

## OTHELLO

OTHELLO

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

DIRECTED BY NIGEL SHAWN WILLIAMS

### GRADE RECOMMENDATION

Suitable for Grade 7 and up.

### CONTENT ADVISORY FOR STUDENTS

Deals with issues of oppression, including racism and misogyny.  
Contains staged violence, including murder and suicide.

### STUDENT MATINÉE DATES

May 3, 7, 10, 15, 17, 22, 24, 31; June 5, 13, 27; September 5, 13, 20, 24;  
October 3\*, 4, 11, 16, 22.

(\* = Performance starts at 12:30 p.m.)

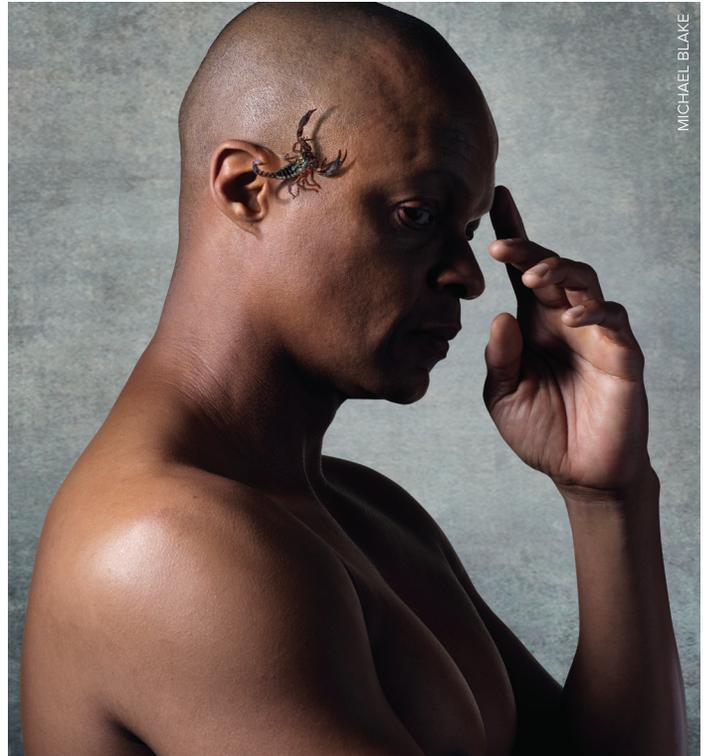
### ABOUT THE PLAY

Written in the later part of Shakespeare's career, *Othello* is a tragic story about an outsider who, despite being in a position of power, still suffers from insecurities that make him vulnerable to the schemes of a vindictive and deceitful former friend.

### SYNOPSIS

Iago resents the fact that his general, Othello, has promoted Michael Cassio to the rank of lieutenant. He initiates a plan to disgrace Cassio in order to have him demoted. Iago then suggests to Cassio that his best chance of getting reinstated is to ask Othello's new wife, Desdemona, to intercede for him. At the same time, Iago insinuates into Othello's mind the unjustified suspicion of a romantic liaison between Cassio and Desdemona. Of course, the more earnestly the innocent Desdemona pleads on behalf of Cassio, the more Othello suspects her.

By chance, Iago's wife, Emilia, has come into possession of a distinctively embroidered handkerchief of Desdemona's. Iago plants it in Cassio's lodging. Cassio, assuming some visitor has dropped it, notices the embroidery and gives it to his mistress, Bianca, to copy – a transaction that Iago ensures Othello sees. Othello, now certain of her adultery, smothers Desdemona, who dies protesting her innocence. The horrified Emilia summons the authorities. When Othello tries to justify himself by citing the evidence of the handkerchief, Emilia suddenly understands what Iago has done and denounces him. Iago stabs her and tries to flee, but is recaptured. Stripped of his office and ordered back to Venice to stand trial, Othello instead chooses to be his own executioner, stabbing himself.



### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

#### GLOBAL COMPETENCIES:

- Creativity
- Learning to Learn/Self-Awareness
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Critical Thinking

#### GRADES 7–12:

- Language/English (listening to understand, speaking to communicate, reading for meaning)
- Drama, Music, Visual Art

#### GRADES 7–12:

- Health and PE (interpersonal skills, conflict resolution, harassment, bullying, leadership)

#### GRADE 10:

- Civics (rights and responsibilities, inclusion)

#### GRADE 11:

- Introduction to Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology (explaining human mental processes and behaviour)

- Gender Studies (power relations, sex and gender)
- Equity, Diversity and Social Justice (the social construction of identity, power and relations)

### GRADE 12:

- Equity and Social Justice: From Theory to Practice (power relations, historical and contemporary issues, leadership)
- World History Since the Fifteenth Century (social, economic and political context)
- Adventures in World History (politics and conflict)

### THEMES

- Relationships: Love and Marriage; Gender and Sex; Trust, Jealousy and Fear
- Self-Knowledge: Appearance and Reality; Sight and Blindness; Confidence and Insecurity
- Power: Racism and Discrimination; Identity; Isolation; Lying, Deceit and Manipulation;
- Masculinity; Violence, Heroism and Honour
- Motifs: Plants, Animals, Hell, Demons and Monsters

### CLASSROOM WARM-UP

This introduces the world of the play through individual words.

Precut the words from the table below.

Invite students to stand in a circle with their hands held out in front of them to indicate that they haven't been called and pointed to yet.

Establish the pattern by pointing to one of the students after you call out their name. In turn, that student calls another student's name, then points to them and puts down his or her hands.

The students continue until each person is a part of the pattern.

Tell the students to remember who they pointed to in the circle: this is the pattern. Repeat the pattern to reinforce it.

Using the precut text, give one word to each student in the circle. Have them now repeat the pattern just saying the word. Invite them to do so a few times.

Discuss, based on these words, what they imagine the story might be about.

Soldier	Cyprus	Moor	Service
Lieutenant	Villain	Married	Love
Thief	Noble	Brave	Hate
Abuse	Wife	False	Beauteous
Lechery	Loving	Jealousy	Drunk
Quarrel	Honest	Handkerchief	Reputation
Suggest	Virtue	Protest	Cunning
Thoughts	Suspicious	Proof	Deceive
Friend	Mind	Jealous	Husband
Cause	Found	Confess	Whore
Treachery	Kill	Perjury	Honour

### ENRICHMENT

Study Guide available at [stratfordfestival.ca/studyguides](http://stratfordfestival.ca/studyguides)

Prologues (interactive presentations on stage) at 11 a.m. before every student matinée except May 3, 31; June 13, 27; September 5, 13, 20; October 3, 22.

Workshops and post-show chats may be arranged by calling the Education Department at 519.271.4040, ext. 2354.

Festival Theatre and Costume Warehouse tours may be arranged by calling the Box Office at 1.800.567.1600.

### BOOKING INFORMATION

**Online:** [www.stratfordfestival.ca/schools](http://www.stratfordfestival.ca/schools)

**Email:** [groups@stratfordfestival.ca](mailto:groups@stratfordfestival.ca)

**Phone:** 1.800.567.1600 or 519.273.1600

**Mail:**

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