

# Much Ado About Nothing

## *Cast*

*Beatrice* ..... *Saskia Reeves*  
*Benedick* ..... *Samuel West*  
*Don Pedro* ..... *Paul Jesson*  
*Claudio* ..... *Jason O'Mara*  
*Hero* ..... *Abigail Docherty*  
*Leonato* ..... *David Bradley*  
*Margaret* ..... *Amanda Root*  
*Dogberry* ..... *Bryan Pringle*  
*Don John* ..... *Steve Hodson*  
*Ursula* ..... *Sonia Ritter*  
*Verges* ..... *Raymond Bowers*  
*Antonio* ..... *James Greene*  
*Balthasar* ..... *Nicholas Murchie*  
*Borachio* ..... *Eddie Marsan*  
*Conrade* ..... *Alex Lowe*  
*Friar Francis* ..... *John Rogan*  
*First Watch* ..... *Alisdair Simpson*  
*Second Watch* ..... *Chris Pavlo*  
*Boy* ..... *Freddie Norton*  
*Other parts played by members of the cast*

## *Play description*

### ACT I

Scene 1. Leonato, Governor of Messina, welcomes Don Pedro, Prince of Arragon, as he returns from a successful campaign. With Don Pedro is his bastard brother, the taciturn Don John; the brothers have been at enmity but are now apparently reconciled. Also with Don Pedro are Claudio, a young Florentine, and Benedick, a Paduan lord. Benedick knows Leonato's niece Beatrice of old: they share an aversion to marriage and enjoy witty banter at each other's expense. Claudio confides in Benedick and Don Pedro that he has fallen in love with Leonato's daughter Hero, and Don Pedro promises to woo her on his behalf.

Scene 2. Leonato learns that Claudio and Don Pedro have been overheard discussing Hero.

Scene 3. Don John is embittered by his enforced subservience to his brother and is interested to learn from his man Borachio of Don Pedro's plan to woo Hero: "This may prove food to my displeasure."

### ACT II

Scene 1. At a masked ball in Leonato's house, Beatrice's dancing partner questions her about Benedick; she replies that he is a "very dull fool" (her partner, of course, is Benedick himself). Meanwhile, Don Pedro has successfully wooed Hero for Claudio. Don Pedro suggests that Leonato, Claudio, and Hero join him in the challenging task of arranging a match between Beatrice and Benedick.

Scene 2. Borachio and Don John plot to thwart Hero and Claudio's marriage plans. Borachio suggests enlisting the help of Hero's woman Margaret. Once Don Pedro and Claudio have been hidden nearby, Margaret will appear at Hero's window dressed in her mistress' clothes and speak to Borachio in such a way as to convince them of Hero's infidelity.

Scene 3. Benedick hears Claudio, Leonato, and Don Pedro approaching and hides in an arbor. Aware of their eavesdropper, they speak of Beatrice's passion for Benedick; then,

having planned that Hero should orchestrate a similar scene for Beatrice's benefit, they leave. Chastened by what he has heard, Benedick resolves to treat Beatrice differently; when she comes to summon him to dinner she is as acerbic as ever, but Benedick persuades himself that her sharp tone conceals tender feelings.

### ACT III

Scene 1. Knowing that Beatrice is overhearing their conversation, Hero and Ursula discuss Benedick's love for her and comment on her contempt for men. Beatrice is horrified that she has appeared so proud and scornful, and determines to "requite" Benedick's love for her.

Scene 2. On the eve of Claudio and Hero's wedding, Don John tells Don Pedro and Claudio that Hero is unfaithful. He will, he says, give them proof if they meet him near her window that night. Claudio vows to shame her before the whole wedding congregation if the allegation proves true.

Scene 3. Having chosen two citizens for the watch, the bumbling constables Dogberry and Verges instruct them in their duties. The watch then overhears Borachio describing to Conrade (another of Don John's men), how he wooed Margaret by the name of Hero, and thus duped Don Pedro and Claudio. The watch promptly arrests them.

