

From One Optimist to Another

I have always admired the work of Michael J. Fox. Although I usually had to find another tv in the house to watch his fabulous role as Uber-conservative Alex P. Keaton on *Family Ties*, the family did enjoy the *Back to the Future* trilogy and the original *Teen Wolf*. Another of my favorite Fox movies is *The Secret of My Success* in which he plays a young man climbing the corporate ladder without really trying. I admit that I was not an avid fan of his second major series *Spin City*, during the course of which he made public his Parkinson's Disease diagnosis.

The past decade of Michael's life is chronicled in the excellent autobiography, *Always Looking Up: The Adventures of an Incurable Optimist*. The book is broken down into four extremely informative, touching, and HILARIOUS sections each showing how he has embraced his new life. His decision to retire (maybe not permanently) from acting, politics (ok so maybe not the best reading ever, but), faith, and family have all played a part in the creation of the Michael J. Fox Foundation which not only funds PD research but for other debilitating diseases as well.

While reading about his political views did get kind of dry, it did hold my interest with some of the humorous anecdotes that were a highlight of the entire book. I loved the dedication he pays to his wife, Tracy (who played his girlfriend Ellen on *Ties*), son Sam, twin daughters Aquinnah and Schuyler, and 8-year old Esme (who was born following Mike's diagnosis... COOL!) Cross-country road trips, playing guitar with The Who (it really WAS him playing Johnny B. Goode in *Back to the Future*), and his battle with Rush Limbaugh (the BEST part of the Politics section) are just a few of the remarkable tales he spins.

Through it all, one thing was quite evident: Mr. Fox's

unwavering optimism. Never for one instant did I find that he was painting a picture asking for the reader's sympathy. It just proves the cliché that when one is given lemons he should make lemonade and who doesn't like a tall cool glass of lemonade.

Vacation Diary – Chapter Three

Tuesday, Oct 21 – We visited Universal Studios, Islands of Adventure, and the Out of Control Magic Show at Wonderworks. Universal and Islands are right next to each other, but there is a lot of walking between the two. A lot of walking and not so much for the kids. But they did have fun, especially Disney who got to see Barney Live. I missed the Animal Actors show this year, but I was more in the mood for rides, and we got to ride plenty. The new Simpsons ride is actually better than I expected. It's the old Back to the Future ride except you are now riding through Springfield. The waiting area is themed well, and you get to watch little Simpsons snippets while you wait – talk about making the time go by fast! The ride is very cool, and you actually feel like you're riding around Springfield. The Mummy ride is still my favorite thing in both parks, and it's as cool as I remember. I especially like sitting near people who haven't been on it before – it's a blast to see the reactions to the haunted house meets roller coaster. Over at Islands, we got positively soaked to the core riding the Bluto boat ride, but that was expected because I rode it twice – those huge raft rides are my favorite type of water ride. My 4-year-old Sammie hated it, much to my surprise because she was just playing in the sprinklers at Epcot the night before. But she felt better after going on

one of the kids' favorites, the Cat in The Hat ride. Our two-year-old loved that one too. We were a bit strapped for time and didn't get to try some of the coasters and other rides I've never been on over at Islands, but oh well, we still had fun. And my husband got chosen again (4th time now) to be an "actor" in the skit they do before the Earthquake ride which is now known as "Disaster". They redid it and added a cool hologram of Christopher Walken. And they chose my husband to be the "hunky" lead actor – but then, I always knew that ☐

The magic show was a lot of fun and it made me want to produce something like it locally for our community theater. It's kind of like stand-up comedy AND magic in one, with lots of audience participation. My husband, daughter, and our friend were all chosen to go on stage, and I filled up the camera's memory card trying to record everything. And a note to Jamiahsh – you really don't know me well enough by now to not point at me when they're asking for volunteers?!? You are so lucky he didn't pick me – I would have blamed you and had your head! Just kidding... well, kind of, but don't do that again!

Sci-Fi... Not Just The Final Frontier

Another of the AFI list of top 10 categories was Science Fiction (which some believe will be tomorrow's "science fact." I promise I will not bore and go into depth on each of the genre's... just those I know a bit about from viewing.

Their List:

- *Back to the Future*
- *Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956)*

- *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*
- *Alien*
- *Blade Runner*
- *The Day the Earth Stood Still*
- *A Clockwork Orange*
- *E.T. The Extraterrestrial*
- *Star Wars*
- *2001: A Space Odyssey*

I will agree with the five films that I know well to a point. I'm not sure if I would include *Back to the Future*. Sure it is a fun time-travel movie that I have watched multiple times, but will people remember it 30 years from now. *T2* is the best of the Terminator series and a wonder of film-making even 17 years later. *Blade Runner* is perhaps best summed up as a cult favorite (one of Harrison Ford's semi-forgotten films... not by me, but...). *Aliens* and *The Empire Strikes Back* were far superior movies than their predecessors. *E.T.* almost could have been included in the fantasy category but should be included on either. And their top choice? I could not make it through the first 45 minutes of silence and a representation of the beginning of man set to the magnificent strains of Richard Strauss' *Also Sprach Zarathustra*.

