

You Cain't Say No to OKLAHOMA! by Jamiahsh

Yes, my first byline appeared in today's local newspaper. VERY exciting and fun how it came about. Last Thursday, I received an email asking if I would like to go and review the local production of *OKLAHOMA!*. The extremely talented regular reviewer of theatrical productions was unavailable for press night. The fact that he is also the president of the board for the non-profit theatre group also might have played a role. So, I quickly replied and was really excited about the opportunity.

Just prior to the beginning of my voice lesson, I hear my cell phone ring (and no it is no longer what I was informed was the theme to "Sex and the City..." never seen either the tv show... or the movie). I quickly got the details... time was the most important thing, the rest I pretty much figured out on my own.

A small town community theatre needs positive feedback from the media. These are not paid professionals performing here. As I have said before, the show is not one of my favorites for many reasons... chief among them is the length. However, I am pleased to say that [Fountain City Festival's](#) performance was top notch. It was very easy to mention all of the principal actors and a few of the veterans who have been involved in the eleven shows the group has produced (two of which I have been in).

The production team decided to remain totally faithful to Rodgers and Hammerstein's original. So faithful that only 8 measures of the score were dropped. Everything gelled nicely; the acting, singing, orchestra, set, costuming, and choreography were all superb. Where most groups may drop such moments as the Dream Ballet for the benefit of time or the lack of decent dancers, the sequence was included and it was

extraordinary. In fact, all of the big dance numbers were high energy and very engaging. All of the performers on stage (from Curly all the way to the cameo performers) remarkably brought their roles to life. The director also was involved on stage... very fun. He surely had a lot of help from his production team. I have also worked with the vocal director and pit conductor in the past.

While there was a lot of good to put in the review, it was hard to put into a coherent article. Who wants to read a review containing the same adjectives over and over. I had to put in a bit of the history... which was easy for the show which kicked off the modern musical... as well as enough of the plot to engage anyone who might not know the show. Plus be kind to everyone involved. Finally... shortly after 1AM Friday morning (about the same amount of time it took for the entire show), I forwarded a copy. It only took a three editions of the paper to see the light of day. It could have stood a bit of editing to reflect the show dates. I just hope no one tries to attend a performance tonight.

So... anyone in the area who wants to see a great performance of the most classic of modern musicals... check out the remaining shows this weekend. Just forget how dated the material is. I do think there is an audience for these light-hearted shows. And as the banner on the website says: Professional Quality Theatre in Northwest Ohio. And another piece to add to my resume! Right up there with a little television performance.

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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Hungry As The Wolf Felt When He Met Red-Riding Hood

In 1949, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II brought to the Broadway stage what would be their third musical blockbuster, [South Pacific](#). It tells the tale of Ensign Nellie Forbush, a “Cockeyed Optimist”-ic Naval nurse from Little Rock, stationed on a remote Pacific island, who falls in love with a worldly French planter. This type of interracial pairing was extremely controversial for a show in the 1940s. Even more so was the introduction of Emile de Becque's two Polynesian children. After learning of the children, Nellie vows to “Wash

that Man Right Out of Her Hair.”

A secondary plot revolves around the romance between Lt. Joseph Cable and a mute Polynesian native. The plots are brought together when de Becque and Cable are called upon to go on a dangerous mission which leads to tragedy.

The theme of racial prejudice is explored throughout the show and no more so than in the song “You’ve Got to be Carefully Taught.” Because of its biting commentary on prejudice, Rodgers and Hammerstein were encouraged to take the song out of the show to which they both responded that there would be no show without it.

South Pacific opened at the Majestic Theatre on Broadway April 7, 1949 (40 years ago, today) and had a run of 1,925 performances. It was the recipient of 9 Tony Awards (including all 4 of the major acting trophies). It also received the prestigious 1950 Pulitzer Prize for Drama (one of only 7 musicals to have done so). Most of the songs have become standards: “Some Enchanted Evening,” “Younger than Springtime,” “Bali Hai,” and “There is Nothing like a Dame” (a rousing chorus number led by the great character Luthor Billis and his chorus of Seabees). The [movie](#) was released in theatres in 1958 as well as a [televised version](#) in 2001 starring an out-of-place Glenn Close who is much too old to play a young, naive Naval nurse. Ironically, it is the only major Rodgers and Hammerstein show to have never been revived on Broadway until it recently opened at the [Vivian Beaumont Theatre](#).

ADDENDUM: Any errors in mathematics are solely the responsibility of the blogger. He takes full responsibility for his ignorance and hopes that his brilliance does not become the topic for a post on another site. Unless it is by his own doing.