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Verdi's

OTELLO

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Edited by Burton D. Fisher

Principal lecturer, *Opera Journeys Lecture Series*

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***“Congratulations to HIM — to Shakespeare,
the immortal bard!”***

-Giuseppe Verdi, after the successful premiere of *Otello*

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a *Prelude* **to OPERA CLASSICS LIBRARY *OTELLO***

Verdi's *OTELLO* represents the ultimate flowering of the composer's musico-dramatic genius. In this opera, Verdi integrated the power of Shakespeare's words with music that conveys profound human emotions and passions. *OTELLO* is a hallmark of Italian opera in which the inherent human conflict becomes intensified by the emotive power of the music.

OPERA CLASSICS LIBRARY explores the greatness and magic of Verdi's ingenious 27th opera. The *Commentary and Analysis* offers pertinent biographical information about Verdi, his mind-set at the time of *OTELLO*'s composition, the ingenious musical inventions he injected into this opera, its premiere and performance history, and insightful story and character analysis.

The text also contains a *Brief Story Synopsis*, *Principal Characters in Otello*, and a *Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples*, the latter containing original music transcriptions that are interspersed appropriately within the story's dramatic exposition. In addition, the text includes a *Discography*, *Videography*, and a *Dictionary of Opera and Musical Terms*.

The *Libretto* has been newly translated by the Opera Journeys staff with specific emphasis on retaining a literal translation, but also with the objective to provide a faithful translation in modern and contemporary English; in this way, the substance of the drama becomes more intelligible. To enhance educational and study objectives, the *Libretto* also contains music highlight examples interspersed within the flow of the drama.

The opera art form is the sum of many artistic expressions: theatrical drama, music, scenery, poetry, dance, acting and gesture. In opera, it is the composer who is the dramatist, using the power of his music to express intense, human conflicts. Words evoke thought, but music provokes feelings; opera's sublime fusion of words, music and all the theatrical arts provide powerful theater, an impact on one's sensibilities that can reach into the very depths of the human soul.

Verdi's *OTELLO*, the indisputable crown jewel of his glorious operatic inventions, remains a masterpiece of musico-dramatic theater, a tribute to the evolution of the art form as well as to its ingenious composer.

Burton D. Fisher
Editor

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OTELLO

Italian opera in four acts

**Music
by
Giuseppe Verdi**

**Libretto by Arrigo Boito,
after Shakespeare's tragedy
Othello, the Moor of Venice (1604)**

**Premiere at La Scala, Milan,
February 1887**

Commentary and Analysis

In 1871, the premiere of *Aida* seemed to be the crowning glory of Giuseppe Verdi's long 26-opera career. In many respects, *Aida* represented the culmination of Verdi's continuing artistic evolution and development: *Aida* was truly grand opera, but it was Italian to the core with its magnificent fusion of intense lyricism, dramatic action, and passionate human conflict.

Italian opera experienced many transformations during the nineteenth century. By mid-century, the popularity of the early bel canto style that had become firmly established by Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti — and continued by Verdi in his earlier operas from 1839 to 1850 — began to decline and languish. As the 1850s unfolded, Verdi was forced to redirect his creative genius and artistic inspiration. His earlier operas were all essentially allegories whose underlying themes reflected his passionate dream for Italian independence and unification. Verdi now sensed the fulfillment of the Risorgimento and Italian national independence, and decided to abandon the heroic pathos and nationalistic themes of his early operas.

Beginning in the 1850s, Verdi began to seek more profound operatic subjects. He was seeking to portray bold, passionate, and extreme human conflicts; subjects with greater dramatic and psychological depth that accented spiritual values, intimate humanity, and tender emotions. He would be ceaseless in his goal to create an expressiveness and acute delineation of the human soul that had never before been realized on the opera stage.

During this “middle period” of creativity (1851 to 1872), Verdi's operas began to possess heretofore unknown dramatic qualities and intensities, an exceptional lyricism, and a profound characterization of humanity. His creative art flowered into a new maturity as he advanced toward a greater dramatic fusion between text and music. His operas composed during this period eventually became some of the best loved works ever written for the lyric theater: *Rigoletto* (1851); *Il Trovatore* (1853); *La Traviata* (1853); *I Vespri Siciliani* (1855); *Simon Boccanegra* (1857); *Aroldo* (1857); *Un Ballo in Maschera* (1859); *La Forza del Destino* (1862); *Don Carlos* (1867); *Aida* (1871). From this period onward, Verdi's operas became synonymous with the portrayal of extreme and profound human passions.

From the mid-nineteenth century onward, profound transitions were occurring in the opera art form. Gounod's *Faust* (1859) and *Roméo et Juliet* (1867) introduced the sublime traditions of the French *lyrique*, a more profound emphasis on lyricism rather than spectacle; Bizet's *Carmen* (1875) introduced the fiery passions of *verisme* (realism) to the operatic stage; and Wagner reinvented opera with the introduction of music drama; *The Ring of the Nibelung* — *Das Rheingold* (1854) and *Die Walküre* (1856) — followed by *Tristan und Isolde* (1859), and *Die Meistersinger* (1867).

By the 1870s, Verdi had indeed become the venerated icon of Italian opera, an opera composer who had retained his position at the forefront of Italian musical taste for three decades. Following the dazzling success of *Aida* (1871), Verdi composed the *Requiem* (1874), a tribute to his beloved Alessandro Manzoni on the occasion of his death: the poet and novelist who wrote the Italian literary classic, *I Promessi Sposi*.

After *Aida*, the 58 year-old composer sensed that he was becoming increasingly isolated from the changes and transformations that were affecting the lyric theater: the avant-garde began to accuse him of being distinctly old-fashioned and out of touch with the times; the pan-Europeans were espousing Wagner's ideas and conceptions about music-drama; and the *giovanni scuola*, the blossoming "Young School" of Italian verismo composers (operatic realism), were introducing a new conception of human truth in their portrayal of operatic subjects.

Verdi sensed that he had fallen from favor; he became despondent, bitter, melancholy, and frustrated. More importantly, he became disillusioned that Italian opera was losing its unique signature and sinking beneath a tide of new ideas and aesthetic attitudes that he was powerless to stem. Likewise, Verdi's influential publisher, Giulio Ricordi, equally sensitive to the transitions threatening Italian opera, opposed Wagner's musico-dramatic ideas so vociferously that he turned the city of Milan into a virtual anti-Wagnerian stronghold.

In 1887, 16 years after *Aida*, the 74 year-old composer had been retired and was relishing his golden years, presumably comfortable and isolated from the artistic battles. It was a time when the fires of ambition were supposed to have extinguished, and a time when most people were spectators in the show of life rather than its stars. But in spite of his age and indifferent mind-set, Verdi was lured out of his self-imposed retirement and proceeded to astonish the musical world with his 27th opera, *Otello*, demonstrating beyond all doubt that the fierce creative spirit that burned within him was not only very much alive, but was indeed a glorious living genius that still glowed brightly.

Verdi's success with *Otello* epitomized the words of Robert Browning's Rabbi Ben Ezra: "Grow old along with me. The best is yet to be." Indeed, Verdi overturned the equation; with *Otello*, Verdi transformed his old age into a glory. *Otello* unequivocally challenged Verdi's contemporary critics: it became a powerful demonstration of his incessant creative energy and capacity for self-renewal. But more importantly, Verdi's *Otello* redeemed the Italian lyric theater and single-handedly reestablished its predominance. *Otello* became the Italian "music of the future," in a certain sense, a refutation of Wagner's revolutionary conceptions of music drama, but at the same time, proof that Italian opera continued to possess its inherent vital truth: its dramatic essence would always be driven by melody, lyricism, and vocal beauty.

Verdi and Wagner were both born in 1813: two masters from two different cultures from opposite sides of the Alps. Both transcended mediocrity and achieved genius; together they dominated nineteenth century Romantic opera, and to a large extent, their operas form the major part of the international operatic repertory to this very day.

As his career flourished, Verdi had become a national hero, the musical inspiration for Italy's struggle for national unity and independence. His fifteen operas composed from 1839 to 1851 were all romantic melodramas whose underlying themes glorified freedom and human dignity: their themes dealt with oppression, and symbolically and allegorically portrayed the Italian people suffering under the domination of the Austrians, French, and the Roman Church. His music became the anthems and patriotic hymns for Italian liberation, such as the "Va Pensiero" chorus of *Nabucco* (1842) that expressed the futility of the Hebrew slaves. Even the anagram of his name symbolized nationalistic dreams: V E R D I denoted *Vittorio Emanuele Re d'Italia*, indicating the return of the exiled King Victor Emanuel to rule his own people. It was a fitting tribute to Verdi that at his funeral the crowd of mourners spontaneously erupted with the "Va Pensiero" chorus, a supreme honor to their national hero.

Simultaneously, Wagner strove to glorify German art and become its redeemer. In his essays entitled the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the "total artwork," he proposed his conceptions of the "music of the future": ideas that would rejuvenate and transform opera into music drama through a balance and perfection of all elements integral to the lyric art form: poetry, music, acting, gesture, and the visual.

Wagner particularly despised the popular spectacles of French grand opera traditions whose leading proponent was Meyerbeer, and by implication, Verdi. In one of his bombastic comments, Wagner claimed memorably that these operatic spectacles consisted of effects without causes. Likewise, Wagner frowned upon the superficiality and artificiality of oom-pah-pah dance-tune accompaniments, and set-pieces like arias and duets that were separated by recitative. Wagner's entire goal was to achieve a quintessential synthesis and continuity of words and music: a transformation of the operatic art form into sung drama.

Nevertheless, the operas Wagner composed before he penned the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, *Rienzi* (1840), *Der Fliegende Holländer* (1841), *Tannhäuser* (1845), and *Lohengrin* (1850), adhered to those operatic styles and traditions which Wagner had later passionately condemned and denounced; all of those operas were indeed composed in the bel canto style, contained set-pieces, and certainly theatrical spectacle. Objectively, Wagner's early operas, if stripped of their German text and sung in another language, become extremely hard to conceive as written by a German, no less the Richard Wagner who later reinvented himself and became the avatar of music drama.

The engine of a drama is the spoken word. An opera delivers its story through words and music: the sung word. In spoken drama, speech and action reveal the conflicts, tensions, emotions, and passions of the characters: dialogue, movement, and event. In opera, the splendor of music and voice emphasize the drama, adding dimension, completeness, and eloquence. The great poet, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, who became the librettist-collaborator for Richard Strauss in six of his magnificent operas, found words holy, but additionally extolled words performed with music as possessing a power to express what language alone had exhausted.

In the early genres of opera seria and bel canto, recitative (the dialogue or narrative between set-pieces) carried the action; the arias and set-pieces provided the characters' reflection, self-revelation, or introspection. In effect, set-pieces were a paradox; at times they could paralyze the action, or at times they could serve to carry the action along. In early nineteenth century bel canto operas, words and text were generally secondary to vocal virtuosity. In this genre, the voice was supreme, and dramatic effects were delivered through vocal inflection, articulation, ornamentation, and vocal acrobatics.

Opera possesses a complex relationship between words and music. Nevertheless, the great power of the art form is its capacity to dramatically underscore words through musical means. By implication, opera's music can play a variety of roles: it can be a narrator or a protagonist; it can advance and even deepen the action; it can reveal the state of mind, the mood, or the motivation of the characters. In the nineteenth century, Wagner became a reformer of the opera genre; his ideas and reforms strongly influence all music to this day. For Wagner, first and foremost, the text was the essential engine of the drama. As such, his texts were invested with complex psychological and philosophical content, but his ultimate goal was to perfect the art form through a sublime integration of text and music.

Under Wagner's powerful influence, opera progressed into a more mature structure and became sung drama, or music drama. The orchestra became a more active component: as such, the orchestra could narrate, explain, and even provide action. Wagner's revolutionary development of music drama brought symphonic grandeur to opera: the orchestra was no longer an accompaniment to song. In Wagner's mature works, the essence of his musical dramas became leitmotifs, those musical motives that identified ideas, characters, and thoughts. With Wagner's genius for weaving a symphonic web of leitmotifs, a fluent and seamless dramatic interaction was achieved between plot and characters. He unified the internal and external elements, and the dramatic essence became the sum of those various elements.

Wagner became a thorn in Verdi's later musical life: their differing conceptions of the lyric theater resulted in a clash of titans. Verdi's style focused on action and lyricism; Wagner's style focused on introspective characters, and his operas were solidly integrated through the use of symphonic leitmotif development.

Nevertheless, Wagner's *Rienzi*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Lohengrin*, and *Tannhäuser*, were stylistically far from the revolutionary music dramas that he was to pursue afterwards. Verdi had heard *Lohengrin* and was overwhelmed by its Prelude and its innovative division of strings and monothematic exposition. But *Lohengrin* was early Wagner. In truth, it was a bel canto opera: a work that was stylistically synonymous with the French and Italian genres of the times, and a work that contained many set-pieces that were separated by recitative. Verdi had heard Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, commenting sarcastically that he had slept peacefully during a Vienna production. Nevertheless, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, the musical avant-garde

and the pan-Europeans were on the brink of dethroning Verdi in favor of Wagner and his “music of the future.”

Essentially, all of Verdi’s operas were melodramas, an extravagant theatricality in which plot and physical action dominated characterization. As such, Verdi’s maxim was to continually sustain dramatic action and pace with his music. Therefore, the inner world of Verdian characters, their underlying motivations, anxieties, and fears, are largely presented through action combined with music. But the characters’ inner psychology and introspection are expressed through their set-pieces, those arias and duets that essentially interrupt the dramatic flow but serve to portray intense human emotions and passions.

Preceding *Otello* — and his later *Falstaff* — Verdi had achieved phenomenal successes with his 26 operas. Nevertheless, he was being condemned by an onslaught of the avant-garde and the Wagnerisms. But with *Otello*, Verdi would redeem himself as well as the underlying essence of the Italian opera genre. Verdi would prove that Italian opera could indeed achieve the goal of music drama, rather than showpieces for song, and he would achieve it in his own unique style, retaining its essential features of vocal supremacy. In achieving his goal, it would never be said that he had become a follower and imitator of Wagner, or that he was playing second fiddle to the man he considered the spinmeister of Bayreuth.

Ultimately, Verdi’s *Otello* became true music drama, Italian to the core with a magnificent combination of character development, lyricism and action as the hero’s sensibilities change rapidly while he heads toward the abyss of psychological destruction. Verdi’s *Otello* is a colossal character, tormented, complex, and pitiable. His opera brims with swift action and powerful human passion, but it is endowed with Verdi’s intensely dramatic music. By any measure of the imagination, in both spirit and style, Verdi’s *Otello* is unique; it is far from a Wagnerian music drama, and it is indeed an Italian opera: an Italian music drama.

Verdi’s last two operas, *Otello* and *Falstaff*, each represents a logical evolution in Verdi’s development toward a synthesis of words and music; both operas are seamless dramas dominated by sung speech. These operatic masterpieces were written by a composer very different from the composer of *La Traviata*, *Don Carlos* and *Aida*; nevertheless, both operas could aptly be categorized as the Italian “music of the future.” *Otello* and *Falstaff* represent the composer’s progress and advancement from previous works, yet each opera stresses its own stylistic continuity, at all times bearing the unique signature of the icon of nineteenth century Italian opera: Verdi.

Even though *Otello* suggests an independence from earlier techniques, the opera’s dynamic style does not really break with past traditions; *Otello* continues Verdi’s unshakable allegiance to past operatic modes and conventions. The opera indeed contains conventional arias, duets, and ensembles; as such, the opening storm scene is followed by the victory chorus “Evviva Otello” and the hero’s short but powerful aria, “Esultate.” The opera contains a traditional “brindisi” or drinking song, a Love Duet that concludes Act I, the explosive Otello-

Iago Oath Duet concluding Act II, “Si pel ciel,” and the traditional “concertato,” or ensemble that concludes Act III. Nevertheless, in *Otello*, these presumably archaic operatic conventions seem modern; they are appropriate to the dramatic continuity and provide a more finite conception of the musical drama.

In *Otello*, more than in any earlier Verdi opera, the structural unit of the act takes precedence over the individual scene. As such, *Otello*’s dramatic action is a continuous stream of events presented with a seamless continuity. Boito’s prose and Verdi’s music are subtly balanced, fused and integrated as one totality. Verdi’s music responds to the meaning of the prose and even at times approaches the rhythms and inflections of the spoken theater; as such, emotions and passions are emphasized, and the dramatic and psychological confrontations are more profound.

Verdi continues his preoccupation with his ideal of the “parola scenica,” his obsession for dramatic integrity which he unceasingly strove for in his later operas. Verdi was determined to have the words sculpt the dramatic situation, make them vivid, and even set them in relief. Verdi defined the ideal of the “parola scenica”: “...by which I mean the word that clinches the situation and makes it absolutely clear...” A quintessential example, Amneris’s “Trema vil schiava” in *Aida*.

Because *Otello*’s tragic plot fuses music and text more completely and seamlessly than Verdi had ever achieved, the opera contains an unrelenting pace, drive, and compulsion. Opera is an art form that inherently communicates on the two levels of words and music, and by its underlying nature, it can even supercede the intensity of its spoken dramatic source: Shakespeare’s *Othello*. In *Otello* Verdi’s music adds dramatic intensity by its strategic repetition of specific motives: the “Kiss Theme,” and Iago’s description of the “Green Monster,” the latter the symbol of jealousy that represents the essential core of the drama.

In essence, Verdi’s *Otello* introduced a new Italian “music of the future.” From *Otello* onward, the emphasis and focus of the Italian lyric theatre would indeed turn toward a more profound integration of words and music; however, that integration would continue to maintain its stylistic traditions in which the voice and lyricism would always remain supreme. Nevertheless, after *Otello*, it would no longer be possible to set to music absurd dramas and lamentable verses that had been standard practice in some of the earlier bel canto operas: music drama as a whole would be compelled to follow the words with strict fidelity, and the words would have to be worthy of being followed by the music.

With *Otello*, Verdi ordained the future of the Italian lyric theater: *Otello* became his own conception of Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or total artwork, a tribute to the art form that certainly did not compromise his artistic integrity. Verdi’s heirs, Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Puccini, Cilea, Giordano, and Ponchielli, would continue the great Italian tradition, most in the short-lived verismo genre. Nevertheless, all of their works would emphasize a profound dramatic synthesis of words and music, and in maintaining that Italian tradition, all of their operas would be driven by a profound lyricism.

The evolution and development of Verdi's *Otello* owes its origins to Verdi's dynamic publisher, Giulio Ricordi, who foresaw the splendid possibilities of a flowering artistic partnership between the great composer, and the equally renowned poet, Arrigo Boito. Nevertheless, the creation of that ultimate collaboration was a long and stormy operatic event in itself; it was saturated with intense emotions and passions.

Verdi and Boito were diverse in terms of background and temperament; Boito was also 30 years younger than Verdi. Verdi was a consummate Italian in personality and character: he descended from humble peasant origins, and as an artist and musical craftsman, he was extremely practical rather than philosophical. Boito was half-Polish, an intellectual and man of letters, a musician, and an opera composer.

But an important obstacle to the development of the partnership was that Boito was one of those late nineteenth century pan-Europeans who had idealized visions about the future of contemporary art. To Boito, Italian opera was in decline and decay, and he considered it his personal mission to modernize the art form and heroically bring it into the vanguard of modern European culture.

Boito launched his artistic crusade and became an active rather than passive reformer. He became associated with the "Scapigliatura" ("the Unkempt Ones"), a group of avant-gardists who were not only iconoclasts, but were dedicated to ridding Italian art of all of its earlier traditions. In particular, through satire and derision, Boito and his followers ridiculed and denounced the Italian lyric theater, and envisioned its salvation in Wagner's music of the future: it became the onset of the clash of the nineteenth century opera titans; Verdi vs. Wagner; and Italian opera vs. German opera.

As a composer, Boito's seminal opera, *Mefistofele*, premiered at La Scala in 1868. Boito's music made no significant impression on Verdi, who considered its musical and dramatic integration too Wagnerian, its orchestration too heavy, and its use of leitmotifs inappropriate and amateurish. In particular, Verdi felt that the opera lacked essential musical development, commenting that it was "as though the composer had renounced all form of melody for fear of losing touch with the text." Today, *Mefistofele* holds the stage by virtue of its subject, its impressive stage spectacle, and certainly its charismatic bass singing role.

Contrarily, Boito doubted if Verdi could continue to play a role in the future of the Italian lyric theater. Like Verdi, Boito considered the operatic art form in a state of deterioration and degeneration. While speculating about a new champion who would redeem Italian opera, Boito wrote: "Perhaps the man is already born who will elevate the art of music in all its chaste purity above that altar now befouled like the walls of a brothel."

Whether Boito's bombast was specifically directed to Verdi or not, Verdi assumed that he personally was the target of those vicious insults: therefore, Verdi was the accused; Boito's enemy of Italian art. As a result, Boito's presumed affronts against Verdi remained an obstacle to Ricordi's efforts to unite the composer and poet. Their disagreements became an acknowledged feud, a mistrust that would continue to undermine any future association.

Nevertheless, Verdi indeed respected and admired Boito's literary talent. While in Paris in 1862, the young 21-year old Boito, then a music student, had the honor of meeting Rossini and Verdi. Boito so impressed Verdi that he commissioned him to write the text for the "Inno delle nazioni" ("Hymn of the Nations"), a work that received prominence during World War II when Arturo Toscanini performed it copiously to symbolize his opposition to Italian fascism.

Boito frequently wrote under the anagrammatic pseudonym, "Tobio Gorrio." Of his many literary activities, he translated German lieder into Italian, among them Wagner's *Wesendonk Lieder*, and wrote an Italian translation of Wagner's *Rienzi*. Boito was the librettist for a number of all but forgotten operas, the single exception, the text written for Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* (1876), the plot loosely derived from Hugo's *Angelo*, a setting which he changed to Venice to introduce local color. Nevertheless, its flamboyant melodramatic style faithfully mirrors Hugo, and thus its characterizations are anything but subtle.

