

COLUMBUS DISPATCH
COLUMBUS, OH.
AM & SUN CIRC. 293,800

NOT-A-92

THEATER REVIEW

Otterbein's 'Tenor' does latest farce proud

By Michael Grossberg
Dispatch Theater Critic

389

If it's a nifty farce, this must be Otterbein College Theatre. If it's an especially lively farce, the director must be Ed Vaughan.

Such is perhaps the most reliable syllogism in central Ohio theater. *Lend Me a Tenor* is the antic proof.

Otterbein's seductive revival, which opened last night in Cowan Hall, will fulfill the expectations of those who enjoyed Vaughan's previous stagings of *Noises Off*, *Rumors* and *A Flea in Her Ear*.

Playwright Ken Ludwig (most recently the author of the book for the Tony-winning Broadway musical *Crazy for You*) packed as many well-choreographed shenanigans into *Tenor* as one might find in a long-lost Marx Brothers movie.

Set in the 1930s at the Cleveland Grand Opera — before and after a make-or-break benefit performance of *Othello* by a famous Italian tenor — this highly theatrical farce blends grand passion, petty ambition, greed, love, lust, rage, jealousy, fear, overindulgence, desperate impersonation, delicious sexual innuendo,

AT A GLANCE

Lend Me a Tenor, Otterbein College Theatre's student production of Ken Ludwig's farce. Directed by Ed Vaughan.

Max Daryl Lozupone
Maggie Kim Butterweck
Saunders Keith Weirich
Tito Todd Crain
Maria Tirzah Wise
Diana Amy Jo Patten
Julia Margenett Moore

May the farce be with you.

Performances are at 8 tonight through Saturday night, 2 p.m. Sunday and 8 p.m. next Thursday through Oct. 17 at Cowan Hall, 30 N. Grove St., Westerville.

Tickets: \$7.50-\$9. Call 898-1109.

dizzy double-entendres and the requisite slamming doors — in short, all the ingredients that make opera so grand and farce so funny.

The top-notch student cast, as synchronized and silly in its stage movements as a water ballet per-

The humor builds from chuckles to guffaws to belly laughs.

formed by the Keystone Cops, doesn't miss a beat or a punch line.

Tenor boasts witty dialogue, but much of the situational humor derives from the well-constructed script's satisfying symmetry.

Vaughan makes sure that the madcap story builds logically from the first act's careful exposition to the second act's mistaken-identity payoffs. The humor builds, too, from chuckles to guffaws to belly laughs.

Daryl Lozupone, a reliable *farceur* from previous Otterbein shows, captures the nervous rhythms of his pivotal role, as the timid factotum of his fiancée's impresario father.

At a student preview, Lozupone's Max was amusing even when not fully convincing as the star's last-minute substitute in the opera's black-faced lead. My quibble is Lozupone's dissimilar appearance and frail build, which makes his first scene in disguise somewhat shaky.

Keith Weirich is a strong

Saunders. One can almost smell his cynicism and apoplectic greed. Unlike many other student actors trying older roles, Weirich is easily convincing as the opera producer.

Todd Crain is marvelously expressive as Tito, the temperamental opera star. Even more temperamental is his madly jealous wife, frenetically played by Tirzah Wise in an even thicker Italian accent.

Amy Jo Patten oozes sexuality as Tito's ambitious co-star. Kim Butterweck milks her ripe innocence for laughs as Max's virginal fiancée.

Margenett Moore's giggling grande dame and Chris Libby's star-struck bellhop radiate sexuality of a campy, cruder aura. Hers is manic and voluptuously silly; his is fey.

Some farces are played tongue in cheek. Vaughan wisely guides the actors to play it straight, despite the profusion of tongues in other cheeks.

The cream-and-lavender hotel suite is an elegant backdrop for the cast's antics and the vivid cartoon colors of Katie Robbins' eye-catching costumes. This final scenic design at Otterbein by Professor Fred Thayer, before his retirement in the spring, is among his best.

oil *

entertainment/arts

Otterbein's British farce offers evening of frothy fun

By Dennis Thompson
SNP Theater Critic

The British may be thought of as reserved but they delight in bedroom farces.

Otterbein Summer Theatre opens its 24th season with a rollicking example of one that is more complicated than most.

