

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY

# MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

BY William Shakespeare  
DIRECTED BY Mark Wilson

RELAXED PERFORMANCE  
VISUAL STORY



# **Wominjeka / Welcome**

Melbourne Theatre Company acknowledges the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work, create and gather. We pay our respects to all First Nations people, their Elders past and present, and their enduring connections to Country, knowledge and stories. As a Company we remain committed to the invitation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and its call for voice, truth and treaty.

# Contents

<b>Important information</b>	3
<b>Sensory warnings</b>	7
<b>Content warnings</b>	8
<b>About the venue</b>	13
<b>About the show</b>	23
<b>The story</b>	37

# Important information

## Relaxed Performance

The relaxed performance of *Much Ado About Nothing* will take place on Wednesday 17 December at 2pm.

Relaxed Performances focus on relaxing or adapting the theatre environment while maintaining the creative integrity of the show. Relaxed Performances are for anyone who would benefit from a more relaxed environment. We embrace noisy enthusiasm and it's okay to move about and self-regulate.

During a relaxed performance:

- We may make minor changes to sensory elements of a show such as reducing bright lighting or loud noises.
- There is a relaxed attitude to noise and movement.
- You are welcome to bring in, and use, stimming devices.
- The theatre doors remain open and the house lights remain on, but dimmed, throughout the performance.
- Your ticket will have a seat row and number on it, but you can decide where you'd like to sit on the day of the performance. There will be an opportunity before the performance begins where you can move to a different seat if you'd prefer.
- You can leave the venue at any time and a designated quiet space is available on level 1 of the foyer.

## Visual Story

Visual Stories are designed to help prepare you for your visit. They include information about the venue and what will happen during the performance. Please note that the information includes 'spoilers' which may impact your experience of the production.

Visit **[mtc.com.au/access](http://mtc.com.au/access)** to learn more.

## Contact

If you would like more information in the lead up to your visit, please contact Melbourne Theatre Company on **03 8688 0900** during business hours or email **[info@mtc.com.au](mailto:info@mtc.com.au)**.

## **The production**

*Much Ado About Nothing* is a fun and contemporary version of Shakespeare's comedy about love, gender, deception and power. This brand-new production uses Shakespeare's original words – which may sound different from everyday English commonly used today – but the costumes, music and design look more like the world we live in now. The story moves quickly and is full of humour, dancing, disguises and playful arguments between the characters.

### **Venue**

This production of *Much Ado About Nothing* will be performed at The Sumner which is inside Southbank Theatre. The Sumner is wheelchair accessible.

### **Length**

*Much Ado About Nothing* runs for approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes, including a 20-minute interval.

### **Age recommendation**

*Much Ado About Nothing* is recommended for ages 13+ / school Years 8–12.

## Theatre guidelines

- Melbourne Theatre Company continues to be aware of the risk of COVID-19 infection. For more information and advice visit **[mtc.com.au/your-visit/covid-19-information](https://mtc.com.au/your-visit/covid-19-information)**.
- Photography and recording is not permitted during the performance. Mobile devices can be used to assist with communication and it's always fine to use a device in the foyer or quiet space.
- For some audience members, clapping can be very loud and feel uncomfortable, so we encourage you to join us at the end of the performance by using the Deaf applause. This is done by waving your hands up in the air, which is the Deaf community's way to show appreciation. We invite you to applaud in whatever way is comfortable for you.

# Sensory warnings

We may make minor changes to sensory elements of this show, such as reducing flashing lights or loud noises. Please be aware of the following:

- Some music will play during the performance as part of scenes and during scene changes. If it becomes too loud you can cover your ears with your hands or put on headphones.
- Thunder rumble sound effects are used when the Prince's brother – the Bastard – appears or after he makes statements about his plans to cause trouble.
- Sometimes the sliding doors (on the ground floor of Leonato's house) make a loud noise when they close.
- As the party starts in Act 1 Scene 4, the first drumbeat of the Elizabethan-style music occurs suddenly, sounding similar to a gunshot.
- When police officers Dogberry and Verges give instructions to their officers, they slam their hands loudly against the noticeboard to emphasise their point.
- Three large fans will blow fake leaves across the stage. The fans create noise while they operate.
- At the end of Act 1, some sudden sound effects occur like a gunshot, pepper spray and a taser.
- Red and blue lights will flash to indicate police colours when police officers enter – they are called the Prince's watch in the story.

# Content warnings

This production contains mature themes, sexual references, and references to and depictions of violence.

For detailed content warnings, please refer to the **Production Content Guide** online at [mtc.com.au](http://mtc.com.au).

## **Mature themes**

### **Depictions of alcohol use**

Beer cans and champagne bottles are used as props but do not contain alcohol, only water. In some scenes characters drink this fake alcohol and act more relaxed with exaggerated gestures and slurred speech to show they are drunk.

### **Culturally sensitive references**

The Prince's brother is referred to as 'the Bastard' throughout the play. 'Bastard' is an old-fashioned word for a child born to parents who are not married. It appears in the original Shakespeare text.

It is an offensive term but was considered more offensive in Shakespeare's time because society placed more value on people being married before having children.

## Depictions of misogyny and sexism

Some moments in the story show unfair and old-fashioned ideas about how men and women should behave. These ideas come from when Shakespeare wrote the play but are still relevant today. Many of these moments are acted in a heightened, dramatic way but may feel upsetting.

In the story:

- Leonato (Hero's father) and Claudio (Hero's fiancé) make decisions about Hero, a young woman, without asking her.
- Male characters often talk about women being unfaithful.
- Hero is wrongly accused of being unfaithful to Claudio because of a trick played by the Bastard and Borachio.
- Claudio shames Hero publicly at their wedding based on the false rumour about Hero being unfaithful. He enjoys doing this because he thinks she deserves it.
- Leonato, Hero's father, does not believe Hero is innocent and plans to pretend she has died to protect his family's reputation.
- Leonato later offers Claudio another niece (who does not exist) to marry as part of his plan to make Claudio feel remorseful about shaming his daughter, Hero. Leonato's offer is made quickly, with no suggestion that the (pretend) bride gets a say in the matter.

## Sexual references

There are moments in the story that refer to romantic or sexual behaviour. All moments involving physical intimacy are choreographed with guidance from an intimacy coordinator to ensure actor safety.

- Characters often talk or joke about attraction, love or relationships, which is a typical of Shakespeare's comedies.
- At the start of the play there is a painting sitting in the middle of the stage. It looks similar to a well-known artwork, from the 1400s called *The Birth of Venus*. In Greek mythology Venus is the goddess of love and considered a symbol of feminine beauty. In the painting Venus is semi-naked like the original depiction in the famous artwork.
- The Prince is often physically close to Hero, placing his hands on her shoulders and waist. Hero does not like it.
- A comedic balcony scene shows Margaret being sexually intimate with Borachio. Their actions are exaggerated and mime-like to simulate sexual acts. The balcony railing hides the actors' lower bodies and is used for comedic effect to suggest sexual acts are happening that the audience can't see.

