

2019-2020 Season

**CATCO** is  
**OUTREACH!**

# PLAYGUIDE



## *Othello: The Remix*

**BOOK AND MUSIC BY:**  
The Q Brothers

### The Story

Shakespeare's story of Othello is remixed into a fresh urban take on the Bard's tragedy, spun out and lyrically rewritten over original beats.

Against all odds, MC Othello escapes the ghetto and rises to the top of the Hip Hop music industry. He is living proof of the "American Dream." Othello falls in love with and marries Desdemona, a beautiful singer, despite the disapproval of her father, Brabantio. In time, Othello and his Crew are sent out on a national tour by Loco Vito, the CEO of the record label. Emilia, Iago's wife, and Desdemona join the Crew on their tour. Other members of the crew include Cassio, the new member of the group, and Iago, Othello's oldest friend. Despite Iago's loyalty, Othello decides to release Cassio's album first to try to reach more listeners. This decision enrages Iago, who enlists the help of Roderigo to get revenge on Othello. Iago begins to manipulate everyone on the tour. Each new city brings a new layer to Iago's revenge plot, eventually leading to Othello's own insanity and downfall.

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# MEET THE CHARACTERS (AND ACTORS)

## Othello (Played by Bobby Lloyd)



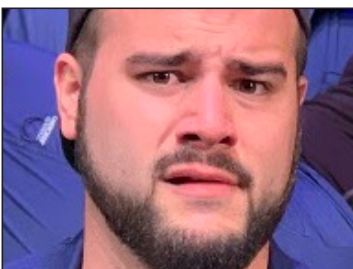
Othello has made it to the top of Hip-Hop stardom. Using music as an escape, he rose up from the riots and uprising of his hood to become a brilliant song writer whose albums have gone ten times platinum. After meeting Desdemona, a singer who became Othello's wife, his songs have become the envy of the airwaves. His poetic prowess echoes his personal authenticity and drive. Othello might be the leader of the Crew, but he is backed up by Iago, his oldest collaborator, and Cassio, the newest member of the clique. These three Hip-Hop titans head out on tour with Desdemona and Emilia, Iago's wife. As the play and the tour unfold, Othello begins to question his wife's faithfulness to him because of Iago's shady scheme.

## Iago (Played by Bill Darby)



Iago has been with Othello since the Day One. Rewind back to when Othello's music was just getting noticed, and you'll find Iago sitting at the right hand of the living Hip-Hop legend. Iago's beats are honest, aggressive, and raw. His rhymes take aim at anyone he doesn't like and every lyric he raps is an instant mic drop. Instead of giving Iago his shot, Othello decides to skip his album release and go with Cassio's next. This sends Iago into a jealous rage. Is this really how Othello treats his oldest friend? Enlisting the help of Roderigo, the tour's techie, Iago begins to calculate his revenge on Othello. No one is safe as Iago begins to weave lie after lie, eventually driving Othello himself into paranoia.

## Brabantio (Played by Bill Darby)



Brabantio is Desdemona's father. His mind and judgements are stuck in the ways of an older generation. He does not like change and completely disapproves of Desdemona's marrying Othello. To Brabantio, Othello is a common thug whose lyrics are full of violence, misogyny, and other explicit content. Brabantio refuses to judge Othello for his character and instead focuses on his own preconceived notions of who Othello is based on the color of his skin. Brabantio loves Desdemona, but he turns his back on her when she runs away to marry Othello despite her father's lack of support.

## Cassio (Played by Andrew Protopapas)



Cassio is the newest member of Othello's crew. His bubblegum rhymes and upbeat lyrics are perfect for the radio and for anyone who wants to have a good time. Cassio is incredibly self-absorbed and outgoing. No matter what room he walks into, he becomes the life of the party. If there wasn't a party in that room before, there is one now. Out of everyone on tour, Cassio has embraced the Rockstar lifestyle a little too well. Cassio's attitude, looks, and dance moves make him a hit with the ladies, and he makes it a point to flirt and flounce with as many women as possible while on tour. Although he puts up the façade of being a player, deep down he is in love with Bianca, a Cassio super-fan who is following the Crew to every stop they make on tour.

