

The background of the poster is a reproduction of the famous 1887 painting by Francesco Bissini, depicting the final scene of Verdi's opera Othello. Othello, a Black man in a red and gold turban, is shown in a state of despair, holding the body of Desdemona, a white woman with long blonde hair, who is lying dead in his arms. A woman in a red and gold dress, likely Emilia, stands in the background, looking on with a sorrowful expression. The painting is characterized by its dramatic lighting and emotional intensity.

VERDI OTELLO

Nikolai Schukoff Melody Moore
Lester Lynch

Gulbenkian Orchestra and Chorus
Lawrence Foster

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)
Otello

Opera in four acts · Oper in vier Akten

Libretto by Arrigo Boito

CD 1
FIRST ACT · ERSTER AKT

1	Una vela!	4. 22
2	Esultate	5. 11
3	Fuoco di gioia!	2. 25
4	Roderigo, beviam!	1. 38
5	Inaffia l'ugola!	3. 53
6	Capitano, v'attende la fazione ai baluardi	1. 28
7	Olà! che avvien?	3. 29
8	Già nella notte	2. 37
9	Quando narravi	3. 18
10	Venga la morte!	4. 26

SECOND ACT · ZWEITER AKT

11	Non ti cruciar	3. 08
12	Credo in un Dio crudel	4. 21

13	Eccola	1. 18
14	Ciò m'accora	4. 41
15	Dove guardi splendono	5. 06
16	D'un uom che geme sotto il tuo disdegno	5. 26
17	Desdemona rea!	1. 41
18	Ora e per sempre addio	3. 48
19	Era la notte, Cassio dormia	6. 19
20	Sì, pel ciel marmoreo giuro!	1. 27

Total playing time CD 1: 70. 19

CD 2
THIRD ACT · DRITTER AKT

1	Introduction	1. 24
2	La vedetta del porto ha segnalato	1. 22
3	Dio ti giocondi, o sposo	10. 44
4	Dio! mi potevi scagliar	4. 40
5	Vieni, l'aula è deserta	3. 48
6	Questa è una ragna	1. 54
7	Come la ucciderò?	1. 16
8	Viva il Leon di San Marco!	5. 34
9	A terra! ... sì ... nel livido fango	8. 58

FOURTH ACT • VIERTER AKT

10	Era più calmo?	4. 10
11	Mia madre aveva una povera ancella	8. 36
12	Ave Maria	5. 09
13	Chi è là?	5. 50
14	Calma come la tomba	3. 41
15	Niun mi tema	5. 15

Total playing time CD 2: 72. 37

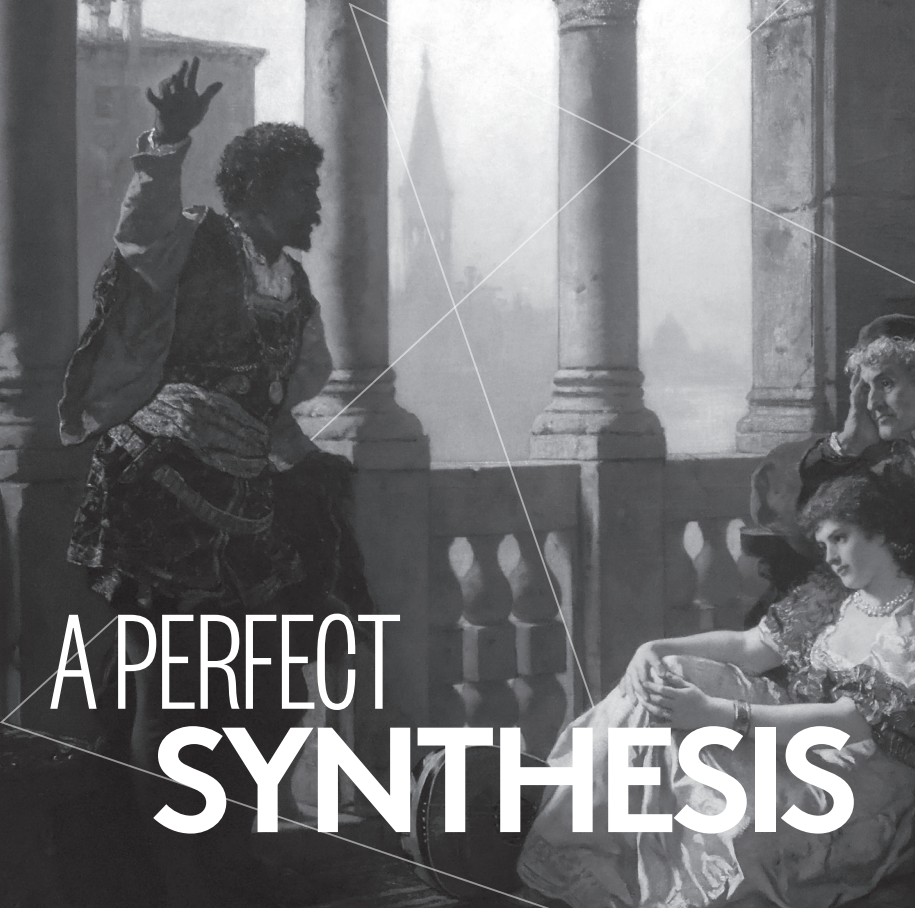
Otello Nikolai Schukoff	Cassio JunHo You	Montano Luis Rodrigues
Desdemona Melody Moore	Roderigo Carlos Cardoso	Emilia Helena Zubanovich
Iago Lester Lynch	Lodovico Kevin Short	A Herald Leandro César

Gulbenkian Choir
Jorge Matta, Chorus master

Children’s Choir of the Academia de Música de Santa Cecília, Lisbon
António Gonçalves, Chorus master

Gulbenkian Orchestra
David Lefèvre, Concertmaster

Conducted by **LAWRENCE FOSTER**



A PERFECT SYNTHESIS

Thoughts on Verdi's *Otello*

Throughout the history of opera, only in the rarest of cases have the absolute masterpieces been created in a torrential, yet ingenious frenzy of composition. On the contrary, often years went by before the initial idea, the first inspiration evolved into a completed work of the highest quality. Ideally, a creative discourse would take place between composer and librettist, an exchange of ideas in which each urged the other onward to achieve artistic excellence. The partnership struck up by composer Giuseppe Verdi and librettist Arrigo Boito for the opera *Otello* is an admirable demonstration of this protracted, yet highly lucrative process of artistic development. An intensive correspondence lasting many years allows us to access the spiritual world of the creative duo. This correspondence reveals the profound

seriousness with which Boito and Verdi dedicated themselves to “their” *Otello* over the years, permitting us to take a peek at the creative “workshop” of one of the most fascinating partnerships in the history of opera; one that can be mentioned in the same breath as, for instance, the duos of Mozart/da Ponte and Strauss/von Hofmannsthal.

The result of the intensive and fruitful collaboration between Verdi and Boito is one of the most important core works ever of the opera repertoire, with which Verdi also raises himself to a new level of quality within the framework of his operatic œuvre. Here, the path led him resolutely and single-mindedly to the dissolution of all formalistic elements within the Italian opera – away from the structured numbers of aria, recitative and ensembles, and toward the through-composed, large-scale dramatic form based on an excellently

crafted literary foundation and a story about human beings with their strengths and weaknesses – and most certainly not about one-dimensional heroes.

The origins – the strength is in the peace and quiet

After the magnificent première of his *Aida* in Cairo on December 24, 1871, no less than 16 years were to elapse before Verdi launched another opera – *Otello* – on February 5, 1887. Following the triumph of *Aida* in Egypt, Italian opera-houses scrambled to win the rights for the Italian première, which eventually took place at La Scala in Milan on February 8, 1872. Further performances followed in Parma and Naples. These successes were followed by the longest creative hiatus of Verdi's career, interrupted only by such completely dissimilar works as his String

Quartet (1873) and *Messa da Requiem* (1874). Verdi's silence in all matters operatic probably had nothing to do with the incipient successes of Wagner's music-dramas in Italy: rather, it was caused by the feelings of uncertainty that had begun to weaken the Italian opera tradition. Verdi regarded with annoyance and dissatisfaction new developments such as the brotherhood of the "Scapigliati," in which Arrigo Boito occupied a central role. He repeatedly described the lack of clarity in the situation as "chaos," lamenting the decline of music in his letters. Subsequently, he retired to his estate in Sant'Agata to devote himself with great passion not to music, but to agriculture. Verdi biographer Wolfgang Marggraf interpreted this action not as "a hobby instigated as a sideline," but rather as "having shaped and determined the entire man, right down to his artistic creativity." Evidently, Verdi enjoyed

the role of the wise old man, who felt no obligation to prove anything, either to himself or to the world of opera. During Verdi's compositional "abstinence," his publisher Giulio Ricordi tried to persuade him to begin work on new and, above all (from his point of view, of course), financially lucrative projects. In July 1879, Ricordi resorted to a cunning ploy to bring Verdi together with Arrigo Boito. The same Boito whom Verdi had already met in 1862, and who, as a young poet in his ode *All'arte italiana* in 1863, had passionately advocated that art be removed "dalla cerchia del vecchio e del cretino" (from the circles of the old and the cretinous), thus – at least, indirectly – launching an attack on Verdi. At a dinner among mutual friends of Ricordi and Verdi, talk turned to Rossini's opera *Otello*. Everyone agreed that Rossini's composition, however, showed some weaknesses, and Ricordi casually

remarked that Boito, an acquaintance of his, just happened to be working on a libretto for *Otello*. Being a great admirer of Shakespeare, Verdi was immediately interested, as so far he had only set one Shakespeare drama to music – *Macbeth*. Just three days later, Boito handed him a first draft of the libretto. Presumably with magnificently enacted restraint, and making much play of his own lack of enthusiasm with regard to his work, Verdi bought the completed libretto from Boito in November 1879. However, he put it to one side, not wishing to be pressured into composing. Verdi's wife, Giuseppina, entered the following in her diary: "It appears that Verdi likes the libretto, as he bought it upon reading it; but then he shelved it next to Somma's libretto for *King Lear*, which has been enjoying a deep, undisturbed sleep for the past 30 years."

Due to the crisis in Italian opera, Verdi was well aware that he would need to present a work that would be nothing less than an artistic solution to and escape from this situation. He still had high expectations of himself; and he had the added advantage of not being tied to an oppressive contract with a theatre. He could approach the project – in the truest sense of the word – in peace and quiet, in order to create a work of the highest quality. Not until 1884, almost five years after purchasing the libretto, did Verdi begin the actual composition: however, he had examined the material from all angles during the previous years. Verdi was seeking to infiltrate the multi-layered characters of *Otello*, *Desdemona*, and, above all, *Iago*, for whom he felt a huge fascination. Verdi and Boito held in-depth discussions of the details of the libretto: not simply exchanging letters, but also meeting in person. The young

Boito always accepted the suggestions and changes recommended by Verdi, the experienced opera composer. However, the congenial co-operation almost came to a sudden end: in March 1884, Verdi heard that Boito had allegedly stated that he would prefer to set his *Otello* libretto to music himself. The highly sensitive Verdi immediately stopped working on the composition, but Boito saved the day by managing to cajole him into restarting: “You are the only one who can compose *Otello*. (...) For you live in the true and real world of art, whereas I live only in a world of hallucinations.” Verdi relented, and went back to work on the opera. With great concentration and inspired by his artistic freedom, he completed the draft of the music by the beginning of October 1885; and on November 1, 1886, he completed the scoring. The composition had taken three years from start to end.

At the beginning of January, 1887, rehearsals began at La Scala under Verdi’s direction. He worked tirelessly, especially with the singers of the principal roles, whom he had hand-picked, and taking painstaking care with stage instructions and costumes. The première held on February 5 was a triumph for Verdi and Boito. The evening was a sensational social event of the highest level, matched perfectly by Ricordi as far as public relations were concerned. Journalists had been invited from all over Europe, and subsequently spread the news of a “godsend for the history of opera” (Marggraf). Ricordi himself proudly proclaimed: “*Otello* is not the triumph of a school, but of that divine art that is the only one to speak a universal language; the art that is directed to all mankind and is the common heritage of all people.”

The source material – Shakespeare’s drama of jealousy

Arrigo Boito had adapted Shakespeare’s drama *Othello* based on Victor Hugo’s version in French. The resourceful librettist had quickly realized that a pure resetting of the original would definitely not form the basis of a successful opera, as the opera of the time demanded a more substantial and dramatic escalation. Boito had both the artistic instinct and the courage to drastically abridge Shakespeare’s text, concentrating on the emotional core lines of the plot. He eliminated the entire first act of the play, simply incorporating any relevant information into his libretto. Verdi urged Boito to situate the love scene between *Desdemona* and *Othello* at the end of the first act, in order to more vigorously develop the drastic contrast with the frantic jealousy of the title hero in

the rest of the opera. The homage to Desdemona as well as Iago's famous "credo" in the second act were also the composer's ideas. The role of Iago fascinated Verdi to such an extent that at time he was even thinking of calling the opera *Iago*: "What a character, that Iago!".

The dramaturgical development of the libretto demonstrates the various stages of *Otello*'s complete psychological deterioration, "the destruction he brings about himself due to his fickleness, distrust, and finally, his unrestrained jealousy; and due to the principle of evil – as embodied in Iago" (Henze-Döhring). Boito deserves nothing but the greatest of praise for his share in *Otello*'s success, as his verses and prose played a decisive role in Verdi's drastic renovation of Italian opera by means of a through-composed form – the *dramma musicale*. The magnificent

source material of the libretto is demonstrated above all in the perfect balance between lyrically expansive and dramatically propulsive scenes. All his life, Verdi had been searching for the perfect librettist; and now, he had found him in Boito, with whom he was later to give his final "shared encore" in the magnificent opera *Falstaff*.

The music – decomposition of the forms

Generally speaking, Verdi's musical conversion of the drama can be described as a "decomposition of the forms." This is no longer the typical sequence of recitative, aria, and ensembles of varying singers, i.e. of a composition based on the modular design, which had done wonders for Verdi's early operas. In *Otello*, Verdi makes a clean break from the formal constraints of this rather schematic

kind of composing. Strictly speaking, there are no longer any arias constantly interrupting the action. Everything is an "infinite recitative, that rarely wanders into the realm of the aria, investigating the significance of the words and the psychological impulse," as Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau formulated it from the point of view of a singer. To quote Gerald Mertens, in *Otello* he discovered "only 'dramatic music' that, however, does not lose any of its contour." In fact, the music of *Otello* exerts upon its audiences a tremendous dramatic attraction, the strength of which is constantly increasing or decreasing in continual correlation with the course of the action. Thus, for example, rather than the fire chorus and Iago's drinking song in Act 1 being designed as "stand-alone numbers," they are embedded in a highly organic and almost natural manner within the dramatic process, thanks to alternating melodic units on

the one hand, and varying choruses on the other. The dramatic expression of the music – depending on the character involved – is determined by the unique elaboration of the melody. The singing voice is always the medium of this expression.

Musical motifs are employed by Verdi predominantly – in contrast to Wagner – in order to characterize his figures, and subsequently as a memory aid for the listener. Thus, for instance, Iago's musical signature is to a certain degree a chromatically descending motif, the "symbol of his destructive influence" (Henze-Döhring), which recurs at decisive points in the opera, creating almost "subcutaneous" links between the different characters. The wonderfully blossoming love motif at the end of Act 1 also returns twice in Act 4, shortly before the assassination of Desdemona. A reminder of the love of two people

who were doomed from the very beginning? At the end, the kiss of love evolves into a kiss of death, when the last syllable of “un altro bacio” is left unsung, in a wholly realistic manner.

Verdi gives a magnificent demonstration of his outstanding ensemble skills in the well-nigh melodramatic final scene of Act 3. Here, raging with jealousy and spurred on by Iago, Othello throws Desdemona to the ground before the eyes of the horrified Venetian envoys. In the subsequent “pezzo concertato,” the composer subtly portrays the shocked reaction of the bystanders, depicting the psychological state of mind of one and all.

In accordance with the period in which it was written, the harmony used in *Otello* is chromatically enhanced; however, this does not cause any confusion concerning the basic

key – as is the case, for instance, in Wagner’s *Tristan*. However, Verdi tends to use altered chords or chromatic modulations rather sparingly. Only the beginning of the opera – the famous storm scene – leads us to distant spheres with its pedal-like organ cluster on the notes C, C-sharp and D. He maintains these organ tones as a disturbing, factor right up to the entrance of the “Vittoria!” chorus, while providing the orchestra with an excessive tonal depiction of the natural phenomena with the flashiest and most lurid of colours; the storm acts as a symbol of the human drama to come. And as for the orchestra: despite the supreme primacy of the human voice – Verdi’s very own decree – in *Otello*, he allots increasing stature and significance to the orchestra. It becomes the voice of an equal partner, whose “words” not only support the feelings and moods of the protagonists, but also virtually

ensure that the listener becomes aware of them. An example of this occurs in Act 4, when the portrayal of Othello’s thoughts is shifted completely to the orchestra as he enters Desdemona’s bedchamber with the intention of murdering her. The voice on the stage is silent, while Othello’s deep-rooted emotions are expressed by the instruments in the orchestra pit.

Numerous sound-colour effects can be found in the score: the flickering of the fire in the fire chorus, the emptying of the cup in Iago’s drinking song, the eruptive outbreaks and trills in the “Credo,” to name but a few. However, the orchestra never appears in a symphonic capacity, as is the case with Wagner. Verdi succeeded in creating his own path leading to “music-drama as a ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’, as a perfect synthesis between action and music” (Mertens).

Nikolai Schukoff

Love of heights

Nikolai Schukoff is a forthright man: he does not beat about the bush, he takes a stand. This charming and astute singer, who describes himself as “a real Austro-Hungarian mix”, is currently one of the most sought-after tenors ever. A heldentenor, to be more precise: certainly, a rare species. At a young age, the tenor from Graz was already being praised by critics for his “youthful charm” and “darkly velvet voice.” In particular, it is thanks to Schukoff’s thoughtful and deliberate selection of roles and, above all, to his intensive study of each chosen role that his career has not led him into a vocal cul-de-sac like so many tenors before him. When starting out, Schukoff studied baritone arias, but then – as he says – a certain “love of heights” began to intervene. What he considers important when

singing? “I try to tell a story when I sing. For me, language and articulation are very important.”

When he is studying a role, the bookworm inside Nikolai Schukoff makes an appearance. “I do my reading by the kilo, because I want to know in exactly what kind of situation the character who is singing has got himself involved.” The tenor considers himself to be an artist with many interests; and in order to be regarded as such, one simply has to “really have a wide-ranging knowledge of opera as synthesis of the arts.”

Back in 2005, it became clear that Schukoff thinks and acts with an eye to the future, with almost prophetic abilities, when he said, “I want to have a long career. I really want to take it step by step. I feel that right now my voice is developing very strongly, and as

long as I do not feel I am ‘there’ yet... I would like to continue to be the ‘tenor of the day’ for a long time!” Less than a year later, he had his international breakthrough in the role of Siegmund, which has opened the doors of the great opera-houses to the free-lance singer: now he excels world-wide in roles of which he had probably never even dreamed when starting out on his career. At times a love of heights can definitely pay off.



Melody Moore

More than a promise for the future

“It was Pamina! That was the role that won me over so thoroughly to opera!” In an interview from the *Rising Stars* series in 2014, the American soprano Melody Moore talked frankly and openly about the beginnings of her career, her scholarship at the San Francisco Opera, and also about her artistic work with the great Carol Vaness. Less than three years later, Moore has outgrown by far the status of a “rising star.” Nowadays, she sings the leading soprano spinto roles, most notably at the major opera-houses in the United States. The critics are simply enchanted by her “vulnerability” and moved by her “rich and gentle tone.”

Back in 2012, Melody Moore proved her mettle stepping in for no less a singer than Angela Gheorghiu after the first act in Puccini’s *Tosca*. It was a huge success



that really fired up her career. The singer with such a suitably musical first name is carefully developing her repertoire; and now she is also heading in the direction of Wagner. In a short period of time, she has added – or rather, conquered – numerous new roles. Long gone are the days when the young girl stood up before the congregation to sing. Now, she is worshipped by the audiences at the great opera-houses.

Melody Moore's voice is more than just a promise for the future, as the critics point out: "She has a lyrical voice with pronounced dark overtones. Besides, she has the typical 'kapow!' of the spinto soprano. Her extraordinary abilities can best be described by mentioning the names of Renata Tebaldi and Gabrielle Tucci." A truly powerful artistic prognosis, which Melody Moore is only too happy to confirm on stage as well as in the recording studio.

Lester Lynch

"Art guides people"

Lester Lynch is one of those artists who, from the beginning, have always looked beyond their own personal vocal and artistic horizons. He believes that art and music – besides their purely aesthetic message – have a further social dimension that becomes increasingly significant in times of drastic upheaval

and development. The African-American baritone from the Cleveland area is also a highly versatile singer. Not only does he demonstrate an astounding range in the classical operatic and concert repertoire, covering virtually all the major dramatic baritone roles, he also devotes himself with heart and soul to a completely different genre: the spiritual. Thus he is one of the few opera singers to have not only recorded, but also arranged an album of spirituals and hymns. For Lynch, "On my Journey" is an important plea for more justice in society. Again, the singer finds clear and unambiguous words with which to respond to an increase in nationalistic rhetoric: "Art can guide people – I am firmly convinced that it is our job as artists to rise up and take upon ourselves a certain leadership function for the people."

The American singer approaches each art form in a highly considered and

individual manner, no matter whether he is using his powerful and expressive voice to convey the violent outbursts of Baron Scarpia or to celebrate an emotionally inspired spiritual such as "Go down, Moses." What the critics appreciate most about Lynch's "rich baritone" are his almost inexhaustible vocal power, his "vivid acting" and his "passionate Puccini": the stages of the world have welcomed a singer whose voice will be heard in years to come in more than just the literal sense of the word.



Lawrence Foster

Conductor Lawrence Foster has been Music Director of l'Opéra de Marseille and l'Orchestre Philharmonique de Marseille since 2013. Previously he has held Music Directorships with the Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona, Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, Houston Symphony, and Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne.

Mr Foster is frequently invited to work with internationally renowned orchestras such as Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Montréal Symphony Orchestra, Copenhagen Philharmonic, Konzerthausorchester Berlin as well as orchestras in Cologne, Frankfurt, Budapest, Shanghai, and Hong Kong. He has deep musical friendships with outstanding soloists such as Evgeny Kissin, Arcadi Volodos, and Arabella Steinbacher.

In addition to highly successful productions in Marseille, he regularly conducts at the opera houses in Frankfurt, Hamburg, San Francisco and Monte Carlo. With great success he led a concert performance of Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler* at the Enescu Festival in Bucharest and a production of *La Traviata* at the Savonlinna Opera Festival.

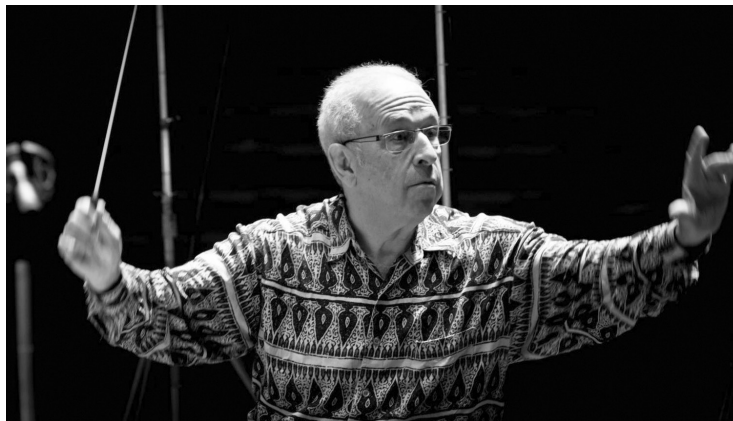
Following an utmost fruitful ten-year tenure as Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Gulbenkian Orchestra, Mr Foster was appointed Conductor Laureate. International tours have led him and the orchestra to Germany, Spain, Brazil, as well as to important festivals such as Kissinger Sommer, many times with famous soloists like Lang Lang.

Mr Foster's discography includes a number of highly acclaimed recordings

for PENTATONE, notably of violin works with Arabella Steinbacher as well as of Bartok's *Two Portraits*, Ligeti's *Romanian Concerto*, Kodaly's *Dances of Galanta* and *Háry Janos Suite*, and the Four Symphonies by Robert Schumann with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, and Strauss' *Zigeunerbaron* with NDR

Radiophilharmonie Hannover.

