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## Much Ado about Much Ado

By Lou Fancher



Emily Kitchens (Hero), Dan Hiatt (Leonato) and Andrew Hurteau (Friar) in rehearsal for Much Ado About Nothing Photo Ohlen Alexander

missing actor, who was stuck at the BART station. "She's from Georgia, so she probably got lost," Moscone quipped. His off-hand remark is exactly why *Inside Scoop* is fun: everyone eats ice cream, everyone laughs, and no one worries about doing too much of either activity.

A common question Moscone hears about *Much Ado* is, "How can this play work?" Stocked with twists and incongruent behavior, the play's a quagmire of feuding and egotistical posturing. "I say to them: 'That's exactly how love works. Emotional turn-arounds are very quick.'" He paused, then added, "And it's a very Italian play."

The audience waited for explanation, at which point, Moscone delivered his comic tha-thump: "We've just hit the limit of what I know about Shakespeare..."

Hiatt chimed in, saying, "It helps so much-that Italian thing...." He left the thought floating, digressing to describe the struggle he has had with the character's fierce outbursts. "I tried for three weeks to find a way with Leonato. Finally, I figured, that's just who the father is."

Shifting to a discussion of the role of the Friar in the production, Moscone called *Much Ado* "very New Testament." He said directing the play hasn't made him want to return to church, "but it convinced me of the belief in redemption."

And with this deeper subject, the second payback for attending *Inside Scoop* began. The three men spoke of pride, and how it drives everything in the play. They talked of men, burdened with the responsibility to "fix" situations, and women, equally weighted by a society that prevented them from taking action. "I cannot be a man for wishing," Moscone said, quoting a line the character Beatrice speaks in the play.

Moscone is clearly fond of *Much Ado*, comparing it to screwball comedies of the 1930's. "I love adults acting insanely ridiculous," he said. "It's about men who don't know how to behave outside of war." He used the words "succulent, stylish, witty," before lapsing into silence.

An introduction of the costume and set designs led to a confession: "[People ask,] why are you changing the words?" Moscone said, "Well, because I'd be run out of town!" The racial and ethnic terminology, unremarkable in Shakespeare's day, is no longer overlooked by today's audiences.

The closing Q and A was brief. The audience was assured that favorite actors will appear, Hiatt's new beard was grown for a single line, and Dogberry is in. Moscone said it's fascinating that "Dogberry, the one who's most witless, gets his job done."

*Much Ado About Nothing*, the final production in the outdoor theater company's 2010 season, runs September 22 through October 17. For more information go to [www.calshakes.org](http://www.calshakes.org).

Cal Shakes' final *Inside Scoop* was a wild affair, with Artistic Director John Moscone and two actors from the cast of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* zig-zagging from esoteric lecture to quoted lines with little foreshadowing. Perhaps because Philippa Kelly, the company's dramaturg, was far away in Australia, the informal hour spun into action without the historical references and linear logic she contributes.

Lacking a road map, the nearly-full Orinda library audience dropped their collective hands from the wheel and left the steering to the three men gathered on the stage.

Joining Moscone to share insights into the production were Dan Hiatt, who plays Leonato, and Nick Childress, who will appear as Claudio.

Moscone, after a mock self-deprecating comment about his resorting to Wikipedia in Kelly's absence, described the play as a romantic comedy. "It throws everyone into a kind of blender of love. And everyone acts insanely," he said.

The next few minutes were a jumble, with Moscone, Hiatt and Childress filling in details of the plot while fielding a phone call from a

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