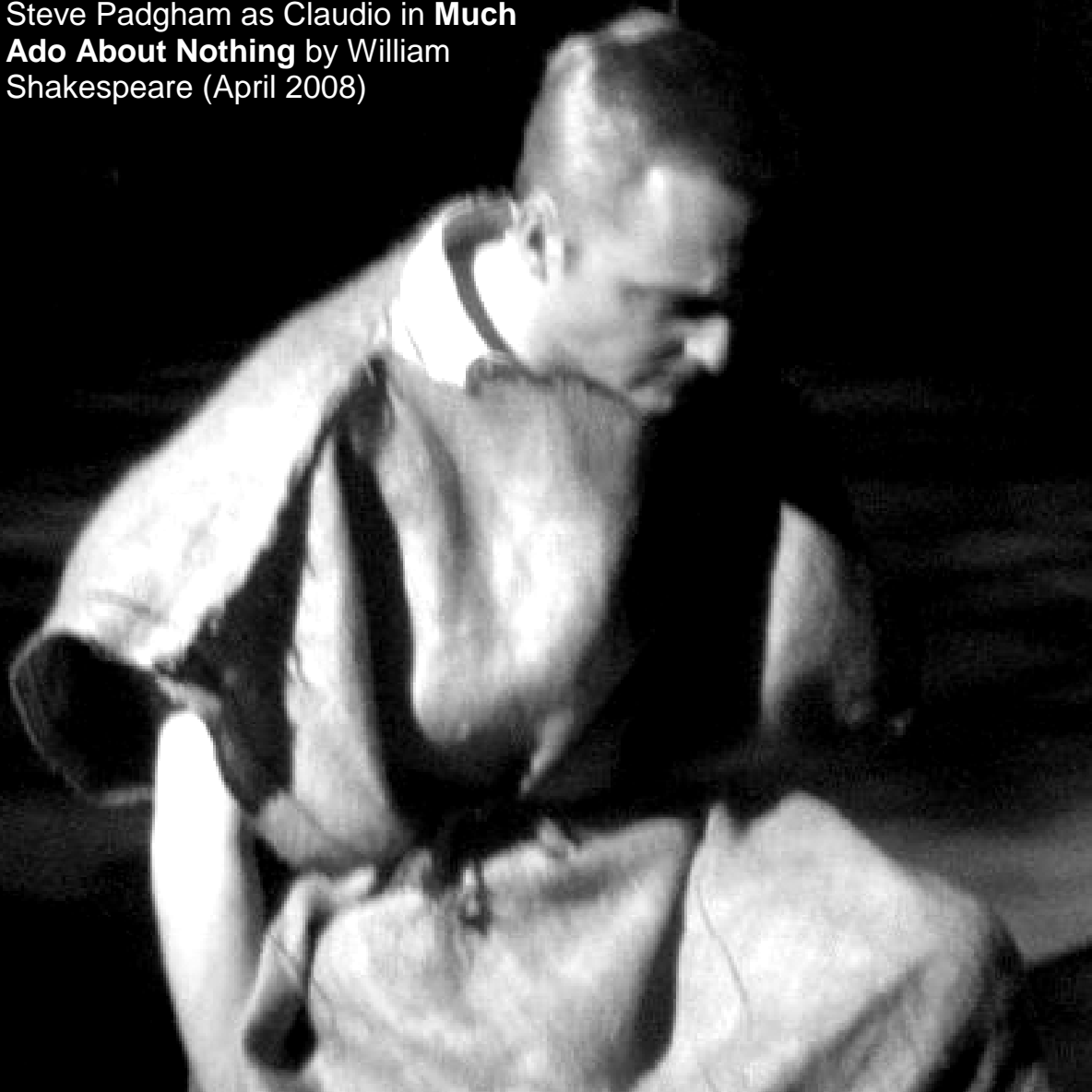


Steve Padgham as Claudio in **Much
Ado About Nothing** by William
Shakespeare (April 2008)



Edward Alderton Theatre

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Newsletter: May 2008

Photograph © Richard Banks

Editorial

Our last production, **Much Ado About Nothing** by William Shakespeare, directed by Richard Banks, received rave reviews and a huge positive reaction from all those who saw it. Reprinted in this newsletter is a selection of comments from appreciative audience members alongside extracts from the *Kentish Times* and *Bexley Extra* newspaper reviews. Hopefully this means that it won't be twenty years before the next Shakespeare appears at the Alderton!

This month's production couldn't be more different - **Justifying War: Scenes from the Hutton Inquiry**, edited by *Guardian* journalist Richard Norton Taylor. This is a hugely fascinating, and still very relevant, look at just how British politics operates in this country today. It demonstrates how the government, under Tony Blair, sought to create a climate of fear about Iraq's (non-existent) Weapons of Mass Destruction, and how the one man who dared to speak up about this - Dr David Kelly - was summarily belittled by those closest to him, ultimately leading him to take his own life.

