



PR photo

Guest professional actor Donal Donnelly, as psychiatrist Martin Dysart, rehearses a scene from the upcoming production of "Equus," where he discusses Alan Strang's (Jeff Kin, center) obsession with horses and in particular, a horse called "Nugget" (played by Craig Summers, right).

## Donnelly is "Equus" guest artist

By Lisa Pettit

Donal Donnelly will be the guest for the Otterbein College theatre department's production of "Equus", a story about a boy who allegedly blinds six horses. This is the 24th consecutive year that Otterbein has had a guest artist.

Donnelly, who is originally from Dublin, Ireland, will play the role of the psychiatrist Martin Dysart. The psychiatrist is asked to treat the young man who has blinded the horses. "Equus", written by Peter Schaffer, won the 1975 Tony Award for best play.

Donnelly considers the role Dr. Martin Dysart to be very challenging and the play itself to be very exciting.

Donnelly began his career in his homeland of Ireland and after several years of travelling back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean, he decided to bring his family to the United States. His wife Patsy and their three children, Maryanne, 19, Damian, 15 and Jonathon James, 13, now reside in Westport Connecticut.

David Merrick's production of "Philadelphia, Here I Come" brought Donnelly to the United States for the first time. This play was very successful

and it was taken on a national tour. This tour brought Donnelly to the Columbus area for the first time.

Donnelly has proven himself to be a very versatile actor. He has played a wide variety of roles on the stage, in film and television roles both here in the United States and in Ireland and elsewhere in Europe.

He has played Dr. Frederick Treves on Broadway in "The Elephant Man" opposite David Bowie. He also appeared on Broadway in "The Faith Healer" with James Mason. He has also performed with Deborah Kerr on the national tour of "The Last of Mrs. Cheyney."

This performance at Otterbein is certainly not the first time that Donnelly has been on a college campus. He has travelled extensively to colleges across the United States and in Canada for the past few years with his one man show "My Astonishing Self." This show is based on the life and times of George Bernard Shaw.

Once Donnelly has completed "Equus" he will continue touring with "My Astonishing Self."

"Equus" will run from Thursday, October 18 through Sunday, October 21 in Cowan Hall. All performances are free to students with their student I.D.'s. Tickets are available in the Cowan Hall box office.



## ENTERTAINMENT

# Otterbein's 'Equus' intense, capable production

By Dennis Fiely

Dispatch Theater Critic

Nobody can accuse Otterbein College in Westerville of opening its theater season with a patsy as a tune-up for more difficult things to come.

Otterbein raised the curtain on its 1984-85 stage season Thursday with a courageous and capable production of Peter Shaffer's *Equus*, which played for more than 1,000 performances in New York and won the Tony Award.

This difficult drama, being revived throughout the country thanks to the success of Shaffer's more recent *Amadeus*, deals with a deeply disturbed boy's unusual preoccupation with horses and the painstaking efforts of a self-doubting psychiatrist to treat the boy and purge his demons.

**THE THERAPY**, which frequently segues into flashbacks as the boy re-enacts his traumatic moments, takes place inside an English psychiatric hospital, barely suggested on the

*Equus*, starring guest professional artist Donal Donnelly, continues in Cowan Hall at Otterbein College through Sunday. Showtimes are 8:15 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 2:30 p.m. Sunday. Tickets may be obtained at the Cowan Hall box office before the show.

### REVIEW

Cowan Hall stage by a square of railings and benches.

Despite its sparse, expressionistic set, which also doubles as a stable, *Equus* is so blindingly theatrical and bizarre that, in less accomplished hands, it could come off as quite silly.

After all, not many plays call for a supporting cast of six horses, neatly represented here by actors with wire mesh horses' heads and hooves.

But, due to the earnestness and intensity of the Otterbein production, there was no snickering in the audience on Thursday, not even during a lengthy, climactic nude scene between

the troubled boy, Alan Strang (Jeff Kin), and his girlfriend, Jill Mason (Charlotte Dougherty).

