


 The
 Tragedy of
OTHELLO
 Moor of Venice
 by
 William Shakespeare

OTHELLO

by William Shakespeare

Cast:
 Roderigo, a gentleman of Venice KEITH BERRY
 Iago, "ancient" to Othello EMMANUEL TOUTOUNGI
 Brabantio, a Senator, father of Desdemona ... ERIC F. ABBOTT
 Othello, a Moor, general in the service
 of Venice TREVOR THOMAS
 Cassio his lieutenant JOHN FENNER
 Duke of Venice RON WEBB
 Gratiano, brother of Brabantio RONALD WELCH
 Lodovico, a Senator WILLIAM HAMILTON
 Desdemona, daughter of Brabantio and wife of
 Othello ELSPETH DALES
 Emilia, wife of Iago JO PLAYER
 Soldier ERIC F. ABBOTT
 Bianca, mistress of Cassio MARGARET REES
 Montano, Governor of Cyprus RON WEBB
 Senator MIKE WOOD
 Sergeant
 Attendant on Brabantio JON BLOMFIELD
 Soldier
 Attendant on Cassio ANGUS MACDONALD
 Soldier

Directed by WILLIAM WILKINSON

There will be one interval of 15 minutes
 Curtain down approximately 10.15 p.m.

Set Design John Collins
 Lighting Design Tony Howard
 Stage Manager Robin Piette
 Deputy Stage Manager John Henderson
 Assistant Stage Managers Rona Bain, Joyce Welch, Dave Roberts,
 Gillian Rushton, Sarah Hopkins, Ann Bardell,
 Melissa Henney, Stephanie Garner.

Loft's Othello is very more-ish . . .

In a year when the star production at nearby Stratford's Royal Shakespeare Theatre is "Othello" with Donald Sinden in the name part, it would seem foolish not to say impertinent for an amateur theatre, even one as capable as Leamington's Loft, to tackle the same play.

The invitation to unfavourable comparison is too obvious to labour. Yet, in the event, foolish or impertinent it may be, but brave it is and, best of all, triumphant.

MOOD

"Othello, The Moor of Venice" is a big play, arguably Shakespeare's most personally tragic love story, finding dark echoes in most of us. It rewards boldness in approach and this director William Wilkinson brings to it. His is a strong and uncluttered production. He puts his faith in a clear interpretation of Shakespeare's words and ideas — and since his cast give him just that, how could the production fail!

No less fine is that of Emmanuel Toutoungi as Iago. He, too, is wholly convincing, the sergeant with a chip on his shoulder, but determined to have pips or a crown there, deviousness his chief weapon. Mr Toutoungi's performance has much subtlety in it, both in voice and movement.

The hardest role in the play is undoubtedly Othello. He lives in permanent danger of losing the spotlight to Iago. It says much for Trevor Thomas's performance that this rarely happened. He looks right, a man capable of winning Desdemona's love, physically attractive, brave and steadfast in action, noble in spirit.

QUALITIES

All the necessary qualities were there. Mr Thomas also produced a Moorish accent which seldom faltered, was occasionally hard to follow but happily was at its surest when his feelings were most deeply aroused. Happily, too, finger-knitting and body-writhing were not his only means of conveying deeply-felt emotions.

There are some splendid performances in the minor roles, none better than Eric Abbott's father of Desdemona, an old man outraged that his daughter has married the Moor.

John Fenner avoiding priggishness as Cassio, Keith Berry, staying just clear of overdoing foppishness as Roderigo, and Jo Player pleasingly assured as the upright Emilia — all caught the eye regularly.

SPLENDID

With hardly an exception, the speaking of the Shakespearean verse was splendid. In the current issue of Loft News, a writer — Mr Wilkin-

"OTHELLO"—Loft Theatre, Leamington, until December 1. Running time 2 hours 45 minutes.

THERE is muscle in this production. It strains at the leash with potential and succeeds largely because it never actually breaks away.

To the director, William Wilkinson, goes immediate credit for maintaining a tight grip on a play which has so often proved a booby trap for the less wary.

He has preserved a subtle balance between the traditional and the adventurous, and though weaknesses are inevitable when an amateur company takes on Shakespearean tragedy, they are surprisingly few.

The strengths far outweigh them. While Trevor Thomas's Othello might appear to start on a dubious note, it quickly becomes clear that a thorough characterisation is in the making.

In fact, the actor most effectively straddles the rather poor construction of the text which has the Moor

Keeping balance in Shakespeare

By Peter McGarry

undergoing a clumsy change of nature. And as the play progresses, his Othello emerges with a fiery passion and conviction which are pointed by skilful vocal variations.

It's almost a relief these days to see the central figure retaining his stature against the encroaching prominence of Iago. The latter role is interpreted with a fair measure of style by Emmanuel

Toutoungi, particularly in the early stages. Rather curiously, last night's portrayal showed a tendency to fade later on, verging at times on the monotonous, but I suspect this will quickly right itself.

Elspeth Dales adds to her growing list of nobly good performances with a vivid study of the loving and anguished Desdemona, despite the fact that her bedchamber death scene

appears to be somewhat rushed.

A major asset of the production is that additional strength has been deployed throughout many of the supporting performances — frequently a source of let-down in the amateur theatre. Jo Player has some fine moments as Emilia. Keith Berry turns in sound work as Roderigo and there's a scene-stealing performance by Eric Abbott as Brabantio which positively illuminates the first 15 minutes.

A pity, though, about the costumes. Their inconsistency is a distraction to both the overall mood of the piece and to John Collins's tasteful set designs.

The general updating—to something like the start of this century—is irrelevant. Mr Wilkinson has pieced together a good solid production which would stand best of all in its original type of cast.

But either way, it deserves a lot better support than the disappointingly sparse opening-night audience.

