NINTH ANNUAL PRODUCTION...

Players' Shakespeare Fete In Four Night Run

By KATHERINE KELLY

With Benedick swearing to be "hanged before a brothel" before admitting that he is in love, and Beatrice promising to "lie in the wool" before she endures his beard, Shakespeare's most reluctant pair of lovers declare war on love in the Rice Players' ninth Shakespeare Festival production. "Much Ado About Nothing."

This skirmish of wit between the sexes began a four-day run Thursday in Hamman Hall and will continue through Sunday at 8:15 pm. Because full attendance is expected every night the play may be held over until Monday.

STAGED ON A new, multi-level Elizabethan set, the production is directed, as it was last year, by Tom Preston, and sponsored by the Rice-English Department.

The chief combatants in this merry war of wit, the self-deceiving Beatrice, and the determined bachelor, Benedict, will be played by Kris Schleeter and Justin Kidd.

Denounced and jilted on her wedding day as a "common stale," Hero will be played by Diana Thomas. Her would-be-bridegroom, Claudio, will be played by Chuck Yingling.

PHIL HOLT WILL portray portrait Leonato, Hero's father; Sam Stuart, Don Pedro, prince of Aragon; Steve Rogers, Hero's uncle; and Bailey Phelps, the prince's bastard brother, Don John, who "denies not that he is a plain dealing villain."

Jim Kuttler stars in the low comedy as Dogberry, the deaf constable, with Verges, the Head-borough of Messina done by Arnold Victor. Franklin Forester and Mack Gray serve as the watch, with Bill Pannill as Sexton in the exmination of Don John's henchmen, played by Dave Russell and Gregg Edwards.

Hero's waiting gentle women, Margaret and Ursula, will be played by Katherine Kelly and Kathryn Pulley. Friar Francis will be portrayed by Glenn Howard; Balthasar by Raymond Schiltz.

Joe Rider and Phyllis Skaff, player co-ordinators are responsible for the set and the special effects with Ann Cossack cooperating on the costumes, Judy Gathers with props.

John Gragg and Marillyn Bresky head the stage crew with Hal Bybee working the lighting.