

Strong cast brings Othello to life

 By [Frances Aron](#)

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A starlit sky, a dimly lit forest background and a graceful stage setting effectively set the mood for Maynardville's memorable production of *Othello, The Moor Of Venice*, with director Fred Abrahamse skilfully drawing the audience into a captivating tragic tale of jealousy, passion and obsession.

It's all about love and the audience will definitely relate to the different forms of love revealed throughout the play; from the obsessive love of Bianca for Cassio, of Rodrigo for Desdemona, to the love between Iago and Othello. In fact, Shakespeare employs all these cases of mistaken love to undermine the one true love, that of Othello and Desdemona. The tragedy of *Othello* is as relevant today as it has been throughout the centuries since it was written.



A strong cast

A Shakespearean tragedy requires a strong cast to bring the story to life. Filled with numerous ironic twists, the cast delivers their verses with aplomb in this domestic tragedy, which explores an endless path of provocation and victimisation.

It is Iago, the antagonist who demands the most attention with loaded soliloquies and sporadic asides, the evil villain is played by Marcel Meyer with cool shrewdness and versatility. Typically Machiavellian, Iago is considered to be one of, if not the most sinister of Shakespearean characters, leaving a path of hell in his wake as he manipulates everyone, including his wife Emilia, in order to fulfil his desire for power. Meyer's performance is chilling to the core, psychopathic to the extreme.

As Othello, Muntu Ngubane is remarkably strong as the loving husband and highly respected general who trusts his friend Iago implicitly. Ngubane cuts a formidable figure, his masculinity portrayed by his superb physique combined with a gentleness and utmost integrity. However, he is perhaps naïve in his inability to see through Iago's deceit and the pathos felt by the audience is palpable as he descends deeper into jealousy and rage at the hands of the charismatic and seductive schemer.



Seemingly, Othello, the exotic and noble Moor, and Desdemona, the daughter of a Venetian nobleman, had broken through the stereotypic mould of racial prejudice. However, as Othello loses himself in rage and jealousy, the underlying racial prejudice of Venetian society as expressed by Brabantio, Desdemona's father, early on in the play becomes evident: Othello is consumed by a sense of inadequacy, not only does he become beastlike in his behaviour to his innocent wife, but angry with himself for ever believing he was good enough for her. Ngubane's portrayal is so utterly compelling that it becomes painful to watch.

Melissa Haidon's Desdemona is almost overly sweet and childlike, dancing about permanently drunk on love for her husband. Her level of vulnerability becomes more convincing as the play progresses. As she faces Othello in the final Act and realises her undeserved fate, her performance mesmerises.

Nicole Holm as Emilia impresses in her role as Desdemona's lady-in-waiting and provides an alternative view to her lady's on womanhood and marriage at the time.

The costumes are elegant and totally suiting each of the 12 characters in the production. The white of the outfits contrasts with the black-and-white garb worn by Othello and only shared by the figure of his Mother's Spirit, highlighting their difference and providing a sense of African and Moorish spiritual tradition. Bright light reveals the final bedroom scene during which the audience is immersed in horror.



Charl-Johan Lingenfelder's original musical score is fitting throughout the play and emphasises the sense of foreboding in the final Act.

This excellent production is well worth your while. What's more, it is a gift in its interpretation and ideal for this year's matric learners.

Full price tickets are R120, 160, R180. Weather enquiries one hour prior to performance phone +27 (0)79 742 0107. Learners and students are invited to attend on 26, 27, 28 January, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10 and 11 February at 7.45pm. Book at [Computicket](#) or Artscape-Dial-A-Seat +27 (0)21 421 7695.

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