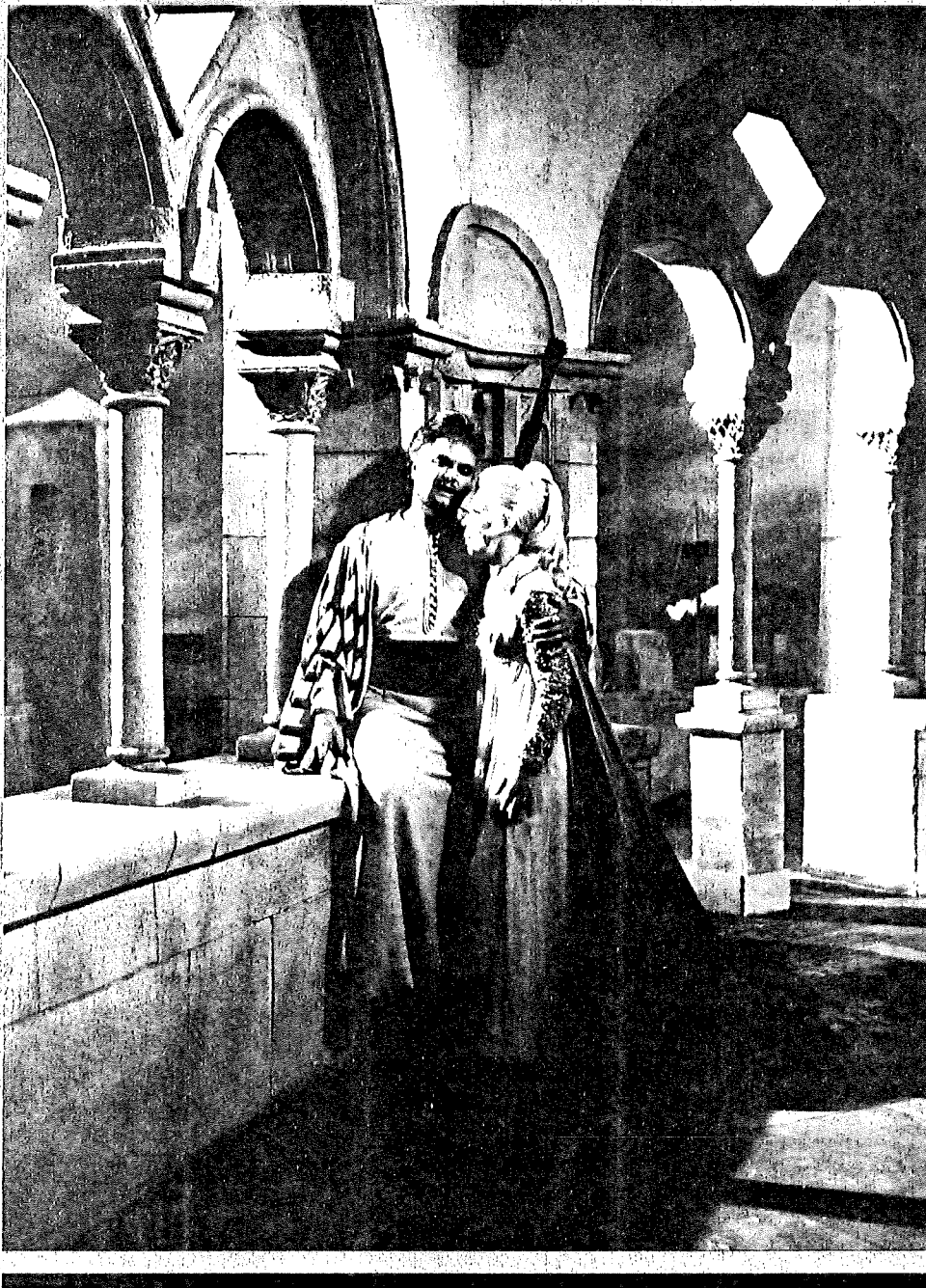


OTELLO





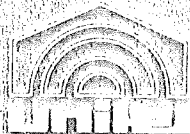
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GIUSEPPE VERDI
(1813–1901)

OTELLO

Dramma lirico in quattro atti
Opera in four acts · Oper in vier Akten
Opéra en quatre actes
Libretto: Arrigo Boito

dalla tragedia di Shakespeare / based on Shakespeare's tragedy / nach der Tragödie von Shakespeare / d'après la tragédie de Shakespeare

