

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas...

There is one problem with being involved in the theater. When you plan a holiday show, the rehearsals start well before the actual holiday season. And since our Christmas show starts at the beginning of December, the rehearsal is also earlier. I don't like to do Christmas until after Thanksgiving.

Anyway, it will my job to bring Santa Clause to life in "Miracle on 34th Street". Ok, so I'm not playing Kris Kringle/Santa Clause, but I am playing 2 different Santa Clauses. And some other part I cannot remember right now.

For those of you who do know the show, the first Santa I play is the drunk Santa that loses his job because he was trying to stay warm on the float. One little drinks never hurt, does it?

To make the show even better for me, I get to act with one of my daughters again. This is always a thrill for me. Should be fun.

It's A Wonderful Miracle

I am in a quandary. Next week, opening week of *You Have the Right to Remain Dead*, is audition dates for WCCT's production of *Miracle on 34th Street*, a show I dearly love. However, I do not see much in the way of a possibility to try out when there is rehearsal each of the three nights.

However, the next production of the Village Players is another

holiday classic, *It's a Wonderful Life*. I'm not entirely sure when auditions for this show will be; since Travis (director for IAWL) and [Mare](#) and are both in *Little Shop of Horrors* at the same time as my show, I do not see them being held until after that. Maybe when our time-strapped tangenteer has time to read this post, she might be able to provide a bit of insight or I may be able to ask at our next gathering.

But I think either show would be fun to be a part of.

Another Miracle

Tonight while watching the first snow of the season continue to fall, I checked the tv listings and discovered two movies that piqued my interest: *Santa Claus The Movie* and the 1973 made-for-television version of *Miracle on 34th Street*. Since I have seen Santa Claus (the rather disappointing movie made by Alexander Salkind, producer of the Christopher Reeve Superman films), I decided to check out one of at least 2 remakes of the 1947 classic. It is a virtual who's who of 1970s television stars. [Sabastian Cabot](#) (Mr. French from Family Affair), Tom Bosley (Mr. C from Happy Days), [David Hartman](#) (whom I remember as the co-host of Good Morning America back in the day... can't say much for his acting ability), Jim Backus (Thurston Howell III and Mr. Magoo, himself), [Roddy McDowell](#), and David Doyle (Bosley from the Charlie's Angels tv series) were just a few of the actors that made the whole thing seem like a bad Love Boat/Fantasy Island episode. I think the best thing about watching remakes is the fun in which one can have discussing the merits of the different versions. I must correct myself; there are actually a total of 4 remakes. Three television versions (1955, 1959, and 1973) as well as the 1994 theatrical version.

One tidbit I learned from imdb.com, Mr. Cabot had to shave the trademark beard from his role on Family Affair and wear an “official” Kris Kringle beard. Another tidbit... upon the release of the [1994 version](#), 20th Century Fox offered a complete refund for anyone who did not enjoy the film. Over 1500 tickets were refunded. Not sure how many were legitimate refunds or if they just had a bunch of Scrooges. One thing is clear... one should not mess with an original.

Now if I could just locate a copy of that FINE classically bad classic [Santa Claus Conquers the Martians](#). I’ve seen bits of this what I am sure is a totally misunderstood gem but have never seen it in its entirety.

Suspension Of Disbelief

Continuing with AFI’s list, I will now comment on the fantasy world. This genre is by far the one in which most people have to leave their logic and knowledge of the ordinary world at the doorstep and embrace their inner child. This was perhaps my favorite segment (as they did not include the 10 best musicals). But here goes:

- [Big](#) (I believe that this Tom Hanks film re-started the whole kid-transforming-into-an-adult-overnight craze)
- *The Thief of Baghdad* (silent movie that I cannot comment on)
- [Groundhog Day](#) (? 0000KKKKKK... Why?)
- [Harvey](#) (classic Jimmy Stewart film... near and dear to one of my frequent readers)
- [Field of Dreams](#) (they built it and they did come again a bit of a ?)
- *Miracle on 34th Street* (the original in glorious black

and white which I have commented on before)

- [King Kong](#) (1933 big scary monkey climbs Empire State Building and go boom)
- [It's a Wonderful Life](#) (another Jimmy Stewart favorite at Christmas time... once in your life did you not want to know the world would be like if you were never born?)
- [The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring](#) (one of the most faithful book to screen adaptations ever conceived)
- *The Wizard of Oz*

In my humble opinion, the classic Oz deserves to be at the top. I dare say that this movie has lived on for over seventy years and I do not know of anyone who has never seen it. If there is they must live under a rock. Speaking of rocks, there is at least one film that should have been in there somewhere. [The Neverending Story](#) is a fun fantasy (featuring Rock Biter) for children of all ages full of wonder and far away worlds. Also, where is [The Princess Bride](#)? The inclusion of *Groundhog Day* just made me scratch my head. How does one get on to vote on this A.F.I. list anyhow?

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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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Persuasive Speaking – How NOT to Make an Argument!

Anyone who knows me well knows that sometimes I can lack confidence. I suppose years of adolescent torment can do that to someone. But one thing I was confident in was my ability to make a good persuasive argument.

NOT ANYMORE.

After recent events as a member of our local theatre's "Play Reading Committee" I am wondering if when I talk I simply make no sense... If what is a compelling argument (point) to me is just plain stupid to everyone else.

