

A Rude Awakening

This morning while I was in bed peacefully sleeping in the quiet confines of my nearly abandoned home (the parents are nearly finished with their 2 week trip to California), I was alarmingly awakened by the shrill tone of the telephone ringing. I looked at the alarm and saw 6:30 AM. They will leave a message. Five minutes later, the phone rings again... UGH. Ten minutes pass; I get up to answer the phone, but they already had hung up. Check the Caller ID: Kaiser's Supermarket. Was my alarm set right... I did not think I had to be in until 10. So I call back (since all three times it was the same caller). Can you come in at 8 instead of 10? Our bookkeeper had a daughter who was going into labor so they were a bit short handed. I suppose, I said rather groggily. At least my first two hours there were rather uneventful... only the two hour delay of our truck that put a damper on the whole day. Not only were we minus one person, our stock was two hours behind schedule (which seems to happen occasionally... especially when you have a new driver who has never heard of our small metropolis and even have gotten it mixed up with a town with the same name one state to the west... which is not a far piece away... think I have been there once). So... other than that, the first part of my day was fine (I did get in two hours more than I had anticipated, good thing would have been better if I had not gone to bed so late last night).

Sci-Fi... Not Just The Final

Frontier

Another of the AFI list of top 10 categories was Science Fiction (which some believe will be tomorrow's "science fact.") I promise I will not bore and go into depth on each of the genre's... just those I know a bit about from viewing.

Their List:

- *Back to the Future*
- *Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956)*
- *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*
- *Alien*
- *Blade Runner*
- *The Day the Earth Stood Still*
- *A Clockwork Orange*
- *E.T. The Extraterrestrial*
- *Star Wars*
- *2001: A Space Odyssey*

I will agree with the five films that I know well to a point. I'm not sure if I would include *Back to the Future*. Sure it is a fun time-travel movie that I have watched multiple times, but will people remember it 30 years from now. *T2* is the best of the Terminator series and a wonder of film-making even 17 years later. *Blade Runner* is perhaps best summed up as a cult favorite (one of Harrison Ford's semi-forgotten films... not by me, but...). *Aliens* and *The Empire Strikes Back* were far superior movies than their predecessors. *E.T.* almost could have been included in the fantasy category but should be included on either. And their top choice? I could not make it through the first 45 minutes of silence and a representation of the beginning of man set to the magnificent strains of Richard Strauss' *Also Sprach Zarathustra*.

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Beastly Beauty In The Snow

☒ Recently, the American Film Institute (AFI) presented their list of 10 Top Films in 10 Categories. It seems that every year, the group presents their list of 100 Films in various specials (one was 100 Years 100 Songs). This year they decided to be diverse and focus on animation, sci-fi, gangster, fantasy, western, sports, mystery, romantic comedy, courtroom drama,

The top ten Animated as presented by the AFI:

Finding Nemo

Cinderella (1950)

Shrek

Beauty and the Beast (1991)

Toy Story

Fantasia

The Lion King

Bambi

Pinocchio

Snow White and the Seven Dwarves

I suppose there is always going to be something to be said for the achievement Walt Disney made in 1937 by creating the first full-length animated feature. However, I do not think that it should be considered the crowning achievement in animation. To

me, *Beauty and the Beast* is an even greater accomplishment. It not only continued the resurrection of the animated feature begun by *The Little Mermaid*, but almost made me forget that I was watching an animated movie. The scene in which Belle and the Beast dance to the title song begins with what would normally be termed a crane shot (if it were not an animated feature). *Beauty* also holds the distinction of being the first animated movie to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Picture. It was also the first fully animated Disney film that I really thought would make a great musical on the stage (coincidence?). Every time I watch the film, I can imagine each of the characters being brought to life on stage; and yes, I have even imagined myself as my favorite character in the show. I am terrible audience member.

[Beauty and the Beast \(Disney Special Platinum Edition\)](#) 

Coming Soon To A Community Theatre Near You?

