

# A winning production of 'The Last Resort'

Performances of the Jewish Ensemble Theatre production of "The Last Resort" by Kitty Dubin continue through Sunday, April 1, at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield. For ticket information, call 788-2900 or Ticketmaster at 645-6666.

By Barbara Michals  
Special writer

With its current production of "The Last Resort" the Jewish Ensemble Theatre has progressed from good but uneven debut to a second show of full-blown excellence. Acting is consistently fine in this production, and the choice of material, the Michigan premiere of a real play by little-known Birmingham playwright Kitty Dubin, shows the JET is unafraid to depart from the tried-and-true and offer fresh, exciting plays.

"The Last Resort" is a comedy-drama about two pairs of people who meet at a Michigan lakeside resort while they are trying to regain control of their respective lives. Teddy (Miriam Yezbick) is a divorcee seeking to capture her self-worth, establish a career and find the courage to stand up to her arrogant, manipulative ex-husband (David Jeffrey). She wants a quiet week with her bubbly 13-year-old son Morgan (P.J. Powers), who is deeply troubled by his parents' tug-of-war



James Vezina and Miriam Yezbick star in "The Last Resort" presented by the Jewish Ensemble Theatre.

over him.

IN THE NEXT-DOOR bungalow are Neil (James Vezina) and Rita Tucker, trying to revitalize their

faltering marriage by getting away to the resort suggested by Rita's marriage counselor. A skeptical Neil is a reluctant participant. With a shared interest in baseball, Neil befriends Morgan, seeing him as the son he longs for. Add in Morgan's mom, season with a full moon over Lake Michigan and let the situation

simmer for a week in close proximity.

Under Neil's patient, gentle prodding, Teddy opens her heart and regains self-confidence. Yezbick is both vivacious and touchingly vulnerable. Vezina's Neil is sensitive and sympathetic. Dominated by his father at work and his wife at home,



Barbara Michals

he has settled into inertia. In helping Teddy he finds the inner resources to help himself as well.

As Morgan, Powers is thoroughly likeable, his usually cheerful facade a thin veneer over his conflicting emotions. The bond between mother and son is almost too strong, a truth that Morgan intuitively recognizes and tries to remedy.

Rita is a bubblehead whose main interest in life is shopping, but Carney makes her surprisingly engaging. Her whiny voice and constant belittling of her husband are partly redeemed by her taking the initiative in trying to patch the marriage and taking charge in a real emergency.

Dubin's characters are eminently believable, recognizable "types" who still retain individuality. In one of the funniest scenes, Neil, who longs to coach youngsters, gets coached by his wife on how to improve his love-making — and strikes out.

tempored by his desire to revive his relationship with Morgan. Irene Schewer is terribly funny as the resort's deuce, persistently perky social director.

Russ Smith's scenic design works fine — two simple, paneled sitting rooms that share an attractive patio. The whole Anna LeRoy Theatre has been redesigned, deepening the stage and providing better sightlines from all seats.

Mary Brown's direction is excellent, with flawless pacing and smooth, polished deliveries elicited from all performers.

Barbara Michals touches high school English in Southfield. A student for the last 15 years, she is an ex-employee of the playhouse who regularly caters up on all the New York productions.

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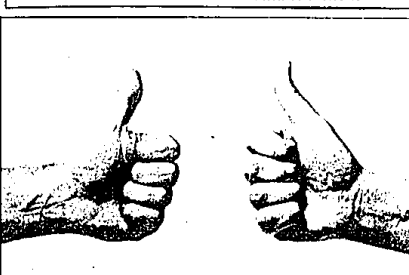
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