

# AUDITION NOTICE

## Othello

by William Shakespeare

**Directors:** Francesca Ellis with Simon Bartlett

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**Reading:** Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024 7.45pm at the Mary Wallace Theatre  
**Auditions:** Monday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024 7.45pm at the Mary Wallace Theatre  
**Recalls** (if needed): Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> January, details tbc  
**Playing dates:** Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2024  
**Rehearsals:** From Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> February, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday evenings 7:30; Sunday afternoons 2:30. **Please advise all outdates on your audition slip, taking note of the time around Easter.**

On a hot, isolated Mediterranean island three outsiders – a black leader in a white state, an unworlly woman in a warzone, and a vengeful malcontent holding a grudge – plunge into tragedy. Othello is Shakespeare's shattering examination of interplaying status, privilege and power.

### Characters

**Othello** The titular 'Moor of Venice' – an experienced General of the Venetian army whose security falls prey to Iago's manipulation. Commanding yet gentle, outsider yet widely-respected. At first calm, eloquent and capable; later paranoid, unpredictable and violent. A character full of contradictions and questions for an actor to explore.

**Desdemona** A high-ranking, educated young woman, daughter of the influential Venetian Brabantia. Her sheltered life turns upside down when she is captivated by Othello and follows him to Cyprus. Charming, optimistic and kind, she struggles in a world where she doesn't know the rules.

**Brabantia** A prominent Venetian woman who has carved out power and influence in a man's world. Mother to Desdemona, she has raised her daughter with every comfort and privilege.

**Duke of Venice** Authority in Venice - a just, capable and even-tempered leader of the Senate. (*Act 1 only, possibly doubled.*)

**Iago** A malcontent with a grudge... or perhaps several. Low-ranking in Othello's army, he is nonetheless respected and trusted for his 'honesty'. In reality a resentful, destructive force, an underminer of power and security. A mercurial figure and practiced deceiver who at once fascinates and horrifies the audience.

**Emilia** Caring, clear-sighted and loyal, she becomes the confidant of Desdemona, and their relationship emerges as the most compassionate in the play. Wife to Iago, she steals a handkerchief for him that becomes the catalyst for the tragedy. Why she does so is the crux of the character and their relationship.

**Cassio** Young, charming and successful with the ladies. He has the easy confidence born of a comfortable upbringing, but has nonetheless proved himself in the Venetian army, and earns his promotion through his loyalty to Othello.

**Roderigo** Young, thinks-he's-charming, less successful with the ladies. With more money than sense, he pursues Desdemona with little consideration for why she should like him. Source of whatever comic relief we can wring out of the play, he is used and ultimately betrayed by Iago.

**Montano** Governor of Cyprus before Othello, he is also the General's friend and loyal supporter. Just and fair-minded, he is drawn into a brawl with the drunken Cassio, and briefly takes command after Desdemona's murder, recapturing the escaped Iago. (*Possibly doubled.*)

**Bianca** is sleeping with Cassio, and fiercely jealous of him, thinking their relationship more significant than he does. A woman without status, her forceful personality gains her little influence or justice.

**Gratiano** and **Lodovico** Desdemona's uncle and cousin, they arrive in Cyprus late in the story and are astonished at what they find. Their reason, sense and care highlight the disintegration of order on the island. (*Possibly doubled with other characters.*)

Other parts not listed here will be played by members of the cast.

**A note on ethnicity:** Actors of any ethnic background may audition for most roles, with the following exceptions: Othello will be played by an actor of colour, Desdemona and Brabantia will be played by lighter-skinned (though not necessarily white) actors.

**A note on gender:** Because the treatment of women in a man's world is an important theme, the gender of the characters will remain as originally written, with the exception of Brabantia (changed from Brabantio).

The production will use a movement and intimacy director, who will work with the cast to establish physical relationships. The roles of Othello and Desdemona will certainly involve intimacy. Iago, Emilia, Cassio and Bianca likely will. If you are considering one or more of these roles and would like to know more, please email Francesca and/or Simon.

**While auditions are open to all, please be aware that, if cast, you will be expected to become a member of the R.S.S. before the first rehearsal.**

**Audition application forms** are available in the theatre or can be downloaded from the auditions page of the R.S.S. website: [www.richmondshakespeare.org.uk](http://www.richmondshakespeare.org.uk)

**Please return these to the Hon. Secretary at the theatre or by e-mail to** [secretary@rss-mwt.org.uk](mailto:secretary@rss-mwt.org.uk)