A question mark you see...hmmm. They are coming soon provided the selections we made in our play-reading group meets with the approval of the theatre board. The small group assembled to discuss our selections decided upon the following for the 2009 season:

[*Over the Tavern*](#)

[*Honk*](#)

Lion in Winter

Little Shop of Horrors

Miracle on 34th Street

I am greatly familiar with three of the five shows. I had heard of *Over the Tavern* and recently read the play. Someone I used to work with has a nephew who played the young mentally challenged boy in an area production a few years ago. I am not really familiar with *Honk* but know that it is a musical based upon the tale of "The Ugly Duckling."

I adore *Little Shop...* and definitely will audition for that (as well as most of the others, right?). I need to begin re-looking into that Howard Ashman and Alan Menken show. But it will be a fun show to do for the Halloween season. I am told that a frequent reader of this blog might consider venturing this way to audition (but I'm not sure if that would be possible... [D?](#)).

Wrapping up our suggested season is the play *Miracle on 34th Street*. I do not think there is a better show that could bring in huge audiences and put them in the holiday spirit than this timeless classic.

We also began tossing ideas out for 2010 (The Year We Make Contact... according to the sequel to 2001). A few musicals were introduced: [State Fair](#) and [Can-Can](#). *State Fair* is perhaps the least known of Rodgers and Hammerstein's musicals. *Can-Can* is a Cole Porter show (I KNEW IT as soon as I looked it up... there you go, [C.](#))

So, our job is done, it is now in the hands of the theatre board to approve or do better. (and I forgot to mention a suggested special engagement of *Jesus Christ Superstar* that I could post about forever).

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Half-Time

Now that our run of *Little Women* is half over, I would like to express my gratitude to EVERYONE involved in the production. I must tell you that I have worked with a cast with a lot of teenagers before and was not at all happy with the result. This production has a cast involving a very professional cast involving performers young and old. The large ensemble included in the production has taken a lot upon themselves. They are responsible for set changes, ushering, concession stand manning, and costume changes. Whenever anything needs to be done, there is at least one hand or voice raised willing to take on the task. Most of the time, these are high school students willing to pitch in and help. It is so great to see these young adults stepping up with maturity.

The entire cast is extremely talented. There are many seasoned veterans on stage as well as many newcomers to our small community theatre. I have been honored to have worked with a lot of the cast on previous occasions so I was familiar with their work. However, those who have never before stepped on stage are every bit as talented and professional as those of us who have been on stage once, twice, or a hundred times before. I believe every member of the cast has a moment on stage when they shine, especially during "The Weekly Volcano Press" ensemble piece. Hopefully, some of the talented newcomers will continue to come out and audition for more shows.

Our pit accompaniment consists of three talented musicians on keyboard. The lead keyboardist is a young lady who was called in about two weeks prior to the start of the run. I was

totally amazed that someone could step in and take on such a demanding task. The other two have MAJOR roles (Marmee and Prof. Bhear) on stage and constantly need to remember when they are on, off, and how they need to exit the stage. Do they return to the pit, or do they go backstage?

Our lighting tech also was called in with just a few weeks notice. I am the first to admit that I know very little about the technical aspect of theatre. But he just came in, began fiddling with the lights, asked what was needed and with some finagling managed to add a whole new aspect to the theatrical experience. All the softs, brights, and every tone in between to add atmosphere and depth to the stage. And his assistant is no slouch either. She does the spot light and so much more. Noticing the most minute details and making sure to tell someone when it needs attention.

Finally, the glue that holds all productions together (or tries to): the director. He has been totally professional since day one. Pushing us when needed (sometimes literally) and knowing when to relax. Being involved in the theatre for 25 years, I am sure he knows when to do both.

So, here is hoping that next weekend's performances bring as much fun, excitement, and sense of accomplishment as the first one did. Although, this afternoon's matinee proved to be full of technical "gremlins." □ THANKS EVERYONE!!!!