You see, our theatre has a play reading committee where people involved with the theatre meet to discuss what plays and musicals to do for the following season. This year, to start, we were given the assignment of bringing a complete season (OR TWO – with dates & location) to the meeting and your reason

for selecting the shows you named.

As far as I could tell, I was one of the only ones who completed the assignment in it's entirety. Some had just a few shows they would reccommend while others had 5-shows for a full season and no particular order.

I brought in two complete seasons... Shows, dates, and REASONS as to why I picked those shows and those dates. I made sure to keep in mind the needs of our struggling theatre and the mandates which had been given to us from the Trustees of the theatre. These mandates were to do a show that involved children, pick one show where everyone who auditioned could be cast, and to pick shows which the audience would have an awareness of already.

The shows I named specifically were:

Bryan in Feb – *A Few Good Men* (or) *Diary of Anne Frank*

May in Montpelier – *Phantom* or *Clue the Musical*

August in Montpelier – *The Goodbye Girl* or *Lost in Yonkers*

October in Bryan – *Little Shop of Horrors* (Cast ALL)

Nov/Dec in Montpelier – *Miracle on 34th Street* (Cast ALL
KIDS)

My logic was to create a season around a theme of "The Movies". As many of the general, non-theatre lover, public might not know some core plays – almost everyone has heard of these movies.

I also placed a Christmas show (with kids in the cast) in our December slot, a show with a "Halloween" theme in our October slot (which could be one where we cast everybody), and a serious acting play (drama) at the begining of the season.

I argued that as a theatre we need to do more to entice the public. Giving them something they already know is a key factor. This is why so many community theatres in large markets focus on primarily musicals. While a theatre lover may have heard of *Scapin* – almost everybody has heard of *West*

Side Story.

Anyway, since we don't want to do 3 – 5 musicals a year I thought "movies" would be a good way to go...

GUESS NOT.

The latest meeting of the play reading committee has left me with no doubt. I DO NOT KNOW WHAT I AM TALKING ABOUT.

I have been with the theatre several years now and, not to pat my own back, but the productions I have been heavily involved in have been extremely successful from both a financial and cast-retention standpoint. However, it seems I make such a poor argument and such little sense that... Well, as the season begins to form I can see that NONE of my suggestions will be there.

It's not that I love those shows or anything. Anyone who knows me knows I would rather do *Assassins* and *Shear Madness*... Or even *Noises Off*. But the point is, what I saw as a persuasive argument (to get known shows in the season) seems to have been more of a pointless and non-compelling one.

It seems that my (obviously misguided) banter has become so apparently flawed that I am just getting ignored now. For example...

This last meeting we were trying to get any show that already had a director and solidify it into the season. I reminded the group that I was willing to direct *Little Shop of Horrors*.

Another member of the committee (a dear friend of mine!) suggested another musical, *Honk*. She suggested that she might be able to find a director for that one.

Well, the leader of our committee (who I absolutely adore – no sarcasm – love the guy!) says "I move we commit to *Honk* and put it in the season since we have a musical that someone will probably want to direct".

I reminded the committee that we have two other musicals who people have COMMITTED to direct. *Little Shop* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. I asked that maybe we commit to one of those.

“No, I think it’s too early to commit to one of those. Let’s see what happens with some other things first.”

WHAT!?! The same person who JUST WANTED to put HONK (a musical of which he had never seen / heard) into the season because it MIGHT have a director said NO to putting either of the shows I talked about in the season for the reason of??

That is when I realized – I have completely devalidated (is that a word) myself. Apparently I have made so many bad mistakes and so many poor arguments that now when I speak it is just considered nonsense.

Oh well. At least I know now not to think too highly of my persuasive speaking skills.

Christmas in April?

After walking downstairs this morning, I ALMOST looked at the calendar to make sure I knew what day it was. On the television, the [1994 remake](#) of the classic *Miracle on 34th Street* was playing. Whichever channel was playing this must have been pretty desperate, especially at the end of April when most people’s thoughts are not focused on anything remotely related to Christmas. Plus, why choose such a horrible remake to play?

The beloved [1947 movie](#) starred [John Payne](#), [Maureen O’Hara](#), a young [Natalie Wood](#), and Edmund Gwenn who received the Best Supporting Actor Oscar for his role as Kris Kringle. It also

featured William Frawley who is best known for his role as Fred Mertz on "[I Love Lucy](#)."

The overall plot of both films is relatively the same. A department store Santa who claims to be the real thing, is put on trial to prove his sanity. He seeks to not only convince the court but also a young girl who has been trained by her mother to dismiss all notions of myths, fantasy, and imagination.

Too much was changed from the original to the most recent remake. Characters were dropped including a young man who works with and idolizes Kris. In the original, Kris sings a charming song to a young Dutch girl in her native tongue. Macy's department store was wise enough to not allow the use of its name in the remake; instead, the name was changed to Kohl's (or if you prefer, Coal's which 20th Century Fox should have been given in their collective stockings).

But, the casting of [Mara Wilson](#) as Susan sent shivers down my spine. Something about the youngster's acting just makes me cringe. This film and [Mrs. Doubtfire](#) are the only times I remember seeing her on screen.

There have been a few other television remakes of the immortal classic. However, as in most Hollywood remakes, the original is far better. Next holiday season, treat the entire family to this fun movie (even if you have to explain to the children why there is no color).