

**National
Theatre**

**Much
Ado
About
Nothing**

Learning Guide

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About

This learning guide supports the National Theatre's production of **Much Ado About Nothing**, directed by **Simon Godwin**, which opened on **18 July, 2022** at the **National Theatre**.

Our packs are designed to support viewing the recording on the **National Theatre Collection**. This pack provides links to the UK school curriculum and other productions in the Collection. It also has a plot synopsis with timecodes to allow you to jump to specific sections of the play.

Here you'll find all the information you need to enable you to study the production and write about it in detail. This includes notes about all the key elements from performance style to design. You'll also find pointers for further research.

Background Information

Recording Date – 8 September, 2022

Location – Lyttelton Theatre, National Theatre

Age Recommendation – PG

Cast:

Antonia.....	Wendy Kweh
Leonato.....	Rufus Wright
Hero	Ioanna Kimbook
Beatrice	Katherine Parkinson
Don Pedro	Ashley Zhangazha
Benedick	John Heffernan
Claudio	Eben Figueiredo
Don John.....	David Judge
Conrade	Ewan Miller
Ursula.....	Celeste Dodwell
Borachio.....	Brandon Grace
Margaret	Phoebe Horn
Baltzahar	Kiren Kebaili-Dwyer
Lorenzo.....	Ashley Gillard
Dogberry.....	David Fynn
Verges.....	Nick Harris

Georgina Seacole..... Olivia Forrest
Hugh Oatcake Al Coppola
Valentino / Friar Francis..... Mateo Oxley
Volpe Puzo Marcia Lecky

Musicians:

MD / Guitars Dario Rossetti-Bonell
Kit..... Shane Forbes
MD / Guitars Dario Rossetti-Bonell
MD / Upright Bass Nicki Davenport
Woodwind..... Jessamy Holder
Trumpet..... Steve Pretty
Tom Flemming..... Guitars

Creative Team:

Director Simon Godwin
Set Designer..... Anna Fleischle
Costume Designer Evie Gurney
Lighting Designer Lucy Carter
Movement Director Coral Messam
Composer..... Michael Bruce
Sound Designer..... Christopher Shutt
Fight Director Kate Waters

Teaching Information

This production is particularly suitable for:

- English Literature students who are studying the play as a set text at GCSE level.
- Drama and theatre students who are studying the play as a set text at A level.
- Anyone with an interest in contemporary staging of Shakespeare's plays.
- Anyone who is studying the work of director Simon Godwin.

In particular you might like to explore:

- The decision to move the action of the play to a high-class hotel in the twentieth century.
- The production's exquisite art deco design.
- The question of gender politics in the play and a contemporary audience's reaction to it.
- This production alongside other Shakespeare plays directed by Simon Godwin which feature on the NT Collection.

Production Notes

Key design Elements: Set

- The Lyttleton Theatre provides a proscenium arch stage on which the Messina Hotel is the location for the entire play.
- The set creates various rooms and locations within the Messina Hotel as well as some exterior settings. We are to imagine that the hotel is near the Teatro Massimo which is in Palermo, Italy. The safety curtain is decorated with a painting of the Italian Riviera.
- The stage directions explain “The Hotel Messina, opened in 1931. Its grandeur and reputation for exquisite service quickly made it popular with royalty, celebrities, and world-renowned artists...still operating in the present day, but which wears its history heavily. It is faded, dusty, filled with old velvets, the presence of guests’ past, vintage colours...”
- The middle section of the hotel features a revolving wall which allows rapid transitions between interior and exterior locations. Above this middle section of the building is a balcony, which also allows us to see interior and exterior scenes, for example in Hero and Don John’s respective bedrooms. At the opening of the performance, a band plays on the balcony.
- To the left and right of the central part of the Messina building are walls with several doors which suggest other parts of the hotel.
- The reception area includes several plush armchairs and footstools. The reception desk is in the centre of this space, with lamps on top of it. To stage left there is an easel advertising the evening’s ‘Under the Sea’ masked ball. There are lifts either side of the reception desk. Flowers on the reception desk are arranged in Art Deco vases.
- The bar/party venue: the same shape and scale as the reception area but instead there is a bar which is back lit in pink. There are two pink fabric-covered bucket chairs with gold legs, one either side of the bar, and the room has been decorated with balloons. There are also fabric shapes attached to the light

fittings to create floating 'jellyfish' in keeping with the theme of the ball. The bar has a blue tiled front. There are potted ferns either side of the bar.

