to strike her and Lodovico questions Othello's sanity. Emilia suggests someone has framed Desdemona. Desdemona begs for Iago's help. Roderigo and Iago agree to murder Cassio. Othello commands Desdemona to get ready for bed and dismiss Emilia. Later, Roderigo and Iago jump Cassio, wounding him. Othello thinks him dead and goes to murder his wife. Othello tells Desdemona he means to kill her and she begs for her life. He smothers her. Emilia discovers Desdemona. Othello admits to killing his wife because of what Iago said. Emilia calls Othello a murderer and confronts Iago with his lies. Iago stabs his wife and runs out, Othello is disarmed, and Emilia dies. Iago is caught and Othello kills himself.

Shakespeare at a glance

1558	Queen Elizabeth I takes the throne
April 23rd, 1564	William Shakespeare was born. He spent his early years in Stratford-upon-Avon where he attended school until age 14
1582	An 18-year-old Shakespeare marries 26-year-old Anne Hathaway because she is pregnant
1583	Susanna Shakespeare is born
1585	Twins Judith and Hamnet are born
1586	Shakespeare leaves his home and joins a company of actors as a performer and playwright
1592	London theatres close due to the Plague
1598	Shakespeare (and others) finance the building of the Globe Theatre
June 29th, 1613	Fire destroys the Globe Theatre during a performance of Henry VIII when cannon fire sets fire to the roof
1614	Second Globe Theatre is built
April 23rd, 1616	Shakespeare dies
1623	"The First Folio" of Shakespeare's plays is published
1644	The Globe Theatre is demolished



SHAKESPEARE'S UPS AND DOWNS

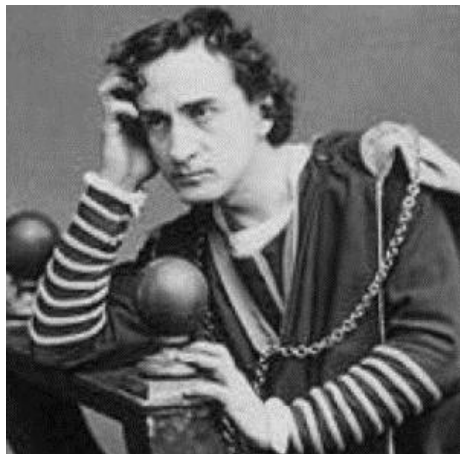
By Dr. Ann Jennalie Cook

Though the most popular and successful playwright of his day, William Shakespeare did not always bask in public acclaim. In fact, the survival of his reputation through the past four centuries was by no means certain. The publication of the First Folio in 1623 saved about half his plays that had never seen the dark of print, but when the Commonwealth closed all theaters from 1642 until 1660, few if any people saw his work on stage.

Even when performances resumed, actors felt free to cut scenes, add or omit characters, and change the plot. The public watched Nahum Tate's *King Lear* come to a happy ending, and Henry Purcell turned *The Tempest* into a musical after John Dryden and William Davenant had both re-written it. Some famous performers could make a version temporarily popular, as David Garrick did with his *Richard III*, but he acted *The Winter's Tale* without three of its five acts. Meanwhile, the growing taste for classical principles among intellectuals led them to irregularities of writing style.



David Garrick as Richard III, William Hogarth painting



Edwin Booth circa 1870 as Hamlet

During the 1800s, the theater pillaged Shakespeare to make money. The language was "bowdlerized" to strip out any offensive language, and any works regarded as immoral, like *Measure for Measure*, never made it to the stage. Great actors such as Edmund Kean or Edwin Booth (pictured left) seized on great roles, great moments, and spectacular effects but heavily cut the rest of the plays in which they performed. This kind of Shakespeare traveled so widely in America throughout the nineteenth century that Mark Twain satirized the inept troupes in *Huckleberry Finn*.

Ironically, the Romantics of the period raised Shakespeare's reputation, but not as a playwright. For them, he was a poet to be read rather than seen. Charles Lamb declared *King Lear* "essentially impossible to be represented on a stage." Publishers began to print new editions, many with gorgeous engravings, and found them extremely profitable. Volumes of the plays became an essential part of any cultured family's library. Even in small towns, groups of readers formed to read, discuss, and declaim passages from Shakespeare.



Charles Lamb
(1775-1834)

When literature finally entered the curriculum as a subject worthy of teaching, every student eventually encountered at least a few of the best-known plays. The reverence for Shakespeare the poet ensured his fame while dooming him to dislike and dread among most who had to study him in school. The emergence of complex literary interpretations at the university level spread to classrooms at the secondary level, further alienating pupils from “the world’s greatest writer.”