OTELLO	Jon Vickers
<i>Generale moro al servizio della Repubblica di Venezia e Governatore di Cipro</i> <i>A Moorish General in the service of the Venetian Republic and Governor of Cyprus</i> <i>Maurischer General im Dienst der Republik Venedig und Gouverneur von Zypern</i> <i>Général maure au service de la République de Venise et Gouverneur de Chypre</i>	
DESDEMONA	Mirella Freni
<i>Gentildonna veneziana, sua moglie · A Venetian Gentlewoman, his wife</i> <i>Eine venezianische Edeldame, seine Frau · Noble dame vénitienne, son épouse</i>	
JAGO	Peter Glossop
<i>Alfiere di Otello · Othello's Ensign · Fähnrich Othellos · Enseigne d'Othello</i>	
EMILIA	Stefania Malagú
<i>Moglie di Jago e confidente di Desdemona · Jago's Wife and confidante of Desdemona</i> <i>Frau Jagos und Vertraute Desdemonas · Epouse de Jago et confidente de Desdémone</i>	
CASSIO	Aldo Bottion
<i>Capitano di Otello · Othello's Captain · Kapitän Othellos · Capitaine d'Othello</i>	
RODERIGO	Michel Sénéchal
<i>Gentiluomo veneziano innamorato di Desdemona · A Venetian Gentleman in love with Desdemona</i> <i>Venezianischer Edelmann, in Desdemona verliebt · Gentilhomme vénitien amoureux de Desdémone</i>	
LODOVICO	José van Dam
<i>Ambasciatore della Repubblica Veneta · Ambassador of the Venetian Republic</i> <i>Botschafter der Republik Venedig · Ambassadeur de la République vénitienne</i>	
MONTANO	Mario Macchi
<i>Precedente Governatore di Cipro · Previously Governor of Cyprus</i> <i>Früherer Gouverneur von Zypern · Précédent Gouverneur de Chypre</i>	

Chor der Deutschen Oper Berlin
Chorus Master (Einstudierung/Maitre des Chœurs/Maestro del coro):
Walter Hagen-Groll

Berliner Philharmoniker
Conductor (Dirigent/Chef d'Orchestre/Direttore):
HERBERT VON KARAJAN
Directed by (Regie/Mise en Scène/Regia):
HERBERT VON KARAJAN

With regard to dramatic form – everything numerical, calculated, and reflective – [Verdi] has entirely accepted the laws of the new art," wrote the critic Ugo Capetti of the première of *Otello* on 5 February 1887; "but in ideas: ah! there Verdi has not changed at all. He remains himself . . . *Musical Italy is not yet lost!*" Capetti's fervent, yet somewhat astonished reaction to *Otello* was widely shared in Italy. Verdi's aggressive return to the new, "modern" theatre at the age of 73 after an embittered 15-year withdrawal could not have been more welcome: in the years following the 1871–72 *Aida*, written for an operatic world whose foundations were only beginning to tremble, it had appeared that, disillusioned with the loudly polemical "reformist" or "internationalist" turn of musical events in Italy, he had renounced new operatic composition altogether. (In the interim, he had produced the *Requiem* [1874] and a few "modernistic" patches of revision for *Simon Boccanegra* [1881] and *Don Carlos* [1882–3]). On the other hand, younger composers and critics were now strongly tempted by the psychological naturalism and intellectual claims of competing French and Germanic operas, and the Italian première of *Lohengrin* in Bologna in November 1871 – the first Wagnerian incursion into Italy – may be understood as having struck an ultimately mortal blow to the body of Italian operatic traditions. Even Verdi's moderately progressive *Aida* had been drawn into the fray. To the composer's fury, critical response to it had ranged from Pietro Cominazzi's sneering charge that he was now an "obsequious imitator of Wagner" to the enthusiastic Leone Fortis's insistence that in its progressivism *Aida* was to be hailed as "Il *Lohengrin* italiano."

