

Year 9 trip to The Globe Theatre - Review by Mahfuza 9C

On Monday 12th March Year 9 went to see a play written by William Shakespeare called Much Ado about Nothing. We travelled from the Thames links to Blackfriars. We watched this play at the Globe theatre, an open air building designed in 1599 and located in the London Borough of Southwark where many Shakespearean plays are performed as well as others too. There were three-tiered seatings on the outside edges containing wooden benches and in the centre was a large area for audience to stand. We were very lucky as we had an amazing opportunity to be seated and enjoy. As the day was not very pleasant and it was cold and wet the audience were very noisy and restless before the play began however as the actors started the audience paid more attention and in my opinion it was an amazing performance.



William Shakespeare's romantic comedy, Much Ado about Nothing, is a story of two pairs of lovers. In the beginning Don Pedro a very honourable prince, Benedick and Claudio visit Leonato's house in Messina. Beatrice and Benedick are continuously quarrelling on the other hand Claudio has found his life partner Hero who is Leonato's only daughter. Don Jon the Bastard is Don Pedro's vicious half-brother who tricks Claudio into believing that Hero has been unfaithful to him. Meanwhile, Don Pedro is also playing tricks and has a plot to make Benedick and Beatrice fall in love. Claudio humiliates Hero at their wedding and Claudio refuses to marry her.

Leonato is told to pretend Hero is dead. After finding evidence to the accusation Hero's innocence is proven. Leonato asks Claudio to marry his niece in replacement of Hero however at the wedding to his surprise Hero is present and they finally get married. At the end of the play Don Pedro succeeds with his plans and Benedick and Beatrice get married. The play explores love through difficulties within relationships. Other themes include: gender, friendship, banter, humiliation, trickery, misunderstandings, deception, hypocrisy and even some aspects showed the nature of evil. Shakespeare's use of humour is shown through the jokes and wordplay from the speeches of Beatrice and Benedick and through the play turns the comedy into love.

Much Ado about Nothing

The set design for this play was very traditional and contrasts with the modernizing of the play. The stage was a rectangular shape therefore the characters had space to move around and come towards the front and this made interactions with the audience. As the stage was quite simple the audience had to use their imagination but the actors made it much easier as they made eye-contact and hand gestures and other elements to make it more realistic. For example when Benedick told us what his ideal wife should be he used hand gestures and pointed towards the audience. Although the stage was quite minimalist there were some props for example there were benches set around the pillars. This made it much easier for the actors as one of the main themes of the play was trickery therefore there was a lot of spying and hiding involved, the use of benches made this easier. As well as this they also added little props such as confetti, cake and balloons during the ball and wedding this was to make it feel more realistic as there was no set design to show a church for the wedding but also no lighting to show the ball. The stage was also set in different levels to show power

of different characters for example when the prayers were performed for Hero's "death" the priest was standing at the top of the stairs. Also during the "death" scene there was a cut in the floor to represent a tomb, this was to make it more realistic but also to make the audience feel more pity for Hero. The simple furniture may also represent the broken relationships.



For most characters their costumes were made to be very modern and this contrasted with the set design and their dialogue as they both were very Shakespearean. In the beginning all the men entered in modern day army uniforms which were camouflaged, this represented them coming back from war. Beatrice, Hero and Margaret were wearing casual clothes like tops and jeans which also contributes to the fact that this performance was very modernized. During the ball most of the characters changed to make it more convincing; the women came wearing very smart clothes which was perhaps to impress their lovers although Beatrice and Benedick were still criticizing each other. The men came wearing superhero outfits which was mainly to entertain the audience as it was a ball. Lastly in both weddings the men wore very smart modern parade

uniforms this created an atmosphere of a military wedding and may have been to symbolise a religious society during the time Shakespeare wrote. Hero also wore a very traditional wedding dress and finally all the women wore very smart dresses at the final wedding. The costumes made most scenes much more powerful as the set was very simple and there wasn't any lighting.



There were various ways sound and music was used in this play. At the beginning when Don Pedro entered there was a very loud drum beat playing this was to symbolise his importance and have his royal entrance. The musicians sat above the stage, there were many brass instruments including trumpet, tuba etc. Most of the time the music created excitement to the audience for example during the ending dance there was loud cheering and also very upbeat music. However there were also times when it was quite depressing for example during Hero's "funeral" the mood of the music was melancholy, this also resulted in a quiet audience because we feel pity for Hero as we know she is innocent.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

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A change they made to the cast was that they presented some of the male characters as female. This included Don Jon who was changed to Princess Donna Joan, Senex who became a Constable, Dogberry and Verges and lastly Friar Francis became Pastor Francis. This idea of changing males to females is very relevant as it symbolises discrimination against women and sexism. One of the main characters in the play is Beatrice who is a heroine in the play and is a very strong character who shouts back to the sexist jokes that she hears every day. When Hero is accused of being a whore Beatrice fights to maintain her innocence however Hero just accepts what Leonato tells her. This tells us how a woman may have been treated in Shakespearean times. Although many women have their rights respected today and sexism is decreasing there are still many countries where women don't have courage to fight back like Beatrice and this play really points this out and shows us that women should have equal rights as men. This also shows that discrimination against women has decreased as in the Shakespearean times only males were allowed to act.

The play tells us that women like Beatrice can be loud, talkative and funny and this doesn't stop them from being ladylike. Borachio being quite stupid shows us that a "man" doesn't mean you have to be educated, strong and rich and

give us a message that both women and men can be the same status and can do the same jobs and succeed.



In the play we can infer that Claudio and Hero's relationship is almost opposite to Benedick and Beatrice. Claudio is a typical example of a male in Shakespeare's day and Hero is quiet and obedient as was expected of a young woman. Benedick and Beatrice's relationship challenges the traditional expectations of their society, and the audience can clearly see that despite this the love between these two is much deeper than the love between Hero and Claudio. There are several aspects of the play which demonstrate this for example their display of loyalty. Claudio is quick to dismiss Hero when he hears she has been unfaithful to him. It doesn't take much time for him to humiliate her as he then does at his wedding. We can see that his honour and reputation is more important to him than his love for Hero. On the other hand, when Benedick is tested by Beatrice's request that he kills Claudio, he shows that his love for her is more powerful even than his friendship. Therefore, I found the storyline to Beatrice and Benedick most interesting and enjoyable.



The play was overall very entertaining and funny for example when Beatrice comes to invite Benedick. Benedick believes now that Beatrice loves him however she doesn't really, Benedick makes this humorous as he tries to please Beatrice although she is very confused. Another part that was very amusing was when both Beatrice and Benedick were being tricked; they both tried very hard to hide and this was funny to the audience as to them it was obvious they could be seen. However there were very miserable aspects as well for example Claudio's sorrow at Hero's funeral as he had found out by this time that she was innocent. Although the audience knew that Hero was alive the actors' facial expressions and emotions made the audience depressed.

Personally I thought the production was very well performed and I would suggest others to go and watch it. Many of the actors played their roles well because they interacted with audience. By making the play modernized the importance of woman was pointed out and gave the audience a message that women are equal to men and if a man can succeed than a woman can too. Much Ado About Nothing also

shows that deceit is not always evil, but something that can be used as a result to good or bad ends. I think the entrance was very energetic therefore grabbed the audience's attention. The costumes, props and interaction with the audience made the play very convincing. Although the director decided to modernize the play the dialogue was given as Shakespeare would have written it therefore it made it interesting. This production was very enjoyable especially because I had read it beforehand, it gave very inspiring messages therefore I would recommend it to others.