- The ballroom (where the weddings take place) is decorated with a floral arch, white chairs and an altar table bearing a white cloth and wooden cross.
- The powder room has 4 vertical lights on the wall behind the three characters. There are 3 stools on which Antonia, Hero and Beatrice sit. The cream wall is also decorated with a large leaf pattern. The carpet helps give the room a sense of intimacy. This element of the set ascends from below stage level.
- The beach in the exterior of the hotel is created by moving the two flats either side of the central part of the hotel further towards the wings, and on to a diagonal. A hammock and a palm tree are placed downstage right. There are two changing huts, made of blue and white striped canvas. These are free standing, partly due to their use in a comic set piece as Beatrice is eavesdropping later in the scene. The central part of the hotel has now become a counter where towels are placed for guests.
- The basement/security office has a wooden desk (stage left) and an A-frame ladder upstage. The strong lighting focus on this area, with no other lights on surrounding set, makes this appear to be in the basement of the hotel. There is a set of pigeonholes on the back wall of the office, and the wood paneling and brass decoration mirrors other areas of the hotel. Dogberry uses an old fashioned (1920s) telephone.
- Hero's bedroom is a room with blue walls and a blue silk awning at the back of the bed. The bedroom is on the same balcony area of the set which was previously used for Don John's bedroom. Hero's room has a double bed, with bedside tables and lamps at either side.
- The spa scene has a set that ascends from below the stage, stage right. It has a mustard yellow curtain, 4 baths, and turquoise tiling. Bubbles and steam are created to convey the sense of a humid spa.
- Don John's bedroom has Art Deco wallpaper as a feature wall, with green walls and ceiling. The lower half of the walls has wood paneling, and there are framed paintings on the wall. The two beds are covered with candlewick bedspreads. Much of the scene happens looking out over the balcony (towards the auditorium).

- The exterior walls of the hotel are a rich terracotta colour, which gives a sense of warmth during the day and are still prominent during night-time scenes where lighting is dimmer.



Production Notes

Key design Elements: Costume

- The costumes include a variety of colour palettes. Those particularly associated with the Messina Hotel wear costumes in a range of greens, mostly pastels and pistachio shades.
- The family and staff who work at the hotel wear uniforms which involve green, either in skirts or trousers. The male staff wear white jackets and bellboy style hats with 'Messina Hotel' printed in gold on the band.
- Beatrice has a range of outfits in keeping with the script's suggestion that she is "something of a celebrity".
 1. A black dogtooth checked cape, wide-legged yellow trousers, and a ruffled yellow blouse with black heeled sandals. She wears a yellow hat and sunglasses, and white driving gloves as if she has arrived in a sports car.
 2. At the 'Under the Sea' ball, Beatrice wears a gold evening dress with silver heeled shoes. The dress is covered with a silk dressing gown during the scene in the powder room with Hero and Antonia. Unlike the other characters at the ball, Beatrice does not wear a mask but instead a large silver lobster-shaped headpiece which extends over the crown of her head. Her sleeveless ankle-length dress is beaded and fringed like the 1920s style of dresses.
 3. Beatrice wears a coral and pink ensemble in the beach scene – her blouse is striped with small bow details, and her wide-legged trousers are light pink. She wears a coral fabric hat and gold heeled shoes. Her outfit in this scene continues the idea that she is a glamorous celebrity.
 4. When overhearing the conversation between Hero and Margaret at the beach, Beatrice wears black wide-legged trousers, a black and white striped short sleeved blouse with button details, and a pillbox hat with a band which matches her blouse. This hat is worn slightly off centre. She wears flat black shoes in this scene, which allows the directorial choices of having her climbing parts of the set to eavesdrop on conversations.

