

Look What They've Started...

If you're a fan of Wicked, stop reading because the following post might offend you, by no means am I pulling any punches. I had kind of a stressful day that I can't post about, and then I read this article, so that was the icing on the cake. Think I'll take out my frustrations on pop culture – things that don't really matter in real life.

I just read an offensive (to me) article detailing the no fewer than SIX Wizard of Oz spinoffs currently being developed in Hollywood. Luckily for the world and movie fans abound, most of them won't see the light of day, but unfortunately at least one or even a few will make it through production and be released into mainstream society, poisoning the legacy of Baum's characters and the 1939 MGM cinematic masterpiece we true fans hold dear. Before you think I'm overreacting, read the synopses I included below. If you're still not offended, do a google image search to dredge up the action figures from the Twisted Oz series, but make sure your kids aren't in the room first. What is this world coming to?

I bring Wicked into this because I blame the franchise – once someone decided to write a book imagining their own version of Baum's characters, the door was blown wide open. Sure, there have been uncountable Wizard of Oz spinoffs. The Muppets had one, the Veggie Tales had one, and countless sitcoms from the last 7 decades had their shots at putting their main characters in versions of Munchkinland. But not until Wicked took off in popularity have people really started abusing the integrity of Baum's original characters and, more importantly to me, massacring the sweet and innocent 1939 MGM movie – my favorite movie for many reasons, the main one being how advanced in many ways it truly was for its day. Sure, 1985's debacle Return to Oz was no picnic, but did it really do any significant damage? Not really, it was never really liked nor taken seriously. I like to make this comparison: take

another movie classic, say, *Gone With The Wind*. Now take an “author” (really just some who is literate enough to be able to put words together to make a story) and imagine them creating a “backstory” for the Civil War characters Rhett Butler and Scarlett O’Hara. Let’s make Rhett, oh, let’s say he was an astronaut before he met Scarlett and let’s make her an ER doctor – that’s why she has trouble attaching to people; it’s because she loses them in the ER. Doesn’t make much sense, does it? Probably because *Gone With the Wind* is what it is – an epic story set during the 1800’s when those professions did not exist as we know them today. Do you see my point? *Wicked* has the witches going to school and other ridiculous scenarios – I’m not going to falsely claim to be an expert as I’ve never read the book nor seen the show. Perhaps if I saw the show, I would like it – everyone seems to rave about it, and the costumes are supposed to be amazing. Maybe so, but they should have left my favorite movie alone! They could have started from scratch, wrote their own stories with their own characters, and I would have been perfectly happy to check out *Wicked* the show. But they had to steal Baum’s ideas and MGM’s visions just to put a brand-name on a product to sell, and this my friends, is called “selling out”.

And as a result, we might be faced with the following junk polluting our theaters in the future (taken from [this article](#) from moviefone):

• *‘Surrender Dorothy’*

Who’s behind it? Drew Barrymore’s production company, Flower Films

What’s it about? According to Pajiba, the latest version of the script, by Zach Helm (‘Stranger Than Fiction’) is an ‘Enchanted’-like story that sees the Wicked Witch of the West still alive and threatening to take over our world as well as Oz. It’s up to Dorothy’s great-great-granddaughter to figure out how to use the ruby slippers to defeat her.

Status: Barrymore’s been developing this project since way

back in 1999, when she was still a fresh-faced ingenue who'd just played Cinderella in 'Ever After.' Today, Pajiba says, the 35-year-old is unlikely to star in it, but she would direct it as her follow-up to her directing debut in last year's 'Whip It.' Pajiba imagines she might cast 'Whip It' star Ellen Page, who would indeed make a fine Dorothy. Still, with 11 years having gone by, it doesn't seem like Barrymore's exactly in a hurry to get this off the ground.