Looking further ahead, **Abigail's Party** by Mike Leigh (12-19 July 2008) rounds off our current season. Be sure to book early to guarantee a good seat for this fabulously funny play - it is sure to be one of our most popular shows, in a season of popular shows. (**There Goes the Bride**, **Wait Until Dark** and **The Christmas Variety Show** were all virtual sell-outs.)

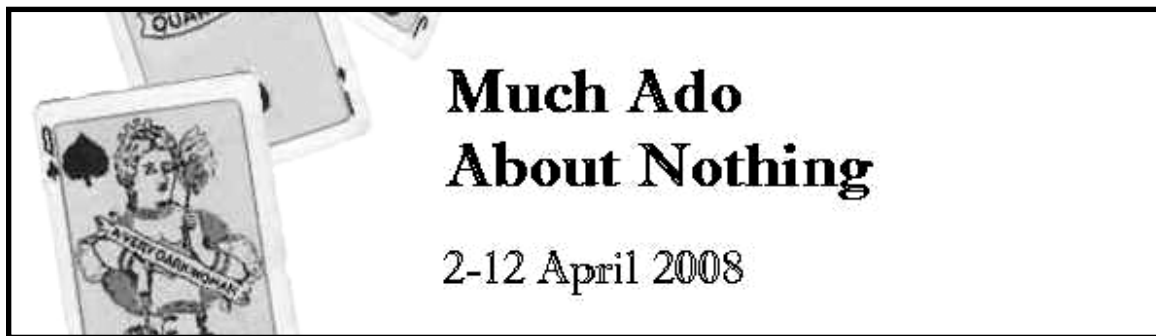
On a less happy note, it seems that the Danson Centre's proposed skatepark to the rear of the theatre *may* be going ahead, despite our protestations to the contrary. No provision has been made for sound barriers, and we are currently fighting the proposal as hard as we can. Our chairman Ian Saxton is doing a valiant job, but he needs all the support he can get. Updates can be found on our website: www.edwardalderton.org; click on the 'News' link. If you have an opinion, please contact us via the website.

Best wishes,



Mark Campbell
Artistic Director

Our last presentation...



As we settled into our seats, the cast was already on stage cracking open the champagne and strawberries. And Richard Banks' production of **Much Ado about Nothing** fizzed along in much the same vein.

Director Richard Banks was always mindful of keeping his audience entertained with moments of delicious comedy: Beatrice, disguised as a maid sweeping the courtyard, and Benedick, ludicrously trying to hide behind a potted plant, 'earwigged' deliberately staged discussions about themselves much to the perverse amusement of their friends.

The well-designed (and brilliantly painted!) set depicting Leonato's Sicilian courtyard was flexible and provided adequate scope for asides, cloak-and-dagger encounters, spaces to hide (a vine trellis) and, well-choreographed interludes of music and dance. The costumes and masks were also well conceived and contributed admirably to a cracking production which left the audience clapping their approval at the end.

Steve Spencer, Kentish Times [extract]

Edward Alderton Theatre's production of Shakespeare's romantic comedy **[Much Ado About Nothing]** didn't disappoint on any score. The love-hate relationship between Benedick (Mark Campbell) and Beatrice (Sarah Hills) was well played throughout. As Dogberry, the bumbling Constable, Richard Gooderson's heavy-handed comic interventions brought light relief to the unfolding dramas elsewhere. Director Richard Banks gave the players modern costumes but his own set design wonderfully evoked the feel of an Italian noble country estate.

Nick Marsden, Bexley Extra [extract]

Amazing. The fading to darkness was fantastic and yet you could still see the actors, same with the daylight - shadows in the right places etc... The sound all the way through was at just the right level to be heard but not intrusive. The costumes were great, the set - wonderful.

Wendi Freeman

The show was really, really good. Probably the best amateur Shakespeare I've seen. All the cast were excellent.

Matt Kellett

I did enjoy it, in particular Richard Gooderson 's performance which I thought was really funny. Glad I made the effort to go.

Emma Wydell

Our next presentation...



Rather than have me personally try to 'justify' why I think this play is worth coming to see, I've given over space to some of the actors involved in it, so they can tell you just what they think in their own words.

Mark Campbell

Director

Tony Donnelly

The Right Honourable Lord Hutton

How do you see your character?

I see Hutton as an establishment figure who was not going to rock the boat.

Were there any surprises in it?

Yes; I would say the way certain people tried to cast Dr Kelly as a minor official was quite chilling.

Chris Manning-Perry

James Dingemans QC

Is the play still relevant?

Although the Hutton Inquiry took place in 2003, the subject matter of Dr Kelly's death has sparked much conversation and speculation over the cause. Since the Hutton Inquiry there have been further revelations leading to further speculation, but it appears that a conclusion will never be reached. The relevance of this inquiry (please note I deliberately avoid calling it a play) is without question; it was something that had to take place.

Will people enjoy it?