- Some characters kiss to show affection and attraction towards each other.
- Moments of partial nudity will occur when actors do costume changes either side of stage or directly in front of the audience.
- Moments of partial nudity will also occur as part of the story:
  - When Leonato and Claudio enter wearing fancy dress costumes for the party they have bare legs and cod pieces.
  - When the Prince is relaxing in swimwear his naked upper body is exposed under an open shirt and he wears bathers that expose his bare legs. Later, he is only in bathers.
  - When Margaret is sexually intimate with Borachio, the actor's underwear is deliberately visible to show the sexual nature of the scene.

## References to and depictions of violence

There are several scenes that involve pretend or staged violence. These moments are carefully rehearsed and performed safely, but they may feel intense. All violent moments are theatrical, stylised and performed by trained actors. If any scene feels overwhelming, you are welcome to take a break and return when ready.

- A staged arrest scene shows police officers using pretend pepper spray, a pretend taser and a pretend gun (with gunshot sound effect) when arresting Borachio and Conrade. The actors are not harmed.
- Other weapons – including a large rifle and swords – are held by male characters but not used in a threatening way. They are props and not real.
- A wedding scene includes Claudio publicly rejecting Hero after believing a false rumour. He raises his voice and knocks over chairs, creating a tense moment.
- Beatrice asks Benedick to challenge and kill Claudio as a way of defending Hero's honour.
- When Claudio learns that Hero has died of shock because he publicly rejected her, he is remorseful and refers to the feeling as if he had drunk poison.
- Later, Leonato and Benedick both challenge Claudio to a duel, although no real fight takes place.

# About the venue

*Much Ado About Nothing* is being performed at Southbank Theatre, 140 Southbank Boulevard in Southbank, Victoria.

The building has lots of white poles on the outside that look like cubes from some angles.



## Entering the building

You can enter the building through the doors on Southbank Boulevard or the doors on Dodds Street's entrance.

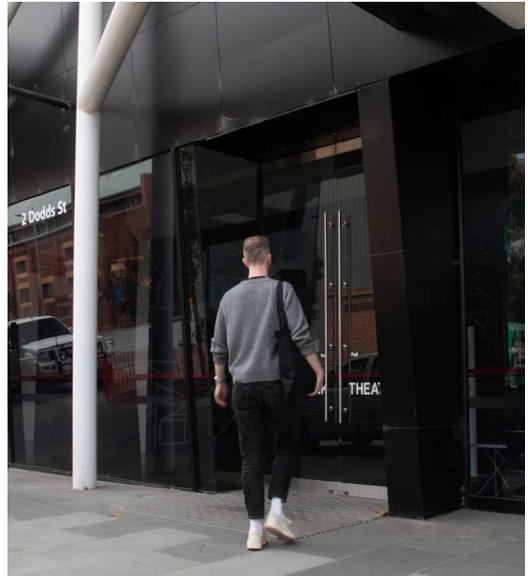
When you arrive at the building you will see other people who are also going to see *Much Ado About Nothing* like you.

You will also see people wearing black uniforms. They are called ushers. They can help you with directions or answer any questions you may have about the performance.

You may hear some verbal announcements over the foyer speakers reminding you that the show will begin shortly.



Southbank Boulevard entrance



Dodd Street entrance

## Find your way

The venue might be busy when you arrive, so you might wish to allow yourself extra time or wear headphones if it's noisy.

There are two theatres inside the building. The relaxed performance of *Much Ado About Nothing* will take place in The Sumner – the largest theatre with entrances on both sides of the building.

If you need help with your tickets, you can go to The Box Office which is on the ground floor.

To the left of the Box Office is the cloak room where you can place large bags or coats if you don't want to take them inside the theatre. In exchange for your belongings, a staff member will give you a small card to keep until you'd like to pick up your items.



Box Office



Cloak Room

Before going inside The Sumner, you may like to use the bathroom.

Accessible toilets are available on all levels. You can ask a friendly usher for directions if you need help.



If your ticket says Door 3 or Door 4, you can enter the theatre from the ground floor. Door 3 is on the left-hand side of the building (left of the bar) and Door 4 is on the right-hand side (right of the Box Office).

If your ticket says Door 1 or Door 2, you can enter the theatre via Level 1.

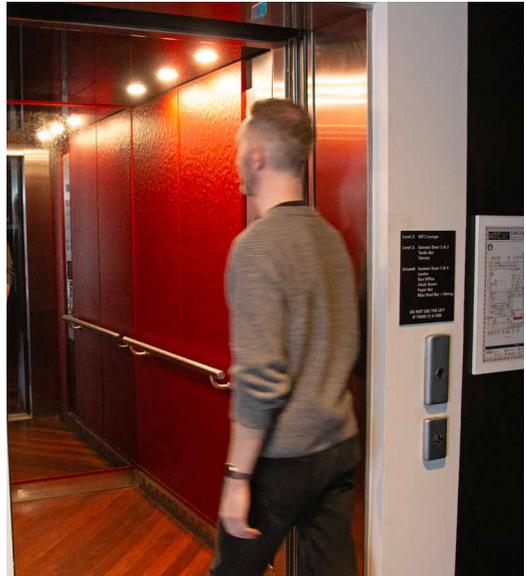
To get to Level 1, you can walk up the stairs or use the lift located to the right of the Box Office.

Door 1 is on the left-hand side of the building on Level 1 (left of the bar) and Door 2 on the right-hand side (at the top of the stairs).

The ushers can help you find your way.



Use the stairs to reach Level 1



Use the lift to reach Level 1

## Seating

The doors to the theatre will open about 30 minutes before the start of the show.

You will need a ticket to enter the theatre. You can go into the theatre and find a seat early if you want to. If you can't find your ticket, please visit the Box Office on the ground level and they will assist you.

Before you go into the theatre, you will need to show your ticket to the usher at the door. Your seat row and seat number are also on your ticket. The ushers can help you find your seat or you can find it yourself.



At this relaxed performance, it's okay to change seats if you would feel more comfortable sitting somewhere else. There will be an announcement pre-show to let you know when you can move to a different, empty seat.

An usher can help you if you find an empty seat if you ask them.

## During the show

The play will go for about 2 hours and 30 minutes in total. There will be a 20-minute interval.

