WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE’S

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

Presented by Acting Company 16

17 – 23 March, 2016
Studio 45
This story is both a comedy and a tragedy. It revolves around two pairs of lovers: Claudio and Hero, and Beatrice and Benedick, along with their family and friends.

Claudio and Hero are brought together with the help of the Prince of Aragon Don Pedro, Claudio’s friend and commanding officer. Disguising himself as the love-struck Claudio, Don Pedro woos Hero on Claudio’s behalf. But Don John (Don Pedro’s illegitimate brother) successfully mounts a slanderous campaign against Hero implicating her virtue. As a result Claudio abandons their marriage plans and unwittingly sets in motion a plan by Hero’s family to fake her death, in an attempt to recover Hero’s honour.

Beatrice and Benedick have no difficulty in expressing themselves and conduct their ‘courtship’ through a merry war of words. Both freely admit an aversion to the other and vehemently declare that they will never marry. Their friends trick them into thinking they are loved by the other. The ruse works and Benedick confesses his love for Beatrice. Returning his love, Beatrice urges Benedick to kill Claudio for shaming Hero, causing Hero’s ‘death’. However in the meantime Don John’s followers, Borrachio and Conrade, are captured by Messina’s local constabulary, and Don John’s wicked trick is revealed.

Friendships are restored and Hero and Claudio are finally united. Beatrice and Benedick, despite their avowed mutual attraction, persist in their merry war of words.

Tony Smith
Victorian College of the Arts
DIRECTOR’S NOTE

2016 commemorates 400 years since the death of William Shakespeare. This production will tour to Essen-Werden, Germany in April to perform in an international Shakespeare Festival hosted by Folkwang Universität der Künste. At the festival each participating Theatre School will perform the same edited version of Much Ado About Nothing in their country of origin’s language and then rehearse together for an international multilingual production to perform on the festival’s closing night. It is a remarkable coming together of languages and cultures in a performance of a play written by a master of the English language over four centuries ago. It is incredible to reflect upon the number of performances in that time that have been spoken in a myriad of languages and accents in theatres, pubs, palaces, school halls, parks and on film all around the world.

One of the challenges for this adaption has been to stage a production in Melbourne that can be transported exactly as it is to Germany in our personal luggage. The world is one of inherited wealth, new wealth, corporate takeover, and social climbing. The play is peopled with characters who are vulnerable, vengeful, fragile and fallible, with foibles, dishonesties and a lot of free time. Love, loyalty, disloyalty, status, honour and gender politics pepper relationships, the outcome of which results in much ado about nothing…Or does it?

A darker world underpins this comedy. A world where the vulnerable are exploited, deceits are believed and innocent people are defamed. Revenge ensues and when the truth is revealed, relationships are resolved in their ways. Much ado about nothing? Indeed.

Alister Smith and Tony Smith

CAST & CREW

CAST

James Biasetto… DON PEDRO, Prince of Aragon
Nickolas James… BENEDICK, a lord of Padua
Jack Dixon-Gunn… CLAUDIO, a lord of Florence County
Nicholas Connelley… DON JOHN, Don Pedro’s bastard brother and SEXTON (Francis Seacole)
Cielo Croci… BORACHIO, a lord and follower of Don John
Annabel Larcombe… CONNIE, a lady and follower of Don John
and ANTONIA, Marriage Celebrant and family friend of Leonato
Julian Dibley-Hall… LEONATO, Governor of Messina
Izabella Yena… HERO, Leonato’s daughter
Erin Pattison… MARGARET, gentle woman to Hero and FIRST WATCHMAN
Mariska Murphy… BEATRICE, an orphan, Leonato’s niece
Laura McAloney… DOGBERRY, the Constable in charge of the watch, and PARTY GUEST
Grace Lauer… VERGES, the Headborough, Dogberry’s partner in authority
and ROSALINDA, Personal Secretary to Don Pedro

CREW

Stage Manager… Mel Robertson
Production Manager… David Lang
Lighting… Adam Grikepelis
Sound… Lachlan Wooden
Costume… Rebecca Dunn, Alexandra Hiller
Choreography… Michelle Heaven
At just thirteen Annabel won first place in the McDonald’s Sydney Eisteddfod acting prize for her role of Abigail in The Crucible (2008). Since then she has played Stevie in Edward Albee’s The Goat or Who is Sylvia? (dir. Jem Rowell) and Alaska, the title role in Looking for Alaska (dir. Luke Derrick), both with the Sydney University Drama Society. She is a regular participant in slam poetry events, performing alongside acclaimed slam poet Luka Lesson. During her time at the Victorian College of the Arts Annabel has played Dunyasha in The Cherry Orchard (dir. Melanie Beddie). As part of The Bunker Theatre Troupe, Annabel holds the world record for the longest improvised play (2013).

Cielo grew up in the Blue Mountains, New South Wales and came to the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) upon completing secondary school. In 2014, he and eight of his peers devised and performed Unplugged for the 8th Asia Pacific Theatre Schools Conference at the LaSalle College of the Arts, Singapore. In the same year at the VCA he played the role of the Yasha in The Cherry Orchard (dir. Melanie Beddie), Eugene in Long Day’s Journey Into Night (dir. Barbara Bosch), and Adam in the short film Grace (dir. James Carroll). His other interests include filmmaking and freestyle rap.

