**Much Ado About Nothing Post Enhance Touch Tour Programme Notes**

**Characters**

The play features four actors, a mop-puppet, and two audience volunteers, covering a total of eighteen roles. All four actors wear the same base costume: a blue shirt with rolled sleeves, tucked into khaki knee-length shorts with khaki braces, calf-length socks in a unique colour per actor, and brown brogue shoes. Character changes are signified by small but distinctive costume additions.

**Sarah** – young white woman with medium-length blonde hair:

* **Beatrice** – Speaks in an neutral North Eastern accent; wears a purple-and-blue plaid skirt.
* **Claudio** – Northern accent; wears a blue-striped cycle cap and a white bib marked “CL.”
* **Conrade** – Scottish accent; black cap with blue stripe, black bib with “CO.”
* **Sexton** – Welsh accent; wears a judge’s curly wig.
* **Second Watchman** – Italian accent; wears a blue flat cap.

**Emma** – tall young white woman, brown hair:

* **Benedick** – RP accent; white cycle cap with green stripe, bib marked “BE.”
* **Verges** – Italian accent; police hat with round wire glasses hanging from it.
* **Borachio** – West Country accent; black cycle cap with green stripe, bib marked “BO.”
* **Hero (voice)** – Performed in a shrill, upper-class English accent.

**Bill** – white man with red hair and a large red moustache:

* **Leonato** – Upper-class English accent; jacket and straw boater hat.
* **Don John** – Villainous drawl; black cycle cap with red stripe.
* **Dogberry** – Italian accent; red-wool moustache and police helmet.

**Andy** – white man, brown hair:

* **Messenger** – West Country accent; brown cap; often plays mandolin and ukulele on stage.
* **Don Pedro** – RP accent; white cap and bib marked “DP.”
* **Margaret** – Cockney accent; wears mop head as wig.
* **Friar** – Northern accent; bald cap, brown robe, cross.
* **Second Watchman** – Italian accent; yellow cap.

**Set & Props**

**Stage** – End-on staging with natural lighting. Minimal set remains static throughout.

* **Gazebo** – Positioned upstage centre, plain white, open on both sides but closed at the front (concealing its interior from the audience). The front frame is decorated with plastic ivy. Used for quick costume changes and prop storage.
* **Bunting** – Green and white, strung above the stage.
* **Bike** – Red vintage road bike, upright stage right. Basket (mounted upside down) holds a mix of real and plastic fruit; leafy green branches over the saddle suggest a small tree.

**Key Props:**

* **Hero the Puppet** – Mop head with rugby ball face, white lace shawl, dark green gardening gloves for hands. Actors use gloves for expressive gestures.
* **Bicycle Handlebars** – Four sets (green, red, yellow, blue) placed in front of the gazebo; used for mimed cycling and as shoulder pieces to hold bibs with character initials.

**Running Gags & Repeated Visual Cues**

1. **Messenger Abandoned** – While singing with the cast and playing mandolin, the Messenger is repeatedly left alone on stage. In the finale, the full cast bursts out from the gazebo with instruments to join him.
2. **Cricket Bat Gun** – Leonato wields a cricket bat as if it were a firearm, chasing the Messenger in and out of the gazebo while swapping roles mid-chase. Later, he “shoots” a squeaky chicken dog toy after chasing an offstage cockerel.
3. **Character Swap Delay** – Occasionally Bill forgets to change characters, pausing awkwardly until prompted by his fellow actors, at which point he dashes to costume-change.
4. **Too Few Actors** – When one actor plays two characters in the same scene, others hold props to “keep” the unused character on stage (e.g., Andy holding Leonato’s hat while Bill plays Don John).
5. **Handshake Mishaps** – Claudio and Don Pedro’s greetings devolve into accidental punches or slaps. The gag reappears with the watchmen attempting a salute.
6. **Abused Toy Cat** – Don John frequently strokes, throws, drops, or accidentally strokes Conrade instead of the toy cat. At the end, the Messenger throws the cat across the stage.
7. **Bike Horn Flirting** – Margaret and Borachio communicate via honking bike horns, sometimes from inside the gazebo window.
8. **Messenger Busking** – The Messenger solicits audience “tips,” losing his hat to other characters or getting chased offstage. Beatrice tips him with a piece of plastic fruit from the basket.
9. **Banana Weapon** – Bananas from the bike’s fruit basket are brandished as knives or guns. The gag escalates until Don Pedro nervously peels and eats one.
10. **Invisible Motorbike** – Dogberry and Verges mime riding a motorcycle with sidecar.
11. **Sun and Moon Dance** – Between scenes, cast members dance holding a smiling sun or sleeping moon prop; at one point, the moon is “found” under an audience member’s chair.

**Audience Interaction**

* + **Food Theft** – Don John takes and sometimes consumes food or drink from front-row audience members, or steals other personal items for comic effect.
	+ **Recurring Volunteers** – One male and one female audience member are selected early and brought on stage multiple times.
	+ **Volunteer Dancing** – Leonato pairs the male volunteer with Beatrice; Benedick later leads a conga line with the female volunteer.
	+ **Volunteer Friar** – The friar’s lines are mouthed by a volunteer while Andy voices them from behind, manipulating puppet arms (sometimes absurdly long). Andy wears the marigold gloves when playing the friar himself.
	+ **Volunteer Watchman** – A female volunteer helps coordinate the watchmen’s salute, then is given a bike light as a lantern. She later hides on stage under a grass blanket with a watchman while Borachio boasts nearby.
	+ **Volunteer Beatrice** – Holds Beatrice’s plaid skirt and veil in later scenes, standing in for the character during the second half and wedding.
	+ **Final Proposal** – In the last scene Don Pedro proposes to the female audience member volunteer.

**Other Key Visual Moments**

* + **Leonato’s “News”** – Prompted by receiving a note from the Messenger.
	+ **Chanting Arrival** – Don Pedro, Claudio, Don John and Benedick enter chanting “hoo hah” and miming cycling and turning with handlebars, stamping feet to indicate pedalling.
	+ **Love Revelation Scuffle** – Benedick restrains Claudio as he tries to stop Don Pedro learning of his feelings for Hero.
	+ **Party Prep** – Leonato crosses the stage with Waitrose shopping bags.
	+ **Ducat Payment** – Don John “pays” Borachio with a small reflective bike light.
	+ **Benedick Hiding** – Uses leafy branches from the bike, which barely cover him; ends up crouched under Claudio’s picnic blanket “bench” as others sit on him.
	+ **Benedick’s Solo Scene** – Mimes dancing with the picnic blanket as a partner, then stuffs it under his shirt as a belly and “gives birth” to it.
	+ **Beatrice Hiding** – Wears the bike fruit basket as a hat while eavesdropping. The actors throw champagne on each other throughout the scene, which culminates in Beatrice being soaked by everyone else. Emma later mops up the champagne with Hero.
	+ **Interrupted Exit** – After agreeing to kill Claudio, Benedick repeatedly re-enters to almost kiss Beatrice before their final kiss, hidden behind his bib.
	+ **Audience Note-taking** – During Borachio’s arrest, Dogberry hands his notes to a seated audience member to “record.”
	+ **Sexton’s Entrance** – Sarah as the Sexton bursts through the gazebo front.
	+ **Plan finger pointing** – when Borachio sums up Don John’s plan he points at the people named and the rest of the cast’s heads follow his pointing. This ends with Borachio dramatically pointing at Don Pedro, which causes him to throw the banana across the stage.
	+ **Hero’s Funeral** – Mop puppet carried on a black foam “coffin” which falls off mid- procession.