

SCENE
theatreFrom Paris to good
times around
the Bend

This is what I can't wait to come back to: a five minute walk to class, three hour meals at the dining hall just to waste time, the glow of the Dome through the trees on the walk back from D6, sitting on the chapel floor in pajamas at Sunday night Mass, stumbling home after a night out only to stay up chatting with the security guard, late night delirium at The Observer, the Basilica's bells, the ever-smiling Grab-n-Go ladies, having my best friends a bunk or a room away and even Turtle Creek (maybe).

This is what I don't want to leave: Paris.

It's a dilemma; though, not one that merits sympathy. When my family or friends ask if I'm ready to come home, I always say "yes." And in some ways it's true. I do miss home, in both sense of the word — good ol' Flushing, Mich., and Ind., 46556.

I miss taking for granted the fact that everyone speaks English. I miss the comfort zone of people who understand my stupid jokes and my grumpy moods. I miss going to a Catholic school. I might even miss snow.

At Thanksgiving last weekend, my quintmates and I (reunited in London for the feast) sat around worrying about the move back to Notre Dame. All semester we've been building up our return, our reunion. We'll be back in Walsh, getting in trouble for violating quiet hours and laughing at the same stupid movies and the world will be right again. But it might not be as smooth a transition as we hope.

For one thing, it won't be the same Notre Dame we left. Friends will be abroad second semester that we won't see until senior year. One-fourth of the faces we pass on the quad will be freshmen we don't know. A football season will have come and gone, a semester of campus news and gossip will be foreign and every building will look a little different than the way we remember leaving it.

At the same time, we've changed as well. New friends, a photo album full of travels and stories of living in another country. Big cities have toughened us a little; the confusion of another language has helped us laugh at ourselves. We feel more confident that we can strike it out on our own and yet we feel overwhelmed at how huge the world really is.

Timing is everything. So, I keep thinking that once January rolls around and I board the plane home, it will feel right. I needed a break from life in South Bend, a breather to help me appreciate what I have there. Now I feel ready to get back.

I think coming home will feel real and after living in this dream world for four months, something raw and gritty will probably do me good. As my friends here get sentimental about leaving, we make the grand promises that everyone does when they part, "I'm coming to see you so many times next semester you'll get sick of me — Philly is only, what, 12 hours away?"

But deep down I know it might not happen, at least not as much as I'd hope. That's the reality of it — I'll go back, and Notre Dame will be home again and I won't be able to imagine how I ever left.

I read somewhere that every story is about coming to a new place or leaving a familiar one. Maybe that's what drives us to write when we're young — it seems like we're always slipping into a new story. I can't really sit around and miss Paris, especially while I'm still here, because there's something new just around the corner. This semester had its time and place and so will the next.

Yesterday, my friends and I went to Disneyland Paris, which on its own, probably says I'm hungry for American culture. And as we rode "It's a Small World" for the fourth time in a row (because, who else goes to Disney when it's cold, raining and December?), I started thinking that the last time I'd laughed at all the happy dancing puppets, I'd been in Florida with my roommates last fall break.

While I may not have grown up at all (the Haunted House ride still makes me jump), I'm now an ocean away, speaking another language with friends I hadn't known existed a year ago. I couldn't wax philosophical for too long, considering I was surrounded by Technicolor trees and talking animals. But it made me realize how much can change in a year. Maybe looking back to see how much we've changed is the only constant we can count on.

In any case, it was a relief to know Paris loves cheezy Americana as much as I do. Makes it feel a little more like home.



Laura Kelly

French
Connection

By MATT KILLEN
Scene Writer

This week, the Not-So-Royal Shakespeare Company brings Shakespeare's classic work "The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice" to Notre Dame's Hesburgh Center for International Studies. True to its form, this highly popular student-run company promises another solid performance of one of The Bard's many great tales.

The play is the story of love, trust, intrigue and jealousy. Iago, played by sophomore Tom Conner, an ensign to the Moorish general Othello, played by sophomore Adel Hanash, plots against his superior in a hateful attempt at vengeance. He enlists the help of Roderigo, played by sophomore Mike Federico, a former suitor of Desdemona.

Iago also plans to wreak vengeance on Cassio, played by junior Jeff Eyerman, a fellow member of the army who was promoted to a post Iago desired. Iago tells Roderigo that Desdemona loves Cassio and encourages Roderigo to incite Cassio into violence to discredit him in front of the general so that Roderigo might win Desdemona's heart without competition.

After Cassio attacks Roderigo in a drunken rage, Othello dismisses Cassio from his service. Desperate to get reinstated, Cassio (following the "honest" advice of Iago) begs Othello's wife Desdemona, played by senior Katy Wilcox, to plead his case to her husband. When interrupted by Iago and Othello, Cassio hastily leaves.

Iago uses this as an opportunity to place the thoughts and image of infidelity into Othello's head. As Othello's jealousy grows, he demands that Iago offer proof of what he

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The Not-So-Royal Shakespeare

is accusing. Iago shows Othello special hankerchief that he gave Desdemona before they were married in the hands of Cassio. Iago secretly got the hankerchief from Emilia, Desdemona's sharp-tongued attendant and Iago's wife.

