

Comedy Production Ineptly Performed at Otterbein

By Jeff De Bray
Of The Dispatch Staff

Bad comedy isn't very hard to spot. It relies on caricatures instead of fleshed-out gimmicks that are easy to figure out, telegraph much of the action to come, and offer cheap, one-line jokes rather than humor that evolves naturally from the development of the play.

"Don't Drink the Water," a play by Woody Allen, is bad comedy.

EVEN SECOND-RATE comedy can be entertaining or at least diverting sometimes, provided it's handled correctly by skilled actors and a director aware of the material's weaknesses.

Such is not the case with Otterbein Summer Theatre's current production of "Don't Drink the Water." It's witless and badly performed by almost everyone involved.

The action is centered in some fictional Communist country in Europe where an obnoxious, loud-mouthed caterer from New Jersey

(Dennis M. Romer), his talkative wife (Pamela Hill) and their free-spirited daughter (Sue Ann Kocks) find themselves "trapped" in the American Embassy, wanted

by the Communists who think they're spies.

THE ACTING-AMBASSADOR (Jim West) is of course so inept he's unable to help to solve their dilemma, all the while making clumsy and unsuccessful passes at the caterer's daughter.

There are possibilities for humor in the situation, but

there's very little in this production.

The main problem with the comedy which runs through Saturday, is that all of the actors are just too pushy, trying too hard to make the gag and situations funnier than they actually are. As a whole the acting is so broad and over-played

it becomes humorless and tiring after a while.

ROMER IS badly miscast as the bullishly American caterer. He's wrong for the part physically and his assumed accent, as are all of the others in the play, is awful.

The best acting of the mediocre lot comes from Hill, who has good comic timing and an awareness of

where the laughs are in the play and how to get them.

Director Charles W. Dodrill has accentuated all of the bad points in this production of "Don't Drink the Water," turning it into an even louder, clumsier situation comedy than it is. Just write this one off as a bad production by an otherwise good company.

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'Don't Drink The Water' closes Otter season

"Don't Drink the Water" is the closing production for Otterbein Summer Theatre, July 22-26, with performances at 8:30 p.m. nightly in the air-conditioned Campus Center Theatre.

Tickets are now available for the comedy, made popular in both Broadway and film versions by Woody Allen. The box office is open from 12:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. daily in the Campus Center.

Typical of the kooky comedy Allen is noted for, "Don't Drink the Water" takes a bumbling American caterer and tosses him into a country behind the Iron Curtain, where he is mistaken for a spy.

The ambassador not in residence, his inept son is in charge of an embassy which is already providing asylum for another refugee. In fact, diplomatic red tape has kept him there for over seven years.

Playing the role of the caterer is Otterbein graduate Dennis Romer who has carried leading roles in "The Importance of Being

Earnest" and "The Liar" this season, as well as directing "Move Over, Mrs. Markham."

"Don't Drink the Water" marks his final appearance here before going to New York to continue his career.

A 1971 graduate of Otterbein, Romer obtained his masters degree in directing and has made a successful circuit of regional and dinner theatres since that time.

Originally coming to Otterbein on a football scholarship, he played varsity ball his freshman and senior years. Transferring to the University of Miami in his home state of Florida for his sophomore year, he became interested in theatre and subsequently returned to Otterbein to complete his college education under the tutelage of Dr. Charles W. Dodrill.

That association has extended beyond college and into Romer's professional career. He terms Dodrill, "still the best director I've ever worked under."

Mutual respect is evident between the two. "Dennis shares with present students

in the acting company," says Dodrill. "He shares not just as a fellow actor, but also as a director."

Set design and technical direction for this all-family entertainment is by D. Marty Bookwalter with costumes by Pamela Simmons.

Varied Season Ends For Actor-Director

Dennis Romer will end his varied season as actor and director at Otterbein Summer Theater in the role of the harried American caterer who is mistaken for a spy in the Woody Allen comedy, "Don't Drink the Water," to be presented Tuesday through Saturday nights in air-conditioned Campus Center.