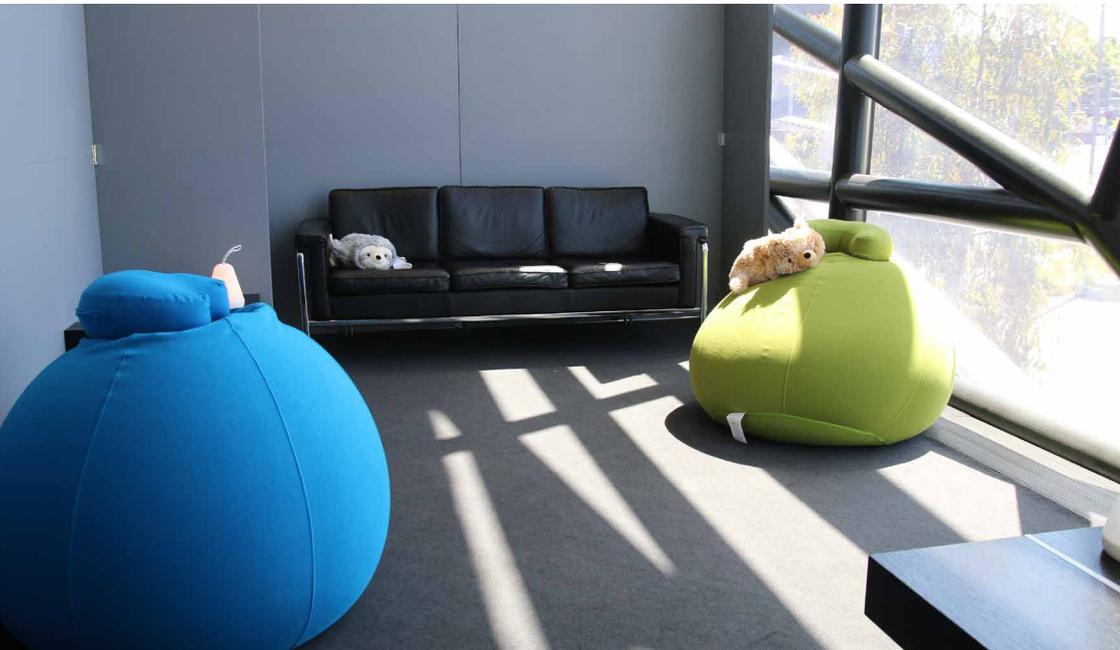
The performance will begin with an announcement. Some actors will come on stage and introduce themselves and the story. They will tell you when you can move to an empty seat.

If you need to take a break during the show you can

leave your seat and come out to the foyer area. You can do this whenever you need to.

There will be a quiet space in the foyer on level 1 that has comfortable beanbags where you can relax if you want to.

You can return to the theatre and watch the rest of the show whenever you feel ready.



During the interval some audience members might go to the foyer to buy refreshments from the bar or use the bathroom.

After about 15 minutes a verbal announcement will play over a loudspeaker to remind you that interval is nearly over and to return to the theatre for the second half of the performance.

## After the show

When the show is finished, people will clap their hands together to say thank you to the performers. Some audience members might even cheer or whistle.

If it's too loud you can cover your ears.

Some people may join in with a Deaf clap, by waving their hands in the air.



# About the show

## The story

*Much Ado About Nothing* was written by English playwright William Shakespeare and first published in the year 1600. This period of time is often called the Elizabethan times because Queen Elizabeth I was in power. Even though it is an old play, this production looks and feels like it has been set today.

In Act 1, there is a party where the characters wear costumes and masks inspired by Shakespeare's time. These masks disguise the identity of the wearer, and this leads to confusion among the characters. Even though it may appear clear to the audience who is who, in the story the characters can't tell.

The story follows two couples – Hero and Claudio, and Beatrice and Benedick.

When a group of soldiers return from war, Claudio meets Hero for the first time and they fall in love quickly. They plan to get married, even though other characters try to stop them. Beatrice sees Benedick again after a long time apart. At first they don't like each other, but their feelings change throughout the play.

The Bastard, the Prince's jealous brother, tries to cause trouble by spreading lies. This impacts the two romantic storylines in the play.

This production uses Shakespeare's original language which is in English but is different to everyday English used today.

## The set

The play is set in Messina, a town on the Italian island of Sicily. The major set piece is a double-storey structure with visible railings and stairs at the back. There is a large photo of a woman's face printed on the outside wall of the building that goes across both floors. This set has been inspired by a property in St Kilda that features an image of Pamela Anderson.

Staircases are visible on both sides of the structure.

The actors have practiced with this structure during rehearsals and they are safe on all areas of the stage.

At different times throughout the performance, lighting and props will help create various settings. For example, the top level of the structure will become Hero's balcony, and the centre of the stage will become a dance floor at the party, a police station, a wedding ceremony and an outdoor pool area (with no visible pool).



## **The characters**

There are 22 characters in the story, played by 8 actors.

Actors wear different costumes and change their voice and movement to create their characters. Sometimes the actors' costume changes will be visible to the audience as there are no wings on the side of stage – this is deliberate.

6 characters are members of the Prince's watch – police officers who act as the Prince's security at Leonato's house. The officers are referred to as 'the watch' throughout the play.

The officers are ensemble characters and only appear a few times with minimal or no dialogue.

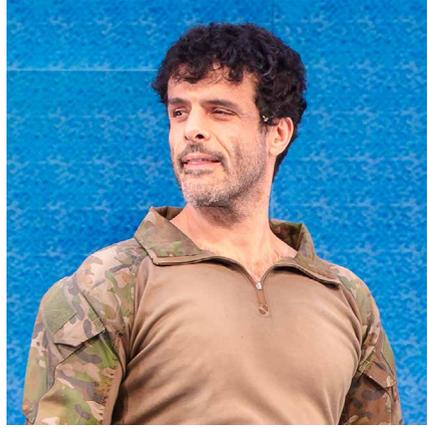
Many of the male characters are referred to as 'signior', the Italian word for 'sir'. This is because the story is set in Messina, a town in Italy.



## Beatrice

This is Beatrice. Beatrice lives with her uncle Leonato. She doesn't like Benedick and often talks about how she never wants to get married. In the story, Beatrice is tricked into thinking Benedick likes her.

Beatrice is played by actor Alison Bell.



## Benedick

This is Benedick. He is a soldier from Padua, a city in Italy. He is called Signior Benedick of Padua only once and Benedick for the rest of the play. He doesn't want to get married and often makes fun of people in love.

Benedick is played by actor Fayssal Bazzi.





## Hero

This is Hero. She is a young woman who lives with her father, Leonato. At the beginning, Hero falls instantly in love with Claudio. Later, she is accused of being unfaithful to him, despite her explaining she's innocent.

Hero is played by actor Miela Anich.



## Borachio

This is Borachio. He is also a soldier but doesn't wear a traditional soldier's uniform. Borachio comes up with a plan to shame Hero and takes money from the Bastard for doing it.

Borachio is played by actor Miela Anich, the same actor who plays Hero.





## Claudio

This is Claudio. He's a young soldier. He is often referred to as Count Claudio – a count is a European title of nobility. When he first sees Hero, he falls instantly in love. Later, when he thinks she's been unfaithful, he's very angry and calls off the wedding.

Claudio is played by actor Remy Heremaia.