It has taken almost a century to return Shakespeare to his roots. In the early 1900s, directors began working from the original texts. Audiences responded enthusiastically to theaters like the Old Vic and the Royal Shakespeare Company in England. On this side of the Atlantic, the Shakespeare Festivals in Ashland, OR, Stratford, ONT, and New York City have grown steadily since the mid-century. Other performing groups devoted primarily to Shakespeare have sprung up throughout the country, including the one here in Nashville. The reconstructed Globe in London and,



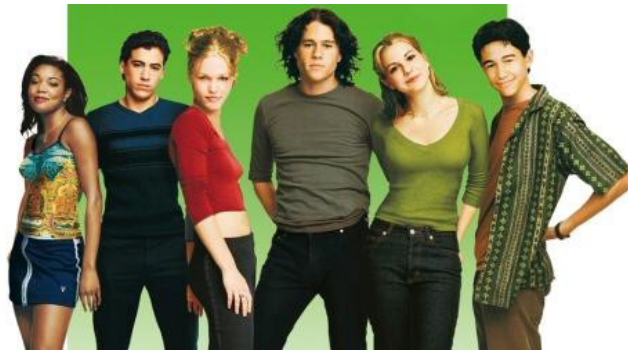
Nashville Shakespeare Festival

nearer home, the Blackfriars in Staunton, VA, delight viewers with plays performed on stages from the Elizabethan and Jacobean period. So many other countries have appropriated Shakespeare that scarcely a moment goes by on any day of the year without multiple productions in progress. Indeed, more people now see these works than all the earlier spectators combined.



Emma Thompson and Kenneth Branagh in *Much Ado About Nothing*

With movies and television, Shakespeare has extended his influence to an even wider audience. But even without such mass media, the public would pay homage through the appropriations of his words, characters, and plots by novelists, poets, other playwrights, music, and all forms of popular culture. Any English-speaking individual spouts Shakespeare, knowingly or unknowingly.



10 Things I Hate About You, 1999

Increasingly, teachers recognize that the plays will speak for themselves if students have access to them in their intended format – performance. Bare words on a page do not represent “Shakespeare” any more than bare notes on a score represent “Beethoven.” A dramatic script is fundamentally different from a poem or novel or short story because it depends on non-verbal elements to bring it to life. It depends on a live, uninterrupted encounter between audience and actors. Anything less demeans his achievement.



The Chandos portrait. Artist and authenticity unconfirmed.

It may depict William Shakespeare.

Or not.

Historical Context: Eliza & James

By Hugh Inman



Queen Elizabeth's Funeral Procession, 1603. Attr. to William Camden

The year 1603 brought great changes to the lives of all English citizens, none more so than William Shakespeare himself. In March of that year Queen Elizabeth I died, ending a forty-four year reign. Over one thousand attended her funeral, and tens of thousands lined the streets to view her funeral procession. Historian John Stowe wrote that her mourners raised "such a general sighing, groaning and weeping as the like hath not been seen or known in the memory of man." One wonders if William Shakespeare was among the mourners who attended the service or lined the streets. One thing is certain. It was a time of sadness and uncertainty for the playwright, whose rising star had still not reached its zenith. Elizabeth I had been a loyal patron of Shakespeare and his company of actors, the Lord Chamberlain's Men. During the last ten years of her reign, they had performed at court thirty-two times, compared to thirty-seven performances by all other companies combined. Now a new monarch was on the throne, this time a king, not from England, but Scotland.



James VI portrait, Daniel Mytens, 1621

James VI of Scotland had been king since the age of thirteen months when his mother, Mary Queen of Scots, was beheaded in the Tower of London on orders from her cousin Elizabeth (yes, Good Queen Bess). During the last years before her death, Queen Elizabeth had sent several companies of actors to Scotland, probably as a gesture of goodwill. By all accounts, King James was greatly pleased with them. Although there is no concrete evidence that Shakespeare traveled to Scotland, it is likely that he journeyed there with some of the players with which he was associated between 1599 and 1600 to lay the groundwork for the likely king's acceptance. King James ascended to the throne of England in May 1603 as James I, and one of his first acts was to grant Shakespeare and others a license to perform in London at the Globe theatre. The acting company now called themselves The King's Players, and later The King's Men.

