

Little Women

We were privileged to get to spend an evening without kids to take in a local community theater's production of Little Women, the Musical.

I must be honest – the music in this musical is not my favorite. It has nothing to do with how it was performed or who sang it; it just seemed to me to be words set to random music. But I don't know much about singing, music composition, or even good theater for that matter. That being said, I will say that it's definitely a production worth seeing. The costumes and set were great, and the large cast of talented actors and singers seemed very cohesive and never crowded on the stage. The play took me back into civil war times, and I do like to see stories from this time period played out live. I was pleasantly surprised by a few of the characters' performances since they were people I've worked with before so I thought I knew what to expect – but a few of their performances were much better than I even expected, and yes, two of those people read or are closely related to people who are regular readers of this blog ☐

But I'm not being biased... I really was impressed. A few of the new people – performers who haven't done much or anything for this particular theater group – were surprisingly talented also, though I have to say at least one was not. And I might even say that the beautiful wigs almost deserve a curtain call of their own... but don't let the wigs steal your thunder, cast, because you can expect standing ovations from your audiences throughout the run of the show, I think. Overall, it was a nice evening out – the show part of the dinner and show anyway. I was so disappointed in my lack of a good meal last night that I composed this little ditty:

RIP – Maywood Restaurant in Montpelier, Ohio

They sold the restaurant but kept the name,
The tables and chairs are all that's the same.
The food quality's gone,
Bob's recipes too
It's a shame that my dinner
Tasted like old shoe.

It was once premium food
But now it's soured my mood.
Advice I would give:
Eat here if you dare
Since I traded gourmet
For mere Sysco fare.

The ditty tells the story – basically we had this awesome restaurant nearby with **very** high quality food that was always cooked by the chef-owner personally. I understand that people have to retire, but it is almost a crime that they still use the same name for the restaurant. I mean, with a food quality drop this severe, it's their duty to warn people before they are tempted to eat there! Too bad dinner didn't work out, but if the theater keeps putting on shows like Little Women, it will be enough of a reason to drive across the county to see them.

The Happening

We went to see the newest [M. Night Shyamalan](#) movie last night – The Happening starring [Mark Wahlberg](#) and [Zooey Deschanel](#). It's an end-of-the-world type movie, but what sets this one apart from the others is that neither the audience nor the characters in the movie know what is happening to the population and why. People just start acting strange – it

begins in parks, where crowds of people freeze in their tracks, and then they begin to slowly and methodically commit suicide. It's really creepy! I especially liked how little gore and there was and how tame the violence was, especially by today's standards and with all the death that was occurring in the movie. Before we went, I had read some bad reviews about it, but I didn't find it boring in the slightest as some of the reviews suggested. It was a gripping, intense, and interesting movie, not to mention effectively eerie. I don't want to give too much away, so all I will say is that I was hoping for more of a resolve and explanation at the end, but since I've seen other M. Night Shyamalan movies, I was also expecting even less closure than we received. He writes, directs, and produces his own movies; they are usually thought-provoking suspense films, often laced with twists – I recommend [The Village](#), [Unbreakable](#), and [The Sixth Sense](#) to try a few. Overall, I would say it was a really good doomsday-TYPE movie. Please don't think it compares to the movie called [Doomsday](#) – one of the most awful I've ever seen. But The Happening has an interesting premise, and it achieves fright without overdoing the gore, which is unusual for scary movies in this day and age. My one problem with the movie is Mark Wahlberg's acting – at times it's just awful! I don't know why he was cast in this movie, but at least he doesn't ruin it. Zooey Deschanel is good – didn't even see any glimpse of her character from [Elf](#) -and [John Leguizamo](#) has a strong performance as well. It is 90 minutes well-spent!

About the Zoo...

Oops, I forgot to mention a few things about the [Potawatomi Zoo](#) in South Bend, Indiana in my post the other day. Even though it was small and not very well taken care of from an

aesthetic point of view, we had some of the best animal encounters there – can't believe I forgot to mention them.

First, they have a white tiger, and he was right up against the glass. We could see his beautiful eyes and everything.

The African lions at this zoo have a small exhibit (but didn't seem to be unhappy in the slightest), which means we were able to see them pretty close up also.

The red pandas were very active and we got to see them climbing around. This creature is so agile, he made climbing branches of trees look like he was climbing stair-steps.

They had a baby Amur Leopard who was born in Decemeber and had just been put on exhibit 2 days before our visit. He was so cute and curious. He climbed all the way up the cage wall and tried to get on the ceiling, then he had a little trouble getting down, but he was so excited when he did it, and mom scolded him a little bit – it was awesome to see that kind of interaction.

So overall, it was a great zoo experience. A cute little zoo, even if it could use some touch-ups.