5. For the first wedding, Beatrice wears a chartreuse green jacket and matching hat with smoky-grey wide legged trousers.
 6. After the cancelled wedding, Beatrice wears a cream short sleeved blouse with dalmatian-style spots and a bow tied at the neckline, black wide-legged trousers with white polka dots, and a black and white hat which mirrors the patterns of her clothes.
 7. Beatrice's wedding dress is much plainer than Hero's – an ivory silk dress, cut on the bias, with long buttoned sleeves, and silver shoes.
- Antonia, Hero, Margaret, Ursula and Borachio are in the hotel colours of pistachio green at the beginning of the play to establish the family-run nature of the Hotel Messina. The younger women wear white aprons over green dresses, with black character-style shoes and white maid headdresses. The male members of the team wear green trousers and white button up jackets.
 - For the masked ball, Antonia wears a bright blue shirt, with slightly darker blue trousers. She wears flat cream and blue Oxford style shoes. For Hero's wedding she wears a light green and cream patterned dress.
 - Leonato wears a grey-green suit, with a white shirt and pale green tie at the opening of the play. For the wedding he wears a cream suit with a very wide light blue check. He also wears a corsage, as Father of the Bride. His tie is powder blue. He wears cream and brown brogues.
 - When we first meet Hero she wears a V-neck dress, with short sleeves and stripes in various shades of green and cream, with cream heeled character-style shoes. For the masked ball, Hero wears a floor length dress, with an asymmetrical shoulder design. It has gold and silver diagonal patterns. She wears elbow-length gloves.
 - At the beach, Hero wears a cream spotted playsuit with sunglasses. The playsuit is in pastel shades, and it has a coral belt. This is strongly contrasted by the black clothes and veil that Hero wears when she is thought dead by many of the other characters after being rejected at the altar.
 - Hero's second wedding dress is white with embellishments of beading to create flowers. She also wears a lace veil with floral patterns, and white elbow-length gloves.
 - Benedick wears an open-necked shirt with a neckerchief when he arrives at the beginning of the play. His shirt has several military stripes on it to show his
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service as a soldier. At the masked ball he wears a silver velvet jacket, with bottle green trousers and a lighter silver shirt and green bow tie, and neutral brown lace up shoes. Early the next morning, in the beach scene, he wears the same shirt and trousers, but they are creased. He has clearly not yet been to bed. He is also wearing sunglasses.

- Claudio wears the same uniform as Benedick, again with military stripes on the left breast pocket. At the ball he wears a silvery-blue suit with a silver collar and lapel which shimmers slightly when it catches the light. He wears cream shoes with this suit.
- Don Pedro wears a khaki brown soldier's uniform, with brown knee-high leather boots, with military stripes on his shirt. At the ball, he wears a dusky pink velvet jacket with lighter pink shirt and matching trousers. He wears his bow tie loose later in the scene which can often be used to indicate the passing of time, or the high standard of the party!
- The soldiers wear a dusky pink military jacket with gold adornments with khaki brown trousers for the wedding. This is their dress uniform (rather than combat uniform). They wear a black version of this for Hero's 'funeral'.
- Don John wears grey-green trousers in Act 1 scene 3. He wears a silver mask during the ball scene, with a green shirt and trousers and a silver-grey velvet jacket. Later in the scene he removes the jacket and wears his bow tie undone. In the spa scene he wears white slacks (with upturned hems), a light turquoise collared short-sleeved top, and an orange neckerchief. He wears light espadrille shoes in this scene.
- Conrade also wears a soldier's uniform. In the ball scene he wears a patterned sapphire blue and black jacket, with a silk shirt, bow tie and blue-grey trousers. He also wears different patterned shirts during the play.
- Margaret wears a silver dress in the masked ball scene. In the beach scene she returns to her light pistachio green maid's dress, with white frilled headdress and white apron. She wears black character-style shoes. Later at the beach she wears a gingham green plunge-necked, short-sleeved blouse, and high waisted shorts which have a yellow trim towards the hem, as well as having button details on the front. The costume choices that are made for Margaret suggest a level of youth and naivety which explains why she does not realise she is part of the plot against Hero.

- Balthazar wears a pink silk shirt and bow tie, with a sequined patterned smoking-style jacket for the ball.
- Borachio wears the Messina uniform, with a 'Hotel Messina' hat and white gloves. The white bellboy jacket has gold epaulettes (a type of ornamental shoulder piece used as insignia of rank). In the ball scene he wears a silver velvet jacket and light grey patterned shirt. He wears white swimming shorts in the scene at the beach.
- Dogberry wears a white and pale green shirt with vertical striped pattern, and white trousers. We can see an orange vest underneath. He wears light beige lace up shoes. At the wedding he wears the same Messina uniform trousers as other characters with a white blazer, white shirt, and pistachio green bow tie.
- Vergs, Oatcake and Seacole wear the hotel uniform.
- At various points, the named characters and ensemble wear costumes appropriate to the scene – for example evening wear, swimming trunks, bathrobes etc. During the mourning for Hero, characters' costumes are various black blouses, jackets, skirts and trousers, with hats for the women.