Any concern that Shakespeare had about the patronage of the King vanished quickly. During his reign the theatres enjoyed unprecedented support, with the King providing patronage even greater than Queen Elizabeth had shown. In writing to his son Henry offering advice about being a successful monarch, James referred to himself as a "player-king." We, as devotees of the Bard, owe a great deal to these two sovereigns of England, so vastly different in style and purpose, yet fortunately alike as true champions of the theater and lovers of plays.

Shakespeare's friend and contemporary, Ben Jonson wrote in the preface to the First Folio in 1623 about the delight Queen Elizabeth and King James took in witnessing the plays of Shakespeare...

*"Those flights upon the banks of Thames
That so did take Eliza and our James."*

Ben Jonson portrait by Abraham Blyenberch



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Setting the Scene: *Othello* activities for the classroom

*“So will I turn her virtue into pitch,
And out of her own goodness make the net
That shall enmesh them all”*

(Act II, Scene III)

Soliloquies and Asides

In *Othello* characters use soliloquies to express desires, plan, confess and reveal true intentions. I like to think of soliloquies as solos to remember that they occur when characters are alone on stage.

An aside happens when a character speaks to the audience while other people are in the scene. This clues the audience in on a character’s true feelings while leaving the other characters oblivious, like a spoken secret.

Activity I

Soliloquies (Act 1 scene 3 or Act 5 scene 2)

As a class read and discuss Act 1 scene 3 beginning with Roderigo’s line “Iago.” How does Iago talk to Roderigo? Familiarly? Respectfully? What is his advice to Roderigo about how to attain Desdemona? Compare Iago’s response to Roderigo in the scene with what he says in the soliloquy. What does Iago reveal about his personality? Should he be trusted?

As a class read Othello’s Act 5 scene 2 soliloquy. What choice is Othello struggling with? Why does Othello compare Desdemona to a burning light? How do you put out a flame? What does this foreshadow?

Activity II

Asides (Act 2 scene 1)

Cast the roles of Iago, Emilia, Desdemona, Cassio, and Othello. Then read the scene out loud with the “actors” on their feet beginning with Desdemona’s line “O most lame and impotent conclusion”.

Iago should deliver his asides to the “audience”, the rest of the seated class. By sharing these thoughts what does he hope to gain from the audience?

Asides are a daily part of life. They are certainly employed in schools or any other place where large groups of people are gathered and noise can mask comments and remarks. Discuss how people use asides in everyday life. When and why do they occur? As a class, or in small groups, create a list of asides (in vernacular English), which one could expect to hear from Iago throughout the play. What function do they serve in telling the story? How would the play be different without them?

Discussion Ideas & Questions

*“... an old black ram
Is tugging your white ewe.”* (Act I, Scene I)

Discussion I: Racism and the “Other”

Othello deals with racism in very open terms. Being of a different culture and race makes Othello an outsider. This status of not really belonging in a society is often called the “Other”. Have you ever been in a situation where you were the only person of your race, gender, religion, economic class, etc.? What was that experience like?

In order to dehumanize groups of people that are different often animal images are used. During WWII the Nazis and many other groups identified Jews and other unwanted people as “rats” and “cockroaches” who needed to be exterminated. Did this work? Why?

[The Holocaust](#)

[Teaching Tolerance](#)

" 'tis the soldiers' life

To have their balmy slumbers waked with strife".

(Act II, Scene III)

Discussion II: Soldiers

What kinds of sacrifices do soldiers make? What do they protect? What is the duty of a soldier in peace time? Do you know anyone in the service? Did their experience change them? How? Are all soldiers equal? Are all wars equal?



In our production the soldiers are stationed in a fiercely guarded island paradise and live by a regimented code of

ethics and behavior. What would be some differences to look for between these soldiers and American soldiers? Are "soldiers" universal? Do they vary?

[Child Soldiers](#)

[Wounded Warrior Project](#)

"Give me a living reason she's disloyal". (Act III, Scene III)

Discussion III: Loyalty and trust

What does it mean to be loyal? Who does society say Othello, Desdemona, and Iago should be loyal to? What are they expected to do? Does being loyal mean you must believe and act upon what that person or group tells you even if you question it? How can you be loyal to yourself? Name two examples from your favorite movies or TV shows about loyalty, one good one bad.

Activity:

There is a concept in psychology known as "Locus of Control." It helps to identify which problems we have control over and which problems we do not.

