

# Iago said, "We cannot all be masters," but he didn't see The Joffrey's OTHELLO

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- BY: JANET ARVIA



Victoria Jaiani & Dylan Gutierrez in The Joffrey's Othello at the Auditorium Theatre *Credit: Cheryl Mann*

Rating for **Othello**: 5

“*Othello* was the first full-length I introduced to the Joffrey in 2009,” states the company's Artistic Director Ashley Wheater, “and is certainly a masterwork of narrative [dance](#) in the new century.”

Indeed, the Joffrey is in fine form with its current production of *Othello* which combines Shakespeare's classic cautionary tale of jealousy with Lar Lubovitch's innovative choreography and Elliot Goldenthal's exceptional score performed live by the Chicago Philharmonic, led by Joffrey Music Director Scott Speck.

Goldenthal, who received an Academy Award® and a Golden Globe® for Best Original Score for *Frida*, and Chicago-born Lubovitch who celebrates his 70th birthday this year, lend their talents to the [ballet](#) which was co-commissioned by the American Ballet Theatre, San Francisco Ballet, and Lubovitch's own company in 1997.

*Othello* received its Joffrey and Chicago premiere in 2009, however the current production is the last time the company will perform the piece before it's retired from active repertory. That means audiences only have until May 5 to see this masterwork in motion at Chicago's Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University on 50 East Congress Parkway.

Told in three succinct acts—the second being the most dynamic—the story travels back to 16th century Venice via digital projections by Wendall K. Harrington, costumes by Ann Hould-Ward, and lighting design by Pat Collins. Unfortunately a couple plexiglass set pieces appear as dated as a few

Madonna-esque *Vogue* moves. But these gestures are brief compared to the breadth of Lubovitch's creative contribution that effectively blends modern dance with classical ballet.

Dylan Gutierrez is stunning in the title role with a stage presence as powerful as his lifts of Victoria Jaiani, who appears to effortlessly defy gravity as the doomed Desdemona. Similarly fragile and tragic, is the graceful Christine Rocas in the role of Emila. Temur Sulusashvili channels a Basil Rathbone-like Iago so villainous, he inspired boos from an exhilarated audience during the standing ovation.



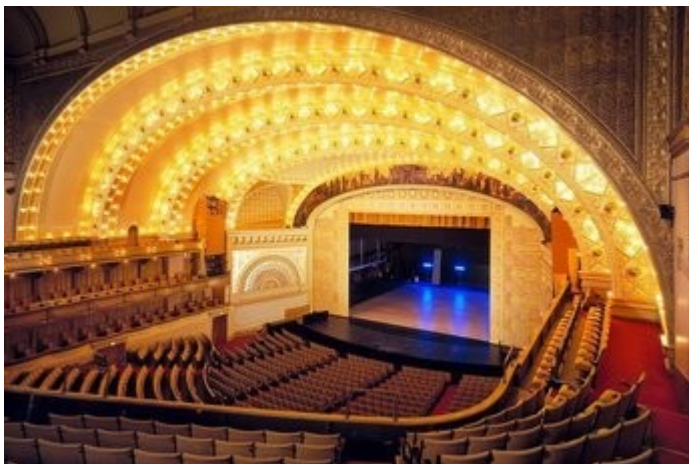
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The Joffrey performs *Othello* at the Auditorium Theatre *Credit: Google images*

Single tickets, which range from \$31 to \$152, are available by telephone at 800-982-2787 and online at [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com). For more information, visit [www.joffrey.org](http://www.joffrey.org).



**Janet Arvia**, Chicago Culture & Events Examiner

Janet Arvia is a freelance columnist, visual artist and grant-winning writer/director of stage and film. After receiving The Silver Bowl Award from the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce for her contribution to the arts, Janet exhibited her work at Sotheby's, The Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, and...