



Hillbark Players





Hillbark Players





Open Auditions
for our June 2015 open-air production of
William Shakespeare's most popular comedy

Much Ado About
Nothing

will be held from 7:30 pm – 10:30 pm on
Tues 25th, Weds 26th & Fri 28th November 2014
at **Greasby Methodist Church**
Greasby Road, Greasby, Wirral, Merseyside CH49 2PN

Reserve your place by e-mailing: hillbarkplayers@gmail.com Further information? Visit our website: www.hillbarkplayers.co.uk

Audition Pieces

Much Ado About Nothing – Audition Pieces

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Antonio

Leonata believes that her daughter has brought shame onto her house by an affair and she is angry. Antonio attempts to console her but then becomes embroiled in an argument with Claudio, the man who spurned his niece.

ANTONIO

If you go on thus, you will kill yourself:
And 'tis not wisdom thus to second grief
Against yourself.

LEONATA

I pray thee, cease thy counsel,
Which falls into mine ears as profitless
As water in a sieve: give not me counsel;

.....

No, no; 'tis all men's office to speak patience
To those that wring under the load of sorrow,
But no man's virtue nor sufficiency
To be so moral when he shall endure
The like himself. Therefore give me no counsel:
My griefs cry louder than advertisement.

ANTONIO

Therein do men from children nothing differ.

LEONATA

I pray thee, peace. I will be flesh and blood;

ANTONIO

Yet bend not all the harm upon yourself;
Make those that do offend you suffer too.

LEONATA

There thou speak'st reason: nay, I will do so.
My soul doth tell me Hero is belied;
And that shall Claudio know; so shall the prince
And all of them that thus dishonour her.

ANTONIO

Here comes the prince and Claudio hastily.

Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO

DON PEDRO

Good den, good den.

CLAUDIO

Good day to both of you.

LEONATA

Hear you, my lords,--

DON PEDRO

We have some haste, Leonata.

LEONATA

Some haste, my lord! well, fare you well, my lord:
Are you so hasty now? well, all is one.

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DON PEDRO

Nay, do not quarrel with us, good lady.

ANTONIO

If she could right herself with quarreling,
Some of us would lie low.

CLAUDIO

Who wrongs her?

LEONATA

... I say thou hast belied mine innocent child;
Thy slander hath gone through and through her heart,
And she lies buried with her ancestors;
O, in a tomb where never scandal slept,
Save this of hers, framed by thy villany!

CLAUDIO

My villany?

LEONATA

Thine, Claudio; thine, I say.

DON PEDRO

You say not right, my lady.

CLAUDIO

Away! I will not have to do with you.

LEONATA

Canst thou so daff me? Thou hast kill'd my child:
If thou kill'st me, boy, thou shalt kill her dam.

ANTONIO

He shall kill two of us, and kin indeed:
But that's no matter; let him kill one first;
Win me and wear me; let him answer me.
Come, follow me, boy; come, sir boy, come, follow me:
Sir boy, I'll whip you from your foining fence;
Nay, as I am a gentleman, I will.

LEONATA

Brother,--

ANTONIO

Content yourself. God knows I loved my niece;
And she is dead, slander'd to death by villains,
That dare as well answer a man indeed
As I dare take a serpent by the tongue:
Boys, apes, braggarts, Jacks, milksops!

LEONATA

Brother Antony,--

ANTONIO

Hold you content. What, woman! I know them, yea,
And what they weigh, even to the utmost scruple,--
Scrambling, out-facing, fashion-monging boys,
That lie and cog and flout, deprave and slander,
Go anticly, show outward hideousness,
And speak off half a dozen dangerous words,
How they might hurt their enemies, if they durst;
And this is all.

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LEONATA

But, brother Antony,--

ANTONIO

Come, 'tis no matter:

Do not you meddle; let me deal in this.

DON PEDRO

Gentlefolk both, we will not wake your patience.

My heart is sorry for your daughter's death:

But, on my honour, she was charged with nothing

But what was true and very full of proof.

LEONATA

My lord, my lord,--

DON PEDRO

I will not hear you.

LEONATA

No? Come, brother; away! I will be heard.

ANTONIO

And shall, or some of us will smart for it.

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Balthasar

Balthasar respectfully addresses Leonata and then Beatrice about the approach of his commander and his comrades.

LEONATA

I learn in this letter that Don Pedro of Arragon comes this night to Messina.

