

OTTERBEIN
C O L L E G E

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GENERAL ENTERTAINMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OTTERBEIN UPDATES *MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING*

Theatre-goers will see an updated version of William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* at Otterbein College in March.

Otterbein College Theatre's version of the classic comedy will be set in 1918 immediately following World War I with the action taking place over a single weekend at a mansion in the Hampton Bay area of Long Island, New York.

Much Ado is considered by many to be Shakespeare's finest comedy. The story centers on two sets of lovers and how they overcome several obstacles to arrive at a happy ending. At the center of the play are Claudio and Hero. The naive Claudio is too willing to believe vicious lies about Hero planted by Don John, who is looking for revenge, and the couple is temporarily torn apart. But love conquers all and the wicked get their just rewards to give the play a happy ending.

Much of the play's comedy is supplied by the second couple, Benedict and Beatrice, with their quick witted bickering and bantering. Their friends aid in pushing the two together by making sure that each hears of the other's romantic attraction. Despite their continual denouncements of romance and love, in the end they are forced to admit their love for each other.

Director Ed Vaughan points out the play as written by Shakespeare involves nobility. He updated that to create a play about high government officials of a mythical state on the east coast.

"It's about the idle rich and a frivolous time with a party to celebrate the end of the war. It's a piece of fluff but a very witty play," Vaughan says.

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While the locale may change, Shakespeare's words will remain intact. Vaughan says while he may make some minor changes, for the most part, the play's original language will remain the same.

"I think that shows the universality of this play to be able to move the location and keep the dialog," he comments.

Another change will be Vaughan's decision to cast women in four roles that traditionally have been given to men. According to Vaughan, this type of non-traditional casting is being seen more and more in theatrical circles and by modernizing the time and place, women are able to play more powerful roles.

Scene designer John Gutknecht has taken on an ambitious project in designing a set that extends 20 feet toward the audience, eliminating two rows of seating, and includes a reflecting pool eight feet in diameter.

Most of the action in the play takes place around this pool which is located behind one of the Hampton mansions. The play flows from scene to scene with the characters continually convening at the pool to carry on their significant conversations over this one busy weekend.

Gutknecht's scene design makes Otterbein's *Much Ado About Nothing* a very visually exciting play and this up-dated version is sure to provide a fun evening of classic comedy. Adding to the play's visual quality will be costumes designed by Katy Robbins and choreography by Doreen Dunn.

At Otterbein, *Much Ado About Nothing* will be performed March 13 through 17. The opening night performance is at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday matinee is at 2 p.m. All other performances begin at 8 p.m. All performances will be held in Cowan Hall, 30 N. Grove St., in Westerville. For tickets and information, call the box office at 898-1109 from 1 to 4:30 p.m. weekdays beginning Feb. 28.