

Shakespeare returns to Denver Center with a saucy ‘Much Ado About Nothing’

By [Alex Miller](#) | Oct 9, 2022 | Categories: [Reviews](#) | Tags: [Denver](#), [Shakespeare](#)



Jennifer Paredes in 'Much Ado About Nothing' | Photo by Michael Martin Photography.

With a 1930s flair, director Chris Coleman wrings every laugh out of the popular comedy

Perhaps the most accessible of all Shakespeare's plays, *Much Ado About Nothing* resonates well in 2022 with its battle-of-the-sexes rom-com vibe. And, despite its dark left turn in Act II, it's light enough to be a good leadoff for the DCPA Theatre Company's first post-pandemic season.

Artistic Director Chris Coleman helms this one with a lot of love and firm attention to detail while also having plenty of fun with the play's physical comedy opportunities. Indeed, some scenes had elements that would be at home in a *Tom & Jerry* cartoon — like the one where Benedick (Geoffrey Kent) eavesdrops on a conversation crawling behind a bench with his butt in the air and later with a potted plant in his lap.

The Kilstrom Theatre — DCPA's in-the-round venue — is the ideal location for *Much Ado*. Scenic designer Klara Zieglerova envisions an elegant but simple outdoors setting with flowers all around and creepers spilling down from the upper level. Costume designer Kevin



If You Go

What: 'Much Ado About Nothing' by William Shakespeare

Where: Denver Center Kilstrom Theatre

When: Sept. 30-Nov. 6

Runtime: 2:40 w/int

Directed by: Chris Coleman

[Tickets & Info >](#)



Geoffrey Kent as Benedick | Photo: Michael Martin Photography

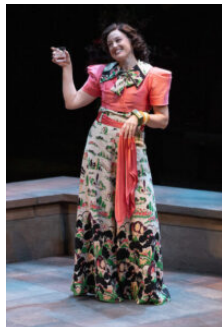
Copenhaver has a lot of fun imagining what characters in 1930s Messina, Sicily might be wearing.

The action centers around two couples: Claudio (Gerrard James) and Hero (Jennifer Paredes) and Benedick (Kent) and Beatrice (Dana Green). The first pair resume their courtship and are engaged not long after Claudio returns from the war, while the more interesting showdown between the second couple drives a lot of the witty dialogue we expect from Shakespeare.

Much Ado has a lot of familiar tropes ranging from mistaken identities, masked goings-on, unfounded accusations, faked deaths and similar silliness. The cast does a fine job portraying all of this, with Coleman clearly on a mission to leave no comedic stone unturned. All that comes to a screeching halt when a serious accusation as to Hero's identity is leveled right in the midst of her wedding to Claudio. But no worries: All is cleared up eventually, of course, and the mirth returns to close out the show.

This DCPA production has a number of standout performances, particularly those delivered by Kent and Green. A fixture of Shakespeare productions in Colorado for some time, Kent brings his A-game to this one with a rollicking portrayal of Benedick that teases out every nuance of the character — mostly to comic effect.

Green is a relative newcomer to the DCPA stage but brings a lot of Shakespearean experience along with her. In her hands, Beatrice is a breezy woman of conflict who, like Benedick, at first decries marriage as a fool's game but who eventually comes around to an uneasy truce with romance. The flowing pantsuit-like garment Copenhaver has her in for much of the show is one of those costumes that really helps define the character. In it, Green floats and flows around the stage dispensing barbed witticisms while the billowy pant legs and flowered print soften her just enough.



Dana Green as Beatrice | Photo: Michael Martin Photography

As Hero's father Leonato, Gareth Saxe is a joy to behold as he tries to make sense of all the shenanigans through a haze of whiskey he's sipping from a rocks glass glued to his hand throughout.

In the scene-stealing department comes Rob Nagle, who portrays the constable Dogberry in an absurd wig and mustache that's not even the most ridiculous part of the character. Using a combination of halting speech and body language, bizarre facial gestures and, of course, the Bard's script, Nagle creates a highly memorable and very funny character not soon to be forgotten.



Rob Nagle as Dogberry | Photo: Michael Martin Photography

The newly remodeled Kilstrom has a lot of capability for all kinds of stage magic, but with a few exceptions, Coleman wisely chose to keep things more minimalist while letting the work speak for itself. The 1930s theme works inasmuch

as it gave the costume department a fun challenge, but I don't know that it added or detracted from the show. All told, it's a solid production with a fine cast that adds a lot of spice to this longtime favorite.

Much Ado About Nothing is written mostly in prose rather than verse, making it a great intro to anyone who's worried about not grokking Willy the Shake. With its emphasis on delivering the laughs, the DCPA

production is a powerful reminder that certain types of comedy are evergreen, and this one really makes the most of it for a fun night at the theatre.

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Klara Zieglerova's set is elegantly minimalist | Photo: Michael Martin Photography

About the Author: [Alex Miller](#)



Alex Miller is the editor & publisher of OnStage Colorado.