BALTHASAR

He is very near by this: he was not three leagues off when I left him.

LEONATA

How many gentlemen have you lost in this action?

BALTHASAR

But few of any sort, and none of name.

LEONATA

A victory is twice itself when the achiever brings home full numbers. I find here that Don Pedro hath bestowed much honour on a young Florentine called Claudio.

BALTHASAR

He hath borne himself beyond the promise of his age, doing, in the figure of a lamb, the feats of a lion.

LEONATA

He hath an uncle here in Messina will be very much glad of it.

BALTHASAR

I have already delivered him letters, and there appears much joy in him.

LEONATA

A kind overflow of kindness: there are no faces truer than those...

Later, Balthasar is encouraged to sing a romantic song as part of the trick played upon Benedick.

DON PEDRO

Come, Balthasar, we'll hear that song again.

BALTHASAR

O, good my lord, tax not so bad a voice To slander music any more than once.

DON PEDRO

It is the witness still of excellency To put a strange face on his own perfection. I pray thee, sing, and let me woo no more.

BALTHASAR

Because you talk of wooing, I will sing; Since many a wooer doth commence his suit

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To her he thinks not worthy, yet he wooes,
Yet will he swear he loves.

DON PEDRO

Now, pray thee, come;
Or, if thou wilt hold longer argument,
Do it in notes.

BENEDICK

Now, divine air! now is his soul ravished!

The Song (sing 'Happy Birthday' in a romantic fashion)

DON PEDRO

By my troth, a good song.

BALTHASAR

And an ill singer, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Ha, no, no, faith; thou singest well enough.

BENEDICK

An he had been a dog that should have howled thus,
they would have hanged him. I had as lief have heard the
night-raven, come what plague could have come after it.

DON PEDRO

Yea, marry, dost thou hear, Balthasar? I pray thee,
get us some excellent music; for to-morrow night we
would have it at the Lady Hero's chamber-window.

BALTHASAR

The best I can, my lord.

DON PEDRO

Do so: farewell.

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Beatrice

Beatrice enters and interrupts a conversation between Balthasar and Leonata about the approach of his commander and his comrades.

BEATRICE

I pray you, is Signior Mountanto returned from the wars or no?

BALTHASAR

I know none of that name, lady: there was none such in the army of any sort.

LEONATA

What is he that you ask for, niece?

HERO

My cousin means Signior Benedick of Padua.

BALTHASAR

O, he's returned; and as pleasant as ever he was.

BEATRICE

He set up his bills here in Messina? I pray you, how many hath he killed and eaten in these wars? But how many hath he killed? For indeed I promised to eat all of his killing.

LEONATA

Faith, niece, you tax Signior Benedick too much; but he'll be meet with you, I doubt it not.

BALTHASAR

He hath done good service, lady, in these wars.

BEATRICE

He is a very valiant trencherman; he hath an excellent stomach.

BALTHASAR

And a good soldier too, lady.

BEATRICE

And a good soldier to a lady: but what is he to a lord?

BALTHASAR

A lord to a lord, a man to a man; stuffed with all honourable virtues.

BEATRICE

It is so, indeed; he is no less than a stuffed man: but for the stuffing,--well, we are all mortal.

LEONATA

You must not, sir, mistake my niece. There is a kind of merry war betwixt Signior Benedick and her: they never meet but there's a skirmish of wit between them.

BEATRICE

Alas! he gets nothing by that. In our last conflict four of his five wits went halting off, and now is the whole man governed with one: so that if he have wit enough to keep himself warm, let him bear it for a difference between himself and his horse; for it is all the wealth that he hath left.

Who is his companion now? He hath every month a new sworn brother. He wears his faith but as the fashion of his

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hat; it ever changes with the next block.

BALTHASAR

I see, lady, the gentleman is not in your books.

BEATRICE

No; an he were, I would burn my study. But, I pray you, who is his companion? Is there no young squarer now that will make a voyage with him to the devil?

BALTHASAR

He is most in the company of the right noble Claudio.

BEATRICE

O Lord! He will hang upon him like a disease: he is sooner caught than the pestilence. God help the noble Claudio! If he have caught the Benedick, it will cost him a thousand pound ere he be cured.

Later, Beatrice muses that perhaps after all she has misjudged Benedick and that perhaps she can admit (at least to herself) her feelings for him.

