

ON THE SCENE

ST. PAUL

Literary heavyweights bring Fitzgeralds, Hemingway to life

George Plimpton, Norman Mailer, Norris Church Mailer premiere work

BY MARY ANN GROSSMANN
Pioneer Press

Zelda Fitzgerald once wrote to F. Scott Fitzgerald: "We will be married and live happily ever after." But they did not, and the disintegration of their relationship is obvious in their letters, which are poetic and beautiful even when they are hurting one another.

Literary heavyweights George Plimpton, Norman Mailer and his wife, Norris Church Mailer, wowed an audience of more than 700 Saturday in the Midwest premiere of "Zelda, Scott and Ernest," a touching dramatic dialogue adapted from the letters of Ernest Hemingway and the Fitzgeralds.

Presented by Central Presbyterian Church's Cedar Exchange arts program, the production was in conjunction with the F. Scott Fitzgerald Society's international meeting in St. Paul.

Society President Jackson Bryer, who introduced the actors, described this dialogue as "a stage success" that the Mailers and Plimpton will perform this fall in Moscow, London, Vienna and Berlin.

Mailer, who uses canes because of hip problems, wore a safari jack-

et in his role as Hemingway. Plimpton played Fitzgerald, wearing a dark suit and red tie, and Church Mailer used a soft southern accent in her role as Zelda.

Fitzgerald and Hemingway's friendship, which started strong in Paris in the mid-1920s, suffered in later years.

As Hemingway, Mailer spoke in a no-nonsense tone, describing Fitzgerald's face as "between handsome and pretty" when they first met as aspiring young writers.

The play shows how Fitzgerald and Hemingway critiqued one another's writing (and personal lives) early in their careers.

Hemingway commented that if Fitzgerald could write a book "as good as 'The Great Gatsby,'" he could write a better one." Fitzgerald felt that parts of "The Sun Also Rises" were "careless and ineffectual" and suggested cutting it, advice that Hemingway took.

There is no correspondence between Hemingway and Zelda, but the production makes clear that the men mentioned her often in their letters.

Hemingway thought Zelda was crazy from the first time he met her, and he felt that she was "jealous of Scott's work." Zelda called

Hemingway "a pain in the neck, phony as a rubber check."

The most affecting parts of the show are the ones in which Zelda and Scott hurl accusations at one another. She says he drinks too much, stays out all night and ignores her; he calls her a "third-rate writer and third-rate ballet dancer" and orders her to stop writing fiction.

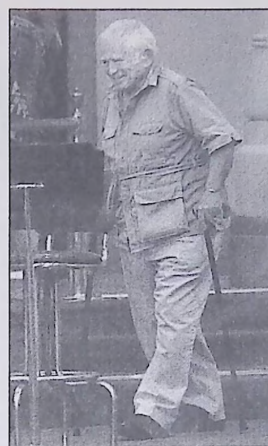
And in a sad 1938 letter to his daughter, Fitzgerald says that "I knew (Zelda) was spoiled and meant no good to me" but he grew to love her. Now, he says of his mentally ill wife, "she is broken forever."

Fitzgerald quarreled with Hemingway, too. "I loved Ernest but it wore out like a love affair," Fitzgerald wrote. But when "For Whom the Bell Tolls" was published, Fitzgerald called it "a fine novel" and told Hemingway, "I envy you like hell."

Fitzgerald died in Hollywood in 1940.

Mailer moved the audience with a final quote from Hemingway, in which Papa compared his old friend Scott to a butterfly who "could only remember when flight had been effortless."

"Zelda, Scott and Ernest" was written by Plimpton and Terry



JEAN PIERI, PIONEER PRESS

Norman Mailer, dressed in a safari jacket to portray Ernest Hemingway, walks onstage before the dramatic dialogue "Zelda, Scott and Ernest" on Saturday at Central Presbyterian Church in St. Paul. The work is adapted from the letters of Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Zelda Fitzgerald.

Quinn. Plimpton is co-founder of The Paris Review and author of more than 15 books, and Quinn is a novelist and composer.

The Fitzgerald Society conference ends today with a noon ice cream social in Rice Park, with local authors reading in Fitzgerald's honor. It is free and open to the public.

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THINGS TO DO

MONDAY

Fall candle lantern: Create a glass lantern with wire and beads. Presented by the Adult Enrichment Program of the Inver Grove Heights/South St. Paul Community Enrichment Departments. 6-8:30 p.m.; South St. Paul High School, 700 Second St. N., Room A-244, St. Paul; \$29; Registration (651) 306-3633.

Understanding memory loss and dementia: Sponsored by Dakota Area Resources and Transportation for Seniors and the Hastings Area Senior Outreach Committee. 6:30-8:30 p.m.; Pleasant Hill Library, 1490 S. Frontage Road, Hastings; \$10; www.darts1.org or (651) 455-1560.