Born in 1941 in Los Angeles to Romanian parents, Lawrence Foster has been a major champion of the music of Georg Enescu - he was decorated for his merits to Romanian Music by the Romanian President.



Lawrence Foster
© Nikolai Schukoff

Synopsis

Act 1

A major storm is raging just before Cyprus. The ship captained by Othello, the dark-skinned governor of the island and commander of the Venetian fleet, is in distress but, with the anxious population looking on, is finally able to reach the harbour safely. Othello announces that he has defeated the Turkish fleet in a mighty naval battle. The people cheer their leader. Othello immediately hurries off to his wife Desdemona in the nearby castle, while the Cypriots celebrate the victory with a bonfire and a boisterous drinking spree. Only Iago, Othello's ensign, is offended and furious, as Othello has chosen to promote Cassio as captain, rather than him. Iago plans to destroy Othello's happiness at any cost. He finds an ally in the

Venetian nobleman Rodrigo, who is himself in love with Desdemona and deeply envious of Othello. First, Iago sets Rodrigo against Cassio, whom he then gets drunk at the boozy victory celebrations. A fight begins, at first between Cassio and Rodrigo, then developing into a duel between Cassio and Montano – Othello's predecessor as governor of Cyprus – during which Montano is wounded. Alarmed by the noisy turmoil, Othello restores calm – and demotes Cassio. After the bedlam has subsided and the crowd dispersed, Othello and Desdemona sing glowingly of their mutual love and kiss one another in the soft glow of planet Venus in the night sky.

Act 2

Cassio is in despair at the events of the previous night and his demotion. Iago is aware of Othello's insane jealousy

and his quick-tempered, suspicious nature, and uses this knowledge to his advantage in a perfidious plan of revenge, designed to destroy Othello. He tells Cassio that he wants to help him, saying that he has only to turn to Desdemona and request her support in approaching Othello. In his "Credo," Iago proclaims his nihilistic outlook on the world and delights in his own wickedness.

Othello observes the conversation taking place between Cassio and Desdemona, during the course of which Iago uses specific words to stoke his latent jealousy. After the Cyprian population has paid homage to Desdemona, she begs her husband's mercy for Cassio. Othello reacts angrily, beginning to believe Iago's insinuations. He complains of a violent headache and hurls to the ground the handkerchief that Desdemona had

previously placed on his forehead in order to relieve his pain. Iago's wife Emilia picks it up, but Iago snatches it from her, murmuring threats. Othello sends the women out of the room. Now he demands unambiguous proof from Iago of Desdemona's infidelity. Iago agrees to produce evidence of this. Alluding to Cassio's love for Desdemona, he manages to drive Othello almost insane with jealousy by pretending to have seen her handkerchief in the hands of the demoted captain. Iago and Othello swear to avenge the humiliation.

Act 3

Once again, Othello and Desdemona argue as she stands up for Cassio. Othello feigns a headache and asks his wife for the handkerchief that he had once given her as proof of his love. Desdemona has no idea where

it is, upon which Othello calls her a “harlot” and forces her to leave the hall. Then he overhears a conversation between Iago and Cassio, which the vindictive ensign cleverly manipulates. He makes sure that Othello hears only misleading snippets of the conversation – sufficient to convince him of an on-going affair between Cassio and Desdemona. In his hand, Cassio is holding the handkerchief (previously hidden by Iago in his rooms), which now finally convinces Othello of his wife’s infidelity. Raging with anger and jealousy, he must now receive the Venetian envoys led by Lodovico, who arrive with orders from the Doge: he commands Othello to return to Venice, appointing Cassio as his successor as chief commander in Cyprus. In a frenzied rage, Othello violently throws Desdemona to the ground before the gathering, and threatens the bystanders, who retreat

in fearful horror. Othello collapses in a dead faint, and Iago triumphantly places his foot on the neck of the “Lion of Venice,” proclaiming: “Here lies the lion...”.

Act 4

In her bedchamber, Desdemona prepares for the night. Deeply sad about recent events, she thinks back to her childhood, and then prays the “Ave Maria.” She lies down to sleep. Othello enters the bedroom, once again assaulted by thoughts of the happiness of their love. Yet his mind is made up. When Desdemona awakens, he accuses her of infidelity and tells her that he has come to kill her: but first, she must confess. Desdemona swears to her innocence and begs for her life, but Othello strangles her. Entering the room, Emilia announces that Cassio has killed Rodrigo in a duel. As soon

as she notices the dying woman, she screams – Iago, Cassio, Lodovico, and Montano all rush into the bedchamber. Emilia reveals the truth: as he was dying, Rodrigo had spoken of Iago’s intrigue. Iago flees. Othello kills himself while embracing Desdemona’s corpse and kissing her pale lips one final time.



EINE VOLLKOMMENE SYNTHESE

Gedanken zu Verdis *Otello*

Die absoluten Meisterwerke der Operngeschichte entstanden nur in den seltensten Fällen in einem sturzflutartigen, genialischen Schaffensrausch. Im Gegenteil, oftmals vergingen Jahre, bis aus der ersten Idee, dem initialen Einfall ein vollendetes Werk von höchster Qualität wurde. Im Idealfall gab es einen kreativen Diskurs zwischen Komponist und Librettist, einen Austausch, in dessen Verlauf man einander zu künstlerischen Höchstleistungen trieb. Am *Otello* Giuseppe Verdis und Arrigo Boitos lässt sich dieser langwierige aber höchst ertragreiche künstlerische Entwicklungsprozess wunderbar aufzeigen. Ein intensiver und langjähriger Briefwechsel verschafft dabei ungehindert Zutritt in die geistige Welt der beiden Schöpfer. Diese Korrespondenz enthüllt die tiefe

Ernsthaftigkeit, mit der sich Boito und Verdi über Jahre hinweg „ihrem“ *Otello* hingaben und erschließt Einblicke in die kreative Werkstatt eines der faszinierendsten „Pärchens“ der Operngeschichte, die in einem Atemzug mit Mozart/da Ponte und Strauss/von Hofmannsthal zu nennen sind.

Ergebnis der intensiv-befruchtenden Zusammenarbeit zwischen Verdi und Boito war eines der wichtigsten Kernwerke des Opernrepertoires überhaupt, mit dem Verdi außerdem eine neue Qualitätsstufe im Rahmen seines operistischen Œuvres erreichte. Verdis Weg führte hier zielstrebig und konsequent zur Auflösung aller formalistischen Elemente innerhalb der italienischen Oper – weg von den gliedernden Nummern von Arie, Rezitativ und Ensembles hin zur durchkomponierten dramatischen Großform auf der Basis einer

handwerklich herausragend gestalteten literarischen Grundlage und einer Geschichte, die von Menschen mit Stärken und Schwächen, aber sicherlich nicht von eindimensionalen Helden handelt.

Die Entstehung – in der Ruhe liegt die Kraft

Nach der glanzvollen Uraufführung seiner *Aida* am 24. Dezember 1871 in Kairo sollten nicht weniger als sechzehn Jahre vergehen, bevor mit dem *Otello* am 5. Februar 1887 wieder eine Verdi-Oper aus der künstlerischen Taufe gehoben wurde. Nach dem *Aida*-Triumph hatten sich die italienischen Opernhäuser um die Rechte der italienischen Erstaufführung gerissen, die am 8. Februar 1872 an der Mailänder Scala stattfand. Weitere Aufführungen folgten in Parma und Neapel. Auf diese Erfolge folgte die

längste künstlerische Schaffenspause in Verdis Karriere, unterbrochen nur von den so gegensätzlichen Werken wie dem Streichquartett (1873) und der *Messa da Requiem* (1874). Verdis Schweigen in Sachen Oper hatte wohl kaum mit den beginnenden Erfolgen der Wagnerschen Musikdramen in Italien zu tun, sondern lag vielmehr in der Unsicherheit begründet, von der die italienische Operntradition ergriffen worden war. Verdi betrachtete neue Entwicklungen wie die der „Scapigliati“ um Arrigo Boito mit Verdruss und Unzufriedenheit. Mehrfach beschrieb er die unklare Lage als „Chaos“ und beklagte in Briefen den Verfall der Musik. Verdi zog sich nun auf sein Landgut in Sant’ Agata zurück und widmete sich mit großer Leidenschaft nicht der Musik, sondern der Landwirtschaft. Der Verdi-Biograph Wolfgang Marggraf erkannte in diesem Tun „keine nebenbei betriebene Liebhaberei“, sondern es

habe „den ganzen Menschen bis in sein künstlerisches Schaffen hinein“ geformt und bestimmt. Augenscheinlich gefiel sich Verdi auch in der Rolle des Altersweisen, der weder sich noch der Opernwelt etwas zu beweisen hatte. Während der kompositorischen Abstinenz Verdis versuchte vor allem sein Verleger, Giulio Ricordi, den Komponisten zu neuen – aus seiner Sicht natürlich vor allem finanziell lukrativen – Projekten zu bewegen. Dabei griff Ricordi im Juli 1879 durchaus zu einer List, indem er Verdi mit Arrigo Boito zusammenbrachte. Jenem Boito also, den Verdi bereits 1862 kennengelernt hatte und der als junger Dichter in seiner Ode *All’arte italiana* im Jahr 1863 noch leidenschaftlich gefordert hatte, die Kunst müsse „dalla cerchia del vecchio e del cretino“ (also dem Kreis des Alten und Dummen) entzogen werden – und damit Verdi zumindest indirekt attackiert hatte. Bei einem

Abendessen kam in der Runde um Ricordi und Verdi die Sprache auf Rossinis *Otello*-Vertonung. Nach der übereinstimmenden Meinung aller wies Rossinis Komposition doch einige Schwächen auf, und Ricordi ließ beiläufig die Bemerkung fallen, der ihm bekannte Boito arbeite gerade an einem *Otello*-Libretto. Verdi zeigte sich interessiert, weil er, der große Shakespeare-Bewunderer, mit *Macbeth* bisher nur ein einziges Shakespeare-Drama vertont hatte, und nur drei Tage später übergab Boito ihm einen ersten Textentwurf. Mit – vermutlich grandios gespielter – Zurückhaltung und einem offenen Kokettieren mit der eigenen Arbeitsunlust, kaufte Verdi Boito das vollendete Libretto im November 1879 ab, ließ es aber dann liegen. Denn zur Komposition drängen lassen wollte er sich nicht. Verdis Frau Giuseppina schrieb in ihr Tagebuch: „Wie es scheint, hat das Libretto Verdi gefallen, da er

es gekauft hat, nachdem er es gelesen hat, aber dann hat er es zu dem ‚König Lear‘ vom Somma gelegt, der schon seit dreißig Jahren einen tiefen und ungestörten Schlaf schläft.“

Verdi war sich durchaus bewusst, dass er im Kontext der italienischen Opernkrise mit einem Werk an die Öffentlichkeit gehen musste, das nicht weniger als einen künstlerischen Ausweg aus eben dieser Krise aufzeigen würde. Die Erwartungshaltung an sich selbst hielt er hoch. Dabei kam ihm zupass, dass er an keine knebelnden Theaterverträge gebunden war, er konnte sich im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes – in aller Ruhe – mit dem Stoff auseinandersetzen, um ein Werk allerhöchster Qualität ins Leben zu rufen. Erst 1884, fast fünf Jahre nach dem Kauf des Librettos, begann Verdi mit der Komposition – aber die Jahre davor waren von einer intensiven Auseinandersetzung mit

dem Stoff geprägt. Verdi suchte, in die vielschichtigen Charaktere des Otello, der Desdemona und vor allem des ihn über die Maßen faszinierenden Jago psychologisierend einzudringen. Verdi und Boito besprachen in engem (nicht nur brieflichen, sondern auch persönlichen) Austausch die Einzelheiten des Librettos. Dabei ging der junge Boito immer wieder auf Anregungen und Änderungswünsche des erfahrenen Theaterpraktikers Verdi ein. Beinahe wäre die kongeniale Zusammenarbeit recht früh wieder gescheitert, denn Verdi hatte im März 1884 von einer angeblichen Äußerung Boitos erfahren, dieser habe den *Otello* lieber selbst vertonen wollen. Boito rettete die Situation und es gelang ihm, den hochsensibel reagierenden Verdi, der die kompositorische Arbeit sofort niedergelegt hatte, wieder einzufangen: „*Nur Sie allein können den ‚Otello‘ komponieren. (...) Denn*

Sie leben im wahren und wirklichen Leben der Kunst, ich aber in einer Welt der Halluzinationen.“ Verdi lenkte ein und setzte die Arbeit fort – konzentriert und inspiriert von seiner künstlerischen Freiheit, bis Anfang Oktober 1885 die Musik fertig skizziert war. Am 1. November 1886 konnte Verdi die Instrumentation abschließen. Drei Jahre hatte die Komposition gedauert.

Anfang Januar 1887 begannen die Proben an der Mailänder Scala – unter Leitung Verdis, der vor allem mit den von ihm ausgewählten Sängern der Hauptpartien unermüdlich arbeitete. Akribisch kümmerte er sich um szenische Anweisungen und auch um Kostümaspekte. Die Uraufführung am 5. Februar geriet zum Triumph für Verdi und Boito. Ein sensationelles gesellschaftliches Ereignis allerersten Ranges war dieser Abend, der von Ricordi perfekt in

der Öffentlichkeitsarbeit begleitet wurde. Journalisten aus ganz Europa waren eingeladen und verbreiteten die Neuigkeiten von einem „*Glücksfall der Operngeschichte*“ (Marggraf). Ricordi selbst verkündete stolz: „*Otello ist nicht der Triumph einer Schule, sondern jener göttlichen Kunst, die als einzige eine universale Sprache spricht, jener Kunst, die sich an jedermann richtet und das gemeinsame Gut aller Völker ist.*“

Die Vorlage – Shakespeares Eifersuchtsdrama

Arrigo Boito hatte Shakespeares Drama *Othello* in der französischen Fassung von Victor Hugo bearbeitet. Dem findigen Librettisten war recht schnell deutlich geworden, dass eine reine Übertragung des Originals keinesfalls die Basis für eine erfolgreiche Oper würde legen können. Denn das moderne Musiktheater verlangte nach inhaltlicher

und dramatischer Zuspitzung. Boito besaß den künstlerischen Instinkt und auch den Mut, Shakespeares Text drastisch zu kürzen und sodann auf die emotionalen Kernlinien der Handlung zu konzentrieren. Er eliminierte den kompletten Ersten Akt des Schauspiels und arbeitete lediglich relevante Informationen daraus in sein Libretto ein. Verdi drängte Boito dazu, die Liebesszene zwischen Desdemona und Otello an den Schluss des Ersten Aktes zu setzen – um dann in der weiteren Folge den drastischen Kontrast zur rasenden Eifersucht des Titelhelden greller und stärker herausarbeiten zu können. Auch die Huldigung vor Desdemona und das berühmte „Credo“ des Jago im Zweiten Akt waren Verdis Einfälle. Die Figur des Jago faszinierte Verdi derart, dass er die Oper sogar zeitweise „Jago“ betiteln wollte: „Ist das eine Gestalt, dieser Jago!“

Die dramaturgische Entwicklung des Librettos zeigt in mehreren Schritten den totalen psychischen Verfall Otellos, „sein durch Beirrbarkeit, Misstrauen, schließlich zügellose Eifersucht herbeigeführtes Scheitern an sich selbst und – verkörpert in Jago – dem Prinzip des Bösen“ (Henze-Döhring). Boitos Anteil am Erfolg des *Otello* kann nicht hoch genug eingeschätzt werden, denn seine Verse und Prosa trugen maßgeblich dazu bei, dass Verdi die italienische Oper im Sinne einer durchkomponierten Form – als *Dramma musicale* – drastisch erneuerte. Die meisterhafte Anlage des Librettos zeigt sich vor allem in einer perfekten Ausgewogenheit zwischen retardierend-lyrischen und dramatisch-vorwärtsdrängenden Szenen. Verdi hatte zeit seines Lebens nach einem perfekten Librettisten gesucht und ihn in Boito nun gefunden. Mit der gemeinsamen finalen Zugabe des wundervollen *Falstaff*.

Die Musik – Auflösung der Formen

Verdis musikalische Umsetzung des Dramenstoffes lässt sich ganz generell als „Auflösung der Formen“ umschreiben. Hier ist nun keine Rede mehr von der typischen Abfolge aus Rezitativ, Arie, Ensembles in unterschiedlicher Besetzung, also von einer Komposition nach dem Baukastenprinzip, nach dem Verdis frühe Opern wunderbar funktioniert hatten. Im *Otello* löst sich Verdi nun völlig von den formalen Zwängen dieses auch kompositorisch eher schematischen Arbeitens. Streng genommen gibt es keine, die Handlung immer wieder unterbrechenden, Arien mehr. Alles ist ein „unendliches, nur selten ins Ariose schweifendes Rezitativ, dem Wortinhalt nachspürend und der psychischen Regung“, wie es Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau aus Sängersicht formulierte. Gerald Mertens entdeckte

im *Otello* „nur noch ,dramatische Musik‘, ohne allerdings jede Kontur zu verlieren“. In der Tat erzeugt die Musik des *Otello* beim Hörer einen ungeheuren dramatischen Sog, dessen Stärke im steten Wechsel zu- und wieder abnimmt, dabei stets mit den Verläufen der Handlung korrelierend. So sind etwa der Feuerchor und das Trinklied des Jago im Ersten Akt weit entfernt von Einzelnummern, sondern vielmehr durch wechselnde melodische Einheiten hier und variierende Refrains dort sehr organisch und geradezu natürlich in den dramatischen Vorgang eingebettet. Der dramatische Ausdruck der Musik bestimmt sich – abhängig von der handelnden Figur – nach der individuellen Ausgestaltung des Melodischen. Die Singstimme ist immer Träger dieses Ausdrucks.

Musikalische Motive verwendet Verdi – im Gegensatz zu Wagner – überwiegend

zur Charakterisierung seiner Figuren und weiterhin als Erinnerungsstütze. So ist ein chromatisch abwärts gerichtetes Motiv etwa Jagos musikalisches Kennzeichen, die „*Chiffre seines zerstörerischen Wirkens*“ (Henze-Döhring), die an entscheidenden Stellen der Oper wiederkehrt und quasi subkutan Bezüge zwischen den Figuren herstellt. Auch das wunderbar aufblühende Liebesmotiv am Ende des Ersten Aktes kehrt im Vierten Akt, kurz vor der Ermordung Desdemonas zweimal wieder. Erinnerung an eine Liebe zweier Menschen, die von Beginn an zum Scheitern verurteilt war? Der Kuss der Liebe wandelt sich am Ende zum Todeskuss, wenn bei „*un altro bacio*“ ganz reell die letzte Silbe unvertont bleibt.

Seine herausragende Ensemble-Kunst zeigt Verdi vor allem in der nahezu melodramatischen Schlusszene des

Dritten Aktes, in der der vor Eifersucht rasende und von Jago angestachelte Otello vor den Augen der entsetzten venezianischen Gesandten Desdemona zu Boden wirft und im anschließenden „*pezzo concertato*“ den Schockzustand aller Beteiligten subtil ausmalt, dabei gekonnt mehrere Gefühlsebenen übereinander schichtend und somit ein psychologisches Gesamtbild entwerfend.

Die Harmonik des *Otello* ist dem Zeitpunkt ihrer Entstehung gemäß chromatisch angereichert, ohne dass es dabei wie etwa in Wagners *Tristan* zur Desorientierung in puncto Grundton kommt. Aber Verdi verwendet alterierte Akkorde oder chromatische Modulationen eher sparsam. Lediglich der Beginn der Oper – die berühmte Gewitterszene – führt mit seinem pedalartigen Orgelcluster auf den Tönen C, Cis und D in entfernte Sphären. Bis

zum Einsatz des Siegeschores „*Vittoria!*“ bleiben diese Töne in der Orgel wie ein Störfaktor liegen, während das Orchester darüber in den schrillsten und grellsten Farben das Naturereignis klanglich exzessiv darstellt. Der Sturm als Symbol für das menschliche Drama, das sich daraus entwickelt. Überhaupt das Orchester. Bei allem Primat der menschlichen Stimme – Verdi ureigenes Verdikt – gewinnt das Orchester im *Otello* zunehmend an Format und Bedeutung. Es wird der Stimme zum ebenbürtigen Partner, dessen Klänge die Gefühle und Stimmungen der Protagonisten nicht nur stützen, sondern dem Hörer nachgerade bewusst machen. Ein Musterbeispiel hierfür sind die ganz in das Orchester verlagerten Gedanken Otellos im Vierten Akt, als dieser Desdemonas Schlafgemach mit Mordabsicht betritt. Die Stimme auf der Bühne schweigt, während im Orchestergraben die tiefwühlenden

Emotionen Otellos rein instrumental ausformuliert werden.

Zahlreiche tonmalerische Effekte finden sich in der Partitur: das Flackern des Feuers im Feuerchor, das Ausleeren der Trinkbecher in Jagos Trinklied, die eruptiven Ausbrüche und Triller im Credo, um nur einige zu nennen. Symphonisch wie bei Wagner tritt das Orchester allerdings niemals auf. Verdi gelang es, seinen eigenen Weg zum „*Musikdrama als Gesamtkunstwerk, als vollkommene Synthese zwischen Handlung und Musik*“ (Mertens) zu schaffen.

Nikolai Schukoff

Höhenfanatismus

Nikolai Schukoff ist ein Mann der klaren Worte. Einer, der nicht um den heißen Brei herumredet, der Stellung bezieht. Dieser charmante und kluge Sänger, der sich selbst als „eine richtige k.u.k.-Mischung“ bezeichnet, ist heute einer der gefragtesten Tenöre überhaupt. Ein Heldentenor, um genauer zu sein. Eine rare Spezies also. Bereits früh wurde dem Grazer von den Kritikern „jugendlicher Charme“ und eine „dunkel-samtig gefärbte Stimme“ beschieden. Dass Schukoffs Karriere eben nicht wie die so vieler anderer Tenöre vor ihm in eine stimmliche Sackgasse führte, hat er seiner bewusst-bedächtigen Rollenauswahl und vor allem einem intensiven Partiestudium zu verdanken. In seinen Anfängen studierte Schukoff noch Bariton-Arien, dann kam aber – wie er sagt – ein gewisser

„Höhenfanatismus“ zum Tragen. Was ihm beim Singen wichtig ist? „Ich möchte Geschichten erzählen, wenn ich singe. Für mich ist die Sprache, die Artikulation ganz wichtig.“

Beim Rollenstudium kommt der Bücherwurm in Nikolai Schukoff hervor. „Ich lese kilowise Literatur, weil ich genau wissen will, in welcher Situation die Figur, die singen soll, gerade ist.“ Der Tenor versteht sich selbst als vielseitig interessierten Künstler, und um als solcher zu gelten, müsse man einfach „um das Gesamtkunstwerk Oper wirklich Bescheid wissen.“

Dass Schukoff ein nachhaltig denkender und handelnder Mensch mit geradezu prophetischen Fähigkeiten ist, konnte man bereits 2005 erfahren, als er sagte: „Ich möchte eine lange Karriere machen. Ich möchte wirklich schrittweise gehen. Ich spüre, dass sich meine

Stimme gerade sehr stark entwickelt und solange ich mich nicht am Ziel fühle... Ich möchte lange ein Tenor des Moments sein!“ Kein Jahr später kam mit der Partie des Siegmund dann sein internationaler Durchbruch. Der dem völlig frei arbeitenden Künstler Zugang zu den großen Opernhäusern weltweit verschafft hat. Dort brilliert er heute in Partien, von denen er zu Beginn seiner Karriere vermutlich nicht einmal zu träumen gewagt hatte. Manchmal zahlt sich Höhenfanatismus eben aus.

Melody Moore

Mehr als ein Versprechen für die Zukunft

„Es war die Pamina! Durch diese Rolle hat mich die Oper so richtig gepackt!“ Die US-amerikanische Sopranistin Melody Moore berichtete in einem Interview aus der Reihe „Rising Stars“ im Jahr 2014 freimütig und offen

über die Anfänge ihrer Karriere, ihr Stipendium an der San Francisco Opera und auch über die künstlerische Arbeit mit der großen Carol Vaness. Keine drei Jahre später ist Moore über den Status eines „Rising Stars“ längst hinausgewachsen. So singt sie heute vor allem an den wichtigsten Opernhäusern der Vereinigten Staaten die zentralen Partien ihres Fachs als Soprano spinto. Die Kritiker sind schlichtweg verzaubert von ihrer „Verwundbarkeit“ und angetan von ihrem „reichhaltigen und sanften Ton“.

