



ACTORS ENSEMBLE OF BERKELEY



PHOTO: VICKI VICTORIA

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

adaptation and direction by
GLENN HAVLAN
adaptation and dramaturgy by
GABY SCHNEIDER

SATURDAYS & SUNDAYS

JUNE 29 - JULY 14

@ 4 PM

plus a SPECIAL SHOW ON THURSDAY JULY 4th

CAST

Marc Berman (Antonio)
David Cesari (John)
Mark Goldman (Verges)
Greg Gutting (Pedro)
Illan F. Halpern (Benedick)
Winter Johnson (Conrade)
Joan Legaspi (Balthasar)
Flannery Mays (Hero)

Liam Monaghan (Claudio)
Erin K. Perry (Ursula)
Virginia Poole (Margaret)
Michele Sanner (Borachio)
Francis Serpa (Frances)
Samira Sheahan (Leonara)
Jeff Trescott (Dogberry)
Skyler Wuolle (Beatrice)

STAFF

Lyre Alston (Costumes)
Kirsten Yamaguchi (Set Design)
Susan Dunn (Props)
Jeff Dunn (Sound)
Abby Hirobe (Stage Manager)
Ana Nogueira (Crew)

FREE!
DONATIONS
APPRECIATED!

BRING PILLOWS, BLANKETS AND/OR LOW STADIUM SEATING

JOHN HINKEL PARK AMPHITHEATRE

41 SOMERSET PLACE, BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94707

www.aeofberkeley.org



About Actors Ensemble of Berkeley

Actors Ensemble (**AE**) has been around the block (and just around the corner from you) since 1957, making us the longest-running stage company in Berkeley. Since 1965 we have performed often at Live Oak Theatre in North Berkeley. Recently we have also taken the opportunity to bring the magic of theatre to the John Hinkel Park Amphitheatre, a wonderful outdoor space with a vast legacy of performance.

As Berkeley's only true community theatre company, we depend on our volunteers to bring their energy and creative vision to each play we produce. If you would like to volunteer in our theatre, give us a call or send us an email! We'd love for you to play a part in our next show!

Actors Ensemble of Berkeley
P.O. Box 663
Berkeley, California 94701
www.aeofberkeley.org
info@AEofBerkeley.Org



Thanks to Ruth Giron Wong, Kevin Karplus, Lisa Wang, Jeff Trescott, Martha Luehrmann, Jay Manley, Jerome Solberg, Matthew Campbell, Jennifer Halsing, Kathleen A Shiring, Eugene S. Bardach, Christine Sheppard, Charlotte von der Hude, Tom and Jan Vargo, and all those who have supported Actors Ensemble over the past year.

Board of Directors

Michael R. Cohen[^], Victoria F. Siegel[^], Jeff Trescott[^], Jerome Solberg[^], Tracy Baxter, Hannah Rachel Gerry, Jane Goodwin, Paulette Herring, Jay Manley, Gabriel Ross, Ian Wilcox*, Crystal Brown*, Susannah Wood*, Robert Estes*, Martha Luehrmann*, Norah Foster*, Meryn MacDougall*

*=alternate, [^]=officer.

Performance Schedule:

**4 p.m. Saturdays and Sunday June 29th – July 14th
& Thursday July 4th**

**John Hinkel Park Amphitheater
41 Somerset Pl., Berkeley, CA 94707**

The Performance is approx. 2 1/2 hours with an intermission



*Actors Ensemble is supported in part
by a grant from The City of Berkeley
Civic Arts Commission*



Much Ado About Nothing
By William Shakespeare
Adaption and Direction by Glenn Havlan
Adaption and Dramaturgy by Gaby Schneider
Cast and Staff

