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## REVIEW: OTHELLO: THE REMIX

 [CHRISTOPHE LOCATELLI \(https://www.ayoungertheatre.com/author/christophe-locatelli/\)](https://www.ayoungertheatre.com/author/christophe-locatelli/) ✕ [SEPTEMBER 14, 2013](#) ✕ [OFF WEST END \(https://www.ayoungertheatre.com/category/reviews/offwestend/\)](#) ✕ [REVIEWS \(https://www.ayoungertheatre.com/category/reviews/\)](#) ✕ [THEATRE \(https://www.ayoungertheatre.com/category/theatre/\)](#) ✕ [202 VIEWS](#)

We have all heard of *Othello*, the classic tragedy by William Shakespeare, with the usual themes of love, jealousy and betrayal. However I suspect only few of us have heard of a hip-hop- and comedy-influenced *Othello*? Well now you have: *Othello: The Remix* is the brainchild of two brothers from Chicago, Jeffrey and Gregory Qaiyum. They have written lyrics over original beats telling us the story of how Othello the MC has been betrayed by a member of his rap crew. He is being lied to about this betrayal by Iago, his best friend of many years, who makes him believe that his wife Desdemona has been having an affair with another rapper, Cassio – and of course all hell breaks loose in the world of rapping.

The four member cast rap to us during the prologue of the play, “There is comedy to be found behind the tragedy”, yet it is hard to even grasp the thought of laughter at the start, with the whole idea of the play coming across as actors who are strenuously attempting to modernise Shakespeare, including rhymes that only seem to be there for the sake of rhyming and intended humour that was devastatingly embarrassing. Only half an hour in and it felt as if it had been pulsing along for several hours with these four men jumping around on stage like drunk teenage boys trying to catch the ladies’ attention, while rapping throughout.

This version of *Othello* was written by the Qaiyum brothers and they make sure the audience is aware that is their show, by letting no other actor shine brighter than them. Moving past the first half an hour, they begin to pull us in with humour and intensity. Gregory Qaiyam has a captivating stage presence and plays the perfect bitter-sweet rapping villain of Iago. From the body language he uses to intimidate and charm the audience while walking around the theatre seats, to each tiny tightened facial expression, he makes sure we understand he is the perfect cruel enemy. Meanwhile, his brother Jeffrey has a real talent for multi-role-ing, playing the socially awkward geek Roderigo with a strong and shy posture. Jeffrey also brought the loudest laughter to the theatre with his character of Bianca, obsessed girlfriend of Cassio, who is feminine and flamboyant with an almighty New York accent, we would not have known that it was the same man playing her.



This production is not superb, with many uncomfortably badly-presented scenes, that could be mistaken for an audition on *Britain's Got Talent*; however the brothers have written some clever songs, such as their new hysterical version of 'It's a Man's World' and other rather powerfully meaningful lyrics, as well as a use of physical theatre so fierce and intelligently put together I will always remember it.

This production is not for everyone. If you are a hip-hop fan and into parody comedy I'm sure you may give these boys a standing ovation, and no matter who you are you will struggle to hold back a smile more than once in this show.

Othello: The Remix is playing at the Unicorn Theatre until 29 September. For more information and tickets, see the [Unicorn Theatre website](https://www.unicorntheatre.com/whatson/12/othello-the-remix) (<https://www.unicorntheatre.com/whatson/12/othello-the-remix>).

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