## Conrade

This is Conrade. Conrade is a follower of the Bastard and friends with Borachio. He is also a soldier but doesn't wear a traditional soldier's uniform. Conrade is arrested, along with Borachio, by the Prince's watch for being suspicious during the party.

Conrade is played by actor Remy Heremaia, the same actor who plays Claudio.



## Leonato

This is Leonato. He is the Governor of Messina. At the beginning, he invites the returning soldiers to stay at his house. When Hero is accused of being unfaithful to Claudio, Leonato is upset because he thinks this brings shame upon Hero and his family.

Leonato is played by actor Syd Brisbane.



## Verges

This is Verges. He's a senior member of the Prince's police force, which acts as security for the Prince at Leonato's house. He is not very good at his job, but he is respected by other police officers.

Verges is played by actor Syd Brisbane, the same actor who plays Leonato.



## Prince

This is the Prince. He has recently been successful at war and returns to Messina with his soldiers. The Prince has an evil-spirited brother called the Bastard. After proposing to Beatrice and being rejected, the Prince tries to make Beatrice and Benedick fall in love.

The Prince is played by actor John Shearman.



## Sexton

This is the Sexton. He is a member of the church and only appears in Act 2. As a person with authority in the church, he makes formal notes at Borachio and Conrade's police interview.

He is played by actor John Shearman, the same actor who plays the Prince.



## **Bastard**

This is the Bastard. He is the Prince's evil-spirited brother. Bastard is an outdated and old-fashioned insult for a child born to parents who are not married. He enjoys causing trouble for others and he tries to ruin Claudio's engagement to Hero.

The Bastard is played by actor Chanella Macri.



## **Margaret**

This is Margaret. She is Hero's maid. The first time you see her she is dressed in a fancy dress costume for the Prince's party. In Act 1, Margaret is romantically intimate with Borachio – this moment is used to trick Claudio and the Prince into thinking Hero has been unfaithful.

Margaret is played by actor Chanella Macri, the same actor who plays the Bastard.



## Ursula

This is Ursula. She is Leonato's maid and helps look after Hero and Leonato. At the beginning, Ursula reports incorrect information to Leonato about the Prince's plans to propose to Hero. This leads to more misunderstandings about who likes who in the story.

Ursula is played by actor Julie Forsyth.

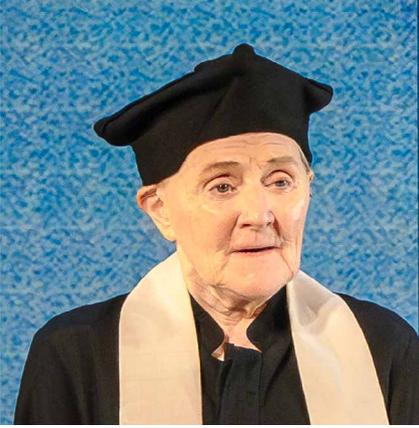


## Dogberry

This is Dogberry. He's a senior member of the Prince's police force which acts as security for the Prince at Leonato's house. He is not very good at his job, but he is respected by other police officers.

Dogberry is played by actor Julie Forsyth, the same actor who plays Ursula.





### **The Friar**

This is the Friar. He appears in Act 2 and is a member of the church. He performs the wedding ceremonies in the play. His full name – Friar Francis – is used only once.

The Friar is played by actor Julie Forsyth, the same actor who plays Ursula and Dogberry. The Friar is one of Julie Forsyth's two ensemble characters.



### **Soldier Messenger**

This is a soldier messenger, another ensemble character. This soldier only appears in the first scene of the play when he delivers a message to Leonato from the Prince.

This soldier is played by actor Julie Forsyth, the same actor who plays Ursula and Dogberry. This soldier is Julie Forsyth's other ensemble character.

**The following characters are all members of the Prince's watch.**



## **Seacoal**

This is a Seacoal. He is called by his full name, George Seacoal, only once. He helps arrest Borachio and Conrade.

Seacoal is played by actor Chanella Macri, the same actor who plays the Bastard and Margaret.



## **Hugh Oatcake**

This police officer's name is Hugh Oatcake but it is used only once, when he first appears. He helps arrest Borachio and Conrade.

This officer is played by Alison Bell, the same actor who plays Beatrice.





### First watchman

This is another member of the Prince's officers. He appears towards the end of Act 1 and helps arrest Borachio and Conrade.

He is played by actor John Shearman, the same actor who plays the Prince and the Sexton.



### Second watchman

This is another police officer. He rides a bicycle across the stage, twice, and helps arrest Borachio and Conrade at the end of Act 1.

He is played by actor Fayssal Bazzi, the same actor who plays Benedick.





### **Third watchman**

This is another police officer who's present when Dogberry gives his officers a security briefing in Act 1.

He is played by actor Miela Anich, the same actor who plays Hero and Borachio.



### **Fourth watchman**

This is another police officer who's present when Dogberry gives his officers a security briefing in Act 1.

He is played by actor Remy Heremaia, the same actor who plays Claudio and Conrade.



# The story

## PRE-SHOW

When you enter the theatre, you will see a large two-storey structure in the centre of the stage. It looks like an incomplete building. There are no wings on the stage – these usually hide props, sets and performers when they're not in a scene.

You will be able to see some elements of how theatre-making is created. These elements are often not seen by the audience in theatrical productions. You may see tables with props, clothing racks with costumes, as well as lights on stands on the side of the stage.

There is also a large painting on an easel in the middle of the stage. The painting looks like a well-known artwork from the 1600s called *The Birth of Venus*.

You will hear some music playing in the auditorium.

You may see crew members and actors at the sides of the stage, getting ready to perform. This is deliberate.

The performance will begin with an announcement. Some actors will come to the front of the stage and introduce themselves and the story. They will be speaking in their own voices, as themselves. They will tell you when you can move to an empty seat.

After a short pause to allow audience to move seats, the Acknowledgement of Country recording will play over the loudspeaker. This tells you the play is about to begin.

