

# Something Was Missing

Adaptations from original sources always leave things on the “cutting room floor.” I just read a very fascinating article about the transformation of [South Pacific](#) (click the link to the article) from a James Michener novel to the original Broadway production to the classic movie to the current revival on the Great White Way and touring around the country.

More historical background from the first performances of the ground-breaking, Pulitzer prize winning classic came to light.

- On April 17, 1949, ten days after the show’s opening, a boat carrying 120 American casualties of war arrived in Honolulu. Casualties of the Theatre in the Pacific.
- There was a lot more that Rodgers and Hammerstein wanted in the show dealing with race relations. “You’ve Got to be Carefully Taught” was just the tip of the iceberg. The central story of Emille de Becque somehow made it into the show. But there was a lot more.
- Like many musicals turned movies, many things were dramatically altered from the original. The director of the 7 Tony Award winning revival, Bartlett Sher, called the 1958 cinematic effort “no use” when developing the return to the stage. Which just adds to my belief that most of the time, somethings are better left ON stage. Beautiful to look at, perhaps, but with a loss to its central meaning.

How fitting that I came across the article as we stop to reflect on the millions who have made the ultimate sacrifice in preserving the freedoms we all sometimes take for granted.

Hopefully, one day, the revival of this musical masterpiece makes it way to our neck of the woods. Or... better yet... just another great show with a scene-stealing character role or a central male lead I wouldn’t mind tackling.

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# 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!**

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## **Oh Lord, It's Hard To Be Humble**

Not really, because I am so **NOT PERFECT** in any (rather long every) way. I see by the old stat count that I have reached a total of 666 posts (I'll get off that with this one). The title... a friend recently posed an interesting question. Does acting make you more humble when it comes to things concerning the human condition: like ego? I like to think that I'm not a very ego-centered person, but does that in itself make me egocentric.

In my humble opinion to be successful in any role, you must first know who the character is beyond what you are given in the script. Where does he come from? What makes the person who he is? What was his life like before he takes his first step onto the stage? This is ultimately as important for the person who has a one-line (or no-line) cameo as it is for the actor playing the 300+ line lead role.

Of course, understanding does not always mean you must empathize with the character. That would be totally insane! I could never be a mean, curmudgeonly miser but I sure had a ball playing one on stage. And as much as I humbly hate to

admit it, I could never be a sexist, Liswathistani visitor covering for news new owner America country.

I am now at the point at which I am ready to take on even more challenging parts. To be able to take on roles that really challenge me to step out of my zone and look at other elements of the human condition. Just as Abigail Breslin is now bringing her take of Helen Keller to the Broadway stage in [The Miracle Worker](#). Plus... still have fun doing it! The moment it is no longer fun is when I stop and I don't see that happening any too soon.

I think during my years as an amateur actor, I have come to see (not necessarily understand) more elements of the human condition than I had before. At least enough to want to continue to do so.

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## 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.

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## Back to the Bronx

After returning from being booed at rehearsal... second time we have read through and I'm already being booed... **I'M LOOOOOVIN' IT!!!!!!** I Returned to see the Yanks down 3-1 in the second and it did not get much better after. I'm pleased to say that they never gave in. That dratted combination of Lee-Utley killed us again. Mr. Utley tied Mr. October (Reggie Jackson... even named a candy bar after him) for the most home runs in a single World Series with five... so far, **NO MORE FOR YOU!!!**

So tomorrow night, we go back to 'da Bronx for the magic game six. I have said for the past week or so that it would be six and **BACK TO THE NEW DIGS!**

Final: Yanks 6... Phillies 8.

