



Roy Leonard's Ramblings

Midwesterners know the name, Roy Leonard, well. For more than 30 years he dominated the airwaves on Saturday mornings with ratings on WGN that were higher than the next four stations combined.

His weekday shows were also top rated as he interviewed celebrities, authors, politicians, musicians and sports figures, who made a stop at the WGN studios a must.

Starting in 1985 he became host of WGN-TV's "Family Classics" after the sudden passing of Frazier Thomas. He hosted many WGN-TV Specials and was Film and Theatre critic on the nightly news.

Musicals - Charles Troy, a historian who shares his astounding knowledge

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By **Roy Leonard**, July 29, 2014 at 10:23 am



Brigadoon at Chicago's Goodman Theatre

There's a huge demand suddenly for a revival of America's great stage musicals. *Brigadoon* is setting box office records at our Goodman Theatre. The New York Times sent their theatre critic to see it who raved about this "first class revival where the kilts flap and fly, the

bagpipes pipe away and rapturous music including the show's signature song *Almost Like Being In Love* flow forth from start to finish" The Marriott Theatre in Lincolnshire is bring back *On the Town*, the hit musical from 1944 with Leonard Bernstein's music, Comden & Green's lyrics telling the story of 3 American's sailors on a 24 hr. leave in New York City. The 1949 movie version starred Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra and Jules Munshin. that starts, Aug 20th. On August 9th, The Light Opera works production of *Fiddler on the Roof* begins at Cahn Auditorium in Evanston thru the 24th. Drury Lane in Oakbrook is bringing back *Camelot* from October 30th into next January and *Annie* returns for a short run at the Cadillac Palace downtown thru Nov 30th.

Now I'd like to tell you how to enjoy them even more. The man who will help is Charles Troy, the acclaimed musical theatre historian and graphic designer who has created over 50 multi-media presentations and brought them to countless local and national audiences. I first saw Charles a few months back at the beautifully refurbished Skokie Theatre at 7924 Lincoln Ave., and have been back 3 times since, learning things I has never known about shows I've been enjoying for years. He appears there the first Wednesday of every month at 1:30 and on August 6th will give us "The Creation of *Fiddler on the Roof*", just in time for the Light Opera Works production in Evanston at Cahn auditorium that begins on the 9th.

Troy goes way back to how the idea for a musical came to be. In his "The Creation of *My Fair Lady*" he starts with a bit of history on George Bernard Shaw who wrote a play back in 1912 called "Pygmalion" about a professor of phonetics, Henry Higgins, who makes a bet that he can train a bedraggled Cockney flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, to pass for a duchess at an ambassador's garden party by teaching her to assume a veneer of gentility, the most important element of which he believes is impeccable speech. It's really a sharp lampoon of the rigid British class system of the day and a commentary on women's independence.

All of this is accompanied by graphics, voices of the participants, film and theatre clips that make it entertaining as well as informative. When we finally get to the making of the story into a Broadway musical we actually hear the voices of Frederic Lower and Alan Jay Lerner talk about their creation and to conclude his presentation Troy shows us the final scene of Gabriel Pascal's film version of "Pygmalion" with Leslie Howard & Wendy Hiller followed immediately by Rex Harrison & Audrey Hepburn in the classic 1964 film ending. It's a great hour of musical history.

Troy has some engagements coming up soon in your area. On August 4th he'll be at the Wilmette Theatre at 7:30 with "Bernstein, Comden & Green Two 'Town' Triumphs"; On the 5th at Ela Township Community Center in Lake Zurich with "the-'Just-Too-Marvelous-Johnny Mercer"; Aug 6th at 1:30 at the Skokie Theatre with "The Creation of 'Fiddler On the Roof'"; and Aug 31st over in Three Oaks, Michigan at the Acorn Theatre, "The Creation of the Wizard of Oz. As you can see he's much in demand. Here's his web-site so you can see his entire schedule:

<http://www.charlestroy.com/Site/homepage.html>

To give you an example of how much fun this can be, Troy recently posted a 1776 quiz in which he mentioned that Sherman Edwards who wrote the score for the hit musical also wrote some pop Tunes. Was it Eddie Fischer's "Dungaree Doll" in 1955? or the 1959 hit by The Tempos "See You In September"? or the Johnny Mathis million seller in 1957 "Wonderful Wonderful"? I was surprised to find out it was ALL THREE! Did you know that 1776 was the first musical ever performed at the White House? What president extended the invitation? Richard Nixon asked it to be performed at the White House on Washington's Birthday in 1970. And Troy also dredged up the fact that Thomas Jefferson's violin playing was the inspiration for Sherman Edwards to write "He Plays the Violin" in Act 1 of the original show.

This man really does his homework. And you'll really enjoy his presentations. Try to get to the Skokie Theatre, next Wed (Aug 6th) at 1:30 for his *The Making of Fiddler on The Roof*. I'll see you there.