



Newsletter 2010-2011 Issue 1

## Enormous kerfuffle about *Much*

Yes people, the next production from the YSP will be *Much Ado About Nothing* to be performed in Summer 2011 in Rowntree's Park.

Is that the one with a huge and rousing array of bottoms during the title sequence, I hear you ask? It is, my dear, it is. The one in which Ken Branagh falls on his deck chair? That is the one, yes. But you prefer Robert Lindsay? You are not alone, my dear. And yes, it is that one too. And Brian

Blessed? The ubiquitous Brian, yes. As always there is Brian. Is it also the one in which Ben Elton rides an imaginary horse? I'm sorry to report that yes, it is that one too. And Sarah Parish (Mmmn.Mn.Mn.) sitting very close on a bed with Damien Lewis? It sort of is that one too.

More to the point, is there a part in it for me? Will my bottom look good in it? Almost certainly, my dear and here are the various parts:

### **Dramatis Personae: (with size of part in brackets)**

Don Pedro, Prince of Aragon (323 lines)  
Don John, his bastard brother (109)  
Claudio, a young lord of Florence (282)  
Benedick, a young lord of Padua (430)  
Leonato, Governor of Messina (344)  
Antonio, his brother (55)  
Hero, daughter to Leonato (132)  
Beatrice, niece to Leonato (279)  
Margaret, gentlewoman attending on Hero (68)  
Ursula, gentlewoman also attending on Hero (47)  
Balthasar, a singer, attendant on Don Pedro (42)  
Conrade, follower of Don John (37)  
Borachio, also follower of Don John (124)  
Toby Gordon (allegedly prodigious)  
Dogberry, master constable (176)

Verges, headborough (28)  
First Watchman (21)  
Second Watchman (20)  
Friar Francis (82)  
Messenger(s) (32)  
Sexton (15) Boy (2) Lord (1)  
Musicians, Ducks, Watchmen, Attendants, Geese.

Statistics on the size of parts are from this wonderful site:

[www.shakespeareswords.com](http://www.shakespeareswords.com)

by David and Ben Crystal which is well worth a wee wander. To find part size data look at *The Book* menu under *Special Features*. Or just ask Toby.

The play is set in Messina, Sicily, almost exactly where little Sicily felt the boot of long-legged Italy on its way to the bottom of the sea. The bottom, my dear, yes. If anyone has been to Messina please, please, please may we see your # holiday snaps? It was apparently a very impressive place in Renaissance Europe, top ten city break destination. And provided a home for Caravaggio in his last years after he fled Rome, following an enormous kerfuffle. Is it known just how enormous Caravaggio's kerfuffle was? Anyone? By all accounts he was a serial kerfuffler. His *Adoration of the Shepherds* was restored this year by Museo Regionale di Messina for the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death and is therefore worth a look when you are researching your part. Nearest airport Palermo. I am available, passport and E111 up to date.

**Digression:** Interesting Dinner Party for 8 in 1598 (the probable year in which *Much* was written): Queen Elizabeth I (nice frock, big hair), William Shakespeare (obviously), Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (kerfuffles), Guy Fawkes (fireworks), John Dowland (sad songs) and then I'm struggling... too late for Christopher Marlowe, his fatal kerfuffle was in 1593. Michel de Montaigne shuffled off this mortal in 1592. So, # suggestions please...

#### **If you don't know *Much*?**

The obvious place to start is with Ken and Em's film version (1993). The BBC version (1984) feat. Robert Lindsay is thought by some to be better and was evidently a lot cheaper to make. And the *Shakespeare Re-Told* take, feat. Billie Piper and Sonnet 116, the extended remix, is an interesting modernisation. The former and the latter I can source. Is there a word for the one in between the former and the latter? I know it not. Let's make one up! Can you # improve on 'the inbetweener'? I don't think you can. Anyway, the inbetweener I have not seen. So, if you've got a copy, # let me know. It should be in York Library. Explore! More ado about *Much* soon. Next up -

## **Minor fuss about me**

Ladies and gentlemen, your attention please. In case you hadn't noticed, the YSP newsletter is now under new management, The Maurice Crichton

Vanity Initiative has taken over from Robbie 'the Column' Swales. 'De Earle' to his AGM mates.

### **\*A Special Moment\***

A special moment therefore for Robbie who has gallantly handled this brief over the last year. Thank you Robbie! For Robbie is an honourable man. I am very glad to say he will remain involved as website manager and general *new technologies* supremo. I expect to lean on him heavily.

And regular readers: although Robbie is no longer at these controls, there is no immediate cause for alarm. The odd bit of useful information will still make it through a self-important fug of ponderous verbiage, digressions, trivia and general showing off. And as always, only much more so, you are invited to do your wee bit.

Send me your stuff to put in the next one. The observant among you will

have seen the ‘#’ symbol which I am using to highlight opportunities to respond to various provocations. And all your scholarly articles, trivial facts, incriminating photos, pointless quizzes, YSP gossip, jokes, and especially your merciless ribbing of the MCV Initiative...readers, it's all good. There will be no more funny business with columns. But I do dream of streaming a video one day. Help #! And I do want to do a funny Christmas picture. And a Guest edited edition or page(s). Al Carr redux.