An Otterbein alumnus who has completed a masters degree in directing and has successfully toured the regional and dinner theater circuit since his 1971 graduation, Romer starred here this summer in "The Importance of Being Earnest" and "The Liar," and in addition directed the near-sellout farce, "Move Over, Mrs. Markham."

HIS OWN assessment of the summer, though, is that playing Shroeder in "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown"

was "the biggest stretch for me as an actor."

Ironically, that "stretch" called for Romer to make his 6' 2" frame believable as "a little kid."



DENNIS ROMER

SPECIAL EVENTS LISTED

Campus Center, Otterbein Summer Theater, Westerville — "Don't Drink the Water," Tuesday through Saturday, 8:30 p.m.

Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, 480 E. Broad St. — "Abe Lincoln in Illinois," directed by John Cromwell with Raymond Massey, Ruth Gordon and Gene Lockhart,

Sunday, 2 p.m. . . . "Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" and "Some of the Boys," two Civil War films, Sunday, July 27, 1:30 and 3 p.m.

Columbus-Springfield Dinner Theater, Rts. 40 and 42, near London — "Champagne Complex," nightly except Mondays through July 27.

Theater opens at 6 p.m., curtain at 8:30 p.m.

Country Dinner Playhouse, 11500 Tussing Rd. off I-70 near Reynoldsburg — Joseph Cotten and Patricia Medina in "The Reluctant Debutante," nightly except Monday through Aug. 24. Theater opens at 6 p.m., curtain at 8:30 p.m.

Dixie Jamboree, 3915 E. Main St. — Bill Anderson, Friday.

Ohio Theater, 39 E. State St. — Dollar Movie Series presents Barbra Streisand and Ryan O'Neal in "What's Up Doc," Sunday. . . Omar Shariff and Julie Christie in "Dr. Zhivago," Friday, Saturday, Sunday, July 27. Evening performances at 8 p.m., Saturday, Sunday matinees at 2 p.m.

Mershon Auditorium, 15th and High Sts. — Far Horizons Travel Film, "Yugoslavia" with Thayler Soule, Wednesday, 8 p.m.

Park of Roses — ACT presents "You're a Good

Man, Charlie Brown," Friday, Saturday, 8 p.m., Sunday, July 27, 2:30 p.m.

Scot's Inn, 4900 Sinclair Rd. — Living Color, Monday through Aug. 2.

Southern Theater, 21 E. Main St. — WMNI Country Cavalcade, 8 p.m. Saturday. Sugarloaf Mt. Amphitheater, three miles north of Chillicothe on Rt. 23, South — "Tecumseh," nightly except Sundays through Aug. 31.

Stadium II, Drake Center, OSU campus — "The Last Meeting of the Knights of the White Magnolia, Tuesday through Saturday, July 22-26, 8 p.m.

Veterans Memorial, 300 W. Broad St. — Kenley Players presents Sunday only, Jack Jones, Anita Gillette and Noel Harrison in "She Loves Me," 2:45 and 7:30 p.m. . . . McLean Stevenson in "Under the Yum Yum Tree," Tuesday through July 27. Evening performances at 8:30 p.m. Saturday matinee 2:45 p.m.

SUNDAY, JULY 20, 1975

Columbus Dispatch

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Summer Theatre ends with comedy

"Don't Drink the Water," Woody Allen's Broadway and film success closes the Otterbein Summer Theatre season a modern-day comedy, nightly through Saturday with curtain time at 8:30 p.m. in the air-conditioned Campus Center.

The box office is open from 12:30 - 9 p.m. daily, with telephone reservation service available, in the Campus Center lobby.

Pamela Hill, Otterbein graduate from Columbus, closes her Otterbein career as the wife of the luckless American caterer who is mistaken for a spy during his vacation behind the Iron Curtain.

Miss Hill, who starred this summer as Lucy in "You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown" and also as the witty title character in "Move Over, Mrs. Markham," will begin graduate work at Bowling Green State University this fall.