BEATRICE

[Coming forward]

What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?
Stand I condemn'd for pride and scorn so much?
Contempt, farewell! and maiden pride, adieu!
No glory lives behind the back of such.
And, Benedick, love on; I will requite thee,
Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand:
If thou dost love, my kindness shall incite thee
To bind our loves up in a holy band;
For others say thou dost deserve, and I
Believe it better than reportingly.

Beatrice & Benedick

When Beatrice and Benedick meet they immediately begin to bandy words and witticisms with each other

BENEDICK

If Milady Leonata be her mother, she would not have her head on those shoulders for all Messina, as like her as she is.

BEATRICE

I wonder that you will still be talking, Signior Benedick: nobody marks you.

BENEDICK

What, my dear Lady Disdain! are you yet living?

BEATRICE

Is it possible disdain should die while she hath such meet food to feed it as Signior Benedick? Courtesy itself must convert to disdain, if you come in her presence.

BENEDICK

Then is courtesy a turncoat. But it is certain I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted: and I would I could find in my heart that I had not a hard heart; for, truly, I love none.

BEATRICE

A dear happiness to women: they would else have been troubled with a pernicious suitor. I thank God and my cold blood, I am of your humour for that: I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow than a man swear he loves me.

BENEDICK

God keep your ladyship still in that mind! so some gentleman or other shall 'scape a predestinate scratched face.

BEATRICE

Scratching could not make it worse, an 'twere such a face as yours were.

BENEDICK

Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher.

BEATRICE

A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours.

BENEDICK

I would my horse had the speed of your tongue, and so good a continuer. But keep your way, i' God's name; I have done.

BEATRICE

You always end with a jade's trick: I know you of old.

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Later, Beatrice is shocked and distressed at the fate which has befallen her cousin. Benedick attempts to console her.

BENEDICK

Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?

BEATRICE

Yea, and I will weep a while longer.

BENEDICK

I will not desire that.

BEATRICE

You have no reason; I do it freely.

BENEDICK

Surely I do believe your fair cousin is wronged.

BEATRICE

Ah, how much might the man deserve of me that would right her!

BENEDICK

Is there any way to show such friendship?

BEATRICE

A very even way, but no such friend.

BENEDICK

May a man do it?

BEATRICE

It is a man's office, but not yours.

BENEDICK

I do love nothing in the world so well as you: is not that strange?

BEATRICE

As strange as the thing I know not. It were as possible for me to say I loved nothing so well as you: but believe me not; and yet I lie not; I confess nothing, nor I deny nothing. I am sorry for my cousin.

BENEDICK

By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me.

BEATRICE

Do not swear, and eat it.

BENEDICK

I will swear by it that you love me; and I will make him eat it that says I love not you.

BEATRICE

Will you not eat your word?

BENEDICK

With no sauce that can be devised to it. I protest I love thee.

BEATRICE

Why, then, God forgive me!

BENEDICK

What offence, sweet Beatrice?

BEATRICE

You have stayed me in a happy hour: I was about to protest I loved you.

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BENEDICK

And do it with all thy heart.

BEATRICE

I love you with so much of my heart that none is left to protest.

BENEDICK

Come, bid me do anything for thee.

BEATRICE

Kill Claudio.

BENEDICK

Ha! not for the wide world.

BEATRICE

You kill me to deny it. Farewell.

BENEDICK

Tarry, sweet Beatrice.

BEATRICE

I am gone, though I am here: there is no love in you: nay, I pray you, let me go.

BENEDICK

Beatrice,--

BEATRICE

In faith, I will go.

BENEDICK

We'll be friends first.

BEATRICE

You dare easier be friends with me than fight with mine enemy.

BENEDICK

Is Claudio thine enemy?

BEATRICE

Is he not approved in the height a villain, that hath slandered, scorned, dishonoured my kinswoman? O that I were a man! What, bear her in hand until they come to take hands; and then, with public accusation, uncovered slander, unmitigated rancour, --O God, that I were a man! I would eat his heart in the market-place.

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Benedick

Having learned that Beatrice loves him, Benedick begins to come to terms with this news.

BENEDICK

This can be no trick: They have the truth of this from Hero. They seem to pity the lady: it seems her affections have their full bent.

