

Merely Players Studio Series Presents

*Free Shakespeare in the Park*

**Much Ado About Nothing**  
by William Shakespeare

September 24, 25, 26, at 6:00 pm  
Sept. 26 and 27 at 2:00 pm  
At Jenkins Ranch Park, Durango

**Cast**

Beatrice / Verges	Mandy Irons Gardner+
Benedick	Jason Lythgoe+
Claudio/ Watchman #1/ Ursula #2	Jeff Graves+
Don John / Dogberry / Ursula #3	Geoff Johnson+
Conrade / Friar / Ursula #1	Brian Devine
Leonato	Stephen Bowers+
Don Pedro / Borachio	Charlie Grice
Hero	Erin Allen
Margaret / Borachio / Don Pedro	Two Mops
Watchman #2	Himself+

**The Creative Team/Crew**

Directors/ Designers	The Cast
Production Manager / Co-Script Slasher/ Sound Designer	Jeff Graves+
Stage Manager	James Oliger+

Props Design and Construction	Charlie Grice
Choreographer	Amanda St. Pierre
Co-Script Slasher	Geoff Johnson+
House Manager	Jamie Pickering
Producers	Mona Wood-Patterson+ Charles Ford+

+ Merely Players Artistic Company

*The show will be played without intermission.*  
Masks are required except when you are eating or drinking.  
*Remain in your flag section throughout the show.*  
Please silence your cell phones.  
*Videography is not permitted.*

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We offer our sincere gratitude to those who helped us with this show. Many hands, creative minds, and kind hearts help us to do our work:

Alex Wilkinson/City of Durango  
Daisy Grice  
Diane Panelli  
Durango Herald  
Durango Telegraph  
Jamie Pickering  
Jill Davis  
JoAnn Nevils  
Judy Bolen  
Katie McCrea  
Melissa May  
Mohriah James  
San Juan Basin Public Health  
Target Rental/Geoff Reynolds  
Todd Macon

**Please use caution when walking at Jenkins Ranch Park. As it is an outdoor venue, uneven ground and tripping hazards may not be immediately obvious.**

**MERELY PLAYERS** has been making theatre in the region since 1995. This show inaugurates our new Studio Series, which will accompany our future mainstage season.

We are a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization and we assure you that any money donated will go toward making quality theatre in Durango both now and in the future. Merely Players is a tradename of Imaginary Friends Productions.

**If you would like to donate to the ongoing Merely Players magic that made this show possible in impossible times, you can do so by:**

Heading over to our **webpage** at [www.merelyplayers.us](http://www.merelyplayers.us)

**Texting** 55142 to 855.575.7888

**Dropping** off cash or check in the donor box at the top of the hill by the road

*Thank you for helping us continue to create, no matter what!*

**We are excited to announce our next show:**

*A virtual production*

**Wakey, Wakey            October 17, 18, 22, 23, and 24**

Directed by Mona Wood-Patterson, Tech Directed and Edited by Charles Ford

Featuring Elizabeth Gray and Jessica Jane Harris

**Tickets available on our website at [www.merelyplayers.us](http://www.merelyplayers.us)**

For more information on Merely Players, to get involved, or to be added to our mailing list:

Website: [www.merelyplayers.us](http://www.merelyplayers.us)

Telephone: 970.749.8585

Email: [directors@merelyplayers.us](mailto:directors@merelyplayers.us)

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**MERELY PLAYERS BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**

Janet Curry

Marc Arbeeny

Heather Howe

Jessica Jane Harris

Diane Panelli

Kate Ishay

**A Note about the Production:**

On March 11<sup>th</sup>, three of us met to discuss producing a fun, summer Shakespeare show. As we bandied about suggestions, the world started to shut down. Over the next days, the pandemic claimed normalcy. We grieved. The world forever changed. Or perhaps not. The impulse to create has survived every plague, war, and disaster. Some parts of us never change.

The first cast meeting took place in a backyard in late June, sitting six feet apart. We frankly had no idea when, where, or how we could create or perform this show. Collaboratively, we began to dream of a way to do a socially-distant performance. Slowly, things fell into place – sticks, parks, masks. Suddenly, we had a fun show to perform. And then you decided to come see it (and read the program).

The compelling thing about Shakespeare is how much the characters mirror our own feelings. The moral of the story of *Much Ado* is no secret; near the end of the show, a character says “man is a giddy thing, and this is my conclusion.” No matter the external conditions, we believe that humans are giddy, loving, silly things. That is our conclusion. – Jeff Graves

### ***MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING* Helpful Info**

#### ***The Characters:***

Leonato, “The Dad” – owns a fancy house  
Hero, “The Virtuous” – daughter of Leonato  
Beatrice, “The Rebel” – niece of Leonato  
Benedick, “The Bachelor” – a lord  
Claudio, “The Gullible” – another lord  
Don Pedro, “The Matchmaker” – the prince  
Ursula, “The Gossip” – Hero’s handmaid  
Don John, “The Bastard” – the prince’s brother; a villain  
Conrade, “The Accomplice” – friend of Don John  
Borachio, “The Henchman” – another friend of Don John  
Dogberry, “An Ass” – a constable  
Verges, “The Sidekick” – an assistant constable  
Friar Francis, “The Reasonable” – a friar  
Watchmen, “The Watchmen” – a dude and a puppet  
Margret, “The Dirty Girl” – Hero’s other handmaid; a mop

**Note:** We cut this play to make it short, sweet, and action-packed. Read on.

#### ***The Story:***

Don Pedro, a prince, visits his friend, Leonato, in Messina (that’s in Italy). Accompanying Don Pedro are his buddies, Claudio and Benedick, and his sour half-brother, Don John. When they arrive at Leonato’s fancy house, they are greeted by Leonato; his daughter, Hero; and his niece, Beatrice. Benedick and Beatrice, who clearly have a “thing” for each other but have resolved not to marry, resume a long-standing battle of words. Meanwhile, Claudio falls immediately in love with Hero. Don Pedro decides to help Claudio get his girl at a ball later. The plan works, and Hero and Claudio are engaged.

With love now in the air, Don Pedro conspires with Leonato, Claudio, and Hero to *finally* get Beatrice and Benedick together. The friends stage separate conversations in the presence of the reluctant eavesdropping lovers, and both Benedick and Beatrice are taken in by the ruse. Things are going pretty well so far.

But Don John, a plain-dealing villain, ain’t having it. He recruits his buddies, Conrade and Borachio, to help muck up the marriage of Claudio and Hero. The villains trick Claudio into thinking that Hero was making out with Borachio. But Borachio can’t keep his mouth shut, and boasts of the ploy to his fellow-villain, Conrade, in front of the night watch. The watchmen turn the villains over to the constables, Dogberry and Verges.

The next day, at the wedding, Claudio refuses to marry Hero and accuses her of being untrue. Hero faints, and everyone leaves except Leonato, Beatrice, Benedick, and the Friar. The Friar suggests that everyone pretend Hero has died of shame. Hero goes and hides.

Meanwhile, Beatrice and Benedick finally confess their love for each other. Beatrice demands that Benedick kill Claudio for falsely accusing Hero. Benedick challenges Claudio to a duel. Luckily, before anyone gets hurt, Dogberry brings his prisoners to Leonato's house, where Borachio publically confesses. Claudio tearfully apologizes to Leonato. Rather than letting Claudio completely off the hook, Leonato demands that Claudio marries his "other niece" who amazingly looks just like Hero.

The next wedding goes much better. At the altar, the "other niece" reveals that she is the actually-not-dead Hero. Benedick and Beatrice also get married. And all's well that ends well (*whoops – wrong show – but you get the idea.*)