

Director's Notes

In the mid 1590s the popular playwright William Shakespeare was writing a series of romantic comedies with madcap titles that winked knowingly at the audience: MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, AS WELL THAT ENDS WELL, LOVE'S LABOURS LOST, AS YOU LIKE IT, WHAT YOU WILL (TWELFTH NIGHT's other title). Mistaken identities, chases, sword fights, battling sexes, songs, death sentences, dances, and love subverted then recovered were some of the common features of these mid-decade plays, along with a streak of melancholy wending its way through each.

In the mid 1960s the popular musicians and pop icons THE BEATLES were creating a series of romantic ditties that told stories, sometimes as monologues, or soliloquies, or as scenes. A HARD DAY'S NIGHT was their first film, a 1964 comic masterpiece about being the Fab Four pursued by frantic fans as they all gathered in a fine studio to have their concert filmed.

In 2015 I played Benedict in a MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING in Woodstock. Jack LaVigne, a former member of Theatre Without a Net, was hired to play Borachio. Commuting daily we chatted about how ill-suited the setting of the Woodstock production was: the Old American West. Jack and his fellow TW/ON alumnus, musician Connor Armbruster, were fond of our setting (psychedelic 1967) for WHAT YOU WILL five years before, and we started wondering what a more appropriate setting would be for the madcap, music rich MUCH ADO. In the middle of Beatlemania circa 1964, when the film A HARD DAY'S NIGHT launched the Liverpool quartet into the midst of celebrity royalty and a media frenzy matched only by the Beatles fans, seemed a perfect setting to explore MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING. We mused about costumes, songs to use, and what the set would look like. "Someday let's do it."

In medias res of my British Literature class last year I started noting that one student more often carried an acoustic guitar to class than notebook, pen, or whichever great of Brit Lit we were studying. "Someday might not be so far off," I mused. "Just needed to find some students who could act, sing, dance, and play instruments again as with 2012's WHAT YOU WILL."

In the middle of 2017, students voted to produce MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING next school year; Superintendent Jodi Monroe and Principal Dave Doemel were kind enough to let me return to direct, with the English department's rising star Ms. Alicia Sharp's assistance. As thankfully happens, the students helped to cast themselves by being able to act, sing, dance, and play instruments, aided by student director Jackson Lalor's creative influence. So A HARD DAY'S MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING began rehearsals in September.

In the middle of December 2017, A HARD DAY'S MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING —inspired by Jack LaVigne and Connor Armbruster's musing, the film A HARD DAY'S NIGHT black&white aesthetic, the Beatles' songs substituting for Shakespeare's borrowed Elizabethan popular ditties, and the protean efforts of Andrea Adamcheck (*spelling of names and aegis need to be confirmed*), Julia O'Keefe's mother, Colleen Bonacci, Sandy Myers, Christine Beck, Michael O'Keefe, Laura Murray on costumes, sets, projections, props, and make up along with the cast and crew of 50 ardent Shakespeare and Beatles savvy students— springs to life. "All My Loving, I will send to you" as Shakespeare might have said, or as Lennon, McCartney, or Harrison might have sung, "I do love nothing in the world so well as you- is not that strange?"

And at least no one in this MUCH ADO will be wearing chaps.

James Yeara