Ultimately, Othello becomes convinced of Desdemona's infidelity and murders her. The tragedy reaches its climax as the truth of Iago's deception is revealed, causing the Moor to tragically take his own life.

While historically much has been made of the role of race in Othello, director Matt Holmes, a second-year law student, was drawn to the play for other reasons.

"I don't think it's primarily about race," Holmes said, "but about trust and what happens when trust is corrupted."

"This play is very timeless," Holmes said. "The race element does play a role, but more important is the distinction between the reality and the perception of friendship in the show."

Holmes feels that the role of trust is the larger theme of Shakespeare's play that has more relevance in today's world than the issue of race does.

Because of these themes, Holmes sees this play as quite relevant today.

"This is easily the most modern play of Shakespeare," Holmes said. "The issue of trust is one of Shakespeare's most timeless themes."

Some of this modern feel is reflected in the production. While the set is minimal, modern elements are prominently used. The actors themselves don contemporary clothing, as well.

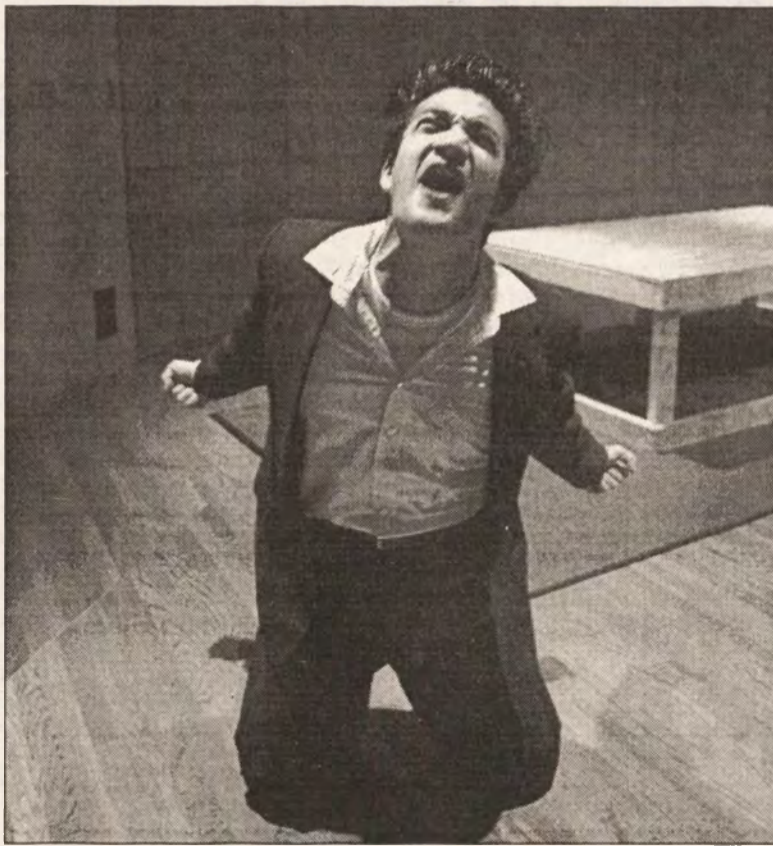
Along with the use of modern dress, minor elements have been altered from the original

text. To shorten the running length, some dialogue and a few scenes were excised from the script, while certain minor characters were combined to reduce the number of cast members, which totaled over two dozen, to 12.

Despite these changes, Shakespeare's work has been left intact. Unlike recent on-screen debacles like "O," this production promises to stay true to form.

"It's set in the present day, but the language is still there," Holmes said. "To attempt to [make Shakespeare] 'better' is a mistake"

With such min-



C. SPENCER BEGGS/The Observer

Adel Hanash as Othello. The Not-So-Royal Shakespeare Company relies on its actors' abilities rather than production effects.

The opinions expressed in this column are those of the author and not necessarily those of The Observer.

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eare Company returns 'Othello' to the Notre Dame stage



C. SPENCER BEGGS/The Observer

imalist design values, the burden is even heavier on the cast to play their roles effectively.

"These actors are really excited about being in the show and are doing a great job," Holmes said. "Casting the show was difficult because I had such a surplus of talent. Ultimately, I got the twelve best actors cast in the show."

"The cast as a whole — as an ensemble — does a great job of creating a real world. Not only the major relationships, but the minor ones as well. The detail everyone puts into their characters is fantastic," Holmes said.

Holmes' respect and appreciation for the cast is mutual.

"It's been nice because he's really fluid with the direction," Bradford said. "[Holmes] has certain things he wants, but he gives us a lot of room and freedom. He spent a lot of time developing [the show] and he has a vision."

Holmes is a veteran of another Othello production five years ago. While he played Iago then, he has always wanted to return to the material and direct the play.

The play's leading roles belong to Hanash and Conner. Though both have little Shakespeare experience, they both have significant backgrounds in acting.

"Adel and Tom are friends in real life, which gives them a kind of chemistry on stage which is great," Holmes said.

