



PITTSBURGH IRISH & CLASSICAL THEATRE

Professional Theater in Residence at the University of Pittsburgh

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Prejudice and jealousy drive fast-paced *Othello*

Heymann Theatre provides intimate space for intense period production of Shakespeare's gripping tragedy, featuring Javon Johnson

Pittsburgh, PA – April 23, 2010. PICT continues its exploration of race with a timely production of Shakespeare's scathing tale of racism and jealousy, *Othello*. Performances begin on May 20th and continue through June 12th in the Henry Heymann Theatre, located at the Stephen Foster Memorial in Oakland. PICT Artistic Director Andrew S. Paul directs a cast of twelve, featuring Javon Johnson, Allison McLemore, Jay Stratton, Michael Hanrahan, and Shelley Delaney. The design team is comprised of Gianni Downs (scenic design), Jim French (lighting), Joan Markert (costumes), Joe Pino (sound), and Cory F. Goddard (properties).

Shakespeare's masterpiece centers on a heroic black warrior living in a society ruled by whites and brought to his knees by the malevolent machinations of his most trusted fellow soldier. Veteran soldier Iago (Michael Hanrahan) is embittered when he is passed over for promotion and feels betrayed by a system that elevates a black man to a position of authority. In retaliation, he cunningly leads Othello (Javon Johnson) to believe that his beautiful wife Desdemona (Allison McLemore), a white woman from a wealthy family, is having an affair with Cassio (Jay Stratton), a handsome white soldier. With the help of his wife Emilia (Shelley Delaney), Iago plants evidence that stokes passionate Othello's jealousy, leading to a disastrous tragic conclusion.

Javon Johnson makes his PICT debut as the tragic Moor. A graduate of the MFA acting program at the University of Pittsburgh, Johnson's local credits include productions with Kuntu Repertory Theatre and Pittsburgh Public Theatre. A protégé of August Wilson and an ensemble and founding member of Chicago's Congo Square Theatre Company, he just completed performances in Wilson's *Two Trains Running* (Sterling Johnson) at Geva Theatre in Rochester. Additional credits include Lydia Diamond's *Stick Fly* (McCarter Theatre, True Colors), *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (Baltimore Center Stage, Goodman/Congo Square), and *Seven Guitars* (Congo Square).

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Allison McLemore (*Jane Eyre*) plays Desdemona. Her credits include the role of Jo in *Little Women* with Peterborough Players, Roxanne in *Cyrano de Bergerac* for the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, *The Madras House* at the Mint Theatre, and Eliza Doolittle in *Pygmalion* at Creede Repertory Theatre, for which she won the Denver Post Ovation Award.

Jay Stratton makes his PICT debut as Cassio. He previously appeared in Pittsburgh as Oedipus in the Public Theater's production of *Oedipus the King*. Other credits include *Pride and Prejudice* (Denver Center), *Reckless* (Cincinnati Playhouse), *Caesar and Cleopatra* (Playmaker's Rep), and *Bug* (Repertory Theatre of St. Louis).

Michael Hanrahan makes his PICT debut as Iago. He has appeared on countless stages across Canada and the U.S. as well as in numerous films and television programs. He is a founding member of Toronto's Souleppper Theatre Company, where he has performed in such productions as *Loot*, *Awake and Sing*, *Oh What a Lovely War*, *As You Like It*, *The Odd Couple*, *American Buffalo*, *The Dumb Waiter/ The Zoo Story*, *No Man's Land*, *Present Laughter*, *The Bald Soprano*, *Platonov*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Our Town*. He was a member of the Stratford Theatre Festival company for four seasons.

Shelley Delaney (*Jane Eyre*) plays Emilia. Head of the Professional Actor Training Program at Ohio University, Delaney's credits include *Free Man of Color* at Victory Gardens (Joseph Jefferson nomination), numerous productions at Capital Repertory Company including *Sylvia* (Best Actress, Metroland Newspapers), and numerous productions at Two River Theatre Company including *The Dining Room* (Best Supporting Actress, New Jersey critics/Star Ledger).

The production also features Ben Blazer (*Henry IV*, *Salome*, Synge Cycle), Martin Giles (*The History Boys*, *What the Butler Saw*, and Synge Cycle, among others), Georgia Guy, Daryll Heysham, Larry John Meyers (*Crime and Punishment*, *Dublin Carol*, and *King Lear*, among others), Joel Ripka (*Beautiful Dreamers*, *Crime and Punishment*, and *Pride & Prejudice*, among others), and Rich Venezia.