I don't think this is something for people to "enjoy", rather I feel it is something for people to think about. Although the subject of the case was widely publicized, it is likely very few people really understood the background of the case and this presentation of the Hutton Inquiry will hopefully fill a few gaps in people's knowledge, not giving them any answers, but allowing them to make informed judgments from the real facts, rather than from bits they might have picked up from the media.

Were there any surprises in it for you?

I, like so many others, obtained my knowledge of this case from the media. I knew Dr Kelly had been found dead; I knew there were some suspicions over the cause of his death; I knew of the instigation of the Hutton Inquiry. I don't think there are any "surprises" in this presentation; what I will say, from reading the script, and hopefully for the audiences viewing the production, is that this is an education into the facts of the case.

Ian Saxton

Wing Commander John Clark, CPAC, CONAC 1

Is the play still relevant?

Yes. These days politicians follow a career path, often putting their career before anything else; always looking to cover their backs. This re-enactment amply highlights this failing.

How does it portray the activities of the government and the media?

The enquiry seems to have had pretty strict lines of enquiry placed upon it that Hutton, sadly, did not appear to waver from. You could almost hear the screech of gears going into reverse at the BBC when No.10 and its press agents (Alastair Campbell mainly) got their teeth into it. I seem to remember dark hints being bandied around about the BBC's charter being up for review and how it might be altered. That was pure blackmail. Ever since then I have lost faith in the Beeb's political reporting and now only watch the news on Channel 4.

James Turner

Andrew Gilligan, BBC journalist

How do you see your character?

I think that Andrew Gilligan is a typical journalist. Whilst his actions and wordings of events certainly didn't help Dr Kelly's cause, he only acted as any other journalist would. I read a review of the premiere of this play at the Tricycle Theatre in which apparently the actor playing Gilligan portrayed him as a 'shifty' character. I didn't see this when I read the script and having watched videos of Gilligan at work I still didn't see this. To me he was just a man reporting on an explosive story.

Is the play still relevant?

I think the play is more relevant than ever. We are still occupying Iraq and the report that made the sexed-up claims was used as a premise for that war. I think this is a perfect time to mount a production of this play as the dust has settled somewhat after the initial furore of the war has died down and now Tony Blair has retired we can look back at the events surrounding the play and reflect properly.

Will people enjoy it?

I think people will. I think anyone with a keen interest in politics or who perhaps wishes to know more about the beginnings of the Iraq war or the Hutton Inquiry will find it interesting. As it is about such a serious topic, enjoyment may not be the right word but I think it will certainly be an interesting theatrical experience and I think it is important that theatres stage plays such as this.

How does it portray the activities of the government and the media?

I think it is clear that the government used the sexed-up report as a premise to go to war when there were perhaps other motives at play - and whilst this is sadly not that shocking these days it doesn't make it acceptable. The media has always behaved in the same way - they certainly contributed to the events surrounding the death of Dr Kelly, but they were just doing their job.

Rebecca Mason

Susan Watts, BBC reporter

How do you see your character?

She's an intelligent, independent woman who does not want her career stained by this - and will sink anyone (especially Gilligan) to protect her arse. She shows little remorse or contrition; as far as she is concerned she was doing her job and that's the end of the matter.

Is the play still relevant?

Very. It shows how the two most powerful organisations in the country - the Government and the Media - will stop at nothing in pursuit of their own agenda, irrespective of the human cost.

Will people enjoy it?

I think they will. I think they will be surprised to see how the "story" pulls together with the heart-wrenching climax of Mrs Kelly's testimony - making them see how a man was destroyed.

Were there any surprises in it for you?

Yes. How little "the powers that be" seem to actually consider the human cost of their actions. This is *not* a play about politics or the media - it's about the inhumanity of man against his fellow man.

Craig Dowding

Patrick Lamb, Deputy Head of the Counter Proliferation Department

Is the play still relevant?

The play is relevant to those that want it to be. It's a different kind of play and one that has significant importance to the 'behind the scenes' things we don't notice.

Will people enjoy it?

I feel it will appeal to those that may be interested in these kinds of politics. Some may be tempted to watch to see what it's actually all about but in the end, with an open mind, anyone can enjoy it.

Justifying War: Scenes from the Hutton Inquiry

24 - 31 May 2008 @ 8pm

Duration: 2 hours including interval

Season Booking Form

I would like to book ___ seats for each remaining show of the 2007/8 season:

Production

Justifying War (24-31 May 2008) _____

Abigail's Party (12-19 July 2008) _____

Tickets cost £6.50.

I enclose a cheque for £_____ payable to **Edward Alderton Theatre**. (If you wish to have tickets forwarded to you, please enclose a SAE.)

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone Number _____

Please send completed form to **Edward Alderton Theatre, c/o 28a Belvedere Road, Bexleyheath, DA7 4NX**. Any queries should be referred to the Box Office on **020 8301 5584** (6-8pm only, Mon to Fri).