

Much Ado about something

ELISABETH MEYER

Staff Writer

The Clackamas Theater Department has put an interesting spin on Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing," its spring production.

One of Shakespeare's most popular comedies, "Much Ado About Nothing" has a

typically convoluted plot that weaves a stubborn man and equally headstrong woman together through the machinations of their friends.

The five acts incorporate two sets of lovers and their stormy relationships, meddling friends and family, an evilly childish villain, and two of the funniest bumbling in Western literature. Of

course, the events unfold in a riot of puns, metaphors and off-color jokes.

The story centers around two couples: Hero (Desirae Carver) and Claudio (Mathew Lingmann), who are eager to be married, and their friends Beatrice (Dawnie Drebin) and Benedick (Jayson Shanafelt), who are attracted to each other but are both bound by long habit to disdain the opposite sex.

While Hero and Claudio and the rest of their friends spin a web to draw Beatrice and Benedick together, evil forces work to slander Hero and destroy Claudio's trust in her.

The most appreciable difference in this production from the script is the number of women in male roles.

The watchmen have become women, the messenger and Balthasar are female, and minor henchman Conrade is now a henchwoman.

Even the story's public enemy number one, the villain Don John, has been replaced by a female version named Donna Maria (Amanda Jensen).

The incompetent constable

Dogberry (Tom Cavanaugh) and his simple assistant Verges (Annie Rimmer) steal the show. Cavanaugh's treatment of his underling takes on a whole new level with a female Verges that really works well.

The women of the watch (Kristie McKenzie, Malorie Rhode and Emily Miller) are also very, very funny—asked by men, the watch's questions to Dogberry seem trivial and overly detailed, but the actresses make them suggestive and thus hilarious.

"If we know him to be a thief," one says, "shall we not lay hands on him?"

Jensen plays a deliciously ungracious Donna Maria, with consorts Borachio (Jon Sodoni) and Conrade (Sarah Pearson) alternately goading her on and hanging back, as they realized that love and honesty must triumph.

"Much Ado About Nothing" is too fast-paced and witty to get syrupy and too funny to be ignored. The play continues and closes this weekend.

To reach Elisabeth Meyer e - m a i l saladlass@hotmail.com or drop by B-104



Elisabeth Meyer/The Clackamas Print

Donna Maria (Amanda Jensen) schemes about ways to spoil Hero and Claudio's plans. "Only to despite them I will endeavor anything," she vows.



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Knowing that Beatrice is eavesdropping, Ursula (Christine Quinlan) and Hero (Desirae Carver) make up stories about Benedick's secret infatuation with her.

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