

Much ado about Not-S

Arrest, death and love mixed with hilarious plot twists fills the H

By JONATHAN RETARTHA
Scene Writer

Guys hooking up their best friends with beautiful girls. Local authorities making arrests. People passing out thought to be dead. Fights to the death. No, this is not a preview of this weekend's round of Christmas SYRs, but rather the action taking place in the Hesburgh Center for International Peace Studies this weekend as Notre Dame's very own Not-So-Royal Shakespeare Company



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Senior Julianne Plazas plays Ursula, a friend of Beatrice, played by Krysta Dennis.



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Kaila Crowley as Hero walks hand in hand with senior Sean Nelson, who plays the infamous Don Pedro, as the two celebrate their engagement.

presents the classic comedy, "Much Ado About Nothing."

The plot involves several storylines, intertwined with each other. The first deals with Claudio, a soldier returning to Italy from battle with his fellow soldiers Benedick and Don Pedro. They return to the estate of Leonato, a prominent figure in society. Claudio falls instantly in love with Leonato's daughter, Hero, but feels he is not worthy enough to gain her love. Don Pedro, the hopeless romantic, devises a plan to help Claudio gain the love of Hero at a masquerade ball. Don Pedro's plan succeeds, and the two prepare to be married in a week's time.

The second storyline revolves around Don John, the bastard brother of Don Pedro, who will do anything to ruin the wonderful romance his brother has created. With the help of his friend Borachio, Don John plans to end the engagement by having Borachio sleep with Hero's serving woman, Margaret, in Hero's room in order to make Claudio and Don Pedro view it from afar and believe it is Hero who is being unfaithful.

Finally, the third facet of the play centers on Benedick and Leonato's niece, Beatrice. The pair has a long history of being at odds with each other and verbally abusing one another with their sharp wit. After the engagement of Claudio and Hero is arranged, Don Pedro plans to set up Benedick, a self-proclaimed bachelor for life, with Beatrice and make the two fall in love.

What ensues is a hilarious tale of tricks and lies that is brought to life by the students in the

Not-So-Royal Shakespeare Company, or NSR as they are commonly called. The acting Company has been around for many years now, but in different waves of involvement. They have had spans of many strong years, and lengths of time when no performances were staged at all. The Company has been enjoying seven years now of very strong participation, receiving talent from all years and studies.

This is the first year in which a play from the past seven years is being repeated. In the past, they have put on such classics as "The Taming of the Shrew," "Hamlet," "Henry IV," "Othello," "Romeo and Juliet," "The Comedy of Errors," "The Tempest," "Twelfth Night" and "Macbeth."

The group is funded by Student Government as well as from private donations. On the average, they receive between 80 to 100 students at tryouts for their fall and spring productions, and for "Much Ado About Nothing," they selected 18. What makes NSR so unique is that it is staged, directed, and acted by students. AnaMarie Ortiz serves as the director for this fall's production, with Ishira Kumar and Sarah Miller serving as Stage Managers.

There are also students involved behind the scenes with sound design, performance coaching, set design, lighting, and choreography. Ortiz made the decision to design the production in a way that does not specify the time or place in which the events of the play occur. Therefore, the sets are very simple, with two flats painted with trees and two as stone walls. The set design crew uses these few sets to their utmost potential, however. The flats painted as trees have cut out squares in them, so that when Beatrice and Benedick are forced to hide in order to overhear other characters talking about them, they are still visible and can participate in the scene with hysterical facial expressions. The costumes are also very traditional Shakespearean era outfits. In addition, music from the era is played in between scenes and before the play begins.

"Much Ado About Nothing," is one



Freshman Kaila Crowley as Hero and freshman Krysta Dennis plays Leonato, Hero's father about all the plans for Hero's marriage.

Shakespeare is famous for his witty one-liners, and every other line delivered by Krysta Dennis reflects the Bard's love for language. Bird and Dennis bring incredible depth to these lead roles, and the chemistry between Benedick and Beatrice is undeniable.

of Shakespeare's most complex comedies, because it involves many serious subplots and scenes. The performances by the students are incredible because of the way they all delve deep into their characters and provide each with a unique voice and personality.

