

## Good Week to Get Out of the House

I'm still trying to decide exactly at what point in time LuAnn and I became hermits. Let's accept Wikipedia's definition of a hermit as "a person who lives to some greater or lesser degree in seclusion from society."

It wasn't that long ago when we would regularly attend dances, concerts, festivals, plays and any number of other activities that required me to hoist my butt out of my overstuffed easy chair. But that seems to be getting harder to do every year.

We long ago stopped going to movies – I can deal with the ticket prices and buckets of overpriced artery-clogging popcorn, but the sticky floors, chatty patrons in close proximity and transit hassles eventually made the prospect insufficiently compelling.

I think what it boils down to is that I have gotten fond of having complete control over my environment. Our house is pretty much exactly the way we like it, but once I step outside my door anarchy and chaos reigns. Random events and variables outside my influence then dictate my relative levels of happiness or distress.

One of the things I really miss by staying safely insulated from life on the outside is attending live performances, especially plays. Between the University of Iowa, Riverside Theatre and a variety of other local groups there's always something worth seeing.

One day a couple of weeks ago when I was dazed and confused while navigating the world outside of my living room, I agreed to become a member of the orchestra for Iowa City Community Theatre's upcoming production of the play *Wonderful Town*. It's a Leonard Bernstein musical comedy about two young women from a small town in Ohio, looking for their big break in Greenwich Village in the 1930's.

The original production in 1953 starred Rosalind Russell (winning five Tony awards) and its 2003 Broadway revival ran for almost three years, winning

an additional five Tonys. The classic Bernstein score has several recognizable tunes that I often wake up humming because they're stuck in my head.

Ed Kottick, the play's musical director, is a retired UI professor of musicology. A renowned harpsichord history expert, Ed is the only person I know who is capable of arguing that an F-sharp is not technically the same note as a G-flat, without sounding pompous.

We also had an interesting conversation about tuning, and I discovered that a musician in 17<sup>th</sup> century Venice couldn't play his cornetto at a gig in Düsseldorf, because each town had its own standard of pitch which made his instrument useless anywhere else. Good to know.

Anyway, there's a full 29-piece orchestra for Wonderful Town, made up of the finest musicians available in the Midwest (my own participation notwithstanding) who are willing to play difficult music with a grinding schedule of rehearsals and performances...for free.

I suppose the same could be said of the actors in the play, although we haven't had a full cast rehearsal to date, so I haven't met any of them yet. I've been assured, however, that they can all carry a tune, know their lines and are kind to their mothers.

Ed says this is the most elaborate and expensive (to produce) community-based play he's ever been involved with, and he wasn't born yesterday (understatement). It will be performed at the historic Englert Theatre this Thursday through Sunday.

Do yourself a favor and hoist your butt out of your own easy chair later this week to catch a performance of Wonderful Town. You'll really enjoy the music, the acting, the Englert Theatre, and I'm cautiously optimistic that the floors won't be sticky.

*During his infrequent departures from his house, Dave Parsons works at his business on the Coralville Strip.*