<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Marc Berman</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>David Cesari</i>
<i>Verges</i>	<i>Mark Goldman</i>
<i>Pedro</i>	<i>Greg Gutting</i>
<i>Benedick</i>	<i>Illan F. Halpern</i>
<i>Conrade</i>	<i>Winter Johnson</i>
<i>Balthasar</i>	<i>Joan Legaspi</i>
<i>Hero</i>	<i>Flannery Mays</i>
<i>Claudio</i>	<i>Liam Monaghan</i>
<i>Ursula</i>	<i>Erin K. Perry</i>
<i>Margaret</i>	<i>Virgie Poole</i>
<i>Borachio</i>	<i>Michele Sanner Vargas</i>
<i>Frances</i>	<i>Francis Serpa</i>
<i>Leonora</i>	<i>Samira Sheahan</i>
<i>Dogberry</i>	<i>Jeff Trescott</i>
<i>Beatrice</i>	<i>Skyler Wuolle</i>
<i>Stage Manager</i>	<i>Abby Hirobe</i>
<i>Costumer</i>	<i>Lyre Alston</i>
<i>Set Designer/Graphic Design</i>	<i>Kirsten Yamaguchi</i>
<i>Props</i>	<i>Susan Dunn</i>
<i>Sound</i>	<i>Jeff Dunn</i>
<i>Photography</i>	<i>Vicki Victoria</i>
<i>Sound System and Hot Dog Coordination</i>	<i>Michael R. Cohen</i>
<i>Producer & Many Other Things</i>	<i>Jerome Solberg</i>

Thanks: Jason Matthews, Terrie Vargas, Bruce Platt and Harvena Tracy of the City of Berkeley. Charlie Pengra for masks. Mercedes Cohen for help with sewing the set. Shay Oglesby-Smith and Masquers for set pieces, and University One-Hour Martinizing for help with dry-cleaning.

For photos of the cast and more check our website or [@actorsensemble](#) on FB or [@aeofberkeley](#) on Instagram or X

A Note from the Director

Of the many themes and issues raised by *Much Ado About Nothing*, we have chosen to focus on the matter of forgiveness. It is a question that becomes central to a few of Shakespeare's plays, especially *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Measure for Measure*, and *The Tempest*. In some plays it is not granted. In *Much Ado* it is, and it becomes our task and our quest to discover why.

Hero is often criticized for her seeming passivity and her relative paucity of words, especially in her own defense. But to infer from this that she is without agency overlooks the fact that the divine power of forgiveness is hers to bestow or withhold. She decides to visualize her future optimistically and she understands that people can learn from their mistakes, apologize with heartfelt earnestness, and prove their ability to learn and grow. We have decided to give her transgressors the chance to redeem themselves rather than to pile on condemnation that we might feel they deserve but is insufficiently meted out to them. We need not heap our own judgment and scorn on them if we take Hero's example and focus on the imperatives of compassion, mercy, and reconciliation. This is the spirit of restorative justice as we are coming to define it in our current times.

This is the play, this is the text, this is Shakespeare. It is our duty to make sense of it, not to shape it to our own sensibilities. People do things differently from my way all the time. It is up to me to fathom their reasons without prejudice or censure. I might learn something.

A Note from the Dramaturg

Much Ado About Nothing is densely packed with wordplay—puns, malapropisms, double meanings, and more—starting with the title itself, which has at least three layers of meaning. On the surface, “much ado about nothing” could be paraphrased as “a big fuss for no good reason.” This is certainly one way to characterize the plot: conflict caused by misunderstandings, easily resolved once the truth is revealed. The second layer is a bawdy double entendre: “nothing” was 16th-century slang for female genitalia, so the title can also mean “a big fuss about women's sexuality”—an accurate description of the Hero/Claudio storyline and the play's central twist!

But the third layer reveals a more complex interpretation. “Nothing” is also a pun on “noting,” which can mean both public perception and rumor, giving the additional meaning of “a big fuss about reputations.” As you watch the play today, you may note many instances of “noting.” Rumors are spread—true and false, well-intended and malicious—rumors that have the power to make or break relationships, reputations, and lives. For Beatrice and Benedick, overhearing what others secretly think of them becomes an opportunity for love and personal growth. For John, who doesn't care what anyone thinks of him, perception is a tool to manipulate his enemies. For Hero and Claudio, a lie could destroy their love—but the truth brings a chance for reconciliation.

Cast and Staff Biographies

In Alphabetical Order

Lyre Alston (he/him/she/her) (*Costumes*) is a designer working in and around the bay area in both Costume design and Wig/Makeup design/artistry. Some recent shows include *The Tutor* with New Conservatory Theatre Company, *The Red Shades* at ZSpace, and in *the Panto* at The Presidio. Please enjoy the show!

