

Media Contact:

Anne Shuff, Finance & Communications Consultant
ashuff@lanterntheater.org or (215) 829-9002 x111

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#MuchAdoLTC

Lantern Theater Company Continues 2024/25 Season with William Shakespeare's *MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING*, Directed by Charles McMahon, February 13 – March 16, 2025

PHILADELPHIA (February 3, 2025) – **Lantern Theater Company** continues its 2024/25 season with ***Much Ado About Nothing***, part of the company's ongoing commitment to produce the timeless stories of **William Shakespeare** for both the general public and local school students. Lantern Artistic Director **Charles McMahon** directs an ensemble cast of Lantern veterans, including **Kirk Wendell Brown, Trevor William Fayle, J Hernandez, Anthony Lawton, Jered McLenigan,** and **Karen Peakes**, alongside **Cheyenne Parks** and **Alice Yorke**, both making their Lantern debuts. *Much Ado About Nothing* runs **Thursday, February 13 through Sunday, March 16, 2025**, at St. Stephen's Theater in Center City Philadelphia; a complete schedule of performances and special events is included in the fact sheet below. Theater critics and members of the press are invited to request press tickets for **opening night on Wednesday, February 19 at 7 p.m.** by contacting Anne Shuff at ashuff@lanterntheater.org.

“Shakespeare loved to combine dramatic styles to create something new and unusual,” said McMahon. “*Much Ado About Nothing* is one of his most clever mashups, combining psychological drama, farce, fairy tale, and romantic comedy to take us on an extraordinary journey. Shakespeare creates two of his most indelible characters in Beatrice and Benedick, the battling couple who become lovers despite themselves, creating the model for countless other great characters over many generations – down through the work of Noël Coward and the great screwball comedies of the 20th century to the classic films of Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn and through today. The Lantern has assembled a superb cast to breathe new life into Shakespeare's timeless delight.”

Well past the age of youthful infatuation, Beatrice and Benedick hardly seem like a couple to be placed at the center of a classic romantic comedy. They would rather duel with wits and mock the coup de foudre of the young lovers Claudio and Hero. Through a dizzying web of misdirection and deceits both malign and benign, their steadfast refusal to love is put to the test. Will they go on with their merry single lives or fall in love despite themselves?

Young soldier Claudio falls in love with Hero, and Hero loves him back. Her cousin, the cheerfully independent Beatrice, loves the acerbic bachelor Benedick, and he loves her back – it just takes some quick thinking and high-spirited deception on the parts of their friends and family to help them see it. But just when both their happily ever afters are within reach, Don John, the disenchanted brother of the noble Don Pedro, plots to tear it all apart. With one wedding dramatically cancelled and another in peril, can Don John's tangled web be unwound before the couples are severed forever? Featuring some of Shakespeare's most dazzling wordplay, a dizzyingly romantic battle of wits, and a heartfelt celebration of friendship and family, *Much Ado About Nothing* remains one of his most beloved comedies over 400 years later.

Lantern Theater Company will delve into the world of *Much Ado About Nothing* on its **Lantern Searchlight blog**, available online at lanterntheater.org/searchlight. Articles will be published throughout the production's run, including background on the play and its themes alongside behind-the-scenes conversations with the artists.

Tickets for *Much Ado About Nothing* are \$30 – \$47 and are available online at www.lanterntheater.org or by calling the Lantern Box Office at (215) 829-0395. Discounts are available for students, seniors 65 and up, U.S. military personnel, and groups of 10 or more. Performances of *Much Ado About Nothing* will take place at **St. Stephen's Theater**, located at 923 Ludlow Street in Center City Philadelphia.

About the Lantern Artists

Much Ado About Nothing director **Charles McMahon** co-founded Lantern Theater Company in 1994 and serves as artistic director in addition to directing, writing, and acting for the company. McMahon has directed all but one of the Lantern's annual Shakespeare productions, including recent productions of *The Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night*, *Othello*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Tempest*, and *Coriolanus*. Other Lantern directing credits include *Tartuffe*; *Travesties*; *The Plague*; *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*; *As You Like It*; *Henry V*; *New Jerusalem*, *The Interrogation of Baruch de Spinoza at Talmud Torah Congregation: Amsterdam, July 27, 1656*; *Romeo and Juliet*; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; *Hamlet*; *La Ronde* (also translator and adapter); *Richard III*; *Much Ado About Nothing*; *King Lear*; *The House of Bernarda Alba*; and *A Doll's House*. His acting credits

include Heisenberg in the Lantern's production of *Copenhagen*, and his writing credits include *Oscar Wilde: From the Depths* and co-creating an original adaptation of Dylan Thomas' *A Child's Christmas in Wales*.

Much Ado About Nothing's ensemble cast includes Lantern veterans **Kirk Wendell Brown** as Leonato (Lantern credits include *As You Like It*, *Coriolanus*, *Measure for Measure*), **Trevor William Fayle** as Claudio (*The Lifespan of a Fact*, *Othello*, *Hapgood*), **J Hernandez** as Benedick (*The Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Tempest*), **Anthony Lawton** as Dogberry (*A Christmas Carol*, *A Man for All Seasons*, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*), **Jered McLenigan** as Don Pedro/Don John (*Tartuffe*, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, Barrymore Award-winner for *Julius Caesar*), and **Karen Peakes** (*Don't Dress for Dinner*). Making their Lantern debuts with *Much Ado About Nothing* are **Cheyenne Parks** as Hero (Arden Theatre Company, Shakespeare in Clark Park, Theatre Exile) and **Alice Yorke** as Margaret (Lightning Rod Special, Inis Nua Theatre Company, Azuka Theatre).

