

# Eastbourne Herald

## Review: EODS' Much Ado About Nothing at the Italian Gardens by Roger Paine



Beatrice and Benedick played by Becky Robinson and Dave Nicholles.

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EASTBOURNE Operatic & Dramatic Society's annual foray into secluded Holywell Gardens now boasts completely tented seating for the audience and an impressive array of spots and floods to light the acting area.

One of Shakespeare's most popular plays gives Gareth Brighton the opportunity to make his full directorial debut.

By using all-white dresses for the ladies and contrasting dark uniforms for the men, an effective touch in the gathering dusk, he brings a black-and-white, cinematic feel to the production.

But with the raised stage area, on which much of the play's action takes place set well back from the audience, and the extensive grassed area between the two infrequently used to optimum effect, the convoluted tale of young love in Renaissance Italy can sometimes be difficult to follow.

Outdoor productions have built-in distractions of external noise and weather. The closer the audience is to the players, the better.

Claudio (David Fricker) loves Hero (Roseanna Sargent). They are, apparently, inseparable.

His close friend Benedick (David Nicholles), in his own mind a confirmed bachelor, loves Beatrice (Becky Robinson), niece of the Governor of Messina, Leonato (Darren Heather), and she him.

But a series of misunderstandings fails to bring the couples together. Egged-on, or put-down, by their associates, a swashbuckling performance by man-about-town Don Pedro (Phil Poole), and his half-brother Don John (Nick Carn), and Hero's buddies, Margaret (Emma Pierssene) and Ursula (Joanna Trainor), their combined bantering and scheming never flags until the play's final scene.

Several of the Bard's works feature comic ruffians. 'Much Ado' has Dogberry, the Constable, and his watchmen.

Nick Moon, with his spidery, staggering walk, squeaky voice and swivelling eyes, gives a masterly portrayal of this engaging buffoon, ably assisted by grovelling sidekick Verges (Stan Fillery).

This is a full-of-fun performance, ideal for providing much-needed warmth on less-than-seasonal July evenings.