In a journal, have students write 5-10 problems that they have. Use the ["Locus of Control Worksheet"](#) to have students evaluate whether their problem is internal or external, and whether they have control or no control over the problem. They can write the problem in the appropriate box. The more internal a problem is and the more control that a student has over it, the easier it is to change. Have them reflect on which problems they can change.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

By Casey Flyth

Miriam Webster classifies PTSD or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as: a psychological reaction occurring after experiencing a highly stressing event (as wartime combat, physical violence, or a natural disaster) that is usually characterized by depression, anxiety, flashbacks, recurrent nightmares, and avoidance of reminders of the event. It is an unavoidable feeling of being in constant fear or danger even when perfectly safe.



Though PTSD can occur to anyone who has relation to a traumatic event, the population group most commonly affected by this disorder is soldiers and veterans who have seen violent combat. This disorder has long been a serious epidemic within the population of soldiers and veterans. The PTSD Foundation of America claims that as many as one in three troops are diagnosed with serious PTSD symptoms. Out of those diagnosed with serious PTSD, only forty percent will seek professional help. Those who have PTSD are known to suffer severely in their personal lives. They have difficulty keeping healthy relationships, and have extremely high rates of homelessness and suicide attempts.

The National Institute of Mental Health has done a large amount of research on the brains of PTSD sufferers. They claim that PTSD is strongly related to the brain's PFC, or Prefrontal Cortex. The PFC is the part of the brain that blocks out painful memories or "controls the brain's stress alarm center". When someone suffers from an

extremely traumatic situation, the experience may be so severe that it hijacks the brains PFC, and blocks it from being able to do its job – the job of keeping the person calm and secure. The override of the PFC is PTSD.

PTSD is a serious issue in our country, especially in soldiers and veterans. As this disorder continues to be brought to light, research and resources become more readily available to its victims.

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Children in the Military: An International Issue

By Annalise Maker



The atrocity of child soldiers dates back to antiquity. Ancient literature and philosophy document children as a part of a soldier's baggage. Throughout history, we see children fill a variety of roles. Medieval Europe utilized boys from twelve

years old and up as "squires". Napoleon enlisted many teenagers for military purposes. In Russia, boys as young as eight years old were taken to fill the quota under the reign of Nicholas I. Perhaps one of the more famous roles from history is the "drummer boy", which became well known during the Battle of Waterloo. American,

Willie Johnston received the Medal of Honor in the Civil War at age 11. Other children who armed the cannons were known as “powder monkeys”.

The use of children for military purposes can be found all throughout history in innumerable countries. Children were brainwashed and desensitized in the Indochina Wars to complete mass murders and other horrific acts in the Cambodian genocide. Other inhuman acts have taken place all over the world. In 2003, P.W. Singer of the Brookings Institution estimated “that child soldiers participate in about three quarters of all the ongoing conflicts in the world” (Nations).

Today Child Soldiers International, an international human rights research and advocacy organization, works to create a world where children are protected from any forced military recruitment and can grow to reach their full potential and enjoy their human rights. They work with several themed campaigns, which include issues of accountability, standard age requirement of eighteen years, state armed forces, recovery and social reintegration for former child soldiers, and the implementation of abiding by states’ specific protocol. Countries currently included in their program include: Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Thailand, and the United Kingdom (Home).

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DESIGN and ACTIVITIES

Color palette

Designers often work within a specific color palette or a range of hues. If your students had to choose only five colors to employ in a production of *Othello*, which five would they choose and why? Are these colors dark or light? What does each color communicate to the audience? Are particular colors associated with certain characters? Why? You can use [this link](#) to help your students explore color.



Costume

Costumes tell us about characters: age, status, occupation, personality, and sometimes what country they are in.



Lighting

Lights tell us where to look on stage and what time of day or even season it is but are also very useful when portraying mood.

What feeling do you get from the following pictures?



Scenery

Scenery for theatre is not always realistic. Sometimes it suggests a location and the mood that goes with it. What type of landscape is described at the beginning of the play? How could you portray that on stage? What type of scenic shift would have to happen when the action of the play moves to the island of Cypress (Cyprus)?



Sound

Sound design can incorporate any or all of the following: recorded sound effects, pre-recorded music, live music, and music designed specifically for that show. In *Othello* the sound will incorporate echoes of war, the voices you hear in your head, and whispers.

Casting

Using the characters with which your students are most familiar – perhaps Othello, Desdemona, Iago, Emilia, and Cassio, cast a production of *Othello* using modern-day film actors. Discuss what features, attributes, and visuals are important about the actors they choose to cast in the roles.