Another Opening Another Show

This evening being opening night for *Little Women*, you never know what kind of crowd you will get: the size of the audience as well as their reactions can be varied. Let us just say that we could not have a better crowd than we had tonight. However,

it did not sound like it when we first got to the theatre. During our pre-show warmup and pep rally, we were told we had a total of 30 audience members. wow-wee. By the time we were finished with our warmup, the number had increased to over 50. At 7:50, people were still coming in off the street. We had already filled every seat in the house (just over 80) and the rest of the chairs were at our neighboring theatre. If we had had the opportunity to bring additional chairs, it would have been even more difficult for performers to make some of their entrances (including yours truly) because they come through the side aisles.

The size of the audience was phenomenal but the response from the people during the show was spectacular. Loud laughter, applause, everything one hopes for from a great audience was present. Following the performance, the patrons came down to the basement to congratulate the wonderful cast and to share in the celebration of our director's 25 years in theatre.

With any luck, the remaining 5 performances will have audiences like tonight or maybe even better. Of course, you have to watch out for those Sunday matinee groups... full of blue-haired ladies just coming from lunch after church who are ready for a nap. Sometimes you can hear a pin drop in the audience during a Sunday afternoon performance. We will have to wait and see. But what a great way to start the run. ☐

So, if you are planning on attending one of the remaining performances, I urge you to call now and make reservations while you can.



From Stage To Screen

Last night's final dress rehearsal contained a small, intimate audience including two of my best friends who really enjoyed the performance (even if I am killed by a girl... not my fault that is how it is written). But I was really pleased with the entire evening. The length of the performance actually was about 10-15 minutes shorter than what we had been anticipating most of the week. I even got a crash course in spotlight use to substitute for the irreplaceable light woman who was still ill.

Today, while sitting at my brother's house waiting for a package that was to be delivered, I found the 1994 movie version of *Little Women* on television. Like most works that have more than one form, there were some differences between the stage and movie versions. I believe that both versions contain at heart the same theme: Do not be afraid to be true to yourself. Do not allow society to impact that which you truly feel you are meant to do.

I also was able to dig deeper into some of the characters while watching the movie. I often wondered why Grandfather Lawrence (John Neville) was at first portrayed as a crotchety old man and then have a change of heart by his interactions with Beth. Like Captain Von Trapp in the *Sound of Music*, Mr. Lawrence lost someone close to him which left an emptiness. Hearing Beth (Claire Danes) play the piano filled that void, lifted his spirits, and melted his heart... AWWWWW.

Mr. Lawrence's grandson Laurie ([Christian Bale](#)) is also given more depth in the movie. After his marriage proposal to Jo ([Winona Ryder](#)) is rejected, Laurie runs off to Europe and becomes a womanizing drunk until he encounters Amy ([Kirsten Dunst](#)) painting at school. At first, I believe that Laurie was in love with the idea of becoming a true member of the March family. However, I do believe that through the courtship he

did fall in love with Amy.

Nowhere is the central core of both pieces more substantial than in Jo's venture from Concord to New York where she meets Professor Bhear ([Gabriel Byrne](#)). Although they are both headstrong and stubborn, the professor encourages Jo to write that which is pleasing to her and not to the publishers who keep rejecting her stories. This path may not lead to a great financial career but will in time please her on a personal level.

Another important part of both versions are the wild, imaginative plays the girls perform. In a scene from the movie, Meg attends a party given in honor of Annie Moffett's coming of age. Annie decides to turn Meg into something she is not and Meg foolishly agrees to "play" along by wearing a corset showing off her figure, and experimenting with drinking (Trini Alvarado). Laurie catches her and she immediately hides in a corner, full of shame.

So while both versions are basically true to each other, there are moments in each which enhance both.



A Tragedy of Operatic Proportions

Yes, tonight was our final rehearsal for *Little Women* before we have an audience and any audience expects to be entertained and tonight while still good also had a few pitfalls. Huge gaps where a character forgot her entrances, fumbling backstage to move sets and props into place. Just little

things that can and frequently do cause an audience to become distracted and lose interest. But overall, these were only minor things (admittedly the person who forgot her entrances was not so minor but I am sure that her professionalism will return and will be fine).

