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GENERAL ENTERTAINMENT

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OTTERBEIN SETS HUCK FINN TALE TO MUSIC

The mighty Mississippi will roll into Cowan Hall when Otterbein College Theatre and the Department of Music present *Big River: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* this spring. The musical won seven Tony Awards and seven Drama Desk Awards in 1985.

One of the actors who made *Big River* such a success on Broadway will be joining the Otterbein cast. Ron Richardson, who won a Tony Award for his work in the musical, will resume the role of Jim, the slave who is rescued by Huck Finn and eventually given his freedom. Richardson originated the role of Jim on Broadway.

This musical is a slice of Americana with a cornucopia of old-fashioned pleasures. This rousing good show with a fairly faithful adaptation of the book is certainly an event for the whole family. The cast includes 28 actors playing 65 characters in 45 scenes and 88 different costumes have been prepared for the production.

Although there have been many, many adaptations of Huckleberry Finn for film and stage, this musical stands apart because, rather than focusing on the adventures of Huck, it is really about his spiritual journey into manhood. The play is not just a recitation of boyhood adventures but rather a tale of how Huck and Jim achieve personal freedom.

The music for *Big River*, composed by country music star Roger Miller, ranges from gospel and spiritual to folk and blues. Miller, who died in 1992, is probably best known for his hit "King of the Road" and several novelty songs including "Dang Me," "Chug-A-Lug" and "Can't Roller in a Buffalo Herd." *Big River* is the only musical Miller wrote in his lifetime.

Department of Theatre Chairperson John Stefano will make his directing debut at Otterbein with this musical. Other musicals he has directed include *Oliver*, *Pirates of Penzance* and *Hello Dolly*.

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While introducing Stefano's directing talents, with this production Otterbein will say good-bye to another theatre faculty member. Associate Professor Fred Thayer, who will design lights and special effects for the musical, is retiring this spring. While Otterbein College Theatre sincerely hopes "Pop," as Thayer is affectionately known, will return during his retirement to help with future productions, *Big River* is his last as a full-time faculty member. Thayer has been with Otterbein College for 33 years.

Big River will be performed at Otterbein April 29 through May 2 and May 6 through 8. All performances will be held in Cowan Hall, 30 S. Grove St. The opening night show begins at 7:30 p.m.. Other evening performances begin at 8 p.m. and Sunday matinees are at 2 p.m.

Tickets are \$10.50 for Thursday, April 29; Sunday, May 2 and Thursday, May 6.
Tickets are \$12 for Friday, April 30; Saturday, May 1; Friday, May 7 and Saturday, May 8.
For tickets, call the Otterbein College Theatre box office at 898-1109 between 1 and 4:30 p.m.