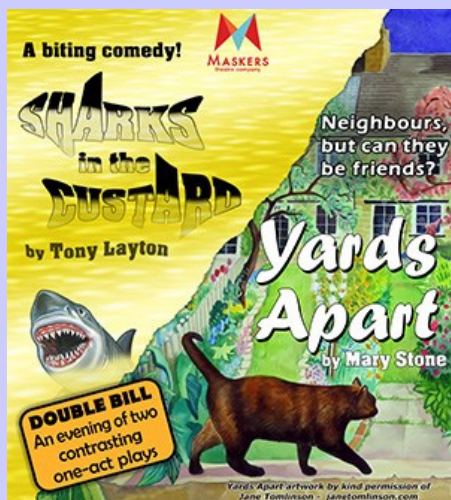


## Our Next Productions



### Double Bill

13 - 18 September  
2021

at The Maskers Studio

off Emsworth Road, Shirley, Southampton  
SO15 3LX

**BOOKING: Via link on our website or 0333 666 3366**

### Out of Focus

22 - 30 October 2021

at The Maskers Studio

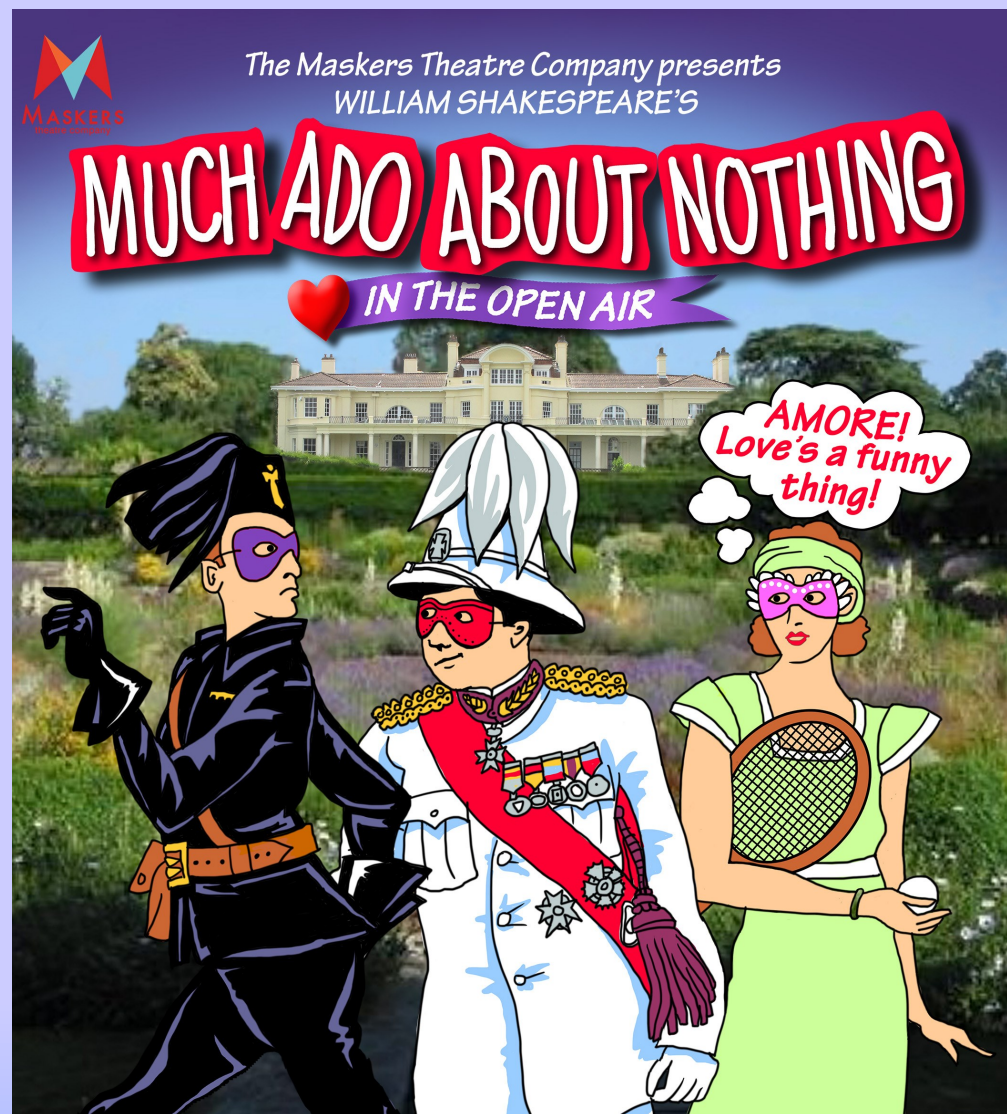
off Emsworth Road, Shirley, Southampton  
SO15 3LX



