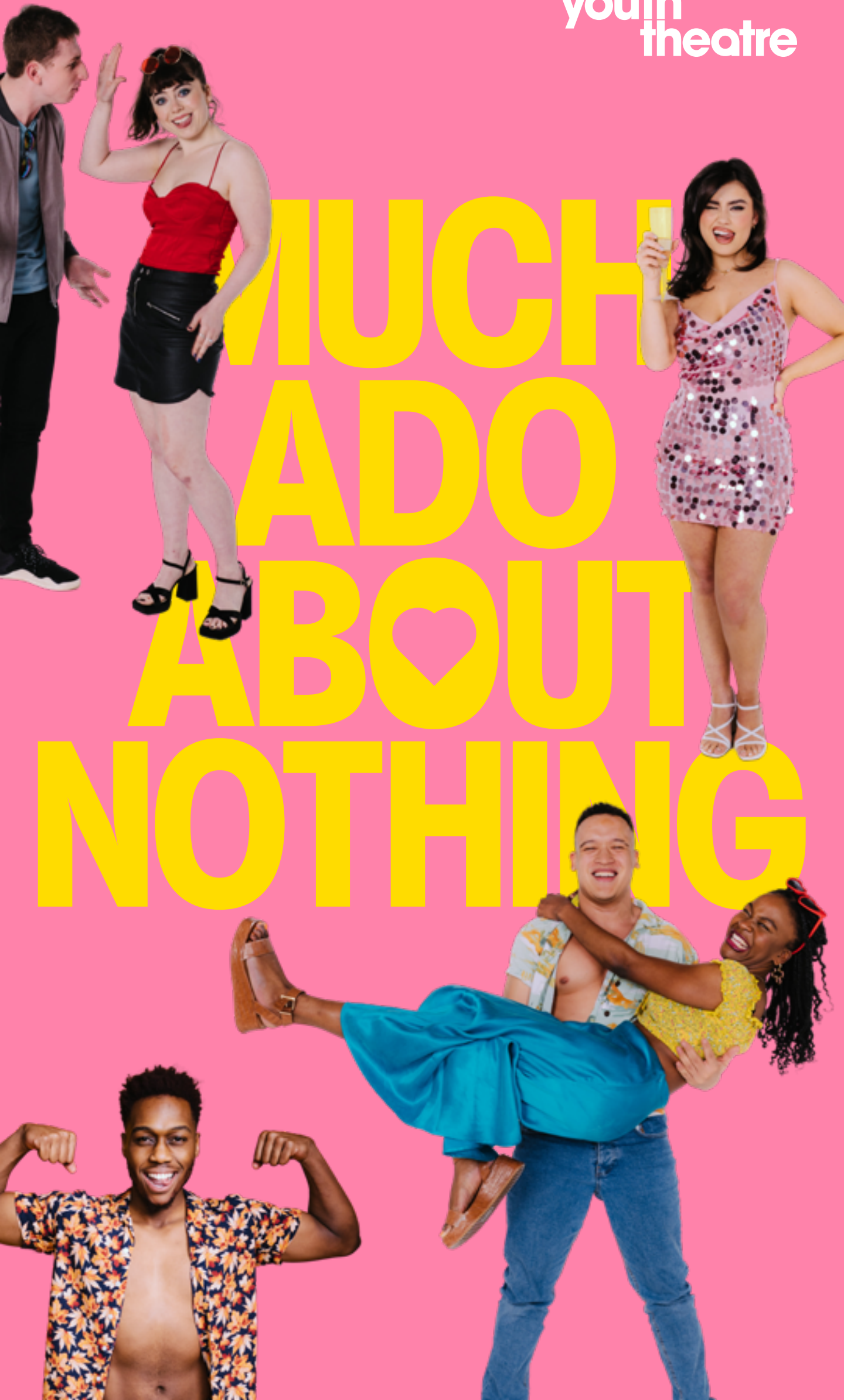


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# **Much Ado About Nothing**

**Written by William Shakespeare**

**Remixed by Debris Stevenson**

**Directed by Josie Daxter**

**7-10 February, Duke of York's Theatre**

Shakespeare's much-loved comedy meets reality TV romance in a raucous and lyrical adaptation by poet and playwright Debris Stevenson (Poet in da Corner, Royal Court) at the iconic Duke of York's Theatre in London's West End. Josie Daxter (NYT alumna), who has worked extensively with The PappyShow and Complicite, playfully directs this modern-day love story as we go behind the cameras into a loved-up world of gossip, matchmaking and manipulation.

