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STRATFORD PLAYERS RECORD FOR NZBS

LISTENERS to main National stations will shortly be able to hear some of the principals of the Stratford - upon - Avon Shakespeare Memorial Theatre Company in an abridged version of *Othello*, recorded in the Auckland Production Studios of the NZBS. The players were Anthony Quayle as Othello, Barbara Jefford as Desdemona, Leo McKern as Iago, Joan MacArthur as Emilia, Terence Longden as Cassio, and Keith Michell as Lodovico. The narrator was Raymond Westwell, and the radio supervision was by Bernard Beeby.

"We were most anxious to do this broadcast," Mr. Quayle told *The Listener*, "because, after all, we have come 13,000 miles to bring these plays to the people of New Zealand and Australia, and we are aware that there are many who simply cannot get to the theatre. The broadcasts should give most people in this country an opportunity to hear at least something of our work."

The NZBS *Othello* will take about 73 minutes to broadcast as compared with the three hours ten minutes of the Company's stage production. It will be heard first from the main National stations and later from other National stations. "Unfortunately, it just wasn't possible to record the whole play," Mr. Beeby explained. "The Company could



IN the Auckland Production Studios of the NZBS—From left, Anthony Quayle, Barbara Jefford, Keith Michell, Joan MacArthur, Bernard Beeby, Terence Longden and Leo McKern

not find time to do more, and both they and the NZBS were anxious to make sure that the time they could spare was used to the benefit of the maximum number of listeners. A longer production could not have been broadcast as often, or from as many stations as we hope to use this one. Our abridging was done at the request of the Company, and after consultations with them about the best way to go about it."

"A straightforward condensation, with-

out any narrative, would be simply terrible," said Mr. Quayle. "It would probably be a complete mess. When *Othello* had to be shortened we felt it better to be frank about it, to cut many scenes and to present only some of the great ones, while bringing out the immediacy, the topicality, and the modernity by intelligent narrative. I think the NZBS script is a very good one. You can understand it very clearly, you know exactly what is going on; that is its virtue."

As well as providing continuity the narrative used in this case discusses very briefly the nature of the play itself and the personalities of Othello and Iago. "The appalling theme of *Othello*," it says, "is stated and restated in almost every line of the dialogue. It informs every shade of charac-

terisation and follows its course with the inexorable beauty of a fugue to a consummate and almost intolerable conclusion. . . *Othello* is the only purely domestic tragedy that Shakespeare wrote, and for that reason it is the most modern of his plays and perhaps the most disturbing. It touches the contemporary nerve. Behind its classic facade is a situation that frightens us because it is so easily recognisable. Although its 'villain' is indeed all compact of villainy, he has—in both senses of the word—the common touch. As soon as we meet him we feel we know Iago."

While *Othello* was being recorded *The Listener* took the opportunity of asking Mr. Quayle his opinion of broadcasting as a means of interpreting Shakespeare. "I find it a most interesting and rewarding experience," he said. "And it's very good for an actor, for whom voice and speech are the greatest weapons, to be restricted to these main resources for his whole effect. It is a valuable discipline to have to give one's whole projection of character by voice alone. Sometimes it can be revealing, too, and you have to check yourself quite savagely."

But Mr. Quayle was not so happy about television: "It seems to me to be a sort of craft in itself, more an exercise in ingenuity in which one has to hop about from set to set and struggle to remember which of the various cameras is at work at any particular moment. It can be amusing, and rather interesting for a time, but I feel it is not conducive to creative acting." Shakespeare is appearing on TV in Britain, he added, but the Stratford-upon-Avon Company are fully devoted to putting Shakespeare on the stage, and are not likely to appear before TV cameras, as a Company, at any rate.

FOR THE PARENTS

*THE child of a single summer is laid
In earth's winter shade;
Soul of light, to light
Returned, is your last legacy
Rebellion, unsolaced injury?*

*The mother who fashioned you shall wear
The comfortless veil of self-despair
Until age remove
Even this vanity to bestow
A gaze pacific with sorrow.*

*This calculating sire, with impatient hands
Casts about his prosperous lands
For a single fault to match
His immensurable distress,
Weighing justice with injustice.*

*No tears nor sense of corrupt equity
Move death's adamant sea
To cast upon the heart's shore
Where dark surfs fret,
One syllable of her secret.*

*Bud untimely broken, the bending flower
Interrogates the indifferent air;
All golden briefly been,
Withered leaves lie
Scattered by the wind's reply.*

*Only the foundling faith, hopes harbinger,
Gift of their wedding year—
Orphaned too soon, will make
At the end of this summer season
A new rhyme for their reason.*

—Colin Newbury