Marc Berman (he/him) (*Antonio*) is honored to join Actors Ensemble for the first time. After being in Sacramento for a decade, Marc moved back to the bay area and took the theater world by storm. Performing in over 30 shows in the past decade, the roles have been strewn across the spectrum. Marc owns his own make-up design company (Seduction Make-up). He wishes to thank his consort Lisa, stepson Aidan and son Xander for their constant support.

David Cesari (he/him) (*John*) is an actor who is born and raised in San Francisco. He thanks the Actor Ensemble for this opportunity.

Susan Dunn (she/her) (*Props*) has enjoyed many production challenges at Berkeley Playhouse, Hillbarn Theatre, Altarena Playhouse, Island City Opera and AE. She particularly revels in turning trash into treasures for the stage. This is her 4th role at AE and second show at John Hinkel Park, a favorite venue. Susan is also a local theatre critic and you can find her reviews at <https://aisleseatreview.com/>.

Mark Goldman (he/him) (*Verges*) is excited to be with Actors Ensemble again after playing Cleante in *Tartuffe* many years past! Mark has acted with several companies including Marin Shakespeare, Mills College, SSFCT and the wonderful Bardophilic Theater of Othera in SF. Favorite roles include King of France in *Alls Well That Ends Well* and Bob Cratchit in *A Christmas Carol*.

Greg Gutting (he/him) (*Pedro*) is excited to be back on stage for the first time following the pandemic and to be playing with good friends again. Greg's past appearances include numerous Elizabethan plays with Theater of Others and Ninjas of Drama. Most recently, he played Lady Bracknel in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* under the direction of the great Rey Carolino. He would like to express his immense gratitude to Glenn Havlan for bringing him along on this ride.

Illan F. Halpern (he/him) (*Benedick*) has acted in plays in Brazil, Canada, and the east and west coasts of the United States. He holds a Ph.D. in Physics from UC Berkeley, and a minor in Theater Arts from MIT. Illan is thrilled to be given the opportunity to play such an iconic

part in this production. He was last seen on stage as the janitor in Andrew Vachss' *Placebo*, as part of AE's *Three for Thought, Too, Plus One*. Additional AE credits include *Fortinbras*, and the staged readings of *Lysistrata* and *Machinal*.

Glenn Havlan (*Director*) returns to AE after playing Peter Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People* and Dr. Ponlius in 2022's *Mothers All*. He appeared in *Much Ado* at College of Marin three months ago and was seen last year in *Shakespeare in Love* at the Novato Theater Company. He performed in nine shows with the Marin Shakespeare Company. Lately, he has been a regular at The Curtain Theatre in Mill Valley. This coming summer he will be appearing as Nick Bottom in Curtain's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Glenn has performed in and/or directed over forty productions of twenty different Shakespeare plays. He founded two San Francisco companies, the Free Civic Theater and the Theater of Others, staging fifty productions from 2000-2019.

Abby Hirobe (*any*) (*Stage Management*) is thrilled to be making her stage-managing debut with Actors Ensemble. She is a student at Galileo Academy and hopes to continue her involvement in local theater productions such as this.

Winter Johnson (*he/him*) (*Conrade*) is an aspiring actor who is excited to continue his theater experience thus far. He has played in several productions, one of which being Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In spare time, he is a UC transfer student!

Joan Legaspi (*she/her*) (*Balthasar*) is a Filipino-American actress who took improv classes to improve her confidence and got bitten by the acting bug. She graduated with a 2-year certificate from the Waterfront Conservatory for Meisner Technique under Rachael Adler. In her spare time, she writes novels, plays electric guitar, sews Victorian clothing, and plays Stardew Valley.

Flannery Mays (*she/her*) (*Hero*) is ecstatic to be back with Actors Ensemble, appearing in their musical last year, *Faeries of the Moonlight!* Today, Flannery is ready to bring empowerment, vulnerability, and effervescence to the role of HERO in this gender-bending "heart-eating" rendition of *Much Ado*. Flannery is a community-oriented actor, dancer, & singer in the Bay Area. Join her journey on Instagram or Facebook: @flannerymays.

