



Ira Aldridge

Birth:

Born in 1807 in New York City.

Early Years:

Aldridge gained his first professional acting experience with the African Company, who founded the first resident African-American Theatre in the United States. Frustrated with the lack of roles given to black actors in the United States, Aldridge moved to London, where he settled in **Upper Norwood, Southwark**.

"Othello himself, as Shakespeare created him...quiet, reserved, classic and majestic."

**— Theophile Gautier on
Ira Aldridge**

Achievements:

Aldridge was best known for his Shakespearean roles. He regularly performed in London and embarked on a European tour. He was especially popular in Russia, where he became acquainted with famous artists such as Count Fyodor Tolstoy and Mikhail Schepkin. He performed title roles in **King Lear, Othello, Richard III** and the **Merchant of Venice**. He is the only actor of African-American descent among 33 actors honoured with bronze plaques at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford upon Avon.

Death:

Aldridge died in 1867. A blue plaque now commemorates his home on 5 Hamlet Road, Upper Norwood, Southwark.

