



Red Velvet: 2nd edition (Modern Plays)

Lolita Chakrabarti

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Its like being at a crossroads - a point of absolute, unequivocal change. It makes the blood rush.

Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, 1833. Edmund Kean, the greatest actor of his generation, has collapsed on stage whilst playing Othello. A young black American actor has been asked to take over the role. But as the public riot in the streets over the abolition of slavery, how will the cast, critics and audience react to the revolution taking place in the theatre?

Lolita Chakrabarti's play creates imagined experiences based on the little-known, but true, story of Ira Aldridge, an African-American actor who, in the nineteenth century, built an incredible reputation on the stages of London and Europe.

Red Velvet received its world premiere at the Tricycle Theatre, London, on 11 October 2012, starring Adrian Lester as Ira Aldridge. It was revived at the Tricycle Theatre on 23 January 2014, before transferring to St Anns Warehouse, New York, on 25 March 2014.

This second edition includes the revisions made to the script for the 2014 revival of the play. It also features contextual articles by Lolita Chakrabarti about the real Ira Aldridge, and a piece by Professor Ayanna Thompson about the significance of Aldridge's erasure from standard theatre history and the importance of the play in this regard.

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