

# Lubovitch's 'Othello' puts poetry in motion

**DANCE REVIEW | Skilled Joffrey ensemble fans emotional flames**

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Among the many miracles of Shakespeare's plays is that for all their pure verbal splendor, they also happen to speak brilliantly as dance. Just think of the ballets inspired by "Romeo and Juliet," as well as those based on "The Taming of the Shrew," "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and even "Hamlet," and you realize how well the playwright's sharply defined characters and plots lend themselves to visceral movement.

In his enthralling, boldly original "Othello," choreographer Lar Lubovitch proves himself a true master of such words-into-motion "translation," weaving this classic tale of love and all-devouring jealousy in the most fluid and audacious dance terms. Lubovitch also banishes the need for the mime and stilted gestures that make even the most otherwise modern story ballets feel oh-so-19th century.



Iago whispers in Othello's ear in the Joffrey Ballet "Othello."

## **THE JOFFREY BALLET IN 'OTHELLO'** **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

**When:** Through Oct. 25

**Where:** Auditorium Theatre, 50 E. Congress

**Tickets:** \$25-\$145

**Phone:** (800) 982-2787

First produced in 1997 by American Ballet Theater, and now receiving a magnificent revival by the Joffrey Ballet, Lubovitch's "Othello" is proof that the sheer propulsive drive of bodies churned by emotion is enough to tell a tale. The choreographer uses a gorgeous blend of ballet and contemporary movement (think Boris Eifman but without the kitschy edge). He adds his particularly ingenious way with partnering (the lifts devised for this ballet are thrilling in their invention and complexity, whether with rigidly horizontal bodies held aloft, sinuous entanglements or a dreamy sort of centripetal spinning motion).

And all this enables him to evoke the drives of the characters, the mood of a scene and even the environment (a sequence in which the ensemble becomes a sea of stormy waves is nothing short of hypnotic).

Othello's inner demons are visualized as he imagines his betrayal. There are sophisticated soliloquies, duets (for Othello and Iago, Othello and Desdemona, Iago and his much-abused wife,

Emilia) and tense triangulated relationships -- all passion-filled and dangerous. And Elliot Goldenthal's lushly burnished score (with echoes of Prokofiev and Shostakovich, plus subtle riffs of jazz) is vividly played by the Chicago Sinfonietta, led by Scott Speck.

The dancing at Wednesday's opening was at once rapturous and fevered, with the dark, towering Fabrice Calmels all volatility as Othello, the Moor; April Daly all heat and light as Desdemona; Matthew Adamczyk oozing sadistic venom as Iago; Valerie Robin, relentless as the ever-rejected Emilia; Aaron Rogers, fleet as the naive admirer, and Allison Walsh, exceptional and full of fire as the wild street girl. The superb ensemble, too, continually stirred the ballet's emotional flames.

Adding to the magic in this glorious addition to the Joffrey repertoire are George Tsybin's visionary set of shattered Venetian glass panels, the stunningly evocative lighting of Jack Mehler, and the Renaissance finery of Ann Hould Ward's costumes.

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