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# Morning Guilty Pleasure

This morning, I was able to catch most of *Regis and Kelly* (the ONLY celebrity focused morning show I enjoy watching). As I made mention of earlier, John Stamos is now in previews for *Bye, Bye Birdie* for its return to the Broadway stage since the debut 50 years ago (WOW!). Mr. Stamos will be playing the lead part of Albert Peterson. Dick Van Dyke originated the role of Conrad Birdie's manager in the original production as well as the original movie. The cinematic experience does not do the stage version justice at all. Not sure why but like many musicals it is much better to have that live, theatrical experience. I honestly cannot think of many musicals that have translated better or at least as enjoyably on the screen. I guess I would say *The Sound of Music* only because it has been so ingrained into pop culture as a movie that many forget or don't realize that it was Rodgers and Hammerstein's theatrical swan song. That reason and the puppet show version of "The Lonely Goatherd" is my favorite part of the movie and IS NOT in the stage version.

Ok... back to my original topic. During the interview, Reege made mention of the fact that Ann-Margrock (err.. Margret) played the young girl, Kim MacAfee in the movie. Shortly after the movie was filmed, Ms. Margret would be Presley's leading lady in my mother's favorite Elvis movie, *Viva Las Vegas*. However, Mom was not aware that she was in the cast of *Birdie*.

Here's a few more tidbits: one of our fellow [tangenteers](#) has played the role of pop singing idol/draftee Conrad Birdie. I assisted in the directing of my high school alma mater's production a few years ago. AND there was a veery short lived sequel (4 performances) entitled [Bring Back Birdie](#) which was set twenty years following the events of the original. Twenty years is quite a LONG time to wait to attempt a comeback.

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# Another Thespian In The Family?

On Tuesday nights, my niece Elizabeth and nephew Noah come to the house while their older brother is taken to Boy Scouts. Last night after returning from rehearsal, I asked Elizabeth when her school play is going to be. I never got the dates but I remember last year's was sometime in November. I was able to drag out that she has the title role in *Mulan, Junior*. I was excited for her and even had to ask again to make sure I heard correctly. How awesome is that?! I asked if Joshua got a part... forgetting that he is too old to be in the 4th and 5th grade show.

I must admit... and I don't know why... but I have never seen the movie. It must have been because I lost track of Disney movies in the years following *The Lion King* up until Pixar joined the studio with *Toy Story*. I do remember that Lea Salonga was the title voice with Donny Osmond and Eddie Murphy also voicing roles.

Another aspect of Elizabeth that amazes me is her voracious reading. For her birthday, I gave her two books: a mid-level edition of *Marley and Me* and a Peter Pan prequel (it had Disney's stamp of approval for whatever that's worth). I thought the first book looked a bit simple for her (she has read all 7 Harry Potter books) but, eh. I was right because I asked how far she had gotten in them and she finished the first and started Peter Pan earlier that day and was already beyond the first 100 of 500 pages.

Apparently, school children are rewarded for outside reading far more than I was. When I was in elementary school, we

received a coupon for a free personal pan pizza from Pizza Hut after reading so many books. Today, children can read a book go onto a website, take a quiz, and earn points which they can build up to obtain all kinds of fabulous gifts. I had no idea there was such a thing until my cousin asked if I made sure the books were on the [AR](#) list? I think it is a neat idea but for one thing: The points do not carry over from year to year. I really don't have a problem with rewarding those who enjoy reading and I don't believe that the incentive is connected with the classroom.

Not trying to take anything away from the fabulous news of Elizabeth's first lead role, so CONGRATS! Break a leg! OH... my brother came in the store tonight and he had no idea of the news when I asked him about the show dates. And I was informed as I walked into the house last night? Priorities.

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## **All The World's A Stage**

*and all its men and women merely players.*

*As You Like It (II,vii, 139-40)*

I have often been asked what type of stage I enjoy performing on most. In response, I usually state that it depends upon what is being performed. Sometimes, a show is grand in scale and is meant to be presented on a HUGE stage with a HUMONGOUS audience. Other times, a play is more intimate and is meant for a more intimate setting. I have been watching a Josh Groban concert on PBS tonight (after the Yankees were defeated by the Red Stockings). Being pledge drive time, there are frequent breaks and during one Josh was interviewed. He had recently performed at Madison Square Garden: one of the world's grandest venues. This evening's taped performance was



much more intimate: smaller stage, closer audience (in which he could see the “whites of their eyes”), almost a jam session in front of maybe 100 fans. Once again, I was in total awe. Such talent! Singing in Spanish, Italian, as well as English. Taking lyrics that I have no idea what the translation is yet conveying their message brilliantly. Looking forward to the concert version of *Chess* coming next week. Although it is a concert version, it will be my first time seeing any version of the cult musical.