Like his idol Wagner, Boito consistently believed that the key ingredient of a music drama was that the words and music should strive for fluidity and integration, stressing that the opera's text should approach the rhythms of the spoken theater. Boito's primary strength was in simplifying a complicated plot, maintaining plot focus, and providing a sense of balance and overall proportion, talents that made him an ideal future partner for the great *Otello* that was looming on the operatic horizon..

Giulio Ricordi was an avid supporter of Boito and recognized that before Verdi and Boito could proceed toward the infinitely greater task of *Otello*, they needed a "trial balloon," an opportunity to work together and test the chemistry of a relationship.

Ricordi wisely understood a poet's ability to aid and stimulate the thoughts of a composer. He assumed the role of peacemaker, determined and resolved to forge the partnership of Boito with Verdi, and envisioning another classic composer-librettist collaboration similar to that of Lorenzo da Ponte with Mozart.

Ricordi initiated a series of intrigues that were coupled with diplomacy and tact. Boito had been working on his opera, *Nerone*, and Ricordi learned that Verdi also had interest in the subject for an opera. Boito was willing to relinquish the libretto to Verdi, but Ricordi failed to induce Verdi; their reconciliation failed because Verdi was still smoldering from Boito's earlier assault against Italian art: Verdi himself.

Undaunted, Ricordi developed another ploy. He knew that Verdi had been unhappy with the final libretto of *Simon Boccanegra* (1857), and convinced Verdi to allow Boito an opportunity to make revisions. Boito added the Council Chamber scene to *Simon Boccanegra*, and Verdi was immensely satisfied, elated that Boito had redeemed his opera.

With that success, Ricordi proceeded to develop the possibilities of their collaboration on *Otello*. At first, Verdi showed cautious enthusiasm for the project, hesitant to affront the venerated Rossini who had composed his *Otello* in 1816. Nevertheless, after Boito submitted the complete libretto of *Otello* to Verdi, the composer was severely impressed by its quality. Soon afterwards, Verdi's progress

on *Otello* proceeded spasmodically, and it was only through Boito's patience and his readiness to cater to Verdi's whims that the momentous project was kept afloat.

The triumphant premiere of *Otello* took place in February 1887. It sealed and set the stage for Boito's future collaborations with Verdi, a friendship and relationship that the poet eventually regarded as the climax of his artistic life. Boito possessed all the artistic attributes necessary for his great endeavor with Verdi: he was a man of great culture, a genuine poet with profound theatrical senses, and a musician who understood the inner workings of a composer's mind.

Afterward *Otello*, they collaborated smoothly on Verdi's final opera, *Falstaff*, the rousing and successful premiere taking place in 1893. It was Boito's particular fondness and extraordinary talent for wordplay and irony that created an exhilarating and beautifully paced libretto for *Falstaff*, and inspired the venerable Verdi to his final operatic success.

Boito struggled with an intense artistic dualism throughout his life: literature vs. music. But it became literature that proved his quintessential talent: his great partnership and collaboration with Verdi achieved artistic immortality for him in the history of opera.

Verdi had a lifelong veneration for Shakespeare, his singular and most popular source of inspiration, far more profound than the playwrights Goldoni, Goethe, Schiller, Hugo, and Racine. Verdi said of Shakespeare: "He is a favorite poet of mine whom I have had in my hands from earliest youth and whom I read and reread constantly."

Shakespearean plots are saturated with extravagant passions that are well-suited to the opera medium, and his tragedies are dominated by classic confrontations that are grist for the operatic mill: themes involving love, hate, jealousy, betrayal, and revenge. Yet Shakespeare's theatrical art depends on lightning verbal intricacy, wit, and eloquent speech, so intrinsically his poetic language and wordplay are not easily integrated or transferred into music drama, a reason perhaps that many successful adaptations of Shakespeare are far removed from the original.

Nevertheless, three of Verdi's operas have assured Shakespeare a continued place in the opera house: *Macbeth*, Verdi's seventh opera which premiered in 1847, *Otello*, and *Falstaff*. Throughout Verdi's entire career, he contemplated the dream of bringing Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *King Lear* to the operatic stage: both ambitious projects that never reached fruition. For *King Lear* in particular, he was deterred by the intricacy and bold extremities of the text, and even after Boito's sketch was submitted, Verdi hesitated, considering himself too old to undertake what he considered a monumental challenge.

Nevertheless, to Verdi, *Othello* was Shakespeare's seminal work, a work of consummate colossal power, and perhaps the best constructed and most vividly theatrical of all of his dramas: a drama that essentially progresses with no subplots, and no episodes that fail to bear on the central action; all of its action is focused toward its central dramatic core and purpose.

Boito's incredible challenge was to reduce Shakespeare's five acts and 3500 lines to workable operatic proportions. Ultimately his text contained 700 lines, a compression and condensation of the original which he brilliantly achieved while at the same time retaining the complete essence of Shakespeare's original drama.

Shakespeare's Act I Venetian scene does not appear in Verdi's *Otello*: the scene in the Senate when Brabantio, Desdemona's father, accuses Othello of seducing his daughter. It is in this scene that Othello makes his famous speech to the Senate and relates how he wooed and won Desdemona by enchanting her with his great military exploits. Othello begins with a self-deprecating, low-key speech to his accusers: "Most potent, grave, and reverend Signiors." And then he defines their consummate love: "She loved me for the dangers I had passed, and I loved her that she did pity them."

In Verdi's *Otello*, there is no Venetian scene, but Boito salvaged Shakespeare's magnificent prose by ingeniously incorporating its essence into the intensely romantic and passionate Act I Love Duet; the Love Duet thus captures Othello's defence in the Senate and provides a retrospective of their discovery of love. In the opera, Otello speaks of his pride in winning Desdemona: "E tu m'amavi le miei sventure," the translation, the identical prose from Shakespeare with a pronoun change from "she" to "you." So in the opera text, Otello directs his words to Desdemona during the Act I love scene: "You loved me for the dangers I had passed, and I loved you that you did pity them," and Desdemona responds by repeating the phrase in the first person nominative; "I loved you for the dangers you had passed...."

The Verdi-Boito *Otello* portrays a two-sided hero: he is at first a man of lofty, heroic nobility, but very soon his soul collapses and plunges into exaggerated savagery. Much of Verdi's music is heroic, a portrayal of a courageous man of great deeds, glory, and grandeur, who self-destructs as he is defeated by his own hubris, pride, and arrogance. Nevertheless, Boito's prose is soul-searching, emotionally intense, and digs deeply into the hero's psychological conflicts, inner turmoil, loss of love and respect. The greatness of the Verdi-Boito *Otello* is the magnificent tension created by both text and music.

Verdi, like most great artists, was a man who dissolved his whole self into his art; he was a moralist, a humanitarian, and a man who was clearly sensitive to the injustices in the world: he considered himself a priest, dedicated through his art to awaken man to morality and humanity.

Otello's drama portrays humanity's archetypal, eternal moral struggle between good against evil. Verdi philosophized that man's greatest moral dilemma was his vulnerability to evil. He believed that an innocent man facing the moral struggle and tension between good and evil becomes powerless and helpless; he will lose the battle, suffer, stumble, fall and die.

Shakespeare's tragedy of *Othello* provided Verdi with the theatrical arena to breathe life into the moral issue of good vs. evil. Good is represented by Desdemona, the faithful, virtuous, and loyal wife of Otello; Iago represents the counter-force who

portrays psychopathic evil. Otello himself becomes the battlefield on which those forces of good and evil play out their conflict. In the end, the essence of the tragedy of *Otello* is that the forces of evil are the victors: evil claims the warrior's soul.

Otello is an heroic figure, a general serving the Venetian Republic at the height of its glory and power in the fifteenth century. Otello is about forty years old, a brave and courageous man of arms, a man of authority and power whose commands are imperious, but whose judgment is temperate. Otello is a black Moor, one of the many brave warriors conscripted from North Africa by the Venetians.

Otello's first appearance in the opera is a triumphant moment. He appears as an undaunted military hero, almost a living legend or walking myth, who has just been victorious over Venice's Turkish enemies. He has also just conquered nature's power: a violent storm. His first words are "Esultate!" ("Rejoice!"), a thunderous proclamation of victory over enemy and sea. (In Shakespeare, "Our wars are done, the Turks are drowned.")

Otello is both hero and lover. We must perceive the great, courageous, and heroic side of Otello in order to understand how worthy he is of Desdemona's love, and how great is his capacity for passionate devotion. A short moment later, Otello is seen as the ardent and passionate lover of his beloved Desdemona: a man who craves love, humanity's greatest aspiration. Otello envisions her as the semi-divine ideal of perfect beauty, innocence, virtue, and faultless purity.

The great hero struggles against two elements that will eventually destroy him: his uncontrollable epilepsy, the outward manifestation of his physical vulnerability, and his vulnerability to the poison of jealousy. At the end of Act III, when Iago's poison has fully succeeded in corrupting his mind, he succumbs to an attack of epilepsy. But Otello eventually defeats himself: he becomes his own worst enemy, who is driven to his doom by doubt: doubt about his own worth despite years of heroism and praise, and doubt about his wife's fidelity.

How quickly the passions of love can be transformed into passions of hatred. The tragedy is built on the human affliction of jealousy. In Act II, while watching Cassio in conversation with Desdemona, Iago injects his lethal poison, planting the seeds of destruction that will ultimately transform Otello's mind: "Temete, signor, la gelosia?" ("My lord, do you fear jealousy?")

Obsessed to drive his master insane, Iago cunningly and subtly administers small doses of suspicion from his Pandora's box of evil through his metaphorical description of jealousy: "È un'idra fosca, livida, cieca, col suo veleno sè stessa attosca, vivida piaga le squarcia il seno" ("It is a green-eyed monster, livid, and blind. I poisons itself, rips open its own wounds, and feeds on them.") Iago's treacherous duplicity corrupts Otello's mind. And appropriately, Verdi's underlying music is slithering and winding: it is music that is heard during the second act, and again at the opening of third act. Verdi is providing us with his musical narration to emphasize the core of the drama: the music of the green-eyed monster is a dramatic reminder that the horrible monster has taken possession of Otello's mind, the disease that will conquer his reason and ultimately drive him insane.

Jealousy! Otello loses control of himself, and explodes into violent savagery, ranting and raving that he must have proof of Desdemona's guilt. In the second act Quartet, in short-breathed nervous phrases, the confused Otello contemplates the reasons Desdemona seeks another lover: Is it his advancing age, his rough manners, or his blackness? In further contemplation of his defeat, he follows shortly thereafter with an explosive and thundering exclamation of his defeat: "Ora e per sempre addio sante memorie" ("Now and forever, farewell to noble memories.") Otello's voice summons all its strength to sustain a martial stance as he bids farewell to his life of heroism.

And in the spine-chilling climax of Act II, the Oath Duet, "Sì, pel ciel marmoreo giuro!" ("Yes, I swear by the marble heaven!"), Boito captures the bloodcurdling essence of Shakespeare's prose: "Arise black vengeance from thy hollow cell." The hero is no longer a man of Christian compassion, but has become a raving, savage maniac who seeks justice through brutal revenge.

In Act III, Otello humiliates Desdemona by insulting her and condemning her as a "vil cortigiana" ("A vile courtesan."). Before the assembled Venetian dignitaries he curses her: "Anima mia, ti maledico!" ("My dearest, I curse you!") And in his final humiliation and ultimate disgrace, after he has killed Desdemona, he learns that he has been the victim of Iago's deceit. Otello, dagger in hand, recites "Niun mi tema s'anco armato mi vede" ("No one fears me although they see me with a weapon"), the musical chords funereal. Indeed, the heroic warrior and great lover pathetically realizes his victimization at the hands of Iago..

Both Otello and Desdemona are the supreme victims of the tragedy: the victims of Iago's evil. As jealousy overpowers Otello, Desdemona confronts the torment within his soul: his doubt, his fury, his spiritual overthrow and defeat. But as Iago's cunning intrigues poison Otello's mind, the fullness of the horror becomes Otello's doubt, that loss of faith that spawns jealousy and stabs him in the heart. Otello's drama plunges its hero's soul into the heart of darkness, into those huge universal powers of evil working in the world. Jealousy is the monster that breeds the tragedy and spawns the mighty power of Iago's evil. Verdi was inspired toward the message of this great tragedy: man was powerless against the forces of evil.

Desdemona is the angelic image of chastity and purity, a noble wife, at times perhaps disingenuous and innocent in her compassion for Cassio, but always expressing devout and loyal feelings of love for Otello. Verdi's music for Desdemona evokes an almost saintly religiosity: her "Ave Maria" of Act IV (not in Shakespeare's *Othello*) virtually frames the holy image of Desdemona.

Shakespeare's Desdemona is a more lively and complex character than in the Verdi-Boito opera: strong, brave, and willful: she is the woman who dared to enter into an unorthodox marriage with a black Moor. Nevertheless, she is vulnerable and becomes the victim of Iago's sinister plot, incapable of understanding or withstanding the power of the forces of evil. Verdi's music and Boito's text are in unison in their characterization of Desdemona, ceaselessly expressing the entire range of joy and sorrow as she tries to comprehend the reversal of Otello's mind.

In Shakespeare's cast-list, Iago is simply described: "Iago, a villain," Shakespeare not adding one additional descriptive word. Iago is quintessential evil: the bold demon who sets all the action into motion; the real author of the drama; the man who fabricates the diabolic threads, gathers them up, combines them, and then weaves them together. Iago is the antithesis and counterforce to Othello's heroism and Desdemona's purity, as well as their capacity for love.

Cinthio, Shakespeare's original source, describes Iago as 28 years old: "An ensign of a most handsome presence, but of the most villainous nature that the world has ever known." Iago is a subtle demon, not the common stereotype of a sneering Mephistopheles shooting satanic glances. Every word spoken by Iago is on the human level, admittedly a villainous humanity, but still human.

Iago portrays many faces and appearances, all of which are designed to achieve his consummate deceptions. He is double-dealing and two-faced: his goal, to bend his opponents to his will, a goal he achieves through his chameleon-like talent to change his personality and adapt it to the person to whom he is speaking.

Thus, he achieves his objectives by using great charm and apparent geniality. So, in Act I, during the storm, he reveals himself as a bustling plotter of mischief and intrigue who is motivated by a singular hatred arising from frustrated ambition: "L'alvo frenetico del mar sia la sua tomba!" ("May the furious womb of the sea be his tomb!") But he is a subtle satanic genius: Cassio believes he is congenial; he is apparently humbly devoted to Othello; he is pleasant and respectful toward Desdemona and Lodovico; but brutal and threatening toward his wife Emilia, a woman who knows of his duplicity and evil ways.

Iago's thundering, nihilistic "Credo," is a brilliant creation of Verdi and Boito, a soliloquy intended to clearly establish and define his diabolic motivation, his evil, and satanic persona. In this context the "Credo" represents paradox and irony.

In Christianity, a "Credo" is a traditional declaration of faith, a part of the Catholic Mass: "Credo in unum Deum" ("I believe in one God.") But the Christian "Credo" is a declaration of faith in a God of goodness and grace. Contrarily, Iago's "Credo" declares his faith in evil. Iago's philosophy represents the antithesis of Christian morality; he is the classic anti-Christ, the incarnate of Satan and the devil. Boito cleverly and ironically created the paradoxical idea of a "Credo" with a satanic text: "I believe in a cruel god who has created me in his image, and I call upon in my wrath."

The Christian "Credo" speaks of human flesh ennobled, Christ incarnate, of Resurrection whereby the body and the spirit are destined to rise to greater glory. Verdi's Iago speaks of flesh as born from some vile element, a primeval slime he feels within himself, flesh that is destined only to corrupt in the grave, and then be eaten by worms. Christianity speaks of man's capacity to be good: Iago declares "I am wicked because I am human." Christianity promises a life in the world to come, but Iago concludes that after death there is nothing: "Heaven is an old fable."

Iago represents quintessential evil. He sees evil in Nature, and evil in God. He commits evil for evil's sake and in the process, has become an artist in deceit. The primary cause of his hatred for Othello — appointing Cassio captain in his place — is

envy that is certainly not as profound as the vengeance he exacts from it. All Iago needed was cause for his villainy, an excuse sufficient to make him hate the Moor and exercise his evil self: “The evil I think, and the evil that flows from me, is the fulfillment of my destiny.”

It is easy to understand why Verdi seriously considered calling his opera by the name of its villain: Iago.

Shakespeare’s contemporary rival, Ben Johnson, praised him as a writer “not of an age, but for all time.” Shakespeare was that universal genius, that literary high priest who invented through his dramas, a secular scripture from which we derive much of our language, much of our psychology, and much of our mythology.

Shakespeare’s character inventions are truthful representations of the human experience: Hamlet, Falstaff, Iago, and Cleopatra. These characters take human nature to its limits, and it is through them that we turn inward, and discover new modes of awareness and consciousness. As such, Shakespeare’s inventions have become the wheel of our lives, serving to teach us whether we are fools of time, of vanity, of arrogance, of love, of fortune, of our parents, or of ourselves.

The tragedy of *Otello* is that the forces of evil become the victors and claim the hero’s soul. Verdi’s music narrates this great human drama, and together with Boito’s brilliant adaptation of Shakespeare’s prose, they capture the tragedy of the conflict: Otello’s horrible downfall, Desdemona’s love and innocence, and Iago’s deceit and evil.

Part of the greatness of the opera art form is that its music can remain implanted in our minds and subconscious. When certain music is recalled, it evokes immediate images. In the final moments of *Otello*, the Kiss Theme from the Act I Love Duet is recalled. When it was first heard, it climaxed the impassioned and rapturous love of Otello and Desdemona.

The Kiss Theme echoes again in the finale in the identical form and musical key in which it was heard earlier. However, in its final rendering, its emotional force and impact become cathartic. Otello has murdered Desdemona, and he learns that he has been the victim of Iago’s deceit. The hero recalls their joyous love, and he laments even more bitterly the ironic and tragic outcome of their love; the death of love, and the death of lovers.

It is Verdi’s Kiss Theme that eloquently suggests the poignancy of Shakespeare’s prose: “I kissed thee, ere I kill’d thee; no way but this – Killing myself, to die upon a kiss.”

After the spectacular success of *Otello* at its premiere, Boito said to Verdi: “Congratulations to us!” Verdi contradicted his ebullient collaborator and answered: “Congratulations to HIM – to Shakespeare, the immortal bard!”

Brief Story Synopsis

Otello, a Venetian general and governor of the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, has just married to Desdemona.

Iago, an envious ensign, hates Otello for his success, and seeks to destroy him.

Iago spawns jealousy in Otello, poisoning his mind with suggestions that Desdemona is unfaithful; that she is the paramour of Cassio.

Inflamed with distrust, doubt, and loss of faith in Desdemona, Otello declines into madness and murders Desdemona.

Historical background: 15th century Venice

During the fifteenth century, the Republic of Venice had become a dominant military and economic power in the Mediterranean and Christian world. The city of Venice, strategically located in northeastern Italy, had commercially benefited from the Crusades by developing trade with the East, as well as from the partition of the Byzantine Empire. The city-state had won its wars of conquest against its commercial rivals and established its invincibility.

Toward the end of the century, its power began to decline, accelerated by attacks on the Republic from the Turkish Empire in the East, various foreign invaders, and other rival Italian city-states. Significantly, the Portuguese discovered a sea route to the Indies that circumvented the Cape of Good Hope and rendered Mediterranean access unessential. As their authority waned, the Holy Roman Empire, France, and Spain divided Venetian possessions among themselves, and thereafter, Venice never regained its former political, economic, and military power.

The story of *Otello* takes place during the mid-fifteenth century when Venetian power was at its peak.

Principal Characters in Otello

Otello, a Moor, Venetian general, and Governor of Cyprus	Tenor
Desdemona, Otello's wife	Soprano
Iago, an ensign	Baritone
Cassio, an officer	Tenor
Roderigo, a Venetian gentleman	Tenor
Lodovico, ambassador from Venice	Bass
Montano, former Governor of Cyprus	Bass
Emilia, Desdemona's companion and Iago's wife	Soprano

TIME and PLACE: Island of Cyprus, 15th century

Story Narrative with Music Highlights

ACT I: The eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus toward the end of the fifteenth century.

As *Otello* begins, a storm rages at sea, the first musical chords portraying a vivid description of nature's fury: the unequivocal physical presence of a ferocious hurricane coupled with fierce flashes of lightning and savage, destructive roars of thunder.

Otello's ship is returning to its Cypriot port after a military engagement with its Turkish enemies. The ship labors in the storm-heavy seas, and as the crowd watches the ship's perilous progress from quayside, they pray for their hero's survival.

All, that is, except Iago, Otello's envious and disillusioned ensign, who reveals his obsessive hatred for his general. He comments viciously to his friend, Roderigo: "L'alvo frenetico del mar sia la sua tomba!" ("May the furious womb of the sea be his tomb!")

When the storm subsides, Otello's ship arrives safely in port. Otello appears, an heroic and self-assured man who is consumed with pride from his many military victories. He announces to his compatriots that he has again overcome great challenges: he has defeated the Turks in battle, as well as the torment of the seas.

Otello urges the Cypriots to rejoice and share his triumph.

"Esultate!"

Maestoso
OTELLO



The Cypriots ecstatically acclaim their hero: "Evviva Otello!" ("Hail Othello!")

Desdemona appears, and with patronizing adoration, greets her returning husband, establishing him not only as a great man of battle, but an exalted lover as well: the hero sits on a sublime peak of greatness from which his later descent will be more horrifying and terrifying.

Otello enters the castle with Desdemona while his soldiers celebrate their victory over the Turks with drink and song.

