

"Extremities" addresses rape, aftermath

by Greg Grant

Rape. Mention the word and a variety of reactions occur. It is a controversial and touchy subject.

Otterbein College Theatre will try to bring it out in the open when they present "Extremities", a play by William Mastrosimone, in the Arena Theatre in the basement of the Campus Center this weekend and next.

"It's a consciousness raising play," said Suzanne Blackburn, director of the play. "What it attempts to do is address what rape is and that it is a violent act and that people are victimized."

Blackburn is a member of the Ohio State University faculty, where she teaches acting and directing. She has directed plays for 14 years, including "Agnes of God" and "The Fantasticks" at Otterbein. After the play she will spend seven months in Paris working with two French theatres in various capacities.

The play tells the story of a young woman who is attacked by a would-be

rapist in her home in the country. She subdues the attacker after a struggle and turns the tables on the man.

Rape is a problem that is often not given enough consideration. According to FBI statistics a rape goes on every sixty seconds in this country. Only 3.5 to 10 percent of rapes are reported according to a joint study by the U.S. Census Bureau, FBI, and the National Opinion Research Center.

Rape also exists on college campuses. In a recent survey of female college students, 25 percent said they had been raped. (not necessarily at college). Forty-five percent said they personally knew someone who had been raped.

What we do in our society, whether it's in pornography, films, or language, is devalue sex, and that gives the message that sex can become a weapon to degrade somebody," said A. Nicholas Groth in his article "Rape, Power, Anger, and Sexuality."

"Rape is where power enters into the sexual arena," said Blackburn.



—Photos by Susan Ward

The play deals with this aggression and power in a graphic manner. The play includes much physical violence and graphic language.

"It is a graphic depiction of an attempted rape," said Blackburn. "It is not a play to bring children to. They would have nightmares. It is realistic, and therefore not a play for the moralistic. It is not romantic at all."

To prepare for the play Blackburn had the cast do a variety of things. They have watched a film on rape, visited a rape crisis center, and had many discussions on attitudes portrayed in films and real life.

Also, a light choreographer was brought in to stage the fight, showing the cast how to time and stage a fight without getting hurt.

Rape is not just an issue that affects women. It is an act of violence that affects all of society. Neil Malamuth surveyed mail college students in the U.S. and Canada and found that if there was no chance they would get caught, 35 percent said they might commit a rape.

"I think this play is really about the act of violence. Violence against another human being is violence," said Blackburn.

Rape is such a violent act that the victim of a rape or attempted rape often takes between six months and six years to feel

normal again. Studies show that the after effects of rape include depression, guilt, diminished interest in sex, breakups of relationships, obsessive concern for safety, loss of trust, and, in some victims, contemplation of, or attempted suicide.

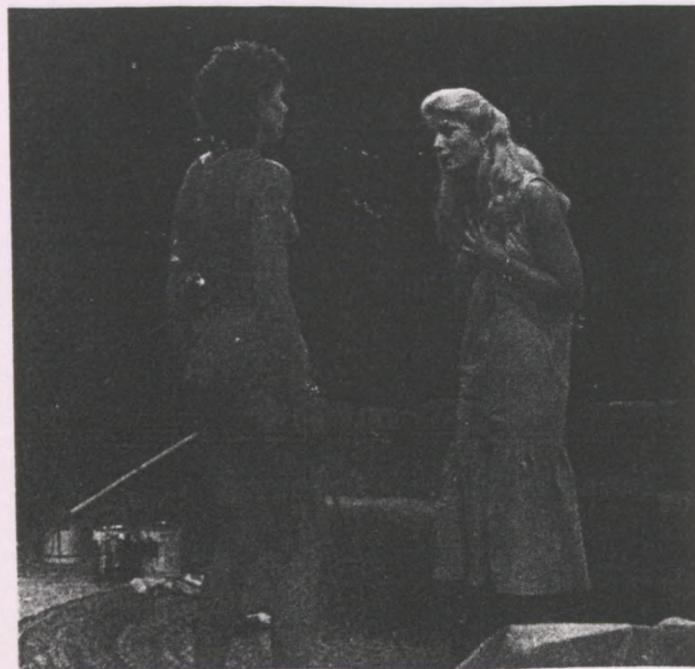
"If a person seeing the play who has been raped feels the right to admit it the play will be a success," said Blackburn.

"You don't do anything to bring this on yourself. A person who commits a rape is not a healthy person."

While dealing with rape as a specific issue, the play encompasses a larger theme.

"'Extremities' is a human story, universal in nature, and unrelenting in its honesty," said Blackburn. It helps us to understand man's basic humanity, and get past stereotypes. It's a serious issue that we're finally being open enough to address in this play."

"Extremities" will open tonight and be performed through Sunday, and then June 4-7. Showtime is 8:15 p.m., except for a Sunday matinee, which will start at 2 p.m. Student tickets are free with ID and are available at the Cowan Hall box office weekdays from 1-4:30 p.m.