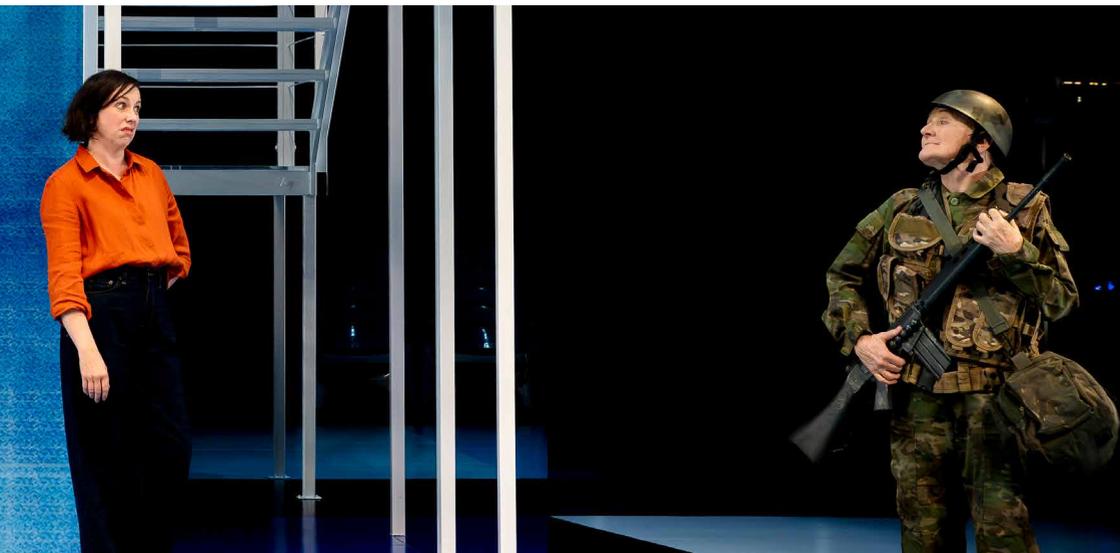
## ACT 1 SCENE 1

As the houselights go down, music plays, and Hero enters the balcony. Two male soldiers enter – the Prince and Claudio. They cover the painting and wheel it off stage.

The Governor of Messina, Leonato, and a soldier enter. The soldier carries a large prop rifle. They are watched by Beatrice. Three other soldiers and the Bastard can be seen on the left of the stage – this is deliberate.

The soldier tells Leonato that the Prince and his winning soldiers are returning from the war. The letter also praises another soldier, Claudio.

Beatrice asks the soldier about another friend of the Prince – Benedick. She asks if he's seduced women at war and laughs. This tells us that Beatrice and Benedick have known each other for a while, but they don't get on.



Trumpet music plays as the Prince, Benedick and Claudio enter, returning from war. The Bastard (the Prince's brother) also enters but doesn't join in the conversation – he is not friendly. Leonato introduces his daughter, Hero, to the men.

Beatrice and Benedick ask each other many questions. This tells us they have met many times in the past. Benedick tells Beatrice that he loves all women, but not her.

Beatrice teases Benedick and he gets annoyed, often raising his voice. Meanwhile, Hero and Claudio stare at each other a lot – they find each other attractive.

Leonato invites the soldiers to stay at his house. Before the Bastard responds to the invitation, a thunder sound effect plays to show the character is evil-spirited. Guitar music plays as everyone goes inside the house, except Benedick and Claudio.



Claudio asks Benedick what he thinks of Hero because Claudio likes her, and wants his friend to agree she's beautiful. As they talk, they playfight – Benedick puts Claudio in a headlock and Claudio air-punches him back. These movements are rehearsed.

The Prince enters, bringing champagne bottles to celebrate winning the war. Benedick tells the Prince that Claudio is romantically interested in Hero.

Benedick jokes about the situation because he thinks love is a bad idea. The Prince and Claudio tease Benedick for his negative attitude towards love, which makes Benedick leave. Claudio tells the Prince that he likes Hero. The Prince offers to help make Hero fall in love with Claudio. The Prince creates a plan to disguise himself as Claudio and trick Hero with his words of love. They leave as gentle string music plays to show the scene changing.



## ACT 1 SCENE 2

Later that day, Leonato yells out for Ursula, his maid. She enters and tells Leonato that she has some news about his daughter, Hero.

Ursula says that another servant (that the audience doesn't see) told her some gossip. The servant overheard the Prince tell Claudio that he loves Hero and plans to ask her to marry him. This is not true – Ursula has been told the wrong information by the servant.

In the previous scene, the Prince said he would help make Hero fall in love with Claudio, not himself.

Leonato decides to tell Hero that the Prince is planning to propose marriage. He wants Hero to be prepared to say yes. As they leave, string music plays and the scene changes.



## ACT 1 SCENE 3

The Bastard enters and the music becomes eerie. The lighting on stage also becomes dim with more shadows.

The Bastard is in a bad mood. Conrade – a friend of the Bastard – enters. The Bastard tells Conrade that even though he's now following his brother around Italy, he isn't happy about it. The Bastard would prefer to be causing trouble for others.

Borachio – another of the Bastard's followers – enters and brings some news. He says he overheard the Prince's plan to help Hero fall in love with Claudio by the Prince dressing up in disguise as Claudio.

Keen to cause trouble, the Bastard tells Conrade and Borachio that he has a plan – he wants to stop Hero falling in love with Claudio. Thunder sound effects play as they leave.



## ACT 1 SCENE 4

Later that night in a room in the house, Leonato, Hero, Beatrice and Ursula enter. They have Elizabethan-style fancy dress costumes on a clothes rack because they are getting ready for a party.

Leonato is already dressed in his fancy dress costume and his bare legs are visible. They talk about how the Bastard is a negative man and compare him to Benedick. Margaret – Hero’s maid – enters and helps Beatrice put on her dress.

Beatrice tells Leonato that she’s not interested in marriage because she finds all men unsuitable. Leonato tells Hero that if the Prince proposes marriage to her, she should say yes. Beatrice warns Hero that the Prince might be keen to get married so he can be physically intimate with her.

Ursula and Margaret hand out fancy dress masks. These masks will help disguise their identities at the party.



Sudden loud drumbeats play as Benedick, Claudio, Leonato and the Prince enter the party.

The drumbeats turn into Elizabethan-era style music as they all start to dance. The men are also wearing fancy dress costumes and masks on their faces. Claudio's bare legs are visible. The women hold their masks up to their faces.

Everyone is now in mask disguises so the characters can't tell who is who. They do a choreographed dance in couples – Beatrice with Benedick, Hero with the Prince, Ursula with Leonato, and Margaret with Claudio.

Eventually two couples take centre stage as others watch – Hero and the Prince and Beatrice and Benedick. Soft music continues under this scene to show the party continuing.



While dancing, Hero and the Prince have a conversation that other characters can't hear. Their mask disguises lead to confusion and Hero doesn't recognise the Prince. Then, Leonato and Ursula dance together and Ursula says she can tell it's Leonato.

Then, Borachio enters (not in fancy dress costume) and dances with Margaret. They are excited to see each other and leave together.

Finally, Beatrice and Benedick dance and tease each other. Benedick uses an exaggerated voice to further disguise himself. He asks Beatrice whether Beatrice likes Benedick.

Not recognising him, Beatrice says that Benedick is a fool and a clown. This hurts his feelings. Benedick and Beatrice leave as the music becomes louder and Claudio enters wearing his fancy dress mask.



The Bastard and Borachio enter and thunder sound effects play. Claudio pretends to be Benedick underneath his fancy dress costume and mask.

The Bastard thinks he's talking to Benedick and tells him that the Prince wants Hero for himself and plans to propose to her. The Bastard is doing this knowing that Benedick would share this information with Claudio and this would upset him greatly.

