

'My Fair Lady' ensemble

By JEAN M. STEVENS
Staff Writer

With a marvelously talented

cast and some of the most beautiful songs from any musical that have endured

since its opening on Broadway in 1956; "My Fair Lady" is an absolute delight at Pax

Amicus Castle Theater in Budd Lake.

I had looked forward for

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rates raves from audience

months to the hit by Frederick Loewe and Alan Jay Lerner adapted from George Bernard Shaw's "Pygmalion." To say I was not disappointed is a gross understatement. "My Fair Lady," to borrow a phrase from one of the songs, is simply "lovely." The audience last weekend obviously shared my feelings with frequent applause and loud "Bravos." I admit I eavesdrop in the lobby and in the ladies room during intermission and everything I

heard was complimentary.

"It'll be a long time before I spend \$20 for a ticket to a Broadway show when I can see something this professional right here," one man remarked.

"Simply marvelous," said a woman in the lobby. "This is my first visit here, but I'll surely be back often."

A bus loaded with 50 members of an adult education group from Hunterdon County arrived just minutes before the show opened and were lavish with

praise.

"My Fair Lady" tells the story of a wager between phonetics Professor Henry Higgins, brilliantly played by Charles May of Allamuchy, and his friend Colonel Hugh Pickering, delightfully enacted by Paul Eagle of Flanders.

Professor Higgins claims that anyone properly trained in correct speech and deportment can be mistaken as a member of the aristocracy. To prove his contention, the professor takes a Cockney flower girl, Eliza, as the subject for his experiment.

Marielaine Mammom of Budd Lake, who was a hit as Fanny Brice in "Funny Girl," was absolutely perfect for the part with her exquisite voice and faultless stage presence.

Ken Stevens of Chester, who played the somber Cromwell in "A Man For All Seasons," admitted he loves the part of Eliza's hard-drinking, rambunctious father, and he turned in a lively and believable performance.

Other members of the gifted cast include Darlene Yannetta as Professor Higgins' maid, Mrs. Pearce; R.J. Steele, as Freddy Eynsford-Hill, who falls for Eliza; Lorraine Burke, as Freddy's mother; Barbara Stevens as the kind and gentle mother of Professor Higgins; and Mark Carovale as Zoltan Karpathy, a phony Hungarian nobleman who claims he can always spot imposters by their speech and

insists that Eliza is a Hungarian "of royal blood" when he meets her at an embassy ball.

Members of the spirited ensemble who play cockneys, servants, lords and ladies are Patrick Boyd, Ingrid Cory, Joan Goode, Joyce Gould, Joe Greenwicz, Andy Hiester, Norman Hughes, Arlene Labudzki, Gil LeDuc, Melissa Rivardo, Paula Shumsky and Jackie Truppo.

The cast is brilliantly directed by Stan Barber, who never missed a rehearsal for the musical even when he was confined to bed 20 hours a day for more than a week while he battled the flu.

Special credit is due Frank Conner for the beautiful sets he designed and the gorgeous costumes created by him and his wife, Doris. Kudos, too, to Gary Lewis of Lake Hopatcong, who directed a fine 16-piece orchestra with Anna Mae Malloy of Budd Lake turning in her usual proficient performance at the piano.

If you think I've been too lavish with my praise, don't just take my word. Go see "My Fair Lady" for yourself. It's a "whopper" in the vernacular of Alfred Doolittle. The musical will run Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. through April 26 with special 2 p.m. Sunday matinees on March 30 and April 20. For reservations, call 584-3900 between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. Mondays through Fridays and between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. on Saturdays.