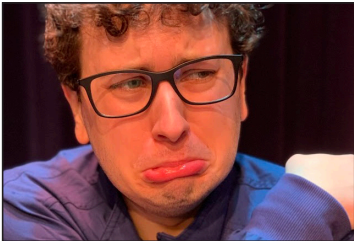
# MEET THE CHARACTERS (AND ACTORS)

## Emilia (Played by Andrew Protopapas)



Emilia is Iago's wife, who has joined the Crew on tour. She is incredibly faithful to Iago and loves him unconditionally. She is always seeking ways to support him. As the story progresses, it's Emilia who begins to put pieces together that someone has it out for Othello, but it's not until later when she realizes completely it's her own Iago.

## Roderigo (Played by Nick Van Atta)



Roderigo is a lighting designer extraordinaire and techie-titan. However, what Roderigo possesses in professional talent, he deeply lacks in social skills. A nerd through-and-through, Roderigo loves movies, video games, and *Magic: The Gathering*. Despite loving every nerdism known to humankind, someone else has caught Roderigo's affection—Desdemona. His love for her makes him an easy target for Iago's revenge plot for Othello. Roderigo eats up every half-truth and lie that Iago speaks and doesn't realize until much later that he is just a pawn in Iago's twisted game of Chess.

## Bianca (Played by Nick Van Atta)



Bianca is a Cassio Super-fan. While her behavior boards the line of stalkery, she means well and truly loves Cassio. Cassio loves her too, but he would never let her know that. Bianca follows the Crew from city to city on their tour, frequently interacting with Cassio and the others. Bianca is kind and caring, but she definitely has a fiery streak in her too.

## Loco Vito (Played by Nick Van Atta)



Loco Vito is the CEO of the record label that is supporting the Crew's tour. The only thing Loco Vito loves more than money and success is tennis. His affinity for the sport causes him to make constant parallels to players and how the game is played...even at the most inappropriate times.