**BORROWING HEAVILY** from the Broadway staging of *Equus*, director Charles Dodrill has devised a classy and well-conceived production.

He creates an arena setting for added intimacy and dimension.

The show clocks in at 2½ hours, but it moves along with a fluid grace as the performers enter the action from the rows of spectators that surround the stage.

The production's eerie, almost Gothic, tone, largely attributable to Fred Thayer's dim lighting design, makes Otterbein's *Equus* seem like a nightmarish journey into the subconscious, where all manner of forbidden fears and desires are dangerously unearthed.

The script is explosive and controversial. It re-examines accepted notions of sex, religion

and child-rearing for an extremely disturbing portrait.

It's also a diatribe against the humdrum existence of daily living.

**THE SHOW'S** big, classical themes emerge loudly and clearly in the Otterbein production, even though its emotionally charged material stretches the student cast to the limit.

Guest professional artist Donal Donnelly, a Broadway veteran from Ireland, is outstanding as psychiatrist Martin Dysart. Donnelly's polished professionalism and deft underplaying hold the young student cast together.

The younger cast members, all Otterbein undergraduates, create strong definitions for their characters and nicely handle the language in English accents, although they're occasionally caught emoting instead of acting.

*Equus* is certainly a fine learning experience for them.

**IN THE SHOW'S** most challenging role, Kin captures the right mix of intimidation and vulnerability for Alan. Laura Stitt and David Caldwell effectively portray his overly protective parents' misguided love.

Nancy Fox as the hospital nurse and Jodie Silk as Dysart's confidant and comforter, Hester Salomon, lend able support.

But it is Dougherty as the boy's adventurous, carefree girlfriend who delivers the evening's most natural student performance.

The entire team at Otterbein is to be commended for ably tackling such a challenging show that should leave the audience entertained and, most of all, stimulated.



# Otterbein guest tells tall tales

By Dennis Fiely

Dispatch Theater Critic

Give him a bar stool and a bottle of whiskey and Donal Donnelly would probably talk all night.

Whether he's recounting a meeting between George Bernard Shaw and Albert Einstein or an anecdote about Groucho Marx watching his first cricket match in England, Donnelly is the quintessential Irish storyteller.

The 53-year-old actor, a Dublin native transplanted to Westport, Conn., spins mesmerizing tales, punctuated with animated gestures, uncanny impressions and a hearty laugh, which always follows an inevitable punch line.

**HE HAS BEEN** in the Columbus area for the past couple of weeks to prepare for his guest role as psychiatrist Martin Dyars in the Otterbein College Theatre production of Peter Shaffer's *Equus*, which opens Thursday on the Westerville campus.

Donnelly is probably best remembered by New York stage audiences for his two-year stint on Broadway as Dr. Frederick Treves in *The Elephant Man*.

During his long tenure in the show, Donnelly played opposite eight different actors in the title role.

He can't even readily remember the names of all the actors with whom he co-starred, but there was one "elephant man" he'll never forget — rock superstar David Bowie.

"WHEN HE came into the show, there was an explosion in attendance," Donnelly said.



Dispatch photo by Tom Dodge

From left, Donal Donnelly, Charlotte Dougherty, Jeff Kin rehearse for *Equus*

"People came from all over the world to see him. Friends phoned me from Ireland begging for tickets. My daughter was a junior in high school in Connecticut. When her classmates found out, I was inundated with requests to meet him."

Bowie's superstar status notwithstanding, Donnelly was duly impressed with his performance.

"You know, Bowie studied mime for several years and his movement in the role was astonishing. He's also an incredibly intelligent person. He began the play rather tentative and apprehensive, but everything he learned locked in right away. By the time he was halfway through his run, he was terribly impressive."

Donnelly bowed on Broadway with a splash of his own in 1966 when he starred in David Merrick's production of *Philadelphia, Here I Come*, written by noted Irish playwright Brian Friel.

**THE SHOW** won a Tony nomination, and a *Variety* poll of theater critics named Donnel-

ly as Broadway's most promising newcomer.

Later, he toured in the national company of *Philadelphia, Here I Come*, which stopped in Columbus.