A product of the 1880s, *Otello* was thus conceived in an increasingly threatened, chaotic operatic world, one swinging outward in ever wider arcs from its melodic center. At stake – and under attack – was the legitimacy of rounded, closed melody: the direct, sunlight-pure vocalism of earlier Italian opera. Now emerging with the last 30 years of the *Ottocento* was a more explicitly self-conscious art: a passion for things "numerical, calculated and reflective", as Capetti put it; a musical practice that justified itself through verbally elaborated aesthetic argumentation; the invalidating of the familiar melodic contours of the old, traditional forms; the appeal of an "up-to-date" orchestral-developmental conception of opera. Conservative and nationalistic Italian critics – and often Verdi himself – feared that the Wagnerian movement would be an attraction fatal to the interests of a public-oriented, melodic art, a poisoning of the health and distinctiveness of Italian opera. For Verdi (and for his librettist, Arrigo Boito), *Otello* was to be an authoritative manifesto by example. As a *dramma lirico* – a genre musically innovative and flexible, elevated in subject matter, psychologically "realistic", orchestrally and motivically sophisticated, and yet still, above all, emphatically melodic at its core – it was to represent an alternative genre to the Wagnerian music drama. *Otello*'s greatness, long recognized, need not be argued here; but we may need to remind ourselves that it is the urgent product of crisis, that it springs from an Italian operatic culture that was nervously questioning its own continued validity and national identity.

The idea of composing *Otello* was not Verdi's. Rather, he had to be tactfully persuaded into it by a trio of friendly plotters, all much younger men: the librettist Arrigo Boito, whose reputation had been that of a torchbearing modernist (and hence for Verdi, at least initially, an object of suspicion); Giulio Ricordi, whose firm would publish the new work; and Franco Faccio, the conductor at the première. The hope was to lure Verdi back into the theatre by offering him an irresistible subject and an irresistible libretto – the most accomplished libretto, in fact, that he had ever seen. Boito traced the outlines of the plot in late June or early July 1879, but although Verdi's curiosity had been roused, he remained reluctant about giving the project his blessing. Nevertheless, the librettist continued to work avidly from July until mid-November to produce a brilliant full draft, brimming over with intricate, provocative wordplay and structural innovations. Upon Verdi's insistence numerous textual revisions would follow over the next seven years. An ardent Shakespearean, Boito had approached the project of condensing *Otello* into an opera in a scholarly, methodical way. He had consulted the original text (he could struggle through English and by 1879 it seems that he owned at least two copies of the English-language *Otello*) and the most obvious Italian translations. But, far more directly important, he had also immersed himself in François-Victor Hugo's translation of *Otello* into French (1860). As Boito's carefully marked copy of this translation reveals (it is now housed in the La Scala

library in Milan), this was his principal working edition of Shakespeare. The son of Victor Hugo, the translator had striven for a scrupulously faithful rendering of the original and had included a well-researched 35-page introduction (some of whose arguments may be found reflected in the opera), 22 pages of notes and commentary, and even a translation of the relevant story from Giraldo Cinzio's *Ecatommii* (1566), Shakespeare's own source for the story (and an Italian one at that, as Boito and Verdi surely relished).

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The first five years of *Otello*'s genesis, 1879–84, were devoted to textual matters: Verdi remained unwilling to initiate the composition until the libretto had been brought to a state of near-perfection. Although little is known of his compositional process, the later reports of Giuseppe Giacosa and Ricordi seem convincing: he apparently began by reading the libretto aloud, experiencing it first as verbal drama, and then permitting it to edge its way – as a "natural" process – into musical ideas (sketches and drafts) that recaptured the textual rhythm, accent and nuances. Verdi began the composition of *Otello* in March 1884 – a very brief, hesitant start, as it turned out – and finally poured out a draft of the first three acts in Genoa from December 1884 to April 1885. After further significant textual revisions, he produced the fourth act at Sant'Agata five months later, in September and early October 1885, and immediately turned to the task of orchestration, beginning with the last act. By early 1886 it was clear that *Otello* could be staged the following year at La Scala. Verdi began once again to become involved with the selection of singers: Francesco Tamagno as Othello, a powerful tenor who the composer had originally feared would be unable to deliver some of the sensitive, softer passages; Victor Maurel as Iago, a gifted actor and singer, attractive to Verdi as a commanding stage presence and a superb deliverer of texts; and Romilda Pantaleoni as Desdemona. Verdi completed the orchestration in various stages from late August (Act IV) to early November 1886 (the second half of Act II). After some seven years of intermittent labor Verdi could finally write the famous lines to Boito on 1 November 1886, "It's finished! All honor to us! (and to Him!)"

