

# Playwright finds rich source in stock-market boom and bust

By Michael Grossberg  
Dispatch Theater Critic

Well before the stock market peaked in March 2000, the playwright sensed that the days of the dizzy dot-com era were numbered.

Anthony Clarvoe cashed in not by selling badly performing stocks but by writing a full-length play: *Ctrl+Alt+Delete*.

Beginning tonight, Otterbein College Theatre will present the first college production of the high-tech comedy.

"The title of the play came to me from one of the umpteen times that my computer screen froze," Clarvoe said from his home in Gambier. "It's the command for Windows to reboot your computer, so you lose whatever you've done that isn't saved but you get a fresh start. That seemed like a good metaphor for what the people who lived through the recent crash had to decide to do."

For historical context, he researched other boom-and-bust trends — from the Dutch tulip craze of the 1600s to the South Sea "bubble" in England during the 1700s.

Both are documented in Charles Mackay's *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*, which Clarvoe read as part of his research.

"Boom markets," he said, "often turn into a kind of mass hysteria where people are no longer investing but speculating and where the price of commodities is vastly out of whack with the underlying value."

"Every time this happens, people say we have discovered a whole new way of doing business, history is over, all the rules are overturned and the bubble will never end."

■ Otterbein College Theatre will present *Ctrl+Alt+Delete* at 7:30 tonight, 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and 2 p.m. Sunday — and 8 p.m. May 1-4 — in the Campus Center Theatre, 100 W. Home St., Westerville. Tickets cost \$14. For more information, call 614-823-1109.

In writing his play, Clarvoe set out to dramatize the "upward rocket" and "downward spiral" of a young entrepreneur who has an idea for a hand-held communications device.

"He calls it the Gizmo, and he brings it to the fourth-richest man in America, who sees it as an opportunity not to sell gizmos but to sell stock. The suspense in the play is can they go public before the bubble bursts."

Clarvoe began writing the work in the fall of 2000.

"But I had wanted to write it for several years because I was struck by the similarity between the events in the financial world and the high-tech world."

In the wake of a well-received premiere at the San Jose (Calif.) Rep., a production at the George Street Playhouse in New Jersey is generating interest from New York producers for an off-Broadway run.

"How people have responded to the play pre- and post-Enron is fascinating," Clarvoe said. "Today, people are much more aware of how their perceptions of companies were manipulated."

"At the sold-out Silicon Valley premiere, a lot of people from that world came to see it. There was a lot of laughter and a rueful recognition of what we've gone through and



Fred Squillante / Dispatch

Renata Wilson, left, Dennis Romer and Elizabeth Harold in rehearsals with playwright Anthony Clarvoe, second from right

are still going through."

His plays are performed regularly throughout the United States.

Among them: *Pick Up Ax*, set in the world of garage start-ups; *Let's Play Two*, concerning a pair of Minnesota Twins fans on a car trip; and the historical drama *Ambition Facing West*.

Based on a commission from the St. Louis Rep and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Clarvoe is writing a historical drama about the Lewis & Clark expedition.

"I like to write histories because I get curious about things," he said. "When I learn something new I want to share it, and writing plays is how I share things."

"I also love comedies because I love laughing. . . . This is the first time I've written a play that combines both comedy and history so thoroughly. Anytime behavior is this absurd and people are this desperate, it had better be a comedy."

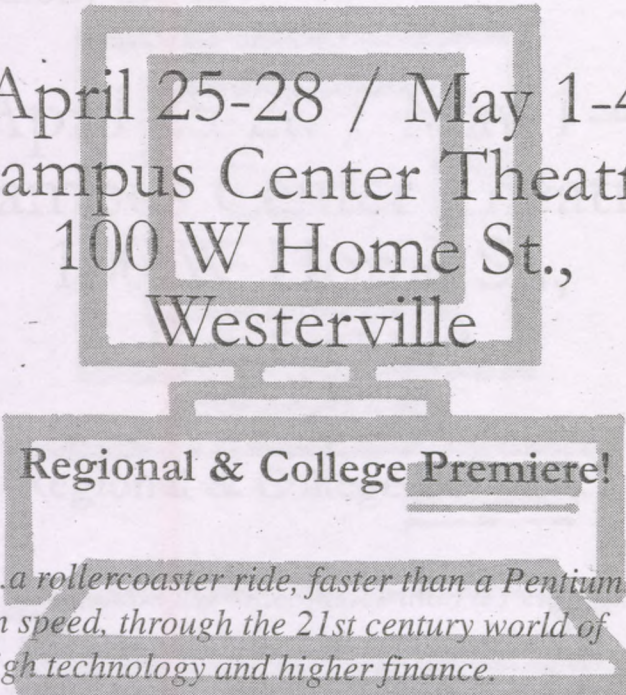
mgrossberg@dispatch.com



# Otterbein College Theatre

## CTRL+ALT+DEL

by Anthony Clarvoe



April 25-28 / May 1-4  
Campus Center Theatre  
100 W Home St.,  
Westerville

**Regional & College Premiere!**

*...a rollercoaster ride, faster than a Pentium IV  
on speed, through the 21st century world of  
high technology and higher finance.*

## BOX OFFICE

614-823-1109

30 S Grove St., Westerville OH 43081



5-2-02

## CURTAIN

This guide to central Ohio theater is based on recent Dispatch reviews. For show times and dates, see the Theater listings on Page 11.