Love me? why, it must be requited. I hear how I am censured: they say I will bear myself proudly, if I perceive the love come from her; they say too that she will rather die than give any sign of affection. I did never think to marry. They say the lady is fair; 'tis a truth, I can bear them witness; and virtuous; 'tis so, I cannot reprove it; and wise, but for loving me; by my troth, it is no addition to her wit, nor no great argument of her folly, for I will be horribly in love with her. I may chance have some odd quirks and remnants of wit broken on me, because I have railed so long against marriage: but doth not the appetite alter? a man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his age.

Shall quips paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humour?

No! the world must be peopled. When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married. Here comes Beatrice. By this day! she's a fair lady: I do spy some marks of love in her.

Don John, Borachio & Conrade

Borachio and Conrade meet with their master, Don John and begins to hatch a plot against Claudio

CONRADE

What the good-year, my lord! why are you thus out of measure sad?

DON JOHN

There is no measure in the occasion that breeds;
therefore the sadness is without limit.

CONRADE

You should hear reason.

DON JOHN

And when I have heard it, what blessing brings it?

CONRADE

If not a present remedy, at least a patient sufferance.

DON JOHN

I wonder that thou, being, as thou sayest thou art,
born under Saturn, goest about to apply a moral
medicine to a mortifying mischief. I cannot hide
what I am: I must be sad when I have cause and smile
at no man's jests, eat when I have stomach and wait
for no man's leisure, sleep when I am drowsy and
tend on no man's business, laugh when I am merry and
claw no man in his humour.

CONRADE

Yea, but you must not make the full show of this
till you may do it without controlment. You have of
late stood out against your brother, and he hath
ta'en you newly into his grace; where it is
impossible you should take true root but by the
fair weather that you make yourself.

DON JOHN

I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a rose in
his grace, and it better fits my blood to be
disdained of all than to fashion a carriage to rob
love from any: in this, though I cannot be said to
be a flattering honest man, it must not be denied
but I am a plain-dealing villain. I am trusted with
a muzzle and enfranchised with a clog; therefore I
have decreed not to sing in my cage. If I had my
mouth, I would bite; if I had my liberty, I would do
my liking: in the meantime let me be that I am and
seek not to alter me.

CONRADE

Can you make no use of your discontent?

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DON JOHN

I make all use of it, for I use it only.

Who comes here?

Enter BORACHIO

What news, Borachio?

BORACHIO

I came yonder from a great supper: the prince your brother is royally entertained by Leonata: and I can give you intelligence of an intended marriage.

DON JOHN

Will it serve for any model to build mischief on?

What is he for a fool that betroths himself to unquietness?

BORACHIO

Marry, it is your brother's right hand.

DON JOHN

Who? the most exquisite Claudio?

BORACHIO

Even he.

DON JOHN

A proper squire! And who, and who? which way looks he?

BORACHIO

Marry, on Hero, the daughter and heir of Leonata.

DON JOHN

A very forward March-chick! How came you to this?

BORACHIO

Being entertained for a perfumer, comes me the prince and Claudio, hand in hand in sad conference: I whipt me behind the arras; and there heard it agreed upon that the prince should woo Hero for himself, and having obtained her, give her to Count Claudio.

DON JOHN

Come, come, let us thither: this may prove food to my displeasure. That young start-up hath all the glory of my overthrow: if I can cross him any way, I bless myself every way. You are both sure, and will assist me?

CONRADE

To the death, my lord.

DON JOHN

Let us to the great supper: their cheer is the greater that I am subdued. Would the cook were of my mind! Shall we go prove what's to be done?

BORACHIO

We'll wait upon your lordship.

Claudio

Claudio expresses his love for Hero to Benedick.

CLAUDIO

Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of Signior Leonata?

BENEDICK

I noted her not; but I looked on her.

CLAUDIO

Is she not a modest young lady?

BENEDICK

Do you question me, as an honest man should do, for my simple true judgment; or would you have me speak after my custom, as being a professed tyrant to their sex?

CLAUDIO

No; I pray thee speak in sober judgment.

BENEDICK

Why, i' faith, methinks she's too low for a high praise, too brown for a fair praise and too little for a great praise: only this commendation I can afford her, that were she other than she is, she were unhandsome; and being no other but as she is... I do not like her.

CLAUDIO

Thou thinkest I am in sport: I pray thee tell me truly how thou likest her.

BENEDICK

Would you buy her, that you inquire after her?

CLAUDIO

Can the world buy such a jewel?

BENEDICK

Yea, and a case to put it into. But speak you this with a sad brow Come, in what key shall a man take you, to go in the song?