### For the Maskers

**Technical Manager:-** Jamie McCarthy; **Lighting Consultant:-** Clive Weeks; **Sound Consultant:-** Jamie McCarthy;

**Marketing Team:-** Angela Stansbridge, Clive Weeks, Anna Hussey, Peter Court, Robert Osborne, Meri Mackney, Paul Baker; **Front of House and Box Office Manager:** Chris Baker; **Photography:-** Clive Weeks



Programme

20 - 24 July

2021

In the beautiful grounds of  
Townhill Park House

## Maskers at Townhill Park House

Welcome to Maskers' open-air production of *Much Ado about Nothing*

This is our second production at this lovely location and we hope you enjoy the beauty of the grounds and get a chance to look around the Gertrude Jekyll garden. We are very grateful to The Gregg School for allowing us to perform here and for all their help, most especially Elizabeth Adams, in ensuring that the preparations for the show went smoothly, despite the pandemic.

This is Maskers' 39th outdoor summer production and we are very proud of our record of bringing award-winning, quality theatre to audiences and locations in the area. Maskers was formed over fifty years ago. During that time we have performed and been based in a number of different places in Southampton but we have had our own studio theatre in Shirley, Southampton, for a good many years now. Do come and see a show there. A performance in its small, intimate space is a very different experience compared with an open-air show. Details of Maskers' next productions are on the back page of this programme. See our website for full details: [www.maskers.org.uk](http://www.maskers.org.uk).

We respectfully request that you take all your picnic leftovers and empties home. You may remain to finish your picnics at the end of the play but we ask that you vacate the grounds by 10.30pm (5.45pm for matinée). Thank you!!



This production of *Much Ado About Nothing* is dedicated to Sarah Russell who was a long standing, active and much-loved member of our company. Sarah died, tragically young, in September 2020. She was the first person to be cast in the show – as The Messenger!

Sarah made her directing debut with *Great Expectations* in 2017 and played many challenging roles in *The Graduate*, *Wuthering Heights* and *Butterfly Kiss*, and triumphed as the feisty Sister George in *The Killing of Sister George* in 2018. She was also

part of the marketing team and contributed a great deal to the development of the Maskers. She is greatly missed.

Since our last Open Air Production in July 2019, Ken Spencer, founding member and Chair of Maskers for 36 years, passed away. Ken was a major figure in Southampton's amateur theatre scene and a highly memorable character with his handlebar moustache, sparkling eyes and rich tones. We take this opportunity to remember Ken and we know that many of you will too.



*There will be one interval of 20 minutes*

## Townhill Park House



From early Norman times until the dissolution of the monasteries, Townhill was held by the Bishop of Winchester. In 1536, it was granted to Sir William Paulet and became known as Townhill Farm. Nathaniel Middleton of the East India Company acquired it in 1787 and turned it into a private home. The estate became known as Townhill Park.

Townhill Park was bought by Samuel Montagu, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Swaythling, in 1897 as a residence for his newly-married son, Louis. Extensive modifications took place in the Italian style under the architect Leonard Rome Guthrie. He and Gertrude Jekyll were asked to design the gardens to complement the new style of the house and the arboretum.

During World War II, the estate was loaned to the Red Cross as a convalescent home for British soldiers, after which the house was sold to Middlesex County Council and became a boarding school for underprivileged girls. The rest of the land became the housing estate known as Townhill Park. Southampton City Council took over the house and grounds in 1969 as a hostel for merchant navy cadets. In 1994, it became The Gregg School, as you see it today.

