

ENTERTAINMENT & ARTS

Director Dunn says 'Other Half' is all good

By TONY GOINS

Suburban News Reporter

Otterbein College's theater department will kick off its 33rd summer season with a farce.

How the Other Half Loves, a farce by Alan Ayckbourn, will open Otterbein Summer Theatre tomorrow, according to a press release. The play will run through July 11.

The play is a British comedy about infidelity and mistaken identities, said Doreen Dunn, the guest director.

"I guarantee you'll laugh harder at this comedy than any other play you'll see on the stage," Dunn said.

Dunn, whose day job is directing the Eastland Performing Arts program, has directed several plays at Otterbein. She said she keeps coming back for the talent.

"I love these students. They're so well-trained."

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She also appreciated set designer Rob Johnson, who she described as being as talented as set designers she worked with in New York City.

How the Other Half Loves follows two couples, upper-class Frank and Fiona and middle-class Bob and Teresa.

The play takes place in both couples' living rooms at the same time, Dunn said. Both couples' furniture is intermingled, and the actors play scenes in both households at the same time.

Actors must avoid running into each other without acknowledging the other couple's presence, Dunn said. Actors must often take their cues not from the char-

acter they are speaking to, but from characters in the other couple.

The intermingled scenes make the show "incredibly hard to memorize," Dunn said.

Bob and Fiona have an illicit affair, and to cover it up they tell their spouses they were counseling another couple, the Detweilers.

The Detweilers, meanwhile, do not know they are having problems.

"Somebody's having an affair and everybody's accused of it," Dunn said.

Both couples invite the Detweilers over for dinner on successive nights.

Both dinner parties take place at the same time on the stage, Dunn said, at a large

T-shaped table, Dunn said, "so it's great fun to see."

Another challenge is the set, Dunn said.

Instead of setting the play on a stage in front of the audience, *How the Other Half Loves* will take place with the audience on three sides, Dunn said.

The play is helped, however, but what Dunn describes as a "stupendous cast."

"These are six of the most talented Otterbein students I have ever worked with," Dunn said.

How the Other Half Loves will run Thursday through Sunday, next Wednesday and July 1, July 3 and July 7-11.

Tickets cost \$14 for Sunday and Wednesday performances, \$15 for Thursdays and \$16 for Friday and Saturday. For more information, call the Otterbein box office at 823-1109.



Cast members from Otterbein College's *How the Other Half Loves* include (from left) Mandy Wheeler, Robin Barovic and Geof Martin.

ENTERTAINMENT & ARTS

'How the Other Half Loves' is an entertaining farce

By **DENNIS THOMPSON**

Suburban News Theater Critic

Otterbein Summer Theatre opens its season with a crisp production of the 1969 Alan Ayckbourn farce *How the Other Half Loves*.

Ayckbourn has often been called the British Neil Simon, writer of plays that are clever and funny without much substance.

Revisionist thinking finds that a harsh sentiment about both playwrights.

Whereas the implications of depth in Simon is based primarily on his recent work, even this early piece by Ayckbourn shows serious concerns lurking beneath the surface.

Bleak suburban lives, sterile marriages, infidelities and missed communication per-

vades Ayckbourn's world.

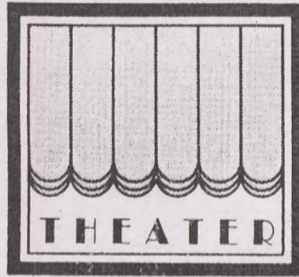
But this is at heart a farce and a clever one. At times it seems to rely on gimmick, but it's a theatrical gimmick that is ingenious and so intricate in its staging.

The action revolves around two couples, the Fosters (Fiona and Frank) and the Phillipses (Bob and Teresa). Fiona and Bob have had a fling, and to cover it up have concocted stories involving a third couple, William and Mary Detweiler.

The Detweilers get invited to dinner on consecutive nights at each house.

The gimmick is that the living rooms of the two couples blend together on stage with the action in each household occurring simultaneously.

The highlight of this is the



REVIEW

staging of both dinner parties with the Detweilers which overlap the same scene.

Director Doreen Dunn conducts the intricate choreography through Rob Johnson's blended set and injects humorous bits of group business.

Robin Borovic as Teresa

Phillips is the most well-rounded real person in this absurd world, both sweet and feisty.

Some of the farcical moments seem too contrived, even for this genre.

But it's only dated in the sense that if Star 69 had existed on telephones, all the misunderstandings would have been cleared up in the first act.

All in all, this is quite entertaining and was greeted with much opening night laughter.

Otterbein Summer Theatre's How the Other Half Loves continues through Saturday at 8 p.m. and at 2 and 7:30 p.m. Sunday through July 11 at the Campus Center Theatre, 100 W. Home St.,

Westerville. There are no performances July 4 and no 7:30 p.m. performance July 11. Tickets are \$14 Wednesday

and Sunday, \$15 Thursday and \$16 Friday and Saturday. For more information call 823-1109.



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'Other Half' has sturdy foundations

By Michael Grossberg
Dispatch Theater Critic

With its well-paced, well-mounted and crisply staged revival of one of Alan Ayckbourn's best early plays, Otterbein Summer Theatre delivers what may be the summer season's most consistently funny farce.

How the Other Half Loves, which opened last night to screams of laughter, is built on the sturdiest of comic foundations: adultery, deception and shaky British manners.

Director Doreen Dunn deftly balances the ample physical slapstick and verbal fireworks in this two-act comedy of class differences, apprehension and misapprehension.

