



streetlight shakespeare ensemble

shakespeare's

much ado about nothing

directed by

abigail olshin & julia sommer

september 30th & october 1st

6:30 p.m.

rose terrace, mary baldwin university

MB

Shakes &

production teams

directors

abigail olshin & julia sommer

stage manager

kyle showalter

assistant stage manager

jess snellings

costumes

anna bigham, molly minter,
& katy shinas

set design

jim drake

hair & makeup

margaret levin

movement

austen bell & margaret levin

combat choreographer

jim drake

production teams

intimacy choreographer

margaret levin

dramaturgs

austen bell, anna bigham,

jim drake, & jess snellings

props

cory drozdowski, jim drake,

godfred ogoe, & john williams

music team

cory drozdowski & rosemary herold

publicity & marketing

anna bigham, matthias bolon,

ethan goodmansen, rosemary herold,

margaret levin, & molly minter

cast
in order of appearance

beatrice/watchman
molly minter

hero/borachio
katy shinas

leonato
austen bell

messenger/verges
jess snellings

don pedro/seacoal
margaret levin

benedick/watchman
cory drozdowski

cast
in order of appearance

claudio
john williams

don john
jim drake

margaret/conrade
anna bigham

priest/sexton
godfred ogoe

dogberry
rosemary herold

understudies
becca bailey, emmet temple,
& nick trusty

directors' note

Much Ado About Nothing is one of those fun, delightful plays with enough antics and meta-theatrical hijinks to make you clutch your stomach with laughter. These traits are so prominent that it can be easy to lose sight of the play's high stakes, particularly its characters' experiences with reputation, ruin, and threats of violence. In curating this show with a student audience in mind, we wanted to lean into this play's icky and uncomfortable parts to heighten the sense of contrast so inherent to its structure. The tragedy must brush against the comedy, much like how we see characters of different gender identities, social status, and age brush and bristle against each other. As the play's eavesdropping unfolds, we want students to come face-to-face with the consequences of putting reputation and social standing before personal relationships and better judgment. What happens when we rely

directors' note

too heavily on hearsay and act out on impulse? How do we navigate relationships with those we love (or hate) (or hate to love) when we can't first be honest with ourselves? And, perhaps most importantly, who suffers most under a patriarchal society with rigid rules and expectations about how men and women can and should behave? We dive into these questions in our 1919 post-war setting, as manly war heroes return from the battlefields of Europe to the opulent and vast estates of the upper class to find love amongst the women who may or may not adhere to the "right" way to behave. As rumors fly and strings are pulled behind the scenes, no one is safe from the threat of reputational ruin.

– Abigail Olshin & Julia Sommer

dramaturgy note

World War I brought into sharp focus divides in American society – gender (the men who fought in the war and the women who fought for equal rights at home); age (the older generation, conservative and patriotic, and the younger, who saw the horrors of war and sought change); and socioeconomic (the poor worked harder, and the rich got richer). *Much Ado About Nothing*, however, deals with reconciliation – so Streetlight's production, set immediately after the War, highlights the elements of the play that challenge the War's rigid dichotomies.

For instance, our music combines the "old" and the "new". The preshow consists of two contemporary songs adapted to music genres of the period: instrumentation includes euphonium, clarinet, and piano (among others) as a nod to popular genres of the period like ragtime, jazz, and marches.

Beatrice and Benedick, more than

dramaturgy note

anyone, challenge the divide of gender. Although Beatrice claims she cannot seek revenge for her wronged cousin because she is a woman, she breaks away from other gender-based expectations of the period – she wears trousers that contrast with the other female characters' dresses and skirts, she openly speaks her mind at the risk of societal disapproval, and she rejects the idea of marriage for marriage's sake. Benedick parallels her when he steps out of his assigned role as a man's man and stands up for the women of the play, even risking his own life in a duel for a woman's honor. In a way, their willingness to cross lines makes them perfect for each other!

In *Much Ado*, division and reconciliation walk hand-in-hand. Our production revels especially in breaks from tradition and the uncertain hope of change.

– Austen Bell & Jess Snellings

special thanks

The *Much Ado* cast and design teams,
Ashley Wright, Doreen Bechtol,
Dr. Peter Kirwan, Dr. Matt Davies,
Kelley McKinnon, JP Scheidler,
Jenny Hoyt, Molly Seremet,
Bijou Staunton,
& the MBU Theatre Department

plot summary

- Don Pedro's army arrives in town after a military victory. Leonato welcomes Don Pedro and his officers to stay on his estate.
- Claudio, one of Don Pedro's officers, falls in love with Hero, Leonato's daughter. Meanwhile, Benedick (another officer) and Beatrice (Leonato's niece) playfully argue. Both Benedick and Beatrice insist that they will never fall in love.
- Don Pedro agrees to help Claudio win Hero. He asks Leonato to consent to the marriage and tries to woo Hero for Claudio while disguised at a masque ball.

plot summary

- Don Pedro's illegitimate brother, Don John, plans to disrupt the young lover's happiness. He convinces Claudio that Don Pedro is flirting with Hero for himself, not trying to help.
- At the masque, Don Pedro convinces Claudio they are on the same side, and Claudio and Hero are officially engaged. Benedick and Beatrice continue to bicker. Don Pedro hatches a plan to make Benedick and Beatrice fall in love with each other.
- Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato pretend that Beatrice is desperately in love with Benedick, leaving Benedick confused and determined to be in love with Beatrice.
- Hero and her governess Margaret pretend that Benedick is desperately in love with Beatrice, leaving Beatrice confused and determined to be in love with Benedick.

plot summary

- Don John tries once again to disrupt the upcoming marriage. He uses his friend Borachio to frame Hero, making Claudio believe that Hero is cheating on him.
- Believing that Hero is unfaithful, Claudio plans to break off their engagement and publicly shame her for cheating.
- The constables Dogberry and Verges train their watchmen for the evening's patrol.
- Amidst all the gossip and plots for revenge, true love (and good humor) might just conquer all.



Much Ado cast members, from left to right:
Katy Shinas (Hero), John Williams (Claudio),
Cory Drozdowski (Benedick), & Molly Minter (Beatrice)

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