



INDEPENDENT SHAKESPEARE CO. presents

# OTHELLO

By William Shakespeare

Directed by Melissa Chalsma

*Limited Engagement Opens Saturday, March 26  
at Independent Studio in the  
Atwater Crossing Arts + Innovation Complex*

March 24, 2016...Los Angeles...Independent Shakespeare Co. (ISC), presenters of the Griffith Park Free Shakespeare Festival announce performances of Shakespeare's great treatise on alienation, **OTHELLO**, directed by Independent Shakespeare Co.'s Artistic Director Melissa Chalsma. **OTHELLO** will begin previews on Saturday, March 19, will open on Saturday, March 26 at 7:30pm and will perform through Saturday, May 7 at Independent Studio in the Atwater Crossing Arts + Innovation Complex, 3191 Casitas Ave., #168 in Atwater Village.

In this tightly-wound adaptation of **OTHELLO**, eight actors bring to life Shakespeare's great treatise on the dangers of faith and love. Othello (Evan Lewis Smith), decorated and revered, marries Desdemona (Kalean Ung), the daughter of a local aristocrat. This unexpected pairing dredges up some unpleasant truths about his adopted community and sets in motion a sequence of events that allows Othello to fall prey to the progressively more brutal machinations of Iago (David Melville). This production is a breathless, suspenseful ride.

(more)

**Comments Melissa Chalsma, “In **OTHELLO**, Shakespeare creates a deeply disorienting world, reflecting the experience of its central figure, the great general, Othello. He is a foreigner whose acceptance into his adopted community is fragile and for whom his marriage is both a surprise and a kind of rebellion. As he grapples with shifting circumstances (manufactured by his trusted ensign, Iago) he begins to sense that the people around him are not as they seem. And indeed, they are not—even his innocent wife, Desdemona, engages in ill-advised (albeit well meaning) subterfuge. Combined with the strange, dual timeline of the play (which seems to take place both in a matter of days, but also a matter of weeks), this creates a tense and crackling environment that quickly spirals into tragedy. With our production we are focused on creating a meticulously detailed examination of the subtle interactions that allow the events of the play to occur, as well as the often troubling intersections of race, gender, and class.”**

**ISC is embarking on a strategic growth plan which will position us to better serve our community of audiences and artists.**

**Comments ISC Board Chair, Eduardo A. Braniff, “We are committed to providing Angelenos free Shakespeare year-round through our new ticketing initiative that affords access to all of our productions at the Independent Studio. The Studio, and our expansion plans for it, is a vital part of making our vision of a community that considers theater a vital part of being an Angeleno.”**

**(more)**

## **ABOUT THE CREATIVE TEAM AND CAST**

**MELISSA CHALSMA** (Director) is the co-founder and Artistic Director of Independent Shakespeare Co. (ISC). Under her leadership, along with co-founder David Melville, the company created the Griffith Park Free Shakespeare Festival, which has grown into the largest theater event of its kind in Los Angeles. In 2015, ISC received the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle's highest honor, the Margaret Harford Award for sustained excellence in theater. She directs and acts in many ISC productions. ISC roles include Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (as well as directing), Hermione in *The Winter's Tale* and Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*. As director: *Romeo & Juliet*, Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, *Hamlet*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Two Gentleman of Verona*. She has performed in theaters across the country, on Broadway (including the American premiere of Harold Pinter's *Moonlight* with Jason Robards, Blythe Danner, and Liev Schreiber), and in the UK.

In her ten years as a college faculty member she taught at Moorpark College, Pepperdine University, and California State University, Northridge. Drawing on her experience as an educator, she has guided the company in the development of educational programming for schools, as well as workshops directed toward families that take place before performances in Griffith Park.

The cast of **OTHELLO** will feature: Evan Lewis Smith as Othello, Kalean Ung as Desdemona, David Melville as Iago, with Danny Brown, Fiona Cheung, Faqir Hassan, Edgar Landa and Sean Pritchett.

Lighting Design is by Bosco Flanagan. Set Design is by David Melville. Costume Design is by Hourii Mahserejian. Composer is Chris Porter.

## **SCHEDULE AND PRICING**

**OTHELLO** will preview Saturday, March 19 and will open on Saturday, March 26 and perform through Saturday, May 7 at Independent Studio, 3191 Casitas Ave., #168, (between Fletcher Drive and Glendale Blvd.) at the Atwater Crossing Arts + Innovation Complex, Los Angeles, CA 90039. Free, ample lot and street parking.

Previews begin Saturday, March 19. Opens Saturday, March 26. Regular performances are Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30pm & Sundays at 2pm. Closes Saturday, May 7.

### **NEW TICKETING PRICES**

**Generous Admission - \$35. Support ISC's initiative to provide access across income and age!**

**General Admission - \$20. ISC's affordable ticket price.**

**FREE! 10 free tickets are available for each performance so that price is not an obstacle to attending live theater. Call the office to make a reservation.**

**For tickets, please call (818) 710-6306 or buy online at [www.iscla.org](http://www.iscla.org)**

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**For more information, photos, press interviews or for press comps please contact David Elzer/DEMAND PR at 818-508-1754 or at [davidelzer@me.com](mailto:davidelzer@me.com)**

# Calendar Listing:

## OTHELLO

Directed by Melissa Chalsma

**OPENS SATURDAY, MARCH 26 THROUGH SATURDAY, MAY 7!**

Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30pm; Sundays at 2pm

Previews are:

Saturday, March 19

Sunday, March 20

Thursday, March 24

Friday, March 25

**OPENING/PRESS NIGHT: Saturday, March 26 at 7:30pm**

### INDEPENDENT SHAKESPEARE CO. STUDIO

3191 Casitas Ave. #168

(between Fletcher Drive and Glendale Blvd.)

at the Atwater Crossing Arts + Innovation Complex

Los Angeles, CA 90039

Free, ample lot and street parking.

Tickets are \$35 Generous Admission; \$20 General Admission; Free – 10 tickets for each performance (call for reservation)

For tickets, please call (818) 710-6306 or buy online at [www.iscla.org](http://www.iscla.org)

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*INDEPENDENT SHAKESPEARE CO. (ISC) produces accessible, imaginative performances of classical plays. We are the 2015 recipients of the LA Drama Critics Circle's highest honor, the Margaret Harford Award for sustained excellence in theater, a 2015 recipient of an NEA ArtWorks grant and a grantee recipient of Bloomberg Philanthropies' Arts Innovation and Management Program. Since 2010 we have produced the Griffith Park Free Shakespeare Festival in partnership with the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks at the iconic Old Zoo in Griffith Park, the second largest city park in California. The growth in attendance is extraordinary: at our first season (at Barnsdall Park in 2004), we played to fewer than 1,000 people; by 2015 our audience grew to nearly 50,000. Through classical theater we have attracted a community that is young (69% age 18 and under), diverse (45% identify as non-Caucasian and 75% are middle and lower income), and from all corners of Los Angeles. In 2012, we expanded our offerings with our indoor performance space, Independent Studio, where we present original work, re-imagined stagings of classics, readings and classes. Beginning in 2016 ISC is implementing a growth plan that will see a dramatic increase in audience served, scope of programming and budget while maintaining our profound focus on our community. The plans include two structures: the Griffith Park Performing Arts Stage (a project of the City of Los Angeles, Department of Recreation & Parks) and a new performing arts space (re-invented to better serve our community of artists and audience). For more information call 818-710-6306 or visit [www.iscla.org](http://www.iscla.org).*

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