



ARTS BRIEFS

Otterbein faculty to perform today

Lyle Barkhymer, a 30-year faculty member of Otterbein College's Department of Music, will present a recital at 8 p.m. today in the Battelle Fine Arts Center on the Otterbein College campus.

The performance is free and open to the public.

For more information call 823-1358.

Otterbein to present its 'Arcadia'

Otterbein College Theatre will present the Central Ohio premiere of *Arcadia* at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, 8 p.m. Saturday and Sunday and Feb. 12-13 and 2 p.m. Sunday at the college theater.

Tickets are \$11 per performance for Thursday and Sunday, \$12 Friday and Saturday.

For tickets call the box office at 823-1109 from 1 to 4:30 p.m. weekdays.

This guide to central Ohio theater is based on recent Dispatch reviews. For show times and dates, see the Theater listings on Page 26.

✱ **Arcadia** — Most college theater companies would be thrown into chaos by Tom Stoppard, a consummate wordsmith with a penchant for transforming the arcana of philosophy and physics into a wickedly funny theater of the mind. But director Christina Kirk and an exceptionally even cast rise to the challenge to deliver a thoughtful, mature and entertaining production on Rob Johnson's Greek Revival set. As with most Stoppard's plays, a mere plot synopsis can't begin to convey the ideas, wordplay and intellectual energy of a play that pits the paradigms of Classicism and Romanticism against each other. Although challenging for audiences, patience is rewarded with an oddly compelling love story. **Otterbein College Theatre.** (Reviewed by Scott Phillips.)

Bosoms and Neglect — A solid cast, good direction and stylish scenic design don't overcome the difficulties and flaws of John Guare's diffuse comedy-drama about a 40-year-old man

(Rich Stadler, a befuddled Woody Allen) who struggles with two women. The three-person cast finds much of the dark humor and quirky romance under Michael Herring's ruefully self-aware direction. Recommended for mature audiences. **Red Herring Theatre Company.** (Reviewed by Michael Grossberg.)

How I Learned To Drive — The year's first must-see show. Funny, tender and brilliantly theatrical, Paula Vogel's 1998 Pulitzer Prize-winner is much more than a one-issue play about incest or alcoholism. It's a multifaceted portrait of a dysfunctional 1960s Maryland family and the child who survives it. Ed Vaughan's Uncle Peck is a masterful, gently insinuating teacher; his niece L'il Bit (mesmerizing Debra Whitfield), a wary but all-too-willing student. Under Maureen Ryan's sensitive direction, the five-member cast races through the memory piece with smooth precision and

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bittersweet rear-view-mirror perception. Recommended for mature audiences because of suggestive sexual scenes and amusingly frank dialogue. **Contemporary American Theatre Company.** (M.G.)

Remembrance — A heartfelt, wonderfully acted production of the first play by Belfast playwright Graham Reid to be staged in central Ohio. New York director Scott Tobin helps a terrific cast find the fragile romance, sarcastic wit and angry regrets of Reid's cautiously hopeful two-act tale about an elderly Irish couple whose budding romance withers from their adult children's lack of understanding and love. Two capable veterans fully inhabit the widowed leading roles, with Rex McGraw as an avuncular, cranky British Protestant and Bev Pettit as the dignified and compassionate Irish Catholic. **The Irish and American Repertory Theatre.** (M.G.)

The Secret Garden — William Goldsmith directs this fluid production of the Marsha Norman-Lucy Simon musical. The tone is one of mystery and melancholy, as young Mary Lennox (10-year-old Michalea Delaveris) comes to terms with her parents' deaths and her new life in her uncle's bleak English manor. The set is spare and the orchestra is only an electric piano, but the hard-working cast presents a sophisticated musical filled with themes of redemption and growth. Best for children ages 8 and older who can appreciate the dark tone and grown-up themes. **Columbus Children's Theatre.** (Reviewed by Nancy Gilson).

Sex at the Box — Funny, rueful and surprisingly optimistic about the chances for love, this variety show offers a well-balanced blend of good music, original skits and short plays. The rock songs are delivered with style, rhythm and loud

intensity, backed by BillWho?, the troupe's smooth house band. Recommended for adult audiences because of sexual situations and some profanity. **Shadowbox Cabaret.** (M.G.)

The Taste of Sunrise — Sometimes the most beautiful plays are the simplest. Hands wave like the wind, flutter like a bird or clap like thunder as a deaf boy, young girl and outcast woman grapple with the challenge of living between the worlds of sounds and signs in Suzan Zeder's touching, inspiring and amusing coming-of-age drama. Director Steven Anderson helps a superb eight-member cast portray 16 roles, with Michael J. Stark especially fresh as wide-eyed Tuc. Every poetic word and shimmering gesture counts in an eloquent blend of pantomime, lyrical understatement and a fluid blend of speaking and signing. Recommended for ages 7 and older, *Taste* brims with warmth, wisdom, compassion, playfulness, sadness and spirituality. **Contemporary American Theatre Company and Cleveland Signstage Theatre.** (M.G.)