In 1997, The Friends of Townhill Park Gardens volunteer force was formed to restore the Gertrude Jekyll Garden, the Herb Garden and the Herbaceous Borders. More recently, work has been done to restore the Arboretum and Orchard. The gardens are open to the public free of charge on advertised dates through the year.

***Please take care when moving around the grounds as steps and paths may be uneven and slippery if wet.***

***Provision for smoking has been made in the parkland. Please use the sand buckets provided. Thank you!***

## Much Ado About Maskers

***Much Ado About Nothing*** has been a favourite of Maskers and our audiences over the years. It was our first production in 1968, touring and then going into the Nuffield Theatre, Southampton, where we performed regularly for 49 years.



Jeanne Rushton as Beatrice;  
Jim Smith as Benedick



We came back to it in 1989 for our 21st anniversary production, with Belinda Drew playing Beatrice and Brian Stansbridge (yes, the director of this production) playing Benedick.

The director of that show, Michael Patterson, remembers:

*The resplendent setting of the National Trust's Mottisfont Abbey provided The Maskers with the opportunity for a new approach to outdoor theatre - we moved the whole audience to a different location for each main scene. All 200 of them. Not once, but 3 times! The play opened, for example, around the main entrance to the great House, with the messenger arriving on horseback down the long drive. He was soon followed by the arrival of Benedick, in full Ruritanian military uniform, sitting in the back of his staff-car (a canary yellow, chauffeur-driven vintage car!). The audience loved the concept - each move gave them a chance to get a better position to see the action. They still remember the finale, the candle-lit entrance into the Chapel Arch, the setting for The Wedding, as dusk deepened over the Test Valley, and the sound of the church choir drifted over the river . . .*



And now our 2021 production with husband and wife team Anna and Sam Hussey.



To receive details of all our productions, join the Maskers' online mailing list at [www.maskers.org.uk](http://www.maskers.org.uk)

## Director's Notes

It may not be everyone's choice, but ***Much Ado About Nothing*** is my favourite Shakespeare comedy. I was lucky enough to play Benedick in the Maskers' 1989 production at Mottisfont Abbey. It gradually became apparent to me then that there was something going on in this play that was about more than just the mistaken identities, puns and fools that we see in other Shakespeare comedies. It was about Beatrice!

In many of his plays, Shakespeare lays certain "truths" before us – giving the audience something to think about, and in ***Much Ado*** it is about the expectations and role of women. It is clear that Beatrice is not some passive Elizabethan woman. She scorns the messenger's descriptions of Benedick as some kind of hero. She doesn't faint at Benedick's feet but engages in a battle of wits with him. She gives Hero some very down to earth advice about what to expect from marriage. Some would say that Shakespeare uses comedy to soften the audience's reaction to a woman who subverts the socially acceptable notion that women "need" men and husbands. I find it surprising and impressive that a 16<sup>th</sup> Century man even entertained such an idea.

We originally intended to present this production last year, but Covid 19 put paid to that. When, earlier this year, the Government launched its Roadmap setting out our path from Lockdown, it looked like an outdoor production in July might be possible. So, I contacted the people I had cast, to sound them out on going ahead this year. The response was overwhelmingly, "YES, PLEASE !!!!!!!". I delivered scripts by hand in April and, as I socially distanced on their doorsteps, I had people jumping up and down with delight at the prospect of getting some live theatre going again. And it wasn't just the cast. We had to rehearse outdoors, obeying the "rule of six", initially, and I chose to use my garden. I thought I had better warn the neighbours and reassure them that we were following the Covid rules. They were very happy too and, at our first rehearsal, one neighbour delivered a bottle of champagne, so keen was she to mark the occasion.

It wasn't easy, but we thought it was worth it. We hope you think so too.