In Ray Cooney and John Chapman's *Move Over, Mrs. Markham*, Philip Markham is a conservative publisher of children's

books who has reluctantly agreed to let his philandering partner, Henry Lodge, use his apartment for a tryst.

Markham doesn't realize his wife Joanna has agreed to let Lodge's wife Linda use the apartment for the same reason, while neither realize their interior decorator and maid have plans of their own.

ALL THE elements of the genre are here, wrong impressions and mistaken

identities, timely entrances and exits, potential entanglements that never reach fruition due to all the frantic activity. Each time you think you've anticipated all the plot complications, new twists appear.

Markham and Lodge are played by Guest Equity artists and Otterbein faculty Ed Vaughan and Dennis Romer.

For much of the play Vaughan is a delight, portraying the staid publisher with intricate attention to character detail. Constricted movement, furrowed fore-

head, worried exasperation and fidgety embarrassment are all part of his repertoire.

THE PLAYBOY Lodge is a more one-dimensional character so Romer has less to work with. Still, he is dashing with an ever present smile and a roguish twinkle in his eye.

Cheryl Gaysunas brings her Otterbein career to a close as Joanna.

While Gaysunas was solid in Otterbein's last summer season she has grown remarkably in presence and poise. From sexy to schem-

ing, bewildered to frantic, and with wide eyes that were made for farce, she is totally in control.

AS ALISTAIR, the interior decorator, Bill Timmins leans toward the stereotype but still fleshes out a solid comic character.

Anastasia Klimaszewski as Sylvie the maid and Meg Chamberlain as Linda Lodge lend capable support.

As Miss Wilkinson, Colby Anne Paul has little to say but much to show. The character of author Olive Smythe, adds more to the

plot than Mary Randle does to the ensemble.

Linda's love interest Walter is the blandest character and Michael Warren's portrayal keeps him that way.

Director Carter Lewis does a masterful job with the difficult task of directing farce. Comic timing, staging, overall pacing, planned pauses, — all critical to the success of farce — are superbly handled.

THE PLAY gets ragged midway through the second act when Markham decides

(Continued on page 24)

entertainment/arts

Fairy tales and farce hit stage with style

KEN LUDWIG'S farce *Lend Me A Tenor*, slowly lays the foundation, then explodes with the expected second act complications. Otterbein College Theatre's talented cast and director methodically build the laughter.

The play, set in 1930s Cleveland, revolves around the visit of a temperamental opera star. His apparent absences result in the expected disguises, mistaken identities and revolving doors.

Director Ed Vaughn's pacing is deliberate more than frantic, but ensures we miss nothing. He is a master of comic choreography.

The vocal strength is inconsistent as the young actors' voices are occasionally swallowed by the vastness of Galvin Hall.

But in manner, inflection, characterization and comic timing this show is the equal, and in some facets the superior, of Players Theatre's fine professional production last year.

NO DOUBT influencing

Otterbein's selection of this play was that they knew they had the cast. Each role is filled with an actor seemingly tailor-made for it.

Daryl Lozupone's nervousness, Kim Butterweck's enthusiasm, Keith Weirich's bluster, Todd Crain's flair, Tirzah Wise's temper, Chris Libby's obnoxiousness, Amy Jo Patten's sexuality, and Margenett Moore's sass all fit like gloves.

Lozupone is at his best playing roles where his character is uncomfortable. As Max, he gets ample opportunity to pull out his repertoire of stutters, constricted movements and pained expressions. His attempts at flamboyance are less successful, but not distracting.

Weirich grows with authoritative frustration as Saunders, the opera manager. Crain's Tito is a solid combination of passionate flair and throw-away amiability.

ALTHOUGH NOT consistently domineering, Wise

conveys Maria's volubility.

Butterweck's Maggie is attractive with a romantic innocence. Patten plays Diana with a breathtaking sensuality.

Libby's pushy bellhop and Moore's robust Julia insert comic texture to the main story line.

Stick around, as *Tenor* ends with the most entertaining curtain call you're likely to see.

Grandparents Living Theatre's Story Theatre continues at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and concludes its run at 2 p.m. Sunday at Studio II Theatre, Riffe Center, 53 S. High St. Tickets are \$12, students \$8. Call 644-8425.

Otterbein College Theatre's *Lend Me A Tenor* continues at 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday at Galvin Hall on the Westerville campus. Tickets are \$7.50 Thursday and \$9 Friday and Saturday. Call 898-1109.