

Diversions

Having fun at Otterbein's 'Forum'

College theatre company celebrates its 25th anniversary

By JOHN HEGENBERGER
ThisWeek Entertainment Editor

Otterbein College Theatre is celebrating its 25th anniversary season with the classic musical comedy "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum." Set in Roman times, the play centers on Pseudolus, a slave in the household of an aging citizen named Senex and his nagging wife Domina. His master is actually Hero, the son of the household. Equity artist Ed Vaughan will play Pseudolus, a role he has taken on twice before.

"This role haunts me," says Vaughan. "Each time I do it, it's different. It's an audience's delight and a whole lot of fun. Pseudolus is mischievous without being devious. It's well-written, the payoffs are clear and I've never had to work to do this role."

The setting is a street in Rome. The time is 200 years before the Christian Era, a day in spring. Pseudolus, a slave, decides the best way to gain his freedom is to cater to the desires of the men of the household. Hero yearns for the beautiful courtesan Philia and agrees to give Pseudolus his freedom if he can help him win Philia.

Hero's aging father, Senex, however, lecherously wants to have a last fling and also has his eye on Philia. A further complication is that Philia has already been promised to Miles Gloriosus. Are you following this?

Doreen Dunn, guest director and choreographer for the production says, "This will be a dignified production, true to the Greek form and Vaudeville quality. By that I mean there will be real togas and sandals and no squirt guns."

Dunn has directed "The Women of My Father's House" at CATCO and "Something's Afoot" at Otter-

bein, as well as choreographing last year's Otterbein production of "Evita." In addition, she directed and choreographed "... Forum" 11 years ago at Otterbein with Ed Vaughan. "You wouldn't want to do anything funny without Ed," says Dunn. "And the script is really well-written. Everything funny pays off in the end and the action is very tightly constructed to build to total pandemonium."

Meanwhile back in Rome: When Miles returns from war and demands Philia, Pseudolus in desperation declares that she is dead and persuades a fellow slave, Hysterium, to don a wig and woman's clothes to pretend to be the corpse.

The very much alive Philia, hearing her contracted owner has returned, not too brightly thinks old Senex is her master and Senex tries to escape his battleaxe of a wife in order to enjoy his good luck. The ever-funny comic bit of mistaken identities goes into high gear as there are suddenly three Philias—the real one, Hysterium in his fright-wig and finally Domina in a similar wig trying to snatch her husband in the guise of Philia.

"A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" opened on Broadway in 1962 and ran until 1964 for a total of 966 performances. "... Forum," which features the songs "Comedy Tonight," "Everybody Ought to Have a Maid," "Pretty Little Picture," "Impossible," received six Tony



Brian Brems and Katie Bowers (both seated) and Ed Vaughan enjoy a moment together in Otterbein Summer Theatre's production of "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum."

awards in 1963 including best musical of the season.

This was Stephen Sondheim's first full musical, and after it had been on the road, he discovered that the opening song didn't work, so he quickly wrote "Comedy Tonight" which became the best known song in the show and is a clear forerunner of his later work like "Into the Woods."

"This is a funny thing on the way anywhere," wrote John McClain of the N.Y. Journal American.

At Otterbein, the play runs until July 7. All performances are held in the Campus Center Theatre. Call 898-1109 for tickets and times. ♦

T+C

September 19, 1991

Ar

'Funny things happened' at a lighter summer theater

By Becky Mizer

Otterbein Summer Theatre celebrated its 25th anniversary this summer with a season of lighter, less serious plays.

"A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" ran June 26-July 7, "Blue Window" ran July 10-21, and "Not Now, Darling" ran July 24-Aug. 11.

Tod Wilson, managing director of the theatre department, said the department hires eight to ten students each year for the summer theater.

"It's hard for students to give up a (higher paying) summer job," he said, "but they do it for the experience."

Senior Brian Brems chose to act in summer theater because he got a chance to play three very different roles, he said.