Dass sie Nerven wie Drahtseile hat, bewies Melody Moore bereits 2012, als sie in einer Aufführung von Puccinis Tosca nach dem 1. Akt für keine Geringere als Angela Gheorghiu einsprang. Mit großartigem Erfolg, der ihre Karriere befeuerte. Die Sängerin mit dem so passenden musikalischen Vornamen entwickelt ihr Repertoire

sorgfältig und mittlerweile auch schon in Richtung Wagner weiter. In kurzer Zeit erarbeitet, ja erobert sie sich rasch zahlreiche neue Partien. Die Zeiten, in denen sie noch als junges Mädchen vor der Kirchengemeinde sang, sind längst vorbei. Heute liegen ihr die Zuschauer an den großen Häusern zu Füßen. Melody Moores Stimme ist mehr als nur ein Versprechen für die Zukunft, wie die Kritiker zu deuten wissen: *“Sie verfügt über eine lyrische Stimme mit ausgeprägten dunklen Obertönen. Außerdem hat sie diesen typischen spinto-Peng. Mit den Namen von Renata Tebaldi und Gabrielle Tucci lassen sich ihre außergewöhnlichen Fähigkeiten am besten umschreiben.”* So klingt eine wahrhaft gewichtige künstlerische Prognose, die Melody Moore mit ihren Interpretationen auf der Bühne und auch im Aufnahmestudio nur zu gerne bestätigten würde.

Lester Lynch

„Die Kunst leitet die Menschen“

Lester Lynch ist einer jener Künstler, die von Anfang an über ihren sängerischen und künstlerischen Horizont hinausgeblickt haben. Kunst und Musik besitzen für ihn neben der rein ästhetischen Aussage noch eine gesellschaftliche Dimension, die gerade in Zeiten drastischer Umbrüche und Entwicklungen an Bedeutung gewinnt. Der afro-amerikanische Bariton aus der Nähe von Cleveland ist auch musikalisch sehr vielseitig. So weist er nicht nur bereits in jungen Jahren eine erstaunliche Bandbreite im klassischen Opern- und Konzertrepertoire auf, die quasi alle großen Partien im dramatischen Bariton-Fach umfasst, sondern widmet sich außerdem auch mit Herzkblut und Überzeugung einer völlig anderen Gattung: dem Spiritual. So hat er als einer der wenigen

Opernsänger ein Album mit Spirituals und Hymns eingespielt und auch selbst arrangiert. „On my Journey“ ist für Lynch ein wichtiges Statement für mehr Gerechtigkeit in der Gesellschaft. Auch gegen verstärkt auftretende nationalistische Töne findet der Sänger klare und offene Worte: *“Die Kunst kann die Menschen leiten. Ich bin der festen Überzeugung, dass es zu unserem Job als Künstler gehört, sich zu erheben und eine gewisse Leitfunktion für die Menschen einzunehmen.”*

Der US-amerikanische Sänger nähert sich jeder Kunstform auf sehr durchdachte und individuelle Art und Weise, ganz gleich, ob er mit seiner kraftvollen, ja markigen Stimme die großen Ausbrüche eines Baron Scarpia gestaltet oder ein emotionsgeladenes Spiritual wie „Go Down Moses“ vokal zelebriert. Die Kritiker schätzen an Lynchs *“warmem Bariton“* vor allem

seine schier unerschöpfliche Stimmkraft, sein *“intensives Spiel“* und sein *„Puccini-Feuer“*. Mit Lynch hat ein Sänger die Bühnen der Welt betreten, der in Zukunft seine Stimme nicht nur im wörtlichen Sinne erheben wird.

Lawrence Foster

Der amerikanische Dirigent Lawrence Foster ist seit 2013 Chefdirigent der Opéra de Marseille und des Orchestre Philharmonique de Marseille. Zuvor war er Künstlerischer Leiter u.a. beim Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona, Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, Houston Symphony und beim Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne.

Gastdirigate führen ihn zu weltweit renommierten Orchestern wie dem Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Copenhagen Philharmonic und dem

Konzerthausorchester Berlin sowie zu den Orchestern in Köln, Frankfurt, Budapest, Shanghai und Hong Kong. Mit herausragenden Solisten wie Evgeny Kissin, Arcadi Volodos und Arabella Steinbacher verbinden ihn tiefe musikalische Freundschaften.

Im Bereich der Oper dirigiert er zusätzlich zu den äußerst erfolgreichen Produktionen in Marseille u.a. auch regelmäßig an der Oper Frankfurt, war häufiger Gast in Hamburg sowie an der San Francisco Opera und in Monte Carlo. Beim Enescu-Festival in Bukarest leitete er mit sensationellen Erfolg Hindemiths *Mathis der Maler* (konzertant) sowie beim Savonlinna Opern-Festival *La Traviata*.

Nach seiner zehnjährigen Amtszeit als Musikdirektor des Gulbenkian-Orchesters wurde Lawrence Foster zum Ehrendirigent des Orchesters ernannt. In diesen

zehn Jahren haben ihn Tourneen nach Deutschland, Spanien, Brasilien sowie zu bedeutenden Festivals wie dem Kissinger Sommer geführt – oft mit renommierten Solisten wie z.B. Lang Lang.

Zu Fosters Diskographie gehören zahlreiche hochgelobte Einspielungen für PENTATONE, darunter Werke für Violine mit Arabella Steinbacher, Bartóks *Zwei Bilder*, Ligetis *Rumänisches Konzert*, Kodálys *Tänze aus Galanta* und *Háry János Suite*, die Symphonien von Robert Schumann mit dem Tschechischen Philharmonischen Orchester sowie *Der Zigeunerbaron* mit dem NDR Orchester Hannover.

Der 1941 in Los Angeles geborene Sohn rumänischer Einwanderer hat sich stets besonders für das Werk Georg Enescus eingesetzt, wofür er 2003 vom Präsidenten Rumäniens mit einem Orden ausgezeichnet wurde.

Die Handlung

Erster Akt

Ein schwerer Gewittersturm tobt vor Zypern. Otello, der dunkelhäutige Statthalter der Insel und Feldherr der venezianischen Flotte, ist mit seinem Schiff in Seenot geraten, kann aber unter den angstvollen Blicken der Bevölkerung letztlich sicher den Hafen erreichen. Otello verkündet, dass er die türkische Flotte in einer gewaltigen Seeschlacht vernichtend geschlagen habe. Das Volk jubelt ihm zu. Otello eilt sofort ins nahegelegene Schloss zu seiner Gattin Desdemona, während die Zyprioten den Sieg mit einem Freudenfeuer und ausgelassenem Trinkgelage feiern. Nur Jago, Otellos Fährhelfer, ist gekränkt und wütend, weil Otello ihm Cassio bei der Beförderung zum Hauptmann vorgezogen hat. Jago plant, Otellos

Glück um jeden Preis zu vernichten. Im venezianischen Edelmann Roderigo findet er einen Verbündeten, der selbst in Desdemona verliebt ist und Otello deren Liebe zutiefst neidet. Zunächst hetzt Jago Roderigo gegen Cassio auf und macht diesen dann bei der feuchtfröhlichen Siegesfeier betrunken. Es kommt zum Streit, erst zwischen Cassio und Roderigo und dann zum Duell zwischen Cassio und Montano, Otellos Vorgänger als Statthalter auf Zypern, in dessen Verlauf Montano verwundet wird. Otello, von Lärm und Aufruhr alarmiert, stellt die Ruhe wieder her – und degradiert Cassio. Als sich der Aufruhr gelegt und sich die Menge verlaufen hat, preisen Otello und Desdemona im Anblick der glühenden Venus am Nachthimmel ihre Liebe und küssen sich.

Zweiter Akt

Cassio verzweifelt über die Ereignisse der letzten Nacht und über seine Degradierung. Jago kennt die rasende Eifersucht sowie das aufbrausend-misstrauische Wesen Otellos und nutzt dieses Wissen für seinen perfiden, auf Vernichtung des Menschen Otello angelegten Racheplan. Er erklärt sich bereit, Cassio zu helfen – dieser solle sich nur an Desdemona wenden und sie um Unterstützung bei Otello bitten. In seinem „Credo“ verkündet Jago seine nihilistische Weltsicht und erfreut sich an der eigenen Schlechtigkeit.

Otello beobachtet das Gespräch Cassios mit Desdemona und wird in dessen Verlauf von Jago mit gezielten Worten in seiner latenten Eifersucht angestachelt. Nachdem die zypriotische Bevölkerung Desdemona gehuldigt hat, bittet diese ihren Gatten um Gnade für Cassio. Otello reagiert wütend, beginnt Jagos Einflüsterungen Glauben zu schenken. Er

klagt über heftige Kopfschmerzen und schleudert Desdemonas Taschentuch zu Boden, das diese ihm zur Linderung seiner Schmerzen auf die Stirn gelegt hatte. Jagos Gattin Emilia hebt es auf, doch Jago entreißt es ihr unter Drohungen. Otello schickt die Frauen aus dem Raum. Jetzt verlangt er von Jago eindeutige Beweise für Desdemonas Untreue. Jago erklärt sich bereit, diese zu erbringen. Es gelingt ihm, Otellos Eifersucht mit Anspielungen auf Cassios Liebe bis zum Irrsinn zu steigern, indem er vorgibt, er habe Desdemonas Taschentuch in den Händen des degradierten Hauptmanns gesehen. Jago und Otello schwören, die Schmach zu rächen.

Dritter Akt

Erneut streiten sich Otello und Desdemona, als diese wieder für Cassio eintritt. Otello schützt

Kopfschmerzen vor und fordert von seiner Frau das Taschentuch, das er ihr einst als Liebesbeweis geschenkt hatte. Desdemona kann nichts über den Verbleib des Stoffes sagen. Otello schimpft sie daraufhin eine „Dirne“ und zwingt sie, den Saal zu verlassen. Er wird im Anschluss zum Ohrenzeugen eines Gesprächs zwischen Jago und Cassio, dass der rachsüchtige Fähnrich geschickt lenkt. Er sorgt dafür, dass Otello nur missverständliche Gesprächsfetzen vernimmt, die ihn von einer Affäre zwischen Cassio und Desdemona überzeugen müssen. Cassio hat das Taschentuch in seiner Hand (das Jago in dessen Wohnung versteckt hatte) und nun ist Otello endgültig von der Untreue seiner Frau überzeugt. Voller Zorn und Eifersucht muss er die venezianischen Gesandten unter Leitung Lodovicos empfangen, die Order bringen. Auf Befehl des Dogen soll Otello nach Venedig zurückkehren.

Sein Nachfolger als Oberbefehlshaber auf Zypern wird – Cassio. In einem Tobsuchtsanfall wirft Otello Desdemona vor den Augen aller brutal zu Boden und bedroht die Umstehenden. Die Anwesenden schrecken entsetzt zurück. Otello bricht ohnmächtig zusammen und Jago setzt triumphierend seinen Fuß auf den Nacken des „Löwen von Venedig“: „Da liegt der Löwe...“

Vierter Akt

In ihrem Schlafgemach bereitet sich Desdemona auf die Nachtruhe vor. Voller Trauer über die Ereignisse erinnert sie sich an ihre Kindheit und betet dann das „Ave Maria“. Sie begibt sich zur Ruhe. Otello betritt den Raum, noch einmal durchziehen ihn Gedanken an eine glückliche Liebe. Doch sein Plan steht fest. Als Desdemona erwacht, beschuldigt er sie der Untreue und teilt ihr mit, dass er gekommen sei, sie zu

töten. Doch vorher solle sie gestehen. Desdemona beschwört ihre Unschuld und fleht um ihr Leben. Otello erwürgt sie. Die eintretende Emilia berichtet, dass Cassio im Duell Roderigo getötet habe. Als sie die sterbende Desdemona erblickt, stürzen auf ihren Schrei Jago, Cassio, Lodovico und Montano ins Schlafgemach. Emilia bringt die Wahrheit ans Licht: Roderigo hat im Sterben Jagos Intrige enthüllt. Jago flieht. Otello gibt sich an der Leiche Desdemonas selbst den Tod und küsst ein letztes Mal die bleichen Lippen Desdemonas.



VERDI OTELLO

GIUSEPPE VERDI: OTELLO

CD 1

ATTO PRIMO

La trama si svolge sull'isola di Cipro alla fine del Quattrocento. L'esterno del castello, gli spaldi nel fondo e il mare. Una taverna con pergolato. È sera. Lampi, tuoni, uragano.

Ciprioti

Una vela! Una vela!
Un vessillo! Un vessillo!

Montano

È l'alato Leon!

Cassio

Or la folgore lo svela.

Ciprioti

Uno squillo! Uno squillo!
Ha tuonato il cannon.

ACT ONE

The action takes place in Cyprus, at the end of the fifteenth century. Outside the castle, with the sea-walls and sea in the background. An inn with a pergola. It is evening. A thunderstorm is raging.

Cypriots

A sail! A sail!
A standard! A standard!

Montano

'Tis the winged Lion of St. Mark!

Cassio

Now the lightning flash reveals it.

Cypriots

A fanfare! A fanfare!
The cannon has roared.

1

Cassio

È la nave del Duce.

Montano

Or s'affonda, or s'inciela.

Cassio

Erge il rostro dall'onda.

Alcuni Ciprioti

Nelle nubi si cela e nel mar,
e alla luce dei lampi ne appar.

Tutti

Lampi! tuoni! gorgi! turbi
tempestosi e fulmini!
Tremon l'onde, tremon l'aure,
tremon basi e culmini!

(Entrano dal fondo molte donne del popolo.)

Fende l'etra un torvo e cieco

Cassio

It is the General's ship.

Montano

Now she is engulfed, anon is tossed
skywards.

Cassio

Her prow rises from the waves.

Some Cypriots

Veiled by mist and water,
the lightning flash reveals her.

All

Flashes! Crashes! Whirlpools! Howling
winds and thunder's mighty roar!
Air and water shake together,
shaken is the ocean-floor!

(A large group of Cypriot women enters from the back.)

Black-browed and blind, a spirit wild

spirito di vertigine.

Donne

(gridando)
Ah!

Tutti

Iddio scuote il ciel bieco,
come un tetro vel.

Donne

Ah!

Tutti

Tutto è fumo! Tutto è fuoco!
L'orrida caligine
si fa incendio, poi si spegne
più funesta. Spasima
l'universo, accorre a valchi
l'aquilon fantasima,
i titanici oricalchi
squillano nel ciel!
*(con gesti di spavento e di supplicazione
e rivolti verso lo spaldo)*

of chaos cleaves the air.

Women

(shrieking)
Ah!

All

God shakes the sullen sky about
like sable drapery.

Women

Ah!

All

All is smoke! All is fire!
The dense and dreadful fog
bursts into flame, and then subsides
in greater gloom. Convulsed
the cosmos, glacial surges
the spectre-like north-wind,
and titanic trumpet-calls
sound fanfares in the sky!
*(turning towards the quay with gestures
of fear and supplication)*

Dio, fulgor della bufera!
Dio, sorriso della duna!
Salva l'arca e la bandiera
della veneta fortuna!
Tu, che reggi gli astri e il Fato!
Tu, che imperi al mondo e al ciel!
Fa che in fondo al mar placato
posi l'ancora fedel.

Jago

È infranto l'artimon!

Roderigo

Il rostro piomba su quello scoglio!

La Folla

Aita! aita!

Jago

(a Roderigo)

L'alvo frenetico del mar sia la sua
tomba!

God, the splendour of the tempest!
God, the sandbank's luring smile!
Save the treasure and the standard
of the Venetian enterprise!
Thou, who guidest stars and fortunes,
Thou, who rulest earth and sky,
grant that in a tranquil ocean
may the trusty anchor lie.

Iago

The mainmast's broken off!

Roderigo

Her prow is dashing on that rock!

Onlookers

O help! O help!

Iago

(to Roderigo)

May the ocean's seething belly be his
tomb!

La Folla

È salvo! è salvo!

Marinai

(dalla nave)

Gittate i palischermi!
Mani alle funi! Fermi!
Forza ai remi! Alla riva!

(tuono lontano)

All'approdo! allo sbarco!

Folla Cittadina

Evviva! Evviva! Evviva!

(Otello entra, salendo la scala dalla
spiaggia sullo spaldo con seguito di
marinai e soldati.)

Otello

Esultate! L'orgoglio musulmano
sepolto è in mar.
Nostra e del ciel è gloria.

Onlookers

Safe! He's safe!

Sailors

(from on board the ship)

Lower the tenders!
All hands to the ropes! Steady!
Pull on the oars! To shore!

(distant thunder)

To the quayside! To the landing!

Onlookers

Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!

(Othello enters, ascending the steps
from the shore to the ramparts followed
by a number of soldiers and sailors.)

Othello

Rejoice! The Muslim pride
is buried in the deep.
Ours and heaven's is the glory.

Dopo l'armi lo vinse l'uragano.

Folla Cittadina

Evviva Otello! Evviva!

Evviva! Evviva! Vittoria! Vittoria!

(Otello entra nella rocca, seguito da Cassio, Montano e soldati.)

Vittoria! Vittoria!

Sterminio! Sterminio!

Dispersi, distrutti, sepolti nell'orrido tumulto piombâr!

Vittoria! Vittoria!

Vittoria! Vittoria!

Sterminio! Sterminio! ecc.

Avranno per requie la sferza dei flutti,
(rip.)

la ridda dei turbini, (rip.)

l'abisso, l'abisso del mar.

Vittoria! Vittoria! (rip.)

Dispersi, distrutti, ecc.

Evviva!

After our arms the storm has conquered it.

Onlookers

Hurrah for Othello! Hurrah!

Hurrah! Hurrah! Victory! Victory!

(Othello enters the castle followed by Cassio, Montano and the soldiers.)

Victory! Victory!

Destruction! Destruction!

Dispersed, destroyed, engulfed they plummeted into the raging deep!

Victory! Victory!

Victory! Victory!

Destruction! Destruction! etc.

Their requiem shall be the sharp scourge of
the spray, the swirl of the whirlwind,

the scend of the sea.

Victory! Victory!

Dispersed, destroyed, etc.

Hurrah!

(Tuono lontano. La tempesta sta avviandosi.)

Si calma la bufera.

Jago

(in disparte a Roderigo)

Roderigo, ebbene che pensi?

Roderigo

D'affogarmi.

Jago

Stolto è chi s'affoga per amor di donna.

(Mentre la nave viene scaricata e si portano armi e bagagli da essa nel castello, dei popolani escono da dietro la rocca portando dei rami da ardere presso lo spaldo; alla luce di fiaccole tenute dai soldati formano da un lato una catasta di legna: la folla s'accalca intorno turbolenta e curiosa.)

(Distant thunder. The storm is passing away.)

Spent is the tempest's fury.

Iago

(aside to Roderigo)

Well, Roderigo, what think you?

Roderigo

Of drowning myself.

Iago

Only an idiot drowns himself for love of a woman.

(While the ship is being unloaded and weapons and baggage are being carried from her into the castle, some citizens emerge from behind the fortress carrying branches to make a bonfire which, by the light of torches held by the soldiers, they construct to one side of the ramparts. The crowd gathers

Roderigo

Vincer nol so.

Jago

Su via, fa senno,
aspetta l'opra dei tempo;
a Desdemona bella,
che nel segreto dei tuoi sogni adori,
presto in uggia verranno i foschi baci
di quel selvaggio dalle gonfie labbra.
Buon Roderigo, amico tuo sincero
mi ti professo, né in più forte
ambascia soccorrerti potrei.

Se un fragil voto di femmina
non è tropp'arduo nodo pel genio mio
nè per l'inferno,
giuro che quella donna sarà tua.
M'ascolta, benchè finga d'amarlo,
odio quel Moro.

around, excited and curious.)

Roderigo

How to win I know not.

Iago

Come, keep your wits about you,
await the ministry of time;
the beautiful Desdemona,
who in your secret dreams you so adore,
will soon begin to abhor the murky kisses
of that thick-lipped savage.
Good Roderigo, your friend sincere
I have professed myself, and I could never
do more for you than in your present
need.

If the frail vow of a woman
be not too hard a knot for my wits
and all the tribe of hell to untie,
I promise that the woman shall be yours.
Listen, though I make show of loving him,
I hate the Moor.

(Entra Cassio: poi s'unisce a un crocchio di soldati.)

E una cagion dell'ira, eccola, guarda.

(indicando Cassio)
Quell'azzimato capitano
usurpa il grado mio, il grado mio
che in cento ben pugnate battaglie
ho meritato;
tal fu il voler d'Otello,
ed io rimango di sua Moresca Signoria
l'alfiere!

(Dalla catasta incominciano ad alzarsi dei globi di fumo sempre più denso.)

Ma com'è ver che tu Roderigo sei,
così è pur vero, che se il Moro io fossi
vedermi non vorrei d'attorno un Jago.
Se tu m'ascolti ...

(Sempre parlando, Jago conduce Roderigo più lontano. Il fuoco divampa, i

(Cassio enters and joins a group of soldiers.)

Here comes one reason for my hatred,
look.

(pointing to Cassio)
That curled captain
usurps my place, the place that I
by a hundred well-fought battles
have richly earned;
such was Othello's will,
and I remain his Moorish Lordship's
ancient!

(Puffs of smoke begin to rise from the wood with increasing density.)

But just as sure as you are Roderigo,
so sure it is, that if I were the Moor
I should not want an Iago about me.
If you heed my counsel ...

(Still talking, Iago leads Roderigo further away. Flames begin to leap up from the

Ciprioti s'avvicinano ad esso, cantando. Mentre cantano, i tavernieri illuminano a festa il pergolato. Soldati s'affollano intorno alle tavole, parlando e bevendo.)

Ciprioti

Fuoco di gioia! L'ilare vampa
fuga la notte col suo splendor.
Guizza, sfavilla, crepita, avvampa, (rip.)
fulgido incendio che invade il cor!
Dal raggio attratti, vaghi sembianti
movono intorno mutando stuol,
e son fanciulle dai lieti canti,
e son farfalle dall'igneo vol.
Arde la palma col sicomoro (rip.)
canta la sposa col suo fedel,
sull'aurea fiamma, sul lieto coro,
soffia l'ardente spiro del ciel, ecc.
Fuoco di gioia rapido brilla!

Rapido passa fuoco d'amor!
Splende, s'oscura, palpita, oscilla, (rip.)
l'ultimo guizzo lampeggia e muor.

fire, and the Cypriots gather round it, singing. Meanwhile, the tavern servants decorate the pergola with lanterns. Soldiers gather round the tables, drinking and talking.)

Cypriots

Fire of rejoicing! The jovial flame
by its glow compels night to depart.
It leaps and sparkles, crackles and flares,
bright radiance invading the heart!
Drawn by the firelight, shadowy faces
flit in ever-mutating rings,
now like maidens singing sweetly,
now like moths with flamy wings.
Palm and sycamore burn together,
the bride sings with her own true love,
on golden flame and happy chorus
blow ardent zephyrs from above, etc.
The fire of rejoicing flames but a
moment!
Gone in a moment are passion's fires!
Glowing, fading, throbbing, wavering,
the last flicker leaps and expires.

3

Fuoco di gioia, (rip.) rapido brilla!
Splende, s'oscura, palpita, oscilla,
l'ultimo guizzo lampeggia e muor.
Fuoco di gioia, ecc.

*(Il fuoco si spegne a poco a poco:
la bufera è cessata.)*

... lampeggia e muor!

*(Jago, Roderigo, Cassio e parecchi altri
uomini d'arme stanno intorno a un
tavolo dove c'è del vino.)*

Jago

Roderigo, beviam!
(a Cassio)
Qua la tazza, capitano!

Cassio

Non bevo più.

The fire of rejoicing flames but a
moment!
Glowing, fading, throbbing, wavering,
the last flicker leaps and expires.
Fire of rejoicing, etc.

*(The fire dies down gradually: the storm
has ceased completely.)*

... leaps and expires!

*(Jago, Roderigo, Cassio and a group of
soldiers are gathered around a table on
which wine has been placed.)*

Iago

Roderigo, let's drink!
(to Cassio)
Give me your cup, Captain!