- 'Oz the Great and Powerful'

Who's behind it? Disney and 'Alice in Wonderland' producer Joe Roth

What's it about? The script by Mitchell Kapner ('The Whole Nine Yards') tells the backstory of how the wizard went from earthbound carnival mountebank to becoming the fearsome and mysterious sorcerer of the Emerald City.

Status: Given the success of the Roth-produced 'Alice,' Disney is likely to fast-track this movie, which was formerly titled 'Brick' (as in "yellow"?), according to the Los Angeles Times. Now that the next James Bond movie has been postponed and his schedule freed up, Sam Mendes has been approached to direct and Robert Downey Jr. to star, reports FirstShowing. Neither has yet said yes.

- 'Oz'

Who's behind it? Temple Hill, the production company behind the 'Twilight' movies

What's it about? According to the Los Angeles Times, the script by Darren Lemke ('Shrek Forever After') is a faithful retelling of L. Frank Baum's first novel in the saga, 'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz.' Imagine the Judy Garland movie, but with more action and no music.

Status: Coming from the New Line division of Warner Bros., this has the potential to launch a vast franchise based on the 22 'Oz' books. Which is why it's the most likely of the three competing 'Oz' projects at Warners (see below) to see the light of day.

- *'The Twisted Land of Oz'*

Who's behind it? Comic book gorehound and toymaker Todd McFarlane (*'Spawn'*)

What's it about? Based on McFarlane's own decidedly R-rated *'Twisted Land of Oz'* line of figurines, his Oz includes a Scarecrow who's torn apart by ravenous birds, a Tin Man who's a junkpile of Edward Scissorhands-like limbs, a flesh-eating Lion who's not at all cowardly, a Wizard who's a gas-mask-wearing mad scientist, a carnivorous creature dubbed Toto after it eats Dorothy's dog, and a nubile Dorothy who's bound and molested by depraved Munchkins.

Status: There was confusion in the trade press (including some strewn by McFarlane himself) between this project and Josh Olson's, (see below) since both were pitched to production company Thunder Road, with an eye toward distribution by Warner Bros. Last we heard from McFarlane (via MTV), back in September, he was grumbling over Thunder Road's apparent decision to go with Olsen's more family-friendly script instead of his own. McFarlane also claimed at one point that Michael Bay was interested in directing, but we imagine he's a little too busy making movies based on another line of toys.

- *'Oz: Return to the Emerald City'*

Who's behind it? Screenwriter Josh Olson (*'A History of Violence'*)

What's it about? In a plot that sounds a lot like *'Surrender Dorothy,'* a descendant of Dorothy Gale (this time, her granddaughter) living in contemporary America (she's a young associate at a top Chicago law firm) is called upon to defeat a new witch making trouble in Oz. Aiding the young woman are the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion that she's been hearing her grandmother talk about for years.

Status: Olsen has denied ever being affiliated with the McFarlane *'Oz,'* telling MTV in January that the script he delivered to Thunder Road and Warner Bros. was based on his own original pitch. Dakota Fanning was rumored at one time to

be up for the younger Dorothy, but that rumor proved false (makes sense, since Olsen's granddaughter character is an adult). Of course, both Olsen's and McFarlane's projects have to compete with Temple Hill's for Warners' favor.

- *'Wicked'*

Who's behind it? Universal

What's it about? It's a film version of the Broadway smash about what Glinda the Good Witch and the Wicked Witch of the West were like when they were schoolmates, well before Dorothy showed up. (Think 'Mean Girls' with green face paint.) Winnie Holzman, who wrote the book for the musical, has also written the screenplay.

Status: Universal is a co-producer of the stage show and has owned the film rights since the play opened seven years ago. Despite an IMDB listing that cites a 2012 release date, there's been no sign of progress beyond script stage. No one has been cast, though let's hope this gets rolling before original stars (and recurring 'Glee' guest players) Kristin Chenoweth and Idina Menzel are too old to reprise their stage roles.

