

# 'God's Favorite' is next production for OST

A Biblical story becomes a contemporary comedy when Neil Simon rewrites the Book of Job in "God's Favorite," the upcoming production of the Otterbein College Summer Theatre.

The play is set for July 19 through 23 at 8:30 p.m. in the air-conditioned Campus Center Arena Theatre on the Otterbein campus.

"The play is basically a comedy, but it has serious moments," said Geoff Nelson, who is directing the production. "I might call it a cross between Alan Ayckbourn and the Marx Brothers. It's a comedy of character and wit rather than a slapstick, more physical kind of comedy."

The story revolves around Joe Benjamin, a wealthy corrugated box manufacturer living on Long Island with his jewel-bedecked wife, Rose, and his dim-witted twins, Ben and Sarah. Their prodigal son, Davi

returns to the family from time to time to stir up anguish.

As the play opens, Joe is visited by a messenger from God in the unlikely form of one Sidney Lipton, with a startling announcement: Unless Joe renounces God he will be subjected to a series of vile misfortunes. Joe refuses, calamity strikes, and the Benjamin family is shaken from its comfortable complaisance.

"The serious message of the play is that suffering is sometimes necessary," said Nelson. "The Benjamin family grows in strength as Joe's faith is tested."

Nelson said the play opened to mixed reviews on Broadway and that his interpretation of the comedy will be a more subtle one. "The Broadway production was done with very broad humor," he said.

A native of Maine, Nelson is currently working on his

doctorate in theatre at Ohio State University. He has directed productions at the Weathervane Playhouse, Ohio State, and Players Theatre in Columbus. Following his Otterbein stint, Nelson will travel to Michigan and Oklahoma where he will both direct and act in several plays.

"I'm really looking forward to working with the Otterbein cast and with the play," said Nelson. "I directed another work by Simon at a dinner theatre in Michigan and really enjoyed that experience. I am anxious to test my interpretation of 'God's Favorite'."

The role of Joe Benjamin will be played by Ed Vaughan, managing director of the Otterbein College Summer Theatre and a member of the theatre faculty. Susan Diol will play

Rose and Giovanni Moscardino will play Sidney Lipton. Ben and Sarah Benjamin will be played by Steve Salyer and Carol Giffen. Brent Erdy will play David. The Benjamins' servants, Mady and Morris, will be played by Juli Armentrout and

Roger Tackette.

Tickets to "God's Favorite" are available at the Campus Center box office from 12:30 to 9 p.m. weekdays and for one hour preceding each performance at the door.