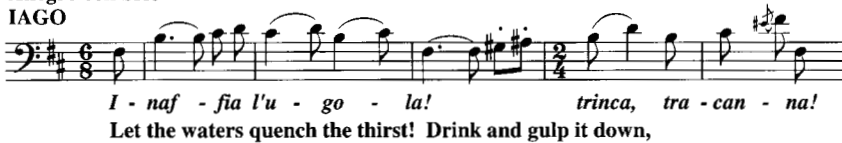
Iago seethes with envy. He hates Otello because he rose to become a general and governor of Cyprus, positions he himself had yearned for. But he is also jealous of Cassio, his comrade-in-arms, who was promoted by Otello above him to the senior rank of captain. Iago is vindictive and vengeful, obsessed to destroy both Cassio and Otello.

Iago shares his envy and bitterness with his ally, Roderigo, a fellow discontent who is also dismayed because he was in love with Desdemona, but she spurned him to marry Otello. Iago consoles his despondent friend with promises of revenge, and then demeans the Moor with a stereotypically racist comment: she will “soon tire of the kisses from the inflated lips of that savage.”

Iago instigates Roderigo to ply Cassio with wine: if Cassio is insulted while drunk, he will be provoked into a fight.

Drinking Song:

Allegro con brio
IAGO



Roderigo, urged on by Iago, crosses swords with Cassio. Montano, the retiring governor, intervenes, but while attempting to break up the fight, he is accidentally wounded. Iago sounds the alarm for help. Immediately, Otello arrives and orders his fighting soldiers to lower their swords: the force and power of his authority creates an immediate fearful silence.

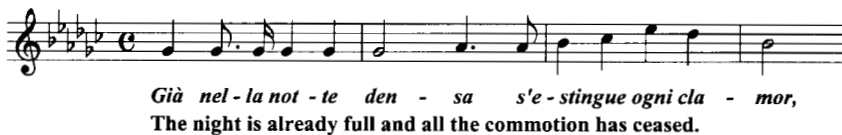
Otello becomes further enraged when he notices that Montano is wounded. When he questions Cassio, he is appalled to find him drunk and speechless. Iago feigns innocence to Otello's queries. Otello reacts furiously: he demotes Cassio and removes his captain's rank. Iago gloats to himself: "O, mio trionfo!" ("Oh, I am triumphant!") Otello then commands all to leave.

Otello and Desdemona retire to their bedchamber. The tranquility of a starlit night envelops the hero-lover and his devoted bride, transforming it into a rapturous moment of impassioned adoration and love.

Otello addresses his beloved wife, pleased by the renewed calm and serenity of the evening.

"Già nella notte"

OTELLO

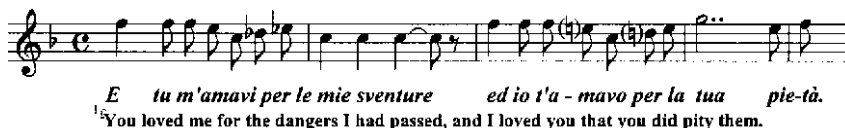


Desdemona embraces her adored warrior-husband, and with almost childlike adoration, begs her hero to tell her again about his past: how his village was rampaged; how he was sold off into slavery, his later heroic deeds and military struggles, and the dangers he faced in the field of battle as he fought off death.

They recall their courtship and how Otello faced the accusations from her father, Brabantio, before the Venetian Senate. Otello's triumph in the Senate is underscored with soaring and arching music as he proclaims: "You loved me for the dangers I had passed, and I loved you that you did pity them"; verbatim Shakespeare's prose from his drama's Venetian scene.

"E tu m'amavi per le mie sventure"

OTELLO



Their love has achieved life's ultimate fulfillment: the supreme contentment of love and its consummation has satisfied all yearning. Otello declares: "Venga la morte! E mi colga nell'estasi de quest'amplesso il momento supremo" ("Let death come! I find myself in the ecstasy of this embrace, this supreme moment!") Desdemona assures Otello that their love shall grow even stronger, her wishes ennobled with an "Amen."

Otello and Desdemona are both overwhelmed by joy and happiness. Their Love Duet sweeps forward like a tide, finally arriving at its supreme ecstatic moment: a kiss, "Un bacio," the music resounding three times, each time ascending higher as it reaches its shimmering finale.

The Kiss Theme:

Allegro moderato



Otello notes that Venus shines brightly, "Venere splende," and the lovers embrace each other to an accompaniment of magical cellos, a musical confirmation of their ecstatic moment of blissful love and contentment.

ACT II: A hall in the castle with a view of a garden terrace

Iago, obsessed to destroy Otello, will achieve his goal by poisoning Otello's mind with doubt about Desdemona's faithfulness. The great hero who earlier described his feats and rejoiced so memorably in his "Esultate!," and the man of passion who just shared rapturous moments with his beloved Desdemona, will surrender to Iago's treachery: doubt will lead to Otello's breach of trust and faith in Desdemona; his irrational jealousy will overpower him and become the engine that will destroy him, bringing tragedy to himself, as well as to Desdemona.

Iago begins his intrigue on the unsuspecting and crestfallen Cassio, convincing the ex-captain that Desdemona's intercession with Otello can restore his rank. Desdemona stands outside in the garden, indulged by adoring Cypriots, and Iago urges Cassio to approach her and plead for her help with Otello.

Alone inside the hall, Iago gloats over his intrigue and reveals his heartless inner soul in a soliloquy: the "Credo," a brilliant invention and tour-de-force resulting from the Verdi-Boito collaboration that has no counterpart in the original Shakespeare. The "Credo" represents Iago's demonic philosophy: it is a terrifying invocation of his total faith in evil. It is a deliberate and vicious assault on one's sensibilities, as Iago reveals himself as a man of savage villainy with a brazen inner soul.

Iago's creed states that a cruel God has created him in his own vile image: that his destiny is to do evil; that virtue is a lie and a good man is a contemptible dupe; that man is the plaything of fate and can hope for nothing in this life or after death.

Iago's confession of his evil faith expresses the soul of a heartless cynic. He concludes his soliloquy: "La morte è il nulla. È vecchia fola il Ciel" ("Death is nothing. Heaven is an old fable.")

And then Iago explodes into mocking laughter.

Iago: Credo



Desdemona, Emilia, and adoring Cypriot women, children, and sailors promenade on the garden terrace in full view of the castle hall. Cassio and Desdemona are seen engaged in intimate conversation.

While Iago watches their encounter from inside the hall, Otello arrives. Iago pretends surprise at his general's sudden presence, and murmurs about the conspicuous familiarity he is witnessing between Cassio and Desdemona: "Ciò m'accora" ("That breaks my heart.") As both observe Desdemona and Cassio, Otello seems confused

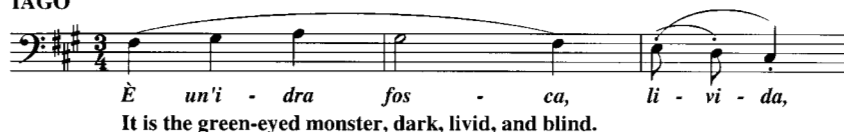
by Iago's concern, assessing their encounter merely as an expression of innocent homage to his wife. Nevertheless, Otello becomes disquieted and irritated: Iago has succeeded in planting the first seeds of jealousy and suspicion in his master.

Iago injects his poisonous villainy in small drops; half-uttered phrases, and vague suggestions. In a spine-chilling moment, he whispers in Otello's ear: "Temete, Signor, la gelosia?" ("My Lord, do you fear jealousy?") And then he describes jealousy as a gruesome green-eyed monster.

"È un'idra fosca, livida, cieca"

Moderato

IAGO



Otello reacts by exploding into a rage, rejecting jealousy as nonsense. Otello affirms that he is the supreme law: he alone has the power to exact justice. If the crime of infidelity has been committed, he will be the sole judge: "Otello ha sue leggi supremo, amor e gelosia vadan dispersi insieme!" ("Othello has his own supreme rules, and then love and jealousy will disappear together!") Iago has succeeded again to arouse Otello's suspicions. He further advances his intrigue by cautioning Otello to be vigilant, wary, and guarded.

Desdemona enters the hall followed by her lady-in-waiting, Iago's wife, Emilia. She approaches her husband, and confident in her conviction that she is fulfilling a virtuous deed, immediately launches her plea for Cassio's reinstatement.

"D'un uom che geme"

DESDEMONA



Otello becomes agitated and irritated, now confounded by a growing suspicion of her intentions: Otello rudely tells Desdemona that he does not wish to talk about Cassio at this moment.

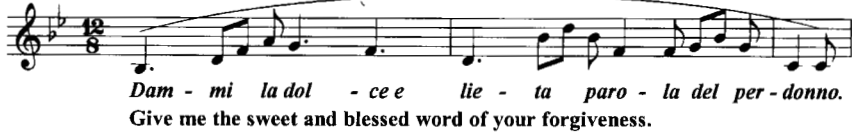
In spite of Otello's agitation, Desdemona is undaunted and continues to plead for Cassio's pardon, her incessant pleas making Otello increasingly distraught. Irritated, Otello complains that his forehead is burning, and the dutiful Desdemona takes her handkerchief to wipe his brow: "il fazzoletto," the handkerchief Otello had given her as a present. Desdemona accidentally drops the handkerchief to the ground where it is retrieved by Emilia.

A quartet follows: it is actually two duets; one between Otello and Desdemona; and the other between Iago and Emilia.

Quartet: “Dammi la dolce e lieta parola del perdono”

Largo

DESDEMONA



Desdemona tries to soothe her husband's incomprehensible distress, but Otello is in the throes of suspicion and becomes impassive. He becomes introspective and reflects on his doubt, confusion, and insecurity, lamenting that perhaps she no longer loves him because he is too old, perhaps because he has lost his virility, or perhaps because he is black.

Meanwhile, Iago tries to bully Emilia into giving him the handkerchief, but when she refuses, he physically snatches it from her and hides it in his tunic.

Otello brusquely dismisses Desdemona, and starts to grumble and vacillate, unable to rationalize his confusion and irritation: Desdemona has been pleading for Cassio incessantly, and Iago has suggested to him that she is Cassio's paramour. Otello reflects: "Desdemona rea! Atroce idea!" ("Desdemona is guilty! An atrocious idea!") And then he ruminates: How could he, the great warrior and hero, be the victim of infidelity? Iago, hearing Otello ponder his doubts, gloats to himself: "Il mio velen lavora" ("My poison is working.")

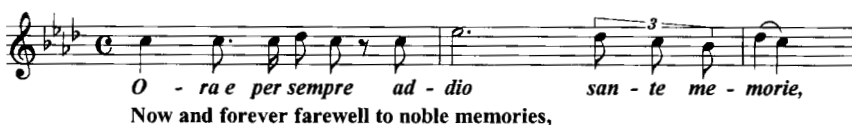
As Otello's mental confusion becomes more intense, he rages out of control and bursts into a savagely furious explosion against Iago: "Tu? Indietro! Fuggi!" ("You? Get back! Flee from here!") Otello senses defeat: his whole world is collapsing; infidelity is the greatest of betrayals.

Otello ponders: What if it is true? He envisions the end of his glory and his dreams shattered: "Ora e per sempre addio sante memorie" ("Now and forever farewell to noble memories.") Otello's phrases swell and arrive at a boiling climax at the moment when he envisions his total downfall: "Della gloria d'Otello è questo al fin" ("This is the end of Othello's glory.")

"Ora e per sempre addio"

Allegro assai sostenuto

OTELLO



Iago suggests to Otello that his dilemma is self-made: he has been too honest and trustful. Otello again vacillates: “I believe Desdemona is loyal, and I believe she is not. I believe that you are honest, and I believe that you are disloyal.” If Desdemona is indeed guilty, Otello resolves that he must have conclusive proof of her infidelity.

Iago feeds his now totally vulnerable victim with a manufactured story which implies an affair between Cassio and Desdemona. He tells Otello that he heard Cassio talking in his sleep: “Gentle Desdemona! Hide our love. We must be cautious! Heaven’s ecstasy completely enraptures us.” And he continues, quoting Cassio: “I curse the awful destiny that gave you to the Moor.”

Then Iago injects his coup de grace. Does Otello recall the handkerchief he gave Desdemona? Iago produces the handkerchief, telling him: “I saw that handkerchief yesterday in Cassio’s hands.”

Iago’s evil work has been accomplished: Does his master want further proof? Does he want to actually see them in bed together? Otello erupts, raves frantically, and swears a lethal revenge: “sangue, sangue, sangue”: Otello wants blood. Iago offers his help. Together, Otello and Iago unite and swear a solemn oath: they swear never to relent until the guilty shall have been punished.

Duet: “*Si pel ciel marmoreo giuro!*”



The second act of Otello concludes amidst orchestral thunders, underscoring the new-found conspirators’ solemn proclamation: “Dio vendicator!” (“God will vindicate us!”)

ACT III: The great hall of the castle

The monsters of jealousy and doubt have totally consumed Otello. Otello and Iago plan to entrap Cassio into revealing the truth. Iago will bring Cassio to the castle and Otello will eavesdrop on their conversation while Iago interrogates him.

Desdemona appears, interrupting Iago and Otello and their sinister intrigue. Immediately, she expresses her innocence and charm: “Dio ti giocondi, o sposo” (“God bring joy to my husband.”)

"Dio ti giocondi, o sposo"**Allegro moderato
DESDEMONA**

Otello responds: "Grazie, madonna, datemi la vostra eburnea mano" ("Thank you my good lady. Give me your ivory hand, whose mellow beauty is sprinkled with warmth.") With bitter irony, Otello's words to Desdemona feign sweetness, but it is a pretense: he is unable to control his suspicions and irrational emotions, and their exchange builds to an almost unbearable tension, particularly when Desdemona again pleads to Otello to pardon Cassio.

Desdemona speaks to her husband with clear conscience, unable to believe or comprehend that his anxiety reflects anything amiss between them. But Desdemona is powerless against Otello's mounting anger and fury, and she becomes unnerved by his repeated demands that she produce the handkerchief: "Il fazzoletto."

Desdemona offers him a handkerchief to wipe his brow, but explains that it is not the one he had given her as a gift: that handkerchief is in her room and she offers to fetch it. Otello explodes in rage, now thoroughly convinced that Iago's story about Cassio's dream is true: he denounces Desdemona, damning her with accusations of infidelity; she is a whore. Desdemona, astonished and grief stricken, tries to remain calm, but fully realizes that Otello is out of control and has progressed toward madness.

Suddenly, Otello returns to an ominous calm, and asks Desdemona: "Dimmi chi sei!" ("Tell me who you are!") Desdemona answers: "The faithful wife of Othello." Othello answers, "Swear it and damn yourself."

Desdemona protests that she is innocent, unaware of what has prompted Otello's irrational fury: Desdemona is shocked, in disbelief, and duly confused, and continues to repudiate Otello's accusations. Otello takes Desdemona by the hand, and leads her to the door, pretending to be apologetic: "Vo' fare ammenda" ("I want to apologize.") But as Desdemona leaves, he explodes savagely, condemning and damning the woman who has committed the blackest of sins: "Quella vil cortigiana che è la sposa d'Otello" ("Otello's wife is a vile courtesan.")

Otello, now alone, is emotionally drained, and in a state of numb misery and spiritual exhaustion: he murmurs to himself in broken phrases. His mind has been corrupted by his jealous mania: he feels dejected and rejected. He pours out his grief, declaring that cruel fate has exacted this terrible blow, and he now suffers from the most horrible of defeats, a calamity worse than marring his military fame: Desdemona's betrayal.

Finally, in his hysteria and incoherence, he resolves that Desdemona must die: "Ah! Dannazione! Pria confessi il delitto e poscia muoia!" ("Ah! Damnation! First confess the crime and then you die!")

Iago enters to announce that Cassio has arrived, causing Otello to explode into joyous delight: his inner demons have triumphed. This is the moment when he will find the smoking gun. Iago directs Otello to hide while he traps Cassio into betraying himself.

Otello watches and listens as Iago, with fiendish ingenuity, induces Cassio to talk about his love affairs: Cassio speaks about a woman named Bianca, but he murmurs her name so softly that Otello cannot decipher it: Otello assumes that he speaks about Desdemona. Cassio unwittingly produces the handkerchief, the handkerchief Iago planted in his room: Iago passes the handkerchief behind his back for Otello to see.

“Quest’è una ragna”

Allegro brillante
IAGO



Otello has now seen the smoking gun; the handkerchief is the indisputable evidence that condemns Desdemona: she is guilty beyond doubt. Otello explodes and becomes obsessed with revenge.

Together, Otello and Iago join in a diabolic conversation. Otello has decided that Desdemona must be killed as punishment for her sins: he will smother and strangle her in the bed that she has dishonored.

A fanfare of trumpets announces the arrival of the Venetian ambassador, Lodovico, and his retinue. Lodovico inquires of Iago why Cassio is not present, and Iago replies that “Othello is upset with him. But Desdemona, ever Cassio’s advocate, intervenes and adds that “I believe he will return to his good graces.” Otello overhears their conversation and murmurs viciously to Desdemona: her support of Cassio convinces him of her treachery.

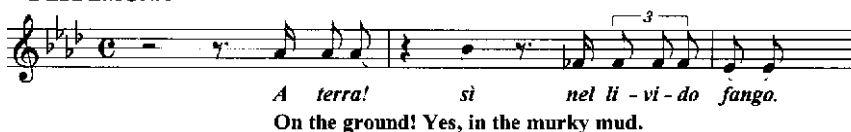
Lodovico brings news that the Senate has recalled Otello to Venice, and in his stead, they have appointed Cassio to govern Cyprus. Iago, his plans defeated and thwarted, responds furiously. Cassio kneels before the Ambassador to express his appreciation for his promotion. Lodovico begs Otello to comfort Desdemona, but Otello, his mind totally distorted and poisoned with jealousy, concludes that she weeps not because of Otello’s dismissal, but because of her forthcoming separation from Cassio.

Otello is unable to contain his smoldering anger. He publicly insults Desdemona, and then grasps her by the arm and hurls her to the ground. The entire entourage becomes frozen in horror at Otello’s violent behavior.

Desdemona, overcome with emotion, fear and sadness, cries in frustrated agony.

“A terra! Sì, nel livido fango”

Largo
DESDEMONA



Iago whispers to Otello not to waste time: kill Desdemona at the earliest opportunity; he will kill Cassio. Otello orders everyone to leave. Cries of “Evviva Otello” are heard from the Cypriots outside. Desdemona cries out as she departs: “Mio sposo” (“My husband.”) Otello responds, ferociously cursing her: “Anima mia, ti malidico!” (“My dearest, I curse you.”)

Otello is possessed with his demons and cannot escape himself. He is besieged with a fit of epilepsy and cannot physically control himself: scraps of remembered conversation pass before him like a montage of horror. Overcome with emotional exhaustion, he faints and falls to the ground. Iago stands above him and gloats to himself over his handiwork: “Il mio velen lavora” (“My poison is working.”)

Fanfares are again heard from the Cypriots hailing their beloved hero: “Evviva Otello! Gloria al Leon di Venezia!” (“Hail Othello! Glory to the Lion of Venice.”)

Iago, in triumph, viciously and cynically gloats over his victim: “Chi può vietar che questa fronte preme col mio tallone?” (“Who can prevent me from placing my heel on his head?”)

In his final triumph, Iago responds to the Cypriot’s praise of their hero, the prostrate Moor who lies on the ground: “Here is your Lion.”

ACT IV: Desdemona’s bedroom

In *Otello*’s final act, the hyper-emotions and passionate outbursts of rage and fury that saturated the finale of Act III become transformed into a prolonged moment of repose: in Desdemona’s bedchamber there is an atmosphere of indefinable sadness and desolation, and an eerie sense of gloom and foreboding.

Assisted by Emilia, Desdemona prepares to retire. She has premonitions of danger, and recalls in the “Willow Song,” a song from her childhood, the story of a woman who died because her love was scorned. Desdemona broods, half applying the sadness of the song to her own unhappy dilemma.

“Willow Song”

DESDEMONA



"Scor-rea - no i ri - vi fra le zolle in fior gemea quel core affranto."
The stream ran through the flowery banks.

Emilia bids her goodnight, and Desdemona proceeds to say her evening prayers.

“Ave Maria”

Adagio

DESDEMONA



Pre - ga per chi a do-ran - do a te, si pro - stra,
Pray for one who kneels before you and adores you.

While Desdemona lies in bed, Otello enters through a secret door, makes his way to her bed, and contemplates the sleeping Desdemona: the Kiss Theme from the Act I Love Duet underscores his movements, an ironic comment to their past love and the contrasting murderous passions that have now enveloped him.

The drama proceeds rapidly toward its catastrophic conclusion. Otello awakens Desdemona, and asks her if she has said her prayers, implying that she must atone and be cleansed of the sins she has committed: Otello would not destroy her soul before she has prayed for penance.

Desdemona panics, and realizes that Otello intends to murder her. He is intransigent and convinced that she has been perfidious and unfaithful to him. She asks for Cassio: he will vindicate her because he knows the truth, and will swear to her innocence. Otello announces that Cassio is dead. Desdemona finally realizes that she is lost and helpless, and now at the mercy of a madman.

Otello again accuses Desdemona of being Cassio's paramour. Her denials are futile. Otello's jealous rage mounts, and then he smothers her with her pillow.

Emilia enters, witnesses the horror before her, and cries for help. Lodovico, Cassio, and Iago arrive, followed by Montano and armed guards. They try to disarm Otello, but dagger in hand, he backs away from them. Chagrined, he realizes that even armed, no one fears him.

“Niun mi tema”

OTELLO



Niun mi te -ma, se ancor armato mi ve-de. Ec - co la fi - ne del mio cammin.

No one fears me although they see me with a weapon. This is the end of my road.

Otello admits that he killed Desdemona because she was unfaithful. But Emilia reveals Iago's intrigue and his theft of the handkerchief. Montano further reveals that Roderigo, as he was dying, exposed Iago's wiles. Iago hurriedly exits and escapes.

Otello, turning toward Desdemona, half singing and half sobbing, realizes that he has been betrayed by Iago, and the horror of his actions cannot be undone. He addresses Desdemona, and pours out his distressed and despairing soul: “a pious creature, born under an evil star.”

