

Much Ado About You

Performance Guide

The professional actors from Cincinnati Shakespeare Company bring to life one of the Bard's most beloved comedies, *Much Ado About Nothing*, in a fresh, new way. Beatrice and Benedick are the perfect match — it's too bad they can't stand each other! When their war of wits comes to a head, their friends set in motion a series of plots, pranks, plans and ploys to bring them together! Updated for today's students, who will recognize themselves in the characters and learn it is all Much Ado About YOU!

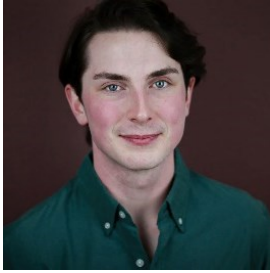
This guide is divided into three parts:

- **Before the Show:** Meet the cast and watch a plot summary
- **During the Show:** Consider how the performers use masks to communicate
- **After the Show:** Respond to some of the essential questions raised by the story

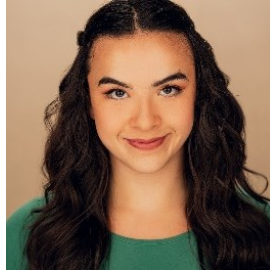
BEFORE THE SHOW

Meet the Artists

Cincinnati Shakespeare Company is a resident ensemble theatre company bringing Shakespeare and the Classics to life for all. CSC's touring company of teaching artists tour Shakespeare programs each year and present a variety of workshops and residency programs.



Jack Bausch
Don Pedro/Friar Francis



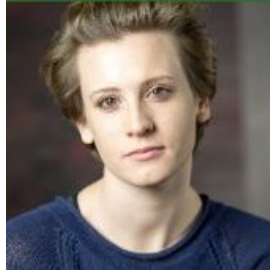
Camila Calderón
Beatrice



Christian Hall
Leonato/Don John



Ray K. Soeun
Claudio



Katie Mitchell
Hero/Borachio



Adrian Devaughn Summers
Benedick

Plot Synopsis

THE PLOT IN UNDER 5 MINUTES

1. Animated Synopsis - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMElltCbtJ4>
2. Flocabulary Rap Summary - <https://youtu.be/Q2621OZqFU0>

Does this story remind you of other stories you may have seen or read before?

DURING THE SHOW

CSC's Educational Touring Company brings the Muse Machine a devised piece of theatre that is a commedia dell'arte inspired adaptation of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*.

What is devised theatre?

Devised theatre is a process of creative collaboration among an ensemble of artists. *Much Ado About YOU* is created by six performance artists, who serve as the actors, writers, designers, choreographers and researchers on this project. Each actor in the production plays multiple characters in the story. The goal of devised theatre is to create and communicate meaning.

What is commedia dell'arte?

Commedia dell'arte literally translates into English as "comedy of artists." It is a theatrical form characterized by a cast of colorful stock characters that emerged in northern Italy in the fifteenth century and rapidly gained popularity throughout Europe. Performers in this genre of theatre wear masks that communicate fundamental aspects of each character, such as beauty, wit, deceit, age, power and strength.

Take descriptive notes of the masks of the following *Much Ado About YOU* characters. List the colors, materials, shapes and features used to create the mask. What character traits do you think the masks help to define?

Claudio _____

Benedick _____

Hero _____

Borachio _____

Friar Francis _____

AFTER THE SHOW

Think and Respond: Masking the Truth

The driving theme in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* is **deceit** or the practice of concealing or misrepresenting the truth. Beatrice and Benedick reject vulnerability by pretending to hate one another, while the jealous villain Don John spreads a lie about Hero to ruin her marriage to Claudio. Friar Francis even endorses the deception that Hero dies of a broken heart in order to shock Claudio back to his senses.

How do the actors' use of masks help to highlight the theme of masking the truth?

Are deceptions ever acceptable? Why or why not?

Why are we fooled by appearances?

Why do you think Shakespeare called his play *Much Ado About Nothing*?

Send Muse Machine your answers by giving this page back to
your Muse Club advisor!