Erin began her acting career in Brisbane, participating in the Queensland Theatre Company (QTC) Youth Ensemble in 2012 and 2013 where she appeared as Louise in This Hollow Crown (dir. Kate Fay) and as Erin in Orbit (dir. Jason Klarwien). In Queensland she also acted as a Youth Ambassador for La Boite Theatre Company. Erin’s castings at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) include: Vaya in The Cherry Orchard (dir. Melanie Beddie) and Cathleen in Long Days Journey Into Night (dir. Barbara Bosch).

Originally from Germany, Grace was a performer at the Theatre Junge Generation in Dresden before moving to Australia. In Sydney she worked with director Kevin Jackson and participated in his production of Gao Xingjian’s The Other Shore at the University of New South Wales, where she also completed a degree in Theatre, Performance and Film Studies. She is currently in her final year of a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Theatre Practice) at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA). Most recently she played a lead role in a national branding film for the University of Melbourne.

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Born and bred in Melbourne, Izabella was drawn to performance at an early age. She trained at Centrestage and the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) before beginning her Bachelor of Fine Arts (Theatre Practice) at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) in 2014, where she is the recipient of the 2015 Pratt Bursaries Scholarship. Her VCA theatre credits include Antigone in The Theban Plays (dir. Melanie Beddie), Dunyasha in The Cherry Orchard (dir. Melanie Beddie) and Blanche Du Bois in A Streetcar Named Desire (dir. Barbara Bosch). She also appeared in the short film Pretty Little Things (dir. Chris and Robert Smellin). In 2015 under the mentorship of Ross Mueller, Izabella participated in the Fresh Ink program for the Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP).

Since commencing his performance studies at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) straight out of high school, Jack has been given performances as Polynices in Oedipus at Colonus (dir. Melanie Beddie) and Yepikhodov in The Cherry Orchard (dir. Melanie Beddie). Jack’s devising work at the VCA has extended from live art to site-specific performances. Outside of the VCA, he has worked with The National Theatre, St. Martin’s Youth Ensemble and the Melbourne International Comedy Festival.
James is a graduating member of the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) Bachelor of Fine Arts (Theatre Practice). At the VCA he has appeared as Stanley in A Streetcar Named Desire (dir. Barbara Bosch) and as Lopakhin in The Cherry Orchard (dir. Melanie Beddie). He has also performed in Cosi (dir. Susan Geldart), Glorious (dir. Gavin Leahy), What the Butler Saw (dir. James Cameron), and as an actor in three shows Patriot, Money and Hope 2.0 with Underground Cinema. He appeared in the independent film The Age of Imitation (dir. Mark Day) and the short film Woof (dir. Nina Buxton).

Julian Dibley-Hall

Julian is a Melbourne-based actor and theatre-maker, who will graduate from the Bachelor of Fine Arts (Theatre Practice) at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) in 2016. He has performed with MKA: Theatre of New Writing, Siren Theatre Co, Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP) and the Sydney University Dramatic Society (SUDS). His television credits include All Saints and Search for Treasure Island and he has featured in various other television commercials and short films. He was the Performance Director of Underground Cinema in Melbourne and Sydney from 2013-2015.

James Biasetto

Originally from rural Queensland, Mariska trained at the Queensland Actor’s Playhouse and also holds a Bachelor of Journalism from the Queensland University of Technology. In 2015 she was chosen to represent the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) and perform at the 8th Asia-Pacific Bureau Theatre School’s Conference in Singapore. In the same year Mariska became an Underground Cinema actor and participated in the ‘Fresh Ink’ program for Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP). Her VCA credits include Lyubov Andreyevna in The Cherry Orchard (dir. Melanie Beddie) and Blanche DuBois in A Streetcar Named Desire (dir. Barbara Bosch).

Mariska Murphy

Prior to attending the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA), Laura graduated from Monash University with a Bachelor of Performing Arts, where she performed in Leticia Cacares’ Where in the World is Frank Sparrow? (2012). She has worked extensively with Zen Zen Zo Physical Theatre, being selected for their International Internship Program in Brisbane, under Lynne Bradley. She played Hannah in Nina Buxton’s Short Film Woof which screened at ACMI (Dec. 2015) and at Flickerfest’s International Short Film festival (Jan. 2016).

Laura McAloney

Nicholas is an actor and theatre-maker from Launceston, Tasmania, where his community theatre credits include Mercutio in Romeo and Juliet and Anthony Hope in Sweeney Todd. At the Victorian College of the Arts his roles have included Creon in Antigone (dir. Melanie Beddie), Yepikhodov in The Cherry Orchard (dir. Melanie Beddie) and Stanley Kowalski in A Streetcar Named Desire (dir. Prof. Barbara Bosch). Nicholas is also a trained vocalist and voice-over artist, most recently heard in Ransom (dir. Nik Lee).

Nicholas Connelley

Originally from Brisbane, Nick completed his Bachelor of Arts (Applied Theatre) at Griffith University, and has been involved with the Queensland Shakespeare Ensemble (QSE) as an apprentice (2012) and core ensemble member (2013). Theatre credits for QSE include Valentine in Two Gentlemen of Verona (dir. Rob Pensalfini), Dromio in The Bomb-itty of Errors (dir. Zac Kelty), Lysander in A Midsummer Night’s Dream (dir. Rob Pensalfini) and Mortimer in Mary Stuart (dir. Christina Koch). Nick’s credits at the Victorian College of the Arts include Oedipus in The Theban Plays (dir. Melanie Beddie) and Lopakhin in The Cherry Orchard (dir. Melanie Beddie).

Nickolas James