

Coming Soon to the Great White Way

Seems like spring is the beginning of the new Broadway season. Guess they have to get in to hit that Tony deadline. In any case, I see a gaggle of revivals, hollywood turned stage productions (for better or worse), and one-man shows among the already established shows.

It appears that there is a new revolving door musical aiming to hit a certain demographic (in this case screaming adolescent females). Daniel Radcliffe ended his employ at the World Wide Wicket company back in early January. Darren Criss (from Glee) Succeeded him for a two week run. And now, Nick Jonas is in the Business until July. Hope that this does not become the next Chicago with every teenage heartthrob stepping into the role of J. Pierpont Finch. A good show should stand on its own. On a side bar, Radcliffe and Criss have more in common than H2\$. Darren's production company (began at all places at the dreaded school up north) created the internet sensation "A Very Potter Musical."

Opening soon for a limited run is the newest entry in Disney's production juggernaut. *Newsies*, a little movie musical from the 80s that starred a young little-known actor named Christian Bale. I do not think it was a major hit but has legions of cult fans ☐

Ghost: The Musical. The less said the better. Sounds like a mess and I don't mean because of the famous clay scene.

In the new revival scene there is a play and a favorite musical about to hit NYC. Phillip Seymour Hoffman is going to fill Willy Loman's shoes along with Andrew Garfield (the *Amazing Spider-Man* not the musical the new reboot of the cinematic saga) in *Death of a Salesman*.

Now for the show that I have had my eye on ever since the news arrived. Lord Lloyd Webber's masterpiece is coming back! ~~Starlight Express that WONDERFUL engine that could will be skating back into the heart of theatre goers in March.~~ *Jesus Christ Superstar* enjoyed a new production in Canada last summer and is making its way to the Neil Simon Theatre in March. I just hope that this production is better than the 90s offering that was dreadful and they had the audacity to film it for all to see (not that the 1973 version was the work of genius but King Herod was much more interesting).

Finally... for a very limited run, the performing wunderkind known as William Shatner will be gracing the stage for the first time in 50 years in a one-man production all his own. I can only imagine...

No Five Mile Jaunts Today

Call it my resolution for the year if you want but it seems that I have been walking a bit lately. Last week being my vacation, I walked a lot. Monday on the zoo excursion I'm sure was good for my daily walk (like to get in a mile or two a day). This Monday was my longest one yet. The weather was still nice so I grabbed my ipod and headed north along 49 and turned down a country road, walked to the next road going west and eventually walked a good country block heading up River Street back into town (that was a good 4 miles). I then continued walking through town in a roundabout way to eventually end up at the post office. Then back home. I must have gone at least 5 miles.

Tuesday was another story entirely. This time, I headed south on 49 and got about a mile out of town when I decided that it

was just crazy cold. I then turned around and stopped by my oldest brother's house to go in and warm up a bit before going home.

The long walks really are helped with my ipod mix. I have it on shuffle so that when an album that I really like comes on, I will switch it to play straight through. Before you know it, an hour and a half has passed. Particularly good when I downloaded one of my favorites that I had on cassette (there it is again) back in the day. You know one that you play continuously, rewind, fast forward, and then get it caught and eaten and there you go, no more tape. Oh, the recording: the 20th Anniverary Recording of the London version of Jesus Christ Superstar. Paul Nicholas as Jesus, Claire Moore as Mary Magdalene, and Keith Burns as Judas Iscariot. My favorite piece has to be "Could We Start Again, Please?" Upon hearing the song, it quickly became a favorite... maybe that's why the cassette got eaten. Of course, another highlight is "Herod's Song." The entire recording is good for at least an hour and a half hike.

Hopefully, the temperature outside improves from the 19 degrees of today quickly so I can take another long walk instead of the walk to and from work.

Fridays Are Great

Not only because it was Good Friday, either. I did join the choir yesterday for services at noon. It was interesting because our priest skipped all over the place, leading many to believe that we were going to skip over the reading of Christ's Passion all together. Actually, one of my favorite moments of mass every year. Resembling a play, with readers

assuming various roles in the passion, the priest serving as Jesus and the congregation serving as the chorus of people sending Christ to his crucifixion. However, Father Steve eventually got back on track and continued onward. Someday, I would love to suggest that the choir (or soloist... never heard a choir version) sing "I Only Want to Say" from JCS. The meaning of the song is found within the Bible if not the exact words. Every year, I find myself reflecting on the sentiment. Christ praying to His Father in the garden questioning whether or not He will actually be able to do "His will" moments before he is handed over.