Eerie music plays as this news is delivered, then they leave. The Bastard has successfully tricked Claudio, just as he wanted. Claudio talks about how upset he is – he thinks the Prince has betrayed him and their friendship.

Benedick arrives, telling Claudio that the Prince has got Hero's attention. Claudio thinks this means that the Prince is about to propose to Hero. Claudio nearly hits Benedick in frustration and then leaves.



The Prince enters with Leonato and Hero, searching for Claudio. They are still wearing their fancy dress costumes.

Benedick confronts the Prince about betraying Claudio, but the Prince explains that he's only helping Claudio. During his explanation the Prince is physically close to Hero, placing his hands on her shoulders and waist. Hero's expressions tell us that she doesn't like it.

The Prince tells Benedick that at the party, Beatrice was saying negative things about her dance partner, which was Benedick in disguise. Benedick is offended by this. He raises his voice in frustration, telling them all about how much she frustrates him. Beatrice and Claudio enter without Benedick noticing. Beatrice overhears him speaking negatively about her. When Benedick realises Beatrice has heard, he's embarrassed and leaves.



The Prince tells Beatrice that Benedick is upset. This doesn't bother Beatrice as she explains how they often disagree.

Claudio joins and is still disappointed because he thinks the Prince and Hero are now a couple. But the Prince explains that he's won Hero for Claudio, not for himself, just as he promised.

Claudio is relieved and Hero is pleased. Hero says very little and Beatrice encourages them to kiss, to show they are engaged to be married. They kiss and are happy.

Seeing her cousin Hero and Claudio engaged makes Beatrice say that she will never get married. The Prince sees this as a challenge to change her mind, so he proposes marriage to Beatrice.



Beatrice thinks he is joking so she laughs and says no. When she realises he is serious, she gently says no to his offer and walks away.

The Prince is embarrassed by Beatrice's rejection. He decides that Benedick and Beatrice would make a good couple because he wants to see them struggle – and fail – at falling in love.

The Prince comes up with a plan. He tells Claudio to delay his wedding to Hero by a day – he wants to make Beatrice and Benedick fall in love with each other. The Prince knows this will be a challenge because Beatrice and Benedick always talk about how much the other annoys them. Leonato, Hero and Claudio agree to help and they all leave.



## ACT 1 SCENE 5

The Bastard enters and the stage lights dim. The actor who plays Hero does a costume change in view of the audience, to change from Hero to Borachio. Her undergarments are visible for a moment. A crew member helps her.

The Bastard has heard that Claudio and Hero are still getting married and he doesn't like it – his first plan failed. Borachio suggests another plan to ruin the engagement and embarrass Claudio and the Prince.

Borachio says he will be sexually intimate with Hero's maid, Margaret. He will do this on Hero's balcony so that it will look like Hero is with Borachio. The Bastard must get the Prince and Claudio to watch from a distance, so they are tricked into thinking they have evidence of Hero being unfaithful.

The Bastard agrees to the plan and offers Borachio a thousand ducats (gold coins) if the plan works.



## ACT 1 SCENE 6

That night, the Prince's officers meet to discuss wedding security. Two senior officers are in charge – Dogberry and Verges.

The officers cheer and whistle to show they like and respect their boss, Dogberry. Sometimes Dogberry asks the officers questions, and they shout responses back. Two other officers enter, running late to the meeting.

Verges and Dogberry have a noticeboard with visual instructions to help explain what the officers need to do. Dogberry and Verges slap the noticeboard loudly as Dogberry tells them their goal of the evening – to catch anyone causing trouble.

All the officers leave and energetic music plays as the scene changes.



## ACT 1 SCENE 7

The next morning Benedick enters, dressed in casual clothes, to relax by the pool (that is not visible). Soft electronic dance music plays in the background.

Benedick talks to himself out loud about how he is confused by love and marriage.

The Prince, Leonato and Claudio arrive carrying sunlounges and an esky (portable cooler). They are ready to relax by the pool.

They notice Benedick hiding and decide they will start to say things that aren't true to trick Benedick. The Prince is wearing swimwear – his naked upper body is exposed with bathers that expose his bare legs. The Prince hands out beers.

Benedick listens to their conversation, trying to stay hidden. His attempts at hiding are visible to the audience, and the Prince, Claudio and Leonato pretend not to see him.



Knowing that Benedick is listening, the Prince, Leonato and Claudio have a conversation about how Beatrice is in love with Benedick. They do this to trick Benedick – as part of the Prince's plan – to make him think Beatrice likes him.

Benedick makes his way down into the front row of the audience. The three men act like they don't see him even though Benedick is right in front of them and Benedick thinks he is well-hidden.

As the men talk, their speech and movements become looser and more relaxed to show they are getting drunk, but the actors are pretending.

Leonato says that Hero reports that Beatrice often talks about Benedick in a positive way. As Benedick continues to listen, he doesn't realise that the Prince, Leonato and Claudio are making this up.



The Prince, Leonato and Claudio leave, and Benedick comes out of the front row of the audience. Benedick talks to himself out loud, as if talking to the audience. Because he thinks Beatrice loves him, he now thinks he loves her back.

He often shouts because he's excited about love. He also slaps his face because he's shocked at his change of mind about marriage.

Suddenly, Beatrice appears on the balcony. Benedick is happy to see her. Beatrice tells him dinner is ready.

Beatrice behaves as usual, but Benedick thinks that her responses show that she's trying to hide her love for him. As he leaves, energetic 1950s rock music plays through the scene change.



## ACT 1 SCENE 8

Later that morning, Beatrice enters and sits on a sunlounge to read 'The Second Sex' by Simone de Beauvoir – a well-known book from 1949 about the treatment of women in society. The book title will only be visible for audience members close enough to see.

Hero and Ursula enter the balcony drinking champagne. They talk about Benedick's love for Beatrice.

They do this knowing that Beatrice can hear them, but they pretend she's not there. They want to trick Beatrice into loving Benedick, as part of the Prince's plan to make Benedick and Beatrice fall in love with each other.

Beatrice is shocked to hear that Benedick loves her. She moves her sunlounge closer to the balcony so she can hear better.



Hero says she'll tell Benedick that loving Beatrice isn't a good idea because Beatrice is stubborn and won't love him back.

Ursula begins to slur her words to show she's getting drunk. She accidentally spills some champagne on Beatrice down below. After Hero and Ursula leave, Beatrice talks to herself out loud – she's shocked to hear Benedick loves her.

She thinks she was wrong about him and decides to love him back.

Beatrice is suddenly interrupted by the Prince, Claudio, Leonato and Benedick entering. Energetic 1950s rock music plays and Beatrice leaves.



## ACT 1 SCENE 9

It's later in the day and the Prince, Leonato and Claudio continue their pre-wedding celebrations by drinking alcohol by the pool. The Prince is now only wearing bathers. Benedick enters dressed more formally. He's not in a party mood. The other men tease Benedick, saying his quiet mood must mean he's in love. Benedick asks to speak privately with Leonato, and they leave. The Bastard arrives and tells the Prince and Claudio that Hero is cheating on Claudio.