Donnelly bathed in the Broadway spotlight strictly by accident. Merrick attended the world premiere of *Philadelphia, Here I Come* at the Dublin Theatre Festival and imported the entire production, cast intact, to New York City.

"We came to Broadway in our stocking feet," Donnelly said. "The show had an unknown writer, an unknown director and unknown actors. You couldn't sell a ticket on a name, but it became the sleeper hit of the year. It marked the launching of Friel on an international level."

Donnelly considers Friel one of his best friends in the business. He has appeared in five Friel plays.

In addition to his numerous theatrical credits (*Sleuth*, *84 Charing Cross Road*, etc.), Donnelly had his own television series for the British Broadcasting

Company and made several European films, including Richard Lester's *The Knack*, the only comedy to have ever won the grand prize at the Cannes Film Festival.

**HE CONTINUES** to tour in the one-man show, *My Astonishing Self*, based on the life of George Bernard Shaw.

But, for now, he said, "I'm just another worried actor," as he prepared for *Equus*, a psychological thriller about a boy, his psychiatrist and six dead horses.

"The play is a monumental study," Donnelly said. "I'm afraid to move away from the text. I go to sleep with it in my hand."

**The Otterbein production of *Equus*** will be performed at 8:15 p.m. Thursday through Sunday and 2:30 p.m. Sunday in Cowan Hall on the Westerville campus. Tickets may be obtained at the Otterbein box office one hour before showtimes or by calling 890-3028 on weekday afternoons.





Photo by Meg Scoll

Craig Summers has an important part in the production of "Equus." He is the understudy for Donal Donnelly, the guest artist.

## Craig Summers is Guest Artist's understudy

by Lisa Pettit

Craig Summers, a junior from McConelsville, Ohio, got an opportunity during this fall's theatre production that not many Otterbein students get. He is the understudy to Donal Donnelly, the guest artist for "Equus."

An understudy is someone who trains for a role in case the regular actor or actress must be replaced.

As well as understudying, Summers plays the role of the Horseman and the horse Nugget. Summers calls Nugget the "lead horse."

During the past summer, Summers appeared in the outdoor drama "Blue Jacket" in Xenia, Ohio. During that time he became very accustomed to horses which has helped him for his role in "Equus."

According to Summers, when he heard that there would be a guest artist, he was upset because he wanted to do this play very much and with the guest artist, there would be one less role to fill.

But after working with Donnelly, he was very pleased with the way things have worked out. Summers feels that this is a valuable learning experience for him.

Being able to sit back and watch a professional actor find things that you had missed really shows what years of experience can do for you, said Summers.

By using an understudy, students get a chance to do roles that they might not normally get to do.

Summers, a transfer from Rio Grande College, has also done other work in the past. He performed in "Tecumseh" and in "Shenandoah" in Chillicothe, Ohio. Here at Otterbein he has played in "Fiddler on the Roof" and in "Midsummer's Night Dream."

## Costumes, set design add dimension to drama

By M.M. Keefer, reporter

Both Lucy Reuther and Mike Slane agree that costumes and set design contribute to the success of a play.

Mike Slane, an '84 graduate of Otterbein, is Assistant Technical Director this year. His primary job is to build sets. For "Equus", he not only built it, he designed it as well.

"Simplicity is the factor," Slane stated in reference to the "Equus" set. The set, which is built of wood and metal in a square shape, was meant to be simple. Slane explained that the play takes place in a lot of different places, therefore the set was created in a neutral sense so that it would not be overwhelming.

As in any play, Slane stated the set has to reflect the atmosphere of the play. The wood represents the warmth of the play and the metal, the coldness.

The "Equus" set, which was under construction the second week back at school, rotates in one of the scenes to help create an illusion.

The "Equus" set is similar to the New York production, yet is simple and effective for the play.

Another factor of play production that goes on "behind the scenes," is costume design. This job belongs to faculty member Lucy Reuther.

This is Reuther's fourth year at Otterbein. Along with her responsibilities as a teaching faculty member, she also

designs and fits all the costumes for all the shows on campus.