Now It Can Be Told

This past weekend, one of my dearest friends graduated from the area community college. Weather permitting, I WAS going to attend the ceremony. If weather did not permit, she was only guaranteed 4 tickets so I would not be so bold. However, the weather held (cold and windy as it was but well worth it). After the commencement, a group met for a party. I'm so glad that I was not the only person to bring a gift. We discussed whether I should bring the gift to the restaurant or

wait until later. Who am I to listen? I brought it along.

Purchasing the gift was stealth at its best! Easter Sunday before [Wicked](#), my family and I arrived at the theatre before Megan and [Carol](#) so I had time to peruse the souvenir stand. I picked up a few things and then saw something that totally caught my eye: a musical snow globe featuring Glinda and Elphaba that plays one of the musical highlights of the show: "For Good." WHAT AN EXCELLENT GIFT IDEA! I bought it and got it to the van before my friends arrived. Megan asked me why I kept texting them to see how far away they were... now she knows! I'm pretty good with secret keeping but even I was getting antsy because I thought it was such a great idea.

A few days later, Megan posted something to the effect of "Hmm... what to get myself for graduation." on her facebook page. To which I replied, "What can those of us who are not you get you for graduation?" HAHA!

Isn't it great to surprise your friends sometimes!? Congratulations Megan! I hope the next step of your journey is filled with joy and fulfillment!

A Totally Different Look At A Classic

My Easter Sunday began this morning about 5 hours after Saturday night ended. I COULD NOT sleep for the life of me.

I was sooooo excited that we were going to redeem the Christmas presents Jeff and I got the parents and I got for Megan and Carol. The anticipation was staggering (I swear I'm worse than a kid at Christmas... imagine if I were the one going to be in the company of a professional cast... no sleep at all).

Around 1AM, I finally fell asleep. Around 6, I woke up and flipped the channels and came across the Pope's mass from St. Peter's in Rome. By 7, I was wide awake. Breakfast was at 8 with the family, so I went down, showered, and put on some leisurely clothes so I did not ruin my good clothes before mass.

We went to 10:30 service instead of sitting through the 2.5 hour Easter Vigil mass the night before. I did get to sing in the choir and was told by another member how jealous she was and that she was going to see the show before its run in Toledo was finished.

What to say about *WICKED*? I have to say that the hype and praise is definitely well deserved. I have to admit that I was a bit apprehensive at first by the audacity of changing a classic movie I have had fond memories of for my entire life. I was tempted to reread the novel by Gregory Maguire but am glad that I decided not to.

Starting with the novel *Wicked*, Maguire has turned several fairy tale legends upside down and told familiar stories most people know from the eyes of the antagonist. He has also penned two sequel novels set in the Land of Oz.

Wicked begins seconds after the liquidation (eh) of Elphaba (aka... The Wicked Witch of the West). From there, Galinda/Glinda takes the story back through the life of her "friend" the green one. We go from birth to school at Dear Old Shiz University to the life changing appearance of a flying farm house which falls from the sky. Traditional concepts such as acceptance, popularity, and the effect of rumors are put on great display.

Along the way, we meet several new characters created in the novel:

- Doctor Dillamond (the last remaining animal teacher at the university)

- Boq (a Munchkin who has eyes for Galinda... incidentally, he was played by a Northwest Ohio native)
- Fiyero (a student who is the love interest of Galinda and Dances Through Life)
- Madame Morrible (a teacher who if you change the first letter of her name describes her character perfectly. Rue McClanahan played the role on Broadway)
- Nessarose (aka The Wicked Witch of the East... wheelchair bound... cared for by Elphaba)

I just wish that I could go on forever about how great this show is! It really did challenge everything and provided insight into one of the most sinister characters ever created.

The performances, sets, and music were all spectacular. Elphaba herself herself definitely was the star... WHAT A VOICE and she was an understudy!

I must admit that I splurged just a bit on the souvenirs but I did get a nice jacket to do my walking in and a colorful program!