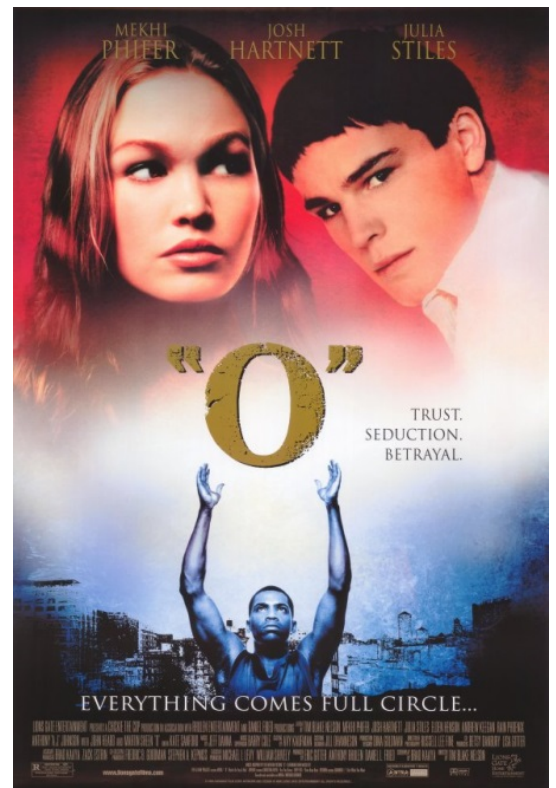


Sometimes it is fun to cast friends or family members when you are designing a play. Artists take inspiration from what they see every day.

Unique perspectives on Othello

Often in theatre experiments take place. Sometimes gender roles are switched, a play is cast non-traditionally, turned into a movie or deconstructed and put back together through music or other multi-media experiences.

[Othello at the Nashville Opera](#)



***Othello* in Performance**

By Dr. Ann Jennalie Cook

The earliest recorded performance of *Othello* occurred in November 1604, when the King's Men played at Whitehall Palace before James I, though the work had probably appeared on stage earlier that year. References to productions at Oxford, the Globe, the Blackfriars, and Hampton Court testify to its enduring popularity. In fact, during the seventeenth century, only *The Tempest* is mentioned in print more often. Samuel Pepys saw the tragedy twice, the second time at Drury Lane with Margaret Hughes, probably the first woman on any English stage, playing Desdemona to Nathaniel Burt's Othello.

From the time when William Shakespeare created the Moor for Richard Burbage, his company's leading actor, the role has been a favorite with great performers. The list of the famous includes Thomas Betterton, David Garrick, John Phillip Kemble, and Edmund Kean. Other lesser figures, like Spranger Barry, are virtually forgotten, even though he portrayed Othello to great acclaim in more than 20 different productions between 1746 and 1775. By the

Richard Burbage, artist unknown



Ira Aldridge

Ira Aldridge as *Othello*

nineteenth century, it had become customary for actors like William Charles Macready and Samuel Phelps or Henry Irving and Edwin Booth to alternate between playing Iago and playing the Moor opposite each other. During this period the American Ira Aldridge became the first black to undertake Othello, winning acclaim in London as well as in European cities.



Paul Robeson

Though this tragedy continued to find favor with audiences after 1900, no single actor stands out until another black American electrified audiences on both sides of the Atlantic – Paul Robeson. When he appeared at the Savoy in 1930, England’s finest performers, Ralph Richardson, Sybil Thorndike, and Peggy Ashcroft, played Iago, Emilia, and Desdemona, respectively. When he toured in the United States, some cities refused to book *Othello* because Robeson kissed Desdemona (Uta Hagen) on stage. However, by the end of the twentieth century, it had become politically incorrect for white actors to play the leading

role. Before that time, however, it was routine for any great male performer to tackle the part. The list of those who attempted it includes Ralph Richardson, Donald Wolfit, Jack Hawkins, Anthony Quayle, Richard Burton, John Gielgud, and Anthony Hopkins, among others.

In a startling reverse of now standard practice, the Shakespeare Theatre cast Patrick Stewart as Othello in a Washington, DC, production. However, all the Venetians were African-American, while all those on Cyprus were of mixed race. The play’s references to “blackness” became metaphors for character traits rather than skin color. For Stewart, who won raves from the critics, it marked a rare



Patrick Stewart as Othello and Patrice Johnson as Desdemona, Shakespeare Theatre Company

opportunity to take on a role he had wanted to play since he was fourteen. As he commented, “To replace the black outsider with a white man in a black society will, I hope, encourage a much broader view of the fundamentals of racism.”

