

Columbus Dispatch  
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# Otterbein Stage Haven For Hijinks

By Ted Wendling  
Of The Dispatch Staff

A gang of Westerville zanies is comin' at ya this week in Otterbein Summer Theatre's 1980 finale, *All Over Town*.

Murray Schisgal's *All Over Town* is an energetic, mistaken-identity riot. Very likely, Otterbein's Campus Center Arena Theater has never seen such an elite collection of international kooks.

**MARKING SCENE** changes with a blitz of projected images of contemporary Americana, director Carter Lewis moves the play along at a break-neck pace. Hang on, and don't be surprised if someone lands in your lap.

*All Over Town* starts and ends with a bang as addled psychiatrist Dr. Lionel Morris (John Ebner), his mind heavy with worldly problems, opens the play with a gun to his head.

And he's one of the few in the cast whose clock is still ticking.

When not ranting at what he sees as the erosion of modern society, Morris is a man trying to "reverse the process of disintegration." But mostly,

he and his household of exotic psychotics help the process along.

**SURROUNDING HIM**, in his own words, is chaos: a suddenly libidinous Swedish hausfrau named Millie (Linda Fennell); Martin Hopkins colonel armed with a .45 and a brace of grenades; Laurent (Richard Buckley), a myopic French safecracker; Harold P. Hainsworth (Larry Sherwood), an Upper East Side fruitfly who envisions a tap dance school in Harlem; and Mahatma Badaah (John Tener), an ex-carpet salesman turned Tibetan yogi.

And none of them are the good doctor's clients.

Summoned for a few weeks of observation, however, is Louis (Roger Tackette), a man whose sexual virtuosity titillates the ladies of the house even before he arrives. Louis is white.

But Lewis (Michael Echols), a black shoe store employee, arrives just in time to be called an "oversexed bullfrog." Herein lies the formula of the play's bad joke: Lewis with a washed face equals Louis.

**THE COMIC BACKDROP** to all this is a trio of would-be jewel thieves, including the Morris household's two French cooks (Carlyle Owens III and Janine Papin). As their comrade in thievery, Buckley takes some sensational falls while probing the apartment for jewelry.

Nice performances are turned in by Rich Tatgenhorst as a nerdy welfare worker who speaks with an impassioned spray of spittle; Fontaine Follansbee as Philomena, Hopkins' battle-axe of a wife; and Tamyra Sagor as Beebe Morris.

*All Over Town*, however, is vulnerable to a bit of ideological criticism. Schisgal's script doesn't justify the casting of Lewis as a black man. The

cast could be all white, all black or mixed.

Obviously Schisgal's justification is an excuse for serving his audience such Caucasoid soul food as "hamy hokies" and "cross-eyed peas." You wash that meal down with a "honky cocktail."

*All Over Town* will continue through Saturday beginning at 8:30 p.m.



# Happy-go-lucky wind-up at USI

By Sarah Skaates  
The Otterbein Summer Theater ends the season this week with a flourish that is fun-fun-fun. "All Over Town" might be described

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## Zany females in 'Town'

Michael Echols is Lewis in "All Over Town," falling into the clutches of three zany females, from left, Ann Doering as Fiona, Tamyán Sager as Beebe Morris, and Linda Finnell as Millie, at the Otterbein Summer Theatre through Saturday at 8:30 p.m. in the air-conditioned Otterbein Campus Center Arena Theatre. Tickets are available 12:30 to 9 p.m. weekdays at the campus center box office.

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as a topical farce, or perhaps a shotgun spoof would be more accurate.

In other words, fun is poked and potshots taken at just about every social condition around.

The entire OST company seems to get on stage sometime before the evening of lighthearted lunacy is over, and they romp with it enthusiastically.

The season program hints that "All Over Town" has to do with the efforts to treat Louie Lucas's penchant for impregnating numbers of women and living off the welfare system. True, that is the basic premise of the show but if that sounds like an exercise in social work the OST cast soon demonstrates its true nutty nature.

It's impossible to try to detail much of the goings-on without spoiling the effect of the play. Suffice it to say that racism, the welfare system, Eastern religions, the gay movement, the military, and any number of social conventions take a tongue-in-cheek bow.

Director Carter Lewis appears to have taken an already appealing script and made it sharply contempor-

ary.

While Monday night's viewing of a technical rehearsal caught the company with a few rough edges to smooth out, there was no doubt that the cast was thoroughly caught up in the spirit of the piece and needed only minor touch-up work before opening night.

There are so many delightful characterizations it is hard to single out individuals. John Ebner is cast in one of those roles he does particularly well, that of the doctor assigned to treat Louie Lucas.

Tamyán Sager, too, as the doctor's wife, has a role that was tailor made for her comedic sensitivities.

Michael Echols as the black Lewis and Roger Tackette as the white Louie balance each other perfectly.

Linda Finnell as the housemaid brings an eager gullibility and a somewhat

uneven Swedish accent to the proceedings.

Susan Diol is the totally effervescent ingenue paired with Rich Tatgenhorst as the somewhat stuffy welfare worker.

Jeffrey Garber as the dyed-in-the-wool military man has some delightful moments.

Richard Buckley pantomimes his way through one ridiculous bit of business after another.

Larry Sherwood's appearance as the gay financier is outrageously done.

Carlyle Owens III, Janin Papin and Fontaine Follansbee give solid support to the proceedings.

Rounding out the cast are Donna Williamson, Ann Doering, Gwen Torry Juergen Tossman and Bruce Marvin.

David Hammond and Kathleen Lewicki provided set and costumes, respectively, that were both imaginative and evocative of the feel of the show.

"All Over Town" provides a happy-go-lucky wind-up for the Otterbein Summer Theatre season. Enjoy!