

PART TWO: PERFORMANCE

5 INTRODUCTION

In Part Two, four stage productions have been chosen, among many, for description and comparison as contributing most usefully, in my opinion, to our understanding of key themes in *Othello* and of the range of possibility in staging and in the interpretation of character. Other productions are considered in general connection with the topics I touch on. In the Epilogue concluding Part Two I discuss film versions, and notably – as the fifth among the representative examples – the most recent one, at the time of writing.

1. Margaret Webster's 1943–44 production on Broadway; Paul Robeson as Othello, Jose Ferrer as Iago, Uta Hagen as Desdemona.

2. John Dexter's National Theatre production, London, 1964; Laurence Olivier as Othello, Frank Finlay as Iago, Maggie Smith as Desdemona.

3. John Barton's rsc production, Stratford and London, 1971–72; Brewster Mason as Othello, Emrys James as Iago, Lisa Harrow as Desdemona.

4. Peter Coe's American Shakespeare Theatre production, 1981–82; James Earl Jones as Othello, Christopher Plummer as Iago; Desdemona (in the Broadway performances) was played by Dianne Wiest and subsequently by Cecilia Hart (Mrs James Earl Jones). This production had a long pre-Broadway tour of other theatre-centres in the United States.

5. Jonathan Miller's BBC-television version, first shown in October 1981; Anthony Hopkins as Othello, Bob Hoskins as Iago, Penelope Wilton as Desdemona.