

national<sup>®</sup>  
youth  
theatre

ROYAL  
DERNGATE &  
NORTHAMPTON

# OTHELLO



# Othello

By William Shakespeare

Abridged by

Dzifa Benson

Directed by

Miranda Cromwell

Associate Director

Mumba Dodwell

Starring the

NYT REP Company

Co-produced by

Royal & Derngate as

part of their Made in

Northampton season

In partnership with

English Heritage

We would like to thank National Youth Theatre Patrons Ian McKellen and Helen Mirren, Sophie's Silver Lining Fund and Urban Myth Films for their support of bursaries for the National Youth Theatre Rep Company Members.

National Youth Theatre and Royal & Derngate are grateful for support from the Cultural Recovery Fund.



Promotional and rehearsal photography by Helen Murray

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This female-led thrilling and lyrical Othello remix, with Francesca Amewudah-Rivers in the title role, sees the National Youth Theatre REP company explore themes of love, jealousy, systemic racism and misogyny through the lens of crime and power.

The action takes place in and around Club Cyprus in Manchester in 1991.

Set against the early 90s rave scene with electrifying music and movement Olivier Award-winning Director Miranda Cromwell (Death of a Salesman, West End) gets to the heart of the play in this abridgement by dramatist Dzifa Benson (Creative Producer at The Water Replies for Estuary 2021 Festival). Othello was created under Covid-secure restrictions.

The production is a collaboration between Royal & Derngate and the National Youth Theatre, whose renowned alumni rank amongst Britain's greatest actors including Northampton's Matt Smith, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Helen Mirren and Daniel Day Lewis.



Backstage NYT graduates have gone on to work in key roles at the world's biggest theatres and events including Olympic Ceremonies, award-winning large-scale theatre productions and global tours of the world's biggest music artists.

Cultural leaders who started their careers with NYT include Bush Theatre Artistic Director Lynette Linton, Royal Exchange Artistic Director Bryony Shanahan, Brixton House Artistic Director Gbolahan Obisesan, Globe Theatre Artistic Director Michelle Terry, Old Vic Theatre Artistic Director Matthew Warchus and many more.

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## Writer's note by Dzifa Benson

What a time to be reimagining a play like Othello! I first started working on this production in October 2020, barely four months after the killing of George Floyd. Running parallel with that reckoning with systemic racism was a sharp uptick in the deaths of women resulting from an increase in domestic violence because of lockdown. When we were trying to decide what we wanted our Othello to do in the world, we wrestled with both these themes, inherent in Shakespeare's original, as well as with themes of feminism, othering, jealousy, toxic masculinity and identity.



In a world in which women in general, and Black women in particular, are often cast to the bottom of the socio-political pile, making Othello a queer, Black woman felt like an urgent opportunity to reflect on the intersectionality of prejudice in our society.



In the year 1603 to 1604, when Othello was most likely written, theatres were closed because of the bubonic plague. It feels like a special kind of poetic synergy that the National Youth Theatre's Othello is one of the first pieces of theatre that people can see now that theatres are open again after our own tussle with the pandemic.

I wish I could say that the world is a very different, better place to the one in which Shakespeare put racist language into Iago, Brabantio and Roderigo's mouths more than 400 years ago. In lots of meaningful ways, the world IS a better place but as we have seen with the killing of George Floyd and the debate over controversial statues, the racism that entrenched itself within European consciousness during Shakespeare's time is very resistant to change more than four centuries later.

This means that Othello, portraying an uber-racist fear of mixing the races through marriage and sex, is still very much a play for our time as it was in Shakespeare's day.



Simon Russell Beale, one of Britain's leading Shakespearean actors, said of making changes to Shakespeare: 'You can do what you like with it as long as you make coherent, emotional sense'. We have made bold changes to Shakespeare's original to enable us to ask the urgent and uncomfortable questions that are pertinent to our time: a script that pares back Shakespeare's original to its bare bones of plot and language; the gender-swapped title character; the addition of another character, the Chorus; the insertion of 21st century contemporary English; setting the action in a nightclub in 1991... would Shakespeare be turning in his grave? Let's not forget that Shakespeare himself famously abridged and remixed the sources of his stories into the plays we know and love so well today.



In addition, Shakespeare was the king of gender swapping, with regards to both his characters and plot devices. This company has worked so hard to make something exciting and emotionally coherent that has something to say about our common humanity. I think Shakespeare would have approved of our remix.

I hope you enjoy it too.



