



NEWS

Office of College Relations • One Otterbein College • Westerville, Ohio 43081
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**Contact: Jennifer Hill, 823-1605
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 29, 2000

General Entertainment

OTTERBEIN COLLEGE THEATRE PREMIERES *GINGER*

Otterbein College Theatre has added *Ginger*, the Broadway-bound developmental musical about the life of Hollywood starlet Ginger Rogers to its regular season schedule. The musical will run May 26-28 and June 1, 2 and 4 in Cowan Hall, 30 S. Grove St., Westerville.

Audiences in Columbus will have the chance to see Donna McKechnie, Tony-award winning actress for *A Chorus Line*, playing Ginger Rogers' mother and Randy Skinner, Tony-nominated choreographer of *State Fair*, playing Fred Astaire playing beside Otterbein College students in the first developmental stage of a Broadway musical. Never before staged, *Ginger* will be done with minimal scenery, but full choreography and music, and audiences will be invited to give feedback to the creative team. Otterbein College Theatre was selected as the site for this project because of its extensive experience in producing new plays and its national reputation for training outstanding musical theatre performers.

Ginger Rogers introduced some of the most important songs in American musical theatre, performing songs written for her by Gershwin and others, including many songs from the popular musical *Crazy for You*. Born in 1911, Ginger began entertaining at age 14 with appearances in Vaudeville and Broadway performances before making her Hollywood debut in 1931. She performed in many musicals throughout the 1930s and '40s that set standards for American musical theatre. She also showed her talent in dramatic roles, earning the 1940 Best Actress Oscar for her performance in *Kitty Foyle*. She appeared regularly in films through the late 1950s and returned to the spotlight in 1965, performing the lead role in the hit Broadway musical *Hello, Dolly!* before taking *Mame* to London for a successful 14-month engagement, including a command performance for the Queen.

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Ginger

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Ginger- the musical is based on the autobiography, *GINGER – My Story*, written by Ginger Rogers. The story was adapted for stage by Paul Becker, a close personal friend of Ginger Rogers, and Robert Kennedy, Ginger's personal manager for the last 15 years of her life. It features music by Irving Berlin, Con Conrad, Vernon Duke, George Gershwin, Irving Kaha, Harry Revel, Ginger Rogers, Harry Warren and Vincent Youmans. It also features lyrics by Irving Berlin, Al Dubin, Vernon Duke, Edward Eliscu, Sammy Fain, Ira Gershwin, Mack Gordon, Gus Kahn, Herb Magidson and Ginger Rogers.

Marshall Mason will direct *Ginger*. Mason's Off-Broadway work has been recognized with six Obie Awards for Distinguished Direction, The Margo Jones and Theatre World awards. His Broadway work includes *Redwood Curtain*, *The Seagull*, *Solitary Confinement*, *As Is*, *Angel's Fall*, *Fifth of July*, *Talley's Folly* and *Knock Knock*. In total, Mason's productions have won five Tony Awards and 24 nominations, including five for Best Director. Founding Artistic Director of Circle Rep, Mason is a professor at Arizona State University. Most recently, Mason was honored as one of the "Outstanding Directors of the Century" by the Stage Directors/Choreographers Foundation. His recent London "West End" credits include the musical *Elephant Man* and others. Mason said of the developmental production that "the glamour of Ginger Rogers is recreated live on stage using the songs and dances she made famous during her legendary career."

Erma Duricko is the associate director. She has directed professionally for over 20 years and is the founder of Blue Roses/4-Tenn Productions. She is the recent recipient of the Tennessee Williams Festival Award for Outstanding Contributions Preserving, Promoting, and Perpetuating the plays of Tennessee Williams. In addition, she has twice received the Arizona Critics' Award for Directing, the Scranton Times Critics' Choice for Outstanding Production of the Year, a Cervantes Grant for Directing, and an ACTF Award for Direction. Duricko currently teaches a master scene study class in New York City and is the artistic associate of the Lab Theatre, listed in *Who's Who in Entertainment, America and the World*.