"It gave me more confidence in my acting experience," Brems said.

Junior Daryl Lozupone, who also acted in summer theater, said, "It's a chance to be here and do theater without doing class work.

He added, "I can focus on my work without other time commitments."

The actors had three rehearsals a day and worked with professional guest artists.

The plays were not as serious as some past Otterbein performances. Wilson said, "It was a lighter, more commercial, popular fair."

Wilson said the audience is a "TV audience," meaning they want the plays to be short and they want the actors to get to the plot and jokes quickly.

The college would not have a regular season of these plays, he said, but they were appropriate for the summer audience.

Wilson said 95 percent of the summer theater audience is from the community, not students or faculty.

It is also an older audience, because many of the older community members do not attend shows in the winter or late at night. Summer theater has more matinees and the weather is better for the older audience.

A record 1484 season tickets were sold this year, according to Wilson, and the theater averaged 86 percent capacity.

"We were extremely excited and impressed," he said.

He attributes the high numbers to the choice of plays and to the fact that it was the 25th anniversary.

Because it was the 25th anniversary, many people attended the performances because of "fondness and loyalty to the college," he said.



Eric Albrecht/Dispatch

From left: Bryan Brems, Katy Bowers, Ed Vaughan and Daryl Lozoupone in *Forum*

CURTAIN CALLS

Here is a guide to central Ohio theater shows, based on recent Dispatch reviews. For performance times and dates, see theater listings.

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum — An impish start to Otterbein College's 25th summer season. Consistent congeniality marks this light, breezy and rather leisurely revival. Choreographer-director Doreen Dunn freshens up this rambunctious romp through ancient Rome by encouraging a game student cast to involve the audience in its antics. Ed Vaughan's guileful, gleeful Pseudolus grows on you, although it takes much of the first act to get used to his epicene, faintly English persona. Vaughan's pranks and plots with Daryl Lozoupone's Hysterium, who "lives to grovel," are simply, well, hysterical. But the show's inveterate scene-stealer is Jess Hanks' macho, egotistical Miles Gloriosus, whose tongue-tied characterization owes an incalculable debt to Elmer Fudd. Hanks lifts the show to unexpected heights of, yes, hilawity. **Otterbein Summer Theatre.** (Reviewed by Michael Grossberg.)

P.O.

4/28/91

THE PUBLIC C



'Funny' actors

Otterbein Summer Theatre will open its 25th anniversary season with the musical comedy "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum." The Otterbein production features, from left: Bryan Brems as Hero, Katie Bowers as Philia, Ed Vaughan as Pseudolus and Daryl Lozupone as Hysterium, a slave who is asked to don a wig and pretend to be Philia. The play will run today through Sunday, July 2-3 and 5-7. All performances will be in the Campus Center Theatre in the basement of the Campus Center, 100 W. Home St. Box office hours are from 12:30 to 8:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. Sunday. The box office number is 898-1109.



A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum: Otterbein Summer Theatre stages this musical comedy through July 7.

The Other Paper
6/27 - 7/3/91.

'Forum' to open Otterbein season

Otterbein College Theatre will open its 25th anniversary season with the musical comedy *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* June 26-30, July 2-3 and 5-7 in the Campus Center Theatre in the basement of the Campus Center, 100 W. Home St., Westerville.

Set in Roman times, the play centers on Pseudolus, a slave in the household of an aging citizen named Senex and his nagging wife Domina. His master is actually Hero, the son of the household.

For more information call 898-1109.

West. News

7-22-91

Theater

26 JUNE-7 JULY

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum. Otterbein Summer Theatre presents this popular Broadway play set in Roman times that it follows a slave's schemes as he tries to win his freedom by securing a courtesan for three different men at the same time. June 26, 7:30 pm; Tues.-Sat., 8 pm; Sun., 2 pm (no performance July 4). Campus Center Theatre, 100 Home St., Westerville, 898-1109.