# The Cast





Tiajna Amayo  
DJ / Chorus



Francesca  
Amewudah-Rivers  
Othello



Will Atiomo  
Gratiano



Ishmel Bridgeman  
Cassio



Matilda Rae  
Bianca



Connor Crawford  
Iago



Alexandra Hannant  
Desdemona



Jack Humphrey  
Brabantio



James-Eden  
Hutchinson  
Roderigo



Tife Kusoro  
Montano



Jack Matthew  
Chorus



Nkhanise Phiri  
Chorus



Julia Kass  
Emilia



Will Stewart  
Ludovico



Adeola Yemitan  
Chorus



Ben Wilson  
Duke & Chorus



Rebecca  
Hesketh-Smith

We're very grateful to REP graduate and professional performer Rebecca Hesketh-Smith for covering the part of Desdemona.

# Credits



## **The Team**

**Abridged by**

Dzifa Benson

**Directed by**

Miranda Cromwell

**Associate Director**

Mumba Dodwell

**Designer**

Rose Revitt

**Movement Director**

DK Fashola

**Composer and**

**Musical Director**

Renell Shaw

**Sound Designer**

Xana

**Lighting Designer**

Zoe Spurr

**Fight Directors**

Yarit Dor &

Enric Ortuño

**Associate Lyricist**

Adeola Yemitan

**Additional Lyrics**

NYT REP Company

Chorus

**Assistant Director**

Masha Kevinovna

**Design Assistant**

Tomas Palmer

**Design Assistant**

Hannah

Ghotbi-Ravandi

(NYT member)

**Sound Assistant**

Daniel Mitchell

**Vocal Coach**

Marcia Carr

**Accent Coach**

Eleanor Manners

**Character Sensitivity**

**Coach**

Yassine Senghor

**Production Manager**

Ian Smith

**Deputy Production**

**Manager**

Jack Greenyer

**Company Stage**

**Manager**

Claire Risseeuw

**Tour Manager**

Dougie Wilson

**Covid Safety Officers**

Andy Patterson

and Anthony

Papamichael

**Chief LX**

Dom Cook

**DSM**

Alix Nicholson

(NYT member)

**ASM**

Samantha Galbraith  
(NYT member)

**ASM**

Emily Dimino  
(NYT member)

**Production Sound/  
Mixer**

Hope Brennan

**Lighting Operator  
and Assistant**

Ed Lawson

(NYT Member)