Cassio

I'll drink no more.

4

Jago

(avvicinando il boccale alla tazza di Cassio)

Ingoia questo sorso.

Cassio

(ritirando il bicchiere)

No.

Jago

Guarda! oggi impazza tutta Cipro!

È una notte di gioia, dunque...

Cassio

Cessa. Già m'arde il cervello
per un nappo vuotato.

Jago

Sì, ancora beber devi.

Alle nozze d'Otello e Desdemona!

Iago

(raising the jug towards Cassio's cup)

Swallow this mouthful.

Cassio

(removing his cup)

No.

Iago

But look! All Cyprus has gone mad
today!

This is a night of rejoicing, so ...

Cassio

Enough. My head's on fire already
after drinking one cup.

Iago

Come, you must drink again.

To the marriage of Othello and
Desdemona!

Ciprioti

Evviva!

Cassio

(alzando il bicchiere e bevendo un poco)

Essa infiora questo lido!

Jago

(sotto voce a Roderigo)

Lo ascolta.

Cassio

Col vago suo raggiar
chiama i cori a raccolta.

Roderigo

Pur modesta essa è tanto.

Cassio

Tu, Jago, canterai le sue lodi, ...

Jago

(piano a Roderigo)

Lo ascolta.

Cypriots

Hurrah!

Cassio

(raising his glass and sipping the wine)

She makes this isle the fairer!

Iago

(aside to Roderigo)

Listen to him.

Cassio

With her charm and radiance
she conquers every heart.

Roderigo

Yet she is so modest.

Cassio

You, Iago, will sing her praises, ...

Iago

(aside to Roderigo)

Listen to him.

(forte a Cassio)

Io non sono che un critico.

Cassio

... ed ella d'ogni lode è più bella.

Jago

(a Roderigo, a parte)

Ti guarda da quel Cassio.

Roderigo

Che temi?

Jago

(a Roderigo)

Ei favella già con troppo bollor,
la gagliarda giovinezza lo sprona,
è un astuto seduttor che t'ingombra
il cammino. Bada...

Roderigo

Ebben?

(aloud to Cassio)

I am but a critic.

Cassio

... yet she paragons description.

Iago

(aside to Roderigo)

Beware of this Cassio.

Roderigo

What do you fear?

Iago

(to Roderigo)

He prattles with too much enthusiasm,
spurred on by vigorous youth,
and is a subtle knave who'll prove
a hindrance to you. Take care ...

Roderigo

And so?

Jago

S'ei s'innebria è perduto!

Fallo ber.

(ai tavernieri)

Qua, ragazzi, del vino!

*(Jago riempie tre bicchieri: uno per sé,
uno per Roderigo, uno per Cassio.
I tavernieri circolano colle anfore; la folla
gli si avvicina e guarda curiosamente.)*

(a Cassio, col bicchiere in mano)

Inaffia l'ugola! Trinca, tracanna
prima che svampino canto e bicchier!

Cassio

(a Jago, col bicchiere in mano)

Questa del pampino verace manna
di vaghe annugola nebbie il pensier.

Iago

If he should get drunk he is lost!

Make him drink.

(to the tavern servants)

Some wine here, lads!

*(Iago fills three glasses: one for himself,
one for Roderigo, one for Cassio. The
servants circulate among the guests
with jugs of wine; the crowd draws
closer and looks on with curiosity.)*

(with glass in hand, to Cassio)

Come wet your whistle! Drink deep,
gulp it down before song and glass both
disappear!

Cassio

(with glass in hand, to Iago)

This true manna of the vine
with charming visions clouds the mind.

Jago

(a tutti)

Chi all'esca ha morso del ditirambo
spavaldo e strambo,
beva con me, beva con me,
beva, beva, ecc.
... beva con me!

Roderigo, Ciprioti, Soldati

Chi all'esca ha morso, ecc.
beve con te, beve con te ...

Jago

Beva, beva, ...

Roderigo, Ciprioti, Soldati

... beve con te, ...

Jago

... beva, beva, ...

Roderigo, Ciprioti, Soldati

... beve con te,

Iago

(to everyone)

Who has ever succumbed to the
Bacchic ode
strange and fantastic,
come, drink with me, drink with me,
drink, drink, etc.
... come, drink with me!

Roderigo, Cypriots, Soldiers

Who has ever succumbed, etc.
he drinks with you, ...

Iago

Drink, drink ...

Roderigo, Cypriots, Soldiers

... drinks with you ...

Iago

... drink, drink ...

Roderigo, Cypriots, Soldiers

... drinks with you ...

beve, ...

Jago

... beva!

Roderigo, Ciprioti, Soldati

... beve, beve, beve con te!

Jago

(a Roderigo, indicando Cassio)
Un altro sorso e brillo egli è.

Roderigo

(a Jago)
Un altro sorso e brillo egli è.

Jago

(a tutti)
Il mondo palpita quand'io son brillo!
Sfido l'ironico Nume e il destin!

Cassio

(bevendo ancora)
Come un armonico liuto oscillo;

... drinks ...

Iago

... drink!

Roderigo, Cypriots, Soldiers

... drinks, drinks, drinks with you!

Iago

(to Roderigo, indicating Cassio)
One more sip and he's tight as a drum.

Roderigo

(to Iago)
One more sip and he's tight as a drum.

Iago

(to all)
When I get drunk the world vibrates!
I challenge the ironic Deity and fate!

Cassio

(drinking some more wine)
Like a melodious lute I quiver;

la gioia scalpita sul mio cammin!

Jago

Chi all'esca ha morso, ecc.

Roderigo, Ciprioti, Soldati, poi Jago

Chi all'esca ha morso, ecc.

Jago

(a Roderigo)

Un altro sorso e brillo egli è.

Roderigo

(a Jago)

Un altro sorso e brillo egli è.

Jago

(forte, a tutti)

Fuggan dal vivido nappo i codardi...

Cassio

(interrompendo)

In fondo all'anima ciascun mi guardi! ...

(Beve.)

pleasure cavorts around my path!

Iago

Who has ever succumbed, etc.

Roderigo, Cypriots, Soldiers, then Iago

Who has ever succumbed, etc.

Iago

(to Roderigo)

One more sip and he's tight as a drum.

Roderigo

(to Iago)

One more sip and he's tight as a drum.

Iago

(out loud, to all)

From the potent flagon cowards fly ...

Cassio

(interrupting)

I'm not afraid to bare my soul! ...

(drinks)

Jago

(interrompendo)

... che in cor nascondono frodi.

Cassio

Non temo, non temo il ver...

(barcollando)

Jago

Chi all'esca ha mor...

... del ditiramb...

Bevi con me, bevi con me.

Cassio

... non temo il ver, ecc.

Non temo il ver, e bevo, e bevo

e bevo, e bevo, e bevo, e ...

Jago

Ah! bevi, bevi con me!

Un Gruppo dei Presenti

(ridendo)

Iago

(interrupting)

... who have evil thoughts to hide.

Cassio

I fear not, I fear not the truth ...

(staggering)

Iago

Who has ever suc ...

... to the Bacchic ...

Drink with me, drink with me.

Cassio

... I fear not the truth, etc.

... I fear not the truth, and I drink,

and I drink and I drink, and ...

Iago

Ah! Drink with me!

Some Bystanders

(laughing)

Aha, aha, ecc.

Aha, aha, ecc.

Cassio

Del calice...

Jago

(a Roderigo)

Egli è briaco fradicio ...

Ti scuoti, lo trascina

a contesa; è pronto all'ira,

t'offenderà, ne seguirà tumulto!

Pensa che puoi così del lieto Otello

turbar la prima vigilia d'amor!

Cassio

Del calice ... gl'orli ...

(con voce sempre più soffocata)

Del calice ... gl'orli ... gl'orli ...

(Gli altri ridono di Cassio.)

Roderigo

(Risponde, a parte, a Jago.)

Ed è ciò che mi spinge.

Aha, aha, etc.

... aha, aha, etc.

Cassio

The cup ...

Iago

(to Roderigo)

He's drunk as a lord ...

... Away, provoke him

to an argument; he's full of quarrel,

will strike you, general uproar will ensue!

Think, that by doing thus you can disturb

the happy Othello's first night of love.

Cassio

The brim ... of the cup ...

(his voice thickening even more)

The brim ... of the cup ... the brim ...

(The others are laughing at him.)

Roderigo

(aside, replying to Iago)

And 'tis that that spurs me on.

Cassio

... s'impor... s'impor...

s'imporporino ...

Roderigo, Ciprioti, Soldati

Ah, aha, aha, aha! *(rip.)*

Bevi, bevi con me, ecc.

Jago

Bevi, bevi, ...

Roderigo, Jago, Ciprioti, Soldati

Bevi, bevi, bevi con me!

Cassio

Bevo, bevo, bevo con te!

(Tutti bevono.)

Montano

(venendo dal castello, si rivolge a Cassio)

Capitano, v'attende la fazione ai
baluardi.

Cassio

... is pur ... pur ...

purple-stained ...

Roderigo, Cypriots, Soldiers

Ah, aha, aha, aha!

Drink, drink with me, etc.

Iago

Drink, drink!

Roderigo, Iago, Cypriots, Soldiers

Drink, drink, drink with me!

Cassio

I drink drink, drink with you!

(They all drink.)

Montano

(coming from the castle, to Cassio)

Captain, the watch awaits you on
the platform.

Cassio

(barcollando)

Andiamo!

Montano

Che vedo?

Jago

(a Montano, avvicinandosi a lui)

Ogni notte in tal guisa

Cassio preludia il sonno.

Montano

Otello il sappia!

Cassio

Andiamo ai baluard i...

Roderigo

(ridendo)

Ah! Ah!

Ah! ah!

Cassio

(staggering)

Let's go then!

Montano

What's this I see?

Iago

(to Montano, approaching him closely)

Every night in like manner

does Cassio prelude sleep.

Montano

Othello shall know about it!

Cassio

Let's go the the platform.

Roderigo

(laughing)

Ah! ah! ...

... Ah! ah!

Uomini

Ah! ah!

Cassio

Chi ride?

Roderigo

(provocandolo)

Rido d'un ebbro ...

Cassio

Bada alle tue spalle!

(scagliandosi contro Roderigo)

Furfante!

Roderigo

(difendendosi)

Briaco ribaldo!

Cassio

Marrano! Nessun più ti salva!

Montano

(separandosi a forza e dirigendosi a

Men

Ah! ah!

Cassio

Who laughs?

Roderigo

(provoking him)

I laugh at a drunkard!

Cassio

Defend yourself!

(flinging himself at Roderigo)

Scoundrel!

Roderigo

(defending himself)

Drunken rogue!

Cassio

Knave! No one can save you now!

Montano

(separating them by force and turning

Cassio)
Frenate la mano, signor, ve ne prego.

Cassio

(a Montano)

Ti spacco il cerebro
se qui t'interponi!

Montano

Parole d'un ebbro ...

Cassio

D'un ebbro?

(Sguaina la spada. Montano s'arma anch'esso. Assalto furibondo. La folla si ritrae.)

Jago

(a parte a Roderigo)

Va al porto, con quanta più possa
ti resta, gridando: sommosa!
sommosa!
Va! Spargi il tumulto, l'orror;

to Cassio)
Hold your hand, sir, I pray you.

Cassio

(to Montano)

I'll crack your head in two
if you seek to interfere!

Montano

Words of a drunkard...

Cassio

A drunkard?

(He draws his sword. Montano draws his too. A furious fight ensues. The crowd draws back.)

Jago

(aside to Roderigo)

Go to the port; with all the strength you
have cry out: Revolt! Revolt!
Go! Spread tumult, horror through the
town,

le campane risuonino a stormo.

(Roderigo esce correndo. Jago si rivolge rapidamente ai due combattenti.)

Fratelli! l'immane conflitto cessate!

Donne

(fuggendo)

Fuggiam!

Jago

Ciel! già gronda di sangue Montano!
Tenzon furibonda!

Donne

Fuggiam! Fuggiam!

Jago

Tregua!

Uomini

Tregua!

let the bell sound the alarm!

(Roderigo runs off. Jago quickly turns to the two combatants.)

Gentlemen, cease this barbarous brawl!

Women

(fleeing)

Let's away!

Jago

Heavens! Montano's bleeding fast!
What a furious fight!

Women

Let's away! Let's away!

Jago

Hold! ...

Men

Hold! ...

Jago

... tregua!

Uomini

... tregua!

Donne

S'uccidono!

Uomini

Pace!

Jago

Nessun più raffrena quel nembo
pugnace!

(agli astanti)

Si gridi l'allarme!

Satana gl'invade!!

Uomini

All'armi! all'armi!

Donne, poi tutti

Soccorso! soccorso! ecc.

Iago

Hold!

Men

Hold!

Women

They're killing each other!

Men

Peace!

Iago

No one can stop this brawling now!

(to the bystanders)

Cry the alarm!

They are possessed by Satan!

Men

To arms! To arms!

Women, then All

Help! Help! etc.

Uomini

All'armi! all'armi!

Donne, poi tutti

Soccorso! ecc.

*(Intanto, squillano campane a stormo;
il combattimento continua e le donne
fuggono... Entra Otello seguito da gente
con fiaccole. Cessano le campane.)*

Otello

Abbasso le spade!

(I combattenti s'arrestano.)

Olà! che avvien?

Son io fra i Saraceni?

O la turchesca rabbia è in voi trasfusa
da sbranarvi l'un l'altro?

Onesto Jago, per quell'amor
che tu mi porti, parla.

Men

To arms! To arms!

Women, then all

Help! etc.

*(Meanwhile the tocsin is pealing; the
fight continues and the women flee.
Othello enters followed by torchbearers.
The bell falls silent.)*

Othello

Down with your weapons!

(The combatants stop fighting.)

How now! What is the matter here?

Am I among Saracens?

Or has the Ottomites' rage infected you
with homicidal fury towards each other?
Honest Iago, for that love
you bear me, speak.

Jago

Non so ...

Qui tutti eran cortesi amici dianzi,
e giocondi... ma ad un tratto,
come se un pianeta maligno
avessi a quelli smagato il senno,
sguainando l'arme s'avventano furenti.
Avesi io prima stroncati i piè
che qui m'addusser!

Otello

Cassio, come obliasti te stesso a tal
segno?

Cassio

Grazia... perdon...
Parlar non so ...

Otello

Montano...

Montano

(sostenuto da un soldato)

Iago

I do not know ...

Here all were courteous friends but now,
and cheerful too ... and then quite
suddenly, as if an evil planet had
appeared and cast a spell of witchcraft
on men's minds, swords out and tilting
furiously at each other. Would I had
severed these feet before they brought
me here!

Othello

How comes it, Cassio, you are thus
forgot?

Cassio

Your mercy ... pardon me ...
I cannot speak ...

Othello

Montano ...

Montano

(supported by a soldier)

Son ferito...

Otello

Ferito! Pel cielo già il sangue mio ribolle!
Ah! l'ira volge l'angelo nostro tutelare
in fuga!

(Entra Desdemona. Otello le accorre.)

Che? la mia dolce Desdemona
anch'essa per voi distolta da' suoi
sogni?!

Cassio, non sei più capitano.

*(Cassio lascia cadere la spada che è
raccolta da Jago.)*

Jago

*(porgendo la spada di Cassio a un
soldato e parlando a parte)*
Oh! mio trionfo!

I am wounded ...

Othello

Wounded! Now by heaven
my blood begins to boil! Ah! Anger
puts to flight our guardian angel!

*(Desdemona enters. Othello quickly
goes to her.)*

What? My gentle Desdemona too
has had her dreams disturbed on your
account? Cassio, you have lost your
captaincy.

*(Cassio lets his sword fall and Iago picks
it up.)*

Iago

*(handing the sword to one of the
soldiers and speaking aside)*
Oh! What a triumph for me!

Otello

Jago, tu va nella città sgomenta
con quella squadra a ricompor la pace.

(Jago parte.)

Si soccorra Montano.

(Montano è accompagnato nel castello.)

Al proprio tetto ritorni ognun.
(con gesto imperioso)
Io da qui non mi parto
se pria non vedo deserti gli spaldi.

(La gente parte. Otello fa cenno agli uomini colle fiaccole che lo accompagnavano di rientrare il castello. Restano soli Otello e Desdemona.)

Già nella notte densa
s'estingue ogni clamor,

Othello

Iago, go about the frightened town
with this patrol, restore the shattered
peace.

(Iago leaves.)

Someone help Montano.

(Montano is helped into the castle.)

Let every one return to his own house.
(with an imperious gesture)
I shall not leave this place
until I see the battlements deserted.

(All depart. Othello makes a sign to the torchbearers who accompanied him to return to the castle. He and Desdemona remain alone.)

Now as the darkness deepens
all harsh sounds die away,

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già il mio cor fremebondo
s'ammansa in quest'amplesso
e si rinsensa.
Tuoni la guerra e s'inabissi il mondo
se dopo l'ira immensa
vien quest'immenso amor!

Desdemona

Mio superbo guerrier! quanti tormenti,
quanti mesti sospiri e quanta speme
ci condusse ai soavi abbracciamenti!
Oh! come è dolce il mormorar insieme!
Te ne rammenti?

Quando narravi l'esule tua vita
e i fieri eventi e i lunghi tuoi dolor,
ed io t'udia coll'anima rapita
in quei spaventi, coll'estasi nel cor.

and now my turbulent heart
finds peace in this embrace
and calm refreshment.
Let cannons roar and all the world
collapse
if after the immeasurable wrath
comes this immeasurable love!

Desdemona

My splendid warrior! What anguish,
what deep sighs and high hopes
have strewn the path to our glad union!
Oh, how sweet to murmur thus together!
Do you remember?

You used to tell me of your life in
exile,
of violent deeds and suffering long
endured,
and I would listen, transported by the
tales
that terrified, but thrilled my heart as
well.

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Otello

Pingea dell'armi il fremito, la pugna
e il vol gagliardo alla breccia mortal,
l'assalto, orribil edera, coll'ugna
al baluardo e il sibilante stral!

Desdemona

Poi mi guidavi ai fulgidi deserti,
all'arse arene, al tuo materno suol;
narravi allor gli spasimi sofferti
e le catene e dello schiavo il duol.

Otello

Ingentilia di lagrime la storia
il tuo bel viso e il labbro di sospir;
scendean sulle mie tenebre la gloria,
il paradiso e gli astri a benedir!

Othello

I would describe the clash of arms, the
fight
and violent thrust toward the fatal
breach,
the assault, when hands, like grisly
tendrils,
clung to bastions amid the hissing darts.

Desdemona

Then you would lead me to the glaring
desert,
to scorching sands, the country of your
birth;
and then you would relate your sufferings,
tell me of chains and slavery's agony.

Othello

Softened was your lovely face by tears,
your lips by sighs, when I my story told;
upon my darkness shone a radiance,
heaven and all the stars in benediction!

Desdemona

Ed io vedea fra le tue tempie oscure
splendor del genio l'eterea beltà.

Otello

E tu m'amavi per le mie sventure,
ed io t'amavo per la tua pietà.

Desdemona

Ed io t'amavo per le tue sventure,
e tu m'amavi per la mia pietà.

Otello

E tu m'amavi ...

Desdemona

E tu m'amavi ...

Otello

... ed io t'amavo ...
| ... per la tua pietà.

Desdemona

And I descried upon your dusky temples
genius' ethereal beauty shining there.

Othello

You loved me for the dangers I had
passed,
and I loved you that you did pity them.

Desdemona

I loved you for the dangers you had
passed,
and you loved me that I did pity them.

Othello

And you loved me ...

Desdemona

And you loved me ...

Othello

... and I loved you ...
| ... that you did pity them.

Desdemona

... per la mia pietà.

Otello

Venga la morte! e mi colga nell'estasi
di questo amplesso il momento
supremo!

*(Il cielo si è tutto rasserenato: si vedono
alcune stelle e sul lembo dell'orizzonte il
riflesso ceruleo della nascente luna.)*

Tale è il gaudio dell'anima che temo,
temo che più non mi sarà concesso
quest'attimo divino
nell'ignoto avvenir del mio destino.

Desdemona

Disperda il ciel gli affanni
e amor non muti col mutar degli anni.

Desdemona

... that I did pity them.

Othello

Let death come now, that in the ecstasy
of this embrace I meet my hour of
hours!

*(The storm clouds have now completely
disappeared. There are stars in the sky
and on the rim of the horizon can be
seen the azure disc of the rising moon.)*

Such is the rapture of my soul, I fear
that never more to me may be
vouchsafed
to know such bliss
in all the hidden future of my fate.

Desdemona

May heaven dispel all cares
and love change not throughout the
changing years.

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Otello

A questa tua preghiera
"amen" risponda la celeste schiera!

Desdemona

"Amen" risponda!

Otello

*(appoggiandosi ad un rialzo degli
spaldi)*
Ah! la gioia m'innonda sì fieramente
che ansante mi giaccio...
Un bacio ...

Desdemona

Otello!

Otello

... un bacio ...
ancora un bacio!
(alzandosi e mirando il cielo)
Già la pleiade ardente in mar discende.

Othello

To that prayer of yours
may all the heavenly host reply "amen"!

Desdemona

"Amen" be the reply!

Othello

(leaning against the parapet)
Ah! Joy floods my breast so piercingly
that I must lay me down and pant for
breath ...
A kiss ...

Desdemona

Othello!

Othello

... a kiss ...
another kiss!
(rising and looking at the sky)
The blazing Pleiades sinks beneath the
waves.

Desdemona

Tarda è la notte.

Otello

Vien ... Venere splende!

Desdemona

Otello!

(S'avviano abbracciati verso il castello.)

Desdemona

The night is far advanced.

Othello

Come... Venus is radiant!

Desdemona

Othello!

(Clasped in each other's arms they go towards the castle.)

ATTO SECONDO

Una sala terrena nel castello.

Un'invetriata e un verone la dividono da un grande giardino.

Jago

(al di qua del verone, a Cassio, chi è al di là)

Non ti crucciar.

Se credi a me, tra poco farai ritorno
ai folleggianti amori di Monna Bianca,
altiero capitano, coll'elsa d'oro
e col balteo fregiato.

Cassio

Non lusingarmi.

Jago

Attendi a ciò ch'io dico.

ACT TWO

A large chamber on the ground floor of the castle. Glazed arches and a terrace divide the chamber from the gardens beyond.

Iago

(on the near side of the terrace, to Cassio, on the far side)

Don't torment yourself.

Heed what I say, and soon you'll be
restored
to the frolicsome embrace of mistress
Bianca,
proud captain with your golden hilt
and decorated sword-belt.

Cassio

Don't flatter me.

Iago

Listen carefully to me.

Tu dêi saper che Desdemona
è il Duce del nostro Duce,
sol per essa ei vive.
Pregala tu, quell'anima cortese
per te interceda,
e il tuo perdono è certo.

Cassio

Ma come favellarle?

Jago

È suo costume girsene a meriggiar
fra quelle fronde colla consorte mia.
Quivi l'aspetta.
Or t'è aperta la via di salvezza;
vanne.

*(Cassio s'allontana. Jago lo segue
coll'occhio.)*

Vanne! la tua meta già vedo.
Ti spinge il tuo dimone
e il tuo dimon son io,

You must be aware that Desdemona
is now our general's general;
he lives for her alone.
Do you beseech her that her gentle
spirit
may intercede for you,
and your pardon is assured.

Cassio

But how shall I speak to her?

Jago

It is her custom in the afternoon to stroll
in the shade of those trees with my wife.
Wait for her there.
The way to your salvation now lies open;
go to it!

(Cassio walks away. Jago watches him.)

Go to it! Your end I see already.
You are driven by your daemon
and I am that daemon,

e me trascina il mio,
nel quale io credo
inesorato Iddio.
*(allontanandosi dal verone senza più
guardar Cassio che sarà scomparso fra
gli alberi)*

Credo in un Dio crudel
che m'ha creato simile a sé,
e che nell'ira io nomo.
Dalla viltà d'un germe
o d'un atomo vile son nato.
Son scellerato perché son uomo,
e sento il fango originario in me.
Sì! quest'è la mia fè!
Credo con fermo cuor,
siccome crede la vedovella al tempio,
che il mal ch'io penso
che da me procede
per mio destino adempio.
Credo che il giusto è un istrion beffardo
e nel viso e nel cuor;
che tutto è in lui bugiardo,
lagrima, bacio, sguardo,

and I am dragged along by mine,
the inexorable God
in whom I believe.
*(walking away from the terrace without
another glance at Cassio, who has now
vanished among the trees)*

I believe in a cruel God
who created me in his image
and who in fury I name.
From the very vileness of a germ
or an atom, vile was I born.
I am a wretch because I am a man,
and I feel within me the primeval slime.
Yes! This is my creed!
I believe with a heart as steadfast
as that of the widow in church,
that the evil I think
and that which I perform
I think and do by destiny's decree.
I believe the just man to be a mocking
actor
in face and heart;
that all his being is a lie,

sacrificio ed onor.
 E credo l'uom gioco d'iniqua sorte
 dal germe della culla
 al verme dell'avel.
 Vieni dopo tanta irrision la Morte.
 E poi? ... e poi?
 La Morte è il Nulla,
 è vecchia fola il Ciel.