If you'd like to find out more about our work, please head over to [www.nyt.org.uk](http://www.nyt.org.uk) for further information.



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## **Josie Daxter** **Director**

Before I met Debris for the first time, I looked up the meaning of this play's title and discovered that the "nothing" in Much Ado About Nothing has three implications:

1. Trivial or empty
2. An Elizabethan euphemism for female genitalia
3. A pun on "noting", ie. overhearing

Vacuous, highly-sexualised and gossipy. It felt like a neon signpost to the world of reality tv shows.

Debris had exactly the same hunch. The carousel of coupling and uncoupling was like an episode of Love Island. Hero, the shamed and jilted bride, could have been

a contestant on Married at First Sight. The flirting and wooing at the masked party was straight out of Love is Blind. The world of reality tv felt like a snug lens that could bring Much Ado About Nothing into sharp focus for a modern audience well-versed in the manoeuvres of singletons looking for love.

We tested the idea during a research and development period with the cast. The reality tv lens made us laugh: runners were scrabbling to hold together the glamour of the show, Dogberry and Verges were offering low-grade psychotherapy to wrung-out contestants, Benedick and Beatrice were admitting all in the diary room.

We discussed the sexism, racism and classism inherent in Shakespeare's text. Hero was described as "too brown". The men had way more to say than the women. The play felt starkly heteronormative. We turned our attention to the reality tv shows. Over 400 years later, but the same "isms" were rife here too. And so our lens had become a magnifying glass, leaving us unable to just cut out the awkward bits from the text. We were forced to lean into the shared, uncomfortable realities of the play and the tv shows in order to expose and critique them. The lens made us braver.

Leonato became an Executive Producer, hungry for ratings. Conrade was a story producer, willing to do anything to climb the greasy pole. Don John was no longer a villain, but a victim, fed to social media followers. The blatant manipulation of the contestants' words and actions by the production company was laid bare.

It felt like we'd stopped looking through our lens to understand Shakespeare, and had started looking through Shakespeare to understand our lens.

The reality tv shows were being pulled into sharp and uncompromising focus.

From a lens to a magnifying glass to...  
a mirror?

A two-way one maybe?

Look out for it in the show.







**Hannah Zoé Ankrah**  
Friar



**Tomás Azócar-Nevin**  
Conrade



**Eleanor Booth**  
Doctor Dogberry



**Daniel Cawley**  
Benedick



**Chloe Cooper**  
Ursula/ Sexton



**Jack D'Arcy**  
Don Pedro





**Jez Davess-Humphrey**  
Claudio



**Jessica Enemokwu**  
Leonato



**Isolde Fenton**  
Beatrice



**Kira Golightly**  
Verges



**Thuliswa Magwaza**  
Hero



**Dalumuzi Moyo**  
Borachio





**Olivia Ng**  
George Seacole



**Jasmine Ricketts**  
Don John



**Nathaly Sabino**  
Margaret



**Jerome Scott**  
Balthazar/  
Hugh Oatcake

Team

Much Ado  
About Nothing  
Rehearsals, photo  
by Helen Murray



Written by  
William Shakespeare

Remixed by  
Debris Stevenson

Directed by  
Josie Daxter

Designer  
Zoë Hurwitz

Lighting and  
Video Designer  
Martha Godfrey

Composer &  
Sound Designer  
Mwen

Movement Director  
Debris Stevenson

Assistant Director  
Maisie Newman

Assistant Set Designer  
Olivia Jamieson

Assistant Costume  
Designer  
Hazel McIntosh

Intimacy & Fight  
Director  
Yarit Dor

Voice Coach  
Marcia Carr

Production Manager  
Callum Finn

Company Manager  
Bex Snell

Stage Manager  
Aime Neeme

Deputy Stage  
Manager  
Eliana Levi  
(NYT member)

Assistant Stage  
Manager  
Arden Grant-Davie  
(NYT member)

Costume Supervisor  
Nicola Stimpson

Make Up Supervisor  
Aimee Harfield



Make Up Assistant  
Rashida Blair

Sound Number 1  
Reece Lyons

Hair Stylist  
Aaliyah Sanchez

Sound Number 2  
Jake Johnson

Production Electrician  
Sam Baker

Sound Op  
Immie Brooks  
(NYT Member)

