

OTTERBEIN NEWS

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GENERAL ENTERTAINMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Five women will breathe life into Otterbein College Theatre's upcoming "Ladyhouse Blues," Kevin O'Morrison's bittersweet story of a family in 1919 St. Louis, left temporarily manless by World War I.

The play, which opens Thurs., Feb. 6, at 8:15 p.m. in Cowan Hall, includes a widowed mother and her four daughters. Only one man remains in their life -- a Navy son and brother, due back from Europe any moment.

A special guest professional actress will travel from New York City to play the lead role of the mother in Otterbein's production. It was for this role that actress Jo Henderson won an Obie award in 1977 for her performance at the Phoenix Theatre in New York. Junior Catherine Randazzo, a junior, is the understudy for the lead role of the mother, Liz Madden, a proud, feisty matriarch used to hardship, but now struggling against the times to keep her daughters on an even moral keel.

Each of the daughters is on the brink of a major change in her life. Helen, the oldest, who will be played by Otterbein junior Nancy Fox, is a ravaged beauty who has come home to die of tuberculosis, cast away by a "foreigner" husband, who wants to protect himself and their small son from the disease.

Junior Liana Peters is Dot, a former model, beautiful but also very insecure. She is married to a New York socialite, now pregnant with their second child, and home for a "visit." Contemplating divorce from the uppity husband who has grown tired of her, Dot is turning more and more to the bottle she keeps hidden in her bedroom.

Junior Gina Grogg's Terry is a waitress as well as banner carrier for labor and feminism. A union member, she shocks her mother by announcing that she has been elected to travel to Washington to speak for women's rights.

Spunky youngest daughter Eylie, played by freshman Cathy Collins, also a local waitress, is itching to escape the confines of the ladyhouse by eloping to California with her Greek boyfriend.

While Mama is fretting considering how she is going to beat some sense into this girl, the others are about their chores, whether the chores of the moment are a matter of grinding fresh coffee or pickling watermelon rinds or making cornbread.

Director Ed Vaughan, assistant professor of theatre, calling the production a "slice of life" play, says its lessons are as valid today as ever. "It is a story of stubborn mother from the hills desperately trying to keep her family together," he explained, "and hang on to their old ways, in spite of changing times." Vaughan promises an exciting realness to the Otterbein production, with street vendors singing out about their melons and fresh fish. The actresses will be busily washing laundry, lighting kerosene lamps and wilting in the stifling heat. But throughout the play audiences are given hints of the new America coming: houses are switching on to electricity, the labor movement is rising, and women are beginning to assert their independence.

Guest set designer is David Hammond, Director of Theatre at Upper Arlington High School, who has designed a "very impressionistic set," according to Vaughan. The set extends a full eight feet over the edge of the stage, bringing much of the action right into the audience.

Otterbein Technical Director-Lighting Director Robert Fox will oversee technical direction for this production, with Otterbein Costume Designer Lucy Lee Reuther charged with costuming the women in their simple "farm woman" versions of the period dress. David Hammond has designed the lighting.

Junior Todd Freeman is stage manager, assisted by Chris Cox, also an Otterbein junior.

The comic drama will be presented at 8:15 p.m. for three consecutive nights: Thursday, February 6, through Saturday, February 8. A Sunday matinee will also be offered at 2:00 p.m. on February 9. Tickets for "Ladyhouse Blues" go on sale at the Cowan Hall box office (890-3028) beginning January 23. Box office hours are 1 - 4:30 p.m. weekdays and 1 - 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, February 8. Mail orders are processed in advance of counter sales.