*(Si vede passare nel giardino
 Desdemona con Emilia. Jago si slancia
 al verone, al di là del quale è appostato
 Cassio.)*

(a Cassio)

Eccola! ... Cassio... a te!
 Quest'è il momento.
 Ti scuoti... vien Desdemona.

(Cassio va verso Desdemona, la saluta,

tear, kiss, glance,
 sacrifice and honour.
 And I believe man the sport of evil fate
 from the germ of the cradle
 to the worm of the grave.
 After all this mockery then comes Death.
 And then?... And then?
 Death is nothingness,
 heaven an old wives' tale.

*(Desdemona appears, walking in the
 garden with Emilia. Iago darts to the
 terrace, on the other side of which
 Cassio is standing.)*

(to Cassio)

There she is! ... Cassio ... it's up to
 you!
 Now's the moment.
 Rouse yourself ... Here comes
 Desdemona.

(Cassio goes towards Desdemona, bows

le s'accosta.)

S'è mosso; la saluta e s'avvicina.
 Or qui si tragga Otello! ...
 Aiuta, aiuta Sàtana il mio cimento!
 Già conversano insieme...
 ed essa inclina, sorridendo, il bel viso.

*(Si vedono ripassare nel giardino Cassio
 e Desdemona.)*

Mi basta un lampo sol di quel sorriso
 per trascinar Otello alla ruina.
 Andiam ...
*(fa per avviarsi rapido ma si arresta
 subitamente)*
 Ma il caso in mio favor s'adopra.
 Eccolo ... al posto, all'opra!

*(Si colloca immoto al verone guardando
 fissamente verso il giardino dove stanno
 Cassio e Desdemona. Entra Otello; Iago,*

to her and steps closer.)

He's made a move; he bows and
 approaches her.
 Now let Othello be brought hither! ...
 Satan, assist my enterprise!
 Now they speak together ...
 and, smiling, she turns her lovely face
 to him.

*(Cassio and Desdemona are seen
 walking up and down in the garden.)*

I need but a single ray of such a smile
 to drag Othello to his doom.
 Away ...
*(starting to walk quickly away, then
 stopping suddenly)*
 But fate plays into my hands.
 Here he comes ... to my post, to work!

*(He takes up a position by the terrace
 and stands there motionless, his eyes
 fixed upon Cassio and Desdemona.*

simulando di non averlo visto, finge di parlare fra sé.)

Othello enters; Iago pretends not to have seen him and speaks as if to himself.)

Ciò m'accora ...

I like not that ...

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Otello

(avvicinandosi a Jago)
Che parli?

Othello

(approaching Iago)
What are you saying?

Jago

Nulla ... Voi qui?
Una vana voce m'uscì dal labbro.

Iago

Nothing ... You here?
An idle word escaped my lips.

Otello

Colui che s'allontana dalla mia sposa, è Cassio?

Othello

The man now leaving my wife, is that Cassio?

(E l'uno e l'altro si staccano dal verone.)

(They both turn away from the terrace.)

Jago

Cassio? No ... quei si scosse
come un reo nel vedervi.

Iago

Cassio? No ... that man gave
a guilty start on seeing you.

Otello

Credo che Cassio ei fosse.

Jago

Mio signore ...

Otello

Che brami?

Jago

Cassio, nei primi dì del vostro amor,
Desdemona non conosceva?

Otello

Sì. Perché fai tale inchiesta?

Jago

Il mio pensier è vago d'ubbie,
non di malizia.

Otello

Di' il tuo pensiero, Jago.

Othello

I believe it was Cassio.

Iago

My lord ...

Othello

What is it?

Iago

Did Cassio, in the early days of your
courtship, not know Desdemona?

Othello

He did. Why do you ask?

Iago

A thought crossed my mind,
whimsical, but without malice.

Othello

Tell me your thought, Iago.

Jago

Vi confidaste a Cassio?

Otello

Spesso un mio dono o un cenno
portava alla mia sposa.

Jago

Dassenno?

Otello

Sì, dassenno. Nol credi onesto?

Jago

(imitando Otello)

Onesto?

Otello

Che ascondi nel tuo core?

Jago

Che ascondo in cor, signore?

Iago

Did you confide in Cassio?

Othello

He would often carry
a gift or note to my bride.

Iago

Indeed?

Othello

Ay, indeed. Do you not think him honest?

Iago

(imitating Othello)

Honest?

Othello

What are you hiding from me?

Iago

What am I hiding, my lord?

Otello

“Che ascondo in cor, signore?”

Pel cielo, tu sei l’eco dei detti miei! ...

Nel chiostro dell’anima
ricetti qualche terribil mostro.

Sì; ben t’udii poc’anzi mormorar,

“Ciò m’accora!”

Ma di che t’accoravi? Nomini Cassio
e allora tu corrughi la fronte.

Suvvia, parla, se m’ami!

Jago

Voi sapete ch’io v’amo.

Otello

Dunque senza velami
t’esprimi e senza ambagi.

T’esca fuor dalla gola

il tuo più rio pensiero

colla più ria parola!

Othello

“What am I hiding, my lord?”

By heaven, you echo me! ...

The inner chamber of your brain
harbours some terrible monster.

Indeed, I heard you saying even now,

“I like not that!”

What did you not like? You mentioned
Cassio

then did contract and purse your brow
together.

Come, speak if you love me!

Iago

You know that I love you.

Othello

Speak then without concealment
or ambiguity.

Speak as you think,

and give your worst of thoughts

the worst of words!

Jago

S'anco teneste in mano
tutta l'anima mia, nol sapreste.

Otello

Ah! ...

Jago

*(avvicinandosi molto ad Otello
e sottovoce)*

Temete, signor, la gelosia!
È un'idra fosca, livida,
cieca, col suo veleno
se stessa attosca, vivida
piaga le squarcia il seno.

Otello

Miseria mia!!
No! il vano sospettar nulla giova.
Pria dei dubbio l'indagine,
dopo il dubbio la prova —
dopo la prova —
Otello ha sue leggi supreme —
amore e gelosia vadan dispersi insieme.

Iago

Even if my heart were in your hand
that thought you would not know.

Othello

Ah!

Iago

*(coming very close to Othello and
speaking in an undertone)*

Beware, my lord, of jealousy!
'Tis a spiteful monster, livid,
blind, with her own venom
self-poisoned, with a vivid
wound upon her bosom.

Othello

O misery!
No! I have no use for baseless doubts.
Before doubt comes enquiry,
after doubt comes proof,
after the proof -
Othello has his supreme laws -
away with love and jealousy together.

Jago

(con piglio più ardito)
Un tal proposto
spezza di mie labbra il suggello.

Non parlo ancor di prova,
pur, generoso Otello, vigilate;
soventi le oneste e ben create coscienze
non sospettano la frode: vigilate.
Scrutate le parole di Desdemona;
un detto può ricondur la fede,
può affermar il sospetto.

Voci lontane

Dove guardi splendono
raggi, avvampan cuori,
dove passi scendono
nuvole di fiori.
Qui fra gigli e rose,
come a un casto altare,
padri, bimbi, spose
vengono a cantar.

Iago

(with greater urgency)
A statement such as that
breaks the seal upon my lips.

I speak not yet of proof,
but, bounteous Othello, look to it,
for often natures that are free and noble
do not suspect deception: look to it.
Observe well Desdemona's speech;
a word could restore trust
or reaffirm suspicion.

Distant Voices

Whereso'er you turn your gaze
light shines, hearts are afire,
whereso'er you walk cascades
of blossoms fill the air.
Here among lilies and roses,
as if to an altar chaste,
fathers, children and matrons,
come with serenades.

Jago

(come prima, sottovoce)

Eccola ... Vigilate!

(Si vede ricomparire Desdemona nel giardino dalla vasta apertura del fondo: essa è circondata da donne dell'isola, da fanciulli, da marinai ciprioti e albanesi, che si avanzano e le offrono fiori e rami fioriti ed altri doni. Alcuni s'accompagnano cantando sulla "guzla" (una specie di mandòla), altri hanno delle piccole arpe ad armacollo.)

Gente intorno a Desdemona

Dove guardi splendono
raggi, avvampan cuori,
dove passi scendono
nuvole di fiori.
Qui fra gigli e rose,
come a un casto altare,
padri, bimbi, spose
vengono a cantar.

Iago

(in an undertone as before)

Here she comes ... Observe her well!

(Desdemona reappears in the garden, on the far side of the great central arch; she is surrounded by women of the island, children and Cypriot and Albanian sailors, who approach to offer flowers, branches of blossom and other gifts. Some accompany their own singing on the "guzla"; a kind of mandolin, others play on small harps which hang around their necks.)

Group around Desdemona

Whereso'er you turn your gaze
light shines, hearts are afire,
whereso'er you walk, cascades
of blossoms fill the air.
Here among lilies and roses,
as if to an altar chaste,
fathers, children and matrons
come with serenades.

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Fanciulli

T'offriamo il giglio, soave stel,
che in man degli angeli fu assunto in ciel,
che abbellà il fulgido manto e la gonna
della Madonna
e il santo vel.

Uomini e Donne

Mentre all'aura vola,
vola lieta la canzon, (rip.)
l'agile mandòla (rip.)
ne accompagna il suon. (rip.)

Marinai

(offrendo a Desdemona dei monili di corallo e di perle)
A te le porpore, le perle e gli ostri
nella voragine colti del mar.
Vogliam Desdemona coi doni nostri
come un'immagine sacra adornar. (rip.)

Fanciulli, Donne

Mentre all'aura vola, ecc.

Children

We proffer lilies, tender flowers,
by angels borne to heavenly bowers,
which ornament the gleaming mantle
and gown of the Madonna gentle
and her holy veil.

Men and Women

While on the breezes wing
aloft the accents gay,
the nimble mandolin
accompanies the lay.

Sailors

(offering trinkets of coral and pearl to Desdemona)
For you these shells and pearls and dyes
we culled from caves beneath the brine.
Desdemona with our gifts would we
bedeck like an image in a shrine.

Children and Women

While on the breezes, etc.

Donne*(spargendo fronde e fiori)*

A te, a te la florida messe dai grembi
 spargiam, spargiam, al suolo, a nembi,
 a nembi spargiamo al suol.

L'april circonda la sposa bionda
 d'un'etra rorida che vibra,
 che vibra al sol.

Fanciulli, Uomini

Mentre all'aura vola, ecc.

Tutti

Dove guardi splendono
 raggi, avvampan cuori,
 dove passi scendono
 nuvole di fiori.

Qui fra gigli e rose
 come a un casto altare,
 padri, bimbi, spose
 vengono a cantar.

Desdemona

Splende il cielo, danza

Women*(scattering leaves and flowers)*

Take this flowery harvest we strew
 from our kirtles upon the ground for you,
 in showers upon the ground.

The April air the bride's golden hair
 doth in a shimmering aura of dew,
 sunlit, surround.

Children, Men

While on the breezes wing, etc.

All

Whereso'er you turn your gaze,
 light shines, hearts are afire;
 whereso'er you walk, cascades
 of blossoms fill the air.

To this bower of lilies and roses,
 as if to an altar chaste,
 fathers, children and matrons
 come with serenades.

Desdemona

The sky is shining, breezes

l'aura, olezza il fior...

Otello*(soavemente commosso)*

Quel canto mi conquide!

Desdemona

... Gioia, amor, speranza
 canton nel mio cuor.

Jago*(a parte)*

Beltà ed amor in dolce inno concordi! ...

Fanciulli, Uomini e Donne

Vivi felice! ...

Otello

S'ella m'inganna...

Desdemona

Gioia, amor, canton nel mio cor!

dance, flowers scent the air ...

Othello*(gently moved)*

That song subdues my heart!

Desdemona

... In my heart the songs
 of joy, love, hope I hear.

Iago*(aside)*

Beauty and love are in sweet harmony.

Children, Men and Women

May you be happy! ...

Othello

If she be false to me ...

Desdemona

Joy and love sing in my breast!

Otello

... il ciel se stesso irride!

Jago

... I vostri infrangerò soavi accordi!

Fanciulli, Uomini e Donne

... Vivi felice! addio!

Qui regna Amor!

Otello

Quel canto mi conquide.

Jago

(sommessamente)

I vostri infrangerò soavi accordi!

(Desdemona bacia la testa d'alcuni tra i fanciulli, e alcune donne le baciano il lembo della veste, ed essa porge una borsa ai marinai. La gente s'allontana. Desdemona, seguita poi da Emilia, entra

Othello

... then Heaven mocks itself!

Iago

... But I'll untune the strings that make this music!

Children, Men and Women

... May you be happy! Farewell!

Here Love is lord!

Othello

That song subdues my heart.

Iago

(under his breath)

I'll untune the strings that make this music!

(Desdemona kisses the heads of some of the children, several women kiss the hem of her gown and she presents a purse to the sailors. The group disperses. Desdemona, followed by Emilia, enters

nella sala e s'avanza verso Otello.)

Desdemona

(a Otello)

D'un uom che geme sotto il tuo disdegno
la preghiera ti porto.

Otello

Chi è costui?

Desdemona

Cassio.

Otello

Era lui che ti parlava
sotto quelle fronde?

Desdemona

Lui stesso, e il suo dolor
che in me s'infonde tant'è verace
che di grazia è degno.
Intercedo per lui, per lui ti prego.

the chamber and approaches Othello.)

Desdemona

(to Othello)

A man that languishes in your displeasure
has sent me with a suit.

Othello

Who is't you mean?

Desdemona

Cassio.

Othello

Was it he who spoke with you just now
under those trees?

Desdemona

It was he, and his grief
so moved me by its sincerity
that he deserves forgiveness.
For him I intercede, for him I plead.

Tu gli perdona.

Otello

Non ora.

Desdemona

Non oppormi il tuo diniego.

Gli perdona.

Otello

Non ora!

Desdemona

Perché torbida suona la voce tua?

Qual pena t'addolora?

Otello

M'ardon le tempie.

Desdemona

*(spiegando il suo fazzoletto come per
fasciare la fronte di Otello)*

Quell'ardor molesto svanirà,
se con questo morbido lino

Forgive him.

Othello

Not now.

Desdemona

Do not deny me.

Forgive him.

Othello

Not now!

Desdemona

Why does your voice sound harsh?

Are you not well?

Othello

My temples throb.

Desdemona

*(taking out her handkerchief and
making as if to bind Othello's temples)*

The troublesome fever will away
if with this soft linen

la mia man ti fascia.

Otello

(getta il fazzoletto a terra)

Non ho d'uopo di ciò.

Desdemona

Tu sei crucciato, signor.

Otello

Mi lascia! mi lascia!

(Emilia raccoglie il fazzoletto dal suolo.)

Desdemona

Se inconscia, contro te, sposo, ho

peccato,

dammi la dolce lieta parola del perdono.

Otello

(a parte)

Forse perché gl'inganni d'arguto amor

I bind your head.

Othello

*(throwing the handkerchief to the
ground)*

I have no need of that.

Desdemona

You're vexed, my lord.

Othello

Leave me alone!

(Emilia picks up the handkerchief.)

Desdemona

If I in ignorance, my lord, have you

offended,

O say the sweet and happy word of
pardon.

Othello

(aside)

Haply because I am not practised

non tendo,...

Desdemona

La tua fanciulla io sono,
umile e mansueta;
ma il labbro tuo sospira,
hai l'occhio fiso al suol.
Guardami in volto e mira
come favella amor!
Vien ch'io t'allieti il core, ...

Otello

... forse perché discendo
nella valle degli anni,
forse perché ho sul viso
quest'atro tenebror,
dunque perché gli inganni
d'arguto amor non tendo,
forse perché discendo
nella valle degli anni,
forse perché ho sul viso
quest'atro tenebror, ...

in the deceitful arts of love...

Desdemona

Your loving bride am I,
humble and submissive;
but sighs fall from your lips,
your eyes are fixed on the ground.
Look in my face and see
how love is there expressed!
Come, let me lighten your heart...

Othello

... or for I am declined
into the vale of years,
or that my complexion
is of this dusky hue,
and that I am not practised
in love's deceitful arts,
or that I am declined
into the vale of years,
or that my complexion
is of this dusky hue...

Jago

(ad Emilia, sottovoce)

Quel vel mi porgi
ch'or hai raccolto!

Emilia

(a Jago)

Qual frode scorgi?
Ti leggo in volto.

Jago

T'opponi a vôto
quand'io comando!

Emilia

Il tuo nefando
livor m'è noto.

Jago

Sospetto insano.

Emilia

Guardia fedel
è questa mano ...

Iago

(aside, to Emilia)

Give me that handkerchief
you picked up just now!

Emilia

(to Iago)

What mischief's in your mind?
I can read your face.

Iago

You resist in vain
when I command!

Emilia

Your wicked envy
well I know.

Iago

Foolish suspicion!

Emilia

A faithful guardian
is my hand ...

Jago

Dammi quel vel! Dammi quel vel!

Emilia

... guardia fedel
è questa mano!

Jago

(afferrando violentemente il braccio di Emilia)

Su te l'irosa
mia man s'aggrava!

Emilia

Son la tua sposa,
non la tua schiava!

Jago

La schiava impura
tu sei di Jago!

Emilia

Ho il cor presago
d'una sventura.

Jago

Give me that handkerchief!

Emilia

... a faithful guardian
is my hand!

Jago

(siezing Emilia's arm savagely)

My hand is poised
o'er you in anger!

Emilia

Your wife am I,
not your slave!

Jago

The unchaste slave
of Jago are you!

Emilia

My heart forewarns me
of some calamity.

Jago

Né mi paventi?

Emilia

Uomo crudel!

Jago

A me ...

Emilia

Che tenti?

Jago

A me quel vel!

Emilia

Uomo crudel!

(Con un colpo di mano Jago ha carpito il fazzoletto ad Emilia.)

Desdemona

... ch'io ti lenisca il duol! (rip.)

Jago

Do you not fear me?

Emilia

Cruel man!

Jago

Give me ...

Emilia

What would you?

Jago

Give me that handkerchief!

Emilia

Cruel man!

(Jago snatches the handkerchief from Emilia.)

Desdemona

... let me soothe your pain!

Emilia

Vinser gli artigli
truci e codardi.

Otello

... ella è perduta
e irriso io sono, ...

Desdemona

Guardami in volto e mira,
mira come favella amor!

Otello

... e il core infrango
e ruinar nel fango
vedo il mio sogno d'or!

Emilia

Dio dai perigli
sempre ci guardi! (rip.)

Jago

Già la mia brama
conquido, ed ora

Emilia

Cruelty and cowardice
have clawed a victory.

Othello

... she is lost
and I am mocked ...

Desdemona

Look in my face and see
how love is there expressed!

Othello

... and my heart is broken
and trampled in the mire
I see my dream of bliss!

Emilia

May God ever keep us
safe from all danger!

Iago

My hands already
grasp the threads;

su questa trama
Jago lavora!

Emilia

Vinser gli artigli
truci e codardi!

Otello

Ella è perduta
e irriso io sono, ...

Desdemona

Guardami in volto,
mira come favella amor, ecc.

Otello

... e il core infrango, ecc.

Emilia

Dio dai perigli, ecc.

Jago

Già la mia brama, ecc.

now, Iago,
to weave the web!

Emilia

Cruelty and cowardice
have clawed a victory!

Othello

She is lost
and I am mocked ...

Desdemona

Look in my face and see
how love is there expressed, etc.

Othello

... and my heart is broken, etc.

Emilia

May God ever keep us, etc.

Iago

My hands already, etc.

Desdemona

Dammi la dolce e lieta parola del
perdon!

Otello

Escite! Solo vo' restar.

Jago

(sottovoce ad Emilia che sta per uscire)
Ti giova tacer. Intendi?

*(Desdemona ed Emilia escono. Jago
finge d'escire dalla porta in fondo, ma
giuntovi s'arresta.)*

Otello

(accasciato su d'un sedile)

Desdemona rea! ...

Jago

(nel fondo guardando di nascosto il

Desdemona

Say the sweet and happy word of
pardon!

Othello

Hence! I would be alone.

Iago

*(covertly, to Emilia who is about to
leave)*
Say nothing of this. You understand?

*(Desdemona and Emilia leave. Iago
makes a pretence of leaving through the
door at the back, but when he reaches
it he stops.)*

Othello

(sinking exhausted upon a stool)

Desdemona false! ...

Iago

(at the back, looking surreptitiously

*fazzoletto, poi riponendolo con cura nel
giustacuore)*

Con questi fili tramerò
la prova del peccato d'amor.
Nella dimora di Cassio ciò s'asconda.

Otello

... Atroce idea!

Jago

(fissando Otello)
Il mio velen lavora.

Otello

... Rea contro me! contro me!!!

Jago

Soffri e ruggi!

Otello

Atroce! atroce!

*at the handkerchief, then replacing it
carefully in his doublet)*

With these threads shall I weave
the proof of the sin of love.
It shall be hidden in Cassio's lodging.

Othello

... Monstrous thought!

Iago

(looking fixedly at Othello)
My poison does its work.

Othello

... False toward me! Toward me!

Iago

Suffer and roar!

Othello

Monstrous! Monstrous!

Jago

(dopo essersi portato accanto ad Otello, bonariamente)

Non pensateci più.

Otello

(balzando)

Tu?! Indietro! fuggi!

M'hai legato alla croce! Ahimè! ...

Più orrendo d'ogni orrenda ingiuria
dell'ingiuria è il sospetto.

Nell'ore arcane della sua lussuria

(e a me furate!)

m'agitava il petto forse un presagio?

Ero baldo, giulivo...

Nulla sapevo ancor;

io non sentivo sul suo corpo divin

che m'innamora

e sui labbri mendaci

gli ardenti baci di Cassio!

Ed ora! ... ed ora ...

Iago

(having approached Othello, good-naturedly)

Think no more of it.

Othello

(taken by surprise)

You! Hence! Avaunt!

You have lashed me to the cross! Alas!

More monstrous than the most
monstrous abuse

of abuse itself is suspicion.

Of her stolen hours of lust

(and stolen from me!)

had I no presentiment in my breast?

I was contented, merry...

Nothing knew I as yet;

I found not on her sweet body

which I so love

or on her lying lips

Cassio's ardent kisses!

And now! ... And now ...

Ora e per sempre addio, sante memorie,
addio sublimi incanti del pensier!

Addio schiere fulgenti, addio vittorie,
dardi volanti e volanti corsier!

Addio, addio vessillo trionfale e pio,
e diane squillanti in sul mattin!

Clamori e canti di battaglia, addio!

Della gloria d'Otello è questo il fin!

Jago

Pace, signor.

Otello

Sciagurato! mi trova una prova sicura
che Desdemona è impura...

Non sfuggir! non sfuggir!

nulla ti giova!

Vo' una sicura, una visibil prova!

O sulla tua testa s'accenda
e precipiti il fulmine

Now, and forever farewell, sacred
memories,

farewell, sublime enchantments of the
mind!

Farewell, shining battalions and victories,
the flying arrow and the flying steed!

Farewell to the standard triumphant
and holy

and the shrill fife that sounded to reveille!

Pride, pomp and circumstance of war,
farewell! Farewell, Othello's glory's at

an end!

Iago

Be calm, my lord.

Othello

Villain! Be sure to find a proof secure
that Desdemona's unchaste ...

Stay! Do not flee!

It would avail you nought!

Bring me the sure, the ocular proof!

Or on your head accumulate
and fall the bolts

del mio spaventoso furor
che si desta!
(afferra Jago alla gola e lo atterra)

Jago

Divina grazia difendimi!
(alzandosi)
Il cielo vi protegga!
Non son più vostro alfiere.
Voglio che il mondo testimon mi sia
che l'onestà è periglio.
(fa per andarsene)

Otello

No ... rimani.
Forse onesto tu sei.

