

COLUMBUS DISPATCH
COLUMBUS, OH.
AM CIRC. 300,425

FEB-1-96

Otterbein represents 'Men' well

■ *The skillfully constructed thriller boasts a polished, believable cast.*

By Michael Grossberg
Dispatch Theater Critic

The 20th century has suffered a multitude of atrocities because of people who were just following orders.

An army, though, cannot maintain discipline without a military code and a chain of command.

By dramatizing the conflict through *A Few Good Men*, Aaron Sorkin launched his Broadway and Hollywood careers.

His lengthy but suspenseful drama, which opened last night at Otterbein College, explores the complex twists, turns and manipulations of a cover-up after the apparent slaying of a scapegoat soldier by two men in his unit.

A well-constructed thriller in the mold of *The Caine Mutiny*, *A Few Good Men* works well as a smart, courtroom-based murder mystery, a la Agatha Christie; and as a revealing portrait-expose of the military's inner hierarchies that puts the Marines on trial.

Otterbein's solid, 26-member cast offers more than a few good men — plus one good actress.

Guest Equity actor Ed Vaughan turns in an utterly relaxed and confident performance as Lt. Col. Jessep, a tough, traditional Marine officer.

At first, the grizzled veteran toys with the boyish defense attorney like a lion with a mouse.

Michael Faber projects a likable immaturity as Lt. Daniel Kaffee, who initially prefers to concentrate on winning a softball game instead of the case. Faber convincingly charts the defense attorney's gradual rite of passage from wisecracking adolescence to the responsibilities of manhood.

THEATER REVIEW

A Few Good Men, Otterbein College Theatre's student production of Aaron Sorkin's military murder mystery. Directed by Dennis Romer.

Lt. Col. Nathan Jessep ... Ed Vaughan
Lt. j.g. Daniel Kaffee ... Michael Faber
Lt. Cmdr. Galloway ... Tess Hartman
Lt. Jack Ross ... Ben Sprunger
Capt. Markinson ... Rodney Cross

Casualties of peace.

Being presented at 8 tonight through Saturday night and 2 p.m. Sunday in Cowan Hall, 30 S. Grove St., Westerville.

Tickets cost \$8.50 and \$10. Call 823-1109.

When Kaffee's mouse starts to transform himself into a man, Jessep meets his match — and the second act becomes a suspenseful battle of wits leading to an explosive final confrontation in the courtroom.

Tess Hartman projects a spunky strength as Lt. Cmdr. Joanne Galloway, who encourages Kaffee to rise to the challenges of justice. Hartman also shows the vulnerability of a woman struggling to hold her own in a male subculture.

Christopher DePaola, last seen as Paul in Otterbein's *A Chorus Line*, gives a deep emotional reality to the Puerto Rican victim, Pfc. William Santiago. One feels Santiago's pain — and his dignity.

At Tuesday's preview, the rest of the cast fell into formation.

The play, which has the usual military profanity, shows off the bas-

ic training of Yosvany Reyes, reserved but passionate as accused Cpl. Dawson; Damon Decker, dumbly loyal as accused Pfc. Downey; Ben Sprunger, swaggering but nervous as the prosecuting attorney; and Tony Cisco, sinister as the fundamentalist Lt. Kendrick.

Rodney Cross, the physical trainer and technical adviser who helped the cast polish its military sheen, doubles as Capt. Matthew Markinson, the guilty link in the chain of command. In his somber final scene, Cross conveys the anguish of a man "who wasn't strong enough to stop them."

Sorkin is best-known for *A Few Good Men* and for his screenplay of *The American President*.

Even during its Broadway run, *Men* seemed like a Hollywood screenplay because of the frequent jump-cuts and flashbacks between Washington, D.C., and the U.S. naval station at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Director Dennis Romer ensures a brisk pace on Rob Johnson's deft, split-level set. The work of neither, however, would be so effective without Joshua Allen's crisp dramatic lighting.

THEATER

Far-flung story taxes Otterbein's creativity

By Michael Grossberg

Dispatch Theater Critic

Many people have seen the popular movie *A Few Good Men*, but few saw the original Broadway version of Aaron Sorkin's military courtroom drama.

Those who have seen the film might have a hard time imagining how all of the action — set in Washington and on a U.S. military facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba — could fit onto a proscenium stage.

"The challenge has been creating 16 different locations on a trilevel unit set," Dennis Romer said.