CLAUDIO

In mine eye she is the sweetest lady that ever I looked on.

BENEDICK

I can see yet without spectacles and I see no such matter: there's her cousin, an' were she not possessed with a fury, exceeds her as much in beauty as the first of May doth the last of December. But I hope you have no intent to turn husband, have you?

CLAUDIO

I would scarce trust myself, though I had sworn the contrary, if Hero would be my wife.

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Claudio arrives at his wedding having been told that his wife to be has been unfaithful.

LEONATA

Come, Friar Francis, be brief; only to the plain form of marriage, and you shall recount their particular duties afterwards.

FRIAR FRANCIS

You come hither, my lord, to marry this lady.

CLAUDIO

No.

LEONATA

To be married to her: friar, you come to marry her.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Lady, you come hither to be married to this count.

HERO

I do.

FRIAR FRANCIS

If either of you know any inward impediment why you should not be conjoined, I charge you, on your souls, to utter it.

CLAUDIO

Know you any, Hero?

HERO

None, my lord.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Know you any, count?

LEONATA

I dare make his answer, none.

CLAUDIO

O, what people dare do! what people may do! what people daily do, not knowing what they do!

Stand thee by, friar. Mother, by your leave:

Will you with free and unconstrained soul

Give me this maid, your daughter?

LEONATA

As freely, son, as God did give her me.

CLAUDIO

And what have I to give you back, whose worth

May counterpoise this rich and precious gift?

DON PEDRO

Nothing, unless you render her again.

CLAUDIO

Sweet prince, you learn me noble thankfulness.

There, Leonata, take her back again:

Give not this rotten orange to your friend;

She's but the sign and semblance of her honour.

Behold how like a maid she blushes here!

O, what authority and show of truth

Can cunning sin cover itself withal!

Comes not that blood as modest evidence

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To witness simple virtue? Would you not swear,
All you that see her, that she were a maid,
By these exterior shows? But she is none:
She knows the heat of a luxurious bed;
Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty.

LEONATA

What do you mean, my lord?

CLAUDIO

Not to be married,
Not to knit my soul to an approved wanton.

LEONATA

Dear my lord, if you, in your own proof,
Have vanquish'd the resistance of her youth,
And made defeat of her virginity,--

CLAUDIO

No, Leonata,
I never tempted her with word too large;
But, as a brother to his sister, show'd
Bashful sincerity and comely love.

HERO

And seem'd I ever otherwise to you?

CLAUDIO

Out on thee! Seeming! I will write against it:
You seem to me as Dian in her orb,
As chaste as is the bud ere it be blown;
But you are more intemperate in your blood
Than Venus, or those pamper'd animals
That rage in savage sensuality.

...

CLAUDIO

O Hero, what a Hero hadst thou been,
If half thy outward graces had been placed
About thy thoughts and counsels of thy heart!
But fare thee well, most foul, most fair! farewell,
Thou pure impiety and impious purity!
For thee I'll lock up all the gates of love,
And on my eyelids shall conjecture hang,
To turn all beauty into thoughts of harm,

Dogberry, Verges, Sexton & Watchmen Oatcake and Seacole

Dogberry in his own inimical way instructs the watch as to their duties during the night.

DOGBERRY

Are you good men and true?

VERGES

Yea, or else it were pity but they should suffer salvation, body and soul.

DOGBERRY

Nay, that were a punishment too good for them, if they should have any allegiance in them, being chosen for the prince's watch.

VERGES

Well, give them their charge, neighbour Dogberry.

DOGBERRY

First, who think you the most desertless man to be constable?

VERGES

George Seacole, sir.....; or Hugh Otecake; for he can write and read.

DOGBERRY

Come hither, neighbour Seacole. God hath blessed you with a good name: to be a well-favoured man is the gift of fortune; but to write and read comes by nature.

WATCHMAN SEACOLE

Both which, master constable,--

DOGBERRY

You have: I knew it would be your answer. Well, for your favour, sir, why, give God thanks, and make no boast of it; and for your writing and reading, let that appear when there is no need of such vanity. You are thought here to be the most senseless and fit man for the constable of the watch; therefore bear you the lantern. This is your charge: you shall comprehend all vagrom men; you are to bid any man stand, in the prince's name.

WATCHMAN OATCAKE

Erm! How if he will not stand?