Jago

(sulla soglia fingendo d'andarsene)
Meglio varrebbe ch'io fossi un
ciurmador.

of my terrible
wakened wrath!
*(He seizes Iago by the throat and hurls
him to the floor.)*

Iago

O heavenly grace defend me!
(rising)
May heaven protect you!
I am no longer your ensign.
The world may be my witness
that honesty is dangerous.
(He turns as if to leave.)

Othello

No ... stay.
You may be honest.

Iago

*(by the door, making a pretence of
leaving)*
'Twere better had I been a charlatan.

Otello

Per l'universo!
Credo leale Desdemona
e credo che non lo sia;
te credo onesto
e credo disleale...
La prova io voglio!
Voglio la certezza!

Jago

(ritornando verso Otello)
Signor, frenate l'ansie.
E qual certezza v'abbisogna?
Avvinti vederli forse?

Otello

Ah! Morte e dannazione!

Jago

Ardua impresa sarebbe;
e qual certezza sognate voi
se quell'immondo fatto
sempre vi sfuggirà?
Ma pur se guida è la ragione al vero,

Othello

By the world!
I believe Desdemona to be loyal
and believe her not to be so;
I think that you are honest
and think you disloyal ...
I'll have some proof!
I must have certainty!

Iago

(moving towards Othello)
My lord, curb your anxieties.
What proof would satisfy you?
To see them clasped together?

Othello

Oh! Death and damnation!

Iago

That would be a difficult undertaking;
but of what assurance are you dreaming
if the filthy deed itself
forever must escape you?
But yet if reason be the guide to truth

una sì forte congettura riserbo
che per poco alla certezza vi conduce.
Udite.

(avvicinandosi molto ad Otello)

Era la notte, Cassio dormia,
gli stavo accanto.
Con interrotte voci tradia
l'intimo incanto.
Le labbra lente, lente movea,
nell'abbandono del sogno ardente;
e allor dicea, con flebil suono:

"Desdemona soave!
Il nostro amor s'asconda.
Cauti vegliamo!
L'estasi del ciel tutto m'innonda!"
Seguia più vago l'incubo blando;
con molle angoscia,
l'interna imago quasi baciando,
ei disse poscia:
"Il rio destino impreco
che al Moro ti donò."
E allora il sogno in cieco

I may propose a circumstance so strong
that it will lead you near to certainty.
Listen.

(approaching close to Othello)

It was night, Cassio lay sleeping,
I was close by him.
In broken phrases he was revealing
an inward enchantment.
Slowly, slowly his lips were moving
in the abandon of passionate dreams;
then he did speak with faint murmuring
voice:
"Sweet Desdemona!
Let us hide our loves.
Let us be wary!
I am quite bathed in heavenly ecstasy!"
The pleasure of his dream intensified;
softly enraptured,
he seemed to almost kiss the inner
vision,
then did he say:
"I curse the cruel fate
that gave thee to the Moor."

19

letargo si mutò.

Otello

Oh! mostruosa colpa!

Jago

Io non narrai che un sogno.

Otello

Un sogno che rivela un fatto.

Jago

Un sogno che può dar
forma di prova ad altro indizio.

Otello

E qual?

Jago

Talor vedeste in mano di Desdemona
un tessuto trapunto a fior
e più sottil d'un velo?

And then the dream was changed
into blind lethargy.

Othello

O monstrous guilt!

Jago

I told you but a dream.

Othello

A dream that reveals a fact.

Jago

A dream that may
give substance to another circumstance.

Othello

And which is that?

Jago

Have you not sometimes seen a
handkerchief
embroidered with flowers in
Desdemona's hand,

Otello

È il fazzoletto ch'io le diedi,
pegno primo d'amor.

Jago

Quel fazzoletto ieri - certo ne son -
lo vidi in man di Cassio.

Otello

Ah! mille vite gli donasse Iddio!
Una è povera preda al furor mio!!
Jago, ho il cor di gelo.
Lungi da me le pietose larve.
Tutto il mio vano amor esalo al cielo.
Guardami ... ei sparve!
Nelle sue spire d'angue
l'idra m'avvince!
Ah! sangue! sangue! sangue!
(*s'inginocchia*)

of finer stuff than lawn?

Othello

That is the handkerchief I gave her,
first token of my love.

Jago

That handkerchief I saw - I am sure of it
- yesterday in the hand of Cassio!

Othello

O, that God had given him a thousand
lives!
One is too poor a prey for my revenge!
Jago, my heart is ice.
Banished be the spirits of mercy.
All my fond love thus do I blow to
heaven.
Watch me ...'tis gone!
In its snaky coils
the hydra has entwined me!
O, blood, blood, blood!
(*He kneels.*)

Sì, pel ciel marmoreo giuro!
Per le attorte folgori!
Per la Morte e per l'oscuro
mar sterminator!
D'ira e d'impeto tremendo
presto fia che sfolgori
(*levando le mani al cielo*)
questa man ch'io levo e stendo!
(*fa per alzarsi; Jago lo trattiene
inginocchiato.*)

Jago

(*inginocchiandosi anch'esso*)
Non v'alzate ancor!
Testimon è il Sol ch'io miro,
che m'irradia e inanima
l'ampia terra e il vasto spiro
del Creato inter,
che ad Otello io sacro ardenti,
core, braccio ed anima
s'anco ad opere cruenti
s'armi il suo voler!

Now, by yond marble heaven!
By the jagged lightning-flash!
By Death, and by the dark
death-dealing ocean flood!
In fury and dire compulsion
shall thunder-bolts soon rain
(*raising his hands to the sky*)
from this hand that I raise outstretched!
(*He starts to rise; Jago prevents him.*)

Jago

(*kneeling also*)
Do not rise yet!
Witness, you sun that I gaze on,
which lights me and which animates
the broad earth and the spiritual
expanse
of the whole universe,
that to Othello I do consecrate
ardently heart, hands and soul
even though on bloody business
his will be bent!

Otello, Jago

(alzando le mani al cielo come chi giura)

Sì, pel ciel marmoreo giuro!

Per le attorte folgori, ecc.

Dio vendicator!

Othello, Iago

(raising their hands to heaven in an oath-taking gesture)

Now, by yond marble heaven!

By the jagged lightning-flash, etc.

God of vengeance!

ATTO TERZO

La gran sala del castello. A destra un vasto peristilio a colonne. Questo peristilio è annesso ad una sala di minori proporzioni. Nel fondo c'è un verone.

Araldo

(dal peristilio, a Otello che sarà con Jago nella sala)

La vedetta del porto ha segnalato la veneta galea che a Cipro adduce gli ambasciatori.

Otello

Bene sta.

(Fa cenno all'Araldo di allontanarsi. L'araldo esce.)

(a Jago)

Continua.

Jago

Qui trarrò Cassio, e con astute inchieste

ACT THREE

CD 2

1

The great hall of the castle. On the right a broad colonnade. This colonnade is adjacent to a hall of smaller proportions. A terrace at the far end.

A Herald

(from the colonnade, to Othello who is with Iago in the hall)

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The harbour watch has signalled the arrival of the Venetian galley which brings the ambassadors to Cyprus.

Othello

Good.

(He makes a sign to dismiss the herald. The herald leaves.)

(to Iago)

Continue.

Iago

I will bring Cassio here, and cunningly

lo adescherò a ciarlar.
(indicando il vano del verone)

Voi là nascosto
scrutate i modi suoi,
le sue parole, i lazzi, i gesti.
Paziente siate, o la prova vi sfugge.
Ecco Desdemona. Finger conviene...
io vado.

*(S'allontana come per escire, poi
s'arresta e si riavvicina ad Otello per
dirgli l'ultima parola.)*
Il fazzoletto...

Otello

Va! volontieri obliato l'avrei.

*(Jago esce. Desdemona entra dalla
porta di sinistra.)*

will lure him on to gossip.
*(indicating the embrasure on the
terrace)*
Hidden there,
you can observe his manner,
his words, his gibes, his gestures.
Have patience, or the proof will escape
you.
Here comes Desdemona. 'Twere
expedient to dissemble ... I'll leave you.

*(He starts to walk towards the door,
then stops and returns to say one last
word to Othello.)*
The handkerchief ...

Othello

Go! I would most gladly have forgot it.

*(Iago goes out. Desdemona enters by
the door on the left.)*

Desdemona

(ancora presso alla soglia)

Dio ti giocondi, o sposo
dell'alma mia sovrano!

Otello

*(andando incontro a Desdemona
e prendendole la mano)*
Grazie, madonna.
Datemi la vostra eburnea mano.
Caldo mador ne irroro
la morbida beltà.

Desdemona

Essa ancor l'orme ignora
del duolo e dell'età.

Otello

Eppur qui annida il demone
gentil di mal consiglio,
che il vago avorio allumina
del piccioletto artiglio.
Mollemente alla prece

Desdemona

(still standing near the door)

God keep you happy, my husband,
sovereign of my soul!

Othello

*(going to meet Desdemona and taking
her hand in his)*
Thank you, my lady.
Give me your ivory hand.
Warm moistness bedews
its soft beauty.

Desdemona

It knows not yet the imprint
of sorrow or of age.

Othello

And yet here lurks the plausible
devil of ill counsel,
who emblazons the ivory beauty
of this little claw-like limb.
With soft deceit he poses

s'atteggia e al pio fervor ...

Desdemona

Eppur con questa mano
io v'ho donato il core.
Ma riparlart ti debbo di Cassio.

Otello

Ancor l'ambascia del mio morbo
m'assale;
tu la fronte mi fascia.

Desdemona

(sciogliendo un fazzoletto)
A te.

Otello

No! il fazzoletto voglio
ch'io ti donai.

Desdemona

Non l'ho meco.

as prayer and pious fervour ...

Desdemona

And yet with this same hand
I gave my heart to you.
But I must speak again to you of Cassio.

Othello

I have that pain again;
bind you my forehead.

Desdemona

(unfolding a handkerchief)
Here, my lord.

Othello

No! I would have the handkerchief
that I gave to you.

Desdemona

I have it not about me.

Otello

Desdemona, guai se lo perdi! Guai!
Una possente maga ne ordia
lo stame arcano:
ivi è riposta l'alta malia
d'un talismano.
Bada! smarrirlo,
oppur donarlo è ria sventura!

Desdemona

Il vero parli?

Otello

Il vero parlo.

Desdemona

Mi fai paura! ...

Otello

Che!? l'hai perduto forse?

Othello

Desdemona, woe if you should lose it!
Woe!
A powerful sibyl devised
the magic web of it:
within it there reposes the high
witchcraft of a talisman.
Take heed! To lose it,
or give it away, were perdition!

Desdemona

Speak you the truth?

Othello

I speak the truth.

Desdemona

You frighten me! ...

Othello

What!? Have you lost it then?

Desdemona

No ...

Otello

Lo cerca.

Desdemona

Fra poco ... lo cercherò ...

Otello

No, tosto!

Desdemona

Tu di me ti fai gioco!

Storni così l'inchiesta di Cassio;
astuzia è questa del tuo pensier.

Otello

Pel cielo! l'anima mia si desta!
Il fazzoletto ...

Desdemona

È Cassio l'amico tuo diletto.

Desdemona

No ...

Othello

Fetch it.

Desdemona

In a little while ... I shall fetch it ...

Othello

No, now!

Desdemona

You are making sport of me!

Thus you put me from my suit for Cassio;
your thought is cunning.

Othello

By heaven! My soul is roused!
The handkerchief ...

Desdemona

Cassio is your very dearest friend.

Otello

Il fazzoletto!

Desdemona

A Cassio, a Cassio perdona...

Otello

Il fazzoletto!

Desdemona

Gran Dio! nella tua voce
v'è un grido di minaccia!

Otello

Alza quegli'occhi!

Desdemona

Atroce idea!

Otello

*(prendendola a forza sotto il mento e
per le spalle e obbligandola a guardarlo)*

Guardami in faccia!

Othello

The handkerchief!

Desdemona

To Cassio, to Cassio extend forgiveness ...

Othello

The handkerchief!

Desdemona

Great God! I hear a note
of menace in your voice!

Othello

Raise your eyes!

Desdemona

Horrible fancy!

Othello

*(seizing her forcibly under the chin and
by the shoulders so that she has to look
at him)*

Look in my face!

Dimmi che sei!

Desdemona

La sposa fedel d'Otello.

Otello

Giura! giura e ti danna ...

Desdemona

Otello fedel mi crede.

Otello

Impura ti credo.

Desdemona

Iddio m'aiuti!

Otello

Corri alla tua condanna,
di' che sei casta.

Desdemona

(fissandolo)
Casta, lo son!

Tell me who you are!

Desdemona

Othello's faithful wife.

Othello

Come, swear it, damn yourself ...

Desdemona

Othello esteems me honest.

Othello

Unchaste do I esteem you.

Desdemona

God help me!

Othello

Hasten to your damnation,
swear that you are chaste.

Desdemona

(meeting Othello's eyes)
I am chaste.

Otello

Giura e ti danna!

Desdemona

Esterrefatta fisso
lo sguardo tuo tremendo,
in te parla una Furia
la sento e non l'intendo.
Mi guarda! il volto e l'anima
ti svelo; il core infranto
mi scruta... io prego il cielo
per te con questo pianto;
per te con queste stille
cocenti aspergo il suol.
Guarda le prime lagrime (rip.)
che da me spremi il duol.
Le prime lagrime!

Otello

S'or ti scorge il tuo demone,
un angelo ti crede
e non t'afferra.

Othello

Swear it and damn yourself!

Desdemona

Horror-struck, I gaze into
your stern and terrifying eyes,
I hear a fury in your words
but do not comprehend them.
Look at me! My face, my soul
I show you; my stricken heart
search well ... I pray to heaven
for you with these my tears;
for you these burning drops
I shed upon the ground.
Behold the first tears ever wrung
from me by suffering.
The first tears!

Othello

If your daemon were to see you now
he'd take you for an angel
and not seize you.

Desdemona

Vede l'Eterno la mia fede!

Otello

No! la vede l'inferno!

Desdemona

La tua giustizia impetro, sposo mio!

Otello

Ah! Desdemona! Indietro!

indietro! indietro!!

Desdemona

Tu pur piangi?! e gemendo

freni del cor lo schianto!

E son io l'innocente

cagion di tanto pianto!

Qual è il mio fallo?

Otello

E il chiedi?

Il più nero delitto

sovra il candido giglio

Desdemona

The Eternal sees my innocence!

Othello

No! Hell sees it!

Desdemona

Your justice, I implore, my lord!

Othello

Ah! Desdemona! Away!

Away! Away!

Desdemona

You also weep?! and groaning

stem the anguish of your heart!

And am I then the innocent

motive of these tears!

What sin have I committed?

Othello

And would you ask?

The blackest of crimes

upon the lily fairness

della tua fronte è scritto.

Desdemona

Ahimè!

Otello

Che? non sei forse una vil cortigiana?

Desdemona

Ciel!

No ... no ... pel battesimo della fede

cristiana!

Otello

Che?

Desdemona

Ah! non son ciò che esprime

quelle parola orrenda!

*(Mutando d'un tratto l'ira nella più
terribile calma dell'ironia, Otello prende
Desdemona per mano e la conduce alla
porta d'onde entrò.)*

of your brow is written.

Desdemona

Alas!

Othello

What? Are you not a common courtesan?

Desdemona

Heaven!

No ... no ... by the baptism

of the Christian faith!

Othello

What?

Desdemona

Ah! I am not the thing expressed

by that horrendous word!

*(Othello's mood changing suddenly
from the most towering rage to an even
more terrifying ironic calm, he takes
Desdemona's hand and leads her to*

Otello

Datemi ancor l'eburnea mano,
vo' fare ammenda.

Vi credea (perdonate
se il mio pensiero è fello)
quella vil cortigian
che è la sposa d'Otello.

*(Otello sforza con un'inflessione
del braccio, ma senza scomporsi,
Desdemona ad escire. Poi ritorna verso
il centro della sala nel massimo grado
dell'abbattimento.)*

Dio! mi potevi scagliar tutti i mali
della miseria, della vergogna,
far de' miei baldi trofei trionfali
una maceria, una menzogna ...
e avrei portato la croce crudel
d'angosce e d'onte
con calma fronte

*the door by which she had previously
entered.)*

Othello

Give me your ivory hand again,
I would make amends.
I took you (forgive me
if my thought displeases you)
for that common courtesan
that married with Othello.

*(With a movement of his arm alone,
Othello pushes Desdemona out of the
door without losing his composure.
Then, in the very depths of despair, he
returns to the middle of the hall.)*

God! Thou couldst have rained
upon my head
every affliction of poverty and shame,
made of my heroic battle-honours
a heap of ruination and a lie ...
and I should have borne the cruel cross
of torment and disgrace

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e rassegnato al volere del ciel.
Ma, - o pianto, o duol! -
m'han rapito il miraggio
dov'io, giulivo, l'anima acqueto.
Spento è quel sol,
quel sorriso, quel raggio
che mi fa vivo, che mi fa lieto!
Spento è quel sol, ecc.
Tu alfin, Clemenza,
pio genio immortal
dal roseo riso,
copri il tuo viso santo
coll'orrida larva infernal!
Ah! Dannazione!
Pria confessi il delitto
e poscia muoia!
Confession! Confession!

(Entra Jago.)

La prova!

Jago

(indicando l'ingresso)

with patience
and resigned me to the will of heaven.
But - oh tears, oh pain! -
to rob me of that vision
in which my soul was garnered joyfully!
That sun has been snuffed out,
that smile, that ray
which gives me life and happiness!
That sun has been snuffed out, etc.
Mercy, thou immortal
rose-lipped cherubin,
cover at the last thy holy face
with the horrid mask of hell!
Ah! Damnation!
Let her first confess her crime,
then die!
Confession! Confession!

(Iago enters.)

The proof!

Iago

(pointing to the door)

Cassio è là!

Otello

Là? Cielo! O gioia!!

(con raccapriccio)

Orror! Supplizi immondi!

Jago

Ti frena!

(Conduce rapidamente Otello nel fondo a sinistra dove c'è il vano del verone.)

Ti nascondi.

(Jago, appena condotto Otello al verone, corre verso il fondo del peristilio. Incontra Cassio che esita ad entrare.)

(a Cassio)

Vieni, l'aula è deserta.

T'inoltra, o Capitano.

Cassio is here!

Othello

Here?! Heaven! Oh joy!

(recoiling)

Oh horror! Torture most foul!

Iago

Restrain yourself!

(rapidly leading Othello to the back of the hall on the left, where there is a recess on the terrace)

Hide.

(As soon as Iago has led Othello onto the terrace, he runs to the end of the colonnade. There he meets Cassio, who is hesitating to enter the hall.)

(to Cassio)

Come; the hall's deserted.

Enter, O Captain.

Cassio

Questo nome d'onor
suona ancor vano per me.

Jago

Fa cor, la tua causa è in tal mano
che la vittoria è certa.

Cassio

Io qui credea di ritrovar Desdemona.

Otello

(nascosto)

Ei la nomò.

Cassio

Vorrei parlarle ancora,
per saper se la mia grazia è profferta.

Jago

L'attendi;
(conducendo Cassio alla prima colonna del peristilio)

Cassio

This honourable name
still rings hollow for me.

Iago

Take heart; your cause is in such hands
that victory is certain.

Cassio

I had thought to have found
Desdemona here.

Othello

(hidden)

He spoke her name!

Cassio

I looked to speak further with her
to ask if I am pardoned.

Iago

Wait for her;
(leading Cassio to the first pillar of the colonnade)

e intanto, giacchè non si stanca mai
la tua lingua nelle fole gaie,
narrami un po' di lei che t'innamora.

Cassio

Di chi?

Jago

Di Bianca.

Otello

(a parte)

Sorride!

Cassio

Baie!

Jago

Essa t'avvince coi vaghi rai.

Cassio

Rider mi fai.

and meanwhile, seeing that you never
tire in the recital of mad and merry tales,
tell me a little about her whom you love.

Cassio

Of whom?

Jago

Of Bianca.

Othello

(aside)

He smiles!

Cassio

What nonsense!

Jago

Her charming eye has you in thrall.

Cassio

You make me laugh.

Jago

Ride chi vince.

Cassio

(ridendo)

In tai disfide per verità
vince chi ride. Ah! ah!

Jago

(ridendo)

Ah! ah!

Otello

(dal verone)

L'empio m'irride,
il suo scherno m'uccide.
Dio, frena l'ansia che in core mi sta! ...

Cassio

Son già di baci sazio e di lai.

Jago

He laughs who wins.

Cassio

(laughing)

In such exchanges, truly,
he wins who laughs! Ah, ah!

Jago

(laughing)

Ah, ah!

Othello

(on the terrace)

The villain mocks me,
his scorn is mortal to me.
Oh God, restrain the torment in my
heart!

Cassio

I am already sated with kisses and
reproaches.

Jago

Rider mi fai!

Cassio

O amor' fugaci!

Jago

Vagheggi il regno d'altra beltà.
Colgo nel segno?

Cassio

Ah! ah!

Jago

Ah! ah!

Otello

(come prima)
L'empio m'irride,
il suo scherno m'uccide.
Dio frena l'ansia che in core mi sta!

Iago

You make me laugh!

Cassio

O fleeting love!

Iago

Another beauty beckons with her charms.
Have I hit the mark?

Cassio

Ah, ah!

Iago

Ah, ah!

Othello

(as before)
The villain mocks me,
his scorn is mortal to me.
Oh God, restrain the torment in my
heart!

Cassio

Nel segno hai colto.
Sì, lo confesso. M'odi.

Jago

Sommesso parla. T'ascolto.

*(Jago conduce Cassio in posto più
lontano da Otello.)*

Cassio

Jago, t'è nota la mia dimora...

(Le parole si perdono.)

Otello

*(avvicinandosi un poco e cautamente
per udir le parole)*
Or gli racconta il modo,
il luogo e l'ora...

Cassio

... da mano ignota...

Cassio

You have hit the mark.
Yes, I confess it. Listen.

Iago

Speak softly. I'am listening.

*(Iago leads Cassio to a place further
away from Othello).*

Cassio

Iago, you know my lodging...

(The words are lost.)

Othello

*(coming cautiously a little nearer to
overhear the conversation)*
Now he recounts the manner,
the place and time...

Cassio

... by an unknown hand ...

(Le parole si perdono ancora.)

Otello

Le parole non odo ...
Lasso! ... e udir le vorrei!
Dove son giunto!

Cassio

... un vel trapunto.

Jago

È strano! è strano!

Otello

D'avvicinarmi Jago mi fa cenno.
(passa con cautela e si nasconde dietro le colonne)

Jago

Da ignota mano? Baie!

Cassio

Da senno.
(Jago gli fa cenno di parlare ancora)

(The words are lost again.)

Othello

I cannot hear the words ...
alas! ... and I would hear them!
To what am I come!

Cassio

... a fine embroidered handkerchief.

Iago

'Tis strange! 'Tis strange!

Othello

Iago beckons me.
(emerging with caution and hiding behind the pillars)

Iago

By an unknown hand? Nonsense!

Cassio

Truly.
(Iago signs to him to speak softly.)

sottovoce.)

Quanto mi tarda saper chi sia.

Jago

(guardando rapidamente dalla parte d'Otello, fra sé)
Otello spia.
(a Cassio)
L'hai teco?

Cassio

(estrae dal giustacuore il fazzoletto di Desdemona)
Guarda.

Jago

(prendendo il fazzoletto)
Qual meraviglia!
(a parte)
Otello origlia. Ei s'avvicina
con mosse accorte.
(a Cassio, scherzando)
Bel cavaliere, nel vostro ostello
perdono gli angeli l'aureola e il vel.

How I long to know who it might be.

Iago

(aside, glancing quickly towards Othello)
Othello is looking.
(to Cassio)
You have it with you?

Cassio

(taking Desdemona's handkerchief from his doublet)
Look.

Iago

(taking the handkerchief)
What a miracle!
(aside)
Othello listens. He approaches
with wary steps.
(to Cassio, playfully)
Fine cavalier, in your abode
angels lose their haloes and their veils.

*(mettendo le mani dietro la schiena
perché Otello possa osservare il
fazzoletto)*

Otello

*(avvicinandosi assai al fazzoletto dietro
le spalle di Jago, e nascosto dalla prima
colonna)*

È quello! è quello!
Ruina e morte!