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The structural chain of "set pieces" merging orthodoxy on either side: actually merging the opening's *tissimo* appeal (capped by stretta-like Verdi) with set pieces Song ("Inaffia similar in structure Iago's aside to Love Duet (a nella notte de na's "Quando Depending or tively cast (em AA'BC meloc demona's poi duet-cabaletta Act II) or des ance (as in the o sposo"). Fr with Othello's gether, althou lines at the em mental music rent to reveal "opera", but Three great fi appears to us of earth, air a – one may al by fire. But it sive to the po love melts the still delicious famous "baci losia, and Oth III he has lost di's Othello sl read "savag" more elevated and manipu counterpart i clear. One mi stofele, but i engrained in Schlegel, for i ers to be Me Iago's motive tion. But as clear – partic motivated no rather by a m begrudges O "Credo" – th within Othell wrenched do through whic equate all hu less assertive. her into a pu that Ariane T parts would i librettist, more notable partic draw a touch cruel injustice

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JAMES A. HEPOKOSKI

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The structural design of Verdi's *dramma lirico* may be understood as a chain of "set pieces" (solos, duets, ensembles, choruses, and so on) of varying orthodoxy and closure, each surrounded by freely motivic transitions on either side: transition-in, central set piece, transition-out (this last eventually merging into a new entrance-transition and hence a new set piece). The opening storm, for instance, has as its internal set piece the 32-bar, *fortissimo* appeal of the chorus, "Dio, fulgor della bufera", whose exit-transition (capped by Othello's magnificent "Esultate!") ultimately yields to the stretta-like Victory Chorus - the second set piece. The first act continues with set pieces at the Fire Chorus ("Fuoco di gioia!"), the strophic Drinking Song ("Inaffia l'ugola" - notice the disintegrating third stanza, the whole similar in structure to the Act IV Willow Song), the Duel (beginning with Iago's aside to Roderigo, "Va al porto, con quanta più possa"), and the Love Duet (a set piece whose formal "beginning" is not Othello's "Già nella notte densa" but rather the ensuing plunge into memory, Desdemona's "Quando narravi l'esule tua vita").

Depending on the desired dramatic effect, set pieces are either conservatively cast (employing, for instance, the standard, now "naive" AA'BA" or AA'BC melodic patterns, as in much of the chorus's music as well as in Desdemona's poignant "Ave Maria" in Act IV; or evoking the "primitive" duet-cabaletta format, as in Othello's and Iago's "Sì, pel ciel" at the end of Act II) or designed more freely to keep pace with intricate action and nuance (as in the flexible Act III Othello-Desdemona duet, "Dio ti giocondi, o sposo"). Freest of all is the music that concludes the opera, beginning with Othello's entrance in Act IV. Here set pieces seem to drop out altogether, although Othello is given a *scena*-like soliloquy of disparate dramatic lines at the end ("Niun mi tema"). All of this is the most remarkably experimental music in *Otello*: technique and structure seem to become transparent to reveal a pure, fluid theatre - not traditional "music", not traditional "opera", but Verdian *dramma*.