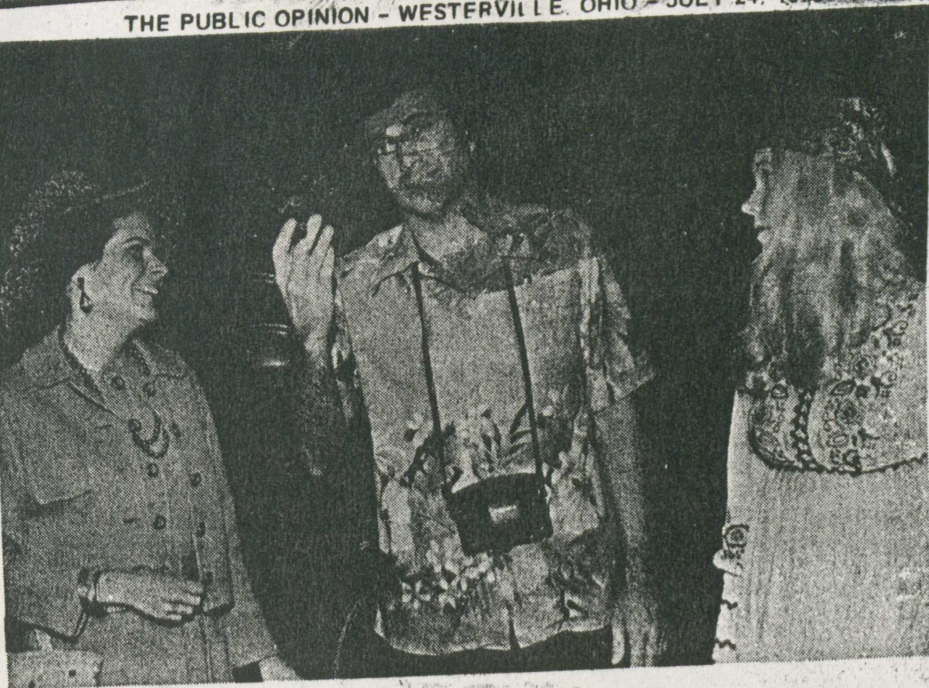
Well-remembered for her several roles at Otterbein,

Miss Hill played Stella opposite guest star Robert Fors-ter in "A Streetcar Named Desire" this spring. She also was Nerine in "Scapin" during the regular season.

A participant in Otterbein's first year of professional internships, Miss Hill spent one term last year at Actors Theatre in Louisville, Ky. where she gained practical experience in theatre management and public relations.

In "Don't Drink the Water" she is cast as the wife of Dennis Romer, Otterbein graduate and professional actor, who will leave for New York City at the close of the summer season to continue his professional career.

Also cast in the comedy are John Cain, Steven Black, Joseph Tribbie, Jim West, Sue Ann Kocks, James St. Clair, Robert Kokai, Dale Lund, Beth Titus, John Woodland and Dorothy Deitz. Assistant to director Charles



What else?

Dennis Romer, the cigar-smoking, sport-shirted, camera-carrying American tourist mistaken for a spy, asks "what else can happen" in the Otterbein Summer Theatre production of "Don't Drink The Water", while wife Pamela Hill (left) and daughter Sue Kocks bear up through it all.

W. Dorrill is Beth Titus and stage manager is Dorothy Deitz.

Costumes for the contemporary farce are by Pamela Simmons and design and technical direction by Marty Bookwalter.



"The phone's for you," says Jim West in his role of the inept son of the American ambassador "somewhere behind the Iron Curtain," in the Otterbein production of "Don't Drink the Water" while Sue Kocks waits out a chance to continue her pursuit of him.

Comedy rates high in sheer fun

By Sarah Skaates

The title of the play may be "Don't Drink the Water," but the advice from this corner is Do see the Show!

The Otterbein Summer Theatre is finishing the 1975 season with the delightful comedy about American tourists mistaken for spies.

And with Charles Dorrill again occupying the director's chair, that finish is definitely with a flourish.

Dorrill took pains at Monday night's preview to note that there were still two more rehearsals to go before the show opened. He hardly needed to bother. The show was bright and set for laughs from the beginning. Further work will make it sparkle even more.

Jim West has a firm grip on the comedic possibilities of the young foreign service staffer who bumbles every assignment except that of winning the heroine's hand. He makes the character both funny and sympathetic at the same time.

Dennis Romer and Pamela Hill are perfectly paired as the center of an international incident. Romer is the cigar-chewing big mouth who is never quite content to leave well enough alone.