Fortunately for teachers and students, an unusual number of *Othello* productions are available, beginning with a silent film from 1922. Starring German actor Emil Jannings and directed by Dimitri Buchowetzki, it features the exaggerated performing style and the brief sub-titles that mark this kind of movie. In a different category altogether is Orson Welles’ 1952 film of *Othello*.

So strapped for money that he had to take acting jobs to finance the project, he shot on location in Venice, then moved (when money permitted) to shoot in Spain

and North Africa. After costumes failed to arrive as expected, he shifted the attempted murder of Cassio and the murder of Roderigo to a Turkish bath so that everyone could just wear towels. Despite the sporadic schedule, the resulting work ranks with *Citizen Kane* as a masterpiece. Thanks to a restoration in 1992, audiences can revel in the unexpected camera angles, the recurring images of entrapment, and the haunting opening scene which shows the end of the tragedy before the plot unfolds. Black and white, rather than color, perfectly complement this film.



In 1963, the blockbuster staging of *Othello*, during the opening season of London's National Theatre, was taped and subsequently released for public viewing. Laurence Olivier spent a year deepening his voice a full octave and acquiring a vaguely Caribbean accent for his portrayal of the Moor. His dark black body makeup took hours to apply. By comparison, Frank Finlay as Iago seems a weak foil to his enemy, but Maggie Smith debuts brilliantly as Desdemona, and Derek Jacobi shows his future promise as Cassio. One night when someone in the front rows of the audience kept saying all his lines along with Olivier, he sent an employee to end the annoyance, only to discover that his "echo" was Winston Churchill.



While the BBC-TV series of all Shakespeare's plays produced a mixed lot at best, the 1981 version of *Othello* deserves considerable credit. Directed by Jonathan Miller, the performance managed to negotiate the limitations in budget, shooting time, locations, and casting that plagued this entire enterprise. In particular, the choice of Anthony Hopkins as the Moor and Bob Hoskins as Iago pitted a classically trained stage actor against a working-class movie

and television actor who never before (or since) played Shakespeare. During the seduction scene that marks the arc of the plot in Act Three, the close-up camera work reveals an intimacy of the two men's relationship, along with the understated, barely controlled violence of Othello.

In 1987, *Othello* made history in South Africa. Janet Suzman, who was born there and whose aunt (a long-standing, political opponent of apartheid) first gave her a copy of Shakespeare, decided to direct the play in that country. Already a star with the Royal Shakespeare Company, she lamented the fact that extraordinary black actors had no opportunities to appear in classical works. John

Kani, who had won a Tony for his role in *Sizwi Banzi Is Dead*, took on the title role. Each day of rehearsal and performance, he had to face police stops between his home in the township of Soweto and the Market Theatre, one of the few places in Johannesburg where black and white and colored could freely congregate. On opening night, when Othello kissed Desdemona (Joanna Weinburg) at the end of the first act, many in the audience walked out, though subsequently the run played to sold-out houses. While the filming of this production (released in 1995) does not reach professional movie standards, many



John Kani and Joanna Weinburg

students find it the most powerful of all the versions, particularly the Moor's death scene.

Another production by the venerable Royal Shakespeare Company in 1989 filled every seat in The Other Place, Stratford's tiny experimental playhouse (now demolished).



Ian McKellen

The director, Trevor Nunn, cast Willard White, a Jamaican opera basso with no experience in Shakespeare, as Othello. His unfamiliarity with the poetry and the subtleties of English accents clearly marks him as an outsider. Nunn's wife, Imogene Stubbs, portrays a physical, passionate Desdemona, while the veteran actor Ian McKellen plays Iago superbly. In the context of a British colonial setting, the hatred of a quintessential soldier for a commander both foreign and dark of skin makes perfect sense. Interestingly, Zoe Wanamaker, as Emilia, followed in the footsteps of her father, Sam Wanamaker

(fund-raiser and founder of London's Globe), who performed the role of Iago for the same company in 1959.

