

## Production features discussion panel

By Carol Ankenman

The opening of the play *Fool for Love* last night in the Campus Theatre brought two new aspects to the theatre program at Otterbein.

First, *Fool for Love* represents the Otterbein Theatre Department's first production of a play by Sam Shepard—one of America's leading playwrights. Second, with this play, Otterbein will be introduced to a new event—the post-performance discussion.

### Sam Shepard

Sam Shepard is a writer, director and actor prominent in the modern theatre scene. He won a Pulitzer prize in 1979 for *Buried Child*, and other works include *Suicide in B Flat*, *True West* and *Curse of the Starving Class*.

Shepard's plays often revolve around dysfunctional people who are often part of dysfunctional families. His characters usually struggle with themselves as well as within their relationships. Further, these conflicts can sometimes be disturbing, violent and frustrating to watch.

In *Fool for Love*, four characters crash into and against each other as they search for their own identities and try to make a compromise between what is and what should be.

*Fool for Love* is well-written, but what is it written so well about? Many viewers may find themselves laughing at what does not really seem funny. Other viewers may feel confused because the characters and relationships portrayed in the play often seem contradictory.

Like many of the movies, books and plays written in this generation, *Fool for Love* is not a story offering a simple theme, conflict, denouement and resolution.

### The Post-Performance Discussion

The post-performance discussion is an

event which may help theatre-goers to better understand and enjoy productions like *Fool for Love*.

The discussion will include moderator Dr. Donald Seay, theatre department chairman, and three guest panelists, who will take their places on stage about 10 minutes after the Thursday, May 31 show.

Tod Wilson, theatre department business manager, said that many other theatres hold discussions, and that the Otterbein Theatre Department has been wanting to initiate the program for a long time. Wilson added that the event seems especially suited for a campus situation where professors are available as panelists.

"There are so many experts, it would be great to involve them," Wilson said.

The panelists for the *Fool for Love* discussion include Dr. Nancy Woodson, associate dean for academic affairs; Dr. James Bailey, English department chairman and Geoff Nelson.

Each panelist will speak for five to 10

minutes before questions are taken from the audience. Woodson will analyze male/female relationships in the play; Bailey will analyze structure, language, imagery and theme and Nelson will analyze *Fool for Love* in terms of Shepard's other works.

Nelson is the artistic director of the Contemporary American Theatre Company. He has directed and acted in several Shepard plays and researched Shepard for his doctoral dissertation.

### *Fool For Love*

*Fool for Love* is playing in the Campus Center Theatre. It opened yesterday and will play tonight through June 2 at 8 p.m. On May 27 and June 3, there will be matinee performances at 2 p.m.

*Fool for Love*, directed by Ed Vaughan, assistant professor of theatre and dance, stars sophomores Ginger Lee McDermott as May and Bill D. Timmins III as Eddie, junior Benjamin A. Hodges as Martin and senior Joshua Alan Wank as The Old Man.



Intrigued? "Fool for Love" tickets are on sale in the Cowan Hall Box Office. Performances will run through May 27, 30 and 31 and June 1 through 3. Publicity photo



# Shepard's 'Fool For Love'

## may be too intense for some

The music of Willie Nelson walked us onto a hot yellow and pink set at the edge of the Mojave Desert for the Otterbein production of *Fool For Love*.

The play by award-winning renegade playwright Sam Shepard is this season's final production by the college's department of theatre and dance.

*Fool For Love* is the story of Eddie, a cowboy who travels more than 2,000 miles to a B-motel to renew a relationship with his high school sweetheart May. The reunion is bittersweet and fraught with emotionally charged mixed feelings. An ever-present character who plays on the periphery of the set is May and Eddie's father. Sound confusing? It is. Is he real or surreal? We don't really know for sure.

*Fool For Love*, true to expectations for a work by Sam Shepard, deals with desire in an appealing raw fashion. The play, which relies heavily on physicalization for character manifestation is punctuated with expressive language in the form of taboo words and wonderfully written monologues.

The contrast of staccato dialogue against these well-executed monologues adds dimension to a work that has more exposition than plot.



Theatre  
Critic

DANE  
BENSON

"Theatre of Fragmentation" is the phrase used to describe Sam Shepard's works. Episodes within the script are non-linear, and one feels that certain scenes could be placed anywhere in the course of the play without changing the playwright's intent. Somewhere along the way, a climax is reached, and the pieces of the puzzle are put together to create a Sam Shepard play.

Otterbein, true to its reputation, takes a difficult work with limited appeal and transforms it into an alluring piece of art.

Expertly directed by Ed. Vaughan, *Fool For Love*, was complete in its concept clear down to the sweat on May's blouse used to intensify the heat of desire in the desert.