Production Notes

Key design Elements: Lighting

- The effect of paparazzi photographers is created when Beatrice enters the hotel with several bright flashes from upstage.
- The hotel foyer scenes are brightly lit, in keeping with the welcoming atmosphere of the hotel.
- In the powder room, the light is a dim orangey-yellow, to create the idea of a small, intimate space. It is lit from the front, although the lights on the back wall suggest that the four lights are the source of light.
- During the ball scene, the bar is back lit in pink, with the downstage areas having a dim green-hued wash. This is in keeping with both the under-the-sea theme of the ball, but also reflects the nighttime party setting. The light becomes brighter and warmer as the conversation between Don John and Borachio draws to a close. The warm wash also allows the light to spill out on to the floor, suggesting light outside on the verandah.
- Notice in the transition between the end of the ball and the beginning of the beach scene (00.38.42) the cyclorama is lit with orange hues to indicate the sun rising. The cyclorama then becomes a bright cloudless blue to represent the sky, and the warm yellow wash suggests the warmth of the day. Notice how the bright light reflects off the brass art deco door frames and decoration. The later scene between Hero and her friends has a slightly dimmer wash, reflecting the passage of time through the day.
- The wedding scene at the beginning of Act Two has a warm dusky pink wash, which mirrors the décor and the colour of the dress uniforms of the soldiers. It suggests the intimacy and atmosphere of the wedding venue.
- The funeral procession (02.03.55) begins with a low-level red wash, and the use of haze, to create a somber atmosphere with an undertone of tension. The lighting becomes more intense as the ensemble fill the stage. Flickering candles held by the ensemble enhance the mourning atmosphere. The angle of the lighting also creates shadows, fitting for an atmosphere of sadness.

- Notice the use of two wide spotlights when Hero gives her soliloquy as Claudio mourns her. Hero's is slightly brighter, as she is speaking, but the spotlight on Claudio allows us to see the character's remorse and sadness as he mourns the loss of his fiancée.



Production Notes

Key design Elements: Sound

- There is a mixture of recorded and live sound in this production.
- A live band plays first on the balcony and then can be seen interacting with the characters at various points in the narrative. During the ball scene they play various pieces of dance music to accompany the dancing, including a tango.
- Recorded sound effects of birds and the sea are used during external scenes to create a sense of location from the beginning of the performance. The sound of mopeds/scooters is also audible at the beginning of the play.
- A subtle echo effect can be heard in the spa (this can be heard particularly well at 01.05.55).
- Live music is played on stage for Hero on the eve of her wedding, from 01.09.34 and also includes singing from the ensemble.
- Before the end of the balcony scene in which Claudio sees 'Hero' betraying him, we hear the recorded sounds of crickets, but this is interrupted by the clap of thunder which coincides with the curtain descending for the interval. This creates a sense of foreboding and tension for the audience and heightens expectations for Act Two. The second act begins with a continuation of the thunder sound effect.
- The wedding music is also live, played in a jazz style.
- The music that is played in Hero's funeral process is also accompanied by the recorded sound of birdsong.
- The party atmosphere at the end of the double wedding is created by solo and ensemble singing from members of the cast.

Production Notes

Key Design Elements: Wigs, Hair and Make-Up

- Beatrice's often wears hats as part of her costume so much of her head is covered. For the ball, her hair is up in a decorative style, as is Antonia's. Hero tends to wear her hair at least partially loose over her shoulders.
- The female characters all have hair styles in keeping with the 1920-30s setting. This includes short bobs, longer loose curls and 'updos' for the ball.
- All of the male characters have short hair. This is particularly relevant for the soldiers who would be expected to have short hair.
- Benedick's hair is perhaps slightly longer than we might expect from a soldier, but it does enhance the comedy of the ice cream trolley set piece.



Production Notes

Performance Style

- The comedy of this play relies on excellent comic timing from all of the actors.
- There are two overheard conversations where Beatrice and Benedick both eavesdrop. The physical comedy of trying to conceal themselves, including disguise and unwittingly being covered in ice cream requires excellent ensemble work.
- Mistaken identity and secrecy are also important elements in making the more sinister part of the plot successful. Differentiating between conversations which are delivered very publicly, and those which are secret and furtive requires versatile vocal skills as well as careful use of eye contact and body language.