Though much shorter than the RSC production, the 1995 movie of *Othello*, directed by Kenneth Branagh and starring him as Iago, proves far less subtle. With a known box office name, Lawrence Fishburne, playing the Moor, the attention inevitably shifts to the villain because of the actor's long years of familiarity with Shakespeare. Such a tilt in focus from hero to villain has marked many other



Lawrence Fishburne and Kenneth Branagh

performances throughout history. Here textual cuts abound, and the locations often overwhelm the dialogue. However, the camera's focus on the mouth in repeated shots underscores the way words shape reality, fantasy, and destruction in this tragedy.

The most recent version of *Othello*, comes from a 2007 performance at the London Globe, directed by Wilson Milan. With Eamon Walker as the Moor and the talented Tim McInnerny as Iago, the filming takes viewers inside this recreation of Shakespeare's theater and, unlike tapes of other stage productions, offers the ambiance of a live performance. While far from definitive in terms of acting or interpretation, the presentation does bring in some elements that none of the other available possibilities offer.

Over the years, *Othello* has provided material for re-interpretation in a variety of media. Though not exhaustive, the following list identifies some of those re-interpretations.

A Double Life (1947) – movie starring Ronald Coleman (Academy Award for role, Signe Hasso, Shelley Winters. Double plots and double roles, tragically revolving around an actor's real life which merges with his stage life as the Moor.

Othello (1955) – foreign film, starring Sergei Bondarchuk, directed by S. Yutkevich, script by Boris Pasternak, music by Katchaturian. Influenced by Welles.

Othello (2001) – BBC show, directed by Geoffrey Sax, telling the story of a black policeman, John Othello, unexpectedly promoted to command over his erstwhile mentor, Ben Jago.

O (2001) – movie of teenagers Odin (Mekhi Phifer), Desi (Julia Stiles), and Hugo (Josh Harnett), playing out the consequences of a black basketball player at a private school who falls in love with the wrong girl.

Omkaara (2006) – foreign film set in India, superbly directed and re-interpreted by Vishal Bhardwaj.

Otello – opera by Giuseppe Verdi. Several versions, including one with Placido Domingo and Kiri Te Kanawa.

The Moor's Pavane – Ballet choreographed by Jose Limon with music by Henry Purcell.

Dr. Ann Cook Calhoun

Additional Teacher

Resources:

[Virtual Tour of the Globe](#)

[Shakespearean Dictionary](#)

[Technical Aspects of Theatre Flash Cards](#)

[Theater Lighting & Sound](#)

[Shakespeare Uncovered](#)

[Documentary Series Shakespeare:](#)

[The World as Stage by Bill Bryson](#)

[Nashville Ballet](#)

[No Fear Shakespeare](#)

Directions to the theatre

Trout Theater

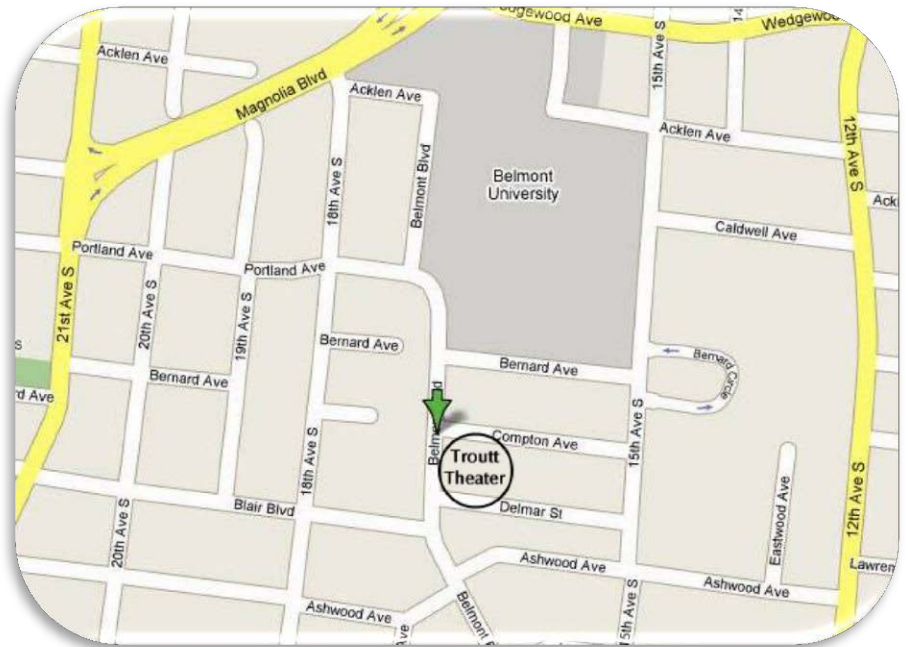
2100 Belmont Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37212

From I-440:

Take Exit 3 for 21st Avenue merge onto 21st Avenue and continue 0.4 mile. Turn RIGHT onto Blair Blvd. and continue 0.4 mile. Turn LEFT onto Belmont Blvd. and continue 500ft.