Coffee nerdiness

Yes, I'm a coffee nerd. I like good strong full bodied coffee. I of course have my favorite roasts, beans, blends, and coffee shops. But I really want to talk about the coffee shop experience. Today, a lot of people consider Starbucks to be the coffee shop of all coffee shops. They are almost everywhere. I will admit that their marketing is wonderful. They've taken the country by storm. Their coffee is good, but

by no means is it the peak of coffee perfection. Their shops are nice and clean, but they are missing a little bit of charm.

Now to go back a few years, about 11 or so, to when I knew nothing about coffee. If you called it coffee and it was hot, I would drink it. At that time, my youngest daughter was in Kindergarten, the oldest was 15. My wife and I needed someplace to go to start re-connecting with each other. The children were all growing up, and didn't need quite as much attention. We also had a built in babysitter. So we started to look around for something we could do together, but wouldn't break the bank. We found a little coffee shop. It was a charming little place where we could get a light lunch, or a desert, or just a cup of coffee or tea. We started going week after week, sometimes more than once a week. From that time on, we would even look for coffee shops on our vacations.

The local coffee shop (before Starbucks was a nationwide brand) was a place to find good coffee and good friends. It was a gathering place. In some places you would find little reading corners. Some shops would have music, some poetry readings. Some places to play chess or backgammon. But in everyone there was a place to meet people and talk. They was always a quite corner you could go to even when the place was busy at the early morning rush. They were places designed to slow down, smell the baked goods, and of course the coffee.

Then we get the fast food of coffee shops, the national brands. A hurry-up kind of place where people seem to be full of caffeine before they have their first cup of coffee. The coffee may be good, but the atmosphere suffers.

One of my daughter worked in 'our' little coffee shop, and it closed shortly after she graduated from college. Just two short years after my wife died. I still miss that atmosphere. There are other places to get coffee in the area. For a time there was even a shop that had a bit of atmosphere. But in

today's world those places seem to be few and far between. You can find them if you look, but you do have to look. It may not be a coffee shop, it may be a little restaurant, or donut shop, maybe even a candy shop, or an old soda fountain. There are places to find, where you can slow down to smell the coffee, or the roses, but always smell and experience the sweet breath of life itself.

A Tragedy of Operatic Proportions

Yes, tonight was our final rehearsal for *Little Women* before we have an audience and any audience expects to be entertained and tonight while still good also had a few pitfalls. Huge gaps where a character forgot her entrances, fumbling backstage to move sets and props into place. Just little things that can and frequently do cause an audience to become distracted and lose interest. But overall, these were only minor things (admittedly the person who forgot her entrances was not so minor but I am sure that her professionalism will return and will be fine).

Also missing tonight was our assistant lighting person. When I returned from practice, I had a message informing me that Carol was really sick so I immediately called and talked to her daughter. I was really concerned because Carol is always so dependable (as well as a fun member of our game night gang who played my mother in our recent Murder Mystery night) and I was hoping most of the evening that nothing was seriously wrong. Thankfully, she was feeling better by the time I had called. This was on her birthday of all things to boot. So Happy Birthday Carol and I hope you feel much better ☺ . And

see you tomorrow night. I will also have to attend some of the Summer City Band concerts on Wednesday nights through the summer as Megan plays the trumpet in the band. She should have told me sooner. I started playing trumpet in 5th grade and by the time I was in high school moved to the tuba (many tales about Susie and I ☹) with some gentle nudging from a certain high school band director.

I almost forgot to mention that a certain well-admired writer from a newspaper was in attendance. Not to review as some feared, just to flash his camera and leave. Hopefully, he does not bring his book Friday night and have it out before the first scene is over.

Astonishing

Tonight is our final run through of *Little Women* before we have an actual audience. Last night, the director wanted us to have a night to relax and get some much needed sleep... so we pretty well had a walk-through of the first act and the first scene of the second. The whole production is phenomenal from the period costumes and set to the lighting design (thank you again [justj](#)), to the excellent cast (every performer on stage brings life to their character). We even have two members of the cast who double as musicians in our small orchestra pit. That takes an extreme amount of talent especially when the main musician jumped on board about two weeks ago and is just going to be a freshman in college in the fall.

Following our rough rehearsal of a week ago, I must say that everyone involved has kicked it up at least 10 notches and everything has fallen into place. I have been asked if I was going to be in another local group's production of *The Music*

Man later this summer. In deciding between the two, I decided to audition for *Little Woman* and see what happened. I am much more familiar with *The Music Man* but said this is something I had never heard before... is that a good thing... going with something new and little known instead of going with the traditional? Do casting directors judge by how many big name shows you have been in or look for the unusual? But, I can honestly say that *Little Women* has been an absolute thrill to be part of. And anyone who lives in or near our little rural Northwest Ohio vicinity should check out the website for the [Williams County Community Theatre](#) and come and see this spectacular show. It is definitely one NOT TO BE MISSED.