Claudio is shocked and says he doesn't believe the Bastard. The Bastard says that he will prove Hero's disloyalty tonight.

He tells Claudio to look up at Hero's balcony later. If he does this, Claudio will see Hero being intimate with another man.

As the scene ends, three crew members bring three large fans to the left of the stage.



## ACT 1 SCENE 10

The following scene depicts sexual activity between characters. The actors have rehearsed this scene many times and are safe.

Later that night, Borachio enters and stands in front of Hero's balcony. The fans – acting as wind machines – blow leaves onto him. Loud orchestral music plays. The fans and the music are used to make fun of the romance of the scene. Margaret stands on Hero's balcony, half-dressed. The actor's

undergarments are sometimes visible in this scene. Borachio tries to get Margaret's attention with dramatic dance moves and sexual gestures.

Once on the balcony, Borachio and Margaret are sexually intimate. It's presented in an exaggerated, unrealistic fashion. The balcony railing hides the actors' lower bodies and is used to suggest sexual activity is happening that the audience can't see.



The actors make sounds to indicate their characters are enjoying themselves.

Afterwards, Borachio comes down from the balcony and the music and fans stop. Conrade enters and Borachio brags about being sexually intimate with Margaret. Borachio explains that from a distance, Margaret would have looked like Hero being unfaithful to her fiancé, Claudio. Claudio will now refuse to marry Hero.

While they talk, police officers creep in and overhear their conversation. The clumsy officers are not effective in arresting them – one officer accidentally pepper sprays the other in the eyes, and he's accidentally tasered back in the crotch. Officer Seacoal enters and misfires his gun. There is a gunshot sound effect – you may wish to cover your ears.

The lights cut to black to indicate that it's interval.



# Interval

It is now interval. Lights come up on the stage again. You may see actors and crew moving props and set pieces to prepare for Act 2.

The show will start again in 20 minutes. You may choose to go out to the foyer and buy a refreshment or use the quiet space.

You can also stay in the theatre if you want.

After 15 minutes you may hear a verbal announcement over the loudspeaker to remind you that the interval is nearly over and to return to your seat for the second half of the performance.

## ACT 2 SCENE 1

As the audience re-enters the auditorium for Act 2, Ursula is placing wedding giftbags on the chairs on the stage. There is a sudden change in lighting – house lights down and stage lights up.

It's the morning of Hero and Claudio's wedding. Chairs on the stage are set up for the ceremony. Hero sings about her wedding from the balcony and Ursula listens. When Hero sees Ursula, she tells Ursula to get Beatrice. Margaret enters the balcony

and tells Hero to wear a different – more fancy – dress. Beatrice enters the balcony, too. She is unwell and blows her nose. With the help of Margaret, Hero and Beatrice get dressed for the wedding and Beatrice puts on undergarments. Margaret is in a playful mood. She teases Beatrice by telling her that Benedick has changed his mind about marriage and suggests that Beatrice might have, too. They all leave the stage as upbeat music plays.



## ACT 2 SCENE 2

Moments later, the Prince enters with Dogberry and Verges. The Prince is dressed in a formal military uniform, which includes a ceremonial sword on his hip.

Dogberry and Verges are keen to tell the Prince that they have caught two men – Borachio and Conrade – and want the Prince to interview them. They try to explain that Borachio and the Bastard have tricked everyone into thinking Hero has been unfaithful, but

their storytelling takes too long, and the Prince becomes impatient.

The Prince tells them he's too busy to hear their news and orders Dogberry and Verges to question their suspects – Borachio and Conrade – on their own and report back later.

As they all leave, traditional wedding music 'Here Comes the Bride' plays.



## ACT 2 SCENE 3

It's time for Hero and Claudio's wedding. Beatrice enters first, walking down the aisle to the music. She avoids eye contact with Benedick, who's already on stage.

Hero enters, walking down the aisle with Leonato. The Prince, the Bastard and Benedick also enter and watch.

The wedding music ends suddenly as the Friar enters, to marry Hero and Claudio.

When the Friar asks if anyone knows why they shouldn't get married, Claudio asks if Hero has anything to say. Everyone – except the Bastard and the Prince – is confused by Claudio's question.



Claudio accuses Hero of being unfaithful, claiming he saw her being intimate with another man the night before. Claudio's voice becomes louder as he tells everyone at the wedding that Hero is not worthy of marriage anymore. Twice, Claudio tries to pull Hero in the direction he wants her to go. This is rehearsed and the actors are not hurt. Claudio knocks over some chairs in anger. Hero and Beatrice are shocked.

The Prince and the Bastard confirm Claudio's story. Even though Hero says that she didn't do it, Claudio and the Prince say their evidence – seeing Hero on her balcony – proves it happened.

Leonato is shocked by the men's story and he believes them. Overwhelmed by the situation, Hero faints (the actor is pretending).

Claudio, the Prince and the Bastard leave.



Beatrice is upset and cries and shouts for help – she thinks Hero might be dead. Leonato is so upset that his daughter has shamed him that he considers letting Hero die. But Beatrice defends Hero, saying she's innocent.

Hero wakes up and says she's done nothing wrong – that she has been faithful to Claudio. Leonato still doesn't believe her and says that the men wouldn't lie.

The Friar tells Leonato he has an idea – they should tell everyone Hero has died. This will make the men feel guilty for Hero's death and draw attention away from her shameful behaviour.

The Friar tells them to trust his new plan. Hero, Leonato and the Friar leave.



Benedick and Beatrice talk. Beatrice cries – she is upset about her cousin being accused of something she didn't do.

Because Benedick and Beatrice have both been tricked into thinking the other likes them, they both say they love each other.

Still upset about her cousin, Beatrice asks Benedick to kill Claudio for saying untrue things about Hero. At first Benedick refuses.

Upset at this, Beatrice walks away, but Benedick grabs her arm. Beatrice raises her voice as she explains her frustration – if she were a man, she could defend Hero's reputation herself.

Benedick finally agrees to confront Claudio and defend Hero, hoping this shows his love for Beatrice.

Happy that Benedick agrees, Beatrice kisses him. They leave the stage.



## ACT 2 SCENE 4

At the police station, Dogberry and Verges are with the Sexton and the arresting police officer – Seacoal – from the night before. The Sexton is present to act like a clerk, making formal notes about Borachio and Conrade’s interview.

Dogberry and Verges hide alcohol from the Sexton. Seacoal brings in Borachio and Conrade.

The interview begins badly because Dogberry asks questions that are not helpful. The Sexton takes over the interview.

Seacoal is asked to give evidence about what the officers overheard Borachio and Conrade talking about the night before.