Holmes describes his directing style as laid back, making sure that the experience is enjoyable for the whole cast.

"We have fun with it," Holmes said. "Plays are plays, not work."

Despite the enjoyable elements for the cast, much is obviously expected from them. Stripped of elaborate costumes or gaudy set designs, even more pressure is placed on the cast to effectively tackle Shakespeare's inherently daunting dialogue. While this is a risky gamble, it pays off big for this production of Othello.

While high quality has always been associated with the Not-So-Royal Shakespeare Company, this production just might set the bar even higher. This talented cast manages to deliver fantastic performances and an all-around excellent experience.

Hanash's portrayal of Othello is fantastic. His commanding voice and intimidating stage presence embody the role, bringing to life the great Moor of Venice. He hits all his notes, with some of his best work coming during his monologue before slaying Desdemona. There Hanash shows a subtlety that is downright impressive.

Conner's representation of Iago is true to the text. Seemingly relishing in his role as one of Shakespeare's most diabolical villains, Conner convincingly plays a difficult character, switching between the many of Iago's lies with an ease and confidence that brings out some great aspects of the role.

Despite the strength of the major characters, the quality of the supporting roles cannot be overlooked. The detail the rest of the cast has put into the show shines through without overshadowing the main story. The cast gives the sense that each of these characters could stand alone as the main focus of their own plays.

The lack of elaborate sets and costumes only serves to underscore the already solid cast. The beauty of the performance can be appreciated in full without distraction. As such, the themes of jealousy and trust weave gracefully through the intricate story, highlighting the entire play with sophistication.

The relatively small venue brings the audience even closer to the story. The action is very close to the audience, which delivers a personal and emotional experience. This play is not removed from the audience. Rather, the venue is able to bring an element to the play that might have been lost at a larger theater.

Even for those averse to The Bard and his prose, "Othello" can still be enjoyed by appreciated the raw emotion and expression with which the actors fill the stage. Shakespeare's sometimes daunting dialogue is too much for some audience members, but just experiencing the production is worth the price of admission alone.

Much is expected from "Othello," and much is delivered. "Othello" is a superior production from a company that already brings the expectation of quality theatre. This version of Shakespeare is as timeless as it is compelling.

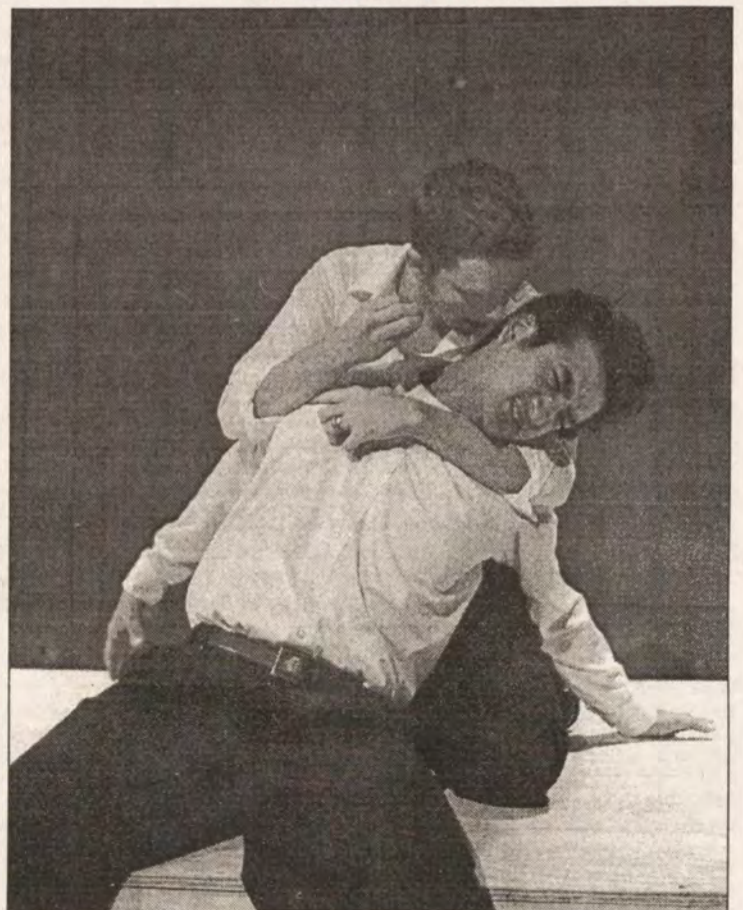
"Othello" runs Wednesday through Saturday at 7:30 p.m. in the Hesburgh Center for International Studies. General admission is \$7 and \$5 for students. Tickets are available at the door or at the LaFortune Box Office. Due to space limitations, ticket holders not in the auditorium at 7:30 p.m. may have their tickets voided and standby seating will be made available. To order tickets call the LaFortune Box Office at (219) 631-8128.

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C. SPENCER BEGGS/The Observer

Katy Wilcox, as Desdemona, sleeps while Othello, deceived by Iago, plots her murder.



C. SPENCER BEGGS/The Observer

Tom Conner, as the treacherous Iago, convinces Othello that his wife is cheating on him.