

DONMAR

NAXOS
AudioBooks

OTHELLO

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Includes
DVD
with interviews

NA392912D



Chiwetel Ejiofor
Photography Johan Persson

1	Act I Scene i	3:21
2	I am one, sir, that comes to tell you your daughter...	2:23
3	Act I Scene ii	3:58
4	Act I Scene iii	4:01
5	Say on, Othello.	6:44
6	I will incontinently drown myself.	4:03
7	Act II Scene i	7:50
8	Rodrigo, come hither: if thou be'st valiant...	3:24
9	Act II Scene ii	1:05
10	Act II Scene iii	6:20
11	Nay, good lieutenant!	4:41
12	What, are you hurt, lieutenant?	5:06
13	Act III Scene i	1:15
14	Act III Scene ii	0:14
15	Act III Scene iii	11:52

16	This fellow's of exceeding honesty...	2:14
17	I am glad I have found this napkin...	1:34
18	I will in Cassio's lodging lose this napkin...	9:20
19	Act III Scene iv	6:35
20	Save you, friend Cassio!	1:39
21	Act IV Scene i	4:18
22	Now will I question Cassio of Bianca...	5:03
23	What trumpet is that same?	3:44
24	Act IV Scene ii	6:42
25	What is your pleasure, madam? How is't with you?	2:52
26	Hark how these instruments summon to supper...	3:18
27	Act IV Scene iii	1:51
28	My mother had a maid call'd Barbary...	7:49
29	Act V Scene i	5:22
30	Act V Scene ii	12:37
31	Help, help, ho, help!	14:45

Total time: 2:36:17



Ewan McGregor

Cast list

in order of speaking

Roderigo	Edward Bennett
Iago	Ewan McGregor
Brabantio & Gratiano	James Laurensen
Othello	Chiwetel Ejiofor
Cassio	Tom Hiddleston
1st Officer, Messenger & 1st Cyprus Gentlemen	Alastair Sims
1st Senator & 2nd Cyprus Gentleman	David Mara
Duke of Venice & Lodovico	Michael Hadley
Desdemona	Kelly Reilly
Montano	Michael Jenn
Emilia	Michelle Fairley
Bianca	Martina Laird

The action takes place in Venice and Cyprus

First performed at the Donmar Warehouse on 30 November 2007

The Donmar Warehouse production of Othello directed by Michael Grandage

Production credits for the stage production

Director	Michael Grandage
Designer	Christopher Oram
Lighting Designer	Paule Constable
Composer and Sound Designer	Adam Cork
Casting Director	Anne McNulty
Production Manager	Patrick Molony
Company Stage Manager	Lorna Cobbald
Deputy Stage Manager	Jenny Grand
Assistant Stage Manager	Bella Lagnado
Assistant Director	Alex Sims
Costume Supervisor	Sarah Bownern
Fight Director	Terry King
Rehearsal Photographer	Marc Brenner
Production Photographer	Johan Persson

Recorded at Soundhouse Studios, London
Recorded and edited by Wilfredo Acosta
Audiobook production by Penny Leicester

DVD credits

Producer	George Scott
Editor	Phil McDonald
Cameraman	Justin Ingham



Kelly Reilly





David Mara, Michael Jenn, Tom Hiddleston, Alastair Sims

OTHELLO

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Othello dates from the first years of the 1600s, and a performance of it is recorded as being given before King James I in the Banqueting House in Whitehall on 1 November 1604. It was first published in 1622, in an edition that differs in many details of wording from that included in the collected edition (the 'First Folio') of Shakespeare's works put together by his fellow actors and published in 1623. Although it is set in Venice and Cyprus in a political and social world that seems remote from that of England, it speaks to some of the tensions and preoccupations of its time – the military and religious threat from a foreign power; the relationship between military genius, private passions and the state; and the always-present question of evil and its sources. It is not a simple matter of reading Catholic Spain

for 'pagan' Ottoman Empire, or seeing Queen Elizabeth's favourites Leicester and (most recently) Essex in Othello himself, but of a general sense of what might be at stake.