### Brian



**Directed by Brian Stansbridge** - A member of Maskers for much longer than he cares to remember, Brian has been involved in many shows, both as an actor and director. Recent acting credits include: Tim in ***The Flint Street Nativity***, Miguel de Cervantes in ***Don Quixote***, the Station Master in ***Mistletoe Junction***, and Long John Silver in ***Treasure Island***. During his acting life, Brian has made an unintentional habit of taking over parts at short notice, when other actors fall ill. He swears he didn't poison them! Recent directing credits include ***Mistletoe Junction***, ***Room at the Inn***, ***The Importance of Being Earnest***, ***The Servant of Two Masters*** and ***The Comedy of Errors***. Last summer during the Covid restrictions, Brian wrote and directed a one act play called ***Parklife***, which we performed in parks and open spaces around Southampton.

## The Cast in order of appearance



**Messenger** played by **Lee Taylor** — Lee is currently doing extra work for a tv series. Despite always having had a passion for the creative arts, Lee hasn't performed on stage since college so he's very excited to do so again. In his spare time, he likes to upload videos to his YouTube channel, called LeeewithanE.



**Leonato** played by **Philip de Grouchy** — A member of the Society since the early 1970s, Philip has played a large variety of parts in every kind of show, including several of Shakespeare's plays; each time, for some reason, an older character than before! He appeared in **Much Ado** about 44 years ago, as Benedick, but only when moonlighting with another group, so it doesn't count. He is much enjoying the stimulation and challenge of learning - and sometimes even remembering - lines and working with such a young and talented company.



**Hero** played by **Katherine Evans** — Katherine is delighted to be playing a 'role' in reviving live theatre this summer, especially one as aptly symbolic as Hero – who undergoes something of a demise and rebirth herself! **Much Ado About Nothing** is Katherine's fourth production with Maskers, having previously appeared in **The Importance of Being Earnest**, **Our Town** and as Eliza Doolittle in **Pygmalion**. She has also performed a wide range of roles with other local companies and directed several shows.



**Beatrice** played by **Anna Hussey** — Anna joined Maskers over 2 years ago and has been involved both on and off stage. Debuting in **Wyrd Sisters** as part of the ensemble in 2018, Anna has contributed backstage and started helping with marketing before returning to the Maskers' stage to play Nina in **100**. Anna has been excited to take on the role of Beatrice, who is one of her favourite Shakespearean characters, and she really hopes that she can do her justice! The cherry on top for Anna is that she gets to play alongside her husband and have a "merry battle of wits" with him as Benedick.



**Don Pedro** played by **Adam Taussik** — Since joining Maskers 17 years ago, Adam has played characters of many ranks, from peasants to kings (with a smattering of vicars, soldiers and bears), but this will be the first Prince (though the second Spanish Don after **Don Quixote**). For this show, Adam will also be keeping up the Shakespearean tone of **Twelfth Night**, and hopes Sir Toby's hard drinking will not haunt the groves of Messina...



**MASKERS**  
theatre company

# OPEN DAYS

Technical demos, costume displays, behind the scenes chats & more

Shirley's own studio theatre opens its doors to everyone!

FREE ENTRY - All welcome!

**MASKERS STUDIO THEATRE**  
off Emsworth Road, Shirley, SO15 3LX

Saturdays 10am to 1pm  
Sunday 15 August 1pm to 4pm

14 / 15 August  
4 September  
2 October  
6 November  
4 December

Just Drop-In when we are open  
FREE Refreshments

maskers.org.uk

Registered charity 900067



## The Production Crew

<b>Director</b>	Brian Stansbridge
<b>Advisor to Director</b>	Graham Buchanan
<b>Production Manager</b>	Chris Baker
<b>Stage Manager</b>	Robert Osborne
<b>Assistant Stage Manager</b>	Kathryn Salmon
<b>Lighting and Production Engineering</b>	Clive Weeks
<b>FoH Sound and Electrical Engineering</b>	Jamie McCarthy
<b>Technical Operators</b>	Oliver Trojak, David Cowley
<b>Properties</b>	Adam Taussik
<b>Costume Design</b>	Serena Brown
<b>Costume Supervisor</b>	Susan Wilson
<b>Assisted by</b>	Sheana Carrington, Magda Witkowska
<b>Set Design</b>	John Hamon
<b>Set Construction and Painting</b>	John Hamon, Ken Hann, Graham Buchanan
<b>Choreography</b>	Molly McDade
<b>Front of House Manager</b>	Meri Mackney
<b>Car Park Manager</b>	Brian Stansbridge
<b>Catering Manager</b>	Chris Baker

