

# Othello revived for Maynardville's diamond jubilee

This summer, the Maynardville Open-Air Theatre celebrates its diamond jubilee. Since its inception in 1956 an annual Shakespeare play has been staged under the stars at the theatre, which is regarded as one of the most beautiful open-air theatres in the world.



Maynardville's 60th anniversary coincides with another very auspicious anniversary for the Bard of Stratford-upon-Avon as 2016 marks the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death in 1616. Throughout 2016, theatre companies across the globe will pay tribute to William Shakespeare's lasting legacy as the world's pre-eminent playwright.

Having staged Shakespeare for over a decade, Artscape has selected to revive its 2015 production of Othello in partnership with the City of Cape Town. Othello drew such large audiences in 2015 that additional performances had to be added and the run extended. This will be the second time in Maynardville's 60-year history that a play is revived by popular demand. The last play to hold this distinction was Ken Leach's 1986 Asterix-inspired production of The Comedy of Errors, which returned to the Maynardville stage in 1987.

Of all Shakespeare's plays, Othello resonates most within a South African context with its themes of racism, jealousy, passion, obsession and betrayal. These themes powerfully combine in a devastating domestic tragedy that is as gripping today as it was when it was written over 400 years ago. The play is a major attraction for schools all over as it is currently being studied as a Grade 12 set work and is also open to the public.

## Pope Jerrod gets title role

Artscape is also pleased to announce that Cape Town star Pope Jerrod has signed on to play the title role of Othello. Pope has proved to be one of South Africa's most versatile actors having featured in numerous television and film productions locally and internationally such as Safe House alongside Denzel Washington, Taste of Rain, The Lost Future, Hansie Cronje as well as Stokvel and Isidingo.

The supporting cast include Melissa Haiden as Desdemona, Marcel Meyer as Iago, Lee-Ann van Rooi as Emilia, Stephen Jubber as Cassio, Matthew Baldwin as Roderigo, Faniswa Yisa as Bianca, Robin Smith as Brabantio, Daniel Richards as Lodovico, and Siya Sikawuti as Montano and The Duke of Venice.

Award-winning duo, Fred Abrahamse and Marcel Meyer return as the creative team for this production. Abrahamse and Meyer have achieved international recognition for their innovative Shakespeare productions, which include A Midsummer Night's Dream (Maynardville 2013, Artscape and National Arts Festival 2012), Shakespeare's R&J (National Arts Festival and The Fugard Theatre 2011), The Tragedy of Richard III (National Arts Festival 2010 and Artscape and the Market Theatre 2011) and their most recent production of The Tragedy of Hamlet, which proved immensely popular with audiences and critics at the 2015 National Arts Festival, Grahamstown.

Othello is directed by Fred Abrahamse [whose previous Maynardville productions include A Midsummer Night's Dream (2001 and 2013), Much Ado About Nothing (2005) and Romeo and Juliet (2007)] with set and costume designs by Marcel Meyer, lighting design by Faheem Barden and original score by Charl-Johan Lingenfelder. The production runs from 26 January till 23 February.

*Tickets at Box Office, Dial-a-Seat and Computicket Outlets ranging from R80 to R180. For more information on the production, contact Themba Mzondi on +27 (0)78 113 5216 or email [Themba@sceproductions.co.za](mailto:Themba@sceproductions.co.za)*

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