

CHICAGO YOUTH SHAKESPEARE PRESENTS

William Shakespeare's

OTHΣELLO



PHOTO BY CAELAN REEVES

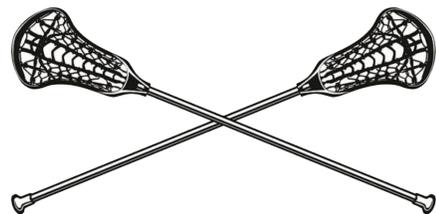
A "DIRECTORLESS" DIRECTOR'S NOTE

WE SHOULD START BY SAYING THAT AT CYS, OUR MISSION HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO MAKE SHAKESPEARE'S WORK ACCESSIBLE AND RELEVANT TO YOUNG ARTISTS AND YOUNG AUDIENCE MEMBERS. FOR THIS REASON, CYS PRODUCTIONS HAVE NO "DIRECTOR" PERSE; BUT RATHER, THEY ARE CONCEIVED COLLABORATIVELY BY THE ENSEMBLE MEMBERS THEMSELVES, WITH GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT FROM CYS ARTISTIC STAFF.

WHEN WE SAT DOWN TO DISCUSS OTHELLO, WE COULDN'T IGNORE HOW THE THEMES THAT DRIVE THE ACTION OF THIS 400-YEAR-OLD PLAY ARE THE SAME ISSUES CONFRONTING YOUNG PEOPLE AND OUR WORLD TODAY. RACISM, SEXISM, RELATIONSHIP ABUSE, EXPECTATIONS OF MASCULINITY -- THESE ARE ALL ISSUES THAT OUR STUDENTS SEE ON THE NEWS AND ENCOUNTER IN THEIR OWN LIVES AND THE LIVES OF THEIR FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES AS THEY NAVIGATE THROUGH A COMPLICATED AND OFTEN UNFAIR WORLD.

WE CHOSE TO SET OUR TELLING OF THIS STORY IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE SYSTEMIC RACISM WOULD BE INGRAINED INTO THE CULTURE, WHERE A "BOYS WILL BE BOYS" ATTITUDE WOULD BE NORMALIZED, AND WHERE WE WOULD BE CONFRONTED WITH JUST HOW DIFFICULT IT CAN BE TO BE A YOUNG PERSON IN A HIGH PRESSURE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT. IN SETTING OUR PLAY IN AN ATHLETICS-BASED FRATERNITY, WE DON'T MEAN TO GENERALIZE THESE GROUPS, BUT TO POINT OUT THE DANGERS FACING THESE ENVIRONMENTS WHEN LEFT UNCHECKED, ESPECIALLY FOR YOUNG WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OF COLOR.

WE HOPE A NEW LOOK AT THIS CLASSIC TEXT WILL RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR PERSONAL PREJUDICES, OUR INGRAINED BIASES, AND HOW OUR INTERACTIONS CARRY A WORLD OF CONSEQUENCES FOR THE PEOPLE AROUND US.



ABOUT THE PLAY

SET IN A MODERN-DAY FRATERNITY HOUSE AT AN UNNAMED UNIVERSITY, OTHELLO IS THE CAPTAIN OF HIS UNIVERSITY'S LACROSSE TEAM AND HE SEEMS TO HAVE IT ALL: ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENT, A THRIVING SOCIAL LIFE, AND THE LOVE OF THE MOST POPULAR GIRL ON CAMPUS, DESDEMONA. PLUS, HE'S NAMED HIS BEST FRIEND AND FRAT BROTHER MICHAEL CASSIO TO BE HIS CO-CAPTAIN AND RIGHT-HAND MAN. ENTER "HONEST IAGO," A FELLOW FRAT BROTHER AND A TRUSTED CONFIDANTE OF OTHELLO'S. SECRETLY CONSUMED WITH HATE AND DRIVEN TO BRING OTHELLO DOWN BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY, IAGO WEAVES A WEB OF LIES THAT MAY JUST CHANGE LIFE ON CAMPUS FOREVER.

***CONTENT WARNING: THIS PRODUCTION CONTAINS DEPICTIONS OF VIOLENCE (SEXUAL, PHYSICAL, & SUICIDAL), ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION BY MINORS, AND RACIALLY-CHARGED LANGUAGE**

CAST OF CHARACTERS

OTHELLO - FRAT STAR AND CAPTAIN OF THE LACROSSE TEAM.....FREEDOM MARTIN

IAGO - EVERYONE’S TRUSTED BRO AND “GO-TO GUY,” HARBORING SOME SERIOUS SECRETS.....LUKE STEADMAN

DESDEMONA - OTHELLO’S FAITHFUL GIRLFRIEND AND MODEL STUDENT.....SONIA ZARTMAN

EMILIA - IAGO’S GIRLFRIEND AND BFF TO DESDEMONA, ALWAYS SPEAKS HER MIND.....ALYSSA COUGHLIN

RODERIGO - FRAT STAR WANNABE AND DESDEMONA ADMIRER/POSSIBLE STALKER.....KEVIN JOHNSON

CASSIO - OTHELLO’S FAITHFUL SIDEKICK - ESPECIALLY ON THE FIELD.....IZZY TERRELL

BRABANTIO - DESDEMONA’S DAD, THE OVERBEARING TYPE / MONTANO - A LAX/FRAT BRO.....SIAH BERLATSKY

THE DUKE - FRAT HOUSE DIRECTOR / LODOVICA - DEAN OF STUDENTS (& DESI’S COUSIN).....ESTHER SEGAL

BIANCA - A GIRL WE SEE AROUND CAMPUS, HAS A BIT OF A REPUTATION, BUT A BIG HEART.....LAUREN MARUT

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS & STAFF *CYS PROGRAM ALUM

RYAN BORGDORFF*
APPRENTICE/UNDERSTUDY

ANNIE FISHBEIN
PRODUCTION/STAGE MANAGER

KEVIN JOHNSON*
FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER

CAELAN REEVES*
PHOTOGRAPHY & MEDIA DESIGN

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DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS
LEAD TEACHING ARTIST

DECLAN RYAN
PRODUCTION COMPOSER

SARAH BELL
CONTRIBUTING TEACHING ARTIST

MANON SPADARO
FOUNDING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

FREYA TREFONIDES*
ARTISTIC APPRENTICE/UNDERSTUDY

READ OTHELLO CAST AND CONTRIBUTING YOUTH ARTISTS BIOS HERE



ABOUT CYS

CHICAGO YOUTH SHAKESPEARE (CYS) IS A 501(C)3 NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO PUTTING SHAKESPEARE'S TIMELESS WORKS INTO THE HANDS OF 21ST-CENTURY TEENAGERS. CYS PROVIDES INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH PROGRAMS AND PERFORMANCES THAT CONNECT YOUNG ADULTS ACROSS CHICAGOLAND WITH SHAKESPEARE AND WITH EACH OTHER. CYS IS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING A SAFE SPACE FOR STUDENTS OF ALL BACKGROUNDS, AND TO FOSTERING A DIVERSE COMMUNITY OF CREATIVE AND COMPASSIONATE GLOBAL CITIZENS.

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FOR MAKING THIS PERFORMANCE POSSIBLE



CYS PROGRAMS ARE MADE POSSIBLE BY GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM INDIVIDUAL DONORS , AND BY



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