## Acknowledgements

**Jon Foyle** for composing and performing the music for Balthasar's songs  
**Peter Court** for Poster Advertising  
**Hazel Burrows** for the loan of furniture  
**Sonya Mackney** for designing and painting the masks  
**Ian Wilson** and **Anna Carrington** for the loan of props.  
**Emphasis Event Productions** for hire of Trilite and radio microphones

## Maskers Needs You!

Maskers are keen to welcome new members with an interest in any aspect of theatre - all things technical, directing, costumes, props, set design and construction, front of house, marketing and, of course, acting!

**Enjoy the challenge of making theatre happen.**

To find out more about Maskers Theatre Company, go to

[www.maskers.org.uk](http://www.maskers.org.uk) or speak to any of the Front of House staff



@MaskersTheatre



Find us on

Facebook

## The Cast in order of appearance



**Claudio** played by **Calum Daly** — *Much Ado About Nothing* will be the second Maskers' production Calum has been in; the first production being *Great Expectations*, directed by Sarah Russell back in 2017. Energetic and talkative by nature, Calum feels Maskers as a group have always felt like a large family and he jumps at the opportunity to find himself among a fun cast of people who will enjoy laughing until it hurts and then some!



**Benedick** played by **Sam Hussey** — Sam joined Maskers for their last open-air Shakespeare production 2 years ago, playing Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night*. Following that, he appeared as The Guide in the studio show *100*. Before that, his experience has mostly been in musicals, with roles including Joe Casey in *Our House* and the Mayor in *Rock of Ages*, although he has dabbled in Shakespeare before as Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Sam is very much looking forward to getting in front of an audience again in one of his all-time favourite Shakespearian roles!



**Don John** played by **Alec Sleight** — Alec trained at the Identity School of Acting in London. His first stage role was as the lead in *Birdland* which enjoyed a run at the Edinburgh Fringe. This was then followed by roles with other companies in productions like *Miss Julie* and *Hamlet*. He has also appeared in independent films and is currently working on a modern-day film adaptation of *Prometheus Bound*; portraying the titular character. *Much Ado About Nothing* is his first role with Maskers. This is a play he has always wanted to be a part of and he cannot wait to get back on stage with such a wonderful company!



**Borachio** played by **Jez Minns** — Jez has been acting, mostly in amateur theatre but sometimes professionally, for the last 35 years (it seems so long when you write it down!) and he still loves everything about the theatre, even learning the lines. His most recent appearances were as Antonio, the gay sea captain in *Twelfth Night* and as the bully-boy Innkeeper in *The Flint Street Nativity* two years ago. He is very happy to be directing the one-act comedy *Sharks in The Custard* as part of a double bill in the Maskers' Studio this September.



**Conrade** played by **David Jobson** - David returns to the Maskers having appeared in *Richard II*, *Jungle Book*, *Ten Times Table*, *An Italian Straw Hat* and *Around the World in Eighty Days*. He has a love for Shakespeare and has had the honour of performing the bard's plays at the Titchfield Festival Players' Tithe Barn, playing Cassius in *Julius Caesar*, Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Malcolm in *Macbeth*, Sir Thurio in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and Angelo in *The Comedy of Errors*. He is also a trustee for Flute Theatre, a company that uses the language of Shakespeare to help autistic youngsters to communicate.

## The Cast in order of appearance



**Antonio** played by **Paul Baker** — 2019 marked the end of a run of twenty-three consecutive appearances for Paul in Maskers' open-air productions and he hopes this year's production is the start of another as he returns to play Antonio. Paul has appeared in a variety of parts over the years, playing pirates, demons, weasels and doctors. He is looking forward to testing his skills in projection against the aeroplanes this year.



