

Play will end OCT season

For the sixth consecutive year, Otterbein College Theatre will close its season with an original commissioned play.

"Antigravity," by Mystery Science Theater writer Bill Corbett, takes a comic and serious look at feelings of isolation and fear at the end of the millennium.

The story focuses on Wendy and her brother, Peter, trying to repair the family home, recently ravaged by a storm. They are aided, somewhat unwillingly, by a group of Peter's friends, Roy the caretaker and a mysterious stranger called Gerald. These very different people share the house for a Memorial Day weekend as tragedy, comedy and many surprises ensue.

Through alternating doses of wit and wisdom, "Antigravity" shows that learning to let go of stress and pain will lead to new and exciting personal connections. As Gerald says to Wendy, "I've learned that when you go to the heart, punishment melts away, fear melts away, light comes in and there's space for happiness to enter."

Corbett's plays have been produced all around the country. Recently his play, "The Big Slam," was produced in theatres in Boston, Seattle, Minneapolis, Fort Worth, Anchorage and Richmond, Va. While "Antigravity" is in rehearsal at Otterbein, "The Big Slam" is running at the Purple Rose Theatre, produced by actor-director Jeff Daniels.

Other plays by Corbett are "Down the Pike," "Cash Karma," "Ridiculous Dreaming" and "Motorcade."

"Antigravity" is Corbett's third commissioned play. He co-wrote a play with Kira Obolensky called "Hate Mail," and "The Clown" was commissioned by the Guthrie Theatre.

Originally from Brooklyn, N.Y., Corbett earned his master of fine arts degree from the Yale School of Drama, where he studied playwriting and screenwriting. As well as writing plays, he is currently writer and performer for the Mystery Science Theater 3000, where he provides the voice of Crow for the Comedy Central program.

John Stefano, chairman of Otterbein's Department of Theatre and Dance, will direct the play. "Antigravity" will be performed May 27-30 and June 3-6 at Otterbein's Campus Center Theatre, 100 W. Home St. Opening night performance begins at 7:30 p.m., and other evening performances are at 8 p.m. Sunday matinees begin at 2 p.m.

Tickets are \$11 for Thursday and Sunday and \$12 for Friday and Saturday, and may be reserved by calling the Otterbein College Box office at 823-1109 between 1 and 4:30 p.m. weekdays.

Free spring concert to be given May 22

The Otterbein College Department of Music

will present a spring concert featuring the Otterbein Vocal Ensemble, Concert Choir and Wind Ensemble at 8 p.m. Saturday, May 22, at the Church of the Master United Methodist, Grove and Main Streets.

The concert, which is open to the public free of charge, will feature works commissioned by the college.

The Vocal Ensemble will premiere "Five Animal Songs" by composer Zae Munn, a member of the music faculty at St. Mary's College of Notre Dame, with texts by Peg Lauber. The set of five pieces is a "consortium commission" between Otterbein, the University of Illinois, Central Michigan University and Harvard University. Each institution commissioned one or more of the movements. The texts of the movements describe various animals and animal images.

The Concert Choir and the Wind Ensemble, two select ensembles of the department, will combine for two works.

They will perform "Chester," an old American hymn tune arranged for Otterbein by William Moffit for the 1976 Bicentennial. Gary Tirey, director of instrumental activities, will conduct.

The two ensembles will collaborate on "Always Something Sings," commissioned of composer Marvin Hamlisch in the fall of 1996 for the college's Sesquicentennial celebration. The text is drawn from the poetry of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Music faculty member Kevin Purcell will conduct.

More information about the performance is available by calling 823-1358.

'Afternoon of Opera' to be offered Sunday

The Opera Theatre of Otterbein College's Department of Music will present an Afternoon of Opera at 3 p.m. Sunday, May 23, in Riley Auditorium of the Battelle Fine Arts Center on the Otterbein campus.

The performance is open to the public free of charge.

The program is a performance of short scenes from well-known operas such as Mozart's "Cosi Fan Tutti," Bizet's "Carmen," Poulenc's "Dialogues of the Carmelites," Weill's "Street Scene," Moore's "Ballad of Baby Doe" and Verdi's "La Traviata."

The cast, consisting of music and music theatre students, is under the direction of faculty member Karen Eckenroth and two student directors, Miguel Ortiz and Chad Bragdon. Accompaniment for the performance is provided by Brad Blackham, piano, with Kevin Purcell conducting.

Additional information may be obtained by calling 823-1358.