I just learned that an EHS alum is part of the ensemble in a semi-professional production of Superstar at the [Croswell Opera House](#) in Adrian, Michigan that ends its run tonight. If only Cindy's mother would have let me know sooner... Semi-professional since amateur rights are not available at this time ☐

Godspell Or Not

My favorite Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is by far his most controversial. [Jesus Christ Superstar](#) may not be the most accurate telling of Christ's triumphant entrance into Jerusalem up to the point of his crucifixion, but the music found in this show is some of the most powerful, moving, and beautiful ever to be put on stage. Correct me if I am wrong, but I believe that the controversy originated because it indeed tells the story of Jesus as a man seen largely through the eyes of the confused, almost sympathetic Judas.

The most powerful part of the show is Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane praying to His Father. Christ asks God why he must

be the one to suffer and die on the cross and indeed what his death will mean in the big picture. Will he be more noticed than he ever was before. Would the things he said and did matter any more. By the end of the triumphant piece, he has accepted the role he must play whether or not he understands what the ultimate consequence for those he leaves behind will be. He will drink the cup of poison and allow himself to be broken and nailed to the tree... but he wants it to be done quickly or he will change his mind. All too human.

One of my favorite parts of the show is King Herod and his show stopping song. A totally flamboyant character who makes a list of demands for Jesus to perform in order to prove that he indeed is the Christ. Walk across my swimming pool, change my water into wine, etc. By the end of the vaudevillian act, Herod has become annoyed with Jesus and his unwillingness to perform the simple tasks. He condemns Jesus as just another false Messiah and not worthy to be prosecuted by him and sends him back to Pilate to be judged. One of the only comedic moments in the entire production. I cannot see it done in anyway that it would not be memorable.

"I Don't Know How To Love Him" is probably the most famous song in the musical and is sung by Mary Magdalene. After she soothes an upset Jesus to sleep, Mary reflects on her feelings of physical love for the man. She has never known another like him and as a prostitute has known many but has never loved. She does not know how to and indeed if she should act on those feelings. Plus, if he were to say he loved her in return she would not know what to do. She is a frightened young woman.

There are so many layers to this masterpiece (and I hope that it will be the show Lord Webber is most remembered for) that it would take hours to explain and debate its significance. Controversial or not it is hard not to imagine what Jesus would be thinking or feeling if he were an ordinary 33 year old man placed in such an extraordinary position. And this comes from someone who has never seen a staged production but

pictures in his minds eye while he listens to the music without the visual. It must be magnificent (as long as it is not the [1973 film adaptation](#) that I found to be horrible).

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Six Little Engines That Tried

Tonight was the episode of "American Idol" that I have been waiting to see since season two. Not because it featured music from the Andrew Lloyd Webber songbook but that a good question was posed to a certain British judge whom everyone admires greatly: "Given the rather negative comments you pose to performers who would be better suited for the Broadway stage how does one approach these songs?" Mr Cowell responded: "Make them memorable yet contemporary." A rather cryptic response if ever there was one.

Six contestants remain. Those who were familiar with the songs showed it and those who were less familiar showed it (perhaps even more so).

Sysha Mercado started the evening with "One Rock & Roll Too Many" from [Starlight Express](#). Not being extremely familiar with the show, I cannot say too much about it. However, the bluesy rendition was quite nice.

The next contestant, Jason Castro, did not fare as well. Even Lord Andrew commented that he never thought he would see the

day when "Memory" would be sung by a young man in dreadlocks. The composer even provided a bit of background into the character from [Cats](#) who performs the song ("a rather old glamour puss"). Jason looked like the proverbial deer in the headlights on stage.

The halftime performer, Brooke White, also had difficulty. The song "You Must Love Me" was composed by Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice for the [movie version](#) of [Evita](#). It is sung by Eva Peron (played by Madonna) on her deathbed. Unfortunately, Brooke lost her lyric in the first line, stopped, apologized, and started over. I'm not sure if this would be allowed in an actual audition but to do so on a television show which is seen by (reportedly) millions of people each week takes some degree of chutzpah.

The "contestant to beat" this year, 17-year-old David Archuleta, chose to take a diva song of nearly operatic proportions and turn it into a boy band pop ballad. Lloyd Webber wrote the role of Christine in [Phantom of the Opera](#) specifically for his wife at the time, Sarah Brightman. For a young man to change such a song with the composer sitting in the audience watching and listening takes a great deal of courage. However, good ol' Simon did not find the performance especially memorable.

The Irish female rocker, Carly Smithson, decided to change her song from "All I Ask of You" to the title track of [Jesus Christ Superstar](#). A wise choice on her part.

However, the final performer did not choose wisely. Male rocker David Cook attempted to sing "Music of the Night." The rendition was as unimpressive as the movie version of [Phantom of the Opera](#). I was hoping he would chose a song better suited to his rock sensibilities, but he decided to go a different route and it just did not work.

I guess I found half of the performances enjoyable. But as

Lord Andrew told most of the contestants: you must know not only what you are singing but also what you are singing about. Find the meaning behind the words.