**Margaret** played by **Jenni Watson**— Jenni's love of acting was ignited when she appeared as an extra in *A Man for all Seasons* whilst at Drama School. Over the years she has performed for Maskers, as well as many local groups, in a variety of settings. Her favourite roles include: Lady Booby (*Joseph Andrews*), Nancy (*Sitting Pretty*), Mrs Pearce (*Pygmalion*), the Contessa (*An Italian Straw Hat*), and in *A Remembrance Anthology*. Jenni is delighted to be able to act again (and with such a talented team) after an agonising absence of many months due to the Covid pandemic!



**Ursula** played by **Jo Fox** — Jo has been an active Masker for 13 years and has played a variety of roles in that time, including Lady Jane Rochford in *Anne Boleyn*, Gwendolen in *The Importance of Being Earnest* and a monkey in *The Jungle Book*. As well as acting, Jo is also kept busy in her role as company secretary on the Maskers' committee. Jo is really excited to be getting back on stage after the enforced break and is having fun being part of the mischief and meddling in *Much Ado!*



**Balthasar** played by **Chris Williams**— Chris joined the Maskers just before the end of the last ice age. Due to work commitments he only manages to appear in Maskers' shows about once every decade, so he is really looking forward to this production of *Much Ado About Nothing*. He last appeared for Maskers in *Treasure Island* at Hamptworth Lodge in 2011 and before that in *Flare Path* at the Plaza Theatre in Romsey in 1989. So, in fact, once a decade is an exaggeration!



**Dogberry** played by **Marie McDade**— This will be Marie's 5th outing on the Maskers' outdoor stage – from Shakespearian Midsummer fairy to Kipling's jungle Panther and assorted eccentric sea captains travelling *Around the World in 80 Days*. Indoor shows (remember them?) have included *Richard II*, Granny Weatherwax in *Wyrd Sisters* (based on Macbeth) and *A Bunch of Amateurs* (based on King Lear) – so *Much Ado* will also be her 5<sup>th</sup> Maskers' Shakespeare and she is very *Much* looking forward to it.

## The Cast in order of appearance



**Verges** played by **Jo Iacovou**— Joanna has played many roles since joining Maskers over seventeen years ago; Favourite roles have included Ruby Birtle in *When We Are Married* and Rita in *Educating Rita* and playing multiple parts in *Around the World in 80 Days*. Jo branched out into directing with *Our Town* at Maskers Studio Theatre for which she won Best Director of a Drama in the Curtain Call Awards 2014.



**The Watch** played by **Sue Dashper** — During Sue's time in Maskers, she has been involved in a number of productions, including *Contractions* and *Metamorphosis* in the Studio and *Sitting Pretty* and *An Italian Straw Hat* at the Nuffield Theatre. She has been in many outdoor productions including: *Don Quixote*, *Around the World in Eighty Days*, *The Jungle Book*, *Ann Boleyn*, *Treasure Island* and *Twelfth Night*.



**The Watch** played by **Angela Stansbridge** — Angie has been a member of Maskers since 1973 and has enjoyed playing a wide range of parts, most recently in *Twelfth Night* (our first show at Townhill Park House), *Don Quixote*, *Room at the Inn*, *Ten Times Table*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Treasure Island* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Angie is the Chair of Maskers so is always busy working with the committee on the smooth running and the creativity of the company.



**The Watch** played by **Jill Desborough**— Having managed to squeeze in her directing debut with *Quartet* just before lockdown in February 2020, Jill is thrilled to be back onstage with Maskers this summer. This will be her third outdoor show, following *Jungle Book* and *Pygmalion*, both at Hamptworth, and she is enjoying exploring the comic possibilities of a female Watch. Jill also plays **Sexton**.



**Father Francis** played by **Michele Zadra**—*Much Ado* is Michele's first production with Maskers - and his very first Shakespeare! - previously he appeared in a long play (the hilarious farce *Inspector Drake and the Time Machine*), festival plays, single acts, sketch shows, mystery murders, radio drama, and even a Halloween horrorfest, for other local amdram companies. He loves the opportunity to be acting outdoors and he is very excited about becoming Friar Francis, the mastermind behind Hero's marriage with Claudio.

**Accordionist** played by **Graham Buchanan**