

Gay Theatre Strikes Responsive Chord

By Steve Madison

The discussion in the last issue of the general lack of gay-themed theater pieces struck a responsive chord in several people I've talked with lately.

Some of the talk, of course, has centered on getting our best writers of today busy writing some decent musical plays. Stephen Sondheim, without question the preeminent musical presence in our theater now, has never penned a gay-oriented musical. (Many argued that the protagonist in Sondheim's "Company" was, in fact, gay, though the play waffles on the idea, and Sondheim

Civilized Behavior

certainly has never suggested such a thought might be true.) Having tackled such diverse subjects in his shows as insanity ("Anyone Can Whistle"), Grand Guignol ("Sweeney Todd," his supreme masterpiece), show biz ("Follies"), Roman farce ("A Funny Thing Happened on My Way to the Forum"), Japanese Noh drama ("Pacific Overtures"), and fairy tales (the current "Into the Woods"), what better subject would there be for SS than homosexual ambivalence? The mind

reels at what he could do with an interesting gay situation.

Harvey Fierstein is also working on a new musical after winning a 1984 Tony award for his book for "La Cage aux Folles." Possible Jerry Herman (who wrote the score for "Folles") or Cy Coleman could supply the music for Harvey's alleged show. Though several titles of projects have been mentioned, one must assume that the subject matter will be of gay interest.

Several years ago, I met a member of an unusual biker club from Washington. These motorcyclists were also theater buffs, and every year to raise money for their organization, they put on famous musicals (probably

NOT with the consent of the holders of the show's rights for production) with men playing all the parts. In "The Music Man," for example, Professor Harold Hill falls for town librarian Marion (as opposed to Marian) Paroo, a male. The biker assured me the female roles were NOT played in drag but were gender-changed and subsequent lyrics adjusted to accommodate such changes. I remarked that the entire idea was fascinating. He told me they had never played to an empty seat. Are there any producers out there willing to take a chance on "My Fair Stud," for instance, or maybe "The Unsinkable Marvin Brown"? Think about it! This could be the start of something big!

Communication Is The Key

Hello again. I can't believe it's October already. Where did the summer go? Where has the year gone? I swear, this is one of the fastest years I can ever remember. Recently, when I talked to my parents, they asked if I was coming home for Labor Day (they live about 500 miles away). I said I wasn't sure because I had been there not too long ago. My mom said, "That was Easter." Whoops!

A group that I would like to spotlight this month is PFLAG - Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. This is a national organization with a chapter in Charlotte. In fact, our PFLAG chapter was featured in a special segment on ABC's Worldwide Evening News in March. Nila and Stokley Bailey, who chair the Charlotte group, came out on national television along with other parents to share their feelings and experiences, but most importantly, to express their love and respect for their gay children. Can you imagine YOUR parents doing this? Can you even imagine your parents attending a PFLAG meeting? Have you even told your parents that you're gay? Those of you who might be considering "dropping the bomb" - I encourage you to call Nila and Stokley at 364-1474.

They will be able to give you some good advice on how to approach your parents, and recommend some books for you and your parents to read if that is something you feel would be helpful. I've had the opportunity to meet various members of PFLAG and believe me, it is just wonderful to feel the support from those people. They couldn't be more enthusiastic about their mission, nor more compassionate. PFLAG holds monthly meetings on the second Thursday at 7:30 pm at Christ Episcopal Church. As "children" we are welcome there also. I think you would find attendance at a PFLAG meeting to be an uplifting experience - certainly a few hours of your time well spent.

Over the last two years - and I hate to admit it took me almost 40 years to realize this - I've begun to recognize the value of open and honest communication. In fact, I believe it's the #1 factor in beginning and sustaining a relationship (in whatever form that relationship takes). Communication is something we do routinely, but open and honest communication is not routine. It takes constant evaluation of our feelings and a desire to let others see us as we really are -

and that is just plain difficult. I've had a fear for years that if I really said what I was thinking, people wouldn't like me. The fallacy is that people really never get to know you either. They like/dislike the image you project rather than the real person. What I have discovered is that when I AM open and honest, it gives me a real sense of freedom because it takes away the artificial barriers I put up and actually allows me to feel closer to the person I'm with. I've also discovered that when two people open up to each other, they often find that they share many of the same things - be it fears, insecurities, needs, hopes, dreams, etc.

To practice open and honest communication also means that I will be a good listener - by really trying to understand what the other person is saying, and at the same time to be non-judgmental and non-defensive. Someone said to me a while back, "If I hurt you or make you angry, tell me. It won't change my feelings for you." What a beautiful gift to give someone you care about! "...and it won't change my feelings for you" - why are we afraid to be open and honest with each other? Because we fear that the other person's feelings may change when we

THE SOFT SPOT

By Ann Michele

express negative emotion (i.e., something that suggests we're other than 100% content at this moment). In reality, allowing the other person to talk freely enhances the relationship; shutting down, either as the giver or receiver, destroys it.

What happens when you HAVE to tell someone something you know they don't want to hear? ... whether it's constructive criticism, something you did, something you want to do. Boy, for me, the urge to play ostrich and bury my head in the sand is real great (maybe if I ignore it, it will go away. Fat chance!). On the receiving end, people can sense when something is not quite right, but they often don't know why. Even if I don't like it, I can deal with reality far better than not knowing. My mind plays all kinds of tricks on me when I'm unsure, but the truth forces me to look at the situation for what it really is. And even though telling someone the truth may be painful for them, it's really showing respect for that person and their feelings.

As the song says, "Don't Worry, Be Happy." Have a good October, watch out for those ghostesses and goblins and I'll see you soon.

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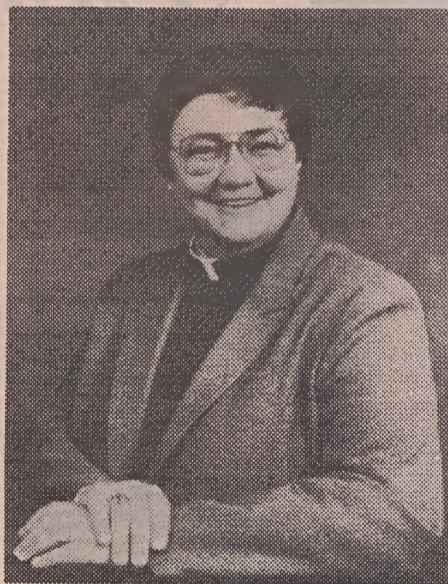
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