Director Andrew S. Paul is the co-founder and artistic director of PICT. Under his leadership, PICT has produced more than fifty main-stage productions and completed two successful international tours. His directing credits for PICT include the 2009 productions of *The History Boys* and *Rock 'n' Roll*. Other PICT directing credits include Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Henry IV*, and *Julius Caesar*; the world premiere of Thomas Kilroy's *Henry* (after Pirandello); and David Hare's *Stuff Happens* and *Via Dolorosa*. In 2008, Paul directed and collaborated with Hare on the non-English language premiere of *Stuff Happens* at the Slaski Teatr in Katowice, Poland.

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Gianni Downs returns to PICT to design the set for *Othello*. His previous PICT credits include: *Jane Eyre*, *Crime & Punishment*, *The History Boys*, *Doubt*, *What the Butler Saw*, and *Boston Marriage*, among others. Lighting is designed by Jim French (*Crime and Punishment*, *The History Boys*, *Rock 'n' Roll*, *Synge Cycle*, and *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*), costumes by Joan Markert (*The School for Scandal*, *An Ideal Husband*), sound by Joe Pino (*Crime and Punishment*), and properties by Cory F. Goddard (*Beautiful Dreamers*, *Doubt*, among others).

WDUQ, 90.5 FM (www.wduq.org) is the media sponsor for the production. *Othello* plays May 20 through June 12 in the Henry Heymann Theatre, located at the Stephen Foster Memorial, 4301 Forbes Avenue in Oakland. Tickets are \$25 to \$50, and are available through ProArtsTickets at 412.394.3353 or online at www.proartstickets.org.

In conjunction with the play, PICT is hosting the free panel discussion “*Othello* for a 21st Century Audience” on Sunday, June 6th after the 2 p.m. performance. The panel will be moderated by Gale McGloin, and includes actor Javon Johnson, director Andrew S. Paul, and dramaturg Kristen L. Olson, Ph.D. The panel discussion is free of charge and open to the public.

PICT will also host a post-show talk-back with the company following the Sunday, May 23rd matinee performance, as well as two pre-show discussions beginning at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 26th and Thursday, May 27th. The pre-show discussions are free and open to the public.

The *Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theatre* was founded in 1996 to diversify the region's theatrical offerings by providing Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania audiences with high-quality, text-driven, affordable productions of classical theatre and the works of classical and contemporary Irish playwrights and to significantly improve employment opportunities for local talent in all facets of theatrical presentation and production. PICT is a Small Professional Theatre (SPT) affiliated with Actors' Equity Association, and a constituent member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG) and the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council. PICT is the Professional Theatre in Residence at the University of Pittsburgh and PICT productions at the Charity Randall and Henry Heymann Theatres are presented in cooperation with the University of Pittsburgh – Department of Theatre Arts.

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Othello FACT SHEET

Othello by William Shakespeare

Directed by Andrew S. Paul

The Henry Heymann Theatre in the Stephen Foster Memorial, Oakland
4301 Forbes Ave, Pittsburgh PA 15213

Cast: Ben Blazer, Shelley Delaney, Martin Giles, Georgia Guy, Michael Hanrahan, Daryll Heysham, Javon Johnson, Allison McLemore, Larry John Meyers, Joel Ripka, Jay Stratton, and Rich Venezia

Design Team: Gianni Downs (scenic design), Jim French (lighting design), Joan Markert (costume design), Joe Pino (sound design), Cory F. Goddard (properties)

Performance Dates and Times:

First Week:

Wednesday and Thursday, May 19 and 20 – 10 a.m. student matinees
Thursday and Friday, May 20 and 21 – 8 p.m. previews
Saturday, May 22 – 8 p.m. opening night, followed by reception
Sunday, May 23 – 2 p.m. matinee, followed by talk-back

Second Week:

Tuesday, May 25 – 10 a.m. student matinee
Wednesday – Saturday, May 25 – 29 – 8 p.m. performances*
Sunday, May 30 – 2 p.m. matinee
*pre-performance lecture at 7 p.m. on Wednesday and Thursday

Third Week:

Tuesday, June 1 – 10 a.m. student matinee
Wednesday – Saturday, May 2 – 5 – 8 p.m. performances
Sunday, June 6 – 2 p.m. matinee

Fourth Week:

Tuesday, June 8 – 7 p.m. Professional Tuesday performance
Wednesday – Friday, June 8 – 11 – 8 p.m. performances
Saturday, June 12 – 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. performances

TICKET PRICES:

Saturday nights:	\$50, Seniors \$47
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday nights:	\$46, Seniors \$43
Professional Tuesdays, Saturday & Sunday Matinees:	\$42, Seniors \$40
Preview Thursday and Friday:	\$34 for all seats

\$20 tickets available for youth under 25, with valid ID

Call ProArtsTickets at 412.394.3353 or visit www.picttheatre.org

Pittsburgh Irish & Classical Theatre.
Great Stories. Well Told.