Thursday December 11, 1980

## **Energy**

## Theater star jogs to keep performances lively

Victor Garber, 31-year-old star of "They're Playing Our Song," opened the door of his Birmingham rental townhouse. He was wearing a red jogging suit and grey sweatsocks. No shoes.

ging suit and grey sweatsoess. Ivo
Garber looked even more youthful
than he does on stage at the Fisher Theatre in Detroit, where he and Marstokages are doing land office business in
the stages are stage to the stage of the
this stage of the stage of the stage of the
things that has helped him along in
his career that began as a child perormer in his hometown of London, Ontario.

In "They're Plaving Our Song."

"They're Playing Our Song," Garber is cast as a somewhat uptight, yet savvy musical genius who writes melodies. He's glad to get away from playing essentially Mr. Nice Guys.

playing essentially Mr. Nice Guys.

GARBER WAS Jesus in a production of "Godspell" in Toronto, where he shared the stage with Gilda Radner. Later, at age 21, he played lessus in the movie version of "Godspell" shot on location in New York.

He's seen some of his friends — including Ms. Radner, wo is from Detroit — "shoot to stardon..."

Garber doesn't view himself yet as a star. But he did receive a Tony Awar justice of the control of th

'We don't ever let down. We're there to entertain the audience.'

-Victor Garber

Garber travels light, with "a couple of trunks and a guitar." He's getting homesick, however, for New York and hopes to return there after the show plays Toronto this spring.
"They're Playing Our Song" is a high-energy musical that demands a lot its two versatile stars. Ms. Scaggs joined the cast about nine months ago, replacing his original leading lady on the road.

DETROIT AUDIENCES have fallen

DETROIT AUDIENCES have fallen in bow with the resty musical, its fabulous title-song production number and its two delightful stars who convey the magic of a couple falling in love. Fisher public relations man Jon Essex describes this as their "chemistry" on stage. He said the show has been pulling in \$250,000 a week. "They're Playing Our Song" opened in October and runs through Dec. 20. On weekends, the stars play two shows a day and they meet the challenge with vigor. "We keep it fresh," Garber said. "We don't ever let down. We're there to entertain the audience." In the show. Ms. Skazes is Sonia

tertain the audience."

In the show, Ms. Skaggs is Sonia Walsk, an uninhibited woman who is just becoming known as a lyricist and gets the chance to work with the famous composer Vernon Gersch, portrayed by Garber.

With music by Marvin Hamlisch and lyrics by Carole Bayer Sager, "They're Playing Our Song" is based on the real-life working relationship and romance between Hamlisch and Ms. Sager.

ON STAGE, Garber moves through his dance routines, as the serious-mind-ed composer unbending, with an easy, exciting grace. He is matched by Ms. Scagg's lively qualities.

Garber used to sing with a musical group called the Sugar Shop, and he composes songs himself. He describes himself as a folk singer, but the music in "They're Playing Our Song" is a flashy, contemporary sound.

The show also has stunning, highly innovative, cleanly styled stage sets.

You'd wonder how Garber can keep up the pace on stage. Garber said he doesn't go out much, and he keeps him-self together with "disciplines."

During a Thursday afternoon inter-view, he offered a cup of herbal tea, although he said he prefers coffee.

He doesn't get home from the theater until midnight, but gets up around 9 or 9:30 a.m. "I like to read, listen to mu-sic, write letters and do exercises in the afternoon," he said.

HE DOES a combination of jogging, yoga and stretching exercises. "I do them every day. If I don't, I'm not comfortable on stage."

In Birmingham, he jogs down South-field Road and across Maple to Quarton Lake.

"When I'm real 'good' I eat a lot of grains, vegetables and fruits," he said, "I don't eat a lot of meat. As a performer, it wears you down. I eat my main meal around 5 p.m."

In the show's catch-fire number "They're Playing Our Song," first the composer and later the lyricist jump up from their table at the disco to ex-claim, "They're playing my song."

claim, "They're playing my song."
Each dances about, shushes the other to hear better, and finally falls on knees, spectacularly, to the floor.
"The first time I did it full out in a run-through, I thought I'd collapse in a heap." Garber recalled. But now he knows just how much energy to use and doesn't use any muscles he doesn't have to.

DURING THE run of the show in De-troit, Garber has been sharing a Bir-mingham townhouse with Orrin Reiley, his standby in the musical. Reiley filled in recently when Garber went to Lon-don, Ontario to visit his father and brother's family and to Marin County in California to visit friends.

Garber said he loves the show. "Mar-sha and I are very lucky to have each other," he said about his co-star. "We both work the same way. When you get to know somebody on stage, it becomes

to know someoody on stage, it becomes very intimate. If are just having a good time together. It's a love story and the audience has to care."

He credits having been in the show a year with giving him the opportunity to develop the character of Vernon to the fullest.

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It's basically a two-person show. Garber and Ms. Skaggs each have an on-stage singing trio dressed like their character. Vernon and Sonia have only their "voices" to back them up, for oc-

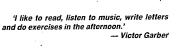
casional support.
Garber and Ms. Skaggs keep the show happening with their onstage rap-

port.
"We're still listening to each other,"
he said. "We haven't gone on automatic
pilot."

Ms. Scaggs has rented a townhouse in the same Birmingham complex.



Victor Garber stars in "They're Playing Our Song" which is cur-rently playing at the Fisher Theatre.











Marsha Skaggs is the co-star of the Neil Simon musical.





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