

# My Fair Lady *more than loverly*

by Judy Reid

I may not have been singing along with the rest of the audience, but it doesn't mean I was enthralled with Neptune's production of *My Fair Lady*.

*My Fair Lady*  
Neptune Theatre  
Until Nov. 27th

The musical was done in English Doolittle style with the character of Mr. Doolittle acting as host. A few one liners, a couple of knowing looks and presto, the audience was his. Doolittle welcomed us to the production which Neptune was "proud to present at great expense". Doolittle even went so far as to compare it to the national debt. "And if you think that's out of control, wait 'til you see the second act," he joked.

It took a few minutes for me to warm up to the actors' English accents, but once Glynis Ranney, a Dalhousie Theatre grad who plays Eliza Doolittle, started singing, I immediately forgot I was in Halifax watching some Canadian actors put on a 1956 Broadway play set in early 20th century London. I was in a music hall being thoroughly entertained by multi-talented performers.

Ranney has an incredible wide ranging voice, and may I add, an equally elastic face. One of the funniest moments of the musical has Eliza reciting "The rain in Spain falls mainly in the plain," with her mouth stuffed full of marbles. Judging by the size of her cheeks, I'd swear she had a couple of golf balls stored in there as well.

But maybe I should back up a bit. For those who grew up without catching "My Fair Lady" on the late night tube at least once (hey, director Allan MacInnis didn't), the plot is fairly simple. Eliza is a feisty cockney woman who survives by selling flowers in Covent Gardens and Professor Higgins is the pig-headed linguist who wagers he can teach Eliza to speak English so fine, she could pass for a duchess at an embassy ball.

Robert Seale plays the infamously Professor Higgins so well I would have strangled him if he hadn't kept me laughing during his "Why Can't a Woman be More Like a Man,"

number. David McClelland plays Higgins' cohort in educating Eliza along with Carroll Godsmen who plays Higgins' housekeeper. Higgins' aristocratic mother performed by Faith Ward is as annoyed with her son's behaviour as the audience. Paul McQuillan is Freddy, the upper class young man who is infatuated with Eliza, and Eric Donkin is Eliza's father Mr. Doolittle and the show's MC who 'sells' his daughter to Higgins for five pounds.

One of the most spectacular things about any musical is the choreography, and often it is achieved by the mere number of performers involved. In this production, the numbers were quite small with only thirteen cast members in total. One outstanding scene (choreographically speaking that is, because as far as I'm concerned all the performances were outstanding) involved only seven actors as they sang, danced and twirled to "Get Me to the Church on Time."

I'm at a loss as to what to call the performers; actors, singers, dancers or musicians? In any case the band played on the right hand of stage and not only did they interact with the actors, most of them were the actors. Versatile is an understatement. How many people do you know can play a keyboard one minute, run on stage singing and dancing the next, and then run off and do a saxophone solo? Apparently McQuillan, who played Freddy can, and if you switched a trombone, piano, flute, mandolin, clarinet, bass and a violin for the sax, so could every other musician in "My Fair Lady".

As the audience applauded and the performers lined up on the stage, I heard comments such as "excellent" and "not very politically correct is it?"

Politically correct it ain't and a whole lotta fun it is. While we applauded I could see people looking around the crowded theatre to see who would be the first to start a standing ovation. I suppose we were a shy audience because we all remained in our seats, but if the opening night performance is any indication, "My Fair Lady" will get their share of standing ovations by November 27.



Krista Wells as a Cockney woman, Glynis Ranney as Eliza Doolittle, Robert McDougall as Jamie, Daniel Givern as Harry and Leigh Rivenbark as George in *My Fair Lady* at Neptune Theatre until November 27. Photo: George Georgakakos

## Welcome to Cape Breton

by Kevin Halfpenny

These were the heartfelt and patriotic words belted out by Cape Breton fiddling sensation Ashley MacIsaac as he graced the stage of Dalhousie's McInnes room Friday night.

*Concert Review*  
**Ashley MacIsaac**  
McInnes Room  
November 4th

For close to three hours the confines of the huge hall were magically transformed into an old-fashioned down-home Cape Breton ceilidh as MacIsaac's rousing blend of traditional Gaelic folk and contemporary rock echoed through the ears and spirits of an appreciative crowd filled with that distinctive, jovial Caper attitude (and a noticeably high consumption of Alexander Keith's finest).

Those in attendance were

treated to a festive evening of Island-flavored music and merriment. Sporting a goatee and kilt, MacIsaac stepped on stage to a mob of endearing fans, fiddle in hand, a little after 9:00 pm. After saying a few inspirational words, the crowd waited in eager anticipation for the musical onslaught to begin.

The blast of screams and cheers which followed shook the McInnes room to its very foundations. Actually my hearing still hasn't completely returned. This probably comes as no surprise to anyone who caught MacIsaac at Dalapalooza in early September. I swear when he came out that day the crowd of crazed teenagers rushed the stage like a wild pack of wolves going in for the kill. If you've ever seen *Lord of the Flies*, it was not unlike that.

MacIsaac pounded out one rollicking tune after another as strangers and friends alike danced arm-in-arm in high-spirited celebration.

Midway through his set however, MacIsaac mellowed things out a bit as he dedicated a slow, melodic ballad to his beloved grandmother.

It was touching to see a local talent, much less a world-renowned star like Ashley MacIsaac, take time out to pay respect to his family. There's something you don't see nearly enough these days.

But then it was back to the matter at hand as MacIsaac once again whipped the crowd into a frenzy. Not letting up once after that point, MacIsaac stomped relentlessly across the stage as beads of sweat dripped from his tired brow.

Finally, after hours of non-stop musical mayhem, MacIsaac took a final bow, thanking his fans for a great night of partying. All in all it was an unforgettable evening compliments of the man who, despite all his fame and success, has never lost touch with his roots. That's a true Cape Bretoner.

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## Local band alert



Serge Samson - bass  
Ruth Minnikin - vocals  
Dale Murray - guitar  
Mark Savoury - guitar

**This Week: Booming Airplanes**

Booming Airplanes are a cool, up and coming acoustic band from across the harbour (Dartmouth, that is). They have played a good number of gigs since their formation about a year ago. The band has also just released their first, self-titled cassette. The songs reveal influences such as the Skydiggers, Grapes of Wrath, REM and maybe even the Waltons.

Right now they are preparing for a spring '95 full length album, but you would be well advised to pick up their indie tape now, since it has been selling like hotcakes at Sam's.

