

Othello

Cast

<i>Othello</i>	<i>Don Warrington</i>
<i>Iago</i>	<i>David Threlfall</i>
<i>Desdemona</i>	<i>Anne-Marie Duff</i>
<i>Cassio</i>	<i>Jasper Britton</i>
<i>Roderigo</i>	<i>Stephen Mangan</i>
<i>Brabantio</i>	<i>Clive Swift</i>
<i>Emilia</i>	<i>Suzanne Bertish</i>
<i>Duke</i>	<i>Julian Glover</i>
<i>Bianca</i>	<i>Tracy-Ann Oberman</i>
<i>Montano</i>	<i>Will Keen</i>
<i>Gratiano</i>	<i>Chris Crooks</i>
<i>Lodovico</i>	<i>Alan David</i>
<i>Clown</i>	<i>Mark Bonnar</i>
<i>Herald</i>	<i>James Greene</i>
<i>Messenger</i>	<i>Jonathan Tafler</i>

Play description

ACT I

Scene 1. Iago tells Roderigo how Cassio has been promoted over him to the position of lieutenant to the Moor Othello, a general in the service of the Venetian state. Iago is furious but resolves to continue serving Othello for his own ends. Having learnt that his master has eloped with Desdemona, Iago informs her father, Brabantio, that “an old black ram/Is tupping your white ewe.”

Scene 2. Iago tells Othello of Brabantio’s fury. Cassio comes from the Duke of Venice with a summons for the Moor: there is trouble in Cyprus, a Venetian colony. Despite Othello’s conciliatory tone, Brabantio insists that the Duke be told of the elopement.

Scene 3. The Duke and senators are discussing a report that a Turkish fleet is on its way to Cyprus, when Othello and Brabantio arrive. Othello defends himself eloquently against charges of bewitching Desdemona, and she affirms the love between them. Brabantio reluctantly accepts the situation. Othello is appointed governor of Cyprus. Desdemona is to accompany her husband, and Iago will escort her to the island. Roderigo threatens suicide for love of Desdemona, but Iago assures him that she will tire of Othello and that Roderigo will then be able to seduce her. Once alone, Iago speaks of a rumor that his wife Emilia has betrayed him with Othello.

ACT II

Scene 1. The Turkish fleet has been destroyed in a storm off Cyprus. The Venetian ships are scattered and Cassio is concerned for Othello’s safety, though he is delighted to see Desdemona safely landed in Cyprus with Iago, Roderigo and Emilia. Iago observes the friendship between Cassio and Desdemona and reiterates his desire for revenge on Cassio and the Moor. Once Othello has arrived and gone with his entourage to the castle, Iago persuades Roderigo that Desdemona and Cassio are in love and enlists his help in discrediting the lieutenant. Once alone, Iago’s rampant jealousy emerges: “nothing can content my soul/Till I am evened with him, wife for wife.”

Scene 2. A herald announces a double celebration for the loss of the Turkish fleet and Othello’s marriage.

Scene 3. Having learnt that Cassio has a weak head for drink, Iago contrives to intoxicate him and involves him in a brawl with Roderigo and Montano. Othello angrily dismisses Cassio from his service. Cassio is devastated, but Iago urges him not to give up hope and to enlist Desdemona’s help in intervening with Othello.

ACT III

Scene 1. Despite Emilia’s reassurance that Othello still holds him dear, Cassio insists on seeing Desdemona alone.

Scene 2. Othello sends Iago with letters to the Senate.

Scene 3. Desdemona urges Othello to forgive Cassio. Once she has gone, Iago starts to work on Othello: he states repeatedly that Cassio is an honest man, whilst insinuating quite the opposite. He

warns the ever more uneasy Othello “O, beware, my lord, of jealousy!” Othello is adamant that he would never be suspicious without concrete evidence, but Iago advises him to watch Desdemona with Cassio, adding “She did deceive her father, marrying you.” Badly shaken, Othello resolves to discard Desdemona if she proves to have been unfaithful. When Desdemona drops her handkerchief, Emilia gives it to Iago. He plans to plant it in Cassio’s lodgings: “Trifles light as air/Are to the jealous confirmations strong/As proofs of holy writ.” Othello returns, accusing Iago of torturing him and demanding proof of Desdemona’s infidelity. Iago claims to have heard Cassio talking of her in his sleep and to have seen him use her handkerchief.

Scene 4. Having told Othello that she does not have his handkerchief, Desdemona continues to plead with him to see Cassio. She hopes that her husband’s anger is due to affairs of state, but is nonetheless disturbed by his uncharacteristic behavior. Cassio gives the handkerchief to his mistress Bianca, telling her that he found it in his room and would like it copied.

ACT IV

Scene 1. Iago fans Othello’s increasingly violent jealousy, until he collapses in an epileptic fit. Once Othello has recovered, Iago suggests that he eavesdrop on a conversation with Cassio about Desdemona. Unbeknownst to Othello they are actually discussing Bianca, who arrives with the handkerchief, convinced that it belongs to another woman. Othello is no longer in doubt and vows to murder Desdemona, leaving Cassio to be dealt with by Iago. When Lodovico comes from Venice with a letter from the Duke, he is appalled to see Othello strike his wife.

Scene 2. Despite Emilia’s insistence on her mistress’s innocence, Othello accuses Desdemona of being a whore. Iago tells Roderigo that Othello and Desdemona are to leave Cyprus; he suggests that Roderigo kill Cassio, thus preventing their departure.

Scene 3. Desdemona remembers her mother’s maid who was forsaken in love and died singing a song of “Willow;” she cannot get the melody from her mind.

ACT V

Scene 1. Roderigo fails to hurt Cassio, so Iago darts from his hiding place and wounds him in the leg. Pretending to avenge Cassio, Iago then kills Roderigo.

Scene 2. Othello smothers Desdemona in her bed. Emilia is horrified to learn of her husband’s part in the tragedy. Despite Iago’s attempts to silence her, she reveals the truth about the handkerchief, upon which Iago murders her. Othello lunges at Iago, but only wounds him. Overwhelmed with grief, he stabs himself and dies beside Desdemona’s body. Refusing to explain his conduct, Iago is led off to his punishment.

Track list

Disc 1

Track 1	Act I	Scene i
Track 2	Act I	Scene ii
Track 3	Act I	Scene iii
Track 4	Act II	Scene i
Track 5	Act II	Scene ii
Track 6	Act II	Scene iii (up to line 345)

Disk 2

Track 1	Act II	Scene iii (from line 345)
Track 2	Act III	Scene i
Track 3	Act III	Scene ii
Track 4	Act III	Scene iii
Track 5	Act III	Scene iv
Track 6	Act IV	Scene i
Track 7	Act IV	Scene ii (up to line 171)

Disk 3

Track 1	Act IV	Scene ii (from line 172)
Track 2	Act IV	Scene iii
Track 3	Act V	Scene i
Track 4	Act V	Scene ii