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Movie to Broadway

Ok... a recent trend that has come to the Broadway stage is the reimagining of Hollywood movies as stage musicals. I am not speaking of Disney animated features being adapted for the stage (I have made at least 2 postings on that subject). I have felt that the best of these cartoons easily lend

themselves to staging. However, musicals such as [The Producers](#), [Hairspray](#), [Xanadu](#), and most recently, [Young Frankenstein](#) all seem to be doing quite well.

I think the strangest of these creations is *Xanadu*. The [1980 movie](#) was to be Olivia-Newton John's follow-up to the phenomenal hit *Grease*. I'm not precisely sure why the movie flopped but it could have been the death of disco or perhaps that the movie was just terrible. It was the winner(?) of 1 Razzie and nominated for 4 others. Hopefully, I am not going to be the victim of a mob of cultists who actually liked the movie. Strangely enough 25 years later, nostalgia (or the few people who have actually seen and enjoyed the movie) must have created the necessity to revisit the movie. I wish I could dwell on the plot of the show. However, I have never seen either version and reading synopses just gave me a headache because they made little sense.

I suppose that this streak of bringing movies to the stage will continue as long as they are profitable. On the horizon a stage version of the Dolly Parton, Lili Tomlin, and Jane Fonda classic(?) [9 to 5](#) opens in Los Angeles in September '08. I'm certain that I have heard rumors of a [Back to the Future](#) musical being produced. Any others? While Mel Brooks seems to be on a role, he might as well develop [Spaceballs](#) or [Blazing Saddles](#). Or how about [Road House: The Stage Version Of The Cinema Classic That Starred Patrick Swayze, Except This One Stars Taimak From The 80's Cult Classic "The Last Dragon" Wearing A Blonde Mullet Wig](#) (oops that was not a musical, correct?).

What other movies would make great musicals or which am I forgetting besides *Footloose* and *Saturday Night Fever* to name a few.

Back to drama

It was a little exhilarating to get back to the children's drama this weekend. We had been off for over a month, partly due to Easter. So this weekend we were back with a vengeance, err- three of us were. I guess the other two were still on spring break or something. Fortunately the head director, I guess I can call him, was there with his son who plays one of the roles on Sunday morning (this is Saturday night I'm talking about), though unfortunately not one of the characters who was needed. Young as he is (4th grade!) he happily brought out a script and filled in. No, he couldn't be expected to memorize it in a half hour. The other character was a puppet, so another drama regular easily filled in, no memorization even required for that role.

I play sort of a clumsy, bumbling, absent-minded TV scientist in the spirit (but not the intelligence) of [Christopher Lloyd's](#) Doc Brown character from [Back to the Future](#). There are two assistants played by kids, one an airhead-ish lab assistant and the other a geeky research assistant. The one tends to ask some very silly questions (to which my character has a wacky response) and the other is immersed in a computer and constantly correcting anything misspoke (usually by me). There is also a puppet I mentioned and a guest character, a recurring role played about once every other month.

The lesson was about being thankful. My character was the one who had something to learn about it, as almost usual, but comes up with the proper thankfulness in the end, attributing all power to Jesus, to whom we should be thankful. Presumably this leads into the actual lesson taught after the drama which should be on the same topic. However, I have never heard any of the lessons as I usually go directly to 4th/5th grade

(drama is only for K-3) right after the drama, or head into the worship service if it is a last weekend of the month like this weekend.

I wish I could say it went perfectly, but a couple of us had some minor line trouble (nothing the kids in the audience would notice) and for some reason none of us thought of putting a microphone on our young 4th-grade fill-in so he was very hard to hear. Well, nothing can be done for it now but to move forward. I will be looking forward to the monthly rehearsal this Wednesday.

Really Quacks Me Up

Well, I'm kinda thinking my blog will be a hodgepodge (?) of just about everything I enjoy. I enjoy a good movie (or even some bad movies). Speaking of bad movies, the guy who created Howard the Duck, Steve Gerber, just passed away. Apparently, the comic book from the 70s was a cult hit. Somehow, Mr. George Lucas came up with the brilliant idea that it would make a box-office hit. The movie came out in 1986. The only relatively recognizable actor in it is Lea Thompson (of Back to the Future fame). I believe ol' George was once again attempting to create a new money making franchise along with the then in-limbo Star Wars saga and the popular Indiana Jones series. Needless to say, Howard the Duck was a miserable flop. It is one of those movies which may be enjoyable with a group of friends who just want to sit around, waste a hour and a half, and laugh at the absurdity. It would also be a great way to relive the culture of the mid-1980s. Big hair, bubble gum pop music, and forgotten actors of the day (whatever became of Lea Thompson?). But, if you want to have a good laugh check out Howard the Duck just to see the duck from outer space rock

and roll with Lea Thompson. I think the best part of the movie is the theme song and that is not that great. It sounds like a great movie to watch with your band of theatre chums. Thank you Bryan Times for publishing an article about an otherwise forgettable comic book writer who probably will go down in history for the creation of one of the biggest "Turkeys" or should I say "Ducks" in movie history. I also found out via IMDB.com that Tim Robbins (For comic relief?) also was in it and that no less than 8 actors are credited with playing the title role. Also, may be a good movie for children of all ages to enjoy. ☒