

THE SHINS, ANDRE WILLIAMS



GREG BARTRAM | FOR THE DISPATCH

Marty Crandall plays keyboard and Dave Hernandez the bass during the Shins' performance at the Newport Music Hall.

Bassist-guitarist Dave Hernandez seemed as if he would rather be playing top-fuel rock 'n' roll, not fidgety, intricate pop, as many Shins songs require. More demure songs such as *New Slang* and *Young Pilgrims* were beautiful, however, and the packed house sang Mercer's every lyric.

The music strangely was reminiscent of so many lost, sunshine-pop bands of the '60s (Chocolate Watchband, Strawberry Alarm Clock), especially during the rousing *So Says I*, which capped the main set.

A few blocks south, literally and figuratively, from the well-scrubbed sounds and sights in the Newport, Detroit raunch 'n' roll legend Andre Williams already was sloshing through his back catalog of almost 40 years

for a thin crowd of 35 die-hards.

Williams, decked out in a red shirt and suit jacket, was, as befits his music, a randy 68-year-old, constantly praising the saltier aspects of love. Backed by a fairly wooden garage-blues five-piece in tailored black suits, Williams was in fine form during songs (*Bacon Fat* was a treat).

Between songs, Uncle Andre didn't know when to put a sock in it. He'd start a thought, meander a while, finish a thought, ask for another drink, utter words such as *stank* a few hundred times, then start another song.

All in all, it was a loose and nasty affair, testament to the hidden charms — bawdy and less so — available for the musically curious on any given night.

THEATER REVIEW | ANTON IN SHOW BUSINESS

Play skims material's surface

By Margaret Quamme

FOR THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

The lives of those involved in theater are rich in comic and dramatic possibilities.

Jane Martin's arch *Anton in Show Business*, produced with pizzazz by Otterbein Summer Theatre, examines the lives of the poor souls trying to survive a problem-plagued regional production of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* and, in the process, makes a few points about the role of theater in American life.

Intensely driven Kate (Molly Camp), the beleaguered artistic director of an unstable San Antonio theater, goes to New York to cast the play, accompanied by Holly (Geneva Hyman), the surgically enhanced TV star who has been selected to draw in the audience, and by a Brit-for-hire director (Megan Ward) with some unconventional audition protocols.

Holly, in a burst of feminist camaraderie, insists on casting naive Lisabette (Sara Alvarez) and dejected Casey (Katie De-Cioccio), causing the show's director to walk.

▶ Otterbein Summer Theatre will present *Anton in Show Business* at 8 tonight and 2 p.m. Sunday — and 8 p.m. Thursday through next Saturday and 2 p.m. June 27 — in the Campus Center Theatre, 100 W. Home St., Westerville. Tickets cost \$17. Call 614-823-1109.

Down in Texas, the mismatched trio is greeted by an emotionally labile costume designer (Camp), a morally upright country singer turned actor (Camp again), a smarmy tobacco executive (Joanna Jordan) and a rotating series of directors.

Their rehearsals and hotel heart-to-hearts are interrupted by an earnest young theater critic (Kate Oliva) planted in the audience, who complains about the progress and direction of the play.

The two-act *Anton* is an endearingly ramshackle mixture of farce, satire and poignant drama. Under the brisk and polished direction of Ed Vaughan, this production plays up the lightly comic side of the

material rather than exploring its potential depths.

Fresh-faced Alvarez has keen comic timing as the innocent and optimistic Lisabette: The scene in which she meets jaded Casey is a fizzy pleasure.

Camp runs away with the relatively minor role of Kate, finding the heart beneath her theatrical mannerisms, and Ward is both moving and curiously amusing as the mustachioed Polish emigre who finally assumes direction of the play.

Hyman, though charming and attractive, is a bit lightweight to pull off Holly's sinister side, and with the exception of Ward, the actresses have trouble convincingly playing the many male roles.

Rob Johnson's nimble lighting takes a minimal set through multiple scene changes, and Matt Christian's sound design makes nicely ironic use of show tunes.

Anton runs the risks of being sentimental and self-referential, and doesn't fully trust the audience to pick up on what is going on without explanation, but it is thoroughly entertaining.



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BEXLEY NEWS
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JUN-23-2004

Inconsistent cast takes edge off witty backstage comedy

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By DENNIS THOMPSON

Suburban News Theater Critic

Otterbein Summer Theatre opens its 2004 season with Jane Martin's *Anton in Show Business*, a backstage comedy that can be enjoyed without the benefit of a theater background.

I saw the original production at the 2000 Humana Festival for New Plays in Louisville, Ky., and it was my favorite work of the entire collection. Others agreed, apparently, as it received the 2001 American Theatre Critics Steinberg New Play Award.

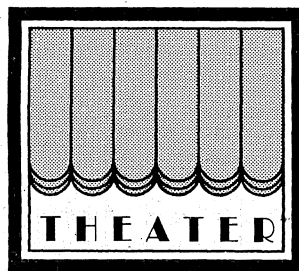
Anton follows the trials of three actresses attempting to

perform Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* at a regional theater in Texas, a premise that opens all sorts of wonderful opportunities.

"Jane Martin" is a pseudonym for an anonymous playwright. Rumors have her (or him) being someone deeply involved in professional theater production.

This play seems to bear that out, as it is ripe with inner knowledge of the workings of professional theater and is a sharp satire of art in today's society.

I don't compare professional productions with college work. The only comment I would make is that having seen it per-



REVIEW

formed professionally, I know that when done well this is a funny, clever and insightful play.

I wouldn't have felt that way if this had been my first viewing.

I have long been enamored with Otterbein's theater program, often feeling its productions are of a professional quality, with skilled and savvy young actors. This is the first time I've felt an Otterbein cast was overmatched.

The all-female cast members not only play characters ranging in age and experience, but some play multiple roles, including male parts. Some of them are making their Otterbein debut or have limited college acting experience, and it shows.

The successful portrayals are those involving characters close to the performers' real age.

Best is Sara Alvarez, who plays Lisabette, a young, naive would-be actress. Alvarez is consistently energetic and charming.

Kate Oliva is fine as Joby, a young, enthusiastic theater graduate.

Geneva Hyman also is solid as Holly, a self-centered television star who knows the world revolves around her. She is believable in her self-knowledge and manipulations, also showing a touch of heart.

Less successful is Katie DeCioccio as Casey, the actress who's been around the block. She tries to play dark and world-weary, but it comes off as playing a type rather than having any connection to that life experience.

The rest of the cast plays multiple roles with inconsistent success.

Most assured is Molly Camp, who has effective moments as Kate, the the-

ater manager, and is delightful as Jackey, the gay costume designer. We don't buy her, though, as Ben, the handsome country singer.

Megan Ward is given all male parts and has her best moments as Wikewitch, the Polish director.

Joanna Jordan plays a wide variety of roles but still needs to develop vocal authority and stage presence.

Billed as a madcap comedy, this doesn't play that way. Timing was off on opening night, and director

Ed Vaughan's pacing often seemed sluggish.

This really is a fun play, and the dialogue here still makes it enjoyable. But this production seems out of sync and just beyond the reach of the performers.

Otterbein Summer Theatre's Anton in Show Business runs at 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday at the Campus Center Theatre, 100 W Home St., Westerville. Tickets are \$17. For more information call 614-823-1109.