

Drama Review: Othello, a mellow fellow

by Kari Howard

How do you spell Trouble? I spell it R-E-L-I-E-F. Relief actors, that is. Just as relief pitchers aren't on the first string, so aren't substitution actors. That was my first thought when I saw the notice that the title role of **Othello** was not, as anticipated, being played by Milledge Mosley. Instead, we were getting Sydney Hibbert. I needed a Roloids.

My stomach didn't settle down much when I saw the stage. It looked like it was going to be another one of those "Shakespeare in 1984" plays (don't laugh, I once saw a punk version of **Richard III**).

Visible black stalks of stagelights grew around the stage, accompanied only by four enormous coffin-like monuments. Wasn't this supposed to be a tale of jealousy? Where was the fury, the brilliant reds? And the music! It was distinctly cool, almost sacred. Where was Wagner's thunder? Where were those Roloids?

I was more than a little relieved when the actors appeared onstage. The costumes were rather traditional! The abundance of satins, brocades, velvets and gold shimmered, adding a rich luster to the performance without being ostentatious.

The same can be said of the acting. The North Carolina Shakespeare Festival company was polished. There were no mishaps, no forgotten lines. But that is a merely superficial observance. More importantly, did the actors have depth?

The answer is yes. And no. Most of the actors seemed to be playing with considerable restraint and understatement. They were smooth, but they stepped gingerly around the prospect of adding new dimensions to their traditional dramatis personae. Take, for example, Mary Hopeman as Othello's devoted wife, Desdemona. She was certainly devoted, but was she inflamed with love to the point of defying her father

and her country's prejudices? No. The fire seemed a trifle damp.

And what about the mysterious Mr. Hibbert? His first scenes confirmed my fears. His husky-voiced delivery unsure and rather unintelligible, he did not strike me as the mighty commander of the Venetian forces. Strangely enough, however, this soft-spoken delivery provided a nice tension to the later scenes of a man maddened with jealousy; his dignity seemed at odds with his dignity.

Conflicting feelings provided a more wicked tension in Eric Zwemer's portrayal of Iago, one of Shakespeare's most evil characters. What started as merely a jealous plot to destroy Othello and Cassio, Othello's choice for lieutenant over Iago, became a sickness with Zwemer's masterful acting.

He was a man literally two-faced, switching schizophrenically from paste-on smiles to sneers of hatred.

More than once, Zwemer shifted mercurially from a soliloquy full of venomous curses to a flippant, "How now, Roderigo?" The transformation became less and less of an act as the play progressed. The one man slowly and totally divided into two; his face was both angelic and ugly.

The strain of this divorce of personalities climaxed in the final scene when Iago showed visible distress at Othello's suicide. Suddenly comprehending, as he could not before, the evil of his plot, Iago became a grinning idiot at the play's end. Having experienced one blinding illumination, he finally was left in the darkness of total insanity.

I suspect that the audience gave their standing ovation to Mr. Zwemer. While the rest of the cast was adequate, he alone added depth to his performance. I may not have jumped at my feet, but I at least discovered that I hadn't needed that Roloids, after all.

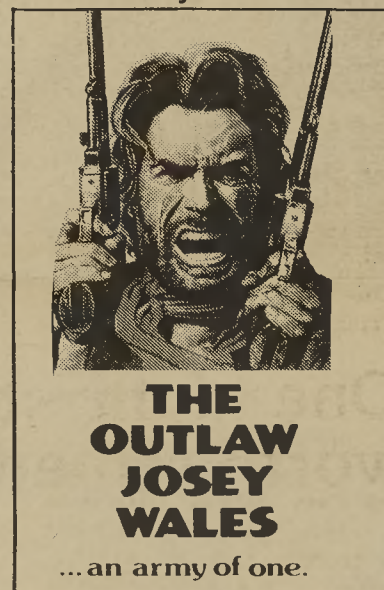


Toga, Toga, Toga: The members of the Alpha Xi Delta sorority donned sheets for their toga party Friday night. Photo by David LaPour

This week's movie

This week's film is **The Outlaw Josey Wales**. Clint Eastwood ("an army of one") stars in this western flick. It's rated PG.

It shows in Lipinsky Auditorium on Sunday, Oct. 1, at 6:30 p.m. and 9 p.m., and on Monday, Oct. 2, at 4 p.m. It's free to all UNCA students and is \$1 for all others.



Concert discount tickets

Discount tickets to the Asheville Symphony Orchestra Concert on Oct. 6 are available in the Student Center Office for UNCA students at \$3 a ticket.

The featured guest artist is Claude Frank. His best-selling recording of the 32 Beethoven Sonatas was the first-ever complete cycle of it recorded by an American pianist.

Works scheduled are: Rossini's **Overture to "La Gazza Ladra,"** Beethoven's **Piano Concerto #4, Op. 58,** Sibelius' **Karelia Overture,** and Respighi's **The Pines of Rome.**

Asheville Symphony concerts are performed in the Thomas Wolfe Auditorium at 8:15 p.m.

Concerts

Sept. 30	Loverboy.....	Atlanta Omni
Oct. 2	Al Jarreau.....	The Fox, Atlanta
Oct. 7	Rick James.....	Greensboro Coliseum
Oct. 9	Rick James.....	Charlotte Coliseum
Oct. 12	Iron Maiden.....	Greensboro Coliseum
Oct. 14	Al Jarreau.....	Greensboro Coliseum
Oct. 20	Iron Maiden.....	Charlotte Coliseum
Oct. 21	Iron Maiden.....	Atlanta Omni
Oct. 30	Kinks.....	Charlotte Coliseum
Oct. 30	Loverboy.....	Freedom Hall, Johnson City