OHIO
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CLEVELAND, OHIO 44115
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THIS WEEK - WESTERVILLE
WORTHINGTON, OH.
W CIRC. 24,253

MAY-19-99

May 1999



Mike Munden / Dispatch

Jared Jensen and Kelly Reeves in Otterbein College Theatre's production of *Antigravity*

CURTAIN CALLS

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

Antigravity — Millennial anxieties add comical foolishness and menace to Otterbein College's sixth annual commissioned play, whose title promises more metaphoric weight and buoyancy than is delivered by playwright Bill Corbett, a former writer for *Mystery Science Theatre 3000*. As the second "hundred-year" storm in a month terrorizes upstate New York and other disasters are reported on television, nine twentysomething characters wrestle with the unbearable lightness of being young. Corbett does have a quirky sense of humor and a flair for hip dialogue that saves much of the first act, which is otherwise poorly paced and confusing as a series of apparent strangers invade a woman's home for a party. Although another rewrite would improve it, *Antigravity* finally grounds its characters enough to approach Corbett's apparent goal: the delicate impressionism of a Chekhovian ensemble portrait of a generation on the cusp of change. Recommended for mature audiences, because of profanity. **Otterbein College Theatre.** (Reviewed by Michael Grossberg.)

The Lady Who Couldn't Cry —

An original musical fable by a company known for its collaboratively written works. The play tells the story of a casting director whose medical condition has resulted in chronically dry tear ducts, a metaphor for her dysfunctional emotional relationship with her former lover and with her daughter. Designed by a committee, the play cries out for an authoritarian director/playwright to make some decisive changes. Heavy-handed in its metaphor and short on character development, this work-in-progress may yet emerge as a viable piece after a few revisions. **Women at Play.** (Reviewed by Scott Phillips.)

Murder at Raccoon Lodge —

The best-written, best-performed mystery-comedy ever produced by Cloak & Dagger Dinner Theatre. Columbus writers Kim Fleming and Doug Martin have shaped the characters to the troupe's biggest talents, making the whodunit plausible enough to reward amateur sleuths and weave in funny shtick, à la *The Honeymooners* and *Columbo*. Producer-director Bill Saunders' antic pacing and rewrites build upon his clever concept and the enjoyably retro subtext of TV sitcoms and late-1950s doo-wop songs. **Cloak & Dagger Dinner Theatre.** (M.G.)

NORTHLAND NEWS
COLUMBUS, OH.
W CIRC. 21,402

MAY-19-99

Otterbein play strives for new heights

By TONY GOINS

Suburban News Reporter

Otterbein College is ready to show Central Ohio residents how to defy gravity.

The original play *Antigravity* will run May 27-30 and June 2-6 at Otterbein's Campus Center Theatre, 100 W. Home St., according to a press release.

The curtain rises at 7:30 p.m. opening night and 8 p.m. all other nights.

Antigravity is a play commissioned especially for this performance, said John Stefano, chairman of Otterbein's department of theater and dance. Stefano also will direct the play.

It was written by Bill Corbett, perhaps best known as the voice of the robot Crow on the Comedy Central program *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, Stefano said.

Corbett writes for *Mystery Science Theater 3000* and is also a respected playwright, Stefano said.

Corbett also wrote *Down the Pike*, *Cash Karma*, *Ridiculous Dreaming* and the commissioned plays *Hate Mail* and *The Clown*.

Antigravity is not science fiction, Stefano said.

The play is set for the same time it opens, around Memo-

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rial Day 1999, said Brian Falck, director of audience services.

The main characters are Peter and Wendy, and it takes place in their parents' home, Stefano said. Both are grown but only Peter has moved out; Wendy lives with the caretaker.

Wendy believes the world will end with the millennium. Peter and his friends have to convince her to let go and not carry the burden of the world on her shoulders, Stefano said.

The play mixes humor and seriousness, Stefano said, and all the characters learn something from their interactions.

"The strongest theme is that of anti-gravity," Stefano said. "One of the characters says it near the end of the play — 'heaviness is the real enemy.'"

This is the sixth season in a row Otterbein has presented a commissioned play, Falck said.

The program tries to bring up-and-coming talent to Central Ohio, Falck said, and several past plays have gone on to other theaters.

Faculty usually find prospective playwrights through informal networking, Falck said.

Corbett has been to Westerville three times to oversee the play, Stefano said: at auditions, a reading and last week for rehearsals and rewrites.

Commissioning a play benefits students as well as playwrights, he said.

Because they are working with new material, students are able to suggest changes, Stefano said, which they can't do with established plays. Nine students comprise the cast.

Besides a cash award, playwrights get expense-paid trips to Westerville to oversee casting, rehearsals and rewrites, Stefano said.

They also are assured exactly when their plays will be produced, Falck noted.

Playwrights are also allowed to write whatever they want, Stefano said, "and we have surprised on several occasions."

"This is one of the better commissions available in America," Stefano said.

Otterbein allows playwrights to reach new heights

By TONY GOINS

News & Public Opinion Reporter

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Corbett agreed to write the play about a year ago, Ste-

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HEIGHTS

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GAHANNA NEWS
COLUMBUS, OH.
W CIRC. 11,666

JUNE-2-99

ARTS BRIEFS

389

Local resident stars in production

J.B. Reidenbaugh, son of Mrs. Vicki Reidenbaugh of Gahanna, will play the part of Roy in Otterbein College Theatre's final production of the year, *Antigravity*.

