

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).

Poppies... Poppies Will Put Them To Sleep

Yes, Spring has finally arrived. For most, that means looking forward to making plans for the summer getaway. For me it means looking forward to auditioning for one of two (or this year... three) big musical productions in the area. I narrowed my choices down to two this week. I really wanted to audition for a production of [The Wizard of Oz](#). I have always wanted to be the Cowardly Lion... a fantastic character role if ever there was one. I contacted the director of the show to ask about performance dates. Alas, they begin in mid-July (after auditions for another play I am extremely excited about trying out for (now be nice)... [The Nerd](#). **And yes, I will be auditioning for the title role**, but of course will gladly accept any part offered to me.

Even while considering the possibility of dreaming that "If I Were King of the Forrrrrrest" (not Queen, not Duke, not Prince), the more logical option seemed to be to try out for the musical that is closer to home with the group I have been involved with for the past two years. It will save a bit of money on the gas tank as well. So... according to an email I received earlier today, I will make my way tomorrow to audition for a role in [Little Women](#) (and yes, there are male roles in the production).

The Queen In Philadelphia

Tonight's Final Jeopardy category: The Academy Awards in the 21st Century

The Final Jeopardy answer: The only actress to win the Best Supporting Actress Oscar for portraying a former Best Actress recipient.

I have to admit that I was stymied (not to mention I have never seen the movie for which the actress won the award). The more recent actress has appeared with such well known performers as [Glenn Close](#), [Frances McDormand](#), and [Jude Law](#).

The former Best Actress winner is no longer with us. She holds the most Best Actress awards with four. Some of her co-stars were [John Wayne](#), [Cary Grant](#), and [James Stewart](#). Her sister was also a former Best Actress winner as well as a UNICEF ambassador.

Be the first to give the correct question and you will have done better than I. Name the film for which she won the award and you are brilliant. Name the actress she played and you are a genius. Of course, you win absolutely nothing except the honor of having your answer posted on Morat's Blog which is (in a word) priceless. Once again, we are on the honor system which means: NO CHEATING!!!! No wikipedia, no imdb, no any other web site or outside source to aid you in your response. AND....

I am make a the rules. So a you a follow the rules. And if a you a cheat I will a hunt a you down. And dems de berries.

Three Is A Magic Number?

Today, I have had three very strange occurrences involving the same numbers. I was called downstairs at 8 o'clock to be asked if I had to be at work ("No, not until 12"). At 9, I received a phone call informing that our manager goofed and really meant for me to be there at 8 (a good thing I was ready to go). At 9:19 precisely, I clocked in. A few minutes later, I waited on a customer whose purchases totaled \$9.19. The very next customer had a completely different set of items and her total came to \$9.19. Now if something strange happens at 9:19 this evening, I will know that I have stepped into "[The Twilight Zone](#)."

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.

For Your Eyes Only

Is it just me or do some of the titles on my posts seem misleading. I am nothing if not creative. Today, I escorted my mother to the eye doctor to have her eyes dilated. Believe it or not there were some rather humorous moments waiting in the reception area. There was a patient who must have been extremely bored as she got up, walked to the 12" TV/VCR/DVD combo and attempted to get it to play something besides the Toshiba menu making its way across the screen. Finally, she managed to start the disc playing. She commented that it was the same disc that was playing the last time she was in the office (I sense a link coming up there... but hey, ya know). The woman must be a regular.

The movie playing was [Seabiscuit](#) starring [Tobey Maguire](#). Since it has been a few years since I have seen the movie about the thoroughbred and his jockey, I cannot honestly give a full review but I remember that I did enjoy it. I do recall that Maguire needed to lose a fair amount of weight after playing Spider-Man to portray Red Pollard. Then after filming was completed for *Seabiscuit*, he had to hit the gym

again to bulk up to play the superhero a second time. At least Maguire will not be typecast as a popcorn idol, summer blockbuster star as he has made several other films before and since which have been well received by critics and viewers ([The Cider House Rules](#), [The Ice Storm](#), and [Pleasantville](#) to name a few). Additionally, he also served as Executive Producer for *Seabiscuit*.

Although it did get a bit boring once the television whiz got called for her appointment, there was an adorable 3 year-old girl who kept those of us waiting entertained by explaining the trials and tribble-ations of a child. Apparently, a scary monster hid under her bed one night causing her to run into her parents' room to be consoled. She was not exactly sure what the creature looked like it was definately "big and UUUUUUGLY." The monster "sure did" go away after the precocious tot told it to.

The colorful people waiting in the lobby kept the waiting to a minimum; however, next time I will have to remember to take a book of some kind... hopefully a script. It has been a few months since I have had one. Perhaps by then I will begin to make my titles better fit the post... BUT I DOUBT IT!!!!!! That would just be no fun.

Meet The Flagstones

✘ I was reminded of a small bit of trivia today (and I am sure that it was buried somewhere under the heading "Still more useless trivia" which sometimes comes in quite handy). The first couple to be seen on prime time television in bed together were Fred and Wilma Flintstone. Before that, television tots came from the stork, right? On "[I Love Lucy](#),"

the word “pregnant” could not even be uttered due to censorship. Hence the title of the episode in which Mrs. Ricardo’s pregnancy is revealed became: “Lucy is *Enceinte*” (the French equivalent of pregnant... why they chose French is anyone’s guess).