Production Notes

Key Moments

- Claudio discusses Hero with Don Pedro on their return to the Hotel Messina. 00.12.25-00.13.51
- Beatrice and Benedick's sparring when they encounter each other at the Hotel Messina begins at 00.04.48 and ends with "I know you of old" at 00.06.22. This is the important establishment of their relationship and their own mannerisms.
- Don Pedro and Beatrice discuss Benedick from 00.29.16 to 00.30.28.
- The plot that starts to bring Beatrice and Benedick together begins with Don Pedro's conversation with Beatrice (00.35.00) and ends at 00.38.34 at the end of the scene.
- The beach scene in which the plot begins can be found from 00.38.55. This begins to create the audience's anticipation of the plot's success or failure.
- Benedick's set piece with the ice cream trolley as his friends discuss Beatrice's 'love' for him begins at 00.43.23 when he hides behind a lilo. It ends at 00.51.04 when he finishes his conversation with Beatrice.
- Hero and Margaret's conversation that is intended for Beatrice to hear begins at 00.52.47 (with Hero's instructions to Margaret) and ends at 00.59.18 when Beatrice finishes her soliloquy.
- The aborted wedding begins at 01.22.52 and ends 01.34.38. Note the rapid change in atmosphere from one of excitement to desolation.
- Beatrice's conversation with Benedick after the wedding is called off begins at 01.34.38 and ends at 01.40.12. It is during this conversation that Beatrice asks him to kill Claudio.
- Benedick's attempt to write a love poem, and his ensuing conversation with Beatrice takes place between 01.59.35 and 02.03.36.

Plot Synopsis with Timecodes

Act 1, Scene 1: 00:00:51

In Hotel Messina, Antonia, Hero, Ursula, Borachio and Margaret stand in a line waiting to greet Beatrice. Waving a letter, Leonato informs everyone that Don Pedro will be present tonight. He prepares to welcome home his soldier friends who have just returned from war.

Don Pedro, Claudio, Benedick, Conrade and Don John arrive. Leonato gives them a tour of the hotel whilst Beatrice and Benedick bicker. Don Pedro tells his friends they can stay here for a month. As they all head further into the hotel, Claudio and Benedick talk about Hero in which Claudio tells Benedick his secret.

Don Pedro enters, Benedick shares Claudio's secret with him. Don Pedro suggests he plays a trick and disguises himself as Claudio at the dance and declare his love to Hero, he will then speak to Leonato about Claudio's feelings towards his daughter.

Act 1, Scene 2: 00:14:05

The hotel is preparing for the ball. Antonia runs into Leonato, she exclaims that her servant overheard Don Pedro confessing his love for Hero and he plans to tell her at the dance. Leonato won't believe this until he sees it himself but will tell his daughter anyway.

Act 1, Scene 3: 00:14:52

Don John is in his room unpacking. Conrade enters. Conrade notices Don John looking glum, he asks what is wrong. Don John explains that he is just depressed and can't change his face to suit other people. Borachio enters, he tells Don John that he overheard Don Pedro and Claudio chatting about Claudio declaring his love for Hero.

Don John hates Claudio because he's so well respected, so decides to use this information to cause trouble for Claudio.

In the powder room, Beatrice and Hero are getting ready. Antonia sits with them. They all discuss the perfect type of man. Leonato runs to call for Beatrice.

Act 2, Scene 1: 00:21:20

It's time for the Under the Sea party. The band play while a paired dance begins. Don Pedro approaches Hero and begins to dance and flirt with her. Benedick dances with Beatrice, Beatrice doesn't recognize him.

Don John speaks to Claudio; he makes him jealous by telling him Don Pedro has decided to win Hero and keep her for himself. Claudio believes him, Don John and Borachio head to the banquet while Claudio is left alone.

Benedick returns, Claudio informs him of Don Pedro's plan, he storms off back to the dance floor. Don Pedro returns, and Benedick learns that he was true to his word all along.

When Claudio returns with Beatrice, Don Pedro informs him that Hero has agreed to marry him and Leonato supports this. Hero joins them and they make their promises to one another. They dance to Balthazar's music, watched by the rest of the group. Borachio, Conrade and Don John join and discuss the recent news.