The first scenes of *Othello* unfold rapidly in an atmosphere of crisis – the rousing of Brabantio with news of his daughter's secret marriage, the council of war in the middle of the night to agree on measures to counter a threat from the Turkish fleet, and then the storm that threatens the Venetian ships as they make for Cyprus. With Othello's safe arrival there and the news that the military threat has ended, it seems as though calm has been achieved, but a campaign is already beginning that will engender more crises and bring four deaths in one climactic night. As the military emergency seems to

come to its climax and then resolve into calm, another more sinister campaign is developing rapidly – Iago’s destruction of Othello.

The four deaths are the culmination of three love stories (four if we include Roderigo’s infatuation with Desdemona). One of them, between Emilia and Othello’s ‘ancient’ (or ensign) Iago, is more mysterious than the others. Another is, in effect, the relationship between Iago and Othello, an obsessive need on Iago’s part that has already turned into hatred when the play begins. The simplest of these love stories, at the centre of the play, is that of Othello and Desdemona. To a prejudiced Venetian (or Elizabethan) eye, the strangeness of this union between a senator’s daughter and a black soldier – however eminent and accomplished – is mysterious enough to prompt the accusation of witchcraft from her father. Its secrecy brings with it an element of deceit that lingers after it is first voiced by Brabantio (‘Look to her, moor, if thou hast eyes to see, / She hath deceived her father, and may thee’), Othello’s account of his wooing – ‘she loved me for the dangers I

had passed, / And I loved her that she did pity them’ – is both justifiably proud and dangerously grounded in his self-esteem. Even as Othello is at his most impressive and eloquent in his speech to the Senate, there is a hint of a weakness that can later be played on by his enemy. Desdemona’s resourcefulness and spirit may seem to belie the picture of a naive young woman he evokes in speaking to the senate, but a certain naivety on his part and a degree of subtlety on hers do not undermine a sense of the good faith of the marriage. In fact faith in one another is fundamental to their identity, a part of Othello’s life that he describes in terms of religion:

‘Excellent wretch, perdition catch my soul,
But I do love thee, and when I
love thee not, Chaos is come again.’

This evocation of religion, and of specifically Christian notions of heaven and hell, sin, damnation and redemption, runs through the play. In the final scene, Othello sees himself as one of the damned: when he is confronted by Desdemona on the Day of Judgment, her ‘look’ ‘will hurl [his] soul



Michelle Fairley



Chiwetel Ejiofor and Ewan McGregor

from Heaven, / And fiends will snatch at it'. Belief in the devil seems to provide the only possible explanation for the unfathomable human wickedness of Iago, 'this demi-devil'. Iago is finally denounced as a 'damned slave', and his plotting is 'most heathenish and most gross'. Othello looks down to see whether he really has the cloven hoof of a devil, 'but that's a fable'.

The love story of Iago and Othello is altogether more complex. In it, trust in 'honest', soldierly virtue and a sense of masculine solidarity is met by a violently conflicted combination of envy, jealousy, racial prejudice and thwarted affection – when Iago insists 'I hate the Moor', the claim seems like an article of faith, a statement of pure emotion that he must cling to. But everything Iago says seems designed to deceive others in the play, the audience and perhaps even himself. Iago's marriage to Emilia has to remain a mystery, but that is part of the play's strategy, its refusal to dot all the I's and cross the T's about every relationship. We will never know exactly how these two worldly, pragmatic and (in his case, seemingly)

trustworthy people live together. Iago's pledging of himself to Othello as though in a wedding vow, with 'I am your own forever', seems to replace Emilia with Othello, and himself takes the place of Desdemona. And by putting himself in charge, seeming to manage a campaign on Othello's behalf while furthering his own plans, Iago has taken on the function of Desdemona as he described her to Cassio when he urged him to approach Othello through her: 'Our general's wife is now our general.' It is Iago who puts into Othello's mind the idea that he should 'strangle her in her bed, even the bed she hath contaminated', and the ghastly appropriateness of the notion is emphasised when Desdemona tells Emilia to put their wedding sheets on the bed. In one of the play's many ironies, Desdemona even asks Iago's advice on how to win back Othello's favour – just as Cassio had after his disgrace in the brawl.