**Joke:** Shakespeare walks into a bar. Landlord says: ‘I don't care who you are, I'm still not serving you. I won't say it again Mr Shakespeare: you're bard!’

## **In-between to-do about the new Committee**

starring

Janet Looker, erstwhile chair, our fearless leader  
Sam ‘the Money’ Valentine, treasurer, every penny of it  
Jeremy Muldowney, t'sec, education tsar, living embodiment of WS  
Maurice ‘the Enforcer’ Crichton, membership secretary and newssheet  
Julia Atkinson, ‘And she will be your scholar. Therefore, look to it.’  
Ben ‘the Destroyer’ Sawyer, just don't mention the table  
Nick Jones – the Doctor, of whom more elsewhere...

According to our Constitution, the Committee should be at least 7 in number. Of which 7 we are the magnificent. But we can co-opt, or in other words press-gang more, provided that the co-optees would not then make up more than one third of the Committee. In short, room for 3 more. Feeling left out? At a loss for things to amuse you? Offer yourself for co-option. Bottoms on seats. Please. (*Whispers*) But don't whatever you do sit on the empty chair. That one's for

Banquo. Sit on that, and we're doomed, aye doomed.

As a new Committee member, I have yet to be put through the famous initiation ritual. Rumour (deadpan face funny straight line walking all talking at once you know who you are) says it may involve singing a song in falsetto accompanied by Janet on bass while Jeremy does his funny dance *or* doing Lady M's sleep walk scene by heart, in a blond wig, on acid.

All will be revealed, funny handshakes included on:

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2010**

**\*Serious point\***

What do we need to deal with? Let the Committee know about your stuff. Get it on our agenda. People.

## **Shakespeare in 100 treasures: Number 1**



Credited by Lord Olivier and Sir John Gielgud as a pathfinder, have a look at John Barrymore as Richard III in 1929:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdy2sUKxfDE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdy2sUKxfDE)

And who said Henry IV had overactive eyebrows? Makes me think of John Laurie's Private Frazer in Dad's Army. And if you think it mannered, check out his fabulous first scene in *Grand Hotel* with Joan Crawford 1932.

And send me # your own treasures please.

## ***Downstage centre (our regular interview spot)*** **please give it up for: \*\*\*Dr Nick Jones\*\*\***

Dr Nick, as the most glamorous new (and recently bearded) face on the YSP Dramatis Personae would you be willing to submit to a short interview for the rag?

Oh fie sir, you do belie me. But I never could resist a bit of flattery, and you are my Beard Idol, so ...

What sort of doctor are you? A doctor doctor, a witch doctor, a dee fill, or are you in fact The Doctor himself?

I'm only The Doctor in the privacy of my own Tardis. Actually, I'm a PhD or Doctor of Philosophy - what my medical friends call 'not one of the useful sorts of Doctor'. Just to make it more complicated I'm a Doctor of Philosophy In Philosophy.

How did you get involved in the YSP?

I saw the audition poster for Henry IV while wandering about the University, thought 'Ooh, maybe I could that' and the rest is a history play.



Dr Nick Northumberland probably thinking about logic or logically thinking about probability. Or, just possibly, acting.

#### Five good things and one bad about Henry IV?

Well, he was weak, worried, cross, a usurper, didn't like my character much - but had a great beard. Sorry, that's the wrong way round. And you meant the play, not the king. OK: it was imaginatively directed, had a great cast (I thought Northumberland was especially good ... ), everyone worked together astonishingly well, the venue was 'exciting' (our Director's favourite word) and we had large and lovely audiences. But it did take over my life for two months, to the detriment of all else!

#### What do you want for YSP now you have the power?

I have power? Why wasn't I told? Well, it's such an insanely ambitious project I just want it to keep going and complete the cycle of plays. I'm already very excited about next year's productions.

#### What Shakespearean role do you most covet?

Hmm. The first shepherd in Winter's Tale. Or Leontes. Or Jaques (darn, I've missed that one). Grumpy old men, basically.

#### Sh-Hakespeare. Why?

Scholars agree that it was because he was inordinately fond of hake.

**Quiz (to which I do not currently have the answers):**

1. Which Italian cities host scenes in Shakespeare?
2. Who would you rather, Branagh, Lindsay or Lewis? Thompson, Lunghi or Parish?
3. How many ghosts appear in Shakespeare?
4. Write a brief and learned note on the business of constables and headboroughs.  
(Bonus marks for sheriffs)

Tiebreaker: Write an amusing limerick about an inhabitant of Messina (or better still, Tom Cooper's director's report).

**Early reviews of the MCV Initiative.**

- Could you um, maybe do a tiny bit less, just make the whole performance a bit smaller perhaps. It is not a huge venue after all. I'm only saying.
- Far far too much about bottoms and parts. A bit odd frankly.
- I don't think I have ever seen that word 'kerfuffle' written down before. It was one of my Uncle Frank's favourites. So lovely to see it in print.

*Gentle breath of yours my sails  
Must fill, or else my project fails,  
Which was to please.*

Feedback to:  
[maurice.crichton@ntlworld.com](mailto:maurice.crichton@ntlworld.com)