Act 2, Scene 2: 00:33:16

Borachio comes up with a plan; he explains to them that he is with one of Beatrice's serving woman, Margaret. He then encourages Don John to go to Claudio and Don Pedro to tell them that Hero is in love with him and is not a virgin. To prove this, Don John will bring Don Pedro and Claudio below the window of Hero's room and hear Borachio and Margaret making love. Borachio will convince Margaret to dress up in Hero's clothing to make it more believable.

Beatrice is with Don Pedro, she wants a husband herself. Don Pedro tells her that he will be her husband, she declines and says he is too fancy to wear every day. Beatrice leaves, Don Pedro, Claudio and Leonato discuss when they should marry. Claudio wants the wedding to be the next day. They also plan to set Beatrice up with Benedick.

Act 2, Scene 3: 00:38:55

It's the morning after the party. Benedick is wandering around the beach, clearly having been there the whole night. He's questioning himself about love and whether he will find it one day. He hides in the hammock as Don Pedro, Claudio and Leonato walk by. They notice that Benedick has hidden himself in the hammock so decide to put their plan into full swing. They act like Benedick isn't there and claim that Leonato knows Beatrice is in love with Benedick.

Benedick falls out of the hammock in shock and sneaks closer to listen. They speak louder and play on the story more, talking about how passionately Beatrice treasures Benedick. Benedick hides behind an inflatable lilo and sneaks even closer to them, he then hides in a gelato cart. They explain Beatrice would never tell Benedick as she fears he will make fun of her. They leave Benedick and go to breakfast. Benedick emerges from the cart, Don Pedro's plan has worked. He decides to love Beatrice in return and marry her.

Beatrice appears after being told to fetch Benedick for breakfast. She acts her mockful self towards him whereas he treats her with unusual flattery. She is confused and mocks him again before leaving. He runs off to have a portrait made of her to carry round with him.

Act 3, Scene 1: 00:51:10

Late afternoon, back at the beach. Margaret is reading a letter from Borachio. Hero and Ursula enter, overhearing Margaret reading the letter and shout her over. Borachio runs off. Hero is planning to trick Beatrice into thinking Benedick loves her.

She sends Ursula to fetch her. She plans to hold a conversation so Beatrice can overhear, exactly as Claudio, Leonato and Don Pedro done with Benedick.

Beatrice enters and listens in to Hero and Margaret. Hero tells Margaret that Don Pedro and Claudio have told her that Benedick loves Beatrice. Beatrice tries to get as close as she can to hear everything. Margaret suggests Hero tell Beatrice, but she is quick to say no as she knows Beatrice will mock her and will break his heart. They finish their conversation and leave. Beatrice laying in the hammock in her hiding spot is shocked to hear what she has heard. She vows to love him back.

That evening in the basement, head of security, Dogberry, is briefing his two new members of the security team on how to properly guard the Messina hotel, and to arrest any guests of the hotel, should they exhibit treacherous behaviour.

Act 3, Scene 2: 01:05:05

Don Pedro, Claudio, Benedick and Leonato are enjoying a mud bath in the spa. It is the night before Claudio's wedding. They notice that Benedick is much quiet than usual and tease him. He is acting different; he tells them he has a toothache. They say he is in love. Benedick takes Leonato aside to speak with him.

Don John approaches Claudio and Don Pedro, he announces that Hero is disloyal and to prove it he will take them to the balcony tonight to find out. Claudio concludes that if what he has been told is true, he will disgrace her publicly at the wedding.

Act 3, Scene 3: 01:09:35

At the beach, Hero and Beatrice stand together on the balcony. Everyone below is singing. Beatrice says goodnight to Hero and leaves her. Borachio passes Margaret a key and a uniform, she takes them and runs off. Everyone cheers and leaves. Hero goes inside.

Don John brings Don Pedro and Claudio in sight of Hero's balcony. Borachio hides below the balcony and Margaret slips out the window dressed as Hero. Borachio

climbs up the balcony and kisses Margaret, they stumble into the room. Claudio thinks this is Hero and feels betrayed.

INTERVAL

Act 3, Scene 3 (continued): 01:12:35

We're back at the beach. Borachio climbs down from the balcony. Conrade is waiting below. Borachio does not realise that the watchmen are around and begins telling Conrade everything that has happened. He shows him his payment from Don John. Borachio made love to Margaret but Claudio thinks it was Hero and now Claudio is going to get revenge on Hero by publicly humiliating her at the wedding. The watchmen who have been listening in quietly, now reveal themselves and arrest Borachio and Conrade for treachery.