Then we went to NICKS for dinner! Always a filling delight... but I did bring some cherry cheesecake HOME! It was already in a take home container which makes sense because none of us ate everything. But once again the ribeye/shrimp combo was worth every penny of the \$14.00.

And the YANKS are... winning 2-1 in the top of the 4th in Boston!

Here is a shot of the Wizard, himself who has a very interesting role in the show:



A Happy Easter Weekend

My weekend kicked off to a great start! On Good Friday after singing at services, I was dragged (☹) by a crowd of no less than 5 kids to see *How to Train Your Dragon* in 2D. I didn't find the idea of paying the extra money for the added thrill of three dimensions too appealing... THIS TIME! I am pleased to announce that both the movie and my band of 5-14 year olds were excellent! The story and the humor in the animated feature are enough to entice both the young and adult viewer. After taking someone's "shortcut" to their mother's house, I returned home. Note to self... never listen to a 10 year-old's directions no matter how many times she has been to the destination or how "easy" this way is... but it was fun.

Tomorrow after mass, the family (yes... Megan & Carol, too) are heading out to see *WiCKED!* My oldest brother has already seen the show and the fact that he wants to again and suggested that we get the parents tickets for Christmas tells me something. At least it doesn't look like we will be driving home in a snowstorm at 11 PM as was the case 2 years ago when Megan, [Carol](#), and I went to the Stranahan to see *The Lion King*. Not forgetting Nick's after the show!!!

Finally, tomorrow night will see the Yanks begin their bid for championship number 28! We won't elaborate on their preseason record because high or low it doesn't really mean a great deal. But why does the season opener have to be **THERE!** **UGH!**

In the midst of all these fun, exciting events, let's not overlook the reason for the season. The ultimate sacrifice of the One who died to save us all from our sins. As Father stated in his homily yesterday, how fickle is man. Jesus entered Jerusalem amidst cheers and celebration. Five days later, he was crucified upon the order of the same revelers. Then to complete the prophesy, he rose from the tomb saving all of us.

May you all have a Blessed and Happy Easter weekend!

How To Get To Carnegie Hall

While at work today, the boss informed me of a spectacular trip her brother and nephew (a seventh grade theatre buff) were recently part of. Her brother is the principal of a high school whose choir just took a trip to the Big Apple. Not only did the group perform at Carnegie Hall (that in itself would be a dream come true) but they saw no less than **3 Broadway Musicals!** (*Phantom of the Opera*, *The Lion King*, and the current smash revival of *West Side Story*). When I was in the BGSU Men's Chorus, the biennial Spring Break tour to New York City afforded us the chance to see one... and MAYBE two shows while living out of the Lakefront Tour buses. I must admit to being a wee bit jealous. Not only do I find it hard to imagine that they were able to see that many shows in 1-2 days, but how did they perform and still have time to sleep? Not that many of them got much sleep. I know from experience. I asked if I could go back to his school next year. I could age myself about 20 years less, right?! That must have been a lot of cheese and sausage sold to take a trip of that magnitude!

The boss remarked that it only took me an hour to come up with *West Side* because she could not and it was my mission to come up with the title of a popular, CURRENT show. So I started rattling off the current musicals on the boards: *Wicked*, *Shrek*, *Mary Poppins*, *Rock of Ages*, *Billy Elliot*, *Hairspray*, *Mamma Mia!*> When none of these worked, I thought... she said CURRENT, but...

Jamiah: West Side Story?!

Di: THAT'S IT!

J: But you said current. West Side Story is indeed on revival but it is hardly current.

Di: Go back to work!

That's gratitude! Next time, I'll let her sweat it out a little more. **HA!**

Family Time

This morning, Mom and Dad and I went to pay our respects at the funeral home. None of us could go last night so we went for the gathering before they processed to the church. We KNEW that the rather small church would not hold many people and with 10 children, 38 grandchildren, and who knows how many great grandchildren, there would not be many places available for other than very immediate family members. I was hoping to catch Britt there but she must have been running late.