Romer is director of Otterbein College Theatre's student production, which runs through Sunday. Faculty member Rob Johnson designed the sets, and student John Allen designed the lights.

"Working closely with the designers," Romer said, "I believe we have shaped and modeled a world that allows the audience to experience this journey through a maze of deception surrounding the murder.

"The theme is the use and misuse of power. Sorkin (most recently, the screenwriter of *The American President*) also deals strongly with issues of honor and morality."

Equity actor Ed Vaughan plays

STAGE NOTES

the macho role of Lt. Col. Nathan Jessup. Also in the cast is Rodney Cross, an Otterbein senior who served for five years in Alaska and the Middle East as an Army infantryman. Cross doubles as the cast's physical trainer and the military technical adviser.

Performances will be at 8 to-night through Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday in Cowan Hall, 30 S. Grove St., Westerville. Tickets cost \$8.50 and \$10. Call 823-1109.



Tom Dodge / Dispatch

Lance Cpl. Dawson (Yosvany Reyes) gets an earful from Lt. Kendrick (Tony Cisco) in *A Few Good Men*.

"A Few Good Men" presents challenges for cast and crew

Theater department will produce popular military courtroom drama

By Anne Loiselle
ARTS WRITER

Otterbein students will have an opportunity to see a few good men, and one good woman, on stage in Cowan Hall.

The Theater Department will produce the military courtroom drama "A Few Good Men" by Aaron Sorkin from Jan 31 to Feb. 4.

In the play, two Marines are court martialled for the accidental death of another Marine, according to Dennis Romer, artistic director of the theatre department and director of the play.

"For me, the underlying theme is the misuse of power," Romer said.

As director, Romer said the challenge of the play is to establish 16 different scenes on a three-level set. The scenes range in location from Washington, D.C., to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

According to Romer, the actors must do the set changes in addition to acting and costume changes.

"The challenge is to keep the story understandable and keep the locations clear," Romer explained.

One challenge the actors face is military

training, according to sophomore Michael Faber. Faber plays the lead role of Daniel Kaffee, defense attorney for the accused Marines.

According to senior Rodney Cross, the cast participates in military training exercises to make the play more accurate. Exercises include push-ups, sit-ups, running in formation and learning direction commands such as "about face."

Cross is the play's military technical advisor and was chosen for this position because of his service as a sergeant in the U.S. Army from 1986 to 1991.

Another point of military accuracy is the actors' hairstyles. Romer said all male cast members are required to have crewcuts, the hairstyle required by the U.S. Armed Forces during active service.

Cross, in addition to being the military technical advisor, plays the part of Captain Markinson, another lawyer.

"I enjoy getting to work both sides of a show," Cross said. "I like my role in particular," he added. "I get to illustrate that life itself is a paradox."

Another actor who enjoys his role is jun-

ior Yosvany Reyes. He plays Lance Corporal Dawson, one of the accused Marines.

"My favorite thing is the journey the character takes," Reyes said. "Dawson comes to the understanding that not all rules are right."

Right and wrong aren't well defined in the play, according to Tess Hartman, who plays Joann Galloway, another defense attorney for the accused Marines and the only female in the play.

"A lot of people are treated unfairly in the play," Hartman said.

Hartman said that although the play isn't about women in the military, the playwright makes the point that women in the military aren't treated the same as men.

"She never gives up," Hartman said of her character. "It's a great opportunity to play a strong woman," she added.

Reyes doesn't agree with Hartman's assessment of the Galloway.

"In my opinion, the playwright could've done a lot better with her character," Reyes said.

Although Galloway is considered a strong character by some, the play is known for its

strong male characters, according to Romer. To balance out the lack of female roles this play offers, Romer said the theatre department chose to perform "Trojan Women" this season, a play with many roles for women.

Another strong and complex character is Kaffee, played by Faber. According to Faber, most characters become easier to play the more one rehearses, but Kaffee was the exception to the rule.

"The hardest thing was learning who I am on stage," Faber said. "He became more and more difficult."

"He's a great lawyer, he just doesn't know it," Faber added.

Despite the challenges of portraying this character, Faber said that the only drawback was the length of the show.

"The worst thing about it is we're only doing it for one week," he said.

The opening night performance on Jan. 31 will be at 7:30 p.m. All other evening performances begin at 8 p.m. and the Sunday showing is at 2 p.m.

Tickets are free with I.D. and can be reserved by calling the box office at 823-1109 between 1 and 4:30 p.m.