

## NEWS RELEASE – Othello

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### “OTHELLO” OPENS 2009 BARD SEASON

**In Short...** Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival celebrates the opening of its 20<sup>th</sup> season with the powerful tragedy *Othello* directed by **Dean Paul Gibson**. It runs Tuesdays to Sundays **May 28 to September 25** under the tents in Vanier Park. Tickets (\$18-\$34): **604-739-0559** or [www.bardonthebeach.org](http://www.bardonthebeach.org).

**In Full ...** Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival opens its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season with the powerful tragedy *Othello* enjoying its first-ever staging at the Festival. It runs Tuesdays to Sundays in the 520-seat open-ended Mainstage tent in **Vanier Park** from **May 28 to September 25, 2009**. In his 18<sup>th</sup> season with Bard, Artistic Associate **Dean Paul Gibson** returns to direct following a year's hiatus since *Romeo and Juliet* in 2007.

One of Shakespeare's best-known tragedies, *Othello* reveals how jealousy, prejudice, deceit and betrayal can drive innocent love to tragedy. Angry that the noble moor Othello has promoted inexperienced Cassio instead of him, Iago sets out to exact revenge. In a dazzling display of villainy, Iago convinces Othello that his new bride Desdemona has been unfaithful with Cassio, driving Othello to rage, madness and murder.

The play begins with Iago (**Bob Frazer**) declaring to his fellow Venetian Roderigo (**Parnelli Parnes**) that he will seek vengeance on both Othello (**Michael Blake**) and Cassio (**Kevin MacDonald**). Othello has secretly married Desdemona (**Naomi Wright**), and Iago sends Roderigo, who is himself in love with the new bride, to tell her father Brabantio (**Neil Maffin**) that she has eloped with the moor. Furious that his daughter has married a black man, Brabantio appeals to the Duke (**Shawn Macdonald**), claiming that Desdemona has been bewitched. Othello and Desdemona convince the Duke of their genuine love, and the couple leaves for Cyprus where Othello is to fight a Turkish invasion. In Cyprus, Iago wreaks his first revenge: he gets Cassio drunk so that Othello strips him of his rank. He then convinces Cassio to have Desdemona plead for his reinstatement and he hints to Othello that the two are romantically involved. When Desdemona accidentally drops her handkerchief, a treasured gift from Othello, Iago's wife Emilia (**Jennifer Lines**) finds it. She gives it to Iago who hides it in Cassio's room. When Cassio finds the handkerchief, he gives it to his mistress, Bianca (**Amber Lewis**). Othello is now fully convinced that Desdemona and Cassio are lovers. With the seeds of jealousy firmly rooted and suspicions 'proven', the path to tragedy is inevitable. Caught up in this powerful drama are **Ryan Beil, Ian Butcher, Gord Myren, Luc Roderique** and **Allan Zinyk** as senators, nobles, gentlemen and soldiers.

The production is reflected through the silhouette of the Italian Renaissance. Scenery designer **Kevin McAllister** has created a classical stage, circular and slightly raked, which is detailed with allusions to ancient astrology. **Mara Gottler's** period costumes mirror the upheaval in the play by undercutting the classical lines of a stylized Renaissance silhouette through contortion of the fabrics. **Alessandro Juliani** and **Meg Roe's** music bridges the more formal, structured world of Venice with the exotic and remote island of Cyprus. **Gerald King's** lighting accentuates the moments of public and private passion while **Joshua Reynolds** and **Nicholas Harrison** guide the conflicts. Stage Manager **Stephen Courtenay** is assisted by **Sarah Pearson** (Assistant Stage Manager) and **Susan Miyagishima** (Apprentice Stage Manager).

Performance details for *Othello* are as follows:

- **OPENS: June 4. PREVIEWS: May 28, 29, 30, 31, June 2, 3.**
- Runs **Tuesdays through Sundays** from **May 28 to September 25** - Mainstage tent in Vanier Park.
- Plays in repertory with *The Comedy of Errors* which begins June 10.
- **At the Movies** with *Othello* – 1965 Laurence Olivier movie at Vancity Theatre – June 1 at 6:30 pm.
- **Introduction to Othello** – part of the 2009 *Bard Explored Lecture Series* – July 5 at 5 pm.
- **Celebrating Red & White** – wine event between shows on August 15.

Tickets are \$34 (evenings); \$18 to \$28.50 (previews/matinees). Order on-site, by phone at **604-739-0559**, or on-line at [www.bardonthebeach.org](http://www.bardonthebeach.org). Season Sponsor is Starbucks; Production Sponsor for *Othello* is RE/MAX.

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[NOTE: For password access to high res photos on the Bard web site, please contact Cynnamon.  
There is no Media Call for this production; video is available upon request.]