From I-65:

Take Exit 81 for Wedgewood Ave. Go west on Wedgewood Ave. and continue 1 mile. Turn LEFT on 15th Ave. S and continue 0.4 mile. Turn RIGHT on Delmar Street and continue 0.2 mile. Turn RIGHT on Belmont Blvd. and continue 300ft.



2014 NSF Apprentice Company for *As You Like It*

Interested in Theatre?

The Apprentice Company is a training intensive for aspiring theatre lovers age 13+ led by the Artistic Director and Education Director, along with guest artists hired from the professional talent in Nashville. Apprentices receive 50 hours of performance training in movement, voice and diction, acting, text analysis, and character work, and then perform supporting roles in the Shakespeare in the Park production. Auditions for the 2014 Apprentice Company will be April 19, 2014.

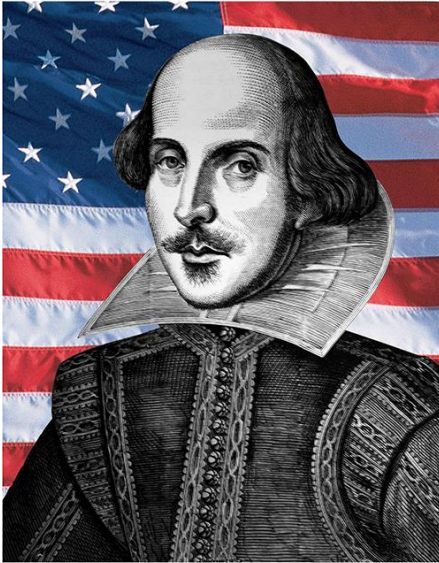
For further information on this program, visit
<http://www.nashvilleshakes.org/apprentice.htm>



2013 Apprentice Company, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Othello is made possible by:

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
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SHAKESPEARE
IN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES



This production is part of Shakespeare for a New Generation, a national program of the National Endowment for the Arts, in partnership with Arts Midwest. This project is funded in part by the Metropolitan Nashville Arts Commission and under an agreement with the Tennessee Arts Commission.

Nashville Shakespeare Festival
Othello
Locus of Control

Name _____

	Internal	External
Control		
No Control		

Name: _____

Date _____

Nashville Shakespeare Festival *Othello* Project Menu

Pick several project ideas from the menu below. You earn different points for different sections. Your total project must add up to 50 points. It is due to your teacher _____.

10 points	15 points	25 points	50 points
Rewrite the ending of the story. 1-2 pages.	Make a poster advertising the play.	Make a color design sheet that provides possible costumes for at least 5 characters	Make a 3 dimensional model of a possible set for the play
Write a 2 page summary of the historical context of the play.	Create a dust jacket with a front cover and back cover for the play.	Make a color design sheet that shows set design for at least 3 scenes	Build a board game that incorporates elements of the play.
Write an original poem, or song related to the play.	Memorize one of the monologues or soliloquies and perform it in front of the class.	Design music for the play. Include links to at least 5 songs, with a 1 page write up of where they would come in and why you would use them.	Make a 3 minute video reenacting a scene from the play.

The new Common Core State Standards for Reading Literature can be largely covered through following the activities in the Nashville Shakespeare Festival guidebook, as well as reading the play, attending the play, and participating in the NSF workshops. Depending on the activities, teachers may also cover many of the other ELA standards as well. The Guidebook itself can be used for Informational Texts. Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language standards may also be incorporated.

Standard	Meaning	Activity
Key Ideas and Details		
<u>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1</u>	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.	Loyalty Jealousy
<u>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.2</u>	Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.	Loyalty Jealousy
<u>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3</u>	Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).	Director’s Note
Craft and Structure		
<u>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4</u>	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)	Asides and Soliloquies
<u>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5</u>	Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its	Director’s Note

	aesthetic impact.	
<u>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.6</u>	Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).	Asides and Soliloquys
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas		
<u>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.7</u>	Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)	Othello in Production Viewing the play
<u>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.9</u>	Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.	Not Applicable
Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity		
<u>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.10</u>	By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently	Othello scores a 1390 Lexile score, putting it in the high range.