Three great figures dominate the stage in a triangle of tension. Othello first appears to us as virtually superhuman, produced out of the raging elements of earth, air and water to proclaim an alliance with Heaven ("Esultate!") - one may also note that his proclamation is shortly thereafter celebrated by fire. But it soon becomes apparent that his love for Desdemona is excessive to the point of self-debilitation. Near the end of Act I the heat of this love melts the warrior within and exposes a momentary - and at this point still delicious - loss of control ("Ah! la gioia m'innonda", leading to the famous "bacio"); by the end of Act II, however, *amor* has decayed into *gelosia*, and Othello has been brought literally to his knees; by the end of Act III he has lost consciousness; at the opera's end he is dead. Boito's and Verdi's Othello skillfully blends elements of August Wilhelm Schlegel's widely read "savage" interpretation of the character with François-Victor Hugo's more elevated, ennobled Moor. Boito's Iago - the consummate deceiver and manipulator - displays more Mephistophelean tints than does his counterpart in the play, as his "unmasking", the Act II "Credo", makes clear. One might have expected this from the composer of the opera *Mefistofele*, but in fact the demonic interpretation of Iago was already well-engrained in 19th-century continental criticism. Virtually paraphrasing Schlegel, for instance, Hugo had written, "He lacks only supernatural powers to be Mephistopheles." Much has been made of Boito's reducing of Iago's motives to a single strand: his having been passed over for promotion. But as a reading of Hugo's preface to his French translation makes clear - particularly in passages marked off by Boito - the opera's Iago is motivated not by any single peripheral cause or overblown suspicion, but rather by a more generalized, gnawing envy of Othello's splendor: "Iago begrudges Othello for being everything that he is not." Hence in his "Credo" - this is the crucial point - Iago denounces the attributes he sees within Othello: the hero's "bacio", "sguardo", "sacrificio", and "onor" are wrenched downward and thrust into the primal mud ("fango originario"), through which materialistic concept Iago intends to degrade and thus equate all humans. Boito's Desdemona, the selfless adorer of Othello, is a less assertive, less capable figure than in the play. Boito has transformed her into a pure, passive victim, the typically *fin-de-siècle* female character that Ariane Thomalla has identified as the *femme fragile*: her later counterparts would include, for instance, Melisande, Mimi, and Butterfly. The librettist, moreover, is careful to surround her with madonna-like imagery, notable particularly in the Act II Homage Chorus. The point, clearly, is to draw a touching portrait of chaste innocence, the better to maximize the cruel injustice of her murder.

For his part, Verdi intensifies the Othello-Iago-Desdemona dramatic triangle by providing each with an idiosyncratic manner of vocal delivery – and the contrasting musical styles startlingly exemplify the historical context of *Otello*, the crisis of Italian music in the 1870s and 1880s. Verdi tells us that Desdemona's music was conceived as a "melodic line [that] never stops from the first to the last note." She is explicitly equated with a concrete, but doomed, musical style – the spontaneously lyrical – and her strangling is also a savage extinguishing of the melodic. Significantly, her beautiful Willow Song shatters into irregular stream-of-consciousness fragments in its third strophe, and, in effect, her dramatic final "addio" to Emilia and subsequent "Ave Maria" bid a moving farewell to a whole tradition of Italian opera, "nell'ora della morte". Iago is her musical opposite: he embodies

the anti-lyrical, the destructive, the coldly intellectual, the calculated. "Iago must only declaim and snicker", wrote Verdi. Or again, "In that part it is necessary neither to sing nor to raise one's voice (with few exceptions)." That Boito, in effect, allows Iago to "escape" at the end is ominously apt, for this is the escape of the principle of disorder. The musical delivery of the tormented Othello lurches wildly between that of Desdemona and Iago: he "must sing and howl", as Verdi explained. He sings lyrically, spontaneously, when living in or recalling his "old" world of feeling and the power of his love for Desdemona (for instance, in much of the Love Duet – his union with her in the sharing of his "E tu m'amavi per le mie sventure" melody seems particularly telling; in portions of "Ora e per sempre addio" and "Dio! mi potevi scagliar"; and so on); but in his unchecked

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SYNOPSIS

Othello the Moor, of royal descent, made his career in the military service of the Venetian Republic and rose to the rank of commander-in-chief of the fleet. Defying convention, and in spite of her father's bitter opposition, he has married Desdemona, a senator's daughter; in the interests of the state the Senate did not act to prevent the marriage, or to stop Desdemona following her husband to Cyprus. As naval commander, Othello was made governor of the island, a Venetian possession of immense strategic importance for the protection of the Republic's interests in the eastern Mediterranean, which has been under attack by the Turks. With the outcome of a crucial naval battle still unknown, however, the Senate has grown fearful of Othello's power. Without his knowledge the order has been given to recall him to Venice and appoint Cassio, his young but meritorious second-in-command, governor in his place. At the very moment when Othello is winning a decisive victory over the Turkish fleet, a galley bearing the Doge's emissary is already on course for Cyprus.

7 "Capitano, v'attende la fazione ai baluardi!" (*Montano*)
Montano, Othello's predecessor as governor of Cyprus, reminds Cassio of his duty. The captain is hopelessly drunk, however, and lets Roderigo provoke him into a fight; Montano attempts to intervene, and is wounded by Cassio. Iago, in the pretence of allaying trouble, succeeds in setting the whole town in an uproar, which brings Othello out.