Spanish read-to-me: Marta Spencer will read stories in Spanish for children. 7-8 p.m.; Rockford Road Community Library, 6401 42nd Ave. N., Crystal; free; (952) 847-8593.

Kick boxing classes: Presented by the Inver Grove Heights/South St. Paul Community Education Adult Enrichment Program. The classes are on Monday or Wednesday for 12 weeks. 6-7 p.m.; Inver Hills Community College Activity Building, Main Gym, 2500 80th St. E., Inver Grove Heights; \$60; (651) 306-3633.

Increase efficiency with smart business solutions: One of a series of seminars designed to educate accounting and financial professionals about the latest trends in technology and financial management. 8:30-11:30 a.m.; Normandale Lake Office Park, 8400 Normandale Lake Blvd., Bloomington; free. Registration www.technologyseries.com or (952) 852-7023.

How Perkinsville became Maple Plain: Professional storyteller Bob Gasch tells stories about the history of Maple Plain. 6:30 p.m.; Maple Plain Community Library, 5184 Main St. E., Maple Plain, Minn.; free; www.hclib.org or (952) 847-5700.

TUESDAY

Prostate cancer forum: A panel of physicians from Mercy and Unity hospitals will lead the forum. 7-8:30 p.m.; Mercy Hospital, 4050 Coon Rapids Blvd., Coon Rapids; free; (651) 697-3333.

The life and times of the modern-day musher: Ward Wallin, owner of Silver Creek Sled Dogs, and his dog Raven will present the program. 7 p.m.; Farmington Library community room, 508 Third St., Farmington; free; (651) 463-7990.

Legal and financial issues for seniors: Last day to register for the Oct. 1 program presented by Dakota Area Resources and Transportation for Seniors. 1-3 p.m. Ebenezer Ridges Care Center, 13810 Community Drive, Burnsville; \$10; www.darts1.org or (651) 455-1560.

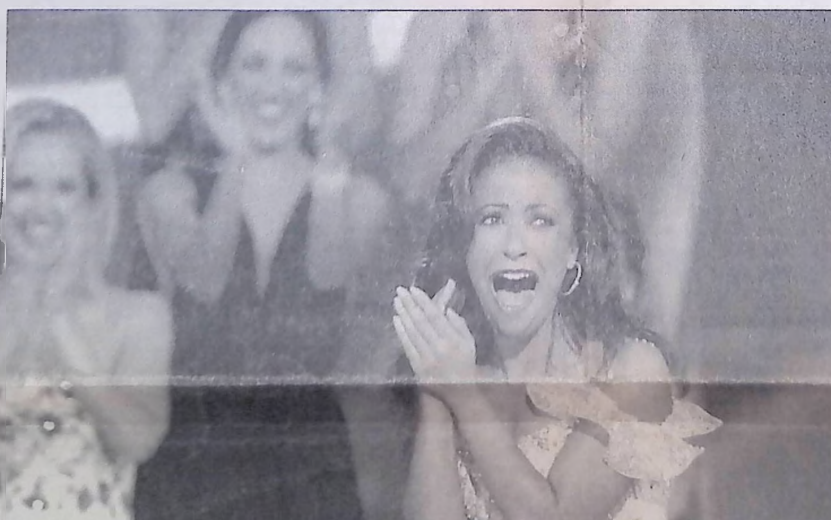
WEDNESDAY

The Great Sukkah Fair: Farmer's market, pony rides, farm animals, petting zoo, games, art projects and more presented by the Jewish Community Center and Merkos Chabad Lubavitch. 4-7 p.m.; St. Paul JCC, 1375 St. Paul Ave., St. Paul; free; (651) 698-0751.

Somali healing traditions: Dr. Siyad Abdulahi speaks about Somali culture, healing traditions, the importance of the Quran and poetry in Islamic healing. 7 p.m.; Rice Street Branch Library, 1011 Rice St., St. Paul; free; www.thefriends.org or (651) 558-2223.

The Return of Gabriel: John Armistead, winner of the 200 Milkweed Prize for Children's Literature, will read from and discuss his new book. 7 p.m.; Golden Valley Community Library, 830 Winnetka Ave. N., Golden Valley; free; www.hclib.org or (763) 540-8290.

Singles "sound off": The Jewish Singles



PEOPLE

Bakker's new ministry

Televangelist Jim Bakker, who was convicted of wire fraud and served five years in prison, said he plans to start another TV ministry, this time in Branson, Mo. The 62-year-old former Assemblies of God minister said he already had commitments from stations in several cities to broadcast his hourlong show, which will originate from a restaurant beginning a few weeks from now. His wife, Lori Graham Bakker, will be his co-host. Bakker, who first hit the airwaves with his PTL Ministries in the 1970s, resigned from PTL in 1987 after admitting to an affair with a ministry secretary, Jessica Hahn. Soon after, he and other ministry officials were implicated in a fraud scheme linked to the sale of memberships in his Heritage USA theme park.