**Costume Supervisor**

Lisa Aitken

**Wardrobe Manager**

Anna Edwards-  
McConway

**Wardrobe Assistant**

Bella Collins

**Lighting Assistant**

Ben Sugrue

**Promotional,  
Rehearsal and  
Production**

**Photography**

Helen Murray

**Design by**

October Associates

**Promo film by**

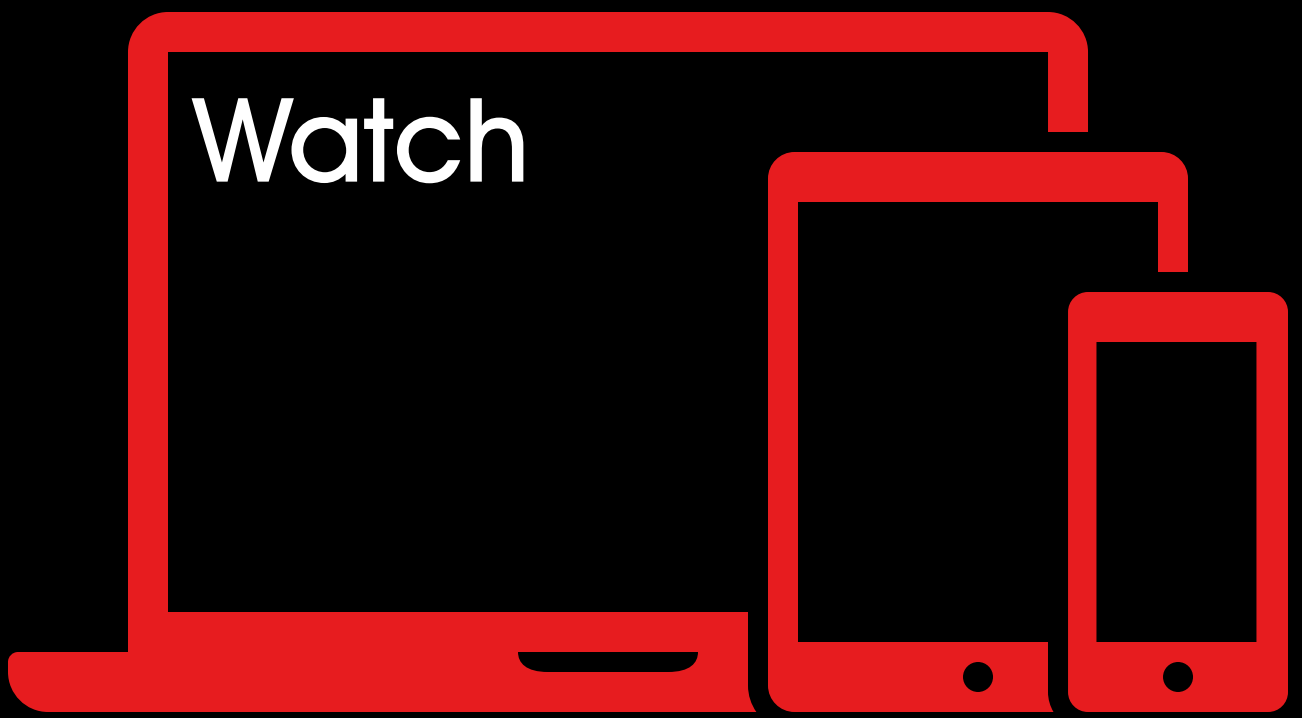
Eren Kaplan

**Rehearsal Emilia**

Abby Russell







Find out more about  
our Othello remix

Interview with  
Composer and  
Musical Director  
Renell Shaw

Interview with the  
NYT REP cast

**National Youth Theatre** is a pioneering charity that has nurtured the creative, personal and professional development of young creatives since 1956. In 2021 NYT will tour major venues UK-wide championing young talent, launch an Inclusive Practice Collective and open an accessible Production House for Young People.

We are inclusive, creative and collaborative and we celebrate all the ways we are different. Whatever your background or wherever you're from, we invite you to support our mission to be a creative force for good at a critical time for our industry, country and world.

Young people aged 11-26 can get involved by joining the NYT Hub today and access talks with leading industry voices, bi-weekly online workshops, acting auditions and backstage interviews for £2-a-month

[www.nyt.org.uk/hub](http://www.nyt.org.uk/hub)

## **NYT REP on Tour**

After opening at Royal &  
Derngate you can catch the NYT  
REP Company in Animal Farm  
and Othello on Tour at:

2–12 June,  
Workshop Theatre,  
National Youth Theatre, Islington

10 –13 June,  
Soulton Hall,  
Shropshire

23 – 26 June,  
Bolsover Castle,  
Derbyshire

[www.nyt.org.uk/reptour](http://www.nyt.org.uk/reptour)

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## Royal & Derngate, Northampton

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### Chief Executive

Jo Gordon

### Artistic Director

James Dacre

Royal & Derngate Northampton is the main venue for arts and entertainment in Northamptonshire and one of the major producing theatres in the country, with its acclaimed Made in Northampton work touring nationally and internationally.

Eight of its productions transferred to London and the West End in 2019, with *The Worst Witch* winning the 2020 Olivier Award for Best Family Show and *Our Lady of Kibeho* being nominated for the 2020 Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre and named by *The Guardian* as one of the 20 Best Shows of the 21st Century. Meanwhile, recently artists have won The Stage Ensemble Award, The Stage Debut Award and the Ian Charleson Award for their work on Made in Northampton productions and the adapted screenplay from Royal & Derngate's original play commission of *The Pope* was nominated for Best Adapted Screenplay at the Academy Awards as Netflix's *The Two Popes*.

In addition to *Animal Farm* and *Othello*, the 2021 Made in Northampton season includes Ralph Fiennes in the world premiere stage adaptation of T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, a brand new musical *Gin Craze!* by April de Angelis and Lucy Rivers, and a radical touring revival of Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None*.

The venue also presents a diverse range of visiting productions on both the Derngate and Royal stages, featuring musicals, dance, comedy and music, and its two-screen cinema presents the best in world, independent, British and mainstream film. Over recent years the theatre has hosted the UK Musical Theatre Conference, *Devoted & Disgruntled 14* and the International Teach First conference.

Royal & Derngate's nationally recognised Creative Learning programme engages with schools, families and communities in Northamptonshire and beyond, and its Generate artistic development programme regularly supports hundreds of local artists each year.

Royal & Derngate also continues to work in partnership to manage The Core at Corby Cube.

**Box Office** 01604 624811

[www.royalandderngate.co.uk](http://www.royalandderngate.co.uk)

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Sir Elton John CBE, Matt Lucas,  
Sir Ian McKellen CH CBE, Dame Helen  
Mirren DBE, Rosamund Pike, John Reid,  
Matt Smith, Liza Tarbuck

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### Executive Director

Karen Turner

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Mason, Eliot Sandiford

## REP Mentors

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Crampsie, Joe Cole, Sope Dìrísù,  
Ray Fearon, John Hollingworth, Kane  
Husbands, Bryony Jarvis-Taylor, Emily Lim,  
Ruth O'Dowd, Régé-Jean Page, Nikesh  
Patel, Charlotte Sutton, Michelle Terry,  
Ashley Zhangazha

## REP Buddies

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Jordon Ford-Silver, Jamie Foulkes, Alice  
Franziska, Billy Hinchliff, Jadie Hobson,  
Bede Hodgkinson, Tiwalade Ibirogba-  
Olulode, Julia Kass, Sarah Lusack,  
Jemima Mayala, Joseph Payne,  
Sonny Poon Tip, Raj Singh

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