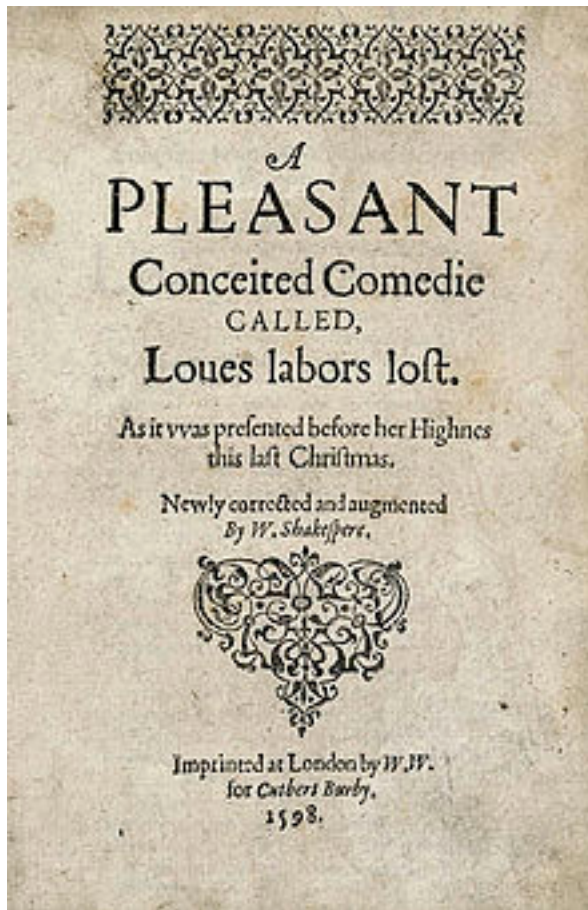


Study Guide for Indianapolis Shakespeare Company's *Love's Labor's Lost*

**The Play**



Written somewhere in 1595-ish the play falls between *The Comedy of Errors* and *Richard II*. The original is overfilled with wordplay almost impossible for modern audiences to get. Our production kept enough to give a feel of the character's use of language as a means of entertainment, but cut out a LOT of archaic or hard to understand language.

I love the play for its lightness, its entertainment value, and its handful of unforgettable characters. But I also love is the fact that Shakespeare was clearly searching in this play. He played with rhythm and meter much more than in most of his other plays. His meter switching is intriguing. Instead of the 10 syllables in a line of poetry of iambic pentameter, in LLL Shakespeare sometimes uses as many as 15 syllables. In one exchange between Rosaline and Berowne, he goes from prose (no poetry) to 10 syllables a line to 8 to 7 to 6. The sense is that the characters are somehow communicating pre-verbally—through the rhythm they are using. But I also think he was testing out different modes; working on ideas that he would later perfect, so the play was a kind of test kitchen.

He was also testing out some themes that would truly fly in later plays. The play within the play in *LLL* is a first clumsy attempt at what would become show stopping hilariousness in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. And the witty back and forth of Berowne and Beatrice is a precursor to the genius of *Much Ado About Nothing*, which is in turn a precursor to all of the ways in which writers have planted the seeds of love interest in the soil of 2 people arguing and insulting each other.

The play is also a testing ground for a theme that Shakespeare would later use extensively: using disguises (or an act of theater) to get what you want. The king and pals dress up as brewery dudes in our production (Muscovites in the original) and the women disguise themselves as each other. Just a few examples of later use of this device include: Hamlet's "antic behavior" to buy him time to figure out what to do as well as his use of a play to expose Claudius' villainy; the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, disguising himself as a priest so that he can witness and control how things unfold, and of course, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, in which women disguise themselves as men either for safety or for anonymity.

Further reading:

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love%27s\\_Labour%27s\\_Lost](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love%27s_Labour%27s_Lost)

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[https://www.district205.net/cms/lib/IL01001003/Centricity/Domain/118/kupdf.net\\_shakespeare-the-invention-of-the-human-harold-bloompdf.pdf](https://www.district205.net/cms/lib/IL01001003/Centricity/Domain/118/kupdf.net_shakespeare-the-invention-of-the-human-harold-bloompdf.pdf)

## **The Process**

Here is some material to give you glimpse into the process of designs, rehearsals, etc.

Once a director agrees to direct a play, the next step is for them to arrive at their vision or concept for the show. In this case, Claire Wilcher took her inspiration from the Esalon Institute in Big Sur, CA. In her own words:

Love's Labor's Lost is the play that pops out if *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Much Ado About Nothing* had a baby. With the rapid-fire wordplay of the former and the battle-of-wits of the latter, *LLL* strikes a lovely, summery, easy chord that goes perfectly with a picnic covered in string lights and warm winds. Set at the Navarre Institute, a coastal retreat centering on wellness and New Age pursuit of the higher self, the King and his BFFs are determined to be peak cultural dudes; what unfolds is an exploration of vulnerability, enlightenment, and joy. This play is chock full of pleasure: in camaraderie, in love letters, in a good stretch and a cold beer. Don't search too hard for high stakes in the play; you'll come up short. No one is home from a distant war, there are no shipwrecks, and—I'm sorry to say — no one is a long lost twin. Instead, the people of Navarre grapple with everyday questions of being human.

*What if I'm wrong?*  
*How long will this take?*  
*Who here thinks I'm cute?*  
*Why should I be vulnerable?*  
*Who are my people?*  
*Why am I so weird?*  
*How can I let go?*

Of course, *Love's Labor's Lost* will expectedly provide Lovers and Clowns, elements of status and privilege, but the sweet story and skilled actors blur that divide as they all seek connection together, and the atypical ending (no spoilers!) is as unique as each shining personality that built this silly play for you tonight. Yes, LLL is unapologetically silly and light. But in an age of doom-scrolling, overstimulation, and daunting headlines, I argue that there's nothing wrong with doubling down on joy. I invite you to lean into the ease of the evening. The lights are twinkling, the blanket is spread. Let's share some simple space. Thank you for joining us. Cheers!

-Claire Wilcher (She/Her)

Once she settled on her vision for the play, the next step is for the director to begin conversations with designers. Designers then show the director their take on what was communicated.

## **Costumes**

Some costume designers work in rendering or drawing and some work in gathering research images. Here are a few research images from our amazing designer, Guy Clark.

Boyet:



Costard, Dull and Moth who all work at the Navarre Institute



The disguises for the king and his pals



The disguises for the princess and her pals:



# Sets

Other designers work from drawings, as in the case of our awesome set designer, Nick Kilgore.