Jago

(fra sé)
Origlia Otello.

Otello

Tutto è spento! amore e duol.
L'alma mia nessun più smuova.

Jago

(a Cassio, indicando il fazzoletto)

*(putting his hands behind his back so
that Othello can see the handkerchief)*

Othello

*(looking closely at the handkerchief
behind Iago's back, remaining hidden
behind the pillar)*

'Tis the one! 'Tis the one!
Destruction and death!

Iago

(aside)
Othello is listening.

Othello

All is gone, love and grieving both.
Nothing more can touch my heart.

Iago

*(eyeing Cassio, indicating the
handkerchief)*

Questa è una ragna
dove il tuo cuor
casca, si lagna,
s'impiglia e muor.
Troppo l'ammiri,
troppo la guardi,
bada ai deliri
vani e bugiardi.
Questa è una ragna, ecc.

Cassio

*(guardando il fazzoletto che avrà ritolto
a Iago)*
Miracolo vago dell'aspo e dell'ago
che in raggi tramuta le fila d'un vel,
più bianco, più lieve
che fiocco di neve,
che nube tessuta dall'aure del ciel!

Jago

Questa è una ragna

This is a spider's web,
'twill your heart catch,
in spite of complaining
'twill trap and dispatch.
Too much you're admiring,
too long you are eyeing,
beware of such transports
abortive and lying.
This is a spider's web, etc.

Cassio

*(looking at the handkerchief which he
has taken again from Iago)*
Fair miracle, wrought by the needle,
which caught rays of light by
transmuting the linen so fair,
whiter and lighter than snowflakes,
and brighter than clouds which are
woven from heaven's sweet air!

Iago

This is a spider's web,

dove il tuo cuor
casca, si lagna,
s'impiglia e muor.

Cassio

Miracolo vago ...

Jago

Questa è una ragna, ecc.

Otello

*(nascosto dietro la colonna e guardando
di tratto in tratto il fazzoletto nelle mani
di Cassio)*

Tradimento,
tradimento, tradimento,
la tua prova,
la tua prova spaventosa
mostri al Sol!

Jago

Troppo l'ammiri, ecc.
Ah, bada,
questa è una ragna, ecc.

'twill your heart catch ...
... in spite of complaining
'twill trap and dispatch.

Cassio

Fair miracle ...

Jago

This is a spider's web, etc.

Othello

*(hidden behind the pillar and casting
glances from time to time at the
handkerchief in Cassio's hand)*

Betrayal,
betrayal, betrayal,
the proof,
the terrifying proof
thou displayest to the sun!

Jago

Too much you're admiring, etc.
Ah, beware,
this is a spider's web, etc.

Cassio

... più bianco, più lieve, ecc.
Miracol, miracolo vago,
... miracolo vago!

Otello

Tradimento! ...

Jago

Troppo l'ammiri!

Otello

... tradimento!
(ritorna nel vano del verone)

Jago

Bada! Bada!

*(Odoni trombe ben lontane. Altre
rispondono dal castello. Colpo di
cannone.)*

Quest'è il segnale che annunzia
l'approdo della trireme veneziana.

Cassio

... whiter and lighter, etc.
Miracle, fair miracle ...
... fair miracle!

Othello

Betrayal! ...

Jago

Too much you admire it!

Othello

... betrayal!
(returning to the terrace)

Jago

Beware! Beware!

*(Distant trumpets are heard. Others
answer them from the castle. A cannon
shot.)*

That is the signal to announce
the arrival of the Venetian trireme.

(Trombe da altre parti.)

Ascolta.
Tutto il castello co' suoi squilli risponde.
Se qui non vuoi con Otello scontrarti,
fuggi.

Cassio

Addio.

Jago

Va.

(Cassio esce velocemente dal fondo.)

Otello

(avvicinandosi a Jago)

Come la ucciderò?

Jago

Vedeste ben com'egli ha riso?

(Trumpets sound from different directions).

Listen.
All the castle's trumpeters reply.
If you do not want to meet Othello here,
go now.

Cassio

Farewell.

Iago

Go.

(Cassio leaves hurriedly through the back end.)

Othello

(coming up to Iago)

How shall I kill her?

Iago

Did you perceive well how he laughed?

Otello

Vidi!

Jago

E il fazzoletto?

Otello

Tutto vidi.

Voci lontane

Evviva!

Alla riva! Allo sbarco!

Otello

È condannata!

Voci lontane

Evviva!

Otello

Fa ch'io m'abbia un velen
per questa notte.

Othello

I saw!

Iago

And the handkerchief?

Othello

I saw it all.

Voices in the distance

Hurrah!

To the shore! To the landing-place!

Othello

She is condemned!

Distant Voices

Hurrah!

Othello

Get me some poison
for tonight.

Jago

Il toscano no ,...

Voci lontane

Evviva il Leon di San Marco!

Jago

... vai meglio soffocarla,
là, nel suo letto,
là, dove ha peccato.

Otello

Questa giustizia tua mi piace.

Jago

A Cassio Jago provvederà.

Otello

Jago, fin d'ora
mio Capitano t'elegerò.

Jago

Mio Duce, grazie vi rendo!
Ecco gli Ambasciatori.

Iago

Poison, no ...

Distant Voices

Long live the Lion of St. Mark!

Iago

... rather suffocate her,
there in her bed,
even the bed where she has sinned.

Othello

Your sense of justice pleases me.

Iago

As for Cassio, I shall see to him.

Othello

Iago, from this moment
I name you my captain.

Iago

My General, I give you thanks.
Here come the ambassadors.

Li accogliete.

Ma ad evitar sospetti

Desdemona si mostri ai quei messeri.

Otello

Sì, qui l'adduci.

*(Jago esce dalla porta di sinistra:
Otello s'avvia verso il fondo per ricevere
gli Ambasciatori. Trombe suonano
di nuovo. Entrano Jago, Lodovico,
Roderigo, l'Araldo, Desdemona con
Emilia, dignitari della Repubblica
Veneta, Gentiluomini e Dame, Soldati,
Trombettieri, poi Cassio.)*

Uomini e Donne

Viva! Evviva!

Viva il Leone di San Marco!

Evviva! evviva! ecc.

Evviva il Leone di San Marco!

Do you receive them.

But to avoid suspicion

Desdemona should come before these
lords.

Othello

Yes, bring her here.

*(Iago leaves by the door on the left;
Othello goes towards the far end of
the hall to receive the ambassadors.
Trumpets sound again, Iago re-enters
with Lodovico, the herald, Desdemona
with Emilia, dignitaries of the Venetian
Republic, ladies and gentlemen, soldiers,
trumpeters and then Cassio.)*

Men and Women

Hurrah! Hurrah!

Long live the Lion of St. Mark!

Hurrah! Hurrah! etc.

Long live the Lion of St. Mark!

Lodovico

(tenendo una pergamena avvoltata in mano)

Il Doge ed il Senato salutano
l'eroe trionfatore di Cipro.

Io reco nelle vostre mani
il messaggio dogale.

Otello

(prendendo il messaggio e baciando il
suggerello)

Io bacio il segno della Sovrana Maestà.
(poi lo spiega e legge)

Lodovico

(avvicinandosi a Desdemona)

Madonna, v'abbia il ciel
in sua guardia.

Desdemona

E il ciel v'ascolti.

Emilia

(a Desdemona, a parte)

Lodovico

(holding a rolled-up parchment in his
hand)

The Duke and senators of Venice greet
the triumphant hero of Cyprus.

I place in your hands
the ducal document.

Othello

(taking the parchment and kissing the
seal)

I kiss the seal of sovereign majesty.
(opens it and reads)

Lodovico

(going up to Desdemona)

My lady, may heaven
keep You in its care.

Desdemona

May heaven heed your prayer.

Emilia

(aside to Desdemona)

Come sei mesta!

Desdemona

(ad Emilia, a parte)

Emilia! una gran nube
turba il senno d'Otello
e il mio destino.

Jago

(a Lodovico)

Messere, son lieto di vedervi.

Lodovico

Jago, quali nuove? ...

Ma in mezzo a voi non trovo Cassio.

Jago

Con lui crucciato è Otello.

Desdemona

Credo che in grazia tornerà.

Otello

(sempre in atto di leggere; a

How sad you look!

Desdemona

(aside to Emilia)

Emilia! There's a great shadow fallen
upon Othello's mind
and upon my destiny.

Jago

(to Lodovico)

Signor, I am very glad to see you.

Lodovico

Jago, what's the news? ...

I do not see Cassio amongst you.

Jago

Othello is angered with him.

Desdemona

I think he will be restored to favour.

Othello

(continuing to read; rapidly aside to

Desdemona rapidamente)

Ne siete certa?

Desdemona

Che dite?

Lodovico

Ei legge, non vi parla.

Jago

Forse che in grazia tornerà.

Desdemona

Jago, lo spero;
sai se un verace affetto
porti a Cassio...

Otello

*(sempre in atto di leggere, ma
febrilmente a Desdemona, sottovoce)*
Frenate dunque le labbra loquaci...

Desdemona

Perdonate, signor...

Desdemona)

Are you sure of that?

Desdemona

My lord?

Lodovico

He reads, and speaks not to you.

Iago

Perhaps he will be restored to favour.

Desdemona

Iago, I hope so;
you know what real affection
I have for Cassio ...

Othello

*(still reading, but speaking feverishly
under his breath to Desdemona)*
Restrain your babbling tongue ...

Desdemona

Forgive me, my lord ...

Otello

(avventandosi contro Desdemona)
Demonio, taci!!

Lodovico

(arrestando il gesto d'Otello)

Ferma!

Uomini e Donne

Orrore! orrore!

Lodovico

La mente mia non osa pensar
ch'io vidi il vero.

Otello

(all'Araldo)
A me Cassio!

(L'Araldo esce.)

Jago

(ad Otello a bassa voce)

Othello

(flinging himself at Desdemona)
Devil, be silent!

Lodovico

*(preventing Othello from striking
Desdemona)*
Stop!

Men and Women

Oh horror! Oh horror!

Lodovico

I dare not believe
that my eyes have truly seen.

Othello

(to the herald)
Send Cassio to me!

(The herald leaves.)

Iago

(aside to Othello)

Che tenti?

Otello

(a Jago sottovoce)

Guardala mentre ei giunge.

Uomini e Donne

Ah! triste sposa!

Lodovico

(si avvicina a Jago e gli dice a parte)

Quest'è dunque l'eroe?

Quest'è il guerriero

dai sublimi ardimenti?

Jago

(a Lodovico, alzando le spalle)

È quel ch'egli è.

Lodovico

Palesa il tuo pensiero.

What would you do?

Othello

(aside to Iago)

Watch her as he enters.

Men and Women

Ah! Unhappy bride!

Lodovico

(approaching Iago and speaking to him

aside)

Is this then the hero?

Is this the warrior

of such noble daring?

Iago

(to Lodovico, shrugging his shoulders)

He's that he is.

Lodovico

Explain what you mean.

Jago

Meglio è tener su ciò la lingua muta.

Otello

(che avrà sempre fissato la porta)

Eccolo! È lui!

(Appare Cassio.)

(a Jago)

Nell'animo lo scruta.

(ad alta voce a tutti)

Messer! ... Il Doge ...

(a parte a Desdemona che piange)

- ben tu fingi il pianto -

(a tutti)

... mi richiama a Venezia.

Roderigo

(fra sé)

Infida sorte!

Iago

It is better to hold one's tongue.

Othello

(who has been watching the door

fixedly)

Here he is! 'Tis he!

(Cassio appears.)

(to Iago)

Watch him well.

(aloud, to the company:)

My lords! ... The Duke ...

(aside to Desdemona, who is weeping:)

- oh well-painted passion -

(to the company:)

... has recalled me to Venice.

Roderigo

(aside)

Unjust fate!

Otello

E in Cipro elegge mio successor
colui che stava accanto al mio vessillo -
Cassio.

Jago

(fra sé, fieramente e sorpreso)
Inferno e morte!

Otello

*(continuando e mostrando la
pergamena)*
La parola ducale è nostra legge.

Cassio

(inchinandosi ad Otello)
Obbedirò.

Otello

*(rapidamente a Jago e accennando a
Cassio)*
Vedi? ... non par che esulti l'infame.

Othello

And as my successor in Cyprus elects
he who stood by my standard -
Cassio.

Iago

(surprised, in a fierce aside)
Death and the devil take it!

Othello

*(continuing his speech and showing the
document)*
The ducal command is our law.

Cassio

(bowing to Othello)
I will obey.

Othello

*(rapidly to Iago, nodding towards
Cassio)*
You see? ...The villain does not seem well
pleased.

Jago

No.

Otello

(a tutti)
La ciurma e la coorte...
(sottovoce a Desdemona)
- continua i tuoi singulti -
(a tutti)
... e le navi e il castello
lascio in poter del nuovo Duce.

Lodovico

*(additando Desdemona che s'avvicina
supplichevole)*
Otello, per pietà la conforta
o il cor le infrangi.

Otello

(a Lodovico e Desdemona)
Noi salperem domani.

*(Afferra Desdemona furiosamente.
Ella cade.)*

Iago

No.

Othello

(to the company)
The ship's crew and garrison...
(aside, to Desdemona)
- Proceed you in your tears -
(aloud)
... the ships and castle,
I leave in charge of my successor.

Lodovico

*(pointing to Desdemona who
approaches Othello supplicatingly)*
Othello, prithee comfort her,
or you will break her heart.

Othello

(to Lodovico and Desdemona)
We shall embark tomorrow.

*(He seizes Desdemona in fury.
She falls.)*

(a Desdemona)

A terra! ... e piangi!

(Otello avrà, nel suo gesto terribile, gettata la pergamena al suolo, e Jago la raccoglie e legge di nascosto. Emilia e Lodovico sollevano pietosamente Desdemona.)

Desdemona

A terra! ... sì ... nel livido
fango ... percossa ... io giacio ...
piango ... m'agghiaccia il brivido
dell'anima che muor.

E un dì sul mio sorriso
fioria la speme e il bacio,
ed or ... l'angoscia in viso
e l'agonia nel cor!

Quel sol sereno e vivido
che allieta il ciel e il mare,
non può sciugar le amare stille
del mio dolor,
le amare stille del mio dolor!

(to Desdemona)

Down! ... And weep!

(Othello, in his act of violence, has thrown the document to the ground; Jago picks it up and reads it, taking care not to be seen. Lodovico and Emilia sympathetically support Desdemona.)

Desdemona

Down! ... yes ... in the livid slime
stricken ... I lie ... I weep ...
chilled by the icy touch
of death upon my soul.

And once upon a time my smile
would quicken hope and kisses,
and now ... I have anguish in my face
and agony in my heart!

That sun so calm and bright
that brings joy to sky and sea,
can never dry the bitter drops
of my pain,
the bitter teardrops of my pain!

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Emilia

(fra sé)

Quell'innocente un fremito
d'odio non ha né un gesto,
trattiene in petto il gemito
con doloroso fren.

Cassio

(fra sé)

L'ora è fatal! un fulmine
sul mio cammin l'addita;
già di mia sorte il culmine
s'offre all'innerto man.

Roderigo

(fra sé).

Per me s'oscura il mondo,
s'annuvola il destin, il destin;
l'angiol soave e biondo
scompar dal mio cammin.

Lodovico

(fra sé)

Egli la man funerea

Emilia

(aside)

Innocent of heart, no word
of hate she speaks, no gesture makes,
but locks her pain within her heart
with sorrowful restraint.

Cassio

(aside)

Fate hangs upon the hour! A flash
of lightning shows it on my path;
the highest prize that fate affords
is offered to my passive hand.

Roderigo

(aside)

Darkness falls upon my world,
mist shrouds my destiny;
that angel sweet and golden-haired
vanishes from my path.

Lodovico

(aside)

His funerary fist

scuote anelando d'ira,
essa la faccia eterea
volge piangendo al ciel.

Donne

(ad Otello)
Pietà! ... Pietà!

Uomini

Mistero!

Lodovico

Egli la man funereal ...

Donne

Pietà! Pietà!

Desdemona

E un dì sul mio sorriso
fioria la speme e il bacio ...

Emilia

La lagrima si frange
muta sul volto mesto ...

he shakes and pants with rage,
she her ethereal face
turns weeping to the sky.

Women

(to Othello)
Have pity! ... Have pity!

Men

... 'Tis strange!

Lodovico

His funerary fist ...

Women

Have pity! Have pity!

Desdemona

And once upon a time my smile
would quicken hope and kisses...

Emilia

The tears fall silently
upon her sorrowing cheek ;...

Cassio

L'ebbra fortuna incalza
la fuga della vita.

Roderigo

L'angiol soave
scompar dal mio cammino.

Lodovico

... scuote anelando d'ira,
essa la faccia eterea
volge piangendo al ciel!

Donne

Pietà! pietà! ecc.

Uomini

Mistero! mistero!

*(Jago s'avvicina a Otello che si è
accasciato su d'una sedia.)*

Jago

Una parola.

Cassio

Reeling Fortune presses hard
upon the swift heels of time.

Roderigo

That angel sweet
vanishes from my path.

Lodovico

... he shakes and pants with rage,
she her ethereal face
turns weeping to the sky!

Women

Have pity! Have pity! etc.

Men

'Tis strange! 'Tis strange!

*(Iago draws close to Othello who has
collapsed onto a chair.)*

Iago

A word with you.

Otello

E che?

Jago

T'affretta!

Rapido slancia la tua vendetta!

Il tempo vola.

Otello

Ben parli.

Jago

È l'ira inutil ciancia. Scuotiti!

All'opra ergi tua mira! all'opra sola!

Io penso a Cassio.

Ei le sue trame espia,

l'infame anima ria l'averno inghiotte!

Otello

Chi gliela svelle?

Jago

Io.

Othello

What is it?

Iago

Make haste!

Let your vengeance be swift!

Time flies.

Othello

You speak truly.

Iago

Angry words are idle gossip. Act!

Aim at the objective, that alone!

I shall deal with Cassio.

He shall pay for his intrigues,
and hell shall swallow up his guilty soul!

Othello

Who will pluck it from him?

Iago

I myself.

Otello

Tu?

Jago

Giurai.

Otello

Tal sia.

Jago

Tu avrai le sue novelle uesta notte.

Desdemona

... ed or, l'angoscia in viso

e l'agonia nel cor ...

a terra ... nel fango ... percossa ...

io giaccio ...

m'agghiaccia il brivido

dell'anima che muor.

Emilia

... no, chi per lei non piange

non ha pietade in sen.

Quell'innocente un fremito, ecc.

Othello

You?

Iago

I have sworn.

Othello

So be it.

Iago

You shall hear more tonight.

Desdemona

... and now with anguish in my face

and agony in my heart ...

on the ground ... in the slime ... stricken

... I lie ...

chilled by the icy touch

of death upon my soul.

Emilia

... no, he who weeps not for her

has no pity in his heart.

Innocent of heart, etc.

Cassio

Questa che al ciel m'innalza
è un'onda d'uragan.
L'ebbra fortuna incalza
la fuga della vita.
Questa che al ciel m'innalza, ecc.

Roderigo

Per me s'oscura il mondo, ecc.

Lodovico

Essa la faccia eterea
volge piangendo al ciel.
Nel contemplar quel pianto
la carità sospira
e un tenero compianto
stempra del core il gel.

Donne

Ansia mortale, bieca ne ingombra,
anime assortite in lungo orror.

Cassio

That which lifts me up so high
is a storm-driven tidal wave.
Reeling Fortune presses hard
upon the swift heels of time.
That which lifts me up, etc.

Roderigo

Darkness falls upon my world, etc.

Lodovico

She her ethereal face
turns weeping to the sky.
To see such tears as these
Pity itself might sigh,
and a stirring of compassion
melt an icy heart.

Women

Mortal care weighs sullenly upon
these souls who writhe in long-drawn
agony.

Uomini

Quell'uomo nero è sepolcrale,
e cieca un'ombra è in lui
di morte e di terror!

Emilia

La lagrima si frange
muta sul volto mesto ...

Cassio

L'ebbra fortuna incalza, ecc.

Roderigo

Per me s'oscura il mondo, ecc.

Lodovico

Nel contemplar quel pianto, ecc.

Donne

Vista crudele!
Ansia mortale, ecc.

Uomini

Strazia coll'ugna l'orrido petto!

Men

This black man has a graveyard air,
a sightless shadow sits within
of death and terror made!

Emilia

The tears fall silently
upon her sorrowing cheek...

Cassio

Reeling Fortune presses, etc.

Roderigo

Darkness falls upon my world, etc.

Lodovico

To see such tears as these, etc.

Women

O cruel sight!
Mortal care, etc.

Men

His nails tear at his fearsome breast!

Gli sguardi figge immoti al suol.
Poi sfida il ciel coll'atre pugna,
l'ispido aspetto ergendo
ai dardi alti del sol.

Desdemona

E un dì sul mio sorriso...

Emilia

... no, chi per lei non piange
non ha pietade.

Cassio

Questa che al ciel m'innalza
è un'onda d'uragan.

Roderigo

L'angiol soave e biondo
scompar dal mio cammin.

Lodovico

E un tenero compianto ...

His eyes are fixed upon the ground.
Now his dusky fist he shakes at heaven,
raising his shaggy face
towards the darts of the sun.

Desdemona

And once upon a time my smile ...

Emilia

... no, he who weeps not for her
has no pity.

Cassio

That which lifts me up so high
is a storm-driven tidal wave.

Roderigo

That angel sweet and golden-haired
vanishes from my path.

Lodovico

... a stirring of compassion ...

Donne

Vista crudel, (rip.)

Uomini

Strazia coll'ugna, ecc.

(Jago si svolge a Roderigo.)

Jago

I sogni tuoi saranno in mar domani
e tu sull'aspra terra!

Roderigo

Ahi triste!

Jago

Ahi stolto! stolto!
Se vuoi tu puoi sperar;
gli umani orsù! cimenti afferra, e m'odi.

Roderigo

T'ascolto.

Women

O cruel sight!

Men

His nails tear, etc.

(Iago turns his attention to Roderigo.)

Iago

Your dreams will be upon the seas
tomorrow,
and you on the bitter shore!

Roderigo

Ah, misery!

Iago

Ah stupidity! Stupidity!
If you will, you may hope yet;
come, show yourself a man! Gird your
loins, and listen.

Roderigo

I hear you.

Jago

Col primo albor salpa il vascello.
Or Cassio è il Duce.
Eppur se avvien che a questi accada
sventura,
allor qui resta Otello.
Mano alla spada!
A notte folta io la sua traccia vigilo,
e il varco e l'ora scruto,
il resto a te. Sarò tua scorta.
A caccia! a caccia!
Cingiti l'arco!

Roderigo

Sì! t'ho venduto onore e fè.

*(Le voci di Jago e Roderigo si sperdono
fra l'insieme generale.)*

Desdemona

... fioria la speme e il bacio, ecc.

Emilia

No, chi per lei non piange

Iago

The ship departs at first light.
Now Cassio is governor.
However, if some accident should befall
him,
Othello must linger here.
Your hand on your sword!
When it is dark I'll supervise his steps
and watch his destination and the hour,
the rest is up to you. I will be near.
A-hunting we will go!
Arm yourself for the fray!

Roderigo

Yes! I have sold you my honour and
faith.

*(The voices of Jago and Roderigo
become lost among the others.)*

Desdemona

... quickened hope and kisses, etc.

Emilia

No, he who weeps not for her

non ha pietade in sen, ecc.

Cassio

L'ebbra fortuna incalza, ecc.

Lodovico

... stempria del core il gel.
Chi per lei non piange, ecc.

Donne

Vista crudel! Ei la colpì!
Quel viso santo, pallido, blando
si china e tace e piange e muor.
Piangon così nel ciel
lor pianto gli angeli
quando perduto giace il peccator.

Uomini

Figge gli sguardi immoti al suol.
Sfida il ciel, ecc.

Donne

Quel viso santo ...

has no pity in his heart, etc.

Cassio

Reeling Fortune presses, etc.

Lodovico

... melt an icy heart.
He who weeps not for her, etc.

Women

O cruel sight! He struck her!
That saint-like face, so pale and gentle,
is mutely bowed, and weeps and dies.
In heaven do the angels
shed such tears as these
when before them, lost, the sinner lies.

Men

His eyes are fixed upon the ground.
His dusky fist, etc.