After, we returned to watch Elizabeth play basketball. A riot watching the young girls begin to develop. Autumn was great although she missed a shot and her mother yelled "**USE THE BACKBOARD!**" Yep, definitely her father's daughter ☺. I thing Elizabeth did more sliding across the slippery floor. More than once, she got the ball and OOPS... whistle blows and traveling called.

I was also asked if I would like to get tickets to *Wicked* coming in April. Of course... most musicals are worth at least a try.

And tonight, I am taking my sister and two young ladies to see the [Santa Claus](#) play. They have been asking, and asking about it and finally it is almost here. I must say that I am pretty excited myself.

A Not-So-Perfect End To A Perfect Day

WHEW! I have to admit that we totally overdid it on Halloween, but in a good way – at one point in the evening, my 5-year-old said “how many parties are we going to?!?” We threw a Halloween-themed game night on Friday, complete with things like spider venom, truth serum, and rat vomit for drinks and snacks. Most guests wore costumes, and there was a wide collection of characters, from witches to fishes to Star Wars characters and a vampire – we even had a gay construction worker! Fun was had, but as usual, we stayed up too late and failed to rest up for our huge day ahead – HALLOWEEN!

We began Saturday by making the rats costumes and taking them to the pet store for a costume contest. No word yet how they placed in the contest, but Bobby Jack dressed as a zebra while Oreo was a Pink Lady from Grease – the kids had a blast! We took the rats home and headed out to the ice rink for the annual community Halloween party – one of my favorite things about living here. We get there right when it opens and head straight for the hayride, where we are driven around the huge park. Occasionally, creepy creatures run from hideouts among the trees and chase the wagon! Not as many people were in line this year, so we got to ride the hayride twice, and then the kids tried some of the games, the maze, and the bouncy castles, while Mom and Dad chatted with long-lost friends and

sipped slushies and hot chocolate (everything at this party is free and donated by local businesses and organizations!) We got our hot dogs to go this year, and they told us to take a huge pumpkin home – we still have to carve our pumpkins, so we were more than happy to get one more!

We were able to rest for about an hour, then it was time for trick-or-treating. We moved into our neighborhood 3 years ago, and we learned the first year that it's not good for trick-or-treating. We love where we live, but come Halloween, it seems like many neighbors aren't home, so we'd have to make the kids walk blocks for only a few houses with porch lights on. So we drive across town and trick-or-treat in a friendly neighborhood where some friends live, and we started with their house. Our little guy dressed as Barney, Disney was Dora the Explorer, Sammie was a princess, and Taylor was a bloody prom girl.



Oh wait, you need to see Barney with his tail ☐



I absolutely love Halloween – of course I think my own kids were the cutest, but I love seeing all the kids dressed up. An honorable mention goes to the 4 teenage boys who were dressed as the Teletubbies – my 3-year-old daughter was asking where the Teletubbies were all night, but we never did catch up to them...



We took in quite a haul with the 4 kids, and after the second house, our 15½-month-old had the hang of taking candy from strangers. Ok, that sounds really bad, but Halloween is a unique event, he was allowed, and it was really cute! We got in the car after we were done trick-or-treating and headed over to a party at our friends' church. The kids had a blast there as always, and we made out like bandits in the raffle! Years of not winning anything we entered apparently caught up with us on Halloween night because a few bucks in raffle tickets won us 2 value meals at Burger King and 3 really cool brand new toys for the kids!

But here is where things start to change from perfect to overwhelming – at the church we ran into my Kindergartner's friend Hannah from preschool. This child has many medical issues, and she's been in and out of the hospital her entire life for brain surgeries. Her mother was telling us how she doesn't like her preschool anymore and how she's been depressed because she doesn't have any friends. So who could possible tell this little girl "no" when she asked if she could come sleep over again? Certainly not us, no matter how exhausted we were from the weekend's activities...

