



Wesfarmers Arts

SYNOPSIS & CASTLIST

Executive Director Carolyn Chard AM
Artistic Director Chris van Tuinen

West Australian Opera presents

OTELLO

20 – 29 July 2023
His Majesty's Theatre

This production of *Otello* is presented by arrangement with Opera Australia.

Composer Giuseppe Verdi
Librettist Arrigo Boito
Conductor Christopher van Tuinen
Original Director Harry Kupfer
Revival Director Miranda Summers
Set Designer Hans Schavernoch
Costume Designer Yan Tax
Lighting Designer Toby Sewell

Otello Paul O'Neill
Desdemona Naomi Johns
Iago José Carbó
Emilia Ashlyn Tymms
Cassio Nicholas Jones
Roderigo Matthew Reardon
Lodovico Mark Alderson
Montano Brett Peart
A Herald Lachlan Higgins

WEST AUSTRALIAN OPERA CHORUS
WEST AUSTRALIAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Act I
Cyprus. A storm batters the Venetian fleet, but Otello, a Venetian general and governor of Cyprus, lands his ship safely in the port. He announces victory over the attacking fleet. Otello's ensign Iago tells Roderigo that Desdemona, Otello's new wife, will soon tire of her husband. He reveals his hatred for Otello, who promoted Cassio and passed Iago over. Iago provokes Roderigo to get into a fight with Cassio. Otello appears from the castle to restore order, furious about his soldiers' behaviour. He takes away Cassio's recent promotion.

Act II
Iago advises Cassio to present his case to Desdemona, who might influence the general. Alone, Iago declares his belief that a cruel God created man wicked and life has no meaning. He watches as Cassio approaches Desdemona in the garden. Otello enters and greets his wife, but when she brings up the question of Cassio's demotion, he grows angry.

She offers her handkerchief to cool his head, but he throws it to the ground. Her attendant Emilia, Iago's wife, picks it up. As Desdemona tries to calm Otello, Iago seizes the handkerchief from Emilia. Otello asks to be alone and everybody leaves, except for Iago, who remains to observe Otello's growing suspicion. He invents a story of how Cassio spoke of Desdemona in his sleep; he mentions that he saw her handkerchief in Cassio's hand. Otello swears vengeance.

Act III
A herald informs Otello that Venetian ambassadors will soon arrive. Iago tells the general he will soon have evidence of his wife's infidelity. Desdemona enters, and brings up Cassio's demotion. Otello demands the handkerchief he gave her. She again pleads for Cassio. Unable to control his fury any longer, Otello accuses her of infidelity and dismisses her. Left alone, he suffers a fit of desperation and self-pity, then hides as Iago returns with Cassio. Iago flashes the handkerchief he stole and leads the conversation with Cassio so that Otello overhears only fragments and incorrectly assumes they are talking about Desdemona. As trumpets announce the Venetian ambassadors, Otello vows to kill his wife that very night. The ambassador Lodovico arrives, recalls Otello to Venice and appoints Cassio to govern Cyprus. Losing control at this news, Otello pushes his wife to the floor, hurling insults. He orders everyone out and collapses in a seizure. Iago gloats.

Act IV
Emilia helps Desdemona prepare for bed. Frightened, Desdemona sings about a maiden forsaken by her lover and recites her prayers. As soon as she has fallen asleep, Otello enters and wakes Desdemona with a kiss, before killing her. Emilia knocks with news that Cassio has killed Roderigo. Shocked to find Desdemona dying, she summons help. Iago's plot is revealed and Otello realises what he has done. He kills himself.

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