

TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

AN ONGOING SERIES OF CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY FILMS PRESENTED IN 35MM BY THE YALE FILM STUDY CENTER

SUNDAY
MARCH 22, 2015
2:00PM • WHITNEY
HUMANITIES CENTER

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

PRESENTED WITH SUPPORT FROM
PAUL L. JOSKOW '70 M.PHIL., '72 PH.D.



MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING is the fourth feature film and second Shakespeare adaptation from Belfast-born director Kenneth Branagh. He received acting and directing Oscar nominations for his 1989 directorial debut, HENRY V, and holds the rare distinction of being nominated in five different Oscar categories. The RADA-trained actor was a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company before forming his own Renaissance Theatre Company, where he first performed the role of Benedick in MUCH ADO under the direction of Judi Dench. Explaining his motivation to adapt Shakespeare's comedy for the screen, Branagh writes, "It speaks loudly and gloriously about love, one of humankind's permanent obsessions. The cruelty of it, the joy of it. The question of tolerance in love and the danger of judging others.... In short, the play presents a whole series of emotional and spiritual challenges that we—young, old, male, female—continue to face when we love. And all throughout this comic debate on everything and nothing, there is life-giving, wisdom-bearing humor and warmth."

Nº 9

THE CAST: In Branagh's British-American cast, stage actors are joined by film actors selected to add the naturalism and "emotional fearlessness" the director desired for the film. "In crude terms," he states, "the challenge was to find experienced Shakespearean actors who were unpracticed on screen and team them with highly experienced film actors who were much less familiar with Shakespeare. Different accents, different looks. An excitement borne out of complementary styles and approaches would produce a Shakespeare film that belonged to the world." The cast of more than 140 performers includes Branagh, Emma Thompson, Robert Sean Leonard, Kate Beckinsale (in her film debut), Denzel Washington, Keanu Reeves, Michael Keaton, Richard Briers, Imelda Staunton, Brian Blessed, Ben Elton, Phyllida Law, and the film's composer, Patrick Doyle, in the role of Balthazar the musician.

THE SETTING: Shakespeare set the play in Messina, Sicily, but Branagh's adaptation was shot in the more verdant Tuscan landscape around the 14th century Villa Vignamaggio. "Opening the story for the cinema," Branagh notes, "should not mean drowning the words and characters in endless vistas and 'production value.' Yet the play seemed to beg to live outside, in a vivid, lush countryside." He chose not to set the film in a specific time in order to emphasize the isolation of the revelers in their rural idyll. "This imaginary world could have existed almost anytime between 1700 and 1900. It was distant enough to allow the language to work without the clash of period anachronisms and for a certain fairy tale quality to emerge."

MUCH ADO ON STAGE AND SCREEN: The play is believed to date to 1598, and it quickly became one of Shakespeare's most popular works. The poet Leonard Digges noted in 1640, "Let but Beatrice / And Benedick be seen, lo, in a trice / The Cockpit galleries, boxes, all are full." Film versions of MUCH ADO go back at least as far as the 1913 silent version by American Phillips Smalley. An East German DEFA production (VIEL LÄRM UM NICHTS) was released in 1963, two Russian versions (MNOGO SHUMA IZ NICHEGO) in 1956 and 1973, and a loose adaptation in Hindi (DIL CHAHTA HAI) in 2001. Though there have been numerous English-language television versions, Branagh's was the first English-language feature version produced for cinemas. It was followed in 2012 by Joss Whedon's contemporary version, shot over a period of 12 days in the director's Santa Monica residence.

DIRECTED BY **KENNETH BRANAGH** (1993) 93 MIN.
SCREENPLAY BY **KENNETH BRANAGH** FROM
THE PLAY BY **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**
CINEMATOGRAPHY BY **ROGER LANSER**

RELEASED BY **THE SAMUEL GOLDWYN COMPANY**
STARRING **KENNETH BRANAGH, EMMA THOMPSON,
ROBERT SEAN LEONARD, KATE BECKINSALE, DENZEL
WASHINGTON, MICHAEL KEATON, AND KEANU REEVES**

DID YOU KNOW: THE 3-MINUTE CLOSING SHOT TOOK SIX MONTHS TO PLAN, OVER EIGHT HOURS TO SHOOT, AND 19 TAKES TO PERFECT. IT ENDS WITH STEADICAM OPERATOR ANDY SHUTTLEWORTH STEPPING ONTO A CRANE AND BEING LIFTED 90 FEET ABOVE A CAST AND CREW OF 200.

NEXT UP: SEE RARE NEWSREELS, INDUSTRIAL FILMS, NOVELTY SHORTS, INTERVIEWS, AND OTHER OBSCURE GEMS FROM THE COLLECTION OF LEGENDARY FILM COLLECTOR HERB GRAFF DURING A SPECIAL MATINEE SCREENING OF 16MM WONDERS ON **SATURDAY APRIL 25 AT 2:00 PM.** THEN, CELEBRATE THE ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF ORSON WELLES (MAY 6, 1915 IN KENOSHA, WISCONSIN), WITH A SCREENING OF **THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI**, DIRECTED BY AND STARRING WELLES, ALONG WITH RITA HAYWORTH AND EVERETT SLOANE, **THURSDAY, APRIL 30 AT 7:00 P.M.**