**Ctrl+Alt+Delete** — Anthony Clarvoe's observant wit and convincing characterizations and director John Stefano's flashy staging freshen a familiar cautionary fable about a dot.com generation on the make and the shared get-rich-quick fantasies that lead to their unmaking. In a welcome return to the stage, Dennis Romer tackles the plum role of a billionaire whose wealth and charisma have made him a high-tech guru to Wall Street's sycophants. As Eddie Fiskier, the proverbial neophyte with a bright idea, Tom Weaver exudes nerdy naivete and wide-eyed capitalist idealism. Recommended for mature audiences because of comic profanity and sexual innuendo. **Otterbein College Theatre.** (Reviewed by Michael Grossberg).

**Dirty Little Secrets** — The singing and choreography are strong, but the comedy sketches range from funny to so-so in this uneven themed variety show about the deceptions and disguises that people adopt to get what they think they want. Much of the acting is cartoonish, but that works fine in

**Package Deal**, Frederick Stropel's amusing send-up of Hollywood's false values. Mary Randle has fun going over the top as a manipulative agent cajoling a B-movie starlet (Jennifer Tarry) to stay with her. Jimmy Mak amusingly impersonates Elvis Presley in *Life After Elvis*, Jason Milligan's short comedy. But most skits and playlets, including a lesser episode of *Dr. Mystery*, need further development. Recommended for mature audiences because of profanity. **Shadowbox Cabaret.** (M.G.)

**Hot and Throbbing** — An ambitious, technically assured production of a problematic Paula Vogel play that alternates between a feminist movie-of-the-week melodrama about domestic abuse and a sharp-edged comedy about a harried mother (Jeanine Thompson) with two adolescent children. Thompson's complex Charlene is an appealing character whose blind spot for her husband (Ralph Scott) doesn't obscure her warmth, humor and intelligence. Director Maureen Ryan gives a comic vitality to the early scenes, but then politically correct formula takes over. Because of its subject matter and language, the 90-minute one-act is recommended for adult audiences. **Red Herring Theatre Ensemble.** (Reviewed by Margaret Quamme)

**Lights, Cam** Mickey Mouse ex goody character well-chosen music please performer tent entertainment heavy and cartoon relief, the weak pl monologues too thing from televa nostalgia. A nurn new 2Co's fac strong vocalizing project charm an



## A night of Coles

The Columbus Jazz Orchestra, with vocalists Kelly Crum-Delaveris and Dwight Lenox and pianist Bobby Floyd, will perform the music of Nat "King" Cole, left, and Cole Porter at 8 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and at 2 and 7:30 p.m. next Sunday at the Southern Theatre, 21 E. Main St. The Columbus Youth Jazz Ensemble also will perform at 1 p.m. Sunday. Tickets cost \$15 to \$30 at Ticketmaster and the Columbus Jazz Arts Group, 614-294-5200.

**High-tech comedy.** Otterbein College Theatre will present *Ctrl+Alt+Delete*, Ohio playwright Anthony Clarvoe's latest comedy about a gizmo that a rich man markets before it is built, at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 2 p.m. next Sunday — and 8 p.m. May 1-4 — in the Campus Center Theatre, 100 W. Home St., Westerville. Tickets cost \$14. Call 614-823-1109.

**Paris calling.** Erik Truffaz Ladyland Quartet, on its first U.S. tour, will perform at 8 p.m. Friday in the Wexner Center for the Arts' Performance Space, 1871 N. High St. Truffaz, a French trumpeter who records for Blue Note, deals in acid jazz, drum 'n' bass, funk and hip-hop. Tickets cost \$12 and \$14 at the Wexner/Mershon box office, and Ticketmaster. Call 614-292-3535

**Springfest.** The acoustic-rocking Pat McGee Band and singer-songwriter Jonatha Brooke will headline Springfest 2002 Friday in Ohio Wesleyan University's Selby Stadium, 45 S. Henry St., Delaware. Cecilia, KWE and Genuine Taste also will perform. Gates open at 6 p.m. Tickets cost \$10. Call 740-368-3197 or go to [www.springfest.owu.edu](http://www.springfest.owu.edu).

**Waltzing Andre.** Andre Rieu will bring the sounds of Strauss to Mershon Auditorium at 8 p.m. Friday. The violinist/orchestra conductor came to prominence in 1994 when his album *From Holland With Love* began a resurgence in waltz music. If the WOSU-TV (Channel 34) pledge events are any indication, Rieu is popular in central Ohio. Tickets cost \$47.50 to \$62.50 at Ticketmaster.



**OHIO  
NEWS BUREAU INC.**  
CLEVELAND, OHIO 44115  
216/241-0675

COLUMBUS DISPATCH  
COLUMBUS, OH  
SUN-CIRC. 402,193

389  
MAY-05-2002

### PLAYWRIGHT ON A ROLL

Otterbein College Theatre has struck gold twice with playwright Anthony Clarvoe.

The school asked him to write a 1994 adaptation of Dostoevski's *The Brothers Karamazov*, which went on to the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park and St. Louis Repertory Theatre, and to pen *Ctrl+Alt+Delete*, a comedy about the dot-com boom and crash.

The latter, which closed yesterday on the Westerville campus, is being considered for an off-Broadway run.

"Returning to Otterbein is great," Clarvoe said recently from his home in Gambier. "It's nice to see how the college's program has evolved and become even more professionally oriented, and it gives me a chance to work close to home."

"Especially with this play, which has a



## Intermission

very 'coastal' theme, it was great to be able to write it away from the coasts. If it's a story that resonates with people in the Midwest, then it's universal."

— Michael Grossberg  
mgrossberg@dispatch.com