The costumes for "Equus" are "contemporary but with an English flavor," Reuther stated.

In choosing the right costume Reuther looks at "what seems right for the character and what the character represents." For example, the character Alan, a typical teenager played by Jeff Kin, is in jeans and a sweatshirt.

With a play like "Equus", Reuther stated that there was only so much that you can do with costumes. The designer must be careful so that the audience gets the right interpretation of the character.

Reuther said that "a lot of times costumes are over looked in contemporary shows," but not so in this production.

The set design and costumes aid the interpretation of a play. In "Equus" both Slane and Reuther feel that they have contributed to a successful play.



The horse head above is only an example of the costumes that are part of "Equus."



# 'Equus' provides entertainment for Homecoming

By Julie Lynch, reporter

An engaging story written by an imaginative playwright will combine with the performance of a carefully selected guest actor to provide an exciting opening for Otterbein's 1984-85 drama season, says the play's director.

**Dr. Charles W. Dodrill**, chairman of the department of theatre and dance at Otterbein, is directing the college's fall production of "Equus," which will be performed October 18-21 in Cowan Hall.

"Equus" is a story of discovery in which a psychiatrist explores a young man's motive for blinding six horses. Dialogue between the psychiatrist and the boy and flashbacks lead to some revealing discoveries.

According to Dodrill, this particular play was chosen for several reasons. One concerns the play's format. All of the scenes in "Equus" will be performed on or around a wooden platform on center stage.

"A good piece of theatre requires the audience to have as much of an imagination as the actors," Dodrill commented, "and 'Equus' really asks the audience to use their imagination."

Sixty audience members will be seated on the stage behind the platform. Dodrill hopes that their closeness to the play's action will help them get more involved.

Another reason for "Equus" being chosen is the fact that it was written by **Peter Shaffer**, who according to Dodrill, is one of the most important playwrights of this century. "The sheer theatricality of Shaffer's plays is wonderful," he said.

The theatre department wants its program to include a wide variety of good plays from the past and present in order to provide its student actors with exposure to many different kinds of roles. "Equus" falls into the category of 20th

century play. Dodrill hopes it will balance the comedy-drama, musical, classical farce and favorite childhood tale which will all be performed during the 1984-85 drama season.

Yet another explanation for choosing "Equus" refers to the important message Shaffer attempts to communicate. In the play, the psychiatrist discovers a boy's and his own individual passion to admire an image or idea beyond humanity.

"'Equus' explores our need for something in our lives bigger than ourselves," said Dodrill. "This play speaks bundles, as a theatre piece, to people of all ages."

Otterbein's guest actor program is celebrating its 24th consecutive season this year with the appearance of **Donal Donnelly** starring in "Equus" as Psychiatrist Martin Dysart.

Dodrill has been in charge of acquiring a guest actor to star in a production each year, and he claims that this is a difficult task. He said, "I've had to chase down actors in the craziest places in the world."

The difficulty has provoked the department to hire a casting agency, which, this year, led them to Donnelly. He is a highly respected actor who is "terribly excited about working with students," commented Dodrill.

Dodrill said the purpose of having a guest actor program is two-fold: a solid professional actor's performance sells more tickets (there is a 10 percent increase in season ticket sales this year) and, the program offers drama students the opportunity to work with a professional who serves as a role model. In

many cases, the presence of the guest actor has inspired the students to work even harder than usual to make an impression.

Dodrill said the program "helps bridge the gap between here and the professional world."