Sound designer Robert Johnson is to be accoladed for his use of reverb and echo when the player slammed the door or hit the back wall of the set in anger or frustra-

tion. Shepard would appreciate these punctuations of intensity in his text.

Within the framework of the playwright's repeated cowboy metaphor, Bill D. Timmins III, who plays Eddie, is well-cast and has an energy and focus in his acting that belies his second-year college status.

Ginger Lee McDermott, who plays May is poetic in her movements on stage. Her consistent use of well-executed dialect adds believability to her character.

The Old Man, played by Joshua Alan Wank, and Martin, played by Benjamin A. Hodges were well-cast and good in their roles.

Ginger Lee McDermott and Bill D. Timmins III are complementary actors. His rough-cut style with a young Tony Curtis look and her fiery strawberry blonde softness brings enchantment to production with very few flaws.

Some slowness in the middle that could be eliminated with some tempo changes or an intermission (opposed by Shepard) and an appropriate intensity choice in May's final scene that I would not have chosen, are minor comments against the major impact of Otterbein's *Fool For Love*. ♦



# Strong acting saves 'Fool for Love'<sup>190</sup>

By Michael Grossberg  
Dispatch Theater Critic

With *A Fool for Love*, Otterbein College takes its first chance on playwright Sam Shepard.

Although one can't call it a foolish move, it's not the wisest. An overrated playwright, Shepard is notorious for his alienated, alienating scripts about the "New West."

Moreover, his plays are difficult to stage and far from Otterbein's more conventional norm.

In addition, *Fool* reeks of sexuality and flaunts its profanity and partial nudity.

Nevertheless, *Fool* represents an admirable challenge for a student cast. Essentially a two-character drama about romantic obsession, *Fool* demands two strong performances.

At last night's opening, it got them. That's high praise, considering that Shepard is one of my least favorite playwrights and *Fool* may be my least favorite off-Broadway play.

As May, Ginger Lee McDermott brims with sensuality, rage and hopelessness (although sometimes she speaks too softly to be heard.) As Eddie, Bill Timmins III bristles with a stir-crazy impulsiveness.

Benjamin Hodges plays the straight (i.e. sane) man to Eddie's over-the-top emotionality, while Joshua Alan Wank imbues the Old Man's ghostly ambiguity with much more than a symbolic presence.

Eddie and May, May and Eddie. What can one say about a rodeo cowboy and his on-again, off-again lover/cousin/half-sister that might explain the unexplainable? They love/hate each other, drive each other mad, up to the edge of violence, into passionate

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## REVIEW

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Otterbein College will present *A Fool for Love* at 8 tonight through Saturday night, 2 p.m. Sunday and from Wednesday to June 3 in the Campus Center Theatre, 100 W. Home St., on the Westerville campus. Call 898-1109.

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ambivalence and to distraction.

Every time the door slams, with its jagged electronic echoes, the audience is reminded that their love affair is an intensified, heightened abstraction.

Otterbein's season closer is directed by Ed Vaughan with his usual attention to theatricality and clarity. Both are needed, since *Fool* probes that wild frontier between reality and mystery, memory and fantasy.

Although *Fool* takes place in a motel room on the edge of the Mojave Desert, its true existential setting is the emotional wasteland in which two lost souls thirst for a love without pain and with happiness.

Those who have seen Otterbein plays this season know that it remains the region's best undergraduate theater program (although not quite as good as the past several seasons under more familiar leadership).

Otterbein's *Fool* doesn't hit the high marks of Contemporary American Theatre Company's *A Lie of the Mind* or The OSU Theatre Company's *Curse of the Starving Class*, the two best local Shepard productions of the past five years.

But it is the best *Fool* I've seen. And that's enough.



David Louis Kern  
Columbus

## Criticism of Otterbein play not made clear to readers

*Dispatch* theater critic Michael Grossberg's recent review of *Fool for Love* at Otterbein College left me mystified and irritated. When he dismissed playwright Sam Shepard as "overrated," I was curious to learn why.

Shepard, a Pulitzer Prize winner, is often credited as one of our greatest living playwrights by other critics. Instead, I read only that Shepard is "notorious for his alienated, alienating scripts" and that *Fool for Love* "may be my least favorite off-Broadway play." But why? Because it "reeks of sexuality and flaunts its profanity and partial nudity?" Are these his criteria for judging artistic value? I'm still confused.

Judging by this review, *Fool for Love* is the theatrical equivalent of castor oil. Nowhere did it say that *Fool for Love* was enormously popular in New York (it ran for more than two years), or that it won an Obie (off-Broadway) award. Or that the play has been produced by hundreds of theaters in this country and abroad. Or that it is often taught in college classes as an example of the best dramatic writing in today's theater.

Geoffrey Nelson  
Columbus

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