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OTTERBEIN  
COLLEGE

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GENERAL ENTERTAINMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Otterbein College Theatre will revive and relive a tragic and unique moment in American history in the March 12-15 production of "The Crucible."

Written in the early '50s by playwright Arthur Miller, the fiery and fascinating plot -- a critically acclaimed masterpiece -- deals with the infamous witch trials of Salem, Mass., in 1692.

The riveting drama begins at the sickbed of a local Puritan girl whose unexplainable illness becomes entangled with the idea of witchcraft. The girl and a group of friends have recently been seen dancing and behaving mysteriously in the forest at night. To avoid punishment for this forbidden behavior and explain the sickness, saucy Abigail Williams (the group's ringleader) claims the group was "bewitched," and begins to weave a tale of blame that soon involves all Salem in its implications.

When questioned, the group picks up on Abigail's lead, weaving a web of deceit that sparks chain reaction accusations of witchery and leaves every Salem man and woman defenseless of suspicion. One by one, "witches" are sentenced to hang.

"The key factor in conviction at the trials," says Stephen Buckwald, Otterbein instructor of theatre and the play's director, "was based on how convincing one person could be over another -- there was no hard proof."

Underlying the tragic sequence of events is the implicated love affair between Abigail and her former employer, farmer John Proctor. Seeing the chance for personal gain during the rash of "witch arrests," Abigail

manages to frame Proctor's wife in hopes of becoming her replacement.

"The tragedy of the play," Buckwald stresses, "is that John Proctor is a man who realizes the truth, and yet is unable to communicate that truth. It also is the story of a community that has gone awry."

John Proctor will be portrayed by senior Tim Gregory of Cincinnati. The 1986 winner of the nationally prestigious Irene Ryan award for acting excellence, Gregory's past roles include Tony in "West Side Story," Mortimer in "Arsenic and Old Lace," Nick in "Baby," and Salieri in "Amadeus." Abigail Williams will be played by senior Liana Peters of Tipp City. Her roles in previous productions include Sissy in "Come Back to the Five and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean," Babe in "Crimes of the Heart," and Ruth in "The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds." Proctor's wife, Elizabeth, will be played by sophomore Cathy Collins of Mt. Clemens, Mich., whose former roles have included Isabella in "Androcles and the Lion," a chorus member in "Baby" and Wendy in "Peter Pan."

Also appearing in "The Crucible" will be Rachel Harris of Worthington, Steve Geyer of Pittsburgh, Pa.; Michelle Thompson of Columbus; Gwen Griffin, Cincinnati; Chuck Rosen, Mentor; Amy Horne, Morristown, Tenn.; Meg Williamson, Plain City; Shane Frampton, Zanesville; Craig Summers, McConnelville; Tim St. John, Ashland; Cheryl Gaysunas, Columbus; Mark Vance, Sagamore Hills; Roy Woods, Eaton; Tim Deak, Brunswick; Marc Foster, Gahanna; Todd Kreps, Loveland, Colo.; Heather Huprich, Berlin; and Keith Berkes, North Royalton. Students T.J. Gerkens of Columbus and Stephanie Haney of Amlin are lighting and set designers, respectively.

Performances will be March 12, 13 and 14 at 8 p.m., followed by a Sunday matinee performance on the 15th at 2 p.m. All performances are in Cowan Hall on the Otterbein campus.

The theatre box office, (614) 890-3028, is open 1-4 p.m. weekdays and will begin selling tickets for the play on Feb. 26.