

# Audience identifies with 'High School'

July 1, 1987

UPPER ARLINGTON NEWS

Many primitive societies have special rituals that marked the time for both males and females to make the transition from child to adult. In today's world, we have high schools, where ever-changing rituals mark that milestone of life. And while we remember our elementary and junior high years, they fade in comparison to our memories of high school. For some, football captains, homecoming queens, student body presidents, it may well be the best years of their life. For others it is a painful experience of not belonging, not accepted, always on the outside. For most it is a combination of highs and lows, good and bad.

The Otterbein Summer Theater's production of *Is There Life After High School?* touched every audience member who graduated from high school or had ever attended a high school. The shock of recognition, or the warmth of recognition, or both, were felt by every audience member.

The cast included Kevin Carty, Todd Kreps, Tim Gregory, Ralph Scott, Scott Willis and Jean Childers, Christine Cox, Rachel Harris and Catherine Randazzo. The ensemble work was brilliant. Each actor had his or her place in the spotlight but all were equally brilliant as a company member.

"I was a late bloomer but Mom and I thought what if I

## act II

jean ann wolfe-weaver

didn't bloom?" In contrast, the homecoming queen who looks back to that event as the highlight of her life. The real and possible tragedy of having your life peak in high school is a frightening thought from a mature viewpoint.

*Thousands of Trumpets* really amused the audience as the song asked how many high school band instruments were buried in the back of how many closets, in how many American homes?

Act II revives memories with a high school reunion. And those memories range from joy to resentment. One song, *I'm Glad You Didn't Know Me Then*, was sung by a couple who met, fell in love and married after they both had left different high schools.

Robert Hetherington directed this delightful production and later in this season will team up with David Graf directing *See How They Run*. D. Martyn Bookwalter returned to Otterbein as scenic and lighting designer for this show. Craig Johnson, musical director, had an important responsibility for this production and he met that challenge.

*Is There Life After High*

*School?* plays July 1, 2 and 3 at Otterbein. Hopefully you have already seen this production or have your tickets in hand. July 7-12 Otterbein will present *The Real Thing* as a central Ohio premiere. For reservations call 898-1109.

YOU ALL know the downtown plans for the Columbus July 4th celebration I would also like to tell you about another celebration in Delaware, Ohio. If huge crowds and traffic jams are not your thing, maybe you would like to head north.

On the evening of July 4th you could bring a large blanket or blankets, family and friends and join the Central Ohio Symphony Orchestra at 8 p.m. in Phillips Glen on the Ohio Wesleyan campus for "An American Salute."

Joining this premiere event will be the first Ohio Light Artillery, Battery B of Ashland, Ohio, under the command of Don Williams. This battery features authentic Civil War cannons attended by soldiers in period uniforms.

By tradition this concert will culminate with Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*. Battery A of the 1st Battalion of the 136th Field Artillery, Ohio National Guard

commanded by Executive Officer, Lt. Steven M. Scheme of Delaware, Ohio, will join the orchestra at the musical climax.

My father, Col. Custer W. Wolfe, was once Battalion Commander of the 136th Field Artillery and later of the 140th Field Artillery of the then 37th Division, for five and a half years in the Pacific during WW II. I would not miss this exciting event when the cannons fire to celebrate victory while the church bells of Delaware join in this victory celebration of sound.

The concert will be followed by fireworks provided by the American Legion, Raymond B. Austin Post 115. I hope to see you on July 4 in Phillips Glen in Delaware, Ohio.



JUN-24-87

# 'High School' given high marks

By Michael Grossberg  
Dispatch Theater Critic

Inside every adult hides an awkward teen-ager. No matter how many years have passed since high school, millions of Americans look back with ambivalent nostalgia on seemingly endless classes and hall passes, old nicknames and status games, popularity cliques and locker-room tricks, whirling pompons and senior proms.

*Is There Life After High School?*, which opened last night to a capacity crowd at Otterbein College, will remind older theatergoers how much affection — and regret — they still feel for their adolescent selves.

Younger audiences will learn, to their delight and dismay, just how important high school can remain years later. Or how unimportant it can become.

In either case, this rousing, rueful musical comedy hits the mark for universal appeal. After all, what could be more central to the American experience than high school?

The show's characters are so recognizable that those who graduated during the 1950s or 1960s may check the program twice to

## REVIEW

make sure the authors didn't attend their school.

Otterbein's buoyant production is graced by a solid nine-member ensemble that sings and acts with equal enthusiasm and skill.

Perhaps Kevin Carty, Jean Childers, Christine Cox, Tim Gregory, Rachael Harris, Todd Kreps, Catherine Randazzo, Ralph Scott and Scott Willis are so wryly convincing as high school students, because they're young enough to remember exactly what it was like to harbor secret lusts and grudges that may later develop into lifelong embarrassments and still-simmering resentments.

Carty is particularly poignant as a nerdy failure who can't quit, shake his traumatic past. Ore feels less sympathy for Scott's snobbish character, who has ap-

parently learned little from his experiences. When he recalls a high school prank, the audience senses that the joke is on him.

The college-aged cast proves it can act several years older in an extended high school reunion sequence that dominates the otherwise more sentimental second act. As insightful as it is amusing, that sequence demonstrates that although no one can forget high school, virtually everyone can grow beyond it.

If any further proof were needed, simply see the show — a high school reunion of sorts for the audience. Otterbein's undergraduate cast, guided by director Robert Hetherington, gives *High School* a graduate-level polish.

Adding professionalism to the production is Otterbein's radically transformed (and much im-

proved) Campus Center Arena Theater and the evocative public-school set by award-winning California designer D. Martyn Bookwalter, an Otterbein alumnus.

Parents should be warned that there's some profanity, but it's all in good fun. Overall, this show is as satisfyingly wholesome as snacking on a peanut butter and jelly sandwich between classes.

*Is There Life After High School?* makes the grade. It's a crowd-pleasing opener to Otterbein's 21st summer theater season.

Otterbein College will present *Is There Life After High School?* at 8:30 tonight through Sunday and June 30-July 3 in the Campus Center Arena Theatre. For tickets, call 898-1109.