DOGBERRY

Why, then, take no note of him, but let him go; and presently call the rest of the watch together and thank God you are rid of a knave.

VERGES

If he will not stand when he is bidden, he is none of the prince's subjects.

DOGBERRY

True, and they are to meddle with none but the prince's subjects. You shall also make no noise in

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the streets; for, for the watch to babble and to talk is most tolerable and not to be endured.

WATCHMAN SEACOLE

We will rather sleep than talk: we know what belongs to a watch.

DOGBERRY

Why, you speak like an ancient and most quiet watchman; for I cannot see how sleeping should offend: only, have a care that your bills be not stolen. Well, you are to call at all the ale-houses, and bid those that are drunk get them to bed.

WATCHMAN OATCAKE

Erm! How if they will not?

DOGBERRY

Why, then, let them alone till they are sober: if they make you not then the better answer, you may say they are not the men you took them for.

WATCHMAN OATCAKE

Erm! Well, sir....!

DOGBERRY

If you meet a thief, you may suspect him, by virtue of your office, to be no true man; and, for such kind of men, the less you meddle or make with them, why the more is for your honesty.

WATCHMAN OATCAKE

Erm! If we know him to be a thief, shall we not lay hands on him?

DOGBERRY

Truly, by your office, you may; but I think they that touch pitch will be defiled: the most peaceable way for you, if you do take a thief, is to let him show himself what he is and steal out of your company.

VERGES

You have been always called a merciful man, partner.

DOGBERRY

Truly, I would not hang a dog by my will, much more a man who hath any honesty in him.

VERGES

If you hear a child cry in the night, you must call to the nurse and bid her still it.

WATCHMAN OATCAKE

Erm! How if the nurse be asleep and will not hear us?

DOGBERRY

Why, then, depart in peace, and let the child wake her with crying; for the ewe that will not hear her lamb when it baes will never answer a calf when he bleats.

VERGES

'Tis very true.

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DOGBERRY

This is the end of the charge:--you, constable, are to present the prince's own person: if you meet the prince in the night, you may stay him.

VERGES

Nay, by'r our lady, that I think a' cannot.

DOGBERRY

Five shillings to one on't, with any man that knows the statutes, he may stay him: marry, not without the prince be willing; for, indeed, the watch ought to offend no man; and it is an offence to stay a man against his will.

VERGES

By'r lady, I think it be so.

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Don Pedro

Claudio seeks help from his commander to win Hero's hand.

CLAUDIO

My liege, your highness now may do me good.

DON PEDRO

My love is thine to teach: teach it but how,
And thou shalt see how apt it is to learn
Any hard lesson that may do thee good.

CLAUDIO

Hath Leonata any son, my lord?

DON PEDRO

No child but Hero; she's her only heir.
Dost thou affect her, Claudio?

CLAUDIO

O, my lord,
When you went onward on this ended action,
I look'd upon her with a soldier's eye,
That liked, but had a rougher task in hand
Than to drive liking to the name of love:
But now I am return'd and that war-thoughts
Have left their places vacant, in their rooms
Come thronging soft and delicate desires,
All prompting me how fair young Hero is,
Saying, I liked her ere I went to wars.

DON PEDRO

Thou wilt be like a lover presently
And tire the hearer with a book of words!
If thou dost love fair Hero, cherish it,
And I will break with her and with her mother,
And thou shalt have her.
Look, what will serve is fit: 'tis once, thou lovest,
And I will fit thee with the remedy.
I know we shall have revelling to-night:
I will assume thy part in some disguise
And tell fair Hero I am Claudio,
And in her bosom I'll unclasp my heart
And take her hearing prisoner with the force
And strong encounter of my amorous tale:
Then after to her father will I break;
And the conclusion is, she shall be thine.
In practise let us put it presently.

Later Don Pedro secretly woos Hero pretending to be Claudio

DON PEDRO

Lady, will you walk about with your friend?

Much Ado About Nothing – Audition Pieces

HERO

So you walk softly and look sweetly and say nothing,
I am yours for the walk; and especially when I walk away.

DON PEDRO

With me in your company?

HERO

I may say so, when I please.

DON PEDRO

And when please you to say so?

HERO

When I like your favour; for God defend the lute
should be like the case!

DON PEDRO

My visor is Philemon's roof; within the house is Jove.

HERO

Why, then, your visor should be thatched.

