

OTHELLO: THE REMIX

BOOK AND MUSIC BY

Q BROTHERS
(GQ AND JQ)

DEVELOPED WITH RICK BOYNTON



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

OTHELLO: THE REMIX
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The Q Brothers' OTHELLO: THE REMIX was commissioned for the Globe to Globe Festival by Shakespeare's Globe, Chicago Shakespeare Theater (Barbara Gaines, Artistic Director; Criss Henderson, Executive Director), and Richard Jordan Productions. The production was developed with Rick Boynton (Creative Producer, Chicago Shakespeare Theater) and had its world premiere on May 5, 2012, at Shakespeare's Globe in London, England.

The production was directed by GQ and JQ, the costume and scenic design were by Scott Davis, and the wig and makeup design was by Melissa Veal. The cast was as follows:

OTHELLO	Postell Pringle
IAGO/BRABANTIO	GQ
CASSIO/EMILIA	Jackson Doran
RODERIGO/BIANCA/LOCO VITO	JQ
DJ	Clayton Stamper

The Q Brothers' OTHELLO: THE REMIX was presented with the same cast at the National Alliance for Musical Theatre's Festival of New Musicals (Betsy King Militello, Executive Director) in 2015. It was directed by Brian Hill.

CHARACTERS

OTHELLO is a modern day hip hop mogul. He is a gifted rapper and a self-made entrepreneur who escaped the pitfalls of the tough neighborhood he was raised in. He is now the most respected rapper in the music industry, with over ten million records sold. (Archetype: Jay-Z/The Game)

DESDEMONA is a disembodied voice. A powerful soul singer, her musical hooks help to elevate Othello's sound from hardcore rap to mainstream hits. During dialogue sections, she communicates with sound but no words. (Archetype: Adele/Christina Aguilera)

IAGO is an underground rapper who has been in Othello's crew since its inception. He is the best lyricist of the bunch, and a hip hop purist who is disgusted by the way rap is turning into mainstream pop music. (Archetype: Eminem/Nas)

CASSIO is the newest member of Othello's crew. He is a great dancer who raps about dancing and flirting with the ladies. For him, entertainment is paramount. Rap comes second. (Archetype: Will Smith/Mase)

EMILIA is Iago's wife and close friend of Desdemona. She is always trying to get Iago's affection and attention, but to no avail. She is supportive of his career and only receives verbal abuse in return.

RODERIGO is a nerdy lighting technician who travels with the crew on tour. He is secretly in love with Desdemona, who doesn't even know he exists. He loves sci-fi and fantasy movies/books and video games. He speaks with a lateral lisp.

BIANCA is Cassio's groupie girlfriend. She follows him everywhere the crew tours. She's a fiery and feisty boricua. She wants nothing but Cassio all the time.

LOCO VITO is the head of First Folio Records, the label to which Othello and his crew are signed. He is a West Coast Chicano gangster who loves tennis.

BRABANTIO is Desdemona's father. He is a stuffy and conservative Senator and does not approve of her relationship with Othello.

CAST

POS—Othello, Backup Girl #1

GQ—Iago, Brabantio, Backup Girl #3

JAX—Cassio, Emilia

JQ—Roderigo, Bianca, Loco Vito, Backup Girl #2, Radio DJ

The stage is bare, with only a road case on wheels, which serves as all set pieces, from a bench to a bed. Any simple piece of set, like a crate or block, may be substituted for the case on wheels. Whatever it is, it should provide levels during performance, and also double as the “bed” in which the murder takes place

A DJ spins the music for the whole play.

Individual songs are indicated, but note that all scenes are played over hip hop beats, making it as much an opera as it is a musical.

Costumes should remain simple and minimal. With each actor playing several roles, we recommend a costume piece or two at most, relying on strong vocal and physical acting choices to portray characters. For instance, when JQ becomes a radio DJ, he throws on headphones and a cap. When an actor plays a female character, he/she throws on a dress that is attached to a hanger and only covers the front of their base costume.

Miming most props will suffice. Drinking glasses, knives, poison, etc. should all be mimed. Two props that we recommend actually using are Othello’s chain and a wedding ring for Othello.

OTHELLO THE REMIX

ACT ONE

Play music cue: Oh Snap Intro.

Four narrators—JQ, GQ, POS, and JAX—emerge on stage, chanting: “O-Snap.” The “chant” continues and builds musically.

ALL.

Oh oh oh oh Snap

Oh oh oh oh Snap

Oh oh oh oh—

JAX.

Good story

GQ.

tellers borrow

POS.

but great

JQ.

ones steal.

ALL.

Oh oh oh oh—

JQ.

Good story

POS.

tellers borrow

GQ.

but great

JAX.

ones steal.

POS.

Hip hop

JAX.

Hip hop

GQ.

Hip hop

JQ.

Hip hop (hop hop hop)

ALL.

Good story tellers borrow but great ones steal,
So believe me the thievery is how we keep it real.

End music cue.

GQ.

This is a story about this one fellow—

POS.

The greatest emcee—

ALL.

