

Press Release

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HARLEM SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL'S ALL-FEMALE, MULTI-RACIAL OTHELLO COMES TO THE WORLD RENOWNED TALIESIN WEST // LIMITED ENGAGEMENT – APRIL 19TH – 28TH



Southwest Shakespeare Company presents Harlem Shakespeare Festival's All-Female, multi-racial mainstage production of *OTHELLO: The Moor of Venice* for a limited run April 19th through April 28th, 2019 at Taliesin West in Scottsdale, AZ. This new 90-minute adaptation of Shakespeare's *OTHELLO*, by Lisa Wolpe, is brought to the stages of Scottsdale as you've never seen it before. Celebrated director and educator Vanessa Morosco leads a cast of 8 classically trained actresses in a tragic tale that tells the story of a love that defies the boundaries of race; a hatred that defies all boundaries of reason. Together they will transform a lover's world of sighs into a universe of hurt... "*Othello*": *be careful who you trust!*

Harlem Shakespeare Festival's All-Female OTHELLO stars Debra Ann Byrd as Othello & Ella Loudon* as Iago. Featured in this AEA Special Appearance production are Natalie Andrews, Amy Driesler*, Troi Hall, Ryan L. Jenkins, Megan Lindsay and Kellyn Masters with live Cello Orchestrations by Wei Guo. *OTHELLO's* creative staff includes: Fight Director Rachelle Hart, Costume Designer Gail Cooper-Hecht, and Stage Manager Hannah Stewart. Producer of *OTHELLO* is Debra Ann Byrd and Voza Rivers/New Heritage Theatre Group.



VANESSA MOROSCO (Director) is a New York based director and educator, specializing in Original Practices Shakespeare and Contemporary Elizabethan Dance & Movement. Her directing credits include: *Cymbeline*, *Equivocation*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (American Shakespeare Center); *Macbeth* (Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey); *Henry VI, Part 1* (Colorado Shakespeare Festival); *Pericles* (Mary Baldwin University); *Boeing-Boeing* (Fordham University); *The Tempest*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Hamptons Shakespeare Festival). Assistant Directing & Choreography credits: *Hold These Truths* (Off-Broadway); *Dancing Lessons*, *One Man, Two Guvnors* (Florida Studio Theatre); *Henry VIII*, *Merry Wives of Windsor* (Alabama Shakespeare Festival); *Much Ado About Nothing* (Colorado Shakespeare Festival); *Romeo & Juliet*, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, *Duchess of Malfi* (American Shakespeare Center). Vanessa also teaches nationally and internationally, developing live training and E-Learning programs for fortune 500 multi-national corporations using the tools of theatre (with a focus on Shakespeare) to address issues of diversity & inclusion and unconscious bias. She is member of AEA, SDC, The League of Professional Theatre Women, and holds an M.A. in Ethics from Yale. She lives in Manhattan with her husband Peter and is a proud stepmother to Octavia. vanessamorosco.com



DEBRA ANN BYRD (Othello | Founder & Producing Artistic Director) is an award winning classically trained actress and producer who recently won an Outstanding Achievement Award from AUDELCO for her portrayal of the title character in the all-female multiracial mainstage production of Shakespeare's *OTHELLO: The Moor of Venice*. As the Founder and Producing Artistic Director of Take Wing And Soar Productions and the Harlem Shakespeare Festival, she guided the company's growth from its birth as the passionate dream of one determined woman, into a viable support organization serving classical artists of color and theater arts groups throughout New York. She received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Acting from Marymount Manhattan College and completed advanced studies at The Public Theater's Shakespeare Lab, Shakespeare & Company and The Broadway League's Commercial Theatre Institute. Her classical roles for the stage include Queen Elizabeth in *Richard III*, The Choragos in *Antigone*, Mrs. Malaprop in *The Rivals*, Volumnia in *Coriolanus*, Winter in *Love's Labors Lost*, Hippolyta in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Cleopatra in *Antony & Cleopatra*, Othello in *The Tragedy of Othello: The Moor of Venice* and Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest*; the latter, for which she received Best Lead Actress and Outstanding Actress in a Lead Role nominations from AUDELCO and the NY Innovative Theatre Awards.



ELLA LOUDON* (Iago) is a Scottish born actress, artist, model and singer based in New York. She has trained with Harold Guskin and Tina Packer. She is a member of Shakespeare and Company, having played Miranda in *The Tempest* and Phoebe in *As you Like It*. She will be playing Viola in *Twelfth Night* this summer season. Ella was in the New York Times critically acclaimed opera *The Mother of Us All*. She had lead roles in the award winning films *ManEater* and *Trauma in a Time Machine*. Ella shall be playing the lead in *Solidago* a British Film Institute supported film this coming fall. She is currently working on putting on her one-woman show.

HARLEM SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL™ (Producing Company) With the plays of William Shakespeare as its foundation, Debra Ann Byrd and Voza Rivers/New Heritage Theatre Group have teamed up to produce the Harlem Shakespeare Festival™, a theatre festival spanning across Harlem with ongoing programming from late summer through early spring. The festival, now celebrating its 6th season was formed with a social justice mission to foster understanding and unity in the arts by producing special events and plays with multicultural casts, with a special emphasis in giving center stage opportunities to women, youth and especially classically trained actors of color. The Festival, inaugurated in summer 2013, brings Shakespeare scripts alive featuring 3-5 Shakespeare and modern plays, Master classes, Panel discussions, International symposiums, Artist talk-backs, Workshops, Shakespeare4Kids, ShakespeareInMusic, ShakespeareOnFilm and Shakespeare-In-The-Open-Air.

DATES: Friday, April 19th thru Sunday April 28th, 2019
TIMES: Friday, 04/19 - Saturday, 04/20 @ 7:30pm, & Sunday, 04/21 @ 6:00pm
 Friday, 04/26 - Saturday, 04/27 @ 7:30pm, & Sunday, 04/28 @ 6:00pm
THEATRE: Taliesin West, Music Pavilion, 12621 N Frank Lloyd Wright Blvd, Scottsdale, AZ
TICKETS: General Admission \$35
RESERVATIONS: 480-435-6868 // Online>> <http://swshakespeare.org/tickets/>
 Box Office opens 1 hour before curtain / **Show website online at www.swshakespeare.org**

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