

COMMUNITY THEATRE

You'll enjoy Plymouth Theatre Guild's 'Squabbles'

Plymouth Theatre Guild presents *Squabbles*, a comedy by Marshall Karp, 12-13 and 14 p.m. Friday-Saturday, May 12-13, and 8 p.m. Sunday, May 14. Water Tower Theatre on the campus of Northville Psychiatric Hospital, 41001 W. Seven Mile Road, west of Haggerty. Tickets \$10, \$7 children ages 18 and under; call (248) 349-7110.

BY DAVID MACGREGOR
SPECIAL WRITER

"I was born to squabble," declares Abe Dreyfus in the latest offering from the Plymouth Theatre Guild, and squabble he does. In fact, this comedy by Marshall Karp is called, appropriately enough, *Squabbles*.

Abe, played with considerable vigor and gusto by Barry Levine, is a cantankerous elderly gentleman who has taken up residence with his daughter and her husband upon the passing of his wife. While we are encouraged to believe that Abe has a heart of gold, his exterior is formed of a much less precious material, and he is a character whose one-liners alternately provoke laughter

and sudden intakes of breath as he wallows in personal invective and political incorrectness for the sheer joy of annoying others. Either you like Abe or you hate him, or more likely you love him one minute, then hate him the next.

Abe's personality is clearly the driving force behind the play, and it is the job of his daughter Alice Sloan and her husband Jerry to rein him in as best they can. Alice is played with long-suffering grace by Nicole Ludwig, while Jerry, played by Robert Purcell, is relentlessly chipper and upbeat despite the beat (or worst) that Abe can throw at him. Just when they seem to have adapted themselves to Abe's motto ("to argue is to live!"), the walls start closing in on them when Alice announces that she is pregnant.

Immediately after this, Jerry's mother calls with the news that she just burned down her house while making chicken soup. When Mildred Sloan moves in, Abe is appalled, but at the same time perversely appreciative of the fact that he finally has someone around him who will give

him an argument.

Mildred, ably played by Dorothy Dunne, at first seems no match for the strutting attacks of Abe, but her retorts grow increasingly pointed until Abe is getting as good as he gives.

Indeed, the sparks that fly between Abe and Mildred effectively put their children in the role of playing parents to their own parents, and there are many occasions when Abe and Mildred sound more like squabbling siblings than senior citizens. How it will all turn out is helped along by the ticking clock of Alice's pregnancy, because it is apparent that once the baby arrives, the house will simply not hold all of them. In other words, someone has to go. After much agonizing and debate, the solution to this dilemma may not surprise you, but it is as elegant as it is effective.

On its opening night, *Squabbles* played to a highly appreciative audience who gladly went along for the ride, and with good reason. Director Bob Weibel and producer Mary Lynn Kuna have put together a very enjoyable



STAFF PHOTO BY PAUL HURCKMAN

Acting: Barry Levine (left) as Abe Dreyfus, and Dorothy Dunne as Mildred Sloan argue during a rehearsal of 'Squabbles.'

production and the detail and care that went into it is evident from the set design down to the costumes. The only problem one could point to is a sound system

which was, at times, not as cooperative as it could have been. Still, that is a relatively minor flaw in an otherwise fine production with a first-rate cast which

brings a considerable degree of craft and professionalism to the play. David MacGregor is a Livonia resident and playwright.

Clever set, great costumes, acting, singing in 'My Fair Lady'

The Players Guild of Dearborn presents the Lerner and Loewe musical, *My Fair Lady* 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, May 12-13; May 19-20, May 26-27, and 2:30 p.m. Sunday, May 14 and May 21 at the playhouse on Madison, near the southwest corner of Monroe and Outer Drive, in Dearborn. Tickets, \$14, senior citizen and student discounts available; call (313) 561-TKTS.

BY SUE SUCHTYA
SPECIAL WRITER

The Players Guild of Dearborn presents the toe-tapping, feel-good musical, *My Fair Lady*, the next three weekends in May. From the ragged street vendors to the chic aristocracy, director Ron Deilhi brought together a cast whose acting and singing is stellar and gave the show a lively, quick pace. The set is cleverly conceived and executed, and the costumes are breathtaking.

My Fair Lady is the story of an unconventional language professor who turns a poor flower girl into a lady by transforming her speech. As Professor Henry Higgins uncovers the princess inside Eliza Doolittle, she touches and changes his life as well.

Ron Otulakowski is the consummate Higgins - articulate and rude in a gentlemanly way, delivering deliciously funny lines with impeccable timing and perfect aplomb. He improves the role each time he plays the part. Otulakowski was well matched by Emily Tyszyk's Eliza Doolittle, whose flashing eyes, quick comebacks and resilient dignity bring class to the role. And oh, that girl can sing - a challenge made even more difficult by the demanding attention to precise accents required by her songs.

Dennis Decker, a newcomer to the stage, is a natural as Alfred P. Doolittle, a "common dustman" and Eliza's father. He conveys complacent pleasure in equal measure for both beer and his total lack of status in life. Jeff Ostrowski, as a bright-eyed and devoted Freddy Eynsford-Hill, was vocally stronger in the second act than the first. He suffered the indignity of redundant pratfalls when one would have been sufficient. However, he brought a likely affinity to the role, as Bill Rumley did to the role of Colonel Pickering.

The supporting cast, which includes Annette Ripper of Westland as Mrs. Eynsford-Hill and Mark Ripper as Prof. Zoltan Karpathy, and chorus strengthen the show and deliver some of its finest moments.

The Cockney quartet was a vocal and visual treat. The Ascot race scene was delightfully entertaining with every mincing step and head toss choreographed with amazing detail.

James Cape's incredible Ascot and Embassy Ball costumes were stars in their own right. His stunning black-and-white Ascot creations, capped by elegant hats, captured both the privilege and the wistful frivolity of the ruling class.

His ball gowns painted a bright palette of sparkling color, adding richness and elegance to a Cinderella scene. Diana Reynolds and her costume committee clothed the rest of the show with attention to detail and imagination, from

Eliza's simple but elegant nightgown to the careworn but colorful garments of the flower sellers.

Chorus members handled their many costume and character changes with speed and tal-

ent, removing facial grime and becoming elegant socialites in rapid order.

One of their finest numbers, *Get Me To The Church On Time*, showcased their talent and displayed choreographer Valerie

Mould's creativity and ability to add imagination to the dances on a relatively small stage.

David Reynolds's set design was cleverly versatile and overcame the handicap of limited space. Mary Beth Graver's richly ren-

dered backdrops added a soft pastel dreaminess to the garden scenes.

Sue Suchtya is a Dearborn resident and writes about theater for the Observer Newspapers.

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