After the church, we headed over to the community theater where they were having a Wizard of Oz party. I was completely exhausted, and we had to hurry home to meet up with my daughter's little friend, but I really enjoyed the Wizard of Oz party during the short time we were there. They did an AWESOME job with the decorations, and there were so many neat Oz-themed games and activities – even a yellow brick road! - that I will forgive the inclusion of some things from Wicked. I guess I should say for any readers who don't know – I'm a huge Wizard of Oz fan, but it's the movie that I really enjoy. I don't remember the book much, and what I've seen of Wicked did not impress me, to say the least, but that's another blog post altogether...

So FINALLY we get home, and Hannah is waiting for us. At this point, I was SO incredibly tired, not to mention my car full of garbage, pieces of costume, and spilled candy. All I wanted to do was end Halloween my favorite way – watching a scary movie with Hubby. So we got the kids (all SIX of them, since two daughters had friends over) as settled as was humanly possible after I-don't-even-want-to-think-about how much candy and were about to start our movie when Hannah comes down the stairs. We sent her back up, and checked email and basically killed some time until we felt confident we could start a movie without any kids coming downstairs or calling for us. Well, that never happened. Somehow, we had

forgotten that Hannah is a friend who is very needy and also one who outright REFUSES to go to bed. We started the movie anyway, and we only had to interrupt it like 5 times (a late 80's thriller called [I, Madman](#) – both hubby and I recommend it!). But Hannah began one of her many descents down the stairs right during a climatic moment in the movie, which made my husband jump a mile high, which in turn made my heart stop and stomach drop. And that was when I knew I wouldn't be falling asleep for hours. Hannah finally fell asleep when there was only 15 minutes left in the movie, but she outlasted every one of the other kids, and by then, it was 2 am! I guess you could say I put my extra daylight savings hour to good use; I think it's the only hour of sleep I got! I had trouble falling asleep, then I had terrible nightmares all night and kept waking up – one was about Hannah; I'm not even kidding! I woke up early to the sounds of kids playing and couldn't fall back asleep. So here we are, the Sunday after Halloween, dead tired with a messy Halloween-themed house and a trashed car. But at least our house once again contains only the 4 kids who live here, and the main trouble-maker has been sacked out all day – told you we overdid it!

Hope you had a GREAT Halloween!!!

For Good

It has been just over a week since Emily's memorial service; however, I had to include one of the most emotional moments. A soloist sang a song that I knew that I had to know but at the time could not remember from where. It was THAT powerful. While listening to my library of songs on my itunes shuffle, the song [For Good](#) from the musical [Wicked](#) played. AHAHA. Just hearing the words to the beautiful song took me back not only

to the service but through many of my most cherished moments with Emily. Amazing the power of the gift that she helped me cultivate for so many years.

I've heard it said
That people come into our lives for a reason
Bringing something we must learn
And we are led
To those who help us most to grow
If we let them
And we help them in return
Well, I don't know if I believe that's true
But I know I'm who I am today
Because I knew you...

Like a comet pulled from orbit
As it passes a sun
Like a stream that meets a boulder
Halfway through the wood
Who can say if I've been changed for the better?
But because I knew you
I have been changed for good

It well may be
That we will never meet again
In this lifetime
So let me say before we part
So much of me
Is made of what I learned from you
You'll be with me
Like a handprint on my heart
And now whatever way our stories end
I know you have re-written mine
By being my friend...

Like a ship blown from its mooring
By a wind off the sea

Like a seed dropped by a skybird
In a distant wood
Who can say if I've been changed for the better?
But because I knew you
Because I knew you
I have been changed for good

And just to clear the air
I ask forgiveness
For the things I've done you blame me for
But then, I guess we know
There's blame to share
And none of it seems to matter anymore

Like a comet pulled from orbit
As it passes a sun
Like a stream that meets a boulder
Halfway through the wood

Like a ship blown from its mooring
By a wind off the sea
Like a seed dropped by a bird in the wood
Who can say if I've been
Changed for the better?
I do believe I have been
Changed for the better

And because I knew you...
Because I knew you...
Because I knew you...
I have been changed for good...

