

Delightful 'Dolly' At Otterbein

By Rose Hume
Of The Dispatch Staff

A vibrant, delightful *Hello, Dolly* is raising the roof at Otterbein College.

The musical can be seen at 8:15 p.m. Friday and Saturday in Cowan Hall on the Westerville campus. There is a 2 p.m. matinee on Saturday.

Hello, Dolly is the best musical the college has staged in quite awhile. In addition to marvelous singing and dancing, the show is perfectly cast.

The sets are vivid, the costumes colorful and the joy seen on the stage is infectious.

Hello Dolly is the story of New York matchmaker Dolly Levi and her attempts to charm Horace Vandergelder of Yonkers. But Dolly is a woman who arranges things, so she's also trying to get Vandergelder's weepy niece Ermengarde to marry an artist despite what the older man thinks about artists.

THE SUBPLOT CENTERS around Cornelius and Barnaby, two clerks at Vandergelder's store. They arrange to blow up several cans of tomatoes, forcing the store to close down and granting themselves a holiday in the Big Apple.

Their trip is a series of escapes from Vandergelder, who is in New York to meet the women Dolly has lined up for him. And, of course, they find two perfect women and fall in love.

Otterbein's show could be retitled *Cornelius and Barnaby Go to New York*. Richard Tatgenhorst and A. Victor Jones steal the show with their country bumpkin antics and comic timing.

Cornelius is a 33-year-old innocent, so Tatgenhorst puts on wide-eyed wonderment and wears it well. Barnaby is as amazed at his own boldness as he is at the wonders of the city, and Jones lets himself be carried on a wave of naive adventures.

JEANINE HOWE plays the title



A. Victor Jones, Richard Tatgenhorst In 'Hello, Dolly'

role, and her Dolly stands back and watches people interact the way Dolly wants them to. But Howe is great in her scenes with Richard Buckley, whose blustering Vandergelder is really an old softy.

Irene Malloy, a milliner, and her giggling assistant Minnie are the love interests for Cornelius and Barnaby. Fontaine Follansbee and Maribeth Graham are just right in the respective roles.

Except for her constant weeping, Nancy Wacker has little to do as Ermengarde, and her fiancé Ambrose (Doug Shaffer) has even less. They are lost in this production.

Hello, Dolly can boast a great chorus, and the men are shown off to the best advantage in two numbers. *It Takes a Woman* finds Vandergelder and his clerks singing about the kinds of chores women can handle when a host of dapper men wander into the store to help them.

THE MEN ALSO do well in the

Waiter's Gallop, which does seem to go on and on and on. However, Joanne Van Sant's choreography is some of the most appealing she's done in a couple of years.

Hello, Dolly is directed by Don Paisley. Except for overlooking Ermengarde and Ambrose, he has helped craft a variety of funny, charming characters.

The show seems shorter than it actually is, mainly because most of its songs are big, lavish production numbers. Visually, *Hello, Dolly* is exciting.

Lyle Barkhymer is serving as music director, and his orchestra has some rare moments of sluggishness.

AS DESIGNER AND technical director, Fred Thayer has created a bright, vivid show, highlighted by the red Harmonia Gardens set. Petie Dorrill's costumes, especially Dolly's plaid dress for Act 1, are mighty nice.

You'll cheer this *Hello, Dolly*. You'll hum the tunes. You'll feel good about seeing it.

Playhouse's 'Dolly' is sprightly, lively



Richard Jonas

Two versions of "Hello, Dolly!" in just over two weeks might be a little much for anyone, but luckily the "Dolly!" which just opened at the Country Dinner Playhouse is a sprightly and lively one, as was the Otterbein College Theatre's edition, which closed earlier this month.

"Dolly!" might seem, at first thought, an unlikely choice for a dinner theater, which must mount its productions with a small cast, a postage stamp-sized stage, and a minimum of props and scenery.

However, thanks to capable direction and staging by Don MacPherson and a strong cast, the CDP production of this flashy staple of the musical comedy theater is largely successful.

The CDP "Dolly!" even shares a cast member with the Otterbein production — Fontaine Follansbee, who played Irene Molloy, has the role of the tearful Ermengarde this time around.

Also, Otterbein graduate and Columbus naïve Beth Titus plays Minnie Fae, the perky milliner's assistant. Otterbein graduate David Leist is headwaiter Rudolph and another former Otterbein student, Ellen Margulies, is the brassy Ernestina.

The show belongs, though, as any successful "Dolly!" must, to its Mrs. Gallagher Levi, played by Leigh Hackett, a veteran of the dinner theater "gravy circuit" who contributes a bawdy, boisterous and broadly comedic Dolly, and confines neither her meddling nor her matchmaking to the stage.

Instead — and to good effect — Ms. Hackett ventures into the audience to distribute Dolly's ubiquitous business cards, to draw a man's arm around his

companion's shoulders, to draw another man onto the stage to partner her for the "Dancing" ensemble number.

In fact, a good deal of this "Dolly!" is played directly to the audience, especially the monologues author Michael Stewart adapted from the original Thornton Wilder play, "The Matchmaker."

These speeches often seem a trifle affected in other productions, but are fittingly presented here.

This is a CDP production cast more on the basis of talent than on the dubious drawing ability of a fading star's name, and it is, for the most part, well-danced and well-sung.

Timothy Casey is a suitably bewildered Horace Vandergelder, and Marilyn Kay Huelsman a lovely Irene Molloy. As Vandergelder's errant apprentices, Daniel Mueller (Cornelius Hackl) and Kevin Deal (Barnaby Tucker) are especially appealing. Mueller's "It Only Takes a Moment" is warm and sincere, and their "It Takes a Woman," performed with Casey, is spirited.

The cast's small size makes necessary the somewhat unorthodox device of costuming two of the women in the chorus in vests and black net tights and having them participate in the abbreviated version of the "Waiter's Gallop."

Overall there's been some streamlining. Some of the songs are minus a verse or two, some of the extraneous dialogue has been cut, but that's really all to the good, since it keeps this "Dolly!" from being unwieldy.

"Hello, Dolly!" will be performed Tuesdays through Sundays through July 5 at the Country Dinner Playhouse, Reynoldsburg.