Production Electrician  
Charlie Jeffries

Wardrobe Manager  
Ruth Keeling

Production Sound  
Engineer  
Matthew Russell





## **NYT Backstage**

### **Members**

Callum Anderson

Laura Conroy

Rose Locke

Hannah Pick

Ryan Webster

## **NYT Production Team**

### **Senior Producer**

Jessica Hall

### **Senior Producer**

Rosie Townshend

### **Assistant Producer**

Cherrelle Glave

### **Production and Casting Assistant**

Erin Thorpe

**With support from the  
Full NYT Team**

## **Set Builders**

RT Scenic Ltd

## **Lighting Hires**

SLX Hire

## **Sound Hires**

Stage Sound Services

## **Thanks to**

Olly Bennett, ENO,  
Holly Miriams, RADA,  
Selladoor

## **Promotional images**

Helen Murray

## **Graphic Design**

October Associates

## **Press**

Bread and Butter PR



In 2012 Paul Roseby, Artistic Director and CEO of National Youth Theatre (NYT), launched a new REP company, co-created with Associate Director Anna Niland, that would provide intensive real-world experience each year to a group of young performers and creatives. Taking inspiration from the old repertory company model, the NYT REP has sought to bring its training and learning model sharply into the modern era.

One of the only companies to stage productions the day theatres were allowed to reopen following the pandemic, the REP premiered a new production of *Animal Farm* at Northampton's Royal and Derngate on 17 May 2021. Other notable productions have included the West End debut of James Graham's *Tory Boyz* in 2013, the first stage adaptation of Carol Ann Duffy's *The World's Wife* at The Ambassadors Theatre in 2014, *Macbeth* at the Garrick Theatre which was the first production of the play in the West End to feature a female *Macbeth*, and *Animal Farm*, as part of an Arts Council funded national tour, performed on a farm at an outdoor theatre in Shropshire newly created in response to the pandemic. The company has worked with a dazzling array of creative talent including Josh Azouz, Neil Bartlett, Dzifa Benson, Ned Bennett, Moira Buffini, Lolita Chakrabarti, Miranda Cromwell, Frantic Assembly, James Graham,



Tatty Hennessy, Kane Husbands, Emily Lim, Michael Morpurgo, Gbolahan Obisesan, Evan Placey, Ed Stambollouian, Stephanie Street, Roy Alexander Weise and more. The company has seen its former members go on to achieve remarkable success with graduates playing leading roles on stage and screen.





“It’s 10 years since we launched the NYT REP in response to the rise in drama school fees, but the challenges faced by young talent around the UK today is greater than ever with the cost of living crisis and decline of arts in schools.

This year’s REP will offer opportunity, entertainment and hope. Young will talent takeover an iconic West End venue with tickets from £10, Bola Agbaje’s award-winning debut is revived offering a welcome shake-up to the curriculum and a young director supported by the Bryan Forbes Bursary reinterprets a classic for our time. Learning by doing it through a free industry-based audience-facing approach has been a game-changer over the last 10 years, as the REP graduates leading major shows prove. Now more than ever we must support flexible free alternative routes for young talent to take centre stage and bring young talent and audiences back to the West End.”

**Paul Roseby, CEO & Artistic Director**



**Wendy Spon, Casting Director and former Head of Casting at the National Theatre said:** “The Rep training represents a unique opportunity for NYT members to focus and develop their skills in an intense burst of training and exposure to the industry. Like all of NYT’s activity it encourages young people to be themselves, to celebrate difference and to enable each other to be the best they can. Industry professionals love this alternative training because the young people are hugely talented, diverse and individual, alive to the challenges of the profession, with a mature outlook and boundless enthusiasm. It’s a breath of fresh air!”



**Johnny Capps is a director at Urban Myth Films, an award-winning Executive Producer to Television and NYT alumnus and Trustee, said:** “The NYT REP not only offers a unique opportunity for members to train with celebrated and relevant industry professionals but also is free of charge to those participating. No other drama school in the country offers this unique experience. The REP’S success speaks for itself and as a television producer I am constantly seeing REP graduates on screen excelling in the parts they have been cast in.”

