

SHAKESPEARE DOUBLE BILL OTHELLO

Written by William Shakespeare
Directed by Nikhil Vyas
Designed by Mima Jupp & Fiona McKeon

Welcome to our enticing Shakespeare double bill. You will be watching the BA Professional Acting second-year students on stage - this production is a collaboration between students and staff from across the School, including costume, lighting, sound, stage management, props, set construction, design, voice and directing.

The running time for the show is approximately 2 hours 10 minutes, with a 20 minute interval.

GOT A COUPLE OF MINUTES BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE BEGINS?

Scan the QR code to sign up for our shows mailing list and be the first to know about our upcoming shows and events.



Did you know the entire Cast, and the majority of the Creative and Technical Team are students currently training at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School? We love supporting the next generation of creative experts. Find out more about our charity at oldvic.ac.uk/support-us.

Creative and Technical Team

Director Nikhil Vyas *
Festival Stage Design Mima Jupp
Production Designer Fiona McKeon *
Sound Designer & Operator Leo Palmer
Lighting Designer & Operator Abigail Georgia
Assistant Director Isabella Forshaw
Fight Arranger Jonathan Howell †
Intimacy Clare Fox †
Voice Coach Sue Cowen †
Dialect Coach Katy Sobey †
Production Manager Jo Woodcock *
Associate Producer Ruth Sidery †
Production Supervisor Lucy Pharaoh †
Stage Manager Angharad Stemp
Deputy Stage Manager Lydia Tricks
Technical Tutor Joe Stathers †
Additional Technical Support Chris Swain *

Costume Supervisor & Maker Jenna Simpkins
Costume Assistant, Maker & Dresser Laura Conroy *
Costume Tutors Rozi Hogger †, Sarah Campbell * and Elaine Andrews †
Head Of Costume Jill Blundell †
Scenic Carpenters Andy Powell * and Lewis Bamford *
Scenic Artist Jo Browne *
Assistant Scenic Artist Skye Turner *
Construction Manager Max O'Malley-Mesher
Construction Assistant Will Manthorpe
Head Of Scenic Construction Andy Scrivens †
Prop Making Supervisor Kacey Purnell †
Prop Makers Chris Wierzbicki and Živa Bučer *
Prop Making Tutor Louise Thomas †
Programme Notes Grace Donaldson

* Visiting professional | † BOVTS staff

We'd like to extend our thanks to all the staff at The Station & Jikoni café. Thanks to Susan Hoare and Andrew Bryant for the prop loans.

**SUMMER
FESTIVAL**
FOUR WEEKS, EIGHT PLAYS

Festival opens: Thursday 21st May 2026
Performances: Thurs / Fri / Sat at 7pm & 1pm Sat matinee

Week 1: **Four Play** by Jake Brunger / **Meat** by Gillian Greer
Week 2: **The Étienne Sisters** by Ché Walker / **dirty butterfly** by debbie tucker green
Week 3: **King Troll** by Sonali Bhattacharyya / **The Crocodile** by Tom Basden
Week 4: **Blackthorn** by Charley Miles / **Island Town** by Simon Longman



Cast **Gratiano** Jasmine Alleman
Desdemona Jessica Carrison
Lodovico Fraser Dawtrey
Emilia Ruby Decent
Iago Charlotte Edwards
The Duke Raphael Goold
Bianca Maya Hicklin
Montano Oliver Keaton
Ensemble Ilaria Balestra Lawrence
Ensemble Robyn Mirmak
Brabantio D'Angelo Poskitt
Roderigo Thapelo Ray
Othello Osi Samuel
Cassio Xander Searson

Bristol Old Vic
Theatre School

PROGRAMME NOTES GRACE DONALDSON - MA DRAMA WRITING STUDENT

Widely considered one of Shakespeare's great tragedies, *Othello* is an all-consuming spiral of prejudice, ambition and deception. Written in the early 1600s, it explores the destruction wrought by the racial discrimination and rigid gender roles of the Elizabethan era. Over 400 years later, these themes still feel troublingly pertinent.

The original text reflected the racial prejudice of Shakespeare's era, exacerbated by the Empire's increasing financial contact with African and Mediterranean countries. By transplanting *Othello* from 16th century Europe to Wall Street in the 1980s, Nikhil Vyas crafts a production sizzling with contemporary relevance. This abridged adaptation highlights just how rapidly one person's quest for power can spiral out of control - and how existing prejudices can be exploited to engineer utter tragedy.

The 1980s was a time of huge social change for Wall Street, as more women and individuals from the global majority were able to obtain influence within the banking industry. Questions around who has access to money and power echo across both periods, and linger in 2026.

Casting Iago as a woman complicates her and Othello's respective journeys - as marginalised people attempting to thrive in the overwhelmingly white, masculine world of finance, they face a more fraught journey than most. Vyas's production becomes an examination of the tough choices people on the fringe must make to be accepted by the elite.

Iago's decision to manipulate existing prejudices against Othello in order to secure her own position in the financial hierarchy takes on a new, tragic twist. For a queer woman to thrive in the bloody business of banking, she must be twice as Machiavellian and scheming as her male counterparts; she must throw a fellow outsider to the wolves.

Reminiscent of popular media such as *Industry* and *Succession*, this twist on *Othello* reflects the complex relationship between marginalised people and the economic elite, inviting the audience to critique biased power structures.

The rich themes of *Othello* allow the talented cohort at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School to breathe life into complex characters on transformative and, in many cases, deadly - journeys. Vyas's innovative adaptation is a nuanced, morally-grey tale that examines the lengths people will go to obtain power - and who they're willing to sacrifice along the way.

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