—Photos by Susan Ward

ENTERTAINMENT

'Extremities' hammers emotions

By Michael Grossberg
Dispatch Theater Critic

Superb performances in a searing drama make *Extremities* a fitting conclusion to Otterbein College's memorable 80th theatrical season.

Extremities, which opened Thursday night, runs the gamut from fear to shame to anguish to anger to much needed humor. Otterbein's student cast vividly projects every possible emotion along that spectrum.

The actors make William Mastrosimone's story of attempted rape and attempted revenge almost too real to be contained within the intimate theater-in-the-round setting of the Campus Center Arena Theatre.

THEY MAKE us feel so close to their characters that when Raul (H. Todd Freeman) attacks Marjorie (Nancy Fox), he attacks us all. All of us are implicated in *Extremities'* tangled skein of shared guilt and mutual aggression, not just Marjorie's roommates Patricia (Jodie Silk) and Terry (Liana Peters).

This is as it should be in any well-acted play. This is especially as it should be in a strong contemporary drama that exposes the horror of a pseudo-sexual violent act that,

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according to one statistic, one-third of all women have experienced by the age of 25.

Such grim realities make understandable *Extremities'* whirlwind of extreme emotions and strong language. Some audience members may recoil from the many spoken obscenities and acts of violence (effectively staged by fight choreographer Jefferson Cronin), but the play's unflinching treatment is appropriate to its adult theme.

Fox is magnificent as she trembles with barely suppressed rage that serves as the volcano's cap over her hidden tears. Peters, playing a frivolous blonde whose superficiality masks a childhood nightmare, eventually reveals an unsuspected emotional range. And Silk, as a psychologist who clings to jargon as a way of maintaining her control, touchingly breaks down into tears by the play's unexpected climax.

SPECIAL PRAISE must be given to Freeman, whose multileveled portrait of a

pathetic psychopath alternately makes you want to pity him and strangle him. Even when blindfolded, his crazy, tortured eyes seem to stare.

This may be the last chance for some time for Columbus audiences to see *Extremities*, which will be released as a movie later this year. It also will be the last chance this year to savor the special talents of guest director Suzanne Blackburn, whose feminist sensitivity obviously helped the cast dig deeper into their roles. Following *Extremities*, Blackburn will take a leave of absence from Ohio State University's theater department for a seven-month stint working with two French theaters in Paris.

Great acting, skillful directing, powerful playwrighting — there are many good reasons to see *Extremities*. Pick any one of them, but go see it.

Otterbein College presents *Extremities* at 8:15 tonight and 2 p.m. Sunday in the Campus Center theater. Performances continue at 8:15 p.m. Wednesday through June 7. For reservations, call 890-3028.

Drama Offers Thought-Provoking Issue

by Greg Grant, reviewer

Otterbein College Theatre has provided an intense dramatic experience for the Otterbein community with their last production of the school year, "Extremities," by William Mastrosimone.

The play, directed by Suzanne Blackburn, is a powerful look at not only the subject of rape, but also violence and man's inhumanity to man.

First, a quick plot synopsis. Marjorie (Nancy Fox) is home alone. A man (Todd Freeman) comes in and attempts to rape her. A struggle begins and eventually the man is subdued when Marjorie sprays wasp-killer spray in his eye. She then binds him and holds him hostage.

The play is violent, but probably not as violent as you've been led to believe. You

have probably seen as much "violence" on an episode of "The Three Stooges" or "The Roadrunner." The difference is that this violence is real. Frighteningly real.

Graphically real. And, because of the setting in the Arena Theatre, it is right there in front of you. You are drawn into it. It is overwhelming. You can't help it.

The one item that struck me the most about this play is man's capability to do cruel and terrible things to each other. After Marjorie subdues Raul she becomes bent on revenge and is even more violent than her attacker. In this play violence breeds violence, just as it often does in the world.

The play is not pretty, but it is well done. Everything about the play, from a technical standpoint, is outstanding. The two leads, Nancy Fox and Todd Freeman, were both

awesome. I don't think I can say anything other than "wow." Jodie Silk is very good

as Patricia, the roommate who keeps trying to analyze the situation psychologically.

She provides some much needed comic relief. Liana Peters is also very good as Terry, the roommate who does not want to get involved.

This play is not for everybody. People who want to live safely in their own little world should not see this play because it will shock them into reality. People who wish to have an intense experience should go. It may not be a very "positive" or happy experience, but it is certainly a thought-provoking and necessary experience and one not to be missed while the opportunity is available.

"Extremities" will be presented tonight through Saturday in the Arena Theatre in the basement of the Campus Center. Tickets are available in the Cowan Hall box office weekdays from 1-4:30 p.m. and are free with student ID.