

IN A NUTSHELL - OTELLO

OPERA BACKGROUND

- It took Verdi's publisher ten years to lure Verdi out of retirement after the success of his opera *Aida* and persuade him to write the opera *Otello*.
- *Otello* is considered Verdi's greatest tragic opera. It is based on Shakespeare's play *Othello*, with a libretto masterfully written by Arrigo Boito
- Preparations for the first performance were done in complete secrecy. The audience's enthusiasm for the premiere resulted in 20 curtain calls for Verdi at the end of the opera.

MAIN CHARACTERS

- Otello (oh-TELL-oh), tenor – A Moor; Governor of Cyprus; a naval hero and great leader respected by his followers, and whose insecurities make him prey to Iago's manipulation
- Desdemona (dez-DAY-moe-nah), soprano – Otello's devoted wife; pure, merciful and sensitive to the plights of others; innocent victim of Iago's evil plot.
- Iago (YAH-go), baritone – ensign in Otello's army; trusted by Otello as a good-hearted friend; secret enemy of his boss; carries out evil plan to destroy both Otello and Cassio.
- Cassio (KAH-see-oh), tenor - Captain in the Navy; honest young soldier; promoted ahead of Iago; has no idea of the passions swirling around him
- Emilia (eh-MEEL-yah), mezzo-soprano – Iago's wife and Desdemona's maid; torn between her loyalty to both of them

WHAT HAPPENS?

- Otello returns victorious from battle. Iago in his hatred for Otello and Cassio creates a scene which disturbs Desdemona, and thus angers Otello into demoting Cassio from his Captain's post.
- Otello professes his devotion for his wife.
- Iago plots to destroy Otello by feeding him lies about Desdemona's devotion, which causes Otello to explode with rage and jealousy.
- Otello orders Cassio killed, insults his wife in public and collapses. '
- Preparing for bed and paralyzed with fear, Desdemona pleads her innocence to Otello. Otello strangles her.
- Iago's plot is revealed; Otello realizes what he has done and stabs himself.

YOU'LL WANT TO SEE THIS SHOW IF...

- You like expressive orchestral music that compels the story
- You want to hear some of the most challenging and dramatic vocal music ever written sung by world-class singers
- You are a fan of Shakespeare's work and classic theater