Jubilee Time

It's time for our town's annual summer fest; they call it the Jubilee. Every year I'm compelled to attend, even though I become more disenchanted with the whole affair as years pass. I just really like summer fest atmospheres, and I can't resist going when we live within blocks of it. It's fun to take all the kids there without having to pack up everyone in the car, spend a few bucks for gas to get there, or haggle over parking. But as every cost in our economy rises, the Jubilee is no exception. And if the kids had lots of fun, it'd be worth it, but every year it seems the Jubilee finds ways to cut corners and disappoint my kids.

Take this year, for example. "Wrist band day" was on the first day of the carnival; a day when you buy a wristband for one "low" price (now \$16, up \$2 from the \$14 it cost last year) and it gets you on "unlimited" rides. I think they planned wrist band day on the first day of the carnival for a reason – before anyone could get to the carnival and look

around to see that some of the usual rides are missing. Not only that, but for small children, because of height requirements, there are only about 4 rides they were able to use their wristband on. My 4-year-old is a little daredevil and wanted to ride everything, including the "Kamikaze", a ride that goes upside down. She was too small to ride that one of course, and I completely understood the rhyme and reason for that rule, however, when she got excited about the Ferris Wheel only to be turned away, I began to lose my patience. Seems the rules require that she ride with an adult, no problem there, my husband would have rode with her even though he's not crazy about ferris wheels... except that the escorting adult had to have 3 tickets to ride! And at \$1.50/ticket, we're talking about spending an extra \$4.50 *for one ride*, on top of the \$32 we had already spent on wristbands for my 2 daughters – just for my daughter to follow their rule and be escorted on the ferris wheel – no thanks. So after 2 disappointments, we went over to the other side of the Jubilee and found the "scrambler" ride, so my daughters went on it and had a good time. They got in line to go again, and 4-year-old Sammie was turned away because she wasn't tall enough – apparently she shrank while waiting in line to go a second time? Again, I'm all for abiding by safety rules, etc., but they need to adopt a uniform policy that will be in place the entire run of the carnival. Try explaining to a 4-year-old that she isn't tall enough to ride a ride that she just got finished riding! We actually ran into the same problem at Disney World, but they were very sympathetic and understanding and offered us ride passes as compensation. And as if all this at the Jubilee weren't enough, my daughters have a favorite "ride" at the Jubilee every year – the funhouse. They actually usually have 2 funhouses, but for whatever reason, my girls have their favorite. So they're standing there on the steps of their favorite funhouse, waiting to get in, and the ride operator is trying to tell them something, and that's when I see the signs. "No wristbands or tickets. This ride is \$2" WHAT?!? Why would they do this? To make

money obviously, but that funhouse had no one there all night, was it really worth it to disappoint all the kids who go there year after year and look forward to that funhouse? And like I said, since wristband night was on the first day of the Jubilee, we didn't have an opportunity to tour the grounds to see what would be included in the purchase of the wristband – regrettably.

Despite all the disappointments, my daughters took them all in stride and still had fun. We ran into some friends, so we decided to take one of their daughters home with us for a sleepover. Even though we had bought the wristbands that were good until 11, we just wanted out of there after all the disappointment and money wasting. I did get my Dippin' Dots, but the vendor forgot my root beer float this year ☹ I was pretty happy with the cookie dough that my husband got for me, and it was actually better than I remember. Not worth going back to the Jubilee for more, but still good. I think we're done with the Jubilee already this year. We usually go back Friday night for the karaoke contest and Saturday after the parade, but I think we can find something better (and cheaper!) to do this year. Next year, maybe we'll plan a vacation for Jubilee week and skip it all together!

Added blog to Friends

This is way late, but I have finally added my friend, C's blog to my links on the left. He told me about it about a month ago when he wrote on his experience with the Nintendo Wii, but for some reason I never added it and it slipped my mind until noticing it on another friend's blog! So, consider this your birthday present! ☺

Well, at least until I think of what to get you since I forgot about it again- I seriously need to get a wife to remember these things for me, though of course in return I will get pounded for forgetting *her* birthday, or worse- our anniversary. Yes, I would be that stereotypical husband.

The Play's the thing...

In 1997 I was in my first play for the (then) Williams County Playhouse. It was "Arsenic and Old Lace". I played one of the beat cops. That show was one of my favorite plays to watch, the movie wasn't bad either ;). Since then I've been involved in many different shows, from comedy to drama. I skip musicals, except to run lights or help backstage. I've even been in a Magic Show. After 11 years with the theater (changed its name to The Williams County Community Theater), I can honestly say I've been bitten by the theater bug.

I've done almost everything in the theater except direct a show. I tried to assist on one, but due to actor shortages, the director and I both had roles in the show. It was a wonderful show that very few people saw. I'm in the light booth for what looks like another wonderful show. I hope it is a show that everyone sees.