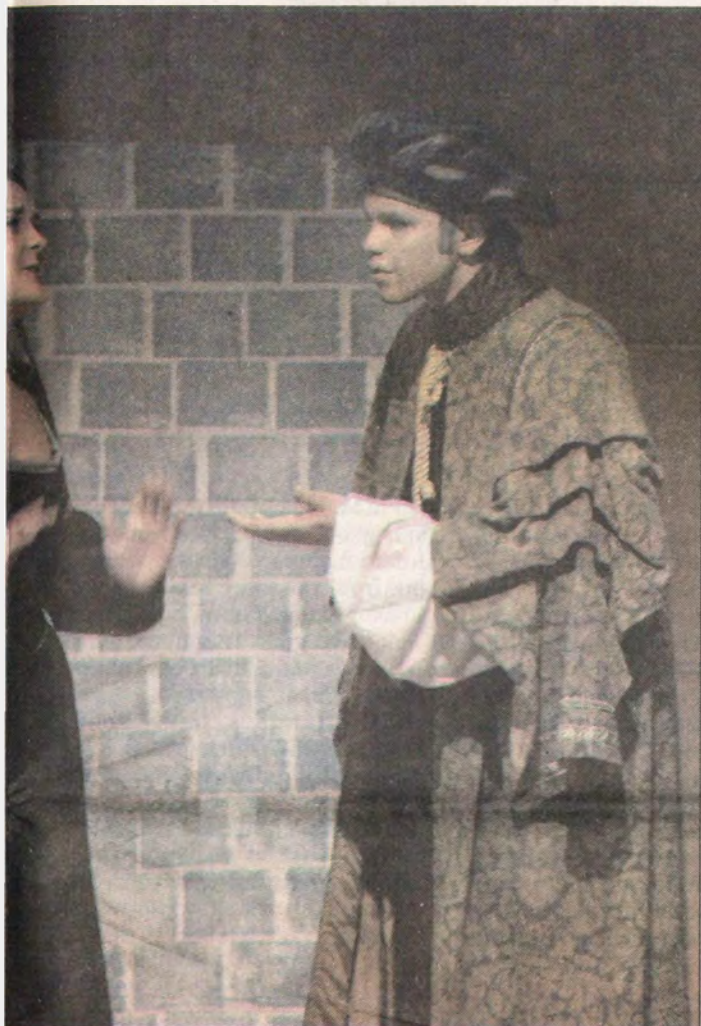
Mario Bird plays Benedick, the suave bachelor who falls hard for Beatrice, played by Krysta Dennis. Bird presents an incredible transformation in the two halves of the play. In the first half, he is the swinging single with a sharp tongue, channeling Frank Sinatra, or another member of the Rat Pack. He is tricked

into believing that Beatrice is secretly in love with him, and, once he falls for her, he turns into a reserved, quiet character who cannot even devise the wit to write a simple love letter. Dennis, on the other hand, plays the classic shrew in her love-hate relationship with Benedick. Shakespeare is famous for his witty one-liners, and every other line delivered by Dennis reflects the Bard's love for language. Bird and Dennis bring incredible depth to these lead roles, and the chemistry between Benedick and Beatrice is undeniable.

Mike Dolson plays Claudio, who

So-Royal Shakespeare

Hesburgh Center this weekend for 'Much Ado About Nothing'



MEGAN DAVISSON/The Observer

is as Beatrice talk with freshman Andre Valdivia, who marriage, while many problems arise.

falls hopelessly in love with Hero, played by Kaila Crowley. Dolson presents another deep character that is forced to endure many emotional waves. The first is in his whirlwind romance with Hero, in which he encompasses the classic giddiness accompanying any romance of that kind. Dolson's second challenge is to display the incredible pain experienced by Claudio when he believes he is seeing his love being unfaithful the night before they are to be wed. This is especially difficult because the entire scene of the apparent betrayal takes place off stage, and is only recounted by other characters. Therefore, with no visual cues, Dolson delivers an incredible performance derived completely from the heart. As if that was not enough, Claudio is made to believe that Hero has died, and Dolson presents the image of a broken, collapsed man without using any words at all, as he weeps by the supposed grave of his past love. In a play filled with so much mirth and trickery, Dolson acts as if he is performing in one of Shakespeare's great tragedies in this performance. Dolson also has great chemistry with Dolson, and is sincere in her love for Claudio, as well as in her desire to help bring Benedick and Beatrice together.

