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Othello: Lenny Henry In Shakespeare's Othello (BBC Radio Drama Full Cast Drama)



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Synopsis

Love, racism, jealousy and desire are at the emotional core of Shakespeares monumental tragedy; a tender love story shattered by one mans obsessive hatred of another. Othello is noble, brave, and victorious. Iago, passed over for a position in the army, fuels his diabolical revenge with hatred and snarling racism. Poignant, intense, and heartbreaking, Othello mercilessly explores every inch of the human condition. This BBC Radio production stars much-loved actor and comedian Lenny Henry, who won the Evening Standards Best Newcomer Award for his stunning performance as the tortured moor. First performed at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, it subsequently toured the country before arriving in Londons West End where Henry received rave reviews. Featuring the cast from the acclaimed West End production and with original music from Conrad Nelson, who also plays Iago, this mesmerising radio drama grips the listener from start to tragic finish.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Compared with the BBC Radio plays collection, here you don’t get a booklet with a play synopsis (not a bad thing as if the production doesn’t make it clear what’s going on, its not a good production), nor a profile of members of the cast. It’s packaged in a single CD package (although its 2 CDs) rather than the clumsy doubles, but I wish they’d use the more environmental card packaging. But gone too is the rather dated cover image. Instead much is made of the lead role being taken by British stand up comedian and Shakespeare novice, Lenny Henry.And there’s another plus point to this over the Radio Plays series - these guys have worked this production on stage and so there is a much more realistic and natural feel to the performance.Northern

Broadsides is proud of its Yorkshire base and we have a distinctly Yorkshire-voiced production here - even the raucous drinking session that is the downfall of Cassio is accompanied by what sounds like a good old Brass band. Here perhaps, without the visual indicators of Venice and Cyprus, it is more confusing than in the original production, but thankfully we are a long way passed believing that Shakespeare can only be performed in Gielgud-like diction so in the end, it matters little.It is a matter of interpretation as to whether you see Othello as a noble, trusting victim or as a bit of an egoistical maniac. Henry takes the trusting approach and there is a naive sincerity in his wooing of the poor Desdemona. And it works well. The simple dignity of Henry's Othello is touching and, when you recall that this is his first Shakespeare, it is a debut of outstanding quality. While there are a few instances where the verse reading may not be "perfect", it is completely natural and to me, that's what counts and it certainly helps make this a good listening experience.Conrad Nelson's Iago is suitably crafty and evil but perhaps hardly seems to merit the trust people place in him. However, when he says of Cassio "he hath a daily beauty in his life that makes me ugly", you get a hint of the vindictive envy of others' grace that undermines Iago's sense of jealousy. Jessica Harris is a girly-girl and naiive Desdemona but Maeve Larkin's Emilia seems to me a bit too posh and well bred to be Iago's wife. She's more of a Desdemona-lite.Running at two and a quarter hours, there are some minor cuts (as in most productions) but the story comes over very well. All in all, this is far better than any of the other BBC Radio Audio collection or Naxos Audios that I've heard and is highly recommended. It may not be technically the greatest production ever, but it is one of the most easy to listen to and appreciate.

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