Alrighty, back to my original topic. My favorite episode of “[The Flintstones](#)” is entitled “Hollyrock, Here I Come.” In it, the title couple and their neighbors, the Rubbles, travel to the movie capitol of the then known-world. Purely by accident, Wilma and then Fred are discovered by a big-time television producer. Fred is spotted in the television audience snoring loudly during a rehearsal. Mr Flintstone’s boisterous voice and winning personality make him the obvious last minute replacement for the title role in the aptly entitled series “The Frogmouth.” However, he becomes totally overbearing (ad libbing not only his lines but those of his castmates, composing his own music, etc) and the producer concludes that something must be done quickly or the show will be disastrous.

Something that has always bothered me about the series: Where is the cat that Fred is supposed to put out for the night during the end credits. And if we never see it how is Fred supposed to someday when the fight.

Hey Rocky Watch Me Pull A Rabbit Out Of My Hat

There have been several one-night open and close flops on the Broadway stage. Some of these include a revival of George M. Cohan’s [Little Johnny Jones](#) (starring Donny Osmond); the more recent [Dance of the Vampires](#); and quite famously, the musical

based on the Stephen King novel [Carrie](#). Apparently, there is another such production that is such a stinker that it is the show by which all stinkers must be compared : *Moose Murders*.

For a history and brief synopsis of the show and a recent 25th anniversary revival of sorts follow the link:

[A Broadway Flop Again Raises Its Antlers](#)

After reading the article, I noticed several signs that the show was doomed after its opening night performance. The opening night cast party at Sardi's was vacated after dessert was served. One party goer gave a two word review of the show to its creator Arthur Bicknell ("the worst"). Mr. Bicknell spent the rest of the night drinking, talking with friends, and taking in a midnight drag show (NOW THAT'S DEPRESSING!!!! Who else would take in a drag show after a GOOD opening... or after a bad one for that matter?). Before going to bed the next morning, he walked by the [Eugene O'Neill Theatre](#) to find that the set was being unloaded from the stage. If none of the other occurrences had tipped him off...

It's Just A Flesh Wound, Honestly

Tuesday night's American Idol will feature the finalists performing the music of Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber. I really do not have a problem with this per se. However, I do recall on several occasions when the judges have commented that a contestants performance is better suited for the Broadway stage and not what would make a good money-making pop star. To me, the finalists should be well versed in multiple genres of music. Why should they appeal to only screaming, teenage fans?

There are other outlets for people with some degree of musical talent.

There have actually been attempts to integrate musical theatre songs into the realm of “popular” culture. In the late 70s, the soundtrack from the movie *Grease* generated several songs which were popular hits. In the late 90s, the British boy band Boyzone had a modest US hit with the song “No Matter What” from Webber’s [Whistle Down the Wind](#).

Recently, former American Idol contestants have also gone on to appear on the musical stage. Third season champion Fantasia Barrino was cast as Celie in [The Color Purple](#). In January 2008, second season runner-up Clay Aiken joined the cast of [Spamalot](#) as Sir Robin.

While the music of the theatrical stage may not appeal to everyone, it will be very interesting to see the American Idol contestants take on the songs of Andrew Lloyd Webber. They may introduce audiences who would otherwise steer clear from the genre or one of them may become tomorrow’s Broadway star.

Happiness Is...

Going waaaaaay off on a tangent, I believe that my first acting gig was in the first grade as a balloon salesman who had one line: “Balloons for sale! BALLOONS FOR SALE!!! Red and YELLOW AAND GREEN BALLOONS!!!” And the finale was a ditty entitled “H-A-double P-I-N-E-double S.” But that is not what this post is about.

Friday evening I had the opportunity to take my four-year-old niece to see a production of [You’re a Food \(Er... GOOD... sorry\) Man Charlie Brown](#). Happily, she was a very good audience

member.

The musical is a fun vignette of scenes featuring the main characters of Charles Schultz immortal comic strip "[Peanuts](#)." We have the siblings Lucy and Linus; the Beethoven fanatic Schroeder; little Sally; and of course the well meaning, though perpetually insecure title character. However, the star of the show is the scene-stealing beagle, Snoopy. Whenever the canine is on stage, the action seemed much more alive, energetic, and fun. Whether he was aboard his trusty Sopwith Camel as the World War I flying ace in search of the dasterdly Red Baron, simply chasing rabbits, or singing the praises of his favorite time of day: "Suppertime," the actor totally exemplified the exuberance of Joe Cool.

Another fun scene is "Book Report" in which Charlie Brown, Lucy, Schroeder, and Linus all attempt to compose a report on Beatrix Potter's classic story "Peter Rabbit." Each character at times in solo and at other times in a quartet, gives voice to the words they are formulating on paper.

The set of the show was also very well imagined. The trees, doghouse, fence, big comfy couch, etc. were all constructed in such a way that the comic strip was brought to brilliant life. While in the dogfight (HAHAHA) with the Red Baron, Snoopy's giant doghouse actually moved up and down just enough to give the illusion of flight. The only thing missing, according to the critical eye of a four-year-old, was the sun and clouds.

You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown is a fun show for all ages. Although I was not sure how a young girl would act during the performance, I was actually glad that I was able to take her.