Women

That saint-like face ...

Emilia

Quell'innocente un fremito ...

Cassio

L'ebbra fortuna incalza ...

Roderigo

(allontanandosi da Jago)

Il dado è tratto!

Jago

(guardando Roderigo, fra sé)

Corri al miraggio!

Lodovico

Nel contemplar quel pianto ...

Donne

... pallido, blando ...

Uomini

Quell'uomo nero è sepolcral!

Emilia

Innocent of heart, no word ...

Cassio

Reeling Fortune presses ...

Roderigo

(walking away from Iago)

The die is cast!

Iago

(aside, watching Roderigo)

Go, chase the rainbow!

Lodovico

To see such tears as these ...

Women

... so pale and gentle ...

Men

This black man has a graveyard air!

Donne

...si china e tace...

Emilia

... d'odio non ha nè un gesto, ...

Cassio

... la fuga della vita...

Roderigo

Il dado è tratto!

Jago

Corri, corri al miraggio!

Lodovico

... a carità sospira.

Donne

... e tace e piange.

Uomini

Quel uomo nero è sepolcral!

Women

... is mutely bowed ...

Emilia

... of hate she speaks nor gesture
makes, ...

Cassio

... at the swift heels of time, ...

Roderigo

The die is cast!

Iago

Go, chase the rainbow!

Lodovico

Pity heaves a sigh ...

Women

... and weeps and dies.

Men

This black man has a graveyard air!

Desdemona

E un dì sul mio sorriso
fioria la speme e il bacio, ecc.

Emilia

... d'odio non ha, ecc.

Cassio

... l'ebbra fortuna incalza, ecc.

Lodovico

La carità sospira, ecc.

Jago

Corri al miraggio! Il fragile tuo senno
ha già confuso un sogno menzogner.
Segui l'astuto ed agile mio cenno,
amante illuso, io seguo il mio pensier,
ecc.

Roderigo

Il dado è tratto! Impavido t'attendo,
ultima sorte, occulto mio destin.

Desdemona

And once upon a time my smile ...
... would quicken hope and kisses, etc.

Emilia

... of hate she speaks, etc.

Cassio

... Reeling Fortune presses, etc.

Lodovico

... Pity heaves a sigh, etc.

Jago

Go, chase the rainbow! Your enfeebled
sense
is by a web of lying dreams enmeshed,
Follow the scheme my shrewd, swift wit
presents,
deluded lover, I follow but myself, etc.

Roderigo

The die is cast! Undaunted, I await
the final outcome, hidden destiny, etc.

Mi sprona amor, ma un avido, tremendo
astro di morte infesta il mio cammin,
ecc.

Donne/Uomini - *come prima*

Otello

*(ergendosi e rivolto alla folla,
terribilmente)*
Fuggite!

Tutti

Ciel!

Otello

(slanciandosi contro la folla)
Tutti fuggite Otello!

Jago

(a tutti)
Lo assale una malia
che di ogni senso il priva.

Love spurs me on, and yet my path is
plagued
by death's dark planet, avid, menacing,
etc.

Women/Men - *as before*

Othello

*(rising and turning on the crowd with
menacing fury)*
Hence, avaunt!

All

Heaven!

Othello

(hurling himself upon the crowd)
All flee Othello!

Jago

(to everyone)
He is assailed by some enchantment
that deprives him of his wits.

Otello

Chi non si scosta
è contro me rubello!

Lodovico

(fa per trascinare lontano Desdemona)

Mi segui.

Uomini

(da lontano)

Evviva!

(Da lontano odesi squilla di trombe.)

Desdemona

(sciogliendosi da Lodovico e accorrendo verso Otello)

Mio sposo!

Otello

Anima mia, ti maledico!

Uomini e Donne

Orror!

Othello

Whoever does not remove himself
is in rebellion against me!

Lodovico

(trying to drag Desdemona away)

Come with me.

Men

(in the distance)

Hurrah!

(Fanfares are heard in the distance.)

Desdemona

(tearing herself away from Lodovico and running to Othello)

My lord!

Othello

My soul, I curse you!

Men and Women

Oh horror!

(Tutti escono inorriditi; Desdemona esce fra Lodovico ed Emilia. Restano soli Otello e Jago).

Otello

Fuggirmi io sol non so!

Sangue! ... Ah! l'abbietto pensiero!

(sempre affannoso)

Ciò m'accora!

(convulsivamente, delirando)

Vederli insieme avvinti ...

il fazzoletto! il fazzoletto! (rip).

Ah! ah! ah!

(Sviene.)

Jago

(fra sé)

Il mio velen lavora.

Uomini

(interno)

Viva Otello!

(Overwhelmed by horror, all leave the hall; Desdemona leaves supported by Lodovico and Emilia. Iago and Othello remain alone.)

Othello

I alone cannot flee myself!

Blood!... O vile thought!

(becoming breathless)

I like not that!

(convulsively, raving)

To see them clasped together ...

The handkerchief! The handkerchief!

O! O! O!

(faints)

Iago

(aside)

My poison's working.

Men

(within)

Long live Othello!

Jago

(ascoltando le grida)

L'eco della vittoria...

Uomini

Evviva! evviva!

Jago

... porge sua laude estrema.

Uomini

Evviva!

Jago

*(osserva Otello disteso a terra
tramortito)*

Chi può vietar che questa fronte
prema col mio tallone?

Uomini

(da più vicino)

Evviva! Evviva Otello!

Gloria al Leone di Venezia!

Iago

(listening to the cries)

His victory is hailed ...

Men

Hurrah! Hurrah!

Iago

... for the last time.

Men

Hurrah!

Iago

*(eyeing Othello stretched on the ground
unconscious)*

Who can stop me crushing
this head beneath my heel?

Men

(nearer)

Hurrah! Long live Othello!

Hail to the Lion of Venice!

Jago

*(ritto e con gesto d'orrendo trionfo,
indicando il corpo inerte d'Otello)*

Ecco il Leone!

Iago

*(standing erect and, with a loathsome
gesture of triumph, pointing to the inert
Othello)*

Behold the Lion!

ATTO QUARTO

La camera di Desdemona. Letto, inginocchiatoio, tavolo, specchio, sedie. Una lampada arde appesa davanti all'immagine della Madonna che sta al disopra dell'inginocchiatoio. Porta a destra. È notte.

(Desdemona, aiutata da Emilia, si prepara per la notte.)

Emilia

Era più calmo?

Desdemona

Mi pareva.
M'ingiunse di coricarmi
e d'attenderlo.
Emilia, te ne prego,
distendi sul mio letto
la mia candida veste nuziale.

(Emilia eseguisce.)

ACT FOUR

Desdemona's bedroom. A bed, a prie-dieu, a table, a mirror and some chairs. A lighted lamp hangs before the image of the Madonna above the prie-dieu. On the right is a door. It is night.

(Desdemona, with the assistance of Emilia, is preparing for bed.)

Emilia

Was he calmer?

Desdemona

He seemed so to me.
He commanded me to go to bed
and there await him.
Emilia, I pray you,
lay upon my bed
my white wedding nightgown.

(Emilia does so.)

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Senti.

Se pria di te morir dovessi,
mi seppellisci con un di quei veli.

Emilia

Scacciate quest'idee.

Desdemona

Son mesta tanto, tanto.
(sedendo macchinalmente davanti allo specchio)

Mia madre aveva una povera ancella,
innamorata e bella;
era il suo nome Barbara;
amava un uom che poi l'abbandonò.
Cantava una canzone,
la canzon del Salice.

(ad Emilia)
Mi disciogli le chiome.
Io questa sera
ho la memoria piena
di quella cantilena.

Listen.

If I should die before you,
lay me to rest in one of those veils.

Emilia

Put such thoughts from you.

Desdemona

I am so sad, so sad.
(seating herself mechanically before the mirror)

My mother had a poor maidservant,
she was in love and pretty;
her name was Barbara;
she loved a man who then abandoned
her.
She used to sing a song,
the song of "The Willow".
(to Emilia)
Unbind my hair.
This evening
my memory is haunted
by that old refrain.

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“Piangea cantando nell’erma landa,
piangea la mesta,

O Salce! Salce! Salce!

Sedeo chinando sul sen la testa,
Salce! Salce! Salce!

Cantiamo! cantiamo!

Il salce funebre sarà la mia ghirlanda.”
(*ad Emilia*)

Affrettati; fra poco giunge Otello.

“Scorreano i rivi fra le zolle in fior,
gemea quel core affranto,
e dalle ciglia le sgorgava il cor
l’amara onda del pianto.

Salce! Salce! Salce!

Cantiamo! cantiamo!

Il salce funebre sarà la mia ghirlanda.
Scende an l’augelli a vol dai rami cupi
verso quel dolce canto.

E gli occhi suoi piangean tanto, tanto,
da impietosir le rupi.”

“She wept as she sang on the lonely
heath,

the poor girl wept,

O Willow, Willow, Willow!

She sat with her head upon her breast,
Willow, Willow, Willow!

Come sing! Come sing!

The green willow shall be my garland.”
(*to Emilia*)

Make haste; Othello will soon be here.

“The fresh streams ran between the
flowery
banks, she moaned in her grief,
in bitter tears which through her eyelids
sprang

her poor heart sought relief.

Willow! Willow! Willow!

Come sing! Come sing!

The green willow shall be my garland.
Down from dark branches flew the birds
towards the singing sweet.
Sufficient were the tears that she did
weep that stoned her sorrow shared.”

(*ad Emilia, levandosi un anello dal dito*)
Riponi quest’anello.

(*alzandosi*)

Povera Barbara!

Solea la storia con questo
semplice suono finir:

“Egli era nato per la sua gloria,
io per amar...”

(*ad Emilia*)

Ascolta. Odo un lamento.

(*Emilia fa qualche passo.*)

Taci... Chi batte quella porta?

Emilia

È il vento.

Desdemona

“Io per amarlo e per morir.

Cantiamo! cantiamo!

Salce! Salce! Salce!”

Emilia, addio.

Come m’ardon le ciglia!

(*to Emilia, taking a ring from her finger*)
Lay this ring by.

(*rising*)

Poor Barbara!

The story used to end
with this simple phrase:

“He was born for glory,
I to love ...”

(*to Emilia*)

Hark! I heard a moan.

(*Emilia takes a step or two.*)

Hush ... Who knocks upon that door?

Emilia

‘Tis the wind.

Desdemona

“I to love him and to die.

Come sing! Come sing!

Willow! Willow! Willow!”

Emilia, farewell.

How mine eyes do itch!

È presagio di pianto.
Buona notte.

(Emilia si volge per partire.)

Ah! Emilia, Emilia, addio!
Emilia addio!

*(Emilia torna e Desdemona l'abbraccia.
Emilia parte.)*

(all'inginocchiatoio)

Ave Maria, piena di grazia,
eletta fra le spose e le vergini sei tu,
sia benedetto il frutto, o Benedetta,
di tue materne viscere, Gesù.
Prega per chi, adorando te, si prostra,
prega pel peccator, per l'innocente,
e pel debole oppresso e pel possente,
misero anch'esso, tua pietà dimostra.

That bodes weeping.
Good night.

(Emilia turns to leave.)

Ah! Emilia, Emilia, farewell!
Emilia, farewell!

*(Emilia returns and Desdemona
embraces her. Emilia leaves.)*

(kneeling at the prie-dieu)

Hail Mary, full of grace,
blessed amongst wives and maids art
thou,
and blessed is the fruit, o blessed one,
of thy maternal womb, Jesu.
Pray for those who kneeling adore thee,
pray for the sinner, for the innocent
and for the weak oppressed; and to the
powerful man,
who also grieves, thy sweet compassion
show.

Prega per chi sotto l'oltraggio piega la
fronte,
e sotto la malvagia sorte;
per noi, per noi tu prega,
prega sempre,
e nell'ora della morte nostra,
prega per noi, prega per noi,
prega!

*(Resta ancora inginocchiata
e appoggiando la fronte
sull'inginocchiatoio ripete mentalmente
l'orazione di cui non s'odono che le
prime e le ultime parole.)*

Ave Maria ...
... nell'ora della morte.
Ave! Amen!
(Si alza e va a coricarsi.)

*(Otello compare sulla soglia di una
porta segreta ... Si Avanza ... depone una
scimitarra sul tavolo s'arresta davanti
alla face, titubante se spegnerla o no ...
Guarda Desdemona ... Spegne la face ...*

Pray for him who bows beneath
injustice
and 'neath the blows of cruel destiny;
for us, pray thou for us,
pray for us always,
and at the hour of our death
pray for us, pray for us,
pray!

*(She remains kneeling and, with her
head bowed on the prie-dieu, repeats
the prayer silently, so that only the first
words and the last are audible.)*

Hail Mary ...
... and at the hour of our death.
Hail! Amen!
(She rises from her knees and goes to bed.)

*(Othello appears on the threshold of
a secret door ... He comes forward
... places his scimitar on the table
... hesitates in front of the candle,
wondering whether to put it out or*

Fa un movimento di furore ... Si avvicina al letto ... S'arresta ... Rialza le cortine, contempla lungamente Desdemona che dorme ... Dà un bacio a Desdemona ... un'altro baci o... un'altro ancora. Desdemona si desta.)

not ... Looks at Desdemona ... Puts out the light ... Makes a gesture of fury ... Approaches the bed ... Stops ... Raises the drapes and stands for a long time contemplating the sleeping Desdemona... He gives her a kiss... another kiss... and another one. Desdemona awakens.)

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Desdemona

Chi è là?

(si alza)

Otello ?

Desdemona

Who's there?

(raising herself)

Othello?

Otello

Sì! ...

Diceste questa sera le vostre preci?

Othello

Ay! ...

Have you prayed tonight?

Desdemona

Orai ...

Desdemona

I prayed ...

Otello

Se vi sovviene
di qualche colpa commessa

Othello

If you bethink yourself
of any crime

che attenda grazia dal ciel,
imploratela tosto.

Desdemona

Perché?

Otello

T'affretta!

Uccidere non voglio l'anima tua.

Desdemona

D'uccider parli?

Otello

Sì.

Desdemona

Pietà di me, mio Dio!

Otello

Amen.

unreconciled as yet to heaven and
grace,
solicit for it straight.

Desdemona

What mean you?

Othello

Be brief!

I would not kill your spirit.

Desdemona

Talk you of killing?

Othello

I do.

Desdemona

Then God have mercy on me!

Othello

Amen.

Desdemona

E abbiate pietà voi pure!

Otello

Pensa a' tuoi peccati.

Desdemona

Mio peccato è l'amor.

Otello

Per ciò tu muori!

Desdemona

E perché t'amo m'uccidi?

Otello

Ami Cassio!

Desdemona

No! sull'anima mia!!

Otello

Quel fazzoletto ch'io ti donai
gli desti.

Desdemona

And you have mercy too!

Othello

Think on your sins.

Desdemona

My sin is love.

Othello

For that you die!

Desdemona

Because I love you you would kill me?

Othello

Cassio is your love!

Desdemona

No! By my life and soul!

Othello

That handkerchief which I gave you
you gave to him.

Desdemona

Non è vero!

Otello

Nella sua man lo vidi.

Desdemona

Io rea non sono!

Otello

Confessa!

Desdemona

Giuro!

Otello

Bada allo spergiuro ...
Pensa che sei sul tuo letto di morte.

Desdemona

Non per morir.

Otello

Per morir tosto.

Desdemona

It is not true!

Othello

I saw it in his hand.

Desdemona

I am not guilty!

Othello

Confess!

Desdemona

I swear it!

Othello

Take heed of perjury ...
Think that you are on your deathbed.

Desdemona

But not to die.

Othello

To die presently.

Desdemona

Aita!

Cassio non amo ...

ch'ei qui venga ... ei parli.

Otello

Muto è per sempre.

Desdemona

Cielo! ... Morto?

Otello

Morto.

Desdemona

Son perduta! ei tradito!

Otello

E pianger l'osi?

Desdemona

Otello, non uccidermi ...

Desdemona

God help me!

I do not love Cassio ...

Send for him hither ... let him speak.

Othello

His mouth is stopped for ever.

Desdemona

What! ... is he dead?

Othello

Dead.

Desdemona

I am undone, and he betrayed!

Othello

And you dare to weep for him?

Desdemona

Othello, do not kill me ...

Otello

Tu invano ti difendi.

Desdemona

Ch'io viva

ancor, ch'io viva ancor,

ch'io viva ancor!

Otello

Giù, cadi, giù, cadi,

prostituta!

Desdemona

Pietà!

Otello

Muori!!

Desdemona

Ch'io viva questa notte ...

Otello

No!

Othello

You strive in vain.

Desdemona

Let me live...

... longer, let me live longer,

let me live!

Othello

Down, fall, down, fall,

strumpet!

Desdemona

Mercy!

Othello

Die!!

Desdemona

Let me live tonight ...

Othello

No!

Desdemona

Un'ora ...

Otello

No!

Desdemona

Un'istante.

Otello

No!

Desdemona

Sol ch'io dica un'Ave.

Otello

È tardi!

(La soffoca.)

Desdemona

Ah! ...

Desdemona

One hour ...

Othello

No!

Desdemona

An instant.

Othello

No!

Desdemona

But while I say one prayer.

Othello

It is too late!

(He smothers her.)

Desdemona

Ah! ...

(Si sente bussare alla porta a destra.)

Otello

(contemplando il corpo inerte di Desdemona)

Calma come la tomba.

(Un'altra picchiata alla porta.)

Emilia

(fuori)

Aprite! aprite!

Otello

(trabalzando)

Chi è là! Chi batte!

Emilia

(bussando ancora)

Signore mio, ven prego,

lasciate ch'io vi parli...

Aprite!

(A knocking is heard at the door on the right.)

Othello

(contemplating the inert form of Desdemona)

As quiet as the grave.

(further knocking at the door)

Emilia

(without)

Unlock the door!

Othello

(starting)

Who is there? Who knocks?

Emilia

(knocking again)

O, good my lord, I do beseech

that I may speak with you ...

Unlock the door!

Otello*(aprendo)*

Emilia! che avvenne?

Emilia*(entrando)*

Un gran delitto!

Cassio uccise Roderigo!

Otello

E Cassio?

Emilia

Vive.

Otello

Cassio vive!!

Desdemona*(dal letto)*

Ingiustamente...

uccisa ingiustamente...

Othello*(opening the door)*

Emilia! What's the matter?

Emilia*(entering)*

Yonder's foul murder done!

Cassio has killed Roderigo!

Othello

And Cassio?

Emilia

Lives.

Othello

Cassio lives!!

Desdemona*(from the bed)*

Falsely ...

falsely killed ...

Emilia*(accorrendo al letto)*

Chi geme là? ...

Orror!

Desdemona

Muoio innocente...

Emilia

Gran Dio... Chi fu? chi fu?

Desdemona

Nessuno ... io stessa ...

Al mio signor mi raccomanda ...

Muoio innocente ...

Addio.

*(muore)***Otello**

O mentitrice!

Io l'uccisi.

Emilia

Assassino!

Emilia*(running towards the bed)*

What cry is that? ...

O horror!

Desdemona

A guiltless death I die ...

Emilia

Great God! Who did this deed?

Desdemona

Nobody ... I myself ...

Commend me to my lord ...

A guiltless death I die ...

Farewell ...

*(dies)***Othello**

O liar!

'Twas I that killed her.

Emilia

Murderer!

Otello

Fu di Cassio la druda.
A Jago il chiedi.

Emilia

A Jago?!

Otello

A Jago.

Emilia

Stolto!! E tu il credesti?

Otello

(fa per avventarsi contro Emilia)
Negarlo ardisci?!

Emilia

Non ti temo.

Otello

(la afferra)
Bada!

Othello

She was Cassio's whore.
Ask Jago else.

Emilia

Jago?

Othello

Jago.

Emilia

O dolt! And you believed him?

Othello

(about to strike Emilia)
Dare you deny it?

Emilia

I fear you not.

Othello

(seizing her)
Take care!

Emilia

Olà! Soccorso! Aiuto!
*(si svincola e corre verso la porta,
gridando)*

Otello uccise Desdemona!

*(Entrano Lodovico, Cassio e Jago, più
tardi Montano con gente armata.)*

Cassio, Jago, Lodovico

Quai grida!
(vedendo Desdemona)
Orrore! Orror!

Emilia

(a Jago)
Jago, smentisci quel vile assassino.
Hai tu creduto Desdemona infida?
Parla!

Jago

Tal la credea.

Emilia

Ho there! Help, ho! Help!
*(freeing herself she runs toward the
door, crying out)*

Othello has killed Desdemona!

*(Lodovico, Cassio and Jago enter,
followed later by Montano and some
armed men.)*

Cassio, Jago, Lodovico

What cries are these!
(seeing Desdemona)
O horror, horror!

Emilia

(to Jago)
Jago, disprove this vile murderer.
Did you believe Desdemona was false?
Speak!

Jago

Such I believed her.

Otello

Quel fazzoletto che un dì le diedi,
a Cassio essa donava.

Emilia

O potenza divina!

Jago

(ad Emilia)

Taci!

Emilia

No, tutto rivelo!

Jago

Taci!

Emilia

No!
Costui dalla mia man
quel fazzoletto svelse
a viva forza.

Othello

That handkerchief that I had given her
she gave to Cassio.

Emilia

O heavenly powers!

Iago

(to Emilia)

Hold your tongue!

Emilia

No, I will tell all!

Iago

Hold your tongue!

Emilia

No!
This man from my hand
the handkerchief did wrench
by use of force.

Cassio

E nella mia dimora trovai quel vel.

Montano

(entrando ed indicando Jago)

Rodrigo morente mi svelò
di quest'uom l'arti nefande.

Otello

(a Jago)

Ah! Discolpati!

Jago

(fuggendo)

No!

Lodovico

Ferma!

Montano

S'insegua.

(Alcuni escono inseguendo Jago.)

Cassio

And in my lodging I found the
handkerchief.

Montano

(entering and pointing to Iago)

Roderigo as he died revealed to me
the devilish machinations of this man.

Othello

(to Iago)

Ah! Vindicate yourself!

Iago

(fleeing)

No!

Lodovico

Stop!

Montano

After him!

(Several leave to pursue Iago.)

Cassio, Lodovico

Afferratelo!

Otello

(slanciandosi per afferrar la spada)

E il ciel non ha più fulmini?

Lodovico

La spada a me!

Otello

Tant'osi?

Niun mi tema,
s'anco armato mi vede.

Ecco la fine del mio cammin ...

Oh! Gloria!

Otello fu.

(Lasciando cadere la spada, va presso al letto, contemplando Desdemona.)

E tu ... come sei pallida!

Cassio, Lodovico

Seize him!

Othello

(with a bound, reaching and grasping his sword)

And has the heaven no more thunder bolts?

Lodovico

Give me the sword!

Othello

Would you dare?

Let no one fear me
though he see me armed.

Here is my journey's end ...

Oh! Glory!

Othello's day is done.

(Letting his sword fall to the ground, he goes to the bed and gazes at Desdemona.)

And thou ... how pale thou art!

e stanca, e muta, e bella,
pia creatura nata sotto maligna stella.
Fredda come la casta tua vita,
e in cielo assorta.
Desdemona! Desdemona!
Ah! ... morta! morta! morta!
(estraendo furtivamente dalle vesti un pugnale)
Ho un'arma ancor!
(si ferisce.)

Cassio

Ah! ferma!

Lodovico, Montano

Sciagurato!

Otello

Pria d'ucciderti ... sposa ... ti baciai.
Or morendo ... nell'ombra in cui mi giaccio ...
un bacio ... un bacio ancora ...
ah! ... un'altro bacio ...
(muore)

And weary, and mute, and beautiful,
pious creature, born 'neath an evil star.
Cold, even like thy chastity,
and gathered into heaven.
Desdemona! Desdemona!
Ah!... Dead! Dead! Dead!
(furtively producing a dagger from his robe)
I have another weapon!
(stabs himself)

Cassio

Ah, stop!

Lodovico, Montano

O bloody period!

Othello

Before I killed thee, wife, I kissed thee thus.
Now dying... in the shadow where I lie ...
a kiss ... another kiss ...
ah!... another kiss...
(dies)

Acknowledgments

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Painting of Othello weeping over Desdemona's body

William Salter (ca. 1857)

Painting of Othello relating his adventures to Desdemona

Carl Ludwig Friedrich Becker (ca. 1869)

Painting of Othello

William Mulready (ca. 1826)

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