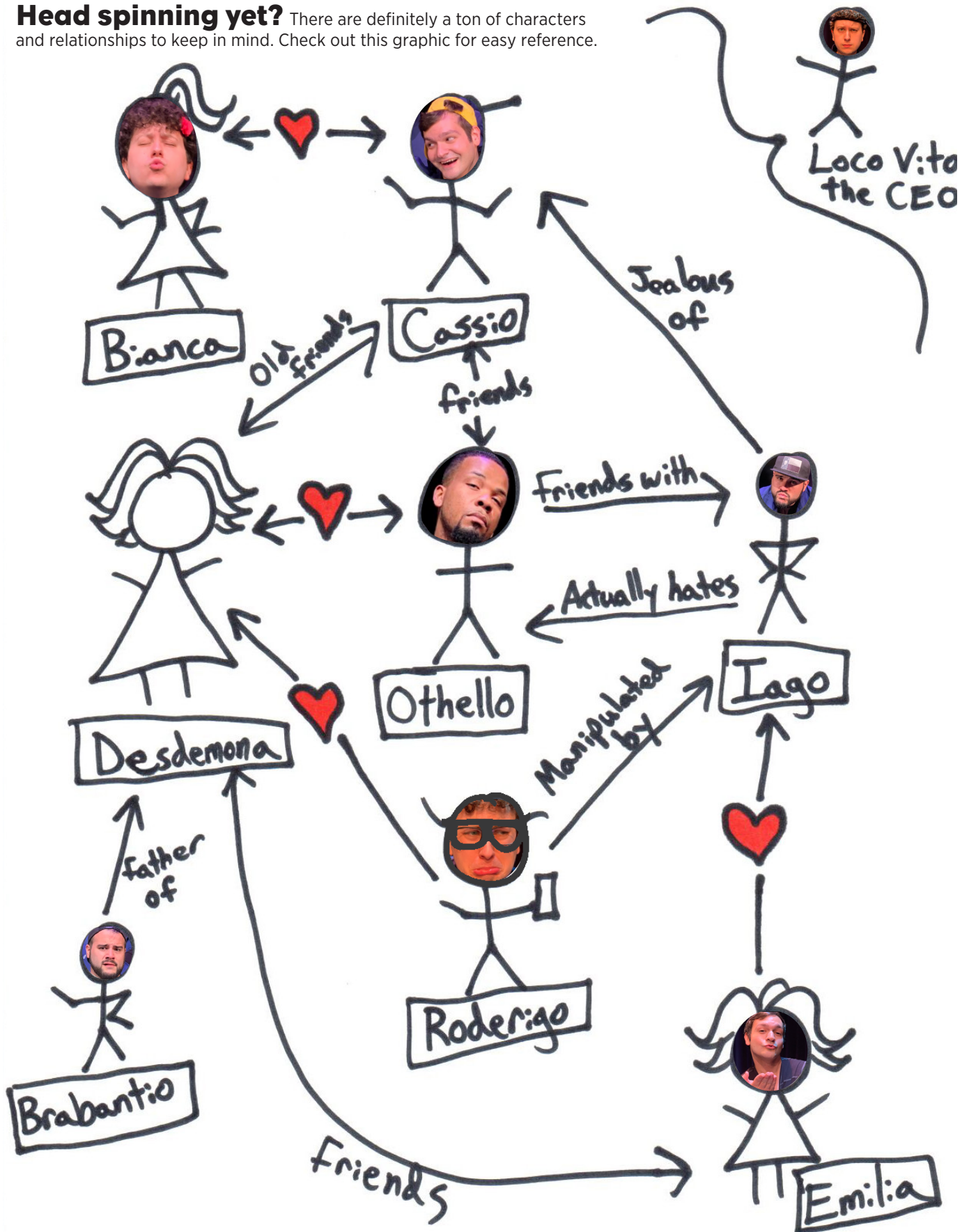
## Desdemona

Desdemona is the love of Othello's life, and he is the love of hers. She first fell in love with him when she heard his music. She would sit in her room, listen to Othello's raps, and sing vocal lines between his words. A situation eventually presented itself for her to be discovered. She took it, and she and Othello officially collaborated on a track. Audiences freaked out in the best possible ways. Othello fell for her and gave her his necklace as a symbol that she is his soulmate. Desdemona and Othello eloped despite her father's disapproval. Desdemona's beauty is only match by her incredible vocals and her absolute faithfulness to Othello. In *Othello: The Remix*, no actor plays Desdemona. Instead she is represented by female vocals in the musical tracks.



# CHARACTER WEB

**Head spinning yet?** There are definitely a ton of characters and relationships to keep in mind. Check out this graphic for easy reference.



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. The original story of *Othello* is a play by William Shakespeare that is about the military. Othello is a top-ranking military officer who promotes Cassio to be second-in-command. Cassio has far less experience than Iago, who is Othello's old friend. Cassio's promotion causes Iago's jealousy and inspires his plot to betray Othello.**

**Question 1:** In what way is the plot above similar to the plot of *Othello: The Remix*? How is it different?

**Question 2:** Do you think that updating the story from being about the military to being about the music industry works? Why or why not?

**Question 3:** If you were going to update the story of *Othello* to take place today, what setting would you use?

- 2. Iago is incredibly talented at manipulating people. He does this through a variety of different tactics.**

**Question 1:** What are the tactics that Iago uses to manipulate others? Lies? Half-truths?

**Question 2:** Do you think that Iago's plan would have been spoiled if Othello confronted Cassio about the rumors?

**Question 3:** What role does the necklace have in Iago's plot? How does he use it to control others?

**Question 4:** What can we learn about rumors and confronting others about rumors based on Iago's actions in *Othello: The Remix*?

- 3. Othello is considered one of Shakespeare's most racially charged plays. People often talk about Othello by using racist language in the play. In the original play and *Othello: The Remix*, Othello is described as being a 'moor.' In Shakespeare's time (1500s-1600s), the word 'moor' was a general term for people from Africa or Arabic descent.**

**Question 1:** How are issues about race and racism explored in *Othello: The Remix*? Are certain characters presented as being racist? What words and actions support your answers?

**Question 2:** Iago himself calls Othello a 'moor.' Do you think it is possible that Iago's scheme is motivated by racism in addition to jealousy? Why or why not?

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