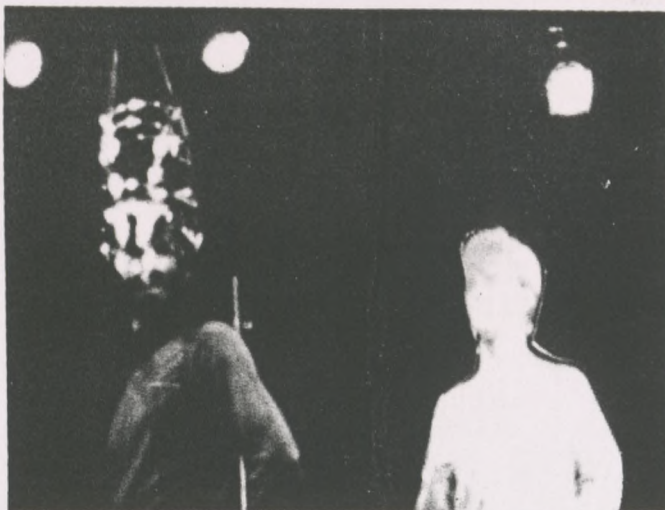


Photo by Meg Scott

Jeff Kin rehearses a scene from the upcoming production of "Equus" which will open tonight at 8:15 p.m. in Cowan Hall.



# Play's nudity no cause to blink today

By KAREN E. HENDERSON

STAFF WRITER

A dramatization of the disfiguring of horses in the play "Equus" at Lake Erie College in Painesville has drawn more comment from students than a nude scene in the same play.

"Nudity in the theater is really old hat," said Jake Rufli, Lake Erie College theater director.

But the maiming of horses is a different story at a college where equestrian studies are a major part of the curriculum, he conceded. Rufli said a number of students, all horse lovers, questioned him about the selection of this particular play.

"I had to explain that it's not about that," Rufli said. "It's a play about human relationships."

He has not gotten any calls or questions about the nude scene from anyone except the press, he said.

The play is based on a true story about a young boy, Alan, who loved horses and worked in a stable in England. One night, for no apparent reason, he blinded six horses.

Using flashbacks, the Peter Shaffer play depicts the forces at work in Alan's mind which are gradually brought out in conversations with a psychiatrist, played by Donald Scobel.

In the brief nude scene, Alan, played by Londoner Josh Wank, makes love to a girl he has fallen in love with. The girl, Jill, is played by Lake Erie junior Sarah Tetzloff.

Rufli said the scene is tastefully done in a semi-darkened setting in the stable. The actors are rehearsing in their underwear.

The first play at the college to include nudity was done about 10 years ago, when the college put on "The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie." There also was nudity a few years back in "Dr. Faustus."

"People see it every night on TV," Rufli said.

And college students need not fear that old Dobbin is going to be sacrificing his eyesight for the theater. Rufli said male actors wearing horse costumes borrowed from the Cleveland Playhouse will depict the horses in a choreographed dream sequence supposedly taking place in the young man's mind.

"It's a powerful, powerful play," Rufli said. "I want it to be an artistic success."

The play will be performed at 8 p.m. on Nov. 9, 10, 15, 16 and 17 at C.K. Rickel Theater.



Jake Rufli, Lake Erie College theater director.

PD/DIANA McNEES



# Equus role labor of love for visiting actor

By Dana Stone

Preparing for his role in *Equus* has proven to be a quite a challenge for visiting actor Donal Donnelly.

He plays psychiatrist Martin Dysart in *Equus*, a provocative drama about a desperately disturbed young man undergoing psychotherapy. The production runs Oct. 18-21 in Cowan Hall on the campus of Otterbein College.

The play's subject matter and complexity make it a demanding production for everyone in the cast, especially him, Donnelly said.

"As the psychiatrist, I have to relate to the young man and the other cast members," Donnelly said.

"Dysart does a lot of talking, and memorizing his parts in the script is very time-consuming."

The effects of puberty and a troubled family life take their toll on teenager Alan Strang's mental state in the play's beginning, Donnelly said.

Driven by forces he is unable to control, Strang, played by

Jeff Kin, begins to maim horses, Donnelly said. This strange behavior results in him becoming Dysart's patient, he said.

"The relationship between the teenager and Dysart, a man undergoing his own personal crisis, creates much drama and tension," Donnelly said.

"Trapped in an unhappy marriage, Dysart begins questioning his own profession and values."