8 "Abbasso le spade!" (*Othello*)
Othello, already annoyed by the disturbance, is made really angry when Desdemona also comes out, having been woken by the noise. He strips the now contrite Cassio of his new rank and restores quiet in the town by ordering everyone to return to their houses.

9 "Già nella notte densa" (*Othello*)
In the still of the night Othello and Desdemona reflect on the differences in their lives before they met. The happiness their love has brought them is beyond their comprehension.

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8 "Era la no... Iago prese vents a tale revealing (demona. I cessarily su innuendoc decisive li kerchief in nificance f
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ACT I

1 "Una vela! Una vela!" (*Cypriots*)
A storm rages as Cyprus awaits the return of Othello. A crowd has gathered at the harbour to watch as his ship struggles against the wind and the waves. Anxiety for his safety overrides concern about the outcome of the battle. There are two people, however, who would prefer to see the ship sink and take Othello down with it: the ensign Iago and the Venetian nobleman Roderigo. But the ship reaches the harbour in safety.

2 "Esultate! L'orgoglio musulmano sepolto è in mar" (*Othello*)
Othello brings news of victory, which drives the rejoicing of the crowd to greater heights. He hurries away to the castle, where Desdemona is waiting for him.

3 "Roderigo, ebbene pensi?" (*Iago*)
Iago and Roderigo share the desire to destroy Othello's good fortune, but their motives are different. Iago is filled with resentment at Cassio's having been promoted captain instead of himself, a much more experienced soldier; the foppish Roderigo failed to win Desdemona in Venice but has followed her to Cyprus in the vain hope of better success. He is only too ready to fall in with Iago's schemes for revenge, though to Iago he is only a useful tool.

4 "Fuoco di gioia!" (*Chorus*)

ACT II

1 "Non ti crucciar" (*Iago*)
To further his own ends, Iago advises the inconsolable Cassio to ask Desdemona to intercede with Othello on his behalf.

2 "Vanne! la tua meta già vedo" – "Credo in un Dio crudel" (*Iago*)
His destructive work set in train, Iago foresees its success with a mixture of triumph and cynical amazement. According to his creed human crimes are foreordained by a cruel god, who snuffs out life and its delusive hopes like a candle.

3 "Eccola! . . . Cassio . . . a te!" (*Iago*)
Sooner than expected, chance brings about the first of the encounters necessary to Iago's plans.

4 "Ciò m'accora" (*Iago*)
Iago draws Othello's attention to Desdemona and Cassio, engaged in earnest conversation, and with ostensibly innocent questions and hints arouses his suspicion and the first stirrings of jealousy.

5 "Dove guardi splendono" (*Chorus*)
The Cypriot people pay tribute to Desdemona with gifts and music. The peaceful scene allays Othello's fears.

ACT III

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4 "Dio! mi p
(*Othello*)
Othello is
5 "Vienti! V
Uneser

lyrical, the destructive, the coldly intellectual, the calculated. "I must only declaim and snicker", wrote Verdi. Or again, "In that part necessary neither to sing nor to raise one's voice (with few exceptions). That Boito, in effect, allows Iago to "escape" at the end is omitted, for this is the escape of the principle of disorder. The musical of the tormented Othello lurches wildly between that of Desdemona and Iago: he "must sing and howl", as Verdi explained. He sings lyrically, spontaneously, when living in or recalling his "old" world of feeling the power of his love for Desdemona (for instance, in much of the Love Song, his union with her in the sharing of his "E tu m'amavi per le mie canzoni"; the melody seems particularly telling; in portions of "Ora e per sempre" and "Diol mi potevi scagliar"; and so on); but in his unchecked

suspensions and ravings he is brutally wrenched away from the melodic. As he thus joins Iago in profaning, then killing, the lyrical, we may hear with our own ears that he has become "one whose hand, / Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away / Richer than all his tribe". *Otello*, of course, was intended neither as a simplistic allegory nor as a veiled commentary on music-historical events, but, perhaps unwittingly, it acts out the path — the unavoidable path — of Italian opera in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Its essential argument is the irreversibility of the loss of innocence, a theme captured perfectly by Shakespeare's Othello as he reflects upon Desdemona's departure in Act III: "Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul / But I do love thee; and when I love thee not, / Chaos is come again."