I'm always amazed at the amount of talent our little community (our theater, other local theaters, and High Schools) find to be in the performances. From the 4 counties in extreme NW Ohio, I've been able to perform in and watch many wonderful shows. There as been Musicals (Godspell, Jesus Christ Superstar, Fiddler on the Roof, Chicago, Les Miserables, Beauty and the Beast), Dramas (Wait Until Dark, Death of Salesman, 12 Angry Men, Proof), Comedies (Harvey, The

Foreigner, Escanaba in the Moonlight) and even Melodramas that have been put on by various schools and play companies in our area. Williams County OH has a population of around 39,000. Defiance County has close to 40,000. Henry and Fulton counties 42,000 and 29,000 respectively. In this area there are numerous High Schools, and around 4 or 5 community theaters. The High Schools put on at least 1 musical a year, the community theaters put on 3 or more shows (each) a year.

Now proudly for the Summer, the Williams County Community Theater, (Montpelier OH theater) is going to present the Musical "Little Women" starting Friday June 20th at 8:00. This is a show not to be missed. The cast has a group of wonderful singers (don't take my word, come and see them), and excellent directing, a great set, period costumes, and a good story to boot. This is a small, intimate 100 seat theater call for your tickets early, check out the [theater website](#) for information on how to get reservations.

Come and see this show, you don't want to miss it.

The Mole Week #3

Watched this Mole episode a little late this week since the kids were rambunctious about settling down after an exciting week at Grandma's – turns out I hadn't missed much. I really liked the Fruit of the Luge challenge where the players divide into teams of 2, and one person is blindfolded and driving the pair on a luge. The other player is supposed to call out the types of fruits that are depicted on signs they pass on the luge course. When they are at the end of the luge course, they are not to talk, and the blindfolded player takes off his or her blindfold and picks out the fruit in the order the

other player had seen it. Alas, a few teams ended up getting their points taken away since they broke a rule and chatted after finishing the course. But it was an interesting challenge; an aspect of this show that I really enjoy. Unlike the following challenge... something about the contestants running around Chile in underwear trying to find clothes. It was a stupid, pointless, sell-out challenge; something that once set this reality show apart from the others because they hadn't yet stooped to this level – what a shame.

But anyway, no one really stuck out at me as being that mole-y tonight. Paul kinda was, but then when he got angry during dinner, it didn't seem mole-like to be so upset. But if he is the mole, maybe that was part of his game, who knows. Clay always seems to be in the background, and if it weren't for last week's episode where he had only about one line to say throughout the entire show, I would think it's him. But because of last week, I can't picture them only showing the mole once during an episode. The blonde neurologist is looking suspect also – her name escapes me at the moment. I also think it could be Nichole, but the whole point of Nichole is that she thinks she is so great at so many things when she really isn't so perfect because she's too busy being full of herself... I don't see how she'd have time to be the mole when she's so busy being so arrogant. And I definitely don't think the mole is Mark. There are a few people that just don't seem suspect to me, and Mark, Craig, the model and Bobby were 3 of those people. The model and Bobby are both gone now (YAY! I was getting so sick of Bobby's antics; he was not very likable), so I guess I was right about those two. So here is where I am so far:

POSSIBLE SUSPECTS:

Paul – My husband's top pick since the beginning. Tonight, he was standout mole-y to me, but he also doesn't seem smart enough to pull off being the mole... maybe just part of his act?

Alex – He's the guy who wins everything; every reality show has one. Usually they do pretty well and become finalists if not win the entire competition. I don't think he's the mole though, but he's more of a suspect than not at this point. It's getting on my nerves that he can speak such fluent spanish. I don't think they should have picked only one contestant with this ability when filming the show and doing the challenges in a spanish-speaking country.

Clay – I wish he wasn't so ignored last week, otherwise he would be my top guess again... he's just SO neutral seeming and in the background.

Kristen – the bike thing from last week made her a suspect... and she just acts generally mole-y; I can't really pinpoint it.

NOT ON MY SUSPECT LIST (yet)

Nichole – see above – the part about the being too arrogant to be the mole.

Craig – seems too genuine? I don't know what it is, but if this guy is the mole, he's good!

Victoria – Not only does she not seem very bright, but her infatuation with Bobby just doesn't fit as mole behavior. It wasn't obvious enough to be present to throw others off, so I think it was genuine. And besides the other clues she's given, the fact that she would have a genuine crush on a fellow reality show contestant, especially someone like Bobby all point to the fact that she is too dim to pull off being the mole.

Mark – something last week had me convinced he is NOT the mole, forgot what it was, but it sticks with me enough to know that I still do not suspect this guy at all. Just seems too real I guess.

I guess after re-reading my contestant breakdown, my official mole guess after seeing this week's episode is Clay.

Chris' guess is Paul.

Jamiahsh can post his guess in comments.