

Much Ado About Nothing

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MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

by Guest Reviewer T.E. Klunzinger

Well!

Shakespeare's got another hit with "Much Ado About Nothing" which was enjoyed at the Sunday matinee by a near-capacity 200 people in the MSU Arena Theatre.

This production includes 19 actors playing many gender-switching roles which is usual for Shakespeare these days, with no copyright laws to limit flexibility. As well, it is set not in Renaissance Messina but in Korea or Viet Nam in the 1970's, in the field hospital. While the play can be taken as a commentary on how mean people can be to each other, yet still find forgiveness (it's a comedy), it also nicely segues from/into Dom Pedro returning from a military campaign.

The basic plot centers on trying to keep the young lovers Claudio and Hero together despite a dastardly effort to drive them apart, while various characters try to push Benedick and Beatrice to the final altar at the same time, despite their protestations to the contrary.

Director Derec McNish has pruned the script to a very-accessible two hours and keeps the action moving at a lively and sometimes-hilarious pace, sometimes including a guitar singalong, sometimes including faux-disco dancing, all done with great color in the costumes and the lighting.

As is often the case, some actors are more comfortable with the Shakespeare idiom than others; and so for this I must single out Rileigh Wine as Beatrice and Oscar Quiroz as Dom Pedro for being total masters of their dialog throughout the show. As well, although not seen as much, Kim Seabright Martin as Leonata and Bobby Conlan as Claudio completely command your attention.

As previously noted, the pace is lively throughout, despite the occasional presence of three hospital beds, two tables, chairs, a desk and many other moving parts (plus extra pillars) on the relatively-small Arena stage; but fortunately there is also a small, well-choreographed army of crew people to move things around crisply.

Recently you have been cautioned for much-smaller venues to "get your tickets now as this show is in demand and selling out"; unlikely as it seems for Shakespeare, that's the case here as well. And then you'll have a very fun evening!

Much Ado About Nothing runs through November 19. Tickets at <https://www.whartoncenter.com/events/category/dept-of-theatre>

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