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SYNOPSIS

"Montano, v'attende la fazione ai baluardi" (Montano)
Montano, Othello's predecessor as governor of Cyprus, reminds Cassio of his duty. The captain is hopelessly drunk, however, and lets Roderigo provoke him into a fight; Montano attempts to intervene, and is wounded by Cassio. Iago, in the absence of allaying trouble, succeeds in setting the whole town in uproar, which brings Othello out.

"Abbasso le spade!" (Othello)
Othello, already annoyed by the disturbance, is made really angry when Desdemona also comes out, having been woken by the noise. He strips the now contrite Cassio of his new rank and restores quiet in the town by ordering everyone to return to their houses.

"Sì nella notte densa" (Othello)
In the still of the night Othello and Desdemona reflect on the differences in their lives before they met. The happiness their union has brought them is beyond their comprehension.

ACT II

"Non ti crucciar" (Iago)
To further his own ends, Iago advises the inconsolable Cassio to ask Desdemona to intercede with Othello on his behalf.

"Credete! la tua meta già vedo" — "Credo in un Dio crudel!" (Iago)

Iago's destructive work set in train, Iago foresees its success with a mixture of triumph and cynical amazement. According to his twisted human crimes are foreordained by a cruel god, who snuffs out life and its delusive hopes like a candle.

"Accola! . . . Cassio . . . a te!" (Iago)

Earlier than expected, chance brings about the first of the encounters necessary to Iago's plans.

"E tu m'accora" (Iago)

Iago draws Othello's attention to Desdemona and Cassio, engaged in earnest conversation, and with ostensibly innocent questions and hints arouses his suspicion and the first stirrings of jealousy.

"Dove guardi splendono" (Chorus)

The Cypriot people pay tribute to Desdemona with gifts and music. The peaceful scene allays Othello's fears.

"S'è un uom che geme" (Desdemona)

But Iago's "well-meant" warning seems to be borne out when Desdemona speaks to Othello on Cassio's behalf. Othello gets a headache as the excuse for his short temper, but when she tries to place a handkerchief on his forehead to soothe him,

7 **"Desdemona rea!" (Othello)**

Already scarcely able to control his anguish and despair, Othello sees his life and his career destroyed. But he insists on incontrovertible proof of Desdemona's infidelity.

8 **"Era la notte, Cassio dormia" (Iago)**

Iago presents his "evidence" with a show of reluctance. He invents a tale of having overheard Cassio talking in his sleep, and revealing thereby that he was dreaming of lying in bed with Desdemona. Iago professes not to see that there was anything necessarily suspicious about this. It is left to Othello to join Iago's innuendoes together to form a "chain" of proof. The last and decisive link is Iago's reference to having seen a certain handkerchief in Cassio's hand recently (it is one that has special significance for Othello, as it was his first gift to Desdemona).

9 **"Ah! — mille vite gli donasse Iddio!" (Othello)**

In an uncontrollable frenzy Othello swears a vow of vengeance, in which Iago hypocritically joins him.

ACT III

1 [Introduction]

2 **"La vedetta del porto ha segnalato la veneta galca" (Herald)**

The announcement that the ship from Venice has been sighted makes little impression on Othello. Iago promises to help him to overhear a conversation with Cassio in which the latter will give himself away and also show that he has the handkerchief.

3 **"Dio ti giocondi, o sposo" (Desdemona)**

Othello manages to dissimulate his feelings until Desdemona speaks of Cassio again. When he discovers that she does not have the handkerchief with her, he gives way to abuse. Desdemona's distress, her protestations of innocence, her guileless persistence in pleading Cassio's cause, only serve to increase Othello's agitation. She flees in horror when he accuses her of adultery.

4 **"Diol mi potevi scagliar tutti i mali" — "Ah! Dannazione!" (Othello)**

Othello is left alone, exhausted and in despair.

5 **"Vieni; l'aula è deserta" (Iago)**

Unseen by Cassio, Othello listens as Iago initiates a ribald conversation about a woman (called Bianca, but Othello does not hear any name) of whom Cassio has tired but who will not leave him alone.

6 **"Questa è una ragna" (Iago)**

Iago succeeds in guiding the conversation so that Othello's certainty of Desdemona's "falsity" is strengthened by mention of