DON PEDRO

Speak low, if you speak love.

Friar Francis

Friar Francis brings calm and wisdom after the wedding ceremony has been interrupted, Hero has fainted and her mother is so angry.

FRIAR FRANCIS

Hear me a little;
By noting of the lady I have mark'd
A thousand blushing apparitions
To start into her face, a thousand innocent shames
In angel whiteness beat away those blushes;
And in her eye there hath appear'd a fire,
To burn the errors that these princes hold
Against her maiden truth. Call me a fool;
Trust not my reading nor my observations,
Trust not my age, my reverence, calling, nor divinity,
If this sweet lady lie not guiltless here.

LEONATA

Friar, it cannot be.
Thou seest that all the grace that she hath left
Is that she will not add to her damnation
A sin of perjury; she not denies it:
Why seek'st thou then to cover with excuse
That which appears in proper nakedness?

FRIAR FRANCIS

Lady, what man is he you are accused of?

HERO

They know that do accuse me; I know none:
If I know more of any man alive
Than that which maiden modesty doth warrant,
Let all my sins lack mercy! O my mother,
Prove you that any man with me conversed
At hours unmeet, or that I yesternight
Maintain'd the change of words with any creature,
Refuse me, hate me, torture me to death!

FRIAR FRANCIS

There is some strange misprision in the princes.

....

Pause awhile,
And let my counsel sway you in this case.
Your daughter here the princes left for dead:
Let her awhile be secretly kept in,
And publish it that she is dead indeed;
Maintain a mourning ostentation
And on your family's old monument
Hang mournful epitaphs and do all rites
That appertain unto a burial.

LEONATA

What shall become of this? what will this do?

Much Ado About Nothing – Audition Pieces

FRIAR FRANCIS

Marry, this, well carried, shall on her behalf
Change slander to remorse; that is some good:
She dying, as it must so be maintain'd,
Upon the instant that she was accused,
Shall be lamented, pitied and excused
Of every hearer. So will it fare with Claudio:
When he shall hear she died upon his words,
Then shall he mourn,
And wish he had not so accused her,
No, though he thought his accusation true.
The supposition of the lady's death
Will quench the wonder of her infamy:
And if it sort not well, you may conceal her,
As best befits her wounded reputation,
In some reclusive and religious life,
Out of all eyes, tongues, minds and injuries.

Hero & Ursula

Hero together with Ursula pretend that they cannot see Beatrice watching and listening to them as she sets a trap to get Beatrice and Benedick together.

HERO

Now, Ursula, when Beatrice doth come,
As we do trace this alley up and down,
Our talk must only be of Benedick.
When I do name him, let it be thy part
To praise him more than ever man did merit:
My talk to thee must be how Benedick
Is sick in love with Beatrice. Of this matter
Is little Cupid's crafty arrow made.

Enter BEATRICE, behind

Now begin; For look where Beatrice, like a lapwing, runs
Close by the ground, to hear our conference.

URSULA

The pleasant'st angling is to see the fish
Cut with her golden oars the silver stream,
And greedily devour the treacherous bait:
So angle we for Beatrice. Fear you not my part
of the dialogue.

HERO

Then go we near her, that her ear lose nothing
Of the false sweet bait that we lay for it.
No, truly, Ursula, she is too disdainful;
I know her spirits are as coy and wild
As haggards of the rock.

URSULA

But are you sure?
That Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?

HERO

So says the prince and my new-trothed lord.

URSULA

And did they bid you tell her of it, madam?

HERO

They did entreat me to acquaint her of it;
But I persuaded them, if they loved Benedick,
To wish him wrestle with affection,
And never to let Beatrice know of it.

URSULA

Why did you so? Doth not the gentleman
Deserve as full as fortunate a bed
As ever Beatrice shall couch upon?

HERO

O god of love! I know he doth deserve
As much as may be yielded to a man:

Much Ado About Nothing – Audition Pieces

But Nature never framed a woman's heart
Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice;
Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,
Misprising what they look on, and her wit
Values itself so highly that to her
All matter else seems weak: she cannot love,
Nor take no shape nor project of affection,
She is so self-endear'd.

URSULA

Sure, I think so;
And therefore certainly it were not good
She knew his love, lest she make sport at it.