WAIT! I think I have gone off on another tangent. Coming up in a few short months is the WCCT’s production of *Little Shop of Horrors*. This is going to be done at the smaller of the two venues. I think it will be quite interesting to discover how we are going to have the huge flesh-eating Audrey II on a small stage as well as the scenery for Skid Row. Seems like a lot, but if it comes off it will be awesome and I think the intimacy of the smaller, in your face venue will have an even more dramatic effect.

So, although I have kind of given a roundabout answer to my own question, it really does have more to do with the type of production being staged. I like being part of big, theatrical extravaganzas that call for a huge setting. I also am comfortable in a small, intimate space in which you can see the audience and know that there are actually butts in the seats.

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## **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 ☐

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## Who Advises The Advisor?

Recently, I received an email from a high school friend asking for advice on auditioning for a movie role. She has never acted before but knew of my passion for theatre and decided to come to me for whatever reason. I have never tested for film, but gathered that my stage experiences would help. Here was my reply:

*That sounds cool. I have never auditioned for film before, but I can't imagine it being any different from stage. Being*

*a first timer, there will be anxiety which is good to have... it gives you energy. I still get it... anyone who says they never get nervous at an audition because they have done it so often is lying through their teeth but the more experience you get in auditioning the easier it becomes to use the nerves to your advantage. Not sure what to expect... do you have a script or is it a cold reading? Do you have to have anything prepared ahead (monologue?) . The best advice I can give is to go in, do what the director asks and have fun (the most important thing). The minute you walk into the site you ARE at the audition. Most of the auditions I go to start out by introducing yourself. This is as important as reading from the script or anything else they ask you to do. The first impression is the most important... be yourself (Sounds cliché and corny, but is very true). And don't let your inexperience get you down... everyone has to start somewhere. With your personality, I am really surprised that you did not try out for anything in school, but... never too late. Break a leg! Let me know if there is anything else you need and let me know how you do.*

Apparently, she felt really good about the audition, because she sent me an email Saturday after the audition and told me that she used my advice. She was nervous but went in and presented herself as best she could and even talked to one of the writers and the casting director. Her husband, another EHS alumnus was in the store tonight and related how excited she was and how grateful she was for the advice. Unfortunately, she has to wait until April 6th to hear about call backs, etc. I would be driven insane waiting that long. She is even anticipating minoring in theatre at the University of Toledo where she started taking classes last fall. "Theatre is fun" she said. I even told her that she needs to take advantage of the theatre around her.

This is not the first time I have shared advice and my love of my favorite thing. It seems that I am quick to pick out

members of any cast who are inexperienced and offer words of encouragement and take them “under my wing” as it were.

My problem is this: If I find it so easy to encourage others (friends, new acquaintances who more often than not turn into friends), why can't **I** find the encouragement to go further? I have conquered (or at least been on) 6 stages in my little corner of the world. I love everyone of them. I have made the best friends I have EVER had in two of these venues because the bond many of us share is so strong. I get encouraged by many of them and yet... here I sit. Have I become so “comfortable” here that I will never try (again) to go above and beyond? I know I am just rambling and many of you may not understand how strong this thing is (I'm not even sure I do at times) but to me if someone finds himself trying out for every show in his community theatre (even when he is not cast... just picks himself up and tries again and again) and even ventures to other groups from time to time, well... **AND I know** that **I** solely am the one who has to come to terms with it. Maybe one day soon I can decide to take another friends advice to heart and believe that:

*“There are no limitations in what you can do except the limitations in your own mind as to what you can not do.”*