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GENERAL ENTERTAINMENT

HISTORY LESSONS HAVE NEVER BEEN SO MUCH FUN

Otterbein College Theatre opens the 1997-98 season with the lively musical *1776*, a song-and-dance peek at the behind-the-scenes struggles through which the Declaration of Independence came into being. This production is co-sponsored by Otterbein's Department of Theatre and Dance and the Department of Music.

In its first season *1776* won two of theatre's most coveted awards, being designated "Season's Best Musical" by the New York Drama Critic's Circle and receiving the Tony Award as "Best Musical." Recently it opened to great acclaim for a limited run on Broadway.

This delightful musical brings recollections of early school lessons instilled by old history books. But it does so with considerable ingenuity and in a way that actually finds dramatic suspense in a most familiar plot.

The story features historical figures John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and John Hancock but depicts them as flesh-and-blood men with a variety of strengths, quirks and weaknesses. This appealing musical, with 14 songs, truly tells the story of that long, hot Philadelphia summer and how the delegates squabbled, fought and outrageously insulted each other till they agreed to found the nation we are today.

John Stefano, Department of Theatre and Dance chairperson, will star in this production as John Adams, the central figure of *1776*. Adams is depicted as a man of cold exterior and stuffy personality who was detested by most of the other delegates. However, he was the backbone of the fight for the Declaration and a courageous supporter of independence.

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Stefano, a member of Actors Equity Association, appeared in the 1987 CBS miniseries *Murder Ordained*. Other acting jobs have included roles in *Facade*, *Our Town*, *The Soldier's Tale* and *Carnival of the Animals*. Stefano, an Otterbein faculty member since 1992, has directed several shows at Otterbein but this will be his first time to act in a College production. Associate Professor Ed Vaughan will direct *1776*.

Otterbein will present *1776* Oct. 16-19 and 23-25 in Cowan Hall, 30 S. Grove St. in Westerville. The opening night performance begins at 7:30 p.m. All other evening performances begin at 8 p.m. and the Oct. 19 matinee begins at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$12 for Thursday and Sunday performances and \$14 for Friday and Saturday shows. They can be reserved by calling the box office at 823-1109 between 1-4:30 p.m. starting Sept. 29.