Otello stabs himself with his dagger before anyone can restrain him. With his last remaining strength, he draws himself to the body of Desdemona, and kisses her. The orchestra repeats the Kiss Theme as Otello, with his last dying breath, sighs: “Un bacio, un bacio ancora, Ah! Un altro bacio.”

In Shakespeare's prose: "I kissed thee ere I kill'd thee; no way but this. Killing myself, to die upon a kiss."

OTELLO

Libretto

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ACT I

*The harbor of the island of Cyprus.
It is evening. There is a violent storm with lightning and thunder.*

CIPRIOTTI:

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

MONTANO:

È l'alato Leon!

CASSIO:

Or la folgor lo svela.

ALTRI CHE SOPRAGGIUNGONO:

Uno squillo!

TUTTI:

Ha tuonato il canon!

CASSIO:

È la nave del Duce.

MONTANO:

Or s'affonda or s'inciela.

CASSIO

Erge il rostro dall'onda.

ALCUNI CIPRIOTTI:

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

TUTTI:

Lampi! tuoni! gorgi!
turbi tempestosi e fulmini!
Tremar l'onde! tremar l'aure!
tremar basi e culmini.

CYPRIOTS:

A sail! A Sail!
A vessel! A vessel!

MONTANO:

It's like a winged lion!

CASSIO:

The lightning flashes reveal it clearly.

OTHERS WHO ARRIVE:

A roar of thunder!

ALL:

There's a cannon shot!

CASSIO:

It's our leader's ship.

MONTANO:

The swells are sinking her.

CASSIO:

She's raising her bow over the wave.

SOME CYPRIOTS:

She's hiding in the clouds and the sea,
and the lightning doesn't reveal her.

ALL:

Lightning! Thunder! Whirlpools!
A tempestuous hurricane and lightning
bolts! The waves roar! The winds blast!
The seas rage!

Fende l'etra un torvo e cieco spirito di vertigine.

Iddio scuote il cielo bieco, come un tetro vel.

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.

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!

CORO:

Aita! Aita!

JAGO:

(L'alvo frenetico del mar sia la sua tomba!)

CIPRIOTTI:

È salvo! È salvo!

VOCI INTERNE:

Gittate i palischermi!

Mano alle funi! Fermi!

CIPRIOTTI:

Forza ai remi! Alla riva!

The air is being shattered by a grim and blind spirit.

God shakes the heavens fiercely, like a dismal pall.

All is in smoke! All is afire!

The horrible fog is lit up, and then extinguishes itself dismally.

The whirling of the ghastly northern clouds are like gigantic trumpets blasts from heaven.

God, power of the storm!

God, smile of the sands!

Save the ship and the banners that are Venice's fortune!

You, who reign over the stars and the Fates!

You, who rule the world and heaven!

Calm the depths of the seas that the ship may anchor safely.

IAGO:

The midsail's broken!

RODERIGO:

Her bow is plunging into that rock!

CHORUS:

Rescue him! Rescue him!

IAGO: (to Roderigo)

(May the furious womb of the sea be his tomb!)

CYPRIOTS:

He is safe! He is safe!

VOICES BEHIND:

Throw the lines!

Hold the ropes! Steady!

CYPRIOTS:

Man the shore boats! To the shore!

VOCI INTERNE:

All'approdo! allo sbarco!

CIPRIOTTI:

Evviva! Evviva! Evviva!

VOICES BEHIND:

To the landing! To the landing!

CYPRIOTS:

Hail! Hail! Hail!

Maestoso
OTELLO



E - sul-ta - te! L'or - go - gliο mu - sul - mano sepolto è in mar,

OTELLO:

Esultate! L'orgoglio musulmano
sepolto è in mar, nostra e del ciel è
gloria! Dopo l'armi lo vinse l'uragano.

OTHELLO: (*from the landing*)

Rejoice! The Muslim's pride is buried
in the sea. Heaven has given us glory!
After the battle we defeated the hurricane.

CIPRIOTTI:

Evviva Othello! Evviva! Evviva! Evviva!
Vittoria! Vittoria! Vittoria!
Stermino, dispersi, distrutti, sepolti
nell'orrido.

CYPRIOTS:

Hail Othello! Hail! Hail! Hail!
Victory! Victory! Victory!
Scattered, dispersed, destroyed, and
buried in the deep sea.

Avranno per *requie* la sferza dei flutti,
la ridda dei turbini, la ridda dei turbini,
l'abisso, l'abisso del mar.
Vittoria! Vittoria! Vittoria! Vittoria!

The forceful storm will be their Requiem.
The galleys of the enemy lie in the
abyss of the sea.
Victory! Victory! Victory! Victory!

Si calma la bufera.

The storm subsides.

JAGO:

Roderigo, ebbene, che pensi?

IAGO: (*aside*)

Roderigo, well, what do you think?

RODERIGO:

D'affogarmi.

RODERIGO:

To drown myself.

JAGO:

Stolto è chi s'affoga per amor di donna.

IAGO:

Only a fool talks of drowning himself
for the love of a woman.

RODERIGO:

Vincer nol so.

JAGO:

Su via, fa senno, aspetta
l'opra del tempo. A Desdemona bella,
che nel segreto de' tuoi sogni adori,
presto in uggia verranno i foschi baci
di quel selvaggio dalle gonfie labbra.

Buon Roderigo, amico tuo sincero
mi ti professo, nè 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.

RODERIGO:

I don't know how to succeed.

IAGO:

Be sensible and wait for time to work
in your favor. The beautiful
Desdemona, whom you adore in your
secret dreams, will soon tire of the kisses
from the inflated lips of that savage.

Good Roderigo, I proclaim myself your
sincere friend, but I cannot help you in
your loftier mission.
But empty feminine vows are not
difficult for my infernal genius and
wits.
I swear that the woman will be yours.
Listen to me.
I pretend to love, but I hate that Moor.

Cassio enters and joins a group of soldiers.

E una cagion dell'ira, eccola, guarda.

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!

Ma, come 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.

It is an angry cause, listen, judge.
(pointing to Cassio)

That garishly dressed captain usurped
my rank, a rank I deserved and proved
in battle; such was Othello's wish, and
I remain an ensign to the Moor!

But, Roderigo, you know the truth.
If I was the Moor, I wouldn't want to
have an Iago around.
But you will listen to me.

(The crowd has lit a fire)

CORO:

Fuoco di gioia, l'ilare vampa
fuga la notte col suo splendor.
Guizza, sfavilla, crepita, avvampa
fulgido incendio che invade il cor.

CHORUS:

Joyous fire, whose cheerful blaze
lights the night with its splendor.
It shines, roars, crackles, rises,
and its resplendent rays fill the heart.

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,
 canta la sposa col suo fedel;
 sull'aurea fiamma, sul lieto coro
 soffia l'ardente spiro del ciel.

Its obscure rays move around and
 change the appearance of the crowd;
 and there are young girls who sing
 happy songs, and butterflies ignorant of
 their flight. The wife and her faithful
 husband sing of bold palms and
 sycamores. The happy singers sing of
 ardent love coming from Heaven.

Fuoco di gioia, rapido brilla!
 Rapido passa, fuoco d'amor!
 Splende, s'oscura, palpita, oscilla,
 l'ultimo guizzo, lampeggia e muor.

Joyous fire, rapidly sparkling!
 The fire of love passes quickly!
 It shines, it hides, it pulses and swings.
 In its last flickering, it trembles and dies.

*The fire slowly dies. The storm has completely subsided. Iago, Roderigo,
 and Cassio are grouped around a table on which there is wine.*

JAGO:

Roderigo, beviam!

Qua la tazza, Capitano.

IAGO:

Roderigo, let's drink!

(to Cassio)

Pass the glass, Captain.

CASSIO:

Non bevo più.

CASSIO:

I can't drink anymore.

JAGO:

Ingoia questo sorso.

IAGO: *(ready to fill Cassio's cup)*

Gulp this draught.

CASSIO:

No.

CASSIO: *(moving the cup away)*

No.

JAGO:

Guarda! Oggi impazza tutta Cipro!
 È una notte di gioia, dunque...

IAGO:

Look! Today all Cyprus is excited!
 It's a night of joy, so...

CASSIO:

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

CASSIO:

Stop. My head is already burning from
 one drink.

JAGO:

Sì, ancora bever devi.
 Alle nozze d'Otello e Desdemona!

IAGO:

Yes, yet you must drink again and toast
 the marriage of Othello and Desdemona!

CIPRIOTTI:

Evviva!

CASSIO:

Essa infiora questo lido.

JAGO:

(Lo ascolta.)

CASSIO:

Col vago suo raggiar chiama i cuori a raccolta.

RODERIGO:

Pur modesta essa è tanto.

CASSIO:

Tu, Jago, canterai le sue lodi!

JAGO:

(Lo ascolta.)

Io non sono che un critico.

CASSIO:

Ed ella d'ogni lode è più bella.

JAGO:

(Ti guarda da quel Cassio.)

RODERIGO:

Che temi?

JAGO:

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

RODERIGO:

Ebben?

CYPRIOTS:

Hail!

CASSIO: (*raises his cup and sips*)

She is the flower of these shores.

IAGO: (*whispering to Roderigo*)

(Listen to him.)

CASSIO:

She gather hearts with her charming radiance.

RODERIGO:

I think that she is very modest.

CASSIO:

You, Iago, sing her praises!

IAGO: (*softly to Roderigo*)

(Listen to him.)

(*loudly to Cassio*)

I am just a critic.

CASSIO:

And she is the most beautiful of every shore.

IAGO: (*aside to Roderigo*)

(Beware of that Cassio.)

RODERIGO:

What are you afraid of?

IAGO:

(He speaks with too much passion, and a hearty young woman excites him. He's a subtle seductor who obstructs your smooth path.
Be aware...)

RODERIGO:

Well?

JAGO:

(S'ei inebria è perduto!
Fallo ber.)

Qua, ragazzi, del vino!

IAGO:

(He's lost if he gets drunk!
Make him drink.)

(to the waiters)

Over here boys, some wine!

Iago fills glasses for himself, Roderigo, and Cassio.

With his drink in his hand, he addresses himself to Cassio and the curious crowd.

Allegro con brio

IAGO



Inaffia l'ugola!

Trinca, tracanna!

Prima che svampino canto e bicchier.

Let the waters quench the thirst!

Drink and gulp it down,

before song and drink vanish.

CASSIO:

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

CASSIO: (to Iago with cup in hand)

This vine leaf is truly a godsend whose
divine mists cloud ones thoughts.

JAGO:

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

IAGO:

The arrogant and impassioned one has
taken the bait, and he cannot resist its
magic. Drink with me! Drink with me!

TUTTI:

Chi all'esca ha morso.

ALL:

He has taken the bait and cannot resist.

JAGO:

(Un altro sorso è brillo egli è.)

IAGO: (indicating the drunken Cassio)

(One more drop and he's drunk.)

RODERIGO:

(Un altro sorso è brillo egli è.)

RODERIGO:

(One more drop and he's drunk.)

JAGO:

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

IAGO:

The world throbs when I am drunk!
I dare the ironic god and destiny!

CASSIO:

Come un armonico liuto oscillo;
la gioia scalpita sul mio cammin!

JAGO E CORO:

Chi all'esca ha morso....

JAGO:

Un altro sorso e brillo egli è!

RODERIGO:

Un altro sorso e brillo egli è!

JAGO:

Fuggan dal vivido nappo i codardi!

CASSIO:

In fondo all' anima ciascun mi guardi!

JAGO:

... che in cor nascondono frodi.

CASSIO:

Non temo, non temo il ver.

JAGO:

Chi all'esca ha morso....

CASSIO:

non temo il ver....
....non temo il ver.

JAGO:

....bevi con me...

CASSIO:

non temo il ver....

JAGO:

....bevi, bevi con me.

CASSIO: *(continuing to drink)*

I'm pulsating like a harmonious lute;
happiness strikes my path.

IAGO and CHORUS::

The arrogant and impassioned one has
taken the bait....

IAGO: *(to Roderigo)*

One more drop and he's drunk!

RODERIGO: *(echoing Iago)*

One more drop and he's drunk!

IAGO:

Cowards flee this good company!

CASSIO: *(interrupting)*

Look into my soul!

IAGO:

....that is a heart hiding deceit.

CASSIO:

I have no fear, no fear of the truth.

IAGO:

The arrogant and impassioned one....

CASSIO: *(wobbly and unsteady)*

I don't fear the truth....
.....I don't fear the truth.

IAGO:

...drink with me...

CASSIO:

I don't fear the truth....

IAGO:

....drink, drink with me.

CASSIO:

....e bevo e bevo e bevo....

CIPRIOTTI:

Ah! Ah ah! Ah ah! Ah ah!

CASSIO:

Del calice....

JAGO:

(Egli è briaco fradicio.)

CASSIO:

del calice....gli orli....

JAGO:

(Ti scuoti, lo trascina a contesa.
È pronto all'ira),

CIPRIOTTI:

Ah ah! Ah ah!

JAGO:

(T'offenderà ne seguirà tumulto!)

CASSIO:

del calice....gli orli.....

JAGO:

(Pensa che puoi così del lieto Otello)
(turbar la prima vigilia d'amor!)

RODERIGO:

(Ed è chò che mi spinge.)

CASSIO:

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

CIPRIOTTI:

Ah! Ah ah! Ah ah!

TUTTI:

Bevi, bevi con me, bevi con me.

CASSIO:

....and I drink and drink and drink....

CYPRIOTS: *(laughing)*

Ah! Ah ah! Ah ah! Ah ah!

CASSIO: *(cannot remember the song)*

From the chalice....

IAGO: *(to Roderigo)*

(He's dead drunk.)

CASSIO:

from the chalice....the brim....

IAGO: *(to Roderigo)*

(Go over and lure him into a fight.
His anger is up.)

CYPRIOTS: *(laughing at Cassio)*

Ah ah! Ah ah!

IAGO:

(He'll offend you and start a riot!)

CASSIO: *(resumes but suffocatingly)*

from the chalice....the brim....

IAGO:

(Think that this can disturb Othello on
his first night of love!)

RODERIGO:

(And that is what drives me.)

CASSIO:

....one blushes....blushes.

CYPRIOTS:

Ah! Ah ah! Ah ah!

ALL:

Drink, drink with me, drink with me

Montano enters and addresses Cassio.

MONTANO:

Capitano, v'attende la fazione ai baluardi.

CASSIO:

Andiamo.

MONTANO:

Che vedo?

JAGO:

(Ogni notte in tal guisa Cassio preludia al sonno.)

MONTANO:

(Otello il sappia.)

CASSIO:

Andiamo ai baluardi.

RODERIGO è CIPRIOTTI:

Ah, ah! Ah, ah!

CASSIO:

Chi ride?

RODERIGO:

Rido d'un ebro.

CASSIO:

Bada alle tue spalle! Furfante!

RODERIGO:

Briaco ribaldo!

CASSIO:

Marrano! Nessun più ti salva!

MONTANO:

Frenate la mano, Signor, ve ne prego.

MONTANO:

Captain, leave the party and tend your watch.

CASSIO: (*tottering*)

Let's go.

MONTANO:

What am I seeing?

IAGO: (*to Montano*)

(Cassio is like this every night before he goes to sleep.)

MONTANO:

(Othello should know this.)

CASSIO:

Let's go to the watch.

RODERIGO and CYPRIOTS:

Ah, ah! Ah, ah!

CASSIO:

Who laughs?

RODERIGO: (*provocatively*)

I'm laughing at a drunk.

CASSIO: (*pushing Roderigo*)

Watch your back! Scoundrel!

RODERIGO: (*defending himself*)

Drunken rogue!

CASSIO:

Traitor! No one can save you!

MONTANO: (*separating them*)

Sir, I beg you to hold your hands.

CASSIO:

Ti spacco il cerebro se qui t'interponi.

CASSIO: *(to Montano)*

I'll knock your brains out if you interrupt.

MONTANO:

Parole d'un ebro.

MONTANO:

Words from a drunk.

CASSIO:

D'un ebro?

CASSIO:

From a drunk?

The crowd draws back as Cassio and Montano draw swords.

JAGO:

(Va al porto, con quanta più possa ti resta, gridando: sommossa! sommossa! Va! Spargi il tumulto, l'orror. Le campane risuonino a stormo.)

IAGO: *(aside to Roderigo)*

(Go to the port as fast as you can and shout that there's a riot! Go! Spread the word that there's a horrible commotion. Ring the bells in the fortress.)

(Roderigo leaves hastily)

JAGO:

Fratelli! L'immane conflitto cessate!

IAGO:

Brothers! Stop this terrible fighting!

DONNE CIPRIOTTI:

Fuggiam!

CYPRIOT WOMEN: *(fleeing)*

Let's leave!

JAGO:

Ciel! Già gronda di sangue Montano! Tenzon furibonda!

IAGO:

Heavens! Montano drips with blood! What terrible fighting!

DONNE:

Fuggiam, fuggiam!

WOMEN:

Let's flee, let's flee!

JAGO:

Tregua!

IAGO:

Truce!

UOMINI:

Tregua!

MEN:

Truce!

DONNE:

S'uccidono!

WOMEN:

They're killing each other!

UOMINI:

Pace!

MEN:

Peace!

JAGO:

Nessun più raffrena quel nembo pugnace!
Sì gridi l'allarme! Satana gl'invade!

IAGO: *(to the bystanders)*

No one can stop their murderous fury!
Yes, ring the alarm! Satan possesses him!

CORO:

All'armi!! All'armi!! Soccorso! Soccorso!

CHORUS:

The alarm! The alarm! Help! Help!

Othello appears, followed by men bearing torches.

OTELLO:

Abbasso le spade!

OTHELLO:

Lower your swords!
(The fight ceases)

Olà! Che avvien? Son io fra i Saraceni?
O la turchesa rabbia è in voi trasfusa
da sbranarvi l'un l'altro?
Onesto Jago, per quell'amor che tu mi
porti, parla.

Now! What's happening? Am I among
Saracens? Have you turned into Turkish
rabble who tear one another to pieces?
If you love me, be honest Iago, and tell
me what happened.

JAGO:

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

IAGO:

I don't know....a short while ago, we were
all good and merry friends. But suddenly,
like an evil star overcame their good
senses, they drew their swords and began
to battle ferociously. I would have been
the first to intervene!

OTELLO:

Cassio, come obliasti te stesso a tal
segno?

OTHELLO:

Cassio, how did you forget yourself and
your duty?

CASSIO:

Grazia...perdon....parlar non so.

CASSIO:

Thank you....pardon....I can't speak.

OTELLO:

Montano.

OTHELLO:

Montano.

MONTANO:

Son ferito.

MONTANO: *(leaning on a soldier)*

I am wounded.

OTELLO:

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

Che? La mia dolce Desdemona
anch'essa per voi distolta da' suoi
sogni? Cassio, non sei più capitano.

OTHELLO:

Wounded! Heavens, my blood is
already boiling. Ah, my anger compels
me to a higher judgement.

(Desdemona appears)

What? My sweet Desdemona, you have
also had your sleep disrupted?
Cassio, you are no longer a captain.

Cassio drops his sword which Iago retrieves.

JAGO:

(Oh, mio trionfo!)

IAGO: (to himself)

(Oh, I am triumphant!)

OTELLO:

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

Si soccorra Montano.

Al proprio tetto ritorni ognun.
Io da qui non mi parto se pria non vedo
deserti gli spaldi.

OTHELLO:

Iago, go into the city, discourage any
brawling and restore peace.

(Iago leaves)

Give Montano help.

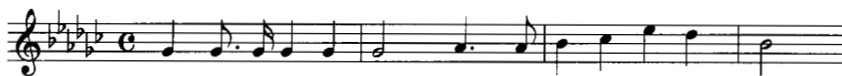
(Montano is led into the castle)

I command everybody to return home.
I shall not leave until I see that peace
has been restored.

All depart.

Othello and Desdemona remain alone.

OTELLO



Già nel-la not-te den-sa s'e-stingue ogni cla-mor,

OTELLO:

Già nella notte densa s'estingue ogni
clamor.
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!

OTHELLO:

The night is already full and all the
commotion has ceased.
My throbbing heart is already calmed in
your embrace.
The sounds of discord rumble, and after
the rage, such a vast love overcomes it!

DESEMONA:

Mio superbo guerrier! Quanti tormenti,
quanti mesti sospiri e quanta speme
ci condusse ai soavi abbracciamenti!
Oh! com'è dolce il mormorare 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 e coll'estasi in cor.

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.

DESEMONA:

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;
scendea sulle mie tenebre la gloria,
il paradiso e gli astri a benedir.

DESEMONA:

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

DESEMONA:

My proud warrior! How much agony and
torment, how many sorrows and hopes
have brought you to these gentle embraces!
Oh! You remember well our sweet
whispers together.!

When you told me of the terrible events in
your life, the long suffering and your
exile, my enraptured soul heard those
frights with ecstasy.

OTHELLO:

I told you about the battles, trembling
fears, the prowess in crushing mortals,
the assault, the horrible accidents, and
the flood of impending death.

DESEMONA:

Then you guided me to the resplendent
deserts, the scorched fields, to the mother's
soil, and you told me again of the pains you
suffered as a slave in chains.

OTHELLO:

The history evoked gentle tears on your
face, and your lips sighed.
The glory of paradise and the star's
blessings descended from them.

DESEMONA:

And I saw shining between your dark
temples, the splendor of genius and the
beauty of your spirit.

OTELLO



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...

OTELLO, DESDEMONA:

....per la {tua, mia} pietà!

OTELLO:

Venga la morte! E mi colga nell'estasi
di quest'amplesso il momento
supremo!

OTHELLO:

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

DESDEMONA:

And 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....

OTHELLO, DESDEMONA:

....for (your, my) pity!

OTHELLO:

Let death come! I find myself in the
ecstasy of this embrace, this supreme
moment!