The creative team for *Much Ado About Nothing* includes scenic designer **Meghan Jones** (Lantern credits include *Tartuffe*, *Coriolanus*, *The Vertical Hour*), costume designer **Marla Jurglanis** (*Faith Healer*, *Travesties*, *Twelfth Night*), lighting designer **Drew Billiau** (*Travesties*, *Coriolanus*, *Measure for Measure*), sound designer **Larry D. Fowler, Jr.** (*The Wanderers*; *Fabulation, or The Re-Education of Undine*; *The Vertical Hour*), choreographer **K. O'Rourke** (*Emma*), and intimacy consultant **Leo Mock** (*The Wanderers*).

About Lantern Theater Company

Founded in 1994 and now in its 31st season, Lantern Theater Company's mission is to produce plays that investigate and illuminate what is essential in the human spirit and the spirit of the times. The Lantern serves the Greater Philadelphia region with award-winning productions and education programming, notably partnering with middle schools and high schools in the Philadelphia School District to provide in-classroom residencies in support of curricular learning. The Lantern became a national leader in streaming theater during the Covid health crisis, producing ten fully designed plays that were created and filmed in the company's resident home at St. Stephen's Theater, garnering coverage in national media including *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, and reaching more than 30,000 people in 15 countries and all 50 states.

Following *Much Ado About Nothing*, the Lantern's 2024/25 season will conclude with ***The 39 Steps***, **Patrick Barlow**'s rollicking adaptation of the classic **John Buchan** adventure novel and **Alfred Hitchcock** film, also directed by **Charles McMahan** (Press Opening: **Wednesday, May 21, 2025, at 7 p.m.**). More information is available online at www.lanterntheater.org.

Lantern Theater Company – 2024/25 Season
FACT SHEET
Much Ado About Nothing

WRITTEN BY:

William Shakespeare

DIRECTED BY:

Charles McMahan

CAST:

Kirk Wendell Brown as Leonato

Trevor William Fayle as Claudio

J Hernandez as Benedick

Anthony Lawton as Dogberry

Jered McLenigan as Don Pedro/Don John

Cheyenne Parks as Hero

Karen Peakes as Beatrice

Alice Yorke as Margaret

CREATIVE TEAM:

Meghan Jones, Scenic Designer

Marla Jurglanis, Costume Designer

Drew Billiau, Lighting Designer

Larry D. Fowler, Jr., Sound Designer

K. O'Rourke, Choreographer

Leo Mock, Intimacy Consultant

Natalie Chernicoff, Stage Manager

Jazmin Mahoney, Assistant Director

PRESS INFORMATION:

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TICKET INFORMATION:

Online: www.lanterntheater.org

By Phone: (215) 829-0395

TICKET PRICING:

\$30 – \$47 / Students: \$25

PERFORMANCES:

Thursday, February 13 – Sunday, March 16, 2025

PREVIEWS:

Thursday, February 13 at 7 p.m.

Friday, February 14 at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, February 15 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, February 16 at 2 p.m.

Tuesday, February 18 at 6:30 p.m.

OPENING NIGHT PERFORMANCE:

Wednesday, February 19 at 7 p.m.

REGULAR RUN:

Wednesday at 2 p.m. on February 26 [AIC], March 5 [AIC], and March 12

Wednesday at 7 p.m. on February 26, March 5, and March 12

Thursday at 7 p.m. on February 20, February 27, March 6, and March 13

Friday at 7:30 p.m. on February 21, February 28, and March 7 (no performance March 14)

Saturday at 2 p.m. on February 22, March 1, March 8, and March 15

Saturday at 8 p.m. on February 22, March 1, March 8, and March 15

Sunday at 2 p.m. on February 23 [AIC], March 2 [AIC], March 9, and March 16

CLOSING PERFORMANCE:

Sunday, March 16 at 2 p.m.

ARTISTS IN CONVERSATION [AIC]

Moderated post-show discussions with the cast immediately follow 2 p.m. performances on Sunday, February 23; Wednesday, February 26; Sunday, March 2; and Wednesday, March 5. Lantern Resident Dramaturg **Meghan Winch** will lead the discussions.

PLAY SYNOPSIS:

Beatrice and Benedick hardly seem like a couple to be placed at the center of a classic romantic comedy. Well past the age of youthful infatuation, they would rather duel with wits and mock the coup de foudre of the young lovers Claudio and Hero. But Venus will not be denied. Through a dizzying web of misdirection and deceptions both malign and benign, Beatrice's and Benedick's steadfast refusal to love is put to the acid test. Will they go on with their merry single lives or fall in love despite themselves?

PERFORMANCE VENUE:

St. Stephen's Theater at 923 Ludlow Street in Center City Philadelphia