He explains that Borachio is being paid by the Bastard to be sexually intimate with Margaret, to set up Hero as unfaithful to Claudio.



The Sexton updates them all about what happened at the wedding – that Hero was accused of being unfaithful and died from shock and shame. He also says that the Bastard has fled Messina. Borachio is shocked by this news.

Verges takes Borachio away. Conrade insults Dogberry and Dogberry pushes Conrade to the ground. The actors are not hurt. Music plays as the scene ends.

Two crew members enter to help the actor who plays Dogberry do a costume change – into the character Ursula – in view of the audience.



## ACT 2 SCENE 5

Back at Leonato and Hero's house, the actor who plays Ursula continues her costume change in view of the audience.

Leonato enters, crawling on hands and knees, screaming loudly, like he's in pain. Leonato is pretending to be upset over his daughter's death so he can go through with the Friar's plan. Claudio and the Prince arrive, and Leonato tells them that Hero is dead. All four characters argue over whose fault it is.

They all raise their voices in anger and threaten each other physically. The Prince angrily says that they have proof that Hero cheated on Claudio.

Leonato explains that Claudio is to blame for Hero's death – she died of shame at being called unfaithful. Ursula gets angry because she loves Hero and thinks she has died.

Leonato and Ursula leave as Benedick enters.



The Prince is pleased to see Benedick after being yelled at by Leonato and Ursula. He does not feel guilty about Hero dying. The Prince and Claudio continue to think that Hero deserved to die for being unfaithful to Claudio.

Benedick is angry with Claudio – he yells and spits in Claudio’s direction. Benedick challenges Claudio to a sword fight, later, to defend Hero’s honour.

Benedick also resigns from the Prince’s military service. Before he leaves, he also tells them that the Bastard has fled Messina and that he’ll meet Claudio later for the fight. Claudio and the Prince are both shocked, as they wonder why the Bastard has left Messina.



Suddenly, Dogberry, Borachio and Seacoal enter. Borachio's hands look like they are tied behind his back. Dogberry tells the Prince and Claudio that Borachio is involved in the plan to shame and dishonour Hero. Borachio confesses and asks to be executed – he feels guilty about causing Hero's death. He also says that the Bastard was behind the plan. Claudio and the Prince are shocked to learn they were tricked.

Leonato enters the balcony, knowing that Hero is alive but still pretending she's dead. Now accepting his guilt, Claudio offers to accept punishment for shaming Hero. Leonato says he'll forgive Claudio, but only if Claudio agrees to marry another niece. Leonato is lying – he doesn't have another niece. Claudio agrees to marry Leonato's unknown other niece the next day. Claudio promises to publicly mourn Hero's death.



## ACT 2 SCENE 6

Later that day, Benedick is thinking about Beatrice and trying to write her a love note. Margaret enters and he asks for her help. He hands Margaret his note for her to read. Margaret takes the note and leaves. Once alone, Benedick talks to himself and tries to sing his words, but he's not very good; his voice is high and not in tune.

Beatrice arrives and she asks Benedick about his planned fight with Claudio to defend Hero's honour.

Benedick says he's waiting for Claudio's response. Then, they discuss each other's positive qualities and how they fell in love. As they are about to kiss, Ursula appears on the balcony. She says Hero was falsely accused, and the Bastard was behind the whole plan – she's happy that Hero's reputation is saved, even in death. Beatrice and Benedick know Hero is innocent and alive, but they go inside, keen to see how this new information will impact everyone.



## ACT 2 SCENE 7

The next day, Claudio reads a poem in honour of Hero that says he's sorry for accusing her of being unfaithful. He hangs Hero's wedding flowers on her family's house as a public sign of his apology.

The Prince sings a song and dances to show his sadness and respect for Hero. Claudio watches.

Guitar music plays as they leave to prepare for Claudio's second wedding.



## ACT 2 SCENE 8

Later that day, Margaret, Hero and Beatrice enter the balcony. Leonato, the Friar and Benedick are down below in the courtyard. They are gathered for Claudio's second wedding to Leonato's other niece – that does not exist.

Leonato tells the women to go inside and put on disguises – he wants to hide Hero's identity as she walks down the aisle so Claudio will be shocked.

Benedick asks Leonato's permission to marry Beatrice, and Leonato agrees. The Friar also agrees to marry them.

The Prince and Claudio arrive. Leonato asks Claudio to confirm that he's ready to marry his new bride and Claudio agrees. Traditional wedding music 'Here Comes The Bride' plays.



The women enter and walk down the aisle wearing wedding dresses and veils over their faces. Although the audience can tell who is who, the veils successfully hide their identities for the characters in the story.

The women do some choreographed dancing before the wedding ceremony begins.

Claudio asks to see his bride's face, but Leonato says that Claudio must marry her before he can see her. Claudio agrees.

The bride pulls back her veil to reveal that it's Hero. She explains that she never died and that she was made to feel ashamed by the false rumour about her being unfaithful. Claudio and the Prince are shocked. Claudio and Hero are happy to be marrying each other.



Benedick wants to know which veiled woman is Beatrice. When Beatrice takes off her veil, they start to argue about how they fell in love.

Benedick says he was tricked by Leonato, Claudio and the Prince, who told him that Beatrice loved him. Beatrice says she was tricked by Hero, Margaret and Ursula who told her that Benedick loved her. Then, Margaret gives Beatrice

Benedick's secret love note and Hero gives Benedick Beatrice's secret love note (that the audience never saw Beatrice write). Benedick and Beatrice read each other's love notes and agree they actually are in love.

Beatrice and Benedick kiss and everyone cheers with happiness. The Prince teases Benedick for falling in love, but Benedick doesn't care because he's in love.



Leonato tells everyone to get ready for Beatrice and Benedick's wedding, but Beatrice and Benedick want to dance first.

Music plays as Beatrice and Benedick dance. Margaret throws rose petal confetti on top of them to celebrate. Leonato, Ursula, Hero and Claudio move to the balcony to watch the dance from above, enjoying the moment.

As Benedick and Beatrice hit a final pose, the lights quickly fade to black to indicate the story is over.

Music plays as the actors gather at the front of the stage, to line up and bow.

The audience is encouraged to give a round of applause to show thank you. This might include clapping, whistling or cheering. Feel free to join in, but if it gets too loud you can cover your ears or leave the theatre.



# MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY

**Cover photo**

Jo Duck

**Southbank Theatre  
photography**

Emily Doyle

James Henry

***Much Ado About Nothing*  
production photography**

Gregory Lorenzutti

**Set design**

Anna Cordingley

**Costume design**

Karine Larché

**Lighting design**

Katie Sfetkidis

MTC IS A DEPARTMENT OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE



MTC IS ASSISTED BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT THROUGH CREATIVE AUSTRALIA, ITS ARTS FUNDING AND  
ADVISORY BODY, AND BY THE STATE GOVERNMENT OF VICTORIA THROUGH CREATIVE VICTORIA.