The sky is clear: the stars shine, and the moon rises.

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.

OTELLO:

A questa tua preghiera *Amen* risponda
la celeste schiera.

It is the joy of the soul that I fear.
I fear that in my unknown destiny,
I will no longer be comforted by such a
divine moment.

DESDEMONA:

Let the heavens disperse grief, and may
our love never change as the years pass.

OTHELLO:

The celestial voices respond *Amen* to
your prayer.

DESDEMONA:

Amen risponda.

DESDEMONA:

They answer *Amen*.

OTELLO:

Ah! La gioia m'innonda si fieramente,
.che ansante mi giaccio.
Un bacio.

OTHELLO:

Ah! I am filled with joy. Yes, I
surrender my pride.
A kiss.

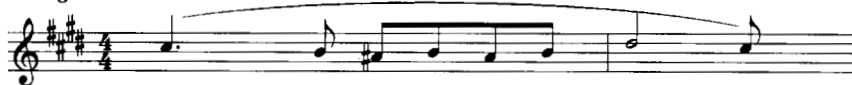
DESDEMONA:

Otello!

DESDEMONA:

Othello!

Allegro moderato



OTELLO:

Un bacio....ancora un bacio.

OTHELLO:

A kiss....another kiss.

(looking skyward)

Già la pleiade ardente al mar discende.

The burning Pleiades are already
descending into the sea.

DESDEMONA:

Tarda e la notte.

DESDEMONA:

It is late in the night.

OTELLO:

Vien. Venere splende.

OTHELLO:

Come. Venus shines brightly.

DESDEMONA:

Otello!

DESDEMONA:

Othello!

Embraced, Othello and Desdemona enter the castle.

ACT II

A Hall in the Castle. A terrace and a large garden are in the background.

JAGO:

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.

IAGO:

Don't worry, proud captain. If you
listen to me, soon you will adorn your
golden sword and return to the joyful
love of Monna Bianca.

CASSIO:

Non lusingarmi.

CASSIO:

Don't deceive me.

JAGO:

Attendi a ciò ch'io dico.
Tu dei 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.

IAGO:

Listen to what I say.
You must know that Desdemona
overwhelms our leader, and he only lives for
her. Plead with her, and that genteel soul will
intercede for you, and your pardon is certain.

CASSIO:

Ma come favellarle?

CASSIO:

But how can I talk to her?

JAGO:

È suo costume girsene a meriggiar fra
quelle fronde colla consorte mia. Qui vi
l'aspetta. Or t'è aperta la via di
salvazione. Vanne.

IAGO:

At noon it is her custom to rest among
the arbors with my wife. You can await
her here. I have unveiled the path to
your salvation. Go.
(Cassio leaves)

JAGO:

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

IAGO: (following Cassio with his eyes)

Go. I already see your fate.
Your demon drives you, and I am that
demon.

E me trascina il mio, nel quale io credo,
inesorato Iddio.

And mine drives me to my faith in a
relentless god.

Allegro sostenuto



Credo in un Dio crudel che m'ha creato
simile a se e che nell'ira io nomo.

I believe in a cruel god who has created
me in his image, and I call upon in my
wrath.

Dalla viltà d'un germe o d'un atomo
vile son nato.
Son scellerato perchè son uomo,
e sento il fango originario in me.
Sì! questa è la mia fè!

I was born from a vile germ or a vile
atom.
I am wicked because I am human,
and I feel the slime of the genesis
within me. Yes! That is my faith!

Credo con fermo cuor, siccome crede
la vedovella al tempio, che il mal ch'io
penso e che da me procede, per il mio
destino adempio.

I strongly believe, like a young widow
before the altar, that the evil I think,
and the evil that flows from me, is the
fulfillment of my destiny.

Credo che il guisto è un istrion
beffardo, e nel viso e nel cuor, che tutto
è in lui bugiardo: lagrima, bacio,
sguardo, sacrificio ed onor.

I believe that justice is a pretence that
mocks the mind and heart, those
deceptive tears, kisses, prayers,
glances, sacrifice and honor.

E credo l'uom gioco d'iniqua sorte
dal germe della culla al verme
dell'avel.

And I believe humanity receives an
iniquitous fate, from the worm of the
cradle to the worm of the death.

Vien dopo tanta irrision la Morte.
E poi? E poi? La Morte è' il Nulla.
È vecchia fola il Ciel.

After all this senselessness comes death.
And then? And then? Death is
nothingness. Heaven is an old fable.

Desdemona and Emilia appear in the garden. Iago directs Cassio to them.

JAGO:

Eccola....Cassio....a te....questo è il
momento.
Ti scuoti....vien Desdemona.

IAGO:

Cassio, there she is. This is the
moment for you.
Hurry. Desdemona is coming.

Cassio approaches Desdemona in the garden, bows and joins her.

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

He approaches her. He greets her, and
he joins her.
Now I must fetch Othello! Satan help
me, help my experiment succeed!
They're already talking together, and she
tilts her beautiful smiling face.

Cassio and Desdemona pass back and forth as they converse in the garden.

Mi basta un lampo sol di quel sorriso
per trascinare Otello alla ruina.

All I need is a flash of that smile to
drag Othello to his ruin.

Iago goes rapidly toward the door but suddenly stops.

Andiam. Ma il caso in mio favor
s'adopra.
Eccolo. Al posto, all'opra.

To work. All my endeavors are working
for me. (*Othello enters*)
Her he is. To my post. To work.

*Iago stares intently toward the garden and talks to himself,
pretending not to see Othello entering.*

JAGO:

Ciò m'accora.

IAGO:

That breaks my heart.

OTELLO:

Che parli?

OTHELLO:

What are you saying?

JAGO:

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

IAGO:

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

OTELLO:

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

OTHELLO:

Who is that person over there with my
wife? Is it Cassio?

JAGO:

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

IAGO:

Cassio? No. He would flee like a
criminal if he would see you.

OTELLO:

Credo che Cassio ei fosse.

OTHELLO:

I believe I saw Cassio.

JAGO:

Mio signore.

IAGO:

My lord.

OTELLO:

Che brami?

OTHELLO:

What is your desire?

JAGO:

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

OTHELLO:

Sì. Perchè fai tale inchiesta?

JAGO:

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

OTHELLO:

Di' il tuo pensiero, Jago.

JAGO:

Vi confidaste a Cassio?

OTHELLO:

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

JAGO:

Dassenno?

OTHELLO:

Sì, dassenno.
Noi credi onesto?

JAGO:

Onesto?

OTHELLO:

Che ascondi nel tuo core?

JAGO:

Che ascondo in cor, signore?

OTHELLO:

"Che ascondo in cor, signore?"
Pel cielo, tu sei l'eco dei detti miei, nel
chiosso dell'anima ricetti qualche
terribil mostro.

IAGO:

Did Desdemona know Cassio when you
were first courting her?

OTHELLO:

Yes, but why do you ask?

IAGO:

My thoughts are without prejudice and
without malice.

OTHELLO:

Iago, speak your thoughts.

IAGO:

Have you confided to Cassio?

OTHELLO:

He would often bring my gifts or a
message to my wife.

IAGO:

Really?

OTHELLO:

Yes, really.
You don't believe he is honest?

IAGO:

Honest?

OTHELLO:

What are you hiding in your heart?

IAGO:

My lord, what do I hide in my heart?

OTHELLO:

"Lord, what do I hide in my heart?"
For heavens sake, you're echoing my
very words. In the refuge of your soul
you are hiding some terrible thoughts.

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.

JAGO:

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

OTELLO:

Ah!

JAGO:

Temete, signor, la gelosia!

Yes, I indeed heard you mumbling before: "That breaks my heart."

But what was upsetting you?

You invoke the name of Cassio, and then you wrinkle your brow.

Come now, if you love me, speak to me.

IAGO:

You know that I love you.

OTHELLO:

Then reveal yourself and express yourself without ambiguity and mystery.

Speak your most wicked thought and most wicked word.

IAGO:

If you would hold my soul in your hand you wouldn't know.

OTHELLO:

Ah!

IAGO: (*whispering to Othello*)

My lord, do you fear jealousy?

Moderato

IAGO



È un'idra fosca, livida, cieca, col suo veleno sè stessa attosca, vivida piaga le squarcia il seno.

It is a green-eyed monster, dark, livid, and blind. It poisons itself, rips open its own wounds, and feeds on them.

OTELLO

Miseria mia! No! Il vano sospettar nulla giova.

Pria del dubbio l'indagine, dopo il dubbio la prova, dopo la prova (Othello ha sue leggi supreme), amore e gelosia vadan dispersi insieme!

OTHELLO:

Misery! No! Nothing will help this vain suspect.

Before doubt, comes investigation, and after doubt, the proof (Othello has his own supreme rules), and then love and jealousy will disappear together!

JAGO:

Un tal proposto spezza di mie labbra il suggello.

Non parlo ancor di prova, pur, generoso Othello, vigilate. Soventi le oneste e ben create coscienze non vedono la frode: vigilate.

Scrutate le parole di Desdemona, un detto può ricondur la fede, può affermare il sospetto.

IAGO:

Your proposal unseals my lips.

Don't speak more of proof, generous Othello. Be vigilant, for often honest people with good conscience do not see the deceit of others. Watch.

Scrutinize Desdemona's words. A mere word can restore faith, or it can affirm suspicions.

In the garden, Desdemona is surrounded by women, children, and Cypriot and Albanian sailors. All offer her flowers, gifts, and sing her praises.

VOCI LONTANO:

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.

VOICES FROM AFAR:

The sun shines where you fix your eyes. Where you walk, hearts inflame, and new flowers descend. Here among the chaste altar of lilies and roses, fathers, children, and spouses come to sing as if it is a chaste altar.

JAGO:

Eccola....vigilate.

IAGO:

Here she is. Scrutinize her.

FANCIULLI:

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

CHILDREN: (spreading lilies)

We offer you slender-stemmed lilies that the angels have taken from heaven, that adorn the sparkling mantle, the Madonna's dress, and the sainted veil.

DONNE E MARINAI:

Mentre all' aura vola lieta la canzon, l'agile mandola ne accompagna il suon.

WOMEN AND SAILORS:

While the happy song floats with the breeze, the sprightly mandolin accompanies the song.

Sailors give Desdemona necklaces of corals and pearls.

MARINAI:

A te le porpore, le perle e gli ostri,
nella voragine colti del mar.
Vogliamo Desdemona coi doni nostri
come un'immagine sacra adornar.

DONNE E FANCIULLI:

Mentre all' aura vola
lieta la canzon,
l'agile mandola
ne accompagna il suon.

LE DONNE:

A te la florida messe dai grembi
spargiam al suolo, a nembi, a nembi.
L'april circonda la sposa bionda
d'un etra rorida che vibra al sol.

FANCIULLI E MARINAI

Mentre all' aura vola....

TUTTI:

Dove guardi splendono raggi...

DESDEMONA:

Splende il cielo, danza l'aura, olezza il
fior.

OTELLO:

Quel canto mi conquide.
S'ella m'inganna, il ciel se stesso
irride!

JAGO:

(Beltà ed amor in dolce inno concordi!
I vostri infrangerò soavi accordi.)

DESDEMONA:

Gioia, amor, speranza cantan nel mio cor.

SAILORS:

We offer you pearls and corals,
gathered from the depths of the sea.
We want our gifts to adorn Desdemona
like a sacred image.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN:

How happy the song floats with the
breeze,
the sprightly mandolin
accompanies the song.

WOMEN: (*spreading flowers*)

In your honor we spread harvests of
flowers to the ground like clouds.
April encircles the blond wife with a
moist dew that quivers in the sun.

CHILDREN AND SAILORS:

While the breezes blow...

ALL:

Where you see splendid rays....

DESDEMONA:

The sky shines, the breezes dance, the
flowers are fragrant.

OTHELLO:

That song conquers me.
If she is deceiving me, heaven itself has
been scorned!

IAGO:

(Beauty and love are in gentle harmony! I
will break these gentle accords.)

DESDEMONA:

Joy, love and hope sing in my heart.

CIPRIOTTI:

Vivi felice! Vivi felice!
Addio. Qui regna Amor.

CYPRIOTS:

Live happily! Live happily!
Farewell. Here love reigns.

OTELLO:

Quel canto mi conquide.

OTHELLO:

That song has conquered me.

Desdemona leaves the admirers and enters the hall with Emilia.

DESDEMONA



D'un uom che geme, sotto il tuo disde - gno la preghie - ra ti porto.

DESDEMONA:

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

DESDEMONA: *(to Othello)*

I bring you a prayer from a man who
laments because of your disdain.

OTELLO:

Chi è costui?

OTHELLO:

Who would he be?

DESDEMONA:

Cassio.

DESDEMONA:

Cassio.

OTELLO:

Era lui che ti parlava sotto quelle fronde?

OTHELLO:

Was it Cassio who was speaking to you
under those fronds?

DESDEMONA:

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

DESDEMONA:

None other. I feel his pain so deep within me. He is so truthful and deserves mercy. I am interceding with you on his behalf. You must forgive him.

OTELLO:

Non ora.

OTHELLO: (*sternly*)

Not now.

DESDEMONA:

Non oppormi il tuo diniego.
Gli perdona.

DESDEMONA:

Don't oppose me with your denial.
Forgive him.

OTELLO:

Non ora.

OTHELLO:

Not now.

DESDEMONA:

Perchè torbida suona la voce tua?
Qual pena t'addolora?

DESDEMONA:

Why is your voice so troubled?
What pain afflicts you?

OTELLO:

M'ardon le tempie.

OTHELLO:

My forehead is on fire.

DESDEMONA:

Quell'ardor molesto svanirà, se con
questo morbido lino la mia man ti fascia.

DESDEMONA: (*about to apply the
handkerchief to Othello's forehead*)

I'll bind this soft cloth, and that
annoying heat will vanish.

OTELLO:

Non ho d'uopo di ciò.

OTHELLO: (*throwing the
handkerchief to the ground*)

I have no need for it.

DESDEMONA:

Tu sei crucciato, signor.

DESDEMONA:

You are upset, my lord.

OTELLO:

Mi lascia! Mi lascia!

OTHELLO: (*roughly*)

Leave me alone! Leave me alone!

(*Emilia picks up the handkerchief*)

DESDEMONA:

Se inconscia, contro te, sposo, ho
peccato, dammi la dolce e lieta parola
del perdono.

DESDEMONA:

My husband, if I have unconsciously
sinned against you, give me the sweet
and blessed word of your forgiveness.

Largo
DESDEMONA



OTELLO:

(Forse perchè gl'inganni
d'arguto amor non tendo...)

OTHELLO: (*aside*)

(Perhaps because I am not deceitful and
pretend ardent love...)

DESDEMONA:

La tua fanciulla io sono umile e
mansueta; ma il labbro tuo sospira,
hai l'occhio fiso al soul.

Guardami in volto e mira come favella
amor.

Vien ch'io t'allieti il core, ch'io ti
lenisca il duol.

Guardami in volto e mira....

OTELLO:

(....forse perchè discendo nella valle
degli anni, forse perchè ho sul viso
quest'atro tenebror....

forse perchè gl'inganni d'arguto
amor non tendo.

Ella è perduta e irriso io sono e il core
m'infrango e ruinar nel fango vedo il
mio sogno d'or.

Ella è perduta e irriso.

JAGO:

(Quel vel mi porgi ch'or hai raccolto.)

EMILIA:

(Qual frode scorgi?
Ti leggo in volto.)

JAGO:

(T'opponi a voto quand'io comando.)

EMILIA:

(Il tuo nefando livor m'è noto.)

JAGO:

(Sospetto insano!)

EMILIA:

(Guardia fedel è questa mano.)

DESDEMONA:

I am your little girl, humble and meek.
But your lips bear sighs, and your eyes
are transfixed to the ground.

Look in my face and see how it speaks
of love.

Come let me enliven your heart, and
soothe your pain.

Look in my face....

OTHELLO:

(....perhaps because I am getting older,
or perhaps because my face bears a
darkness....

perhaps because I mistake the sincerity
of the love she offers me.

She is lost and I am mocked.

My heart broken and I see my golden
dream ruined in slime.

She is lost and I am mocked.

IAGO: (aside to Emilia)

(Give me that veil you just picked up.)

EMILIA:

(What hoaxes are you hatching?
I read it in your face.)

IAGO:

(I am in command, and I oppose your
refusals.)

EMILIA:

(I know too well the wicked side of you.)

IAGO:

(Insane suspicions!)

EMILIA:

(This hand is faithful.)

JAGO:

(Dammi quel vel!
Su te l'irosa mia man s'aggrava!)

IAGO: *(with violence)*

(Give me that veil!
My angry hand will strike you!)

EMILIA:

(Son la tua sposa, non la tua schiava.)

EMILIA:

(I am your wife, not your slave.)

JAGO:

(La schiava impura tu sei di Jago.)

IAGO:

(You are Iago's impure slave.)

EMILIA:

(Ho il cor presago d'una sventura.)

EMILIA:

(I feel omens of misfortune in my heart.)

JAGO:

(Nè mi paventi?)

IAGO:

(You don't fear me?)

EMILIA:

(Uomo crudel!)

EMILIA:

(Cruel man!)

JAGO:

(A me.)

IAGO:

(Give it to me.)

EMILIA:

(Che tenti?)

EMILIA:

(What are you attempting?)

JAGO:

(A me quel vel!)

IAGO:

(Give me that veil!)

(Iago tears the handkerchief from Emilia)

EMILIA:

(Uomo crudel!)

EMILIA:

(Cruel man!)

JAGO:

(Già la mia brama conquido, ed ora
su questa trama Jago lavora!)

IAGO: *(to himself)*

(I got what I wanted. Now Iago will
develop his plot!)

EMILIA:

(Vinser gli artigli truci e codardi.
Dio dai perigli sempre ci guardi.)

EMILIA: *(to herself)*

(His cruel and cowardly claws won.
God save us always against perils.)

DESDEMONA:

Dammi la dolce e lieta parola del
perdon.

OTELLO:

Escite! Solo vo' restar.

JAGO:

(Ti giova tacer. Intendi?)

OTELLO:

Desdemona rea!

JAGO:

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

OTELLO:

Atroce idea!

JAGO:

(Il mio velen lavora.)

OTELLO:

Rea contro me! contro me!

JAGO:

(Soffri e ruggi!)

OTELLO:

Atroce! Atroce!

JAGO:

Non pensateci più.

OTELLO:

Tu? Indietro! Fuggi!

DESDEMONA:

Give me the sweet and joyful word of
your forgiveness.

OTHELLO:

Leave me! I want to be alone.

IAGO: (*whispering to Emilia*)

(You should remain quiet! (Do you
understand?)

(*Desdemona and Emilia exit*)

OTHELLO: (*exhausted, falls into a chair*)

Desdemona is guilty!

IAGO: (*looking at the handkerchief*)

(With these threads I will plot the proof
of sinful love. I will hide this in Cassio's
house.)

OTHELLO:

An atrocious idea!

IAGO: (*watching Othello*)

(My poison is working.)

OTHELLO:

Guilty against me! Against me!

IAGO:

(Suffer and scream!)

OTHELLO:

Atrocious! Atrocious!

IAGO:

Don't think about it any more.

(*approaches Othello cordially*)

OTHELLO: (*staggering*)

You? Get back! Flee from here!

M'hai legato alla croce! Ahimè!
Più orrendo d'ogni orrenda ingiuria
dell' ingiuria è il sospetto.

You have tied me to the cross! Alas!
Suspicion is the most horrible of the
most horrible of injustices.

Nell' ore arcane della sua lussuria
(e a me furate!) m'agitava il petto forse
un presagio?

During the mysterious hours of lust
stolen from me (and it infuriates me!)
was I being agitated by this omen?

Ero baldò, giulivo.
Nulla sapevo ancora; io non sentivo sul
suo corpo divin che m'innamora e sui
labbri mendaci gli ardenti baci di Cassio!

I was bold, joyful.
Yet I knew nothing. On her lying lips
and divine body that enamored me, I
didn't feel Cassio's ardent kisses!

Ed ora! ed ora!

And now! And now!

Allegro assai sostenuto
OTELLO



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

Now and forever farewell to noble
memories, farewell to sublime,
enchanted thoughts!

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

Farewell to resplendent echelons,
farewell to victories, to flying missiles
and the flying corsair!

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.

Farewell to the triumphant, pious vessel,
and the blaring morning reveille!
Farewell to the clamors and songs of
battle! The is the end of Othello's glory.

JAGO:

Pace, signor.

IAGO:

Peace, my lord.

OTELLO:

Sciagurato! Mi trova una prova sicura
che Desdemona è impura.
Non sfuggir! Nulla ti giova!
Vo' una sicura, una visibil prova!
O sulla tua testa s'accenda e precipiti il
fulmine del mio spaventoso furor che si
desta!

OTHELLO:

Wretched one! Find me certain proof
that Desdemona is impure.
Do not escape! Nothing will help you!
I want sure, visible proof!
Or I will ignite and awaken the
lightning of my frightening rage on
your head!

Othello grasps Iago by his throat and throws him down.

JAGO:

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

OTHELLO:

No...rimani. Forse onesto tu sei.

JAGO:

Meglio varebbe ch'io fossi un
ciurmador.

OTHELLO:

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:

Signor, frenate l'ansie.
E qual certezza v'abbisogna?
Avvinti verderli forse?

OTHELLO:

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

IAGO:

Defend me merciful heaven!
May Heaven protect you! I am no
longer your ensign.
I want the world to be my witness that
it has been perilous for me to be honest.

(Iago pretends to leave)

OTHELLO:

No. Stay. Perhaps you are honest.

IAGO: *(still pretending to withdraw)*

Perhaps it would have been wise for me
to be a swindler.

OTHELLO:

For the sake of humanity!
I believe Desdemona is loyal and I
believe that she is not.

I believe that you are honest and I
believe that you are disloyal.

I want proof!
I want certainty!

IAGO: *(returning to Othello)*

My lord, curb your anxiety.
And what certainty do you need?
Perhaps you want to see them embraced?