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David Tull plays Don John, the bitter brother of Don Pedro who sabotages the wedding plans. His character is most definitely a flat one utilized as 'the bad guy' in the play. Therefore, he does not undergo the types of changes in character that many of the leads undertake. However, while many flat characters in plays can be forgotten or unused, Tull sets himself apart from the other characters with his own unique style and attitude. What makes the role of Don John demanding is that the reasons for his bitterness are vague at best. It is difficult to tell if anyone involved in the play has wronged him, other than the fact that his brother gets all the glory. Tull's ability to establish himself as the bad guy without any formal explanation is a credit to the skill in which he gets into his character.

Chez Brooks-DeVita plays Don John's henchman Borachio, and fits the mold of a traditional evil sidekick perfectly with his low, menacing voice. Brooks-DeVita also adds depth to what is traditionally being sinister in his attempt to thwart the marriage plans, and then becoming remorseful when he hears of Hero's apparent death due to grief.

Sean Nelson plays the role of Don Pedro, the Cupid figure of the play.

He brings to the role a sincerity that makes the audience believe in the friendships he has with Claudio and Benedick, and in his true desire to see both of them happy.

Andre Valdivia plays Leonato, the father of Hero. Valdivia brings a great personal touch to the role by broad-

ening the extremes that Leonato must encompass in his character. In the first half of the play, he is overtly jovial and a bit senile, and shows an innocence that portrays him like a grandfather figure. Once Hero has been accused of betrayal, however, Valdivia explodes in a stubborn rage that shocks the audience. He becomes furious over the accusations and stubborn in his belief that Claudio falsely accused Hero. Valdivia stands out in his emotional performance.

The most scene stealing roles, however, go to the watchmen of the town, played by Al Klein, Martin Schroeder, and Connor Woods. The zany, eccen-

tric Dogberry, played maniacally by Jeff Eyeran, deputizes the three.

Shakespeare constructed his plays not for the opera houses or concert halls, but for the masses of his day - those who loved crude and sexual humor, along with rollicking physical comedy. Ortiz has captured this vision perfectly in providing hysterical slapstick comedy to these roles. The four watchmen are almost like cartoon characters as the fight with each other and make a valiant attempt to capture Borachio. Eyeran is as crazy and goofy as Jerry Lewis or Jim Carrey in every single scene. These four roles are absolute testaments to the creativity and vision of the director, as well as to the creativity of the actors involved.

For a program in a small venue with a limited budget, truly the act defines "Much Ado About Nothing." All of the students involved have a focus, determination and love for Shakespeare that makes their production such a success.

"Much Ado About Nothing," is a treat for anyone with any background in Shakespeare, big or small. The cast delivers the lines clearly and acts in a way that brings the language to life visually, even if the words are not easy to understand.

"Much Ado About Nothing" plays at the Hesburgh Center for International Peace Studies Friday and Saturday at 7:30, and Sunday at 2:30. Tickets can be purchased at the LaFortune Box Office or at the door, \$5 for stu-

dents, 7\$ for adults.

The Not-So-Royal Shakespeare Company's spring production will be "King Lear," and will stage auditions shortly after Christmas break. In the meantime, NSR is holding its first-ever Shakespeare Scene Festival, where groups of students are welcome to come with a scene from any Shakespeare play and tryout. Auditions are December 10 from 7 to 11 p.m. in 106 O'Shaughnessy Hall.

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Sophomore Brandon McGirr as Antonio talks with Leonato, played by freshman Andre Valdivia.



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Senior Mario Bird plays the large role of Benedick, who talks with Claudio, played by junior Mike Dolson, about his problems with the women.