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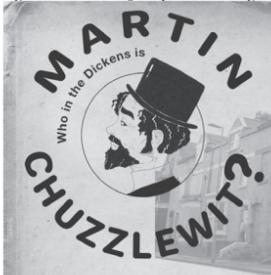
Hours: Mon. - Fri. 7am to 7pm
Sat. & Sun. 7am to 2pm



The Cast and Crew

So, Who in the Dickens is Martin Chuzzlewit?

by Kate Wolfe, photos by Brandy Bischoff



Thursday, April 26 through Saturday, April 28, West Michigan Homeschool Theater performed the play, *Who in the Dickens is Martin Chuzzlewit?* Nearly every seat was filled on opening night, the 26th, at the Beardsley Theater in downtown Muskegon for the play based on Charles Dickens' novel, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, completed in 1844. A charming adaptation of the story, a cast of comical characters, and lively acting gave the play a truly entertaining quality that is inherent in West Michigan Homeschool Theater's best performances.

The story follows the humor-laden endeavors of Mr. Pecksniff and his relatives, as they try to figure out how to weasel into the good graces of their wealthy cousin, old Mr. Martin Chuzzlewit, the eldest surviving member of the Chuzzlewit family. Meanwhile, young Martin Chuzzlewit, namesake grandson of old Martin, must strike out into the world for himself after being cast off by his grandfather. The intricacies of the story as Dickens portrayed them were well managed, being condensed from the form of a novel to fit the stage. Many serious, real-life concepts were presented as the events of the plot unfolded, but the comedy inherent in the characterization balanced out the play nicely. The message of the play came together for the audience as young Martin and several other characters learned the lessons of being unselfish and loving others more than themselves.

Several main characters, including both old and young Martin Chuzzlewit, and a crowd of supporting characters completed the cast of *Who in the Dickens is Martin Chuzzlewit?* The manipulative Mr. Pecksniff and his daughters, the jolly Mr. Taply, the trusting Tom Pinch, and the innocent Mary Graham, make up only part of the excellent cast of characters whose comic antics, songs, and dances made the audience laugh, cry, and cheer during the whole performance.



Mr. Pecksniff (Noah Knebl) and Old Martin Chuzzlewit (Ian Klaes) dismiss Tom Pinch (Dion Fessenden).

Dickens' characters were complemented by the lively acting of West Michigan Homeschool Theater's cast of actors, who put enthusiastic energy into every performance. Mr. Pecksniff, played by Noah Knebl, entered as the bumbling

main villain. Old Martin Chuzzlewit, obstinate but well-mannered, was played by Ian Klaes. *Who in the Dickens is Martin Chuzzlewit?* featured several original songs written by Mary Baldwin and Jera



Mrs. Gamp (Maddie Snuffer) and Betsy Prigg (Anna Shedenhelm) perform the song, "I Bore Up".

Leffring Saniga. Of the songs that were included, one song was performed by young Martin, played by Elijah Yeager, and Mr. Taply, played by Joshua Shedenhelm. Another song featured Mary Graham and Mercy Pecksniff, played by Morgan Flint and Abigail Jackson. A third song was performed by several comical and talented ladies, and the final song of the play was performed by the entire cast to cap the evening. The play's length of nearly three hours made for a great many lines to be learned, comical routines to be practiced, and props to be moved for the seventeen scenes of the



Mary Graham (Morgan Flint) and Young Martin Chuzzlewit (Elijah Yeager) are reunited.

four act play. The large amount of work done on the play gives credit to the director, Mary Baldwin, the cast, and the crew, who all rose to the occasion, and made this play one to remember. The musical finale was greeted by a standing ovation from the crowd on opening night.

Who in the Dickens is Martin Chuzzlewit? was a wonderful performance by our West Michigan Homeschool Theater. Through the charming acting, the fun portrayal of the Dickens classic, and the hard work of all involved, *Martin Chuzzlewit* has been identified at last on the stage of the Beardsley Theater. The fans of West Michigan Homeschool Theater will certainly be waiting for the group's next exciting performance.

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