



**SEPTEMBER**

**22 & 23**

**7:30 pm**

**The Theater at WHATCo**

**15 FRANK E. RODGERS BLVD S., HARRISON, NJ**

**(FREE PARKING IN THE FENCED LOT AT JERSEY ST.)**

**PAY WHAT  
YOU  
CHOOSE**



**RESERVE YOUR SPOT AT  
WHATCONJ.ORG/TICKETS**

The September Shakespeare performances are presented through a special collaboration with TNT, WHATCo, and the Hackensack Performing Arts Center.

 **PSEG** Education Spotlight sponsored by the PSE&G Foundation.

*Othello*  
by William Shakespeare

Study Guide  
*Presented through WHATCo. Spotlight on Education*

2023

# West Hudson Arts and Theatre Company

## Mission Statement

To be a cultural resource that will enrich and invigorate the West Hudson community as a whole while embracing, educating and entertaining people of all ages, cultures and abilities.

Through a range of quality theatrical productions we seek to stimulate, celebrate and enhance the understanding of theater while fostering and inspiring growth and creativity in our members.

We strive to be a resource for both the residents and businesses of the greater West Hudson area and to enrich the cultural depth, education and vitality of the community at large.

## Goals

To enliven and enhance the cultural life of the community at large and its visitors.

To contribute to the economic vitality of the area's (East Newark, Harrison and Kearny) downtowns and the growth of regional tourism.

To secure a local facility/building to better facilitate WHATCo's performance and educational goals and to provide fiscal and housing security for the future.

To develop an educational program to help potential performers and crew to:

Increase self confidence.

Enrich their understanding and appreciation of the arts.

Prepare for future opportunities at WHATCo and elsewhere.

Table of Contents:

About the Writer 3  
Synopsis 4  
Characters 5  
Discussion Questions 6  
Theatre Etiquette 7

# About The Writer

## William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare was a renowned English poet, playwright, and actor born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon. His birthday is most commonly celebrated on 23 April, which is also believed to be the date he died in 1616.

Shakespeare was a prolific writer during the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages of British theatre (sometimes called the English Renaissance or the Early Modern Period). Shakespeare's plays are perhaps his most enduring legacy, but they are not all he wrote. Shakespeare's poems also remain popular to this day. (Shakespeare.org/uk)

## Shakespeare's Works

### COMEDIES

All's Well That Ends Well  
As You Like It  
Comedy of Errors  
Love's Labour's Lost  
Measure for Measure  
Merchant of Venice  
Merry Wives of Windsor  
Midsummer Night's Dream  
Much Ado about Nothing  
Taming of the Shrew  
Tempest  
Twelfth Night  
Two Gentlemen of Verona  
Winter's Tale

### TRAGEDIES

Antony and Cleopatra  
Coriolanus  
Cymbeline  
Hamlet  
Julius Caesar  
King Lear  
Macbeth  
Othello  
Romeo and Juliet  
Timon of Athens  
Titus Andronicus  
Troilus and Cressida

### HISTORIES

Henry IV, Part I  
Henry IV, Part II  
Henry V  
Henry VI, Part I  
Henry VI, Part II  
Henry VI, Part III  
Henry VIII  
King John  
Pericles  
Richard II  
Richard III

## Synopsis

Othello, in full *Othello, the Moor of Venice*, tragedy in five acts by William Shakespeare, written in 1603–04 and published in 1622 in a quarto edition from a transcript of an authorial manuscript. The text published in the First Folio of 1623 seems to have been based on a version revised by Shakespeare himself that sticks close to the original almost line by line but introduces numerous substitutions of words and phrases, as though Shakespeare copied it over himself and rewrote as he copied. The play derives its plot from Giambattista Giraldi's *De gli Hecatommithi* (1565), which Shakespeare appears to have known in the Italian original; it was available to him in French but had not been translated into English.

The play is set in motion when Othello, a heroic black general in the service of Venice, appoints Cassio and not Iago as his chief lieutenant. Jealous of Othello's success and envious of Cassio, Iago plots Othello's downfall by falsely implicating Othello's wife, Desdemona, and Cassio in a love affair. With the unwitting aid of Emilia, his wife, and the willing help of Roderigo, a fellow malcontent, Iago carries out his plan.

Making use of a handkerchief belonging to Desdemona and found by Emilia when Othello has unwittingly dropped it, Iago persuades Othello that Desdemona has given the handkerchief to Cassio as a love token. Iago also induces Othello to eavesdrop on a conversation between himself and Cassio that is in fact about Cassio's mistress, Bianca, but which Othello is led to believe concerns Cassio's infatuation with Desdemona. These slender "proofs" confirm what Othello has been all too inclined to believe—that, as an older black man, he is no longer attractive to his young white Venetian wife. Overcome with jealousy, Othello kills Desdemona. When he learns from Emilia, too late, that his wife is blameless, he asks to be remembered as one who "loved not wisely but too well" and kills himself.

# Characters

## OTHELLO

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

## IAGO

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

## DESDEMONA

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

## EMILIA

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

## CASSIO

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

## BRABANTIO

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

## BIANCA

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

## RODERIGO

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

# Discussion Questions

## About the production:

- 1.) What did you like most about the production?
- 2.) Which story did you find the most compelling and why?
- 3.) What did you think of the design elements (lighting, set, costumes)?
- 4.) What was the audience's relationship with each character?
- 5.) What did you like about the world of the play?

## About the play:

- 6.) What role does revenge play in the story?
- 7.) What role does gender play in the story?
- 8.) What role does race play in the story?
- 9.) What role does jealousy play in the story?
- 10.) Did your opinion of any character change while reading the play?
- 11.) Do you think Othello is a tragic hero?
- 12.) What motives are there for each act of revenge?
- 13.) What is each character's motive? Do any motives change?

# Theatre Etiquette

- Arrive at the theater on time.
- Visit the restroom before the performance begins.
- Turn off your cell phone. Do not speak on the phone or text during the performance.
- Pay attention to announcements that are made prior to the show about the rules of the theater you are attending and the location of the fire exits.
- Don't speak during the performance unless you are encouraged by the performers to participate.
- Remember that the Overture (introductory music) in musical theater is part of the performance, so be quiet when it begins.
- Do not take pictures during the performance.
- Remain in your seat for the entire performance.
- Don't put or throw anything on the stage.
- Do laugh when the performance is funny.
- Do applaud when it is appropriate during the performance.
- Do applaud when the performance is over... this tells the performers and crew that you appreciate their work.
- Stand and applaud if you really thought the show was great (a standing ovation).
- Do not whistle, stomp your feet, or scream out to the performers except for a Bravo or Brava.