OTHELLO:

Ah, death and damnation!

IAGO:

It would truly be difficult. And what
certainty do you dream of if that filthy
deed eludes you? But even if truth is
guided by reason, use strong judgment
to lead you to certainty. Listen!

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 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?

It was night. Cassio was sleeping, and I stayed close to him.

With a broken voice he revealed his most intimate enchantments.

His lips moved very slowly, and in the abandonment of his ardent dream, he then said:

"Gentle Desdemona! Hide our love. We must be cautious! Heaven's ecstasy completely enraptures me."

His gentle nightmare became more indistinct, and while almost kissing the dreamy image, he said with anguish:

"I curse the awful destiny that gave you to the Moor."

And then the dream became silent slumber.

OTHELLO:

Oh! Monstrous guilt!

IAGO:

I only related a dream.

OTHELLO:

A dream that reveals the truth.

IAGO:

A dream that can provide proof of something else.

OTHELLO:

And what?

IAGO:

Have you ever seen Desdemona holding a fine veil, a cloth embroidered with flowers?

OTELLO:

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

JAGO:

Quel fazzoletto ieri 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!

OTHELLO:

It is the handkerchief that I gave her as
the first pledge of my love.

IAGO:

I saw that handkerchief yesterday in
Cassio's hands.

OTHELLO:

Ah! May God give him a thousand lives!
His prayers are too weak for my furor!
Iago, I have a heart of ice.
Keep the miserable larva away from me!
All my vain love has risen to heaven.
Look at me. The Hydra has me trapped
in its bloody coils!
Ah! Blood! Blood! Blood!



Si, 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 questa man ch'io levo e stendo!

JAGO:

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!

Yes, I swear by the marble heaven!
By the twisted lightning above!
By death and the obscure annihilating sea!
This hand I extend in anger and wrath
shall avenge me!

IAGO:

Do not rise yet!
I witness it, by the sun I see,
that illuminates me and breathes life to
the vast earth from the Creator's breath.
I give my heart and soul to Othello's
sacred passion, fastened to his bloody
commands, and braced to his wishes!

Together, they raise their hands in a solemn oath.

JAGO è OTELO:

Si, 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 questa man ch'io levo e stendo!
 Dio vendicator!

IAGO and OTHELLO:

Yes, I swear by the marble heaven!
 By the twisted lightning above!
 By death and the obscure, annihilating sea!
 This hand I extend in anger and wrath
 shall avenge me!
 God will vindicate us!

ACT III

The Great Hall of the Castle. Othello converses with Iago.

ARALDO:

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

HERALD:

The watch at the port has signaled that
 a Venetian galley has come to Cyprus
 with the ambassadors.

OTELLO:

Bene sta.

OTHELLO:

It is well.
(to Iago)
 Continue.

Continua.

JAGO:

Qui trarrò Cassio e con astute inchieste
 lo adescherò a ciarlar.
 Voi là nascosto scrutate i modi suoi, le
 sue parole, i lazzi, i gesti.
 Paziente siate o la prova vi sfugge.

IAGO:

I'll draw Cassio here, and with astute
 questions, I'll lure him to speak.
 You will hide there and scrutinize his
 manners, his words, his gibes, his gestures.
 You must be patient or the proof will escape.

Ecco Desdemona.

Finger conviene. Io vado.
 Il fazzoletto.....

Here comes Desdemona.

It is best to pretend to be proper.. I am going.
 The handkerchief.....

OTELLO:

Va! Volentieri obliato l'avrei.

OTHELLO:

Go! I would have gladly forgotten it.



DESDEMONA:

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

DESDEMONA:

God bring joy to my husband, the
master over my soul.

OTHELLO:

Grazie, madonna, datemi la vostra
eburnea mano. Caldo mador ne irroro
la morbida beltà.

OTHELLO:

Thank you my good lady., Give me
your ivory hand, whose mellow beauty
is sprinkled with warmth.

DESDEMONA:

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

DESDEMONA:

It yet is ignorant of the marks of age or
sorrow.

OTHELLO:

Eppur qui annida il demone gentil del
mal consiglio, che il vago avorio
allumina del piccioletto artiglio.
Mollemente alla prece s'atteggia e al
pio fervore.

OTHELLO:

And here nestles the gentle demon of
evil advice, which illuminates the
vague ivory of this hand.
It requires one to softly pose in prayer
and pure ardor.

DESDEMONA:

Eppur con questa mano io v'ho donato
il core.

DESDEMONA:

And yet it was with this hand that I
have given you my heart.

Ma riparlar vi debbo di Cassio.

But I must speak to you again of Cassio.

OTHELLO

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

OTHELLO:

Again the anguish of my disease
assaults me; bandage my forehead.

DESDEMONA:

A te.

DESDEMONA: (*offering a handkerchief*)

Here.

OTELLO:

No; il fazzoletto voglio ch'io ti donai.

DESDEMONA:

Non l'ho meco.

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?

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.

OTHELLO:

No, I want the handkerchief I gave you
as a present.

DESDEMONA:

I don't have it with me.

OTHELLO:

Desdemona, woe if you lost it! Woe!
A powerful sorceress was plotting the
mysterious thread.
The powerful spell of an evil talisman
is hidden here.
Enough! Losing it or giving it away
would be a bad misfortune!

DESDEMONA:

Really?

OTHELLO:

Yes, it is true.

DESDEMONA:

You scare me!

OTHELLO:

What? Perhaps you lost it?

DESDEMONA:

No.

OTHELLO:

Look for it.

DESDEMONA:

I'll look for it later.

OTHELLO:

No, right away.

DESDEMONA:

Your making fun of me. In this way
you're evading my inquiry about Cassio.
Your thoughts are cunning.

OTELLO:

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

DESDEMONA:

È Cassio l'amico tuo diletto.

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!

OTHELLO:

By heavens! My soul awakens!
The handkerchief.

DESDEMONA:

Cassio is your favorite friend.

OTHELLO:

The handkerchief!

DESDEMONA:

Forgive Cassio.

OTHELLO:

The handkerchief!

DESDEMONA:

Good God! The shouting of your voice
is menacing!

OTHELLO:

Lift those eyes!

DESDEMONA:

Horrible idea!

Othello physically forces Desdemona to look at him.

OTELLO:

Guardami in faccia! Dimmi chi sei!

DESDEMONA:

La sposa fedel d'Otello

OTELLO:

Giura! Giura e ti dann.

DESDEMONA:

Otello fedel mi crede.

OTELLO:

Impura ti credo.

OTHELLO:

Look into my face! Tell me who you are!

DESDEMONA:

The faithful wife of Othello.

OTHELLO:

Swear it! Swear it and damn yourself.

DESDEMONA:

Othello, believe me, I am faithful.

OTHELLO:

I believe you are unfaithful.

DESDEMONA:

Iddio m'aiuta!

OTELLO:

Corri alla tua condanna, di' che sei casta.

DESDEMONA:

Casta io son.

OTELLO:

Giura e ti dannà!

DESDEMONA:

Esterre fatta 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, che da me spreme il duol.

OTELLO:

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

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:

God help me!

OTHELLO:

Go to your damnation, and say you are chaste.

DESDEMONA:

I am chaste.

OTHELLO:

Swear it and damn yourself!

DESDEMONA:

I am terrified by your look.
A fury speaks inside you. I feel it but cannot understand it.

Look at me! I reveal my face and soul to you. My heart is broken. I search inside myself. In tears I pray to heaven for you, sprinkling my scalding tears on the ground.

Look at my tears, that have been caused by my pain.

OTHELLO:

Perhaps it perceives your demon. An angel may believe you but not grasp it.

DESDEMONA:

God is aware of my faithfulness!

OTHELLO:

No! Hell sees it.

DESDEMONA:

My husband, I implore your justice!

OTHELLO:

Ah! Desdemona! Back! Back! Back!

DESEMONA:

Tu pur piangi? E gemendo freni del cor lo schianto!

E son io l'innocente cagion di tanto pianto! Qual è il mio fallo?

OTHELLO:

E il chiedi? Il più nero delitto sovra il candido giglio della tua fronte è scritto.

DESEMONA:

Ahimè!

OTHELLO:

Che? Non sei forse una vil cortigiana?

DESEMONA:

Ciel! No, no, pel battesimo della fede cristiana!

OTHELLO:

Che?

DESEMONA:

Ah! Non son ciò che esprime quella parola orrenda.

DESEMONA:

Are you crying also? And by moaning you stop your pain!

And I am the innocent cause of your tears! What have I done wrong?

OTHELLO:

And you ask? The darkest sin is written on the whiteness of your forehead.

DESEMONA:

Oh my!

OTHELLO:

What? Are you not perhaps a vile courtesan?

DESEMONA:

Heaven! No, no, by the baptism of my Christian faith!

OTHELLO:

What?

DESEMONA:

Ah! I am not what you say, that horrible word.

Othello changes from wrath to calm irony.

He takes Desdemona's hand and leads her to the door.

OTHELLO:

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

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

OTHELLO:

Give me again your ivory hand, I want to apologize.

I believe (please forgive me if my thoughts are treacherous) that Othello's wife is a vile courtesan.

Othello pushes Desdemona out.

He becomes deeply dejected, his voice suffocating.

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'angoscie e d'onte con calma fronte
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!
Tu alfin, Clemenza, pio genio
immortal dal roseo riso,
copri il tuo viso santo coll'orrida larva
infernale!

Ah! Dannazione!
Pria confessi il delitto e poscia muoia!
Confession! Confession!
La prova!

JAGO:
Cassio è là!

OTELLO:
Là? Cielo! Oh, gioia!

Horror! Supplizi immondi!

JAGO:
Ti frena! Ti nascondi!

JAGO:
Vieni, l'aula è deserta.
T'inoltra, o Capitano.

God! You could have afflicted me with
all the pains of poverty and shame.
From my bold triumphs you have given
me ruination and lies.

And I would have borne the cruel cross
of anguish and dishonor calmly and with
resignation if it was the wish of Heaven.

But, oh tears, oh pain! They have
robbed me of the illusion of joy and
calm in my soul.

The sun has descended, that smile, that
radiance that gave me life and joy!
You at least, clemency, pious immortal
genius of a rosy smile,
cover your sainted face with the
horrible infernal larva!

Ah! Damnation!
First confess the crime and then you die!
Confession! Confession!
Proof!

(Iago enters)

IAGO:
Cassio is there!

OTHELLO:
There? Heavens! Oh, joy!

Horror! Filthy torments!

IAGO: *(leads Othello to the back)*
Stop! Hide yourself!

(Iago meets Cassio)
Come, the hall is deserted.
Come forward, 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.

OTHELLO:

Ei la nomò!

CASSIO:

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

JAGO:

L'attendi.

CASSIO:

The honorable title still sounds vain to
me.

IAGO:

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

CASSIO:

I thought that I would find Desdemona here.

OTHELLO: (*from hiding*)

He named her!

CASSIO:

I want to speak to her again to know if
my pardon has been granted.

IAGO:

Await her.

Iago leads Cassio near to where Othello hides so he can overhear them.

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

CASSIO:

Di chi?

JAGO:

Di Bianca.

OTHELLO:

(Sorrìde!)

CASSIO:

Baie!

JAGO:

Essa t'avvince coi vaghi rai.

Meanwhile, don't let your tongue tire,
and tell about your cheerful adventures.
Tell a little about the one who loves you.

CASSIO:

Who?

IAGO: (*whispering to Cassio*)

Of Bianca.

OTHELLO:

(He laughs!)

CASSIO:

Nonsense!

IAGO:

She conquers you with her charming glow.

CASSIO:

Rider mi fai.

JAGO:

Ride chi vince.

CASSIO:

In tai difide, per verità, vince chi ride.
Ah! Ah!

JAGO:

Ah! Ah!

OTELLO:

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

CASSIO:

Son già di baci sazio e di lai. O amor
fugaci!

JAGO:

Rider mi fai!

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

CASSIO:

Ah! Ah!

OTELLO:

(L'empio m'irride, il suo scherno m'uccide,
Dio frena l'ansia che in core mista!)

CASSIO:

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

JAGO:

Sommesso parla. T'ascolto.

CASSIO:

You make me laugh.

IAGO:

The victor laughs.

CASSIO:

In such challenges, truly, the victor
laughs. Ah! Ah!

IAGO:

Ah! Ah!

OTHELLO:

(Impious triumph! His scorn kills me.
God restrain the anxiety in my heart!)

CASSIO:

I've already had enough of kisses and
fleeting love!

IAGO:

You make me laugh!

Some other beauty has enchanted you.
Did I catch you? Ah! Ah!

CASSIO:

Ah! Ah!

OTHELLO:

(Impious triumph! His scorn kills me.
God restrain the anxiety in my heart!)

CASSIO:

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

IAGO:

Speak softly. I'm listening to you.

Iago leads Cassio far from where Othello can hear.

CASSIO:

Jago, t'è nota la mia dimora.

OTELLO:

(Or gli racconta il modo, il luogo e l'ora.)

CASSIO:

Da mano ignota....

OTELLO:

(Le parole non odo....
Lasso! e udir le vorrei! Dove son guinto!)

CASSIO:

....un vel trapunto....

JAGO:

È strano! È strano!

OTELLO:

(D'avvicinarmi Jago mi fa cenno.)

JAGO:

Da ignota mano?
Baie!

CASSIO:

Da senno.
Quanto mi tarda saper chi sia.

JAGO:

(Otello spia.)

L'hai teco?

CASSIO:

Guarda.

JAGO:

Qual meraviglia!

CASSIO:

Iago, you know my apartment.

OTHELLO:

(Now he's telling him the way, place, and the hour.

CASSIO:

From some unknown hand....

OTHELLO:

(I can't hear your words....
I want to hear them! Look where I wait!)

CASSIO:

....a veil with three point design....

IAGO:

That's strange! That's strange!

OTHELLO:

(Iago makes a sign for me to get closer.)

IAGO:

From an unknown hand?
Nonsense!

CASSIO:

Really.
I can't figure out who it is.

IAGO: (*looking toward Othello*)

(*Othello is spying.*)

(*to Cassio, loudly*)

You have it with you?

CASSIO: (*taking out the handkerchief*)

Look.

IAGO: (*taking the handkerchief*)

What a wonder!

(Otello origlia. Ei s'avvicina con mosse accorte.)

Bel cavaliere.

Nel vostro ostello perdono gli angeli
l'aureola e il vel.

OTELLO:

(È quello! È quello!)
Ruina e morte!

JAGO:

(Origlia Otello.)

OTELLO:

(Tutto è spento! Amore e duol.
L'alma mia nessun più smuova.)

(Othello listens. He comes closer cautiously..)

(to Cassio)

Handsome cavalier.

(Iago holds the handkerchief behind him for Othello to see)

In your home angels lose their veils and their wings..

OTHELLO:

(looking at the handkerchief)

(That is it! That is it!

Death and ruin!

IAGO: (to himself)

(Othello listens.)

OTHELLO: (whispering)

(All is ended! Love and pain.

Nobody move my soul anymore.)

Allegro brillante

IAGO



JAGO:

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

IAGO: (displaying the handkerchief)

This is a web
where your heart
falls, moans,
becomes entangled and dies.
You admire her
and look at her so much.
Be aware of useless
and false illusions.
This is a web....

CASSIO:

Miracolo vago dell'aspro e dell'ago
che in raggi tramuta le fila d'un vel,
più bianco, più leve che fiocco di neve,
che nube tessuta dalla'aure del ciel.

CASSIO:

Charming miracle of the reel and needle
that transform the threads into a glimmering
veil, whiter and lighter than flakes of snow,
like a cloud woven by breezes in the sky.

JAGO:

Questa è una ragna dove il tuo cuor....

IAGO:

This is a web where your heart....

CASSIO:

Miracolo vago....

CASSIO:

Miraculous charm....

OTHELLO:

(Tradimento, tradimento, tradimento,
la tua prova, la tua prova spaventosa
mostri al Sol.)

OTHELLO: (*Hidden and looking at
the handkerchief in Cassio's hands*)

(Treachery, treachery, treachery,
your proof, your proof, frightening
lights of the sun.)

CASSIO:

Miracolo vago!

CASSIO:

Charming miracle!

OTHELLO:

(Tradimento!)

OTHELLO:

(Treachery!)

JAGO:

Troppo l'ammiri....

IAGO: (*to Cassio*)

You admire her....

OTHELLO:

(Tradimento!)

OTHELLO:

(Treachery!)

Trumpets and canon sound from afar.

JAGO:

Bada! Bada!

IAGO:

Listen! Listen!

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

Ascolta.

Tutto il castel co'suoi squilli risponde.
Se qui non vuoi con Othello scontrarti,
fuggi.

This is the signal that announces the
arrival of the Venetian galley.

Listen.

The whole castle blasts its response.
If you don't want to face Othello here,
then run away.

CASSIO:

Addio.

CASSIO:

Farewell.

JAGO:

Va.

IAGO:

Go.

As Cassio leaves, Othello emerges from hiding.

OTELLO:

Come la ucciderò?

JAGO:

Vedeste ben com'egli ha riso?

OTELLO:

Vidi.

JAGO:

E il fazzoletto?

OTELLO:

Tutto vidi.

CIPRIOTTI:

Evviva! Alla riva!

VOCI LONTANE:

Allo sbarco!

OTELLO:

È condannata.

TUTTI:

Evviva!

OTELLO:

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

JAGO:

Il toscano, no.

TUTTI:

Evviva il Leon di San Marco!

JAGO:Val meglio soffocarla, là nel suo letto,
là, dove ha peccato.**OTELLO:**

Questa giustizia tua mi piace.

OTHELLO:

How shall I kill her?

IAGO:

You saw well how he laughed?

OTHELLO:

I saw.

IAGO:

And the handkerchief?

OTHELLO:

I saw all.

CYPRIOTS:

Hail! To the shore!

VOICE FROM AFAR:

To the landing!

OTHELLO:

She is condemned.

ALL:

Hail!

OTHELLO:

Get me some poison for this evening.

IAGO:

Poison. No!

ALL:

Hail the Lion of St. Marks!

IAGO:Much better to suffocate her in her bed
where she has sinned.**OTHELLO:**

Your sense of justice pleases me.

JAGO:

A Cassio Jago provvederà.

IAGO:

Iago will handle Cassio.

OTELLO:

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

OTHELLO:

Iago, from this moment I elect you my Captain.

JAGO:

Mio Duce, grazie vi rendo.

Ecco gli Ambasciatori.

Li accogliete. Ma ad evitar sospetti,
Desdemona si mostri a quei Messeri.

IAGO:

My leader, I give you thanks.

Here are the Ambassadors.

Receive them. But avoid suspicion and
present Desdemona to those gentlemen.

OTELLO:

Sì, qui l'adduci.

OTHELLO:

Yes, bring her here.

Iago leaves. Othello goes to greet the Ambassadors. All gather: Iago, Lodovico, Roderigo, the Herald, Desdemona and Emilia, Dignitaries of the Venetian Republic, Gentlemen, ladies, and soldiers.

TUTTI:

Viva! Evviva!

Viva il Leon di San Marco.

Evviva, evviva!

ALL:

Long life! Hail!

Hail to the Lion of St. Marks.

Hail, hail!

LODOVICO:

Il Doge ed il Senato salutano l'eroe
trionfatore di Cipro. Io reco nelle vostre
mani il messaggio dogale.

LODOVICO: *(holding a parchment)*

The Doge and the Senate salute the
triumphant hero of Cyprus. I deliver to
your hands the Doge's message.

OTELLO:

Io bacio il segno della Sovrana Maestà.

OTHELLO: *(takes the letter and kisses it)*

I kiss the seal of the Sovereign Majesty.

(Othello opens the letter and reads it)

LODOVICO:

Madonna, v'abbia il ciel in sua guardia.

LODOVICO: *(going to Desdemona)*

My lady, may heaven protect you.

DESDEMONA:

E il ciel v'ascolti.

DESDEMONA:

May heaven hear you.

EMILIA:

(Come sei mesta!)

EMILIA: (*aside to Desdemona*)

(How sad you are!)

DESDEMONA:

(Emilia, una gran nube turba il senno d'Otello e il mio destino.)

DESDEMONA: (*aside to Emilia*)

(Emilia, a heavy cloud is upsetting Othello's mind and my destiny.)

JAGO:

Messere, son lieto di vedervi.

IAGO: (*to Lodovico*)

Sirs, I'm happy to see you.

LODOVICO:

Jago, quali nuove? Ma in mezzo a voi non trovo Cassio.

LODOVICO:

Iago, what is new? I don't see Cassio among you.

JAGO:

Con lui crucciato è Otello.

IAGO:

Othello is upset with him.

DESDEMONA:

Credo che in grazia tornerà.

DESDEMONA:

I believe he will return to his good graces.

OTELLO:

Ne siete certa?

OTHELLO: (*to Desdemona*)

Are you so sure?

DESDEMONA:

Che dite?

DESDEMONA:

What are you saying?

LODOVICO:

Ei legge, non vi parla.

LODOVICO:

He's reading, and doesn't speak to you.

JAGO:

Forse che in grazia tornerà.

IAGO:

Perhaps his kindness will return.

DESDEMONA:

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

DESDEMONA:

Iago, I hope so. You know how much true affection I have for Cassio.

OTELLO:

Frenate dunque le labbra loquaci. . .

OTHELLO: (*whispering to Desdemona*)

Hold your babbling tongue.

DESDEMONA:

Perdonate, signor.

DESDEMONA:

Pardon me, my lord.

OTELLO:

Demonio, taci!

LODOVICO:

Ferma!

TUTTI:

Orrore! Orrore!

LODOVICO:

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

OTELLO:

A me Cassio!

JAGO:

(Che tenti?)

OTELLO:

(Guardala mentre ei giunge.)

GENTILUOMINI:

Ah! Triste sposa!

LODOVICO:

Quest'è dunque l'erore? quest'è il
guerriero dai sublimi ardimenti?

