

# *Much Ado About Shakespeare, LLC*

## Company Description

**Much Ado About Shakespeare, LLC** is a professional educational program that brings the joy of theater and William Shakespeare's works to homeschool students. In the Shakespeare programs, Much Ado combines technique workshops in areas such as stage combat, Elizabethan dance and acting with rehearsal classes focused on selected Shakespearean plays. Most of these programs then culminate in student Shakespearean productions for the community. Much Ado also offers programs in Playwriting, Improvisation and Commedia dell'Arte, as well as workshops in performance skills like Stage Combat, Voice and Acting.

We are process-focused, rather than product-focused. Although our programs involve performance, our emphasis is on the students' classroom experiences of learning and discovery as they encounter the world of classical theatre. We design each class to educate the students about not only acting and the theatre, but also the particular skills and knowledge involved in bringing Shakespeare's plays to life. Our classes favor physical movement and active learning over traditional lectures. The richness of the lessons lies more in the doing and feeling than in the intellectualizing of material.

We feel that classes/rehearsals should be fun and engaging for all types of learners. We value the fact that each student learns in his or her unique way and therefore, do everything possible to meet the individual needs of each student.

Much Ado's mission is to create in each class a student ensemble that explores the world of the theatre and the works of William Shakespeare in a fun and non-competitive environment.

## Our Story

At its beginning, Much Ado was then what it continues to be now: people coming together to share and learn from the theater's wonder, excitement and understanding. Fifteen years ago, a season of outdoor Shakespeare productions brought together a group of committed, professional actors looking to share and develop their skills beyond the level of stage performance. With each actor bringing a passion for teaching and a love of learning, this team brought their talents and commitment to the homeschool communities of Ventura and Simi Valley for a season of student Shakespeare productions. Growing from the seed of these early programs, Much Ado has flourished through the support of the wonderful families in each community we encounter. Almost entirely due to word of mouth, Much Ado is now offering theater arts programs throughout Southern California in such areas as: Ventura, Simi/Conejo, Santa Barbara, San Pedro, Brentwood, Aliso Viejo, San Juan Capistrano, Camarillo, Santa Clarita, La Crescenta, Westchester, Mammoth Lakes; with a new possible programs beginning in North Hollywood, Beverlywood and San Diego. As Much Ado has acquired new, brilliant and multi-talented group of teachers, they have expanded from their Shakespearean foundation to offering theater arts programs across the spectrum of theatrical performance skills (Playwriting, Improvisation, Stage Combat, etc.). Much Ado is so proud to see all their students growing in self-expression, confidence, teamwork and understanding from their journeys in the theater and their love of Shakespeare. Much Ado is ever thankful for our grand theatrical family and look forward to watching it grow.

## Our Courses

### The Shakespeare Programs

The Shakespeare Production programs combine play rehearsal with specialty classes which come together for a grand Shakespearean performance. Each class will rehearse and perform an edited version of a great classic play. Much Ado works from the original text, preserving the original language, while

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adapting the script for classroom use. Time periods may stay in the Elizabethan era or may be adjusted to provide new creative challenges and perspectives on the plays.

Our journey into the world of Shakespeare and the theater will lead us into exploring such specialties as: Period Dance, Period Song, Speech/Voice, Stage Combat, Tumbling, Improvisation, Acting, Characterization, Theme Exploration, Text Analysis, Exploration of Period History, and Stage Make-up or Prop Making. Throughout these workshops, the emphasis is on learning by physically experiencing the world of Shakespeare.

The exact specialties covered in each class will depend greatly upon the class age level and the needs of each production. Through the Character Diary and Memory Chest projects, the students will explore and personalize their characters by creating memories and objects from their characters' lives. As the season progresses, our new skills and character exploration will be incorporated into our rehearsal process and final productions.

## The Playwriting Programs

The blank page invites us! Together, our brilliant and creative students will collaborate to develop an original theatrical work. Through the magic of improvisation and storytelling, we will discover truthful characters and compelling plots, hilarious comedy and profound tragedy. We'll explore the role and power of inciting incidents, rising and falling actions, denouement and even the *dues ex machina* in stories of our own making. The program will focus on story exploration and the actual writing of the script. The end of the process culminates in an invited performance of our new play!

## The Improvisation Programs

Improvisation is exciting, and spontaneous. It teaches us to trust our own creativity and to prize the creativity of others. It leads us into unexpected adventures and risk-taking and within a supportive and appreciative group. It challenges us to let our imagination lead the way. On top of all that (and because of all that), it is great fun! Students will learn about the fundamentals of improvisation and apply their new skills in the classic games and exercises of professional improvisational actors. Beginning with ensemble and partner exercises, students will explore and develop trust and sharing skills that will serve as a foundation throughout the course. Using these skills, students will learn the basics of scene building, using environments and problem-solving for use in fully improvised scenes. Further challenges will be found in more advanced improvisational games as the class progresses.

## The Workshop Programs

In addition to the production programs, Much Ado offers a wide range of theater skills workshops that are not production-oriented, in such areas as:

- Stage Combat
- Voice
- Tumbling
- Improvisation/Commedia dell'Arte
- Elizabethan Dance and Song
- Acting
- Comedy and Characterization
- Text Analysis/Theme Exploration