Scene 4. Margaret and Ursula are helping Hero to dress for her wedding when Beatrice enters in low spirits. Margaret, guessing the cause of her melancholy, teases her with covert references to Benedick.

Scene 5. Dogberry and Verges try to tell Leonato about the arrest, but Dogberry's loquaciousness is too much for Leonato. Impatiently, he tells the constables to question their prisoners themselves.

### ACT IV

Scene 1. In the church at Messina Claudio publicly accuses Hero of infidelity. His shocking claims are backed up by Don Pedro and Don John. Hero swoons in distress and revives to hear the bitter reproaches of her father. Friar Francis, however, is convinced of the girl's innocence and suggests they pretend that she is dead; this ruse, he says, is sure to make Claudio repent his accusations and thus Hero's reputation may be saved. Once the others have left the church, Benedick tells the weeping Beatrice that he believes Hero to be blameless. He then confesses his love for Beatrice, declaring he will do anything for her, upon which she commands him: "Kill Claudio." Benedick is appalled but eventually agrees to challenge his friend.

Scene 2. Once the Sexton has heard the testimony of the watch, he orders that Conrade and Borachio be bound and taken to Leonato.

### ACT V

Scene 1. Apparently grief-stricken, Leonato denounces Claudio for causing Hero's death and challenges him to a duel. Benedick enters and he too challenges Claudio to combat. Dogberry, Verges and the Watch arrive with their prisoners and Borachio confesses his involvement in Don John's plot to dishonor Hero; he insists, however, that Margaret was unaware of her part in the proceedings. A penitent Claudio agrees to Leonato's request that he publicly proclaim Hero's innocence and then marry her cousin. Don John has, we learn, fled Messina.

Scene 2. Despite their mutual love, Beatrice and Benedick continue their banter: "Thou and I are too wise to woo peaceably."

Scene 3. Claudio visits Hero's tomb and promises to return every year.

Scene 4. Leonato agrees to Benedick's request for Beatrice's hand in marriage. Claudio comes, as promised, to marry Leonato's niece, who appears veiled. When she removes the mask, Claudio is astonished to find that his bride is Hero. As celebratory music strikes up, a messenger arrives with the news that Don John has been captured and brought back to Messina.

## ***Track list***

### **Disk 1**

<b>Track 1</b>	<b>Act I</b>	<b>Scene i</b>
<b>Track 2</b>	<b>Act I</b>	<b>Scene ii</b>
<b>Track 3</b>	<b>Act I</b>	<b>Scene iii</b>
<b>Track 4</b>	<b>Act II</b>	<b>Scene i</b>
<b>Track 5</b>	<b>Act II</b>	<b>Scene ii</b>
<b>Track 6</b>	<b>Act II</b>	<b>Scene iii</b>
<b>Track 7</b>	<b>Act III</b>	<b>Scene i</b>
<b>Track 8</b>	<b>Act III</b>	<b>Scene ii</b>

### **Disk 2**

<b>Track 1</b>	<b>Act III</b>	<b>Scene iii</b> <b>(up to line 87)</b>
<b>Track 2</b>	<b>Act III</b>	<b>Scene iii</b> <b>(from line 88)</b>
<b>Track 3</b>	<b>Act III</b>	<b>Scene iv</b>
<b>Track 4</b>	<b>Act III</b>	<b>Scene v</b>
<b>Track 5</b>	<b>Act IV</b>	<b>Scene i</b>
<b>Track 6</b>	<b>Act IV</b>	<b>Scene ii</b>
<b>Track 7</b>	<b>Act V</b>	<b>Scene i</b>
<b>Track 8</b>	<b>Act V</b>	<b>Scene ii</b>
<b>Track 9</b>	<b>Act V</b>	<b>Scene iii</b>
<b>Track 10</b>	<b>Act V</b>	<b>Scene iv</b>