

# MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

## MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

By **William Shakespeare**  
Additional Text by **Erin Shields**  
Directed by **Chris Abraham**

## GRADE RECOMMENDATION

8+

## CONTENT ADVISORY

Please see the show page for a detailed audience advisory.

## SYNOPSIS

*Much Ado About Nothing* has been an audience favourite for centuries. Brimming with wit, romance and pageantry—there is a masked ball *and* a wedding—Shakespeare’s beloved romantic comedy engages the heart and the mind, posing serious questions about love and honour while trusting in its audience to craft their own answers.

The war is over, the battles won, and Don Pedro and his brothers in arms follow a leisurely route home. When they are invited to spend a month at the estate of Leonato, the governor of Messina, the promise of fine wine, good food and friendly banter is too good to pass up. Soon one of the guests, Claudio, is smitten with Leonato’s daughter, Hero, while another, the avowed bachelor Benedick, triggers a merry war of wits with Hero’s cousin, Beatrice. Hero is quick to return Claudio’s affections, and even Beatrice and Benedick seem to be falling under love’s sway. But Don Pedro’s half-brother, Don John, is so plagued by jealousy and bitterness that he tricks Claudio into believing that Hero has cheated on him. Plots and counter-plots

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- Global Competencies:
  - Citizenship, Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Metacognition, Self-Awareness
- Grade 8
  - The Arts
  - Language
- Grade 9-12
  - The Arts
  - English
  - Health and Physical Education
- Grades 11-12
  - The Arts
  - English
  - Social Sciences and Humanities



From left to right: Maev Beaty and Graham Abbey, Photography by Ted Belton.

are hatched, and with a little help from their friends, both couples may just make it to the chapel on time.

The language in *Much Ado About Nothing* provides an excellent introduction to the Bard’s work. Such comic tropes as the overheard conversation, the case of mistaken identity, and the cynical bachelor who secretly pines for love will be familiar to anyone who has ever watched a romantic comedy or classic TV sitcom. Director Chris Abraham’s vision for *Much Ado About Nothing* retains the play’s buoyant humour while highlighting Shakespeare’s revolutionary (for the time) interrogation of patriarchal conventions and gender roles. Codes of sexual morality and honour are unfairly placed on the women’s shoulders. Even the play’s male villain, Don John, is marginalized for being “illegitimate,” his suspect lineage a permanent stain on his honour. The rigidly gendered world of *Much Ado About Nothing* is both shocking and familiar to contemporary audiences, but Hero’s resourcefulness, strength and integrity make her a hero for our times.

## THEMES

- Communication and Wit
- Honour and Chastity
- Jealousy, Slander and Humiliation
- Love as a Force of Nature
- Marriage and Power
- Maturity and Transformation
- Mistaken Identity
- Perception and Reality
- The Performativity of Love
- Power and Gender
- Respect, Pride and Reputation
- Rumours and Deception

**DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

- What are three qualities of a fulfilling partnership?
- Why do you think shows about finding love/matchmaking are so popular?
- What is the impact of communication on building and maintaining relationships? How can you tell when communication is working well between two people?
- What might be some consequences of gossip? What do you notice about the impact of the gender binary and discrimination on gossip?
- Can trust be mended once it is broken? If so, how?

**STUDY GUIDES**

2023 Shorts and Study Guides and those from previous seasons are available free of charge online at <https://www.stratfordfestival.ca/Learn/Teachers/ResourcesPD>



Maev Beatty, Photography by Ted Belton.

**BOOKING INFORMATION: TICKETS, WORKSHOPS & CHATS**

**STUDENT MATINÉES**

You may book any available date, but selected student matinée performances for this show are at 2 p.m. on the following dates:

- Monday, May 29th
- Thursday, June 1st
- Wednesday, June 7th
- Tuesday, June 13th
- Wednesday, June 21st
- Wednesday, June 28th
- Tuesday, September 12th
- Friday, September 29th
- Thursday, October 5th
- Wednesday, October 11th
- Friday, October 13th
- Wednesday, October 18th
- Tuesday, October 24th

**WORKSHOPS & CHATS**

Pre or Post-Show Workshops and Post-Show Chats (virtual, onsite or at your school/centre) can be booked by calling the Box Office at 1.800.567.1600.

**SOCIAL MEDIA**



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Support for the 2023 season of the Festival Theatre is generously provided by Daniel Bernstein & Claire Foerster.

Production support of *Much Ado About Nothing* is generously provided by Priscilla Costello, by John & Therese Gardner, by the Harkins & Manning families in memory of Jim & Susan Harkins, by The Jentes Family and by Dr. Desta Leavine in memory of Pauline Leavine.