Liam Monaghan (*he/him*) (*Claudio*) is thrilled to be joining Actors Ensemble this summer. Originally from Marin County, he previously attended Marin School of the Arts with a Musical Theatre concentration and is currently pursuing his BFA in Musical Theatre at the Hartt School of Music in Hartford, Connecticut.

Erin K. Perry (she/her) (*Ursula*) graduated from San Francisco State University with a degree in drama, and has continued her practice at A.C.T., as well as the Stella Adler Studio of Acting. Some of her credits include *Clark Kent Gets His Suit Cleaned*, and *other plays* and Berkeley Shakespeare Company's *King Lear*, which she was nominated for a BroadwayWorld San Francisco/Bay Area Award for Best Performer in a Play. She is so excited to make her Actors Ensemble debut.

Virgie Poole (she/her) (*Margaret*) discovered a passion for musical theater before she could walk. Though a longtime lover of acting and performing, she took a distinctly long hiatus in the pursuit of science. Please welcome her back to the stage in her first role since Jan from *Grease: The Musical* in 2006. Hopefully, you'll be seeing even more of her.

Gaby Schneider (she/her) (*Dramaturg*) has been studying and performing Shakespeare since childhood. She was a core company member of Theater of Others, where she initially developed this adaptation of *Much Ado* with Glenn. She has worked at various theaters around the Bay Area, including Marin Shakespeare, Marin Theatre Company, and Playwrights Foundation (where she is now a board member). When not on stage, she works as a staff attorney at Bay Area Legal Aid. Much love and thanks to Michael for all his support and understanding!

Francis Serpa (they/them) (*Frances*) is excited to be back in John Hinkle Park after playing Cecil last summer in AE's production of *A Room with a View*. Most recently they played Cornelia in Berkeley Shakespeare Company's *Cymbeline*, and a few of Shakespeare's other roles they've played are Romeo, Oberon, and Julius Caesar.

Samira Sheahan (she/her) (*Leonora*) has become a drama therapist by day and is delighted to return to Shakespeare after several years away. She credits most of her training to an outdoor Shakespeare camp on the East Coast, most of her sanity to the inestimable Gaurav Bajaj, and most of her insanity to her jumping sheepdog.

Jeff Trescott (Your Majesty) (*Dogberry*) has worked in many plays, both as an actor and backstage. Most recently he was in *The White Card* in Pinole and *Kudzu* at BAM. He has a BA in Mathematics from Harvard and is AE's treasurer.

Michele Sanner Vargas (*Borachio*) is thrilled to join Actors Ensemble for the first time. She most recently started in the musical *The People vs. Mona* at Masquers Theater and played Medda Larkin in *Newsies!* Her favorite roles include Anita in West Side story, Sarah Brown in *Guys and Dolls*, and Hermia in *A Midsummer Nights Dream*. Michele lives in

Novato and performs five shows a day... as a high school teacher, that is. She dedicates this show as always to her father.

Skyler Wuolle (she/her) (*Beatrice*) is thrilled to return to the stage as Beatrice for her first production with the Actors Ensemble. From her earliest years at the Grand Rapids Civic Theatre to music videos and feature films, Skyler brings energy and passion to every role. Offstage, Skyler works in technology marketing and resides in Kensington with her husband, Davis. You're likely to see them walking to John Hinkel Park or out on their quest for the best slice of pizza in Berkeley.

Kirsten Yamaguchi (she/her) (*Set/Graphics*) has designed many theater programs and posters and has also worked as an animator on feature films, games and more. As a youth in Los Angeles, Kirsten performed on stage in many musicals and with choirs.

Donate: www.aeofberkeley.org/donate

*Our website accepts **Paypal** – We are a 501(3)c organization.*

Checks: PO Box 663, Berkeley, CA 94703

Venmo: [https://account.venmo.com/u/Actors Ensemble](https://account.venmo.com/u/Actors_Ensemble)

Or for Venmo

scan this:



Next up for AE:

The Imaginary Invalid, by Molière, directed

by Jay Manley - weekends August 24th –

September 8th including Labor Day

John Hinkel Park Amphitheater

Along with staged readings Late August

Join us!

Join our mailing list - www.aeofberkeley.org

Join the board or just volunteer and help us move forward!

info@aeofberkeley.org