**Kane Husbands, Artistic Director, The PappyShow, said:** “It’s been an incredible ten years of the REP company, a company committed to make a space for young people who may not have had a footing into this competitive industry. I’ve been there since day one and worked on the physical, movement and ensemble training each year. To be thinking about bodies - bodies fitting in, bodies not fitting in - and what a training that could hold, stretch and platform a diverse and rich company of identities has been a real blessing and shaped my own practice. I hope the future of theatre can be open to companies as rich, diverse, different and talented

as the Rep company has. To have started their journeys off thinking about kindness, generosity and caring pedagogies; creating companies that focus on belonging and bravery - where we support each other and pull together, rather than apart has been a contribution im proud of, and a team I feel honoured to have worked alongside. The ethics, thinking and and behaviours of the rep company make me believe that training can look more like this - in the future of theatre making.”

**Gary Davy, Casting Director and NYT alumnus said:** “Thank you NYT. Giving young actors this fantastic first step and introduction to the industry over the last 10 years is invaluable! I’ve met amazing people through the REP and I wouldn’t be where I am today if it wasn’t for the NYT - so I know how important this (free!) training is. You’ve really enriched our industry!”

**James Dacre, Artistic Director, Royal & Derngate Theatre, said:** “Each of the three productions we’ve made with the NYT Rep have brilliantly showcased the depth and range of talent across each cohort and demonstrated the unique ensemble training opportunities provided by the National Youth Theatre, which amplifies the unique potential



of each cast member whilst also nurturing a sense of collaboration and teamwork that will empower its members throughout the promising careers that lie ahead of them.”



**BAFTA nominated Gangs of London star and REP alum Sope Dirísù said:**

“For me, I’d already been to university for three years. It was a perfect transition from my academic course after doing Economics at Birmingham, to the industry. I knew I couldn’t afford to go to drama school and that this was a really viable alternative. We got all the training we needed and they give us the tools to train ourselves, which is really important to me as an independent and active learner.”

NYT REP alum, Zainab Hasan, who recently played the title role in *Antigone* at Regents Park, appeared in the BBC's *Maryland* and starred in the Donmar's *All-Female Shakespeare Trilogy* in London and New York said: "It is the most amazing platform that I've ever had in my life in terms of the kind of training that you get, the people that you meet and financially. I was not in a position to be able to afford to training elsewhere and this is an opportunity that's been funded and allowed me to develop my skills as an actor and meet incredible people within the industry. I'd highly recommend auditioning for the NYT REP to anyone because they will look after you."



**NYT REP Alum Shiv Jalota was the first global majority actor to play the lead in The Curious Incident of The Dog in the Nighttime and is currently starring as regular character Vinny Panesar in Eastenders. He said:** “As a working class, British Asian, it was a place for me where I saw an opportunity where finances may not be as much of a strain,. “It has given me the strength to realise that if you want to perform or be backstage or on stage or behind the camera, to just go for it. Fail, make mistakes but learn in the moment and that’s so important for any actor coming into it – learning in the moment and being present in the moment. That is what the NYT REP has taught me.”

**NYT REP alum Simon Lennon from Liverpool has starred in Netflix’s Bridgerton, BBC1’s Our Girl and ITV’s Emmerdale, he said:** “I didn’t know where I was in my life before I started the REP. The REP gave me all the opportunities that I could have asked for. I have learnt so much and am so thankful to have worked with such a talented group of actors and the most prolific and exceptional industry professionals. The REP was everything I wanted and more and I will cherish all of the memories for the rest of my life.”



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Directed by Monique Touko

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**[Cliodhna.McCorley@nyt.org.uk](mailto:Cliodhna.McCorley@nyt.org.uk)**

**National Youth Theatre would like to thank the following for their support of our 2022/23 NYT REP Company:**

our principal supporter Arts Council England; The Leverhulme Trust, Ian McKellen, the Clothworkers' Foundation, Helen Mirren and Joseph Payne for their support of bursaries; Spotlight for their support of The REP Industry Performances for agents, casting directors and creative professionals to see each show in the season (email [events@nyt.org.uk](mailto:events@nyt.org.uk) for more information); International Music and Art Foundation; Noël Coward Foundation; Idlewild Trust and The Austin & Hope Pilkington Trust.

We're very grateful to all those who have donated to the Bryan Forbes Bursary for Early Career Directors and in particular Emma Forbes and Graham Clempson. We would also like to thank all of NYT's Centre Stage Supporters and Investors In Talent.

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