



Othello - Produced by [Theatre by Numbers](#)

Gullivers, Oldham Street, Manchester

Reviewed by [Yvonne Cawley](#) October 2013

I have to hold my hands up and admit that I don't know a lot about dear old William Shakespeare's works (sacrilege I hear some say!), but not to be deterred I ventured into central Manchester to catch a production of OTHELLO by '[Theatre by Numbers](#)' at **Gullivers Pub** on Oldham Street. However, not before doing a little bit of research and watching the film featuring the one and only Sir Kenneth Brannagh on You Tube to get an idea of what to expect. It definitely falls into the category of 'Tragedies' - lies, deception, lust, death and a little bit more death!!

I've never been to Gullivers pub before and had a quick look at reviews of the place, which to be honest were not the best, and so went there with fairly low expectations of the venue. Pleasantly surprised; the downstairs bar area is basic but clean and the bar staff were friendly and helpful. The theatre space upstairs is a real surprise, extremely high ceilings, wonderful architraving and a large raised staging area, with a nice sized seating space.



I was surprised to hear that there were only 4 members of the cast and did wonder how they would be able to carry this off without losing too much of the original script/story, or that too much time would be taken in costume/set change. However the thought and planning that the production team had implemented, worked so well.

The whole play was accompanied by Tom Woolsgrove's musical score which he performed on a variety of instruments, and was extremely impressive and emotive. Although Tom was

performing at the side of the stage, and there for all to see, it was true credit to the acting on stage, that Tom's physical presence ceased to exist. The music blended perfectly with the story and we were treated to his talents on arrival and during the interval. It substantiated the claims made on stage and the timing, pace, intensity and personality of music dove-tailed what was happening on stage perfectly.

The set and props were extremely basic, but this worked well and the acting more than compensated for that, and in fact more would have been less, a distraction even.

As this was a 4 person play I wasn't entirely sure what to expect, and what if anything had been omitted be of detriment to the play. I need not have worried, as this was a little gem of a performance. Right from the start where the actors enter the stage and literally entwined, showing a coming together and intermingling of characters and plots to come, I was intrigued to find out where this would go and how they would pull this off.

Needless to say, I thoroughly enjoyed this adaptation and it seemed that the actors enjoyed themselves on stage too, throwing themselves wholly into it. There was a little bit of a shaky start from **Othello** (played by **Amine Fourket**) with a few fluffed lines, but as the play progressed so did he and went on to command the stage, with his rage, frustration and final realisation clearly portrayed. And his interaction with

Desdemona

, was exquisite.

Andy Avery gave a very good performance as **Iago**, the master manipulator, and like Othello I believe got better as the play progressed, although I was a little confused over the Scottish accent that was prevalent in certain parts – maybe I missed the use of a certain accent at relevant critical moments of the play!

Desdemona was played extremely well by **Rebecca Derrick**, and her facial expressions were a delight to watch. The early scenes between her and Othello were brilliant, true love existed right there and then! For her to completely transform into ‘

Bianca

’ the prostitute was natural and you could believe a new actress had been introduced. Her portrayal of a male officer was delivered so naturally and believably, it was a real credit to her.

Nicole Gaskell gave a fantastic performance of **Cassio** and **Emilia** (maid to Desdemona), with perfect accent and confidence for each character. Totally believable and humorous in parts. In fact the two female performers delivered more than believable performances of the male characters with such ease and readiness.

Overall this was a fantastic night’s entertainment, enthralling and a real intense performance. I loved the brilliant interpretation of this classic script and found the individual performances a delight and an obvious camaraderie of the cast/crew which shone through in the show. The scene changes were well integrated with all the cast involved and it was a great night out and look out for future performances from this production company.