The convolutions of Iago's planning are such that we in the audience may feel that we are only just abreast of them – and then, in fact, we discover late in the play that another element of the plotting

has been going on behind our backs: Iago has taken money from the hapless Roderigo on the pretence of buying jewels to give Desdemona on his behalf. There are times when common sense seems about to prevail – most remarkably in the conversation between Emilia and Desdemona in the final act – but it is always thwarted by the passion-driven machinery that has been set in motion and which thrives on the blind faith of Othello in Iago.

The play's compelling central figure is grand, eloquent and exotic – in the England of Shakespeare's time, doubly so – but he is not so much naive as unable to conceive the possibility of Iago's kind of malevolence. The perception of the 'ancient' as honest is shared by all the characters, with the possible exception of Emilia, who seems to perceive some mystery in her husband's impulses. The complex of feelings, passions and suspicions is not unlike that depicted in Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, though we will never know to what degree the insights of those extraordinary poems are indebted to Shakespeare's own experiences. Iago's

ability to use 'trifles light as air' (in this case, a handkerchief) to generate confusion and danger produces a violent physical as well as emotional reaction in Othello, prostrating him literally and allowing Iago a moment of triumph beyond anything we might have imagined at the beginning of the play. It is one of the play's abiding theatrical images, which range from the lone black figure addressing the senate to the ultimate 'loading of this tragic bed' in the final scene. It is as though Iago conceives of the world as a play, and himself as a stage-manager or dramatist, manipulating characters who do not know they are figures in a play he has devised.

By Russell Jackson

Russell Jackson is Allardyce Nicoll Professor of Drama and Theatre Arts at the University of Birmingham. His recent publications include *Shakespeare Films in the Making* (Cambridge, 2007) and *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film* (second edition, Cambridge, 2007).



James Laurenson

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Michael Hadley

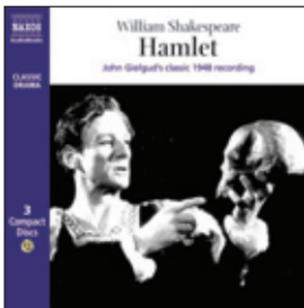


Edward Bennett



Tom Hiddleston

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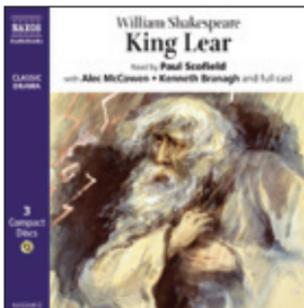
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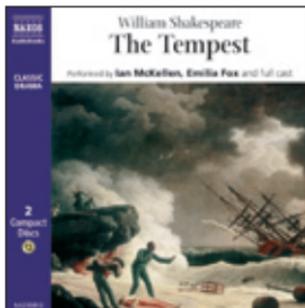
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BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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1st Officer &	Alastair Sims	Emilia	Michelle Fairley
1st Cyprus Gentlemen		Bianca	Martina Laird
	Director	Michael Grandage	
	Composer and Sound Designer	Adam Cork	

The Donmar Warehouse production of *Othello*, with Chiwetel Ejiofor in the title role and Ewan McGregor as Iago, was a sell-out during its London run. Ejiofor received 'Best Actor' in the Olivier Awards and the Critics' Circle Award for Best Shakespearian Performance. The production was nominated for a further three Olivier Awards. *Othello* remains one of Shakespeare's most performed and studied plays, with the intense driving force of the 'green-eyed monster' transforming the love Othello bears for his wife Desdemona to suspicion and murder, carefully orchestrated by Iago.

INCLUDES A DVD OF INTERVIEWS WITH THE CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

2007 Donmar Warehouse Production

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