JAGO:

È quel ch'egli è.

LODOVICO:

Palesa il tuo pensiero.

JAGO:

Meglio è tener su ciò la lingua muta.

OTELLO:

(Eccolo! È lui!

Nell'animo lo scruta.)

OTHELLO: (*about to strike Desdemona*)

Damn it, quiet!

LODOVICO: (*holding back Othello*)

Stop!

ALL:

Horror! Horror!

LODOVICO:

My mind doesn't dare to think that I
saw such a deed.

OTHELLO: (*commanding the Herald*)

Bring Cassio to me!

IAGO: (*whispering to Othello*)

What are you doing?

OTHELLO: (*aside to Iago*)

(Watch her when he arrives.)

MEN:

Ah! Sad wife!

LODOVICO: (*aside to Iago*)

Is this the hero? Is this the warrior with
sublime boldness?

IAGO:

He is the one.

LODOVICO:

Reveal your thoughts.

IAGO:

It is better not to talk about it.

OTHELLO: (*to Iago, as Cassio appears*)

(Here he comes! It's him!

Watch him carefully.)

Messeri! Il Doge....

(ben tu fingi il pianto.)
mi richiama a Venezia.

RODERIGO:

(Infida sorte!)

OTELLO:

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

JAGO:

(Inferno e morte!)

OTELLO:

La parola Ducale è nostra legge.

CASSIO:

Obbedirò.

OTELLO:

(Vedi? Non par che esulti l'infame!)

JAGO:

(No.)

OTELLO:

La ciurma e la coorte....

(Continua i tuoi singulti)
e le navi e il castello lascio in poter del
nuovo Duce.

LODOVICO:

Otello, per pietà la conforta o il cor le
infrangi.

OTELLO:

Noi salperem domani.

Gentlemen! The Doge....

(*aside to Desdemona*)
(you pretend your tears well)
has recalled me to Venice.

RODERIGO:

(Deceitful fate!)

OTHELLO:

And elects as my successor in Cyprus,
the man who stood beside me on my
vessel: Cassio.

IAGO: (*surprised and furious*)

(Hell and death!)

OTHELLO:

The Ducal word is our law.

CASSIO: (*bowing to Othello*)

I will obey.

OTHELLO: (*to Iago*)

(Look? It seems the villain is not excited!)

IAGO:

(No.)

OTHELLO:

The crew and the court...
(*aside to Desdemona*)
(Continue your weeping)
and the ships and the castle are left
under the command of the new leader.

LODOVICO: (*pointing to Desdemona*)

Othello, for pity's sake, comfort her or
you will break her heart.

OTHELLO: (*to Lodovico and Desdemona*)

We sail tomorrow.

*Othello grabs Desdemona furiously and throws her to the ground..
Emilia and Lodovico lift her and try to comfort her.*

A terra! E piangi!

To the ground! And weep!

Largo
DESDEMONA

The musical notation is for a single line of music in G minor (three flats) and 4/4 time. It begins with a whole rest, followed by a quarter rest, then a quarter note G4, an eighth note A4, and a quarter note Bb4. After a bar line, there is a quarter note C5, a quarter rest, and then a triplet of eighth notes: D5, E5, and F5. The line ends with a quarter note G5. The lyrics 'A terra! sì nel li - vi - do fango.' are written below the notes.

DESDEMONA:

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

DESDEMONA:

On the ground! Yes, in the murky mud.
Struck down, I lie weeping, the shiver
of my chills in my dying soul.

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

And once my smile flourished with
hope and a kiss,
and now, there is anguish on my face
and agony in my heart.

Quel Sol sereno e vivido
che allietta il cielo e il mare
non può asciugar le amare
stille del mio dolor.

That serene and vivid sun that enlivens
the heavens and the sea
cannot ease the bitterness
of my pain.

EMILIA

(Quell 'innocente un fremito
d'odio non ha nè un gesto,
trattiene in petto il gemito
con doloroso fren.
La lagrima si frange muta sul volto mesto;
no, chi per lei non piange non ha
pietade in sen.)

EMILIA:

(That innocent shudders from his hate.
Deep in her bosom the sigh dies, wrung
by her grief. She restrains the painful
moaning in her heart.
The tears fall silent on her sad face.
No. The one who cannot weep for her
has no pity in his soul.)

CASSIO

(L'ora è fatal! un fulmine sul mio
cammin l'addita.
Già di mia sorte il culmine s'offre
all'inerte incalza
L'ebbra fortuna incalza la fuga della
vita.
Questa che al ciel m'innalza è un'onda
d'uragan.)

CASSIO:

(It is a fatal hour! Lightning points out
the dangers on my path.
Already my fate surrenders to the
dangers that pursue me.
The intoxicated fortune pursues an
escaping life.
Heaven praises me with a wave of a
hurricane.)

RODERIGO:

(Per me s'oscura il mondo, s'annuvola
il destin, l'angol soave e biondo
scompar dal mio cammin.)

LODOVICO:

(Egli la man funerea scuote anelando
d'ira, essa la faccia eterea volge
piangendo al ciel.
Nel contemplar quel pianto la carità
sospira, e un tenero compianto
stemptra del core il gel.)

DESDEMONA:

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

DAME:

Pietà! Pietà! Pietà!
Ansia mortale, bieca, ne ingombra,
anime assortite in lungo orror.
Vista crudel!
Ei la colpi! 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.

CAVALIERI:

Mistero! Mistero! Mistero!
Quell'uomo nero è sepolcrale, e cieca
un'ombra è in lui di morte e di terror!
Strazia coll'ugna l'orrido
petto! Gli sguardi figge immoti al suol.
Poi sfida il ciel coll'atre pugna, l'ispido
aspetto ergendo ai dardi alti del Sol.

RODERIGO:

(For me, the world darkens into a
clouded destiny, and the gentle blond
angel disappears from my path.)

LODOVICO:

(His bleak hand shakes and he gasps
with anger. She turns her delicate face
to Heaven and weeps.
In contemplating those tears, charity
sighs, and a tender sorrow melts the
chilled heart.

DESDEMONA:

And once my smile flourished with
hope and a kiss,
and now, there is anguish on my face
and agony in my heart.
On the ground,, in the murky slime,
struck down, the shiver of my chills in
my dying soul.

WOMEN:

Mercy! Mercy! Mercy!
Fierce mortal anguish, thoughts of evil
have overcome his mind.
Cruel sight!
He struck her! That saintly face, pale and
gentle, says nothing and cries and dies.
The angels in heaven also cry when
they have lost the sinner.

MEN:

A mystery! A mystery! A mystery!
That dark man is deathlike, a blind
shadow of death and terror in him!
With clenched hands he wildly beats
his chest! He challenges the Heavens
with his other fist, raising his beastly
look to the sun's rays.

JAGO:

Una parola.

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.

OTELLO:

Tu?

JAGO:

Giurai.

OTELLO:

Tal sia.

JAGO:

Tu avrai le sue novelle questa notte.

(I sogni tuoi saranno in mar domani
e tu sull'aspra terra.)

IAGO: (*approaching Othello*)

A word

OTHELLO:

And what?

IAGO:

Hurry! Quickly take your revenge!
Time flies.

OTHELLO:

Good advice.

IAGO:

Useless anger is nonsense! Get hold of
yourself! Concentrate on your action!
Only on your action! I will handle
Cassio. I'll spy on him.
The infernal will swallow his infamous soul!

OTHELLO:

Who will tear it from him?

IAGO:

I.

OTHELLO:

You?

IAGO:

I swear to it.

OTHELLO:

So be it.

IAGO:

You will have the news about him this evening.

(*ironically to Roderigo*)

(You dreams will be at sea tomorrow,
and you shall be on dry land.)

RODERIGO:

(Ahi triste!)

JAGO:

Ahi stolto! Stolto!

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

RODERIGO:

T'ascolta.

JAGO:

Col primo albor salpa il vascello.

Or Cassio è il Duce.

Eppur se avvien che a questi accada
sventura, allor qui resta Otello.

RODERIGO:

Lugubre luce d'atro balen!

JAGO:

Mano alla spada!

A notte folta io la sua traccia vigilo,
e il varco e l'ora scruto; il resto a te.

Sarò tuo scolta. A caccia! a caccia!
Cingiti l'arco!)

RODERIGO:

(Sì! T'ho venduto onore e fè.)

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.)

RODERIGO:

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

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

RODERIGO:

(So sad!)

IAGO:

Foolish! Foolish!

If you wish, you can wait. The men
now! Attack danger and listen to me.

RODERIGO:

I listen to you.

IAGO:

The vessel will sail at daybreak.

Now Cassio is the leader.

And yet if he should meet with a
mishap, Othello will remain here.

RODERIGO:

Dismal light of another flash!

IAGO:

Unsheathe your sword!

At full night I will watch his steps

I'll tell you the hour and place.

I will be your scout! To the hunt! To the
hunt! Get the bow ready!

RODERIGO:

(Yes! I have sold you my honor and faith!)

IAGO:

(The mirage proceeds! Your fragile mind
has already become confused by a lying
dreamer. Follow my astute and agile sign,
deceived lover. I follow my thoughts.)

RODERIGO:

(I await you fearlessly, final fate and
obscure destiny. Love guides me, but
an avid, terrible star of death infests
my path.)

OTELLO:

Fuggite!

OTHELLO:

Flee from me!

TUTTI:

Ciel!

ALL:

Heavens!

OTELLO:

Tutti fuggite Otello!

OTHELLO:

Everyone flee from Othello!

JAGO:

Lo assale una malia che d'ogni senso il priva.

IAGO: (to all)

He is stricken by an illness that deprives him of all of his senses.

OTELLO:

Chi non si scosta è contro me rubello.

OTHELLO:

Who doesn't leave must face my whip.

Desdemona runs toward Othello.

LODOVICO:

Mi segui.

LODOVICO: (trying to draw her away)

Follow me.

CIPRIOTTI:

Evviva!

CYPRIOTS:

Hail!

DESDEMONA:

Mio sposo!

DESDEMONA:

My husband!

OTELLO:

Anima mia, ti maledico!

OTHELLO:

My dearest, I curse you!

TUTTI:

Orror!

ALL:

Horror!

All leave. Othello and Iago are alone.

OTELLO:

Fuggirmi io sol non so!

Sangue!

Ah! L'abbietto pensiero!

"Ciò m'accora!"

Vederli insieme avvinti.

Il fazzoletto! Il fazzoletto! Il fazzoletto!

Ah! Ah! Ah!

OTHELLO: (delirious)

I cannot flee from myself!

Blood!

Ah! That vile thought!

"This breaks my heart!"

To see them embraced together.

The handkerchief! The handkerchief!

The handkerchief! Ah! Ah! Ah!

JAGO:
(Il mio valen lavora.)

IAGO:
(My poison is working.)

CIPRIOTTI:
Viva Otello!

CYPRIOTS: (from outside)
Long live Othello!

JAGO:
L'eco della vittoria....

IAGO:
The echo of victory....

CIPRIOTTI:
Evviva, viva!

CYPRIOTS:
Hail, long life!

JAGO:
....porge sua laude estrema.

IAGO:
....gives him extreme praise.

CIPRIOTTI:
Evviva!

CYPRIOTS:
Hail!

Iago observes Othello lying on the ground

JAGO:
Chi può vietar che questa fronte prema
col mio tallone?

IAGO:
Who can prevent me from placing my
heel on his head?

CIPRIOTTI:
Evviva! Evviva Otello!
Gloria al Leon di Venezia!

CYPRIOTS:
Hail! Hail Othello!
Glory to the Lion of Venice!

JAGO:
Ecco il Leone!

IAGO: (In irony and triumphant)
Here is you Lion!

CIPRIOTTI:
Viva! Viva! Viva Otello!

CYPRIOTS:
Hail! Hail! Hail Othello!

ACT IV

Desdemona's bedroom.

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.

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

EMILIA:

Sacciate queste idee.

DESDEMONA:

Son mesta, tanto, tanto.

Mia madre aveva una povera ancella,
innamorata e bella. Era il suo nome
Barbara.
Amava un uom che poi l'abbandonò;
cantava un canzone: "La canzon del
Salice."

Mi disciogli le chiome.
Io questa sera ho la memoria piena
di quella cantilena.
"Piangea cantando nell'erma landa,
piangea la mesta.
O Salce! Salce! Salce!"

"Sede a chinando sul sen la testa!
Salce! Salce! Salce!
Cantiamo! Cantiamo! il Salce funebre
sarà la mia ghirlanda!"

EMILIA:

He was calmer?

DESDEMONA:

It seemed so. He commanded me to go
to be and await him.
Emilia, I beg of you. Spread my white
wedding dress on my bed.

Listen. If I should die before you bury
me with one of those veils.

EMILIA:

Drive away those thoughts.

DESDEMONA:

I'm so sad, so sad.

My mother had an old maidservant. She
was beautiful and in love. Her name
was Barbara.
The man she loved abandoned her; she
sang a song, "The Song of the
Willow."

Untie my hair.
This evening my thoughts are filled
with that song.
"Alone on the heath, she was sadly
weeping.
O Willow! Willow! Willow!"

"She sat with her head on her chest!
Willow! Willow! Willow!
Let's sing! Let's sing! The mournful
willow will be my garland!"

Affrettati; fra poco giunge Otello.

(to Emilia)

Hurry, soon Othello arrives.

DESDEMONA



"Scor-rea - no i ri - vi fra le zolle in fior gemea quel core affranto..."

“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.
Scendean ‘angeli a vol dai rami cupi
verso quel dolce canto.
E gli occhi suoi piangean tanto, tanto,
da impietosir le rupi.”

“The streams ran through the flowery banks. That broken heart was groaning, and waves of bitter tears were gushing from her eyes.
Willow! Willow! Willow!
Let’s sing! Let’s sing! The mournful willow will be my garland.
All the birds descended from the branches to hear that sweet song.
And her eyes were so full of tears that the stones were moved to pity.”

Riponi quest'anello.
Povera Barbara! Solea la storia con
questo semplice suono finir:
"Egli era nato per la sua gloria,
io per amar."

(*Desdemona takes a ring from her finger*)
Hold on to this ring.
Poor Barbara! That is how that sad
story ended.
“He was born for glory, and I for love.”

Ascolta. Odo un lamento.
Taci. Chi batte a quella porta?

Listen. I hear a sigh.
Quiet. Who knocks on the door?

EMILIA:
E il vento.

EMILIA:
It is the wind.

DESDEMONA:
 “Io per amarlo e per morir.
 Cantiamo! Cantiamo!
 Salce! Salce! Salce!”

DESDEMONA:
 “And I to love him and to die.
 Let’s sing! Let’s sing!
 Willow! Willow! Willow!”

Emilia, addio. Come m'ardon le ciglia!
È presagio di pianto.
Buona notte.
Ah! Emilia, Emilia, addio, Emilia, addio!

Farewell Emilia. How my eyes are
burning me! I feel like crying.
Good night.
Ah! Emilia, Emilia, farewell!

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.

Hail Mary, full of grace, you the elite
among women and virgins,
and from your maternal womb, the
blessed fruit: Jesus.

Adagio
DESDEMONA



Prega per chi adorando a te si prostra,
prega nel peccator, per l'innocente,
e pel debole oppresso e pel possente,
misero anch'esso, tua pietà dimostra.

Pray for one who kneels before you and
adores you. Pray for the sinner, for the
innocent, and for the oppressed weak,
and also show mercy for the powerful.

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.

Pray for one who bows the head under
outrage and wicked destiny.
Pray for us, pray always, and at the
hour of our death, pray for us.
Pray for us, pray.

Ave Maria, nell'ora della morte.
Ave! Amen!

Hail Mary, in the hour of death.
Hail! Amen!

*Desdemona lies down on the bed. Othello enters from a secret door.
With gestures of fury he approaches the bed and contemplates the sleeping
Desdemona. He kisses her, awakening her with the third kiss.*

DESDEMONA:
Chi è là? Otello?

DESDEMONA:
Who is there? Othello?

OTELLO:
Sì! Diceste questa sera le vostre preci?

OTHELLO:
Yes! You said your prayers tonight?

DESDEMONA:
Orai. . .

DESDEMONA:
I prayed.

OTELLO:
Se vi sovviene di qualche colpa
commessa che attenda grazia dal ciel,
imploratela tosto.

OTHELLO:
Implore the grace of heaven if it helps
to absolve a crime you have committed
and which awaits grace.

DESDEMONA:

Perchè?

DESDEMONA:

Why?

OTELLO:

T'affretta. Uccidere non voglio l'anima tua.

OTHELLO:

Hurry! I don't want to kill your soul.

DESDEMONA:

D'uccider parli?

DESDEMONA:

You speak of killing?

OTELLO:

Sì.

OTHELLO::

Yes.

DESDEMONA:

Pietà di me, mio Dio!

DESDEMONA:

God have mercy on me!

OTELLO:

Amen.

OTHELLO:

Amen.

DESDEMONA:

E abbiate pietà voi pure.

DESDEMONA:

And you too have mercy.

OTELLO:

Pensa ai tuoi peccati.

OTHELLO:

Think about your sins.

DESDEMONA:

Mio peccato è l'amor.

DESDEMONA:

My sin is love.

OTELLO:

Perciò tu muori.

OTHELLO:

For that you die.

DESDEMONA:

E perchè t'amo m'uccidi?

DESDEMONA:

And you kill me because I love you?

OTELLO:

Ami Cassio.

OTHELLO:

You love Cassio.

DESDEMONA:

No! Sull'anima mia!

DESDEMONA:

No! On my soul!

OTELLO:

Quel fazzoletto ch'io ti donai gli desti.

OTHELLO:

You gave that handkerchief 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:

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!

DESDEMONA:

That's not true.

OTHELLO:

I saw it in his hand.

DESDEMONA:

I am not guilty!

OTHELLO:

Confess!

DESDEMONA:

I swear!

OTHELLO:

Stop your lying.

Think that you are on your deathbed.

DESDEMONA:

Not to die.

OTHELLO:

To die right now.

DESDEMONA:

Help me!

I don't love Cassio. Call him here and ask him.

OTHELLO:

He is silent for ever.

DESDEMONA:

Heavens! Dead?

OTHELLO:

Dead.

DESDEMONA:

I am lost and betrayed!

OTELLO:

E pianger l'osi?

DESDEMONA:

Otello, non uccidermi.

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!

DESDEMONA:

Un'ora.

OTELLO:

No!

DESDEMONA:

Un istante.

OTELLO:

No!

DESDEMONA:

Sol ch'io dica un'Ave.

OTHELLO:

And you dare cry for him?

DESDEMONA:

Othello, don't kill me.

OTHELLO:

It is futile to defend yourself.

DESDEMONA:That I may live, that I may live,
that I may live.**OTHELLO:**

Down! Fall down, down, prostitute.

DESDEMONA:

Mercy!

OTHELLO:

Die!

DESDEMONA:

Let me live just tonight.

OTHELLO:

No!

DESDEMONA:

For one hour.

OTHELLO:

No!

DESDEMONA:

For a moment.

OTHELLO:

No!

DESDEMONA:

If only that I can say a prayer.

OTELLO:

È tardi!

OTHELLO:

It is too late!

(Othello suffocates Desdemona)

DESDEMONA:

Ah! . . .

DESDEMONA:

Ah!

(Emilia knocks at the door)

OTELLO: :

Calma come la tomba.

OTHELLO:

(Contemplating the body of Desdemona)

Calm like the tomb.

EMILIA:

Aprite! Aprite!

EMILIA:

Open! Open!

OTELLO:

Chi è là? Chi batte?

OTHELLO:

Who is it? Who knocks?

EMILIA:

Signor mio, ven prego, lasciate
ch'io vi parli. Aprite!

EMILIA:

My lord. Hear me. Le me speak to you.
Open!

OTELLO:

Emilia! Che avvenne?

OTHELLO:

Emilia! What happened?

EMILIA:

Un gran delitto! Cassio uccise Roderigo.

EMILIA:

A great crime! Cassio killed Roderigo.

OTELLO:

E Cassio?

OTHELLO:

And Cassio?

EMILIA:

Vive.

EMILIA:

He lives.

OTELLO:

Cassio vive!

OTHELLO:

Cassio lives!

DESDEMONA:

Ingiustamente, uccisa ingiustamente..

DESDEMONA:

Unjustly. I have been killed unjustly.

EMILIA:

Chi geme là? Orror!

EMILIA:

Who is groaning there? Horror!

DESDEMONA:

Muoio innocente.

EMILIA:

Gran Dio! Chi fu? Chi fu?

DESDEMONA:

Nessuno. Io stessa.

Al mio Signor mi raccomanda.

Muoio innocente.

Addio.

OTELLO:

O mentitrice! Io l'uccisi.

EMILIA:

Assassino!

OTELLO:

Fu di Cassio la druda. A Jago il chiedi.

EMILIA:

A Jago?

OTELLO:

A Jago.

EMILIA:

Stolto!! E tu il credesti?

OTELLO:

Negarlo ardisci?

EMILIA:

Non ti temo.

OTELLO:

Bada!

EMILIA:

Olà! Soccorso! Aiuto!

Otello uccise Desdemona!

DESDEMONA:

I die innocent.

EMILIA:

Oh God! Who did it? Who did it?

DESDEMONA:

No one. I myself.

I implore my soul to God.

I die guiltless.

Farewell.

(Desdemona dies)

OTHELLO:

Oh liar! I killed her.

EMILIA:

Assassin!

OTHELLO:

She was Cassio's lover. Iago told me.

EMILIA:

Iago?

OTHELLO:

Iago.

EMILIA:

Fool! And you believed him?

OTHELLO:

You dare to deny it?

EMILIA:

I have no fear of you.

OTHELLO:

Mind yourself!

EMILIA:

Hello! Help! Rescue!

Othello killed Desdemona!

CASSIO, JAGO, LODOVICO:

Quai grida!
Orrore! Orrore!

EMILIA:

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

JAGO:

Tal la credea.