Also missing tonight was our assistant lighting person. When I returned from practice, I had a message informing me that Carol was really sick so I immediately called and talked to her daughter. I was really concerned because Carol is always so dependable (as well as a fun member of our game night gang who played my mother in our recent Murder Mystery night) and I was hoping most of the evening that nothing was seriously wrong. Thankfully, she was feeling better by the time I had called. This was on her birthday of all things to boot. So Happy Birthday Carol and I hope you feel much better ☺ . And see you tomorrow night. I will also have to attend some of the Summer City Band concerts on Wednesday nights through the summer as Megan plays the trumpet in the band. She should have told me sooner. I started playing trumpet in 5th grade and by the time I was in high school moved to the tuba (many tales about Susie and I ☺) with some gentle nudging from a certain high school band director.

I almost forgot to mention that a certain well-admired writer from a newspaper was in attendance. Not to review as some feared, just to flash his camera and leave. Hopefully, he does not bring his book Friday night and have it out before the first scene is over.

Astonishing

Tonight is our final run through of *Little Women* before we have an actual audience. Last night, the director wanted us to have a night to relax and get some much needed sleep... so we pretty well had a walk-through of the first act and the first scene of the second. The whole production is phenomenal from the period costumes and set to the lighting design (thank you again [justj](#)), to the excellent cast (every performer on stage brings life to their character). We even have two members of the cast who double as musicians in our small orchestra pit. That takes an extreme amount of talent especially when the main musician jumped on board about two weeks ago and is just going to be a freshman in college in the fall.

Following our rough rehearsal of a week ago, I must say that everyone involved has kicked it up at least 10 notches and everything has fallen into place. I have been asked if I was going to be in another local group's production of *The Music Man* later this summer. In deciding between the two, I decided to audition for *Little Women* and see what happened. I am much more familiar with *The Music Man* but said this is something I had never heard before... is that a good thing... going with something new and little known instead of going with the traditional? Do casting directors judge by how many big name shows you have been in or look for the unusual? But, I can honestly say that *Little Women* has been an absolute thrill to be part of. And anyone who lives in or near our little rural Northwest Ohio vicinity should check out the website for the [Williams County Community Theatre](#) and come and see this spectacular show. It is definitely one NOT TO BE MISSED.

Birthday Wishes To The Best

Since he so kindly listed several of us in a post proclaiming us as THE BEST, I thought it only fitting to return the favor. I'm sure I have said most of this in previous entries, but it bears repeating. He is just the best director, co-actor, playwright (well the only one I have known personally... but he is a darn fine one), source of encouragement, and most of all, friend that anyone could ever ask for. It is really astonishing that I have known him for only about two years but it seems like forever (and I mean that in the best possible sense). I met him at auditions for our theatre's production of *Grease* and I remember the first thing he said to me. "I know you from somewhere." I was working at Wal-Mart at the time. "That's it."

During the course of the show's run, he made a point of asking if I was going to audition for the next show, *The Odd Couple*. I really was not sure because I had not done a non-musical show in years. It really did not take long to decide after I spoke with my other source of encouragement that very night about it. She told me that if I did not she would hunt me down and kick my posterior (not that word but I try to run a family-friendly blog here). Anyway, I was cast in the role of Vinnie to my great satisfaction and I was told by the actor who played Felix that I stole some of his thunder. And my involvement with the theatre only increased.

Chris has just been so great to work with through his excellent direction and professionalism. I have been privileged to be cast in two shows that he has written himself: *The Clinic* and *Idol Night at the Karaoke Place* (the second one... which I know some people get tired of hearing me go on about as well as allowing our Liswathistani friend contribute to this blog for time to time). As well as his direction and roles in *School House Rock* which was memorable for several things not the least for it being my first lead

part ever. I know it sounds silly but every time I have been in a show and Chris and his wife are not involved, it is like there is something missing (something I guess I need to get away from).

Much more important is his role as a great husband, father, and friend. His family has always come first and he is not afraid to share time together with his family and his friends on our weekly game nights. After all, he is a big kid at heart himself. So... Happy Birthday, my friend and may you have many more.

.. whatever age you may be.