

**Review: Othello**

**By Suzanne Cleave**

## ***Othello* at Theatre Royal Plymouth**

Frantic Assembly's *Othello* catapulted onto the Lyric stage at the Theatre Royal last week, and gave a raw, unadulterated and thoroughly modern retelling of the Shakespeare tragedy.

The audience are drawn in from the start, with a gripping opening scene jam packed with mesmerising choreography and soul-punching techno music. No words were needed as the characters made their appearances and the scene was set.

The stage is set not in Venice, but the inside of a pub on a run-down housing estate. A pool table takes centre stage, and characters are dressed in tracksuits, each with their own accent.

As the story unfolds, you forget that you're watching Shakespeare. Frantic Assembly has taken something that's over 400 years old, and has made it current and something that the audience can connect with.

There were lots of students in the audience, possibly studying the text for their GCSEs or A Levels, but there was no chattering, no shuffling in their seats, everyone was captivated by what they were seeing.

Michael Akinsulire was fantastic as Othello, holding a powerful presence throughout. Chanel Waddock stole the show as Desdemona, full of attitude and irresistible to Othello.

Othello, who in Shakespeare's original rose to become an army general, becomes the leader of a local gang. He marries Desdemona, the daughter of a local white man, and Othello's passionate relationship with her becomes the catalyst for paranoia, jealousy and deception.

When Iago, another gang leader, becomes jealous, he persuades Othello that his 'strumpet' has been unfaithful and everything unravels with tragic consequences.

It's companies like Frantic Assembly who will continue to introduce new generations to the wonders of Shakespeare. Simply amazing!