Act 3, Scene 4: 01:16:10

Margaret and Ursula are getting Hero ready in the bridal suite. Hero asks Margaret to wake Beatrice and bring her over. Hero is excited but wary. Beatrice arrives, she is acting differently. Margaret teases her that she too now desires a husband. She teases her about Benedick. Antonia rushes in and interrupts them, she rushes them out.

Act 3, Scene 5: 01:20:00

Leonato bumps into the watchmen. They explain that they have caught two criminals, and they would like to question them in front of him. Their words and communication are too long-winded and it doesn't seem urgent. Leonato quickly lets them know he is busy and asks them to let him know later. Dogberry and Verge head off to question the criminals themselves as Leonato enters the church.

Act 4, Scene 1: 01:22:47

The ballroom is now dressed for a hotel wedding. Everyone except the maids and porters are present. Friar Francis asks Claudio whether he would like to marry Hero.

He says no, and tells everyone that she is disloyal, and she can go back to Leonato. Hero asks what he means and he goes on to tell her he watched her the night before with a man at her window.

Hero then faints. Don Pedro, Don John and Claudio leave. Benedick and Beatrice go to help Hero, but Leonato tells them to leave her there to die. The Friar joins in, he observed the whole proceeding and can tell she isn't guilty. Hero tells them that she is still a virgin and has been faithful to Claudio.

The Friar comes up with a plan, Leonato will tell everyone that Hero died of shock. When the accusers hear that she has died, they will regret their actions, and start to remember who Hero really was. If the accusation really was a trick, it should unfold itself. Leonato agrees with the plan.

Beatrice and Benedick are left alone. Beatrice is upset over the situation. Benedick confesses his love to her and she mirrors this. They kiss. Beatrice asks Benedick to kill Claudio, he refuses so she wants to do it herself. He changes his mind and will challenge Claudio for Beatrice's sake.

Act 4, Scene 2: 01:40:30

Down in the basement, Dogberry and Verges are ready for the trial, they question Borachio and Conrade. Verges explains he heard that Borachio received money from Don John for pretending to make love to Hero and then lying about it to Claudio. The watchmen now realise what happened at the wedding and take the two criminals to Leonato's hotel.

Act 5, Scene 1: 01:46:00

Leonato and Antonia are sat in the ballroom, Leonato is in a deep state of shock and torn on whether Hero is as innocent as she pleads. Antonia is trying to cheer him up. Don Pedro and Claudio enter, Leonato and Antonia accuse Claudio of lying about Hero and causing her death. Leonato and Antonio leave vowing their revenge.

Benedick arrives, Don Pedro notices that he is not his normal self and looks pained. Benedick calls Claudio a villain and asks to dual, he then goes on to tell Don Pedro that Don John has fled the country and leaves.

Dogberry and the watchmen bring in Conrade and Borachio. They tell Don Pedro and Claudio what they have done, and Conrade confesses everything. Borachio admitted Don John was involved and paid him for his duties. Claudio and Don Pedro are horrified to learn this news. Leonato and Antonia rush in, Claudio and Don Pedro beg for forgiveness. They offer themselves up for any punishment Leonato and Antonia thinks is fit for killing their daughter.

Leonato orders Claudio to clear Hero's name to the whole city, he also wants him to write an epitaph to place above her tomb. He tells Claudio he has a sister whose daughter is a copy of Hero; he would like Claudio to marry her to make up for the loss of Hero. Dogberry takes the villains away.

Act 5, Scene 2: 01:58:50

In the foyer, Benedick finds Margaret, and asks her to help him with a speech for Beatrice. Margaret asks whether Benedick can write love sonnets, but he expresses how bad at writing he is. Margaret leaves. Benedick reads his speech, Beatrice enters dressed ready for her travels. The couple flirt and tease each other with gentle insults, Benedick tells Beatrice that he challenged Claudio to a duel and he is waiting for a response. Ursula runs in distressed and tells Beatrice that it has been proved Hero was falsely accused. Beatrice and Benedick follow Ursula to her uncles.

Act 5, Scene 3: 02:03:55

Down at the beach, it is dawn. Everyone in the town gathers to mourn Hero. Claudio reads out his epitaph Leonato asked him to write. Don Pedro joins in. He hangs it on her tomb and promises to come back on this day every year and read it. Everyone goes off to prepare for the wedding, happening the very same day. A lady stays behind, it is Hero. She goes over to the tomb and takes the flowers Claudio placed down.