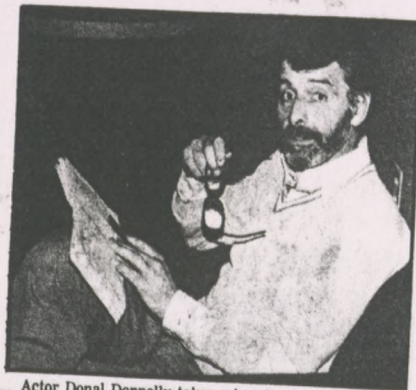
The audience has a powerful experience watching Strang act out his problems, Donnelly said.

Although staging *Equus* is difficult, the students and professors involved have a real commitment to making it a success, Donnelly said.

"The cast is very professional, both technically and artistically," Donnelly said.

The production's director, Charles Dodrill, has a tremendous understanding of the script, Donnelly said. "As chair-

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Actor Donal Donnelly takes a break while studying the script for *Equus*.

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man of the theatre and dance department, he generates great enthusiasm in the students," he said.

Donnelly's extensive acting experience will help him meet the challenge of his part.

Since coming to the United States from Ireland in 1966, Donnelly has appeared in many Broadway plays and has worked with many famous thespians.

He greatly enjoyed working with British actor James Mason in *Faith Healer*, a play about a man who traveled around rural Ireland healing the sick, said Donnelly, who portrayed his manager.

"Healer" marked Mason's return to Broadway after a long absence, Donnelly said.

"Meeting him was a joy because I had seen many of his movies and was a great fan of his," Donnelly said.

"He was instinctively a real gentleman and had a droll sense of humor."

Donnelly portrayed Dr. Treves in the Broadway production of "Elephant Man", he said. Treves takes care of a man suffering from a disease which leaves him horribly deformed, he said.

During the play's two-year run, eight actors played the sick man, including rock singer David Bowie and *Star Wars* star Mark Hamill, he said.

Although Bowie was a novice actor, he was "stupendous" in the role and a real crowd-pleaser, Donnelly said.

"He was very intelligent and learned his role quickly," Donnelly said.

"Bowie put his training as a mime artist to good use in the part."

Acting is clearly a labor of love for Donnelly. This love will help him tackle his latest challenge successfully.

# 'Equus' / One of Otterbein's strongest productions to date

By **NANCY GILSON**

C-J Entertainment Editor

Peter Shaffer, author of "Amadeus" and "Equus," excels at psychological mysteries. One examines the pain of mediocrity and the other the pain of normalcy. Neither is easy for the actors or the audience.

Otterbein College has mounted an outstanding "Equus." It is one of the college's most professional-looking productions to date.

Much of the credit must go to

Donal Donnelly, the professional actor in the central role of psychiatrist Martin Dysart. Donnelly is relaxed and assured so his performance doesn't get in the way of the character but he misses none of the psychiatrist's regret and confusion.

Dysart is treating a teenage boy, Alan Strang, who blinded six horses. Dysart must unravel the impetus behind the hideous crime and in doing so, discovers a passion he envies. He can restore Alan to health but the boy will lose a part of himself forever. As Dysart says, "doctors can de-

stroy passion. They cannot create it."

Jeff Kin is good as Strang. He is slightly built and fair and looks both vulnerable and threatening which is advantageous in this role. Exchanges between Dysart and Alan, crucial in "Equus," are electric.

The rest of the cast is competent although women in two key roles — Laura Stitt and Jodie Silk — over-act.

"Equus" is staged much as it was on Broadway with a spare, slightly abstract set by Michael Slane. A platform serves as Dysart's office, the stable and the field where Alan takes his midnight rides. During this last scene, lights dim, the platform is swiftly rotated and Alan's gallop becomes an erotic, frightening and exceptionally strong scene.

The horses are portrayed by six men with steely wire horse heads

and heavy wire hooves. The weight of the hooves makes a thick clomping as the "horses" move. This naturally suggests the beasts' power.

Charles Dodrill directs the drama cleanly and perceptively. Fred Thayer's lighting is dramatic. All components work well to create a strong psychological drama.

*"Equus" continues through Oct. 21 in Otterbein College's Cowan Hall.*