MC Othello!

JQ.

Now I know what you're thinkin'—

JAX.

“Hold on just a minute,

That's a tragedy.”

POS, GQ, and JQ.

Yep.

GQ.

But there's comedy in it.

ALL.

We four fellas,

POS.

humble story tellers,

JAX.

Will weave

GQ.

the tale

JAX.

of a man

JQ.

who gets jealous.

GQ.

Othello changed the game when he came out,

JQ.

Releasin' free mix-tapes

JAX.

just to get his name out.

JQ.

The scene hadn't seen an emcee so inspired
In some time.

GQ and JAX.

The rhymes he combined were straight fire like—

One of the actors bangs rhythmically on the road case, making a kitchen table style hip hop beat for Othello's freestyle.

OTHELLO.

I gotta lotta drama, hotter than Madonna in a sauna
when she let you do a body shot of vodka on her.
Plus I'm sicker than guzzlin' a fifth of gin,
Pukin', wakin' up and doing it again. Ya listenin'?
I'm tryin' to be the American dream.
So put me in coach, I can carry the team.
Better know ya'll, Bourbon in a low ball,
Standin' so tall, smother tracks like a snowfall!

JQ, GQ, and JAX.

Ohhhhhh!

Play music cue: Torana A.

GQ.

Droppin' sick underground tracks for two years,

JAX.

Till he had every big wig in the industry's ears.

GQ.

He evolved from an artist who could pen rhymes phat

JQ.

Into a brilliant song writer that went

ALL.

ten times plat.

JAX.

Critics called him

POS.

“the greatest poet of the century,”

End music cue.

JQ, GQ, and JAX.

He rose to the top like it was meant to be...

Play music cue: Never Comin' Down.

Audience is transported to Othello's concert, where his back-up vocalists hype up the crowd.

Throw your hands up (x16)

OTHELLO.

I never knew my pops, moms was a junkie.
Raised in the streets with the beats that are

ALL.

funky.

OTHELLO.

Concrete and metal, a

ALL.

child of the ghetto.

OTHELLO.

Lookin' for the loot, but there was none for Othello.
I walk by people smokin' dumb rocks...
Either ya slang crack or ya got a wicked jump shot.

ALL.

Ohh!

OTHELLO.

I couldn't shoot, so I grabbed the microphone,
Spittin' stories for these people from this place I call

ALL.

home!

OTHELLO.

I survived the impossible.
Caught in gang crossfire and crawled to the hospital.
My hood was riots and

ALL.

uprising!

OTHELLO.

Momma so cracked out, she don't recognize me.
I had to get out, for my life and my sanity,
'Stead o' gettin' high waitin' to die like my family.
Grabbin' me a pen with a will that's rare...
Now I'm a mothafuckin' millionaire!

Chorus:

And I made it to the top.

JQ, GQ, and JAX.

No we're never gonna stop.

OTHELLO.

We ain't gon' stop.

JQ, GQ, and JAX.

Yeah we'll always be around.

OTHELLO.

We'll be around.

JQ, GQ, and JAX.

Cuz we made it to the top.

OTHELLO.

To the top, to the top!

And we're never comin' down.

JQ, GQ, and JAX. (*Simultaneously.*)

Down, down, down.

OTHELLO.

No, I'm never gonna stop.

JQ, GQ, and JAX.

We ain't gon' stop.

OTHELLO.

Yeah, we'll always be around.

JQ, GQ, and JAX.

We'll be around.

OTHELLO.

Cuz I made it to the top.

JQ, GQ, and JAX.

To the top!

And we.

OTHELLO.

We.

JQ, GQ, and JAX.

Ain't.

OTHELLO.

Ain't.

JQ, GQ, and JAX.

Never.

OTHELLO.

Never.

JQ, GQ, and JAX.

Comin' Down.

OTHELLO.

The irony is rap is like

OTHELLO: THE REMIX

book and lyrics by Q Brothers
(GQ and JQ)

4 men

Othello is spun out and lyrically rewritten over original beats in this high-energy spin on Shakespeare's play, proving that the Bard himself was the original master of rhythm and rhyme.

"While [the Q Brothers'] version conforms broadly to the original, it is continually infused with impish humor; it's as much a spoof of Othello as it is a serious attempt to translate the play into a contemporary musical idiom. ...The music...pulses with life, and the cascading rhymes of the lyrics are often inspired. ...it's a tickling refreshment to leave a production of this dark tale with a smile on your face, or an urge to head to the nearest nightclub."
—**The New York Times**

"Who knew Othello could be so funny? The Q Brothers have transformed the bloody tragedy into a rip-roaring, rapped one-act rich with dizzying rhymes. ...clever and exhilarating..."
—**Time Out New York**

"...full of clever updates and snarky rhymes... [OTHELLO: THE REMIX] is never less than inventive and even instructive in finding cognates for Shakespeare's poetry. His heroic metaphors drawn from now-obscure knowledge seem reinvigorated when translated into terms as familiar to us as heraldry and the hunt were to Elizabethans."
—**New York Magazine**

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