HERO

Why, you speak truth. I never yet saw man,
How wise, how noble, young, how rarely featured,
But she would spell him backward: if fair-faced,
She would swear the gentleman should be her sister;
If tall, a lance ill-headed; if low, an agate very vilely cut;
If speaking, why, a vane blown with all winds;
If silent, why, a block moved with none.
So turns she every man the wrong side out
And never gives to truth and virtue that
Which simpleness and merit purchaseth.

URSULA

Sure, sure, such carping is not commendable.

HERO

No, not to be so odd and from all fashions
As Beatrice is, cannot be commendable:
But who dare tell her so? If I should speak,
She would mock me into air; O, she would press
me to death with wit. Therefore let Benedick,
like cover'd fire, Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly:
It were a better death than die with mocks.

URSULA

Yet tell her of it: hear what she will say.

HERO

No; rather I will go to Benedick
And counsel him to fight against his passion.
And, truly, I'll devise some honest slanders
To stain my cousin with: one doth not know
How much an ill word may empoison liking.

URSULA

O, do not do your cousin such a wrong.
She cannot be so much without true judgment--
Having so swift and excellent a wit
As she is prized to have--as to refuse
So rare a gentleman as Signior Benedick.

HERO

He is the only man of Italy.
Always excepted my dear Claudio he hath

Much Ado About Nothing – Audition Pieces

an excellent good name.

URSULA

His excellence did earn it, ere he had it.

When are you married, madam?

HERO

Why, to-morrow. Come, go in:

I'll show thee some attires, and have thy counsel

Which is the best to furnish me to-morrow.

URSULA

She's limed, I warrant you: we have caught her, madam.

HERO

If it proves so, then loving goes by haps:

Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps.

Hero & Margaret

Hero and Margaret discuss the wedding morning preparations. And Margaret gives Hero the benefit of her advice.

MARGARET

Troth, I think your other rabato were better.

HERO

No, pray thee, good Meg, I'll wear this.

MARGARET

By my troth, 's not so good; and I warrant your cousin will say so.

HERO

My cousin's a fool, and thou art another: I'll wear none but this.

MARGARET

I like the new tire within excellently, if the hair were a thought browner; and your gown's a most rare fashion, i' faith. I saw the Duchess of Milan's gown that they praise so.

HERO

O, that exceeds, they say.

MARGARET

By my troth, 's but a night-gown in respect of yours: for a fine, quaint, graceful and excellent fashion, yours is worth ten on 't.

HERO

God give me joy to wear it! for my heart is exceeding heavy.

MARGARET

'Twill be heavier soon by the weight of a man.

HERO

Fie upon thee! art not ashamed?

MARGARET

Of what, lady? of speaking honourably? Is not marriage honourable in a beggar? Is not your lord honourable without marriage? I think you would have me say, 'saving your reverence, a husband:' and bad thinking do not wrest true speaking, I'll offend nobody: is there any harm in 'the heavier for a husband'? None, I think, and it be the right husband and the right wife; otherwise 'tis light, and not heavy: ask my Lady Beatrice else; here she comes.

Much Ado About Nothing – Audition Pieces

Leonata

Leonata is angry and incensed by Hero's behaviour and how she and her family have been treated.

ANTONIO

If you go on thus, you will kill yourself:
And 'tis not wisdom thus to second grief
Against yourself.

LEONATA

I pray thee, cease thy counsel,
Which falls into mine ears as profitless
As water in a sieve: give not me counsel;
Nor let no comforter delight mine ear
But such a one whose wrongs do suit with mine.
Bring me a mother that so loved her child,
Whose joy of her is overwhelm'd like mine,
And bid her speak of patience;
Measure her woe the length and breadth of mine
And let it answer every strain for strain,
And I of her will gather patience.
But there is none such: for, brother, men
Can counsel and speak comfort to that grief
Which they themselves not feel; but, tasting it,
Their counsel turns to passion.
No, no; 'tis all men's office to speak patience
To those that wring under the load of sorrow,
But no man's virtue nor sufficiency
To be so moral when he shall endure
The like himself. Therefore give me no counsel:
My griefs cry louder than advertisement.

ANTONIO

Therein do men from children nothing differ.

LEONATA

I pray thee, peace. I will be flesh and blood;

ANTONIO

Yet bend not all the harm upon yourself;
Make those that do offend you suffer too.

LEONATA

There thou speak'st reason: nay, I will do so.
My soul doth tell me Hero is belied;
And that shall Claudio know; so shall the prince
And all of them that thus dishonour her.