Hill is the typical stereotype of the 'Joisey housewife' - sharp tongued and forever ironing or dusting. Between the two of them, Romer and Hill garner the lion's share of laughs.

Sue Kocks makes easy work of the Hollander's pretty daughter with romantic designs on West. James St. Clair is suitably sinister as the Communist official determined to make a spy case out of some innocent photography.

John Cain is cheerfully droll as the priest who has also taken refuge in the American Embassy. Joseph Tribbie manages some good bits as the other ambassadorial assistant, while Steven Black appears as both the ambassador and a visiting sultan.

With the barest frame of molding and appropriate furnishings Marty Bookwalter's set has the illusion of embassorial elegance. His work as technical director/designer has been consistently effective throughout the season.

There's little point in playing the comparison game with the bill of shows presented by Otterbein Summer Theatre in 1975, but were one so inclined, "Don't Drink the Water" would likely rate first or a very close second in terms of sheer fun and in quality of performance. But don't take my word for it - go have a laugh for yourself.

Thurs., July 24, 1975, Cols., O.

Citizen-Jour

presents comedy

"Don't Drink the Water" is the closing production for Otterbein Summer Theatre, with performances through Saturday at 8:30 p.m. nightly in the air-conditioned Campus Center Theatre.

Tickets are now available for this riotous comedy popular in both Broadway and film versions by Woody Allen. The box office is open from 12:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. daily in the Campus Center, telephone 891-3331.

Typical of the kooky comedy Allen is noted for, "Don't Drink the Water" takes a bumbling American caterer and tosses him into an embassy behind the Iron Curtain when he is mistaken for a spy.

With the ambassador not in residence, his inept son is in charge of an embassy which is already providing asylum for another refugee. In fact diplomatic red tape has kept him there for over seven years.

Playing the role of the caterer is Otterbein graduate Dennis Romer who has carried leading roles in "The Importance of Being Earnest," and "The Liar" this season, as well as directing "Move Over, Mrs. Markham."

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BBW
45 West Main
882-3116

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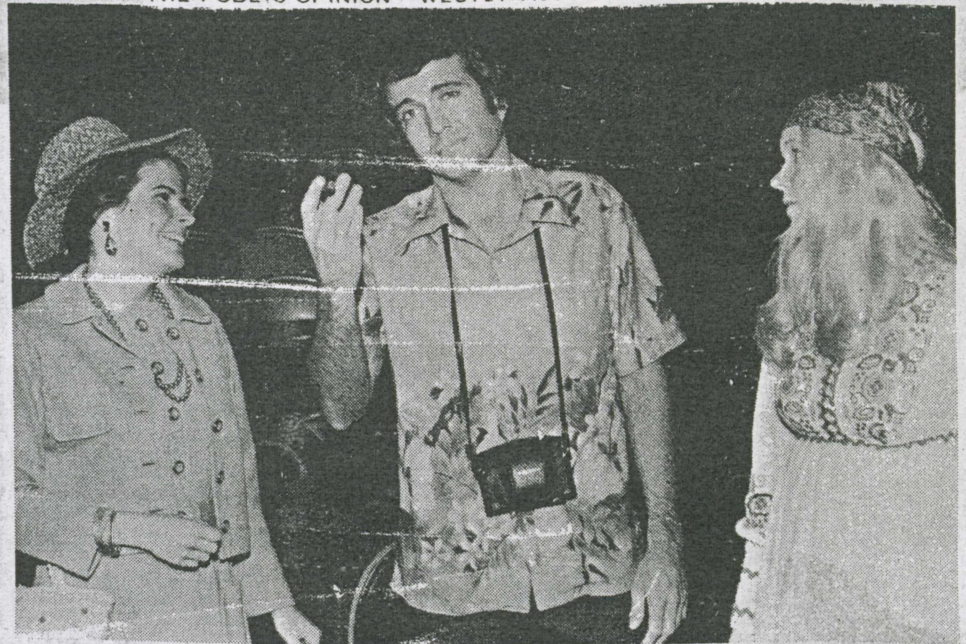
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CJ
7/24/75

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