Donna McKechnie will play Ginger's mother, Lela. McKechnie is regarded internationally as one of Broadway's foremost dancing stars. Most recently, she completed a workshop of her one-woman show *Inside the Music*, written by Chris Durang, and directed by Tommie Walsh, which was produced by the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park. Previously, she played Sally in the

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Ginger

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Add 2

acclaimed revival of *Follies* in the spring of 1998. She also choreographed and performed in *No Way to Treat a Lady* at the Arts Theatre in London's West End, where she had starred in Cole Porter's *Can-Can at the Strand* a few seasons before. McKechnie's Broadway credits include *How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying*; the national tour of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*; *The Education of Hyman Kaplan*; *Sondheim: A Musical Tribute*, which she also choreographed; *On the Town*; *Promises, Promises*; and *Company and State Fair*, for which she received the Fred Astaire Award for Best Female Dance for the 1995-96 season. She has appeared as a guest star in numerous television musical specials and dramatic series including *Fame*, *Cheers*, *Family Ties*, *Twirl* and *Dark Shadows*. She also played The Rose in the film *The Little Prince*.

Randy Skinner is the choreographer for *Ginger* and also performs as Fred Astaire. He is an award-winning director and choreographer whose work has encompassed Broadway, regional and Los Angeles productions. He most recently choreographed *Do Re Mi* for Encores! at City Center. On Broadway, he co-directed and choreographed the world premiere of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *State Fair*; he choreographed *Ain't Broadway Grand*, and he assisted Gower Champion with the dances for *42nd Street*. Skinner also staged the London, Australia and two national companies of *42nd Street*. He choreographed and played the leading role of Val in a highly acclaimed production of *Babes in Arms* directed by the legendary Ginger Rogers. On the West Coast, Skinner choreographed and played Victor in *Pal Joey* with Dixie Carter, choreographed and played Rudolph in *Hello, Dolly!* with Nell Carter, and choreographed *Strike Up the Band* with Tom Bosley. Skinner conceived, directed and choreographed *Swing! The Big Band Hit Parade* starring Margaret Whiting. For his work, Skinner has received a Tony Award nomination, Outer Critics Circle Award nominations, LA Drama Critics Award, LA Drama-logue Award, Connecticut Critics Circle Award, and Bay Area Critic Circles Award. His "taps" can be heard on the recordings of *Strike up the Band*, *110 in the Shade* and *Sondheim at the Movies*. Skinner is a cum laude graduate of Ohio State University and he regularly teaches master classes at both the collegiate and professional levels. He most recently directed and choreographed the new musical *Abby's Song* this past November at City Center.

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Ginger

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Paul Becker (Book/Producer) began his association with Ginger Rogers twenty-two years ago while he was producing a National Public Radio show on her career as an entertainer. He and Rogers formed a close personal friendship that lasted the rest of her life. During that time he traveled with her while she starred in *Anything Goes*. He encouraged her to write her autobiography for which he was the historical consultant. It was Becker who opened the RKO files for her use and who was one of the several editors she used once she had finished writing her life story. Becker's earlier experience included broadcasting for the Armed Forces Network. In later years he wrote over fifty shows which he produced for a local National Public Radio affiliate in Los Angeles. He has also edited and presented motion picture film clips at institutions including the Ronald Reagan Library, American Cinematheque, the Dance Gallery Guild in Los Angeles, the Charles Russell Museum in Great Falls, Montana, and the Hollywood Westerner Hall of Fame. Rogers named him as executor and trustee in her will. He acted in this capacity for three years until the estate was wound down. He wrote the play *Ginger* with his partner Robert Kennedy and then secured the approval of the legal beneficiary and owner of Ginger's image and rights to produce the play under the banner of Tremont Productions, which he and Kennedy had formed. Becker produced a shortened thirty minute version of the play, in a radio show format, for presentation at a major fund-raiser in Palm Springs earlier this year co-starring Rich Little and Meredith Patterson.