Performances will be held Thursday through Sunday in

Otterbein's Campus Center Theatre, 100 W. Home St.

The play takes a comic and serious look at feelings of isolation and fear at the end of the millennium.

Reidenbaugh is a 1995 graduate of Gahanna Lincoln High School.

To reserve tickets call 823-1109 between 1 and 4:30 p.m.



TV writer pens Y2K play

Peter and his sister Wendy, played by Jared Jensen (left) and Kelly Reeves, spend a weekend trying to repair the family home and sort out changing relationships in the original play *Antigravity*, written by Mystery Science Theatre writer Bill Corbett. The serio-comic play, which looks at feelings of isolation and fear at the end of the millenium, will be performed at 8 p.m. Thursday through Sunday and 2 p.m. Sunday in Otterbein's Campus Center Theatre, 100 W. Home St. Tickets at \$11 for Thursday and Sunday and \$12 for Friday and Saturday can be reserved by calling 823-1109 between 1 and 4:30 p.m. weekdays.

ARTS BRIEFS

West. NEWS+
P.O. 5/26/99

Play considers millennium anxiety

Otterbein College Theatre will close its season with an original commissioned play, *Antigravity*, by Mystery Science Theater writer Bill Corbet.

The play takes a comic and serious look at feelings of isolation and fear at the end of the millennium.

Performances will be held at the Campus Center Theatre, 100 W. Home St., at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and June 3-5 and 2 p.m. Sunday and June 6.

Tickets are \$11 for Thursday and Sunday, \$12 for Friday and Saturday. For reservations call 823-1109 between 4 and 4:30 p.m.

Humor writing contest under way

Local authors are invited to submit entries to the ninth annual Thurber House humor writing contest. The theme is "My Life and Hard Times," taken from James Thurber's 1933 collection of the same title.

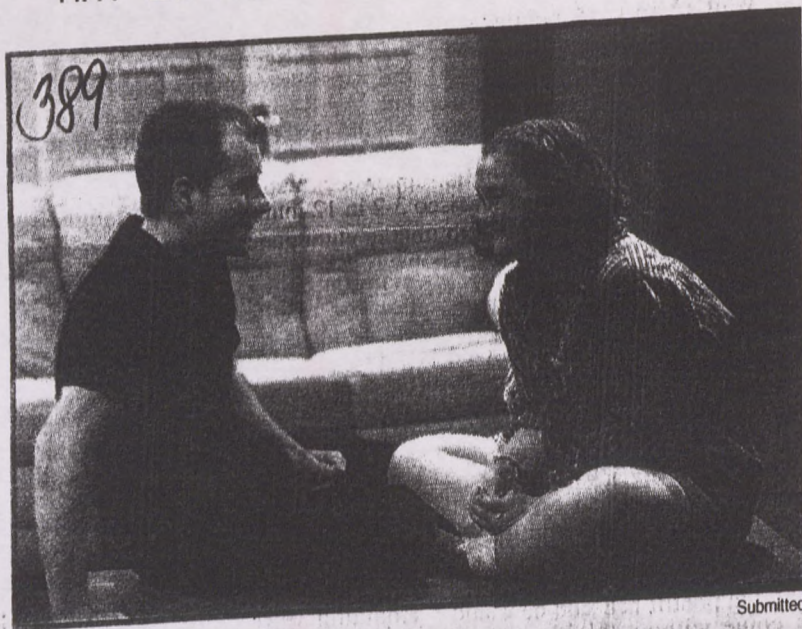
Winning authors will read their entries at the Literary Picnic June 30 at the Thurber House.

Entries, limited to 750 words, should sent with the writer's name, address and daytime telephone number, the title on a separate piece of paper, to: "My Life and Hard Times" Writing Contest, Thurber House, 77 Jefferson Ave., Columbus 43215, by 4:30 p.m. Tuesday.

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DELAWARE GAZETTE
DELAWARE, OH.
PM CIRC. 7,900

MAY-28-99



Otterbein College closes out its theater season with "Antigravity," featuring Jared Jensen, left, and Kelly Reeves.

Otterbein wraps up season with 'Antigravity'

The Otterbein College Department of Theatre and Dance closes out its season with "Antigravity."

The play features Jared Jensen and Kelly Reeves as a brother and sister trying to repair the family home and sort out changing relationships. "Antigravity" was written by "Mystery Science Theatre" writer Bill Corbett.

The play continues tonight, Saturday and Sunday, and June 3-6 in Otterbein's Campus Center Theatre, 100 W. Home St., in Westerville. Tickets are \$11 for Thursday and Sunday performances and \$12 on Fridays and Saturdays. Evening showtimes are 8 p.m.; Sunday matinees are at 2 p.m. For more information, call 614-823-1109.