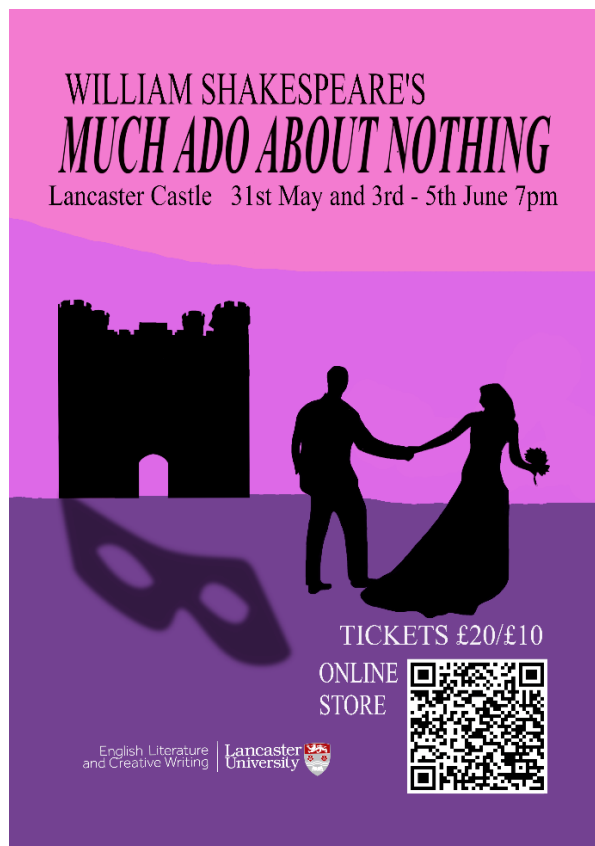


## ***Much Ado About Nothing***

Our forthcoming production of *Much Ado About Nothing*, to be staged at Lancaster Castle, involves final year Shakespeare students (from English Literature), working alongside professional actors and a professional director (Emma Rucastle) along with volunteer members of the local community.

Shakespeare student Jennifer Cordes designed the poster as part of her role in marketing. The four nights of performance are Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> May, Tuesday 3 June, Wednesday 4 June, Thursday 5 June. Tickets can be purchased from the online store. [Much Ado About Nothing at Lancaster Castle - Products - Lancaster University](#)



William Shakespeare's comedy features the roller-coaster of romance for the young couple Hero and Claudio, whose happiness is tragically threatened by the evil plots of the villain Don John.

Opposite this, the matchmaker Don Pedro works to conjure a 'mountain of affection' between the witty Beatrice and Benedick who declare their dislike for each other and for marriage.

Professor Alison Findlay (English & Creative Writing) who is producing the show is excited about the possibilities of performing the play in the courtyard and the former prison of Lancaster Castle. 'It will offer a unique opportunity to investigate the blend of comedy and tragedy in *Much Ado*. The Italianate loggia in the courtyard provides a perfect stage for the comic and sinister scenes of 'noting' or overhearing which run through both love plots. Deception and self-deception in love are flamboyantly displayed through an Italian masked ball filling the courtyard and its archways with music and dance.'



[Lancaster Castle Courtyard]

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Lancaster Castle's former prison interiors will make their own silent commentary on how the play mocks of the slow but sure operations of the law in the comic figures of the bungling Constable Dogberry and his team of watchmen who 'will rather sleep than talk. We know what belongs to a watch' (Act 3 Scene 3).



[A Wing of Lancaster Castle Prison]

More seriously, the prison setting raises questions about the play's comic drive towards marriage. Who is excluded from or trapped within this cultural norm? Does the young valiant soldier Claudio transform to 'Monsieur Love' for love of Hero or for love of her fortune? Does the play agree with Beatrice who observes, cynically, that 'wooing, wedding and repenting' are like three dances:

'The first suit is hot and hasty, like a Scotch jig;  
the wedding mannerly-modest as a measure,  
full of state and ancientry; and then comes Repentance,  
and with his bad legs falls into the cinque-pace,  
faster and faster, till he sink into his grave' (Act 2 Scene 1 lines 64-70)

Is marriage something we are forced into since, as Benedick says, 'the world must be peopled' (Act 2 Scene 3 line 233)?

In addition to the four nights of performance, we will also be holding open rehearsals in the Lancaster Suite (in Lancaster Castle courtyard near to Atkinson's café) at which members

of the public can get a taste of the production in progress on 26 -27 May and Bank Holiday Monday 2 June. These are free to attend.

Keep an eye on the website news <https://wp.lancs.ac.uk/shakespeare-and-his-sisters/much-ado-about-nothing/> for times. The Lancaster Suite can be found in the main Castle courtyard near to Atkinson's cafe.