Act 5, Scene 4: 02:08:05

In the ballroom, Friar, Antonia, Leonato, Benedick and Beatrice are finishing preparation for the wedding. Hero enters with Ursula, she is told to remember she is the daughter of Leonato's brother. She is sent away to get ready and put a mask on her face. It has been concluded that Margaret has been interrogated and not to blame. She never knew she was part of Don John's lying and treachery. Benedick takes Leonato aside and asks his permission to marry Beatrice.

Don Pedro and Claudio enter while Antonia leads in Beatrice, Margaret, Ursula and Hero veiled. Claudio vows to marry the masked woman by his side who he believes is Leonato's niece. The woman unveils herself to reveal it is in fact Hero. Leonato and Hero explain to Claudio that now her name is cleared, she can come back to life and be his wife. Benedick asks Beatrice in front of everybody if she loves him, she denies this. Beatrice then asks Benedick if he loves her, he denies it. They both realise they have been caught and give in. They kiss and decide to marry.

Benedick gets down on one knee and gives her a ring. Dogberry rushes in and tells everyone that Don John has been captured in flight and has been brought back to Messina. Beatrice tells everyone to think about that tomorrow and to enjoy both weddings. Everyone dances.

THE END

Suggestions for Further Activity

- Another Shakespeare comedy that is available on the NT Collection is Twelfth Night and is also directed by Simon Godwin. Watch that production and create a comparison of the two productions. You can focus on i) acting style ii) design iii) use of sound and music iv) Shakespeare's plot devices such as mistaken identity.
- Simon Godwin's film version of Romeo and Juliet is also available on the NT Collection. This was filmed using the Lyttleton Theatre during the COVID pandemic of 2020. Watch this production and notice how the same theatre is used in different ways for the two productions.
- Read this review from The Guardian about the production of Much Ado About Nothing. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2022/jul/19/much-ado-about-nothing-review-screwball-shakespeare-goes-with-a-swing>
Using this as a style guide, write your own review. You may wish to focus on the transposition of the play to a 1930s style hotel on the Italian Riviera. Do you think it is successful? How does the modern interpretation help or hinder the audience in appreciating this popular Shakespeare play?
- A famous film version of Much Ado About Nothing is the 1993 film version starring Emma Thompson and Kenneth Branagh, directed by Branagh. Watch this version and compare it with the stage production. How does setting, use of design and directorial choices differ between this 2022 stage version and the 1993 film version? How have the two directors interpreted the characters? Which interpretation do you most agree with, and why?
- The sparring between Beatrice and Benedick is one of the many reasons why this play has such enduring popularity as a comedy. A similar character to Beatrice is Katherine in The Taming of the Shrew. Read and/or research that play and consider why The Taming of the Shrew is considered a little more problematic in its portrayal of the relationships between men and women.

Find out More

Watch

Voice Text Work: Blank Verse from Much Ado About Nothing

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pQ_JbzAb8

Performing Shakespeare with Abigail Rokison-Woodall and Simon Russell-Beale

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdmFNzyR27s&list=PLJgBmjHpqgs7citDojiasj-nMABL_DXku&index=8

Shakespeare at the NT: Writer for Today

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lnDNluJno0&t=1s>

Shakespeare at the NT: The 21st Century

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxgiayklr-0>

Explore

The National Theatre's Google Arts and Culture exhibitions, including this one on Shakespeare at the National Theatre

<https://artsandculture.google.com/story/WQVxxgh-hh8A8A>

Learning Hub

You can find more resources for schools and teachers on the National Theatre's Learning Hub. Search by key stage, subject, theatrical style or practitioner and discover an ever-growing library of short films, learning guides and digital exhibitions.

Find out more: <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/learn-explore/schools/teacher-resources/>

National Theatre Archive

More materials relating to the production including the costume bible, poster, prompt scripts, programme, stage management reports and more are held at the National Theatre Archive, which is free to visit.

Find out more: <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/archive>

We hope that you have enjoyed watching and studying **Much Ado About Nothing**. Don't forget that there are many more fantastic productions to explore as part of the NT Collection. We hope that watching this recorded production has made you feel inspired to see and make live theatre. [Why not find out what's happening at your local theatre and how you can get involved?](#)

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Thank you