Elyot (Cory Smith) and Amanda (Kari Ringer) in a scene from *Private Lives*

PERFORMING CLASSIC COWARD PLAY DOESN'T SCARE OTTERBEIN STUDENTS

BY MICHAEL GROSSBERG | THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

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Otterbein Summer Theatre will launch its 41st season with wit, style and sophistication.

In other words, with Noel Coward.

"Coward is so witty," said Doreen Dunn, who directs *Private Lives,* opening tonight in the Campus Center Theatre.

In the play, first staged in 1930 and still widely revived, once-married Elyot and Amanda reignite old chemistry when they meet by accident while honeymooning with new spouses at the same hotel.

Within days, however, the old sparks of attraction become flames of anger. When Elyot and Amanda's aggrieved spouses appear, alliances shift — then shift again.

"Coward's plays make universal comments about relationships," Dunn said.

at a glance

Private Lives

Otterbein Summer Theatre, Campus Center Theatre, 100 W. Home St., Westerville, 614-823-1109; or visit www.otterbein.edu/theatre

SHOWTIMES » 7:30 tonight, 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday, 8 p.m. June 28-30 and July 6-7

TICKETS » $20

"You watch people fighting in *Private Lives* and really telling nasty insults to each other. Yet the audience is laughing hysterically because they recognize the humanity of it. . . . Coward's stylish humor takes everything to an extreme."

Cory Smith plays Elyot opposite Kari Ringer as Amanda. Both actors are 20.

"I like the sarcasm of my character," Smith said. "Elyot is so flippant, and, for me, that's fun. . . . The romanticism and the courting are so different from today. I like how romantic Elyot can be but how sarcastic his language can be in the very next line."

Ringer finds Amanda similar to the role she played last month — the title character in *Hello, Dolly!*

"Dolly could say and do whatever she wants without fear of people. Amanda's the same way. . . . It's liberating. "

Dunn said she hopes to bring some psychological realism to the play, which otherwise can seem too