All the action takes place in the living rooms of the upper-class Fosters and working-class Philipps — with actors talking and moving through each other's scenes in the same theatrical space. Only onstage could such a brilliantly theatrical farce come to such madcap life.

Aside from the placement of the Fosters' bar, Dunn and scenic designer Rob Johnson should be applauded for their expert realization of Ayckbourn's tricky, multilevel script. The stage blocking alone is no small feat of focus and timing.

Allison Sattinger's upper-crust Fiona Foster and Jared Jensen's blue-collar Bob Philips generate much laughter as they navigate an arc from ego to comeuppance.

But Robin Borovic, funny enough as Bob's initially confused wife, achieves something far greater: An emotional depth and intelligence that ground her later scenes in a gripping psychological realism. In her terrific acting and even somewhat in her appearance, Borovic evokes a young Annette Bening.

Jesse Wilson is also convincing and empathetic as Frank Foster. His forgetfulness is amusing; his well-meaning befuddlement expands into an affecting sweetness.

Geoff Martin and Mandy Wheeler, mimicking Elmer Fudd's speech impediment on top of their British accents, deftly twist and turn as deferential William and shy Mary Detweiler. Without their pivotal (and fast-pivoting) performances, the first act would not climax so hilariously at "simultaneous" dinner parties.

As Otterbein's memorable 33rd-season opener, Ayckbourn's three-decades-old hit retains its manifold charms and amusing complexity.

Theater review

How the Other Half Loves, Otterbein Summer Theatre's student production of Alan Ayckbourn's farce. Directed by Doreen Dunn.

Fiona Foster Allison Sattinger
Teresa Philips Robin Borovic
Frank Foster Jesse Wilson
Bob Philips Jared Jensen
William Detweiler Geoff Martin
Mary Detweiler Mandy Wheeler

Well-fed farce, from soup to nuts

Being performed at 8 tonight and Saturday and 2 and 7:30 p.m. Sunday — through July 11 — at the Campus Center Theatre, 100 W. Home St., Westerville.

Tickets cost \$14-\$16. Call 614-823-1109.



Alysa Peyton/Dispatch

Sonny Osborne, right, and Dana Cupp of the Osborne Brothers perform.

Bluegrass thrives at festival, thanks to its strong roots

By Aaron Beck
Dispatch Pop Music Critic

Mainstream country music today is cowboy hats, deli tray-sized belt buckles, blue jeans, clean hair and slick, homogeneous videos that resemble advertisements for dating services.

Country's hallowed post-war musicians have been pushed to the shadows by the new breed that has more white teeth than memorable story songs.

One of country's cousins, bluegrass, is a very different animal. As bluegrass' forefathers age, the market for their music increases.

The Bluegrass Classic yesterday in Hoover Y Park provided a prime example. Four of bluegrass' primary keepers of traditional — that is, acoustic — bluegrass, Sonny and Bobby Osborne 61 and 67 years old; Del McCoury, 60, and Doyle Lawson, 55, performed with their bands songs as old as 100 years or more and original tunes written only last year.

The themes — retribution, lovers scorned, longing for the mountains of Virginia, Kentucky and eastern Tennessee and meeting the eyes of God — and the tools used to get them across — dobros, mandolins, stand-up basses, guitars, banjos and fiddles — were constant.

The Osborne Brothers fought through first-day bugs in the sound system. At one point, as power zapped on and off, the sextet's version of *Foggy Mountain Breakdown* alternated between being acoustic and electric. No one under the trees sitting in lawn chairs seemed to care. The Osborne Brothers' take on the Scruggs' signature tune was intense either way, thanks to the blazing, three-fingered banjo picking of Dana Cupp, a man whose previous gig was with Bill Monroe, the Father of Bluegrass.

Lawson and Quicksilver brought to the festival their gospel music and simultaneously endearing and hokey stage banter. Since 1979, this band, led by a Jimmy Martin protege, has been one of the most influential acts in the business. Last night, their

Music review

■ The Bluegrass Classic continues at 11 a.m. today and Saturday at Hoover Y Park, on Rohr Road off Alum Creek Drive. **Today's performers:** the Lewis Family; Northwest Territory; Lonesome River Band; Blue Highway; Larry Stephenson Band; Del McCoury Band; Larry Stephenson Band and Dudley Connell; Larry Stephenson, Roy Lewis, Ricky Simpkins and Travis Lewis. **Saturday's performers:** Northwest Territory; Seldom Scene; J.D. Crowe and the New South; Lonesome River Band; Blue Highway; Bela Fleck, Tony Rice, Jerry Douglas and Tim O'Brien; the Ronnie Bowman Experience. Tickets cost \$25-\$30 (single day) or \$55-\$75 (two-day pass). For more information, call 740-548-4199.

drum-tight harmonies proved why.

Mandolin player and lead vocalist Lawson took much time to tell jokes that compel a person to laugh because the listener has invested so much time. His funniest moment was a non sequitur aimed at fiddler Doug Bartlett: "You look a lot better since the worm medicine took hold."

Lawson's timing was much better when he and the band stood in a semicircle like a football team huddling and sang a cappella.

The Del McCoury Band is led by a man whose voice epitomizes the "high lonesome" sound.

One of the former Monroe band member's secret weapons is his ability to unnerve the listener with a line like "Ely killed his wife with a longshore Bowie knife," then laugh it off while making small talk with the people in the front rows making requests.

McCoury would save the requests for later, for he was excited about his new record *The Family*. Before deadline called, his young band had ripped through most of it. A stand-out: *Red Eyes on a Mad Dog*.