Everyone has at one time turned to someone be it a parent, sibling, friend, teacher, or even a complete stranger and been changed profoundly in some way. Thank you for being that someone to not only myself but to all those whose lives you touched, For Good.

✖ ✖	Wicked (Piano/Vocal Selections) (A New Musical) By Stephen Schwartz. Songbook for voice, piano and guitar chords. This edition is in standard piano/vocal format with the melody in the piano part. 120 pages. Published by Hal Leonard. (HL.313267) See more info...
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So Many Shows...

This evening, I had the pleasure of added responsibility at work. Years ago, I closed the store quite frequently (under different management, however) . Tonight, I was given a five minute refresher. Nothing Earth-shattering. Basically, make sure that everything was locked up, put away, doors locked, etc. Of course, the process was aided by the help I had. I would have felt a little insecure with someone who had not known what was expected of them; I just had to make sure that the teenage fellow did what was expected of him (I've been there).

During our brief moments of downtime, my co-worker and I discussed one of my favorite subjects. He asked me what my favorite part has been. My normal readers already know what that is. For the sake of one, I will refrain from going into detail (although I was once again able to break into him to the delight of my companion). We then discussed what our favorite musical to watch has been. He saw *Wicked* in Chicago a few years ago and said it is really awesome. He also mentioned a high school marching band show in which they performed the music of *Jesus Christ Superstar* (another show I would like to be in). I have to say that my favorite to watch has been *Les Misérables*. But there are soooo many shows that I would love to see or be in. One such show is the Stephen Sondheim musical [Assassins](#) . I suppose I could say that I have been in a small

part of it. Back in my days at BGSU during an evening of montages for a musical theatre course, I performed the role of the balladeer in the song "[Ballad of Booth](#)" which features John Wilkes Booth following the assassination of President Lincoln.

[Wicked Tickets at *** All Venues ***](#)

Crossing the Big Pond

Planning a trip to London? Let me be your guide to the best the West End has to offer in theatre. Already there are the Broadway hits [Wicked](#), [Phantom of the Opera](#) (ok, ok, it was in London first), and the just opened [Jersey Boys](#). However, there are several productions which have not yet made the leap over to the U.S.

There is the Andrew Lloyd Webber produced revival of *The Sound of Music*. Apparently, Lord Lloyd Webber cannot produce anything new on his own that is capable of making money so he must revive not only his past successes but also breathe new life into other's works as well (whatever happened to his planned sequel to *Phantom*?). There is also a revival of Webber's [Joseph....](#). In a bit of "American Idol" meets musical theatre, the Joseph for this production was chosen on a reality television show. In 2007, the new Broadway cast of [Grease](#) was chosen in this way on a series called "Grease: You're the One that I Want." Not a very original title.

There is also a new musical version of the classic novel and movie [Gone with the Wind](#). The Trevor Nunn directed production stars [Darius Danesh](#) as Rhett Butler. Darius was seen on "Pop Idol" which is the British phenomenon that inspired "American Idol." I wonder if the judges told him that he was "too

theatrical” as Simon Cowell has been known to tell American contestants.

Perhaps the strangest if not the most ambitious show of all is the staging of J.R.R. Tolkien’s [*Lord of the Rings*](#) trilogy. It took three films of nearly three hours each to scratch the surface of the novels. I’m sure Rings purists are left wanting after only one 3 hour musical.

So.... if you are in West End or are planning a trip over the Atlantic, consider taking in one or more of these stage hits. Of course many times, today’s hits of London become tomorrow’s Broadway blockbusters and vice versa.