OTHELLO:

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

EMILIA:

O potenza divina!

JAGO:

Taci!

EMILIA:

No, tutto rivelo!

JAGO:

Taci!

EMILIA:

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

CASSIO:

E nella mia dimora trovai quel vel.

MONTANO:

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

OTHELLO:

Ah! Discolpati!

(Lodovico, Cassio and Iago enter)

CASSIO, IAGO, LODOVICO:

Who shouts! *(seeing Desdemona)*
Horror! Horror!

EMILIA: *(to Iago)*

Iago, refute that assassin.
Did you believe that Desdemona was
unfaithful? Speak!

IAGO:

I believed she was.

OTHELLO:

That handkerchief I once gave her, she
gave to Cassio.

EMILIA:

Oh heavenly power!

IAGO: *(to Emilia)*

Quiet!

EMILIA:

No, I will reveal all!

IAGO:

Quiet!

EMILIA:

No! He took that handkerchief from my
hand using force.

CASSIO:

And I found the veil in my room.

MONTANO: *(enters and points to Iago)*

The dying Roderigo confessed this
man's nefarious plot.

OTHELLO: *(to Iago)*

Ah! Exculpate yourself!

CASSIO:

Ah! Ferma!

LODOVICO, MONTANO:

Sciagurato!

OTELLO:

Pria d'ucciderti, sposa, ti baciai.

Or morendo nell'ombra in cui mi giacio.

Un bacio, un bacio ancora.

Ah! Un altro bacio.

Fine dell'Opera

CASSIO:

Ah! Stop him!

LODOVICO, MONTANO:

Wicked man!

OTHELLO: *(to the dead Desdemona)*

Before I killed you, wife, I kissed you.

now dying in the shadow where I lie.

A kiss. Another kiss.

Ah! Another kiss.

(Othello dies)

END

OTELLO

Discography

- 1931 Fusati (Otello); Carbone (Desdemona); Granforte (Iago);
 Beltacchi (Emilia); Girardi (Cassio);
 Zambelli (Lodovico); Spada (Montano); Palai (Roderigo);
 La Scala Orchestra and Chorus;
 Sabajno (Conductor)
- 1940 Martinelli (Otello); Rethberg (Desdemona); Tibbett (Iago);
 Votipka (Emilia); de Paolis (Cassio);
 Metropolitan Opera Chorus and Orchestra;
 Panizza (Conductor)
- 1947 (Broadcast)
 Vinay (Otello); Nelli (Desdemona); Valdengo (Iago);
 Merriman (AEmilia); Assandri (Cassio);
 Moscona (Lodovico); Newman (Montano);
 Chabay (Roderigo);
 NBC Chorus and Symphony Orchestra;
 Toscanini (Conductor)
- 1951 Sarri (Otello); Lo Pollo (Desdemona); Manca Serra (Iago);
 Landi (Emilia); Cesarini (Cassio); Platania (Lodovico);
 Stocco (Montano); Russo (Montano);
 Rome Opera Chorus and Orchestra;
 Paoletti (Conductor)
- 1951 (Live performance in Salzburg)
 Vinay (Otello); Martinis (Desdemona); Schöffler (Iago);
 S. Wagner (Emilia); Dermota (Cassio);
 Greindl (Lodovico); Monthy (Montano);
 Jaresch (Roderigo);
 Vienna State Opera Orchestra and Chorus;
 Furtwängler (Conductor)
- 1954 Guichandut (Otello); Corsi (Desdemona);
 Taddei (Iago); Mercuriali (Cassio);
 Stefanoni (Lodovico); Albertini (Montano);
 Soley (Roderigo);
 Turin Radio Chorus and Orchestra;
 Capuana (Conductor)

- 1954 Del Monaco (Otello); Tebaldi (Desdemona);
Protti (Iago); Ribacchi (Emilia); de Palma (Cassio);
Corena (Lodovico); Latinucci (Montano);
Mercuriali (Roderigo);
Santa Cecilia Academy Chorus and Orchestra;
Erede (Conductor)
- 1955 Guichandut (Otello); Brogginì (Desdemona); Taddei (Iago);
Corsi (Emilia); Mercuriali (Cassio);
RAI Turin Chorus and Orchestra;
Capuana (Conductor)
- 1960 Vickers (Otello); Rysanek (Desdemona);
Gobbi (Iago); Andreolli (Cassio);
Mazzoli (Lodovico); Calabrese (Montano);
Carlin (Roderigo);
Rome Opera Chorus and Orchestra;
Serafin (Conductor)
- 1960 Del Monaco (Otello); Tebaldi (Desdemona);
Protti (Iago); Satre (Emilia); Romanato (Cassio);
Corena (Lodovico); Arbace (Montano);
Cesarini (Roderigo);
Vienna State Opera Chorus and Orchestra;
Karajan (Conductor)
- 1968 McCracken (Otello); Gwyneth Jones (Desdemona);
Fischer-Dieskau (Iago); de Palma (Cassio);
Giacomotti (Lodovico); Monreale (Montano);
Ambrosian Chorus, New Philharmonia Orchestra;
Barbirolli (Conductor)
- 1974 Vickers (Otello); Freni (Desdemona);
Glossop (Iago); Malagù (Emilia); Böttion (Cassio);
Van Dam (Lodovico); Mach (Montano);
Sénéchal (Roderigo);
German Opera Chorus, Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra;
Karajan (Conductor)
- 1977 Cossutta (Otello) M. Price (Desdemona); Bacquier (Iago);
Berbié (Emilia); Dvorský (Cassio); Moll (Lodovico); Dean (Montano);
Equiluz (Roderigo);
Vienna State Opera Chorus and Orchestra;
Solti (Conductor)

- 1978 Domingo (Otello); Scotto (Desdemona); Milnes (Iago); Kraft (Emilia);
 Little (Cassio); Plishka (Lodovico); King (Montano); Crook (Roderigo);
 Ambrosian Opera Chorus, National Philharmonic Orchestra;
 Levine (Conductor)
- 1983 (In English)
 Craig (Otello); Plowright (Desdemona); Howlett (Iago); Squires (Emilia);
 Bottone (Cassio);
 English National Opera Chorus and Orchestra;
 Elder (Conductor)
- 1985 Domingo (Otello); Ricciarelli (Desdemona); Diaz (Iago);
 Malakova (Emilia); De Cesare (Cassio);
 La Scala Chorus and Orchestra;
 Maazel (Conductor)
- 1991 Pavarotti (Otello); Te Kanawa (Desdemona); Nucci (Iago);
 Ardam (Emilia); Johnson (Cassio);
 Chicago Symphony Chorus and Orchestra;
 Solti (Conductor)

OTELLO

Videography

Castle VHS

Domingo (Otello); Te Kanawa (Desdemona); Leiferkus (Iago)
Powell (Emilia); Leggate (Cassio); Earle (Montano);
Beesley (Lodovico); Remedios (Roderigo);
Royal Opera House Chorus and Orchestra;
Solti (Conductor);
Moshinsky (Director);
Large (Video Director)

DG VHS

Vickers (Otello); Freni (Desdemona); Glossop (Iago);
Malagù (Emilia); Bottion (Cassio); Sénégal (Roderigo);
Macchi (Montano); Van Dam (Lodovico);
Deutsche Oper Chorus, Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra;
Karajan (Conductor);
A film Director by Karajan

Castle VHS

Atlantov (Otello); Te Kanawa (Desdemona); Cappuccilli (Iago)
Raffanelli (Emilia); Bevacqua (Cassio); Schiavon (Roderigo);
Mori (Montano); Casarini (Lodovico);
Verona Arena Chorus and Orchestra;
Pesko (Conductor);
De Bosio (Director);
Montell (Video Director)

DICTIONARY OF OPERA AND MUSICAL TERMS

Accelerando - Play the music faster, but gradually.

Adagio - At slow or gliding tempo, not as slow as Largo, but not as fast as Andante.

Agitato - Restless or agitated.

Allegro - At a brisk or lively tempo, faster than Andante but not as fast as Presto.

Andante - A moderately slow, easy-going tempo.

Appoggiatura - An extra or embellishing note preceding a main melodic note or tone. Usually written as a note of smaller size, it shares the time value of the main note.

Arabesque - Flourishes or fancy patterns usually applying to vocal virtuosity.

Aria - A solo song usually structured in a formal pattern. Arias generally convey reflective and introspective thoughts rather than descriptive action.

Arietta - A shortened form of aria.

Arioso - A musical passage or composition having a mixture of free recitative and metrical song.

Arpeggio - Producing the tones of a chord in succession but not simultaneously.

Atonal - Music that is not anchored in traditional musical tonality; it uses the chromatic scale impartially, does not use the diatonic scale and has no keynote or tonal center.

Ballad Opera - 18th century English opera consisting of spoken dialogue and music derived from popular ballad and folksong sources. The most famous is *The Beggar's Opera* which was a satire of the Italian opera seria.

Bar - A vertical line across the stave that divides the music into units.

Baritone - A male singing voice ranging between the bass and tenor.

Baroque - A style of artistic expression prevalent in the 17th century that is marked generally by the use of complex forms, bold ornamentation, and florid decoration. The Baroque period extends from approximately 1600 to 1750 and includes the works of the original creators of modern opera, the Camerata, as well as the later works by Bach and Handel.

Bass - The lowest male voices, usually divided into categories such as:

Basso buffo - A bass voice that specializes in comic roles like Dr. Bartolo in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*.

Basso cantante - A bass voice that demonstrates melodic singing quality rather than comic or tragic: King Philip in Verdi's *Don Carlos*.

Basso profondo - the deepest, most profound, or most dramatic of bass voices: Sarastro in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.

Bel canto - Literally "beautiful singing." It originated in Italian opera of the 17th and 18th centuries and stressed beautiful tones produced with ease, clarity, purity, evenness, together with an agile vocal technique and virtuosity. Bel canto flourished in the first half of the 19th century in the works of Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti.

Cabaletta - Typically a lively bravura extension of an aria or duet that creates a climax. The term is derived from the Italian word "cavallo," or horse: it metaphorically describes a horse galloping to the finish line.

Cadenza - A flourish or brilliant part of an aria commonly inserted just before a finale.

Camerata - A gathering of Florentine writers and musicians between 1590 and 1600 who attempted to recreate what they believed was the ancient Greek theatrical synthesis of drama, music, and stage spectacle; their experimentation led to the creation of the early structural forms of modern opera.

Cantabile - An expression indication urging the singer to sing sweetly.

Cantata - A choral piece generally containing Scriptural narrative texts: Bach Cantatas.

Cantilena - A lyrical melodic line meant to be played or sung "cantabile," or with sweetness and expression.

Canzone - A short, lyrical operatic song usually containing no narrative association with the drama but rather simply reflecting the character's state of mind: Cherubino's "Voi che sapete" in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. Shorter versions are called canzonettas.

Castrato - A young male singer who was surgically castrated to retain his treble voice.

Cavatina - A short aria popular in the 18th century without the da capo repeat section.

Classical Period - The period between the Baroque and Romantic periods. The Classical period is generally considered to have begun with the birth of Mozart (1756) and ended with Beethoven's death (1830). Stylistically, the music of the period stressed clarity, precision, and rigid structural forms.

Coda - A trailer or tailpiece added on by the composer after the music's natural conclusion.

Coloratura - Literally colored: it refers to a soprano singing in the bel canto tradition with great agility, virtuosity, embellishments and ornamentation: Joan Sutherland singing in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

Commedia dell'arte - A popular form of dramatic presentation originating in Renaissance Italy in which highly stylized characters were involved in comic plots involving mistaken identities and misunderstandings. The standard characters were Harlequin and Colombine: The “play within a play” in Leoncavallo’s *I Pagliacci*.

Comprimario - A singer portraying secondary character roles such as confidantes, servants, and messengers.

Continuo - A bass part (as for a keyboard or stringed instrument) that was used especially in baroque ensemble music; it consists of a succession of bass notes with figures that indicate the required chords. Also called *figured bass*, *thoroughbass*.

Contralto - The lowest female voice derived from “contra” against, and “alto” voice, a voice between the tenor and mezzo-soprano.

Countertenor, or male alto vocal range - A high male voice generally singing within the female high soprano ranges.

Counterpoint - The combination of one or more independent melodies added into a single harmonic texture in which each retains its linear character: polyphony. The most sophisticated form of counterpoint is the fugue form in which up to 6 to 8 voices are combined, each providing a variation on the basic theme but each retaining its relation to the whole.

Crescendo - A gradual increase in the volume of a musical passage.

Da capo - Literally “from the top”: repeat. Early 17th century da capo arias were in the form of A B A, the last A section repeating the first A section.

Deus ex machina - Literally “god out of a machine.” A dramatic technique in which a person or thing appears or is introduced suddenly and unexpectedly; it provides a contrived solution to an apparently insoluble dramatic difficulty.

Diatonic - Relating to a major or minor musical scale that comprises intervals of five whole steps and two half steps.

Diminuendo - Gradually getting softer, the opposite of crescendo.

Dissonance - A mingling of discordant sounds that do not harmonize within the diatonic scale.

Diva - Literally a “goddess”; generally refers to a female opera star who either possesses, or pretends to possess, great rank.

Dominant - The fifth tone of the diatonic scale: in the key of C, the dominant is G.

Dramma giocoso - Literally meaning amusing, or lighthearted. Like tragicomedy it represents an opera whose story combines both serious and comic elements: Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*.

Falsetto - Literally a lighter or “false” voice; an artificially produced high singing voice that extends above the range of the full voice.

Fioritura - Literally “flower”; a flowering ornamentation or embellishment of the vocal line within an aria.

Forte, Fortissimo - Forte (*f*) means loud; mezzo forte (*mf*) is fairly loud; fortissimo (*ff*) even louder, and additional *fff*’s indicate greater degrees of loudness.

Glissando - A rapid sliding up or down the scale.

Grand Opera - An opera in which there is no spoken dialogue and the entire text is set to music, frequently treating serious and dramatic subjects. Grand Opera flourished in France in the 19th century (Meyerbeer) and most notably by Verdi (*Aida*): the genre is epic in scale and combines spectacle, large choruses, scenery, and huge orchestras.

Heldentenor - A tenor with a powerful dramatic voice who possesses brilliant top notes and vocal stamina. Heldentenors are well suited to heroic (Wagnerian) roles: Lauritz Melchior in Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*.

Imbroglia - Literally “Intrigue”; an operatic scene with chaos and confusion and appropriate diverse melodies and rhythms.

Largo or larghetto - Largo indicates a very slow tempo; Larghetto is slightly faster than Largo.

Legato - Literally “tied”; therefore, successive tones that are connected smoothly. Opposing Legato would be Marcato (strongly accented and punctuated) and Staccato (short and aggressive).

Leitmotif - A short musical passage attached to a person, thing, feeling, or idea that provides associations when it recurs or is recalled.

Libretto - Literally “little book”; the text of an opera. On Broadway, the text of songs is called “lyrics” but the spoken text in the play is called the “book.”

Lied - A German song; the plural is “lieder.” Originally German art songs of the 19th century.

Light opera, or operetta - Operas that contain comic elements but light romantic plots: Johann Strauss’s *Die Fledermaus*.

Maestro - From the Italian “master”: a term of respect to conductors, composers, directors, and great musicians.

Melodrama - Words spoken over music. Melodrama appears in Beethoven’s *Fidelio* but flourished during the late 19th century in the operas of Massenet (*Manon*). Melodrama should not be confused with melodrama when it describes a work that is characterized by extravagant theatricality and by the predominance of plot and physical action over characterization.

Mezza voce - Literally “medium voice,” or singing with medium or half volume; it is generally intended as a vocal means to intensify emotion.

Mezzo-soprano - A woman’s voice with a range between that of the soprano and contralto.

Molto - Very. Molto agitato means very agitated.

Obbligato - An elaborate accompaniment to a solo or principal melody that is usually played by a single instrument.

Octave - A musical interval embracing eight diatonic degrees: therefore, from C to C is an octave.

Opera - Literally “a work”; a dramatic or comic play combining music.

Opera buffa - Italian comic opera that flourished during the bel canto era. Buffo characters were usually basses singing patter songs: Dr. Bartolo in Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*, and Dr. Dulcamara in Donizetti’s *The Elixir of Love*.

Opéra comique - A French opera characterized by spoken dialogue interspersed between the arias and ensemble numbers, as opposed to Grand Opera in which there is no spoken dialogue.

Operetta, or light opera - Operas that contain comic elements but tend to be more romantic: Strauss’s *Die Fledermaus*, Offenbach’s *La Périchole*, and Lehar’s *The Merry Widow*. In operettas, there is usually much spoken dialogue, dancing, practical jokes, and mistaken identities.

Oratorio - A lengthy choral work, usually of a religious or philosophical nature and consisting chiefly of recitatives, arias, and choruses but in deference to its content, performed without action or scenery: Handel’s *Messiah*.

Ornamentation - Extra embellishing notes—appoggiaturas, trills, roulades, or cadenzas—that enhance a melodic line.

Overture - The orchestral introduction to a musical dramatic work that frequently incorporates musical themes within the work.

Parlando - Literally “speaking”; the imitation of speech while singing, or singing that is almost speaking over the music. It is usually short and with minimal orchestral accompaniment.

Patter - Words rapidly and quickly delivered. Figaro’s Largo in Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville* is a patter song.

Pentatonic - A five-note scale, like the black notes within an octave on the piano.

Piano - Soft volume.

Pitch - The property of a musical tone that is determined by the frequency of the waves producing it.

Pizzicato - A passage played by plucking the strings instead of stroking the string with the bow.

Polyphony - Literally “many voices.” A style of musical composition in which two or more independent melodies are juxtaposed in harmony; counterpoint.

Polytonal - The use of several tonal schemes simultaneously.

Portamento - A continuous gliding movement from one tone to another.

Prelude - An orchestral introduction to an act or the whole opera. An Overture can appear only at the beginning of an opera.

Presto, Prestissimo - Very fast and vigorous.

Prima Donna - The female star of an opera cast. Although the term was initially used to differentiate between the dramatic and vocal importance of a singer, today it generally describes the personality of a singer rather than her importance in the particular opera.

Prologue - A piece sung before the curtain goes up on the opera proper: Tonio’s Prologue in Leoncavallo’s *I Pagliacci*.

Quaver - An eighth note.

Range - The divisions of the voice: soprano, mezzo-soprano, contralto, tenor, baritone, and bass.

Recitative - A formal device that advances the plot. It is usually a rhythmically free vocal style that imitates the natural inflections of speech; it represents the dialogue and narrative in operas and oratorios. Secco recitative is accompanied by harpsichord and sometimes with cello or continuo instruments and *accompagnato* indicates that the recitative is accompanied by the orchestra.

Ritornello - A short recurrent instrumental passage between elements of a vocal composition.

Romanza - A solo song that is usually sentimental; it is usually shorter and less complex than an aria and rarely deals with terror, rage, and anger.

Romantic Period - The period generally beginning with the raiding of the Bastille (1789) and the last revolutions and uprisings in Europe (1848). Romanticists generally found inspiration in nature and man. Beethoven’s *Fidelio* (1805) is considered the first Romantic opera, followed by the works of Verdi and Wagner.

Roulade - A florid vocal embellishment sung to one syllable.

Rubato - Literally “robbed”; it is a fluctuation of tempo within a musical phrase, often against a rhythmically steady accompaniment.

Secco - The accompaniment for recitative played by the harpsichord and sometimes continuo instruments.

Semitone - A half-step, the smallest distance between two notes. In the key of C, the notes are E and F, and B and C.

Serial music - Music based on a series of tones in a chosen pattern without regard for traditional tonality.

Sforzando - Sudden loudness and force; it must stick out from the texture and provide a shock.

Singspiel - Early German musical drama employing spoken dialogue between songs: Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*.

Soprano - The highest range of the female voice ranging from lyric (light and graceful quality) to dramatic (fuller and heavier in tone).

Sotto voce - Literally “below the voice”; sung softly between a whisper and a quiet conversational tone.

Soubrette - A soprano who sings supporting roles in comic opera: Adele in Strauss’s *Die Fledermaus*, or Despina in Mozart’s *Così fan tutte*.

Spinto - From the Italian “spingere” (to push); a soprano having lyric vocal qualities who “pushes” the voice to achieve heavier dramatic qualities.

Sprechstimme - Literally “speak voice.” The singer half sings a note and half speaks; the declamation sounds like speaking but the duration of pitch makes it seem almost like singing.

Staccato - Short, clipped, rapid articulation; the opposite of the caressing effects of legato.

Stretto - A concluding passage performed in a quicker tempo to create a musical climax.

Strophe - Music repeated for each verse of an aria.

Syncopation - Shifting the beat forward or back from its usual place in the bar; it is a temporary displacement of the regular metrical accent in music caused typically by stressing the weak beat.

Supernumerary - A “super”; a performer with a non-singing role: “Spear-carrier.”

Tempo - Time, or speed. The ranges are Largo for very slow to Presto for very fast.

Tenor - Highest natural male voice.

Tessitura - The general range of a melody or voice part; but specifically, the part of the register in which most of the tones of a melody or voice part lie.

Tonality - The organization of all the tones and harmonies of a piece of music in relation to a tonic (the first tone of its scale).

Tone Poem - An orchestral piece with a program; a script.

Tonic - The keynote of the key in which a piece is written. C is the tonic of C major.

Trill - Two adjacent notes rapidly and repeatedly alternated.

Tutti - All together.

Twelve tone - The 12 chromatic tones of the octave placed in a chosen fixed order and constituting with some permitted permutations and derivations the melodic and harmonic material of a serial musical piece. Each note of the chromatic scale is used as part of the melody before any other note gets repeated.

Verismo - Literally “truth”; the artistic use of contemporary everyday material in preference to the heroic or legendary in opera. A movement from the late 19th century: *Carmen*.

Vibrato - A “vibration”; a slightly tremulous effect imparted to vocal or instrumental tone for added warmth and expressiveness by slight and rapid variations in pitch.