Robert Kennedy (Producer/Book) began his association with Ginger Rogers nineteen years ago as her personal manager. In 1985, Rogers made her directing debut with Kennedy's two productions of *Babes in Arms* where she and he revamped the classic Rodgers and Hart script with choreography by Randy Skinner. For twenty years Kennedy was the sole owner of GK Management, handling the careers of professionals throughout the entertainment industry. He was president of KENVEL Productions for two years as well as GK Productions for ten years. While traveling with Rogers on her autobiographical book tour, she agreed to allow her life story to be adapted and written for the theater - thus the musical *Ginger* and the formation of Tremont Productions with his partner, Paul Becker. For three years, Kennedy handled Rogers intellectual property rights for the Ginger Rogers Trust. Kennedy is currently marketing a previously unreleased video of Ginger's one-woman show as well as a CD including rare vocal recordings.

Ginger

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Add 4

Kennedy and Becker will produce the play under Executive Producer James Cardwell. Cardwell has produced for over 15 years in theatre, film, television and other entertainment-related projects. He has produced numerous productions over the years and has several new shows in development, including *Rasputin*, a new musical opera. Recently, he was appointed as the Deputy Director for the National Jazz Museum in Harlem, in association with Smithsonian Institute and Library of Congress. He is also a managing director in the development of the Harlem Performing Arts Center. He began his career in theatrical production in 1985 as the associate producer for the original production of the musical *Nunsense*, which has grossed to date over \$250 million worldwide.

The addition of *Ginger* will replace the scheduled Seventh Commissioned Play *Longevity Abbreviated: for those who don't have time* by Carter Lewis, which will be performed as the first play of the Summer Season, opening June 22.

Ginger will be performed May 26-28 and June 1, 2 and 4 in Cowan Hall, 30 S. Grove St., Westerville. The show will be at 8 p.m. on May 26-27 and June 2. There will be 2 p.m. shows on May 28 and June 4. There will also be shows at 7:30 p.m. on May 28 and June 1.

Tickets for *Ginger* can be reserved by calling the Otterbein College box office at (614) 823-1109. The box office is open on weekdays beginning May 15 and one hour prior to performances.

For more information about the production, call (614) 823-1209.

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Otterbein College Theatre

Ginger

Runs May 26-28, June 1, 2, and 4, 2000

Tickets are \$15-18. The box office is open 1:00-4:30 p.m. weekdays, selected Saturdays beginning May 15 and one hour prior to performances. The box office is located in Cowan Hall, 30 S. Grove St. in Westerville. The phone number is (614) 823-1109. For more information on Otterbein College Theatre's season, call (614) 823-1209.

Dates, times and location of performances are as follows:

| DATE | TIME | LOCATION |
|------------------|------------------|--|
| Friday, May 26 | 8:00 p.m. | Cowan Hall, 30 S. Grove St., Westerville |
| Saturday, May 27 | 8:00 p.m. | Cowan Hall, 30 S. Grove St., Westerville |
| Sunday, May 28 | 2:00 & 7:30 p.m. | Cowan Hall, 30 S. Grove St., Westerville |
| Thursday, June 1 | 7:30 p.m. | Cowan Hall, 30 S. Grove St., Westerville |
| Friday, June 2 | 8 p.m. | Cowan Hall, 30 S. Grove St., Westerville |
| Sunday, June 4 | 2 p.m. | Cowan Hall, 30 S. Grove St., Westerville |



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**Michael Grossberg, 461-7571 (fax)
The Columbus Dispatch**

GINGER CORRECTION

The dates listed in a Feb. 7 news release about the upcoming Otterbein College Theatre production *Ginger* recently were changed. Attached is an updated news release. There will also be a copy sent in the mail.

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