

HUMOR

"Honey, what's a 1944 Celeste Holm musical?"

These kinds of requests are frequently shouted across my house by my boyfriend, Mr. Times-Crossword-Puzzle-in-Ink. "Bloomer Girl," I shout back.

I'm hopeless when it comes to crosswords (eight-letter word for my attitude: W-H-O-C-A-R-E-S), but I'm a reliable source for the occasional music theater reference.

The fact is, I've never seen *Bloomer Girl*. I've never heard *Bloomer Girl*. Hell, I don't even know what a bloomer girl is. But I do know that *Bloomer Girl* was a 1944 Celeste Holm musical. You see, I'm not just a music theater queen, I'm an empress.

And I have been ever since I burst out of the womb crying: "Hello, everybody! My name's June. What's yours?"

I mean, I was the 9-year-old who scolded the clerks in the record department at Sears for putting original cast albums under "soundtracks." When I went to college I even *majored* in musical theater. Like the song says, "Gayer than laughter am I."

Certainly it's no accident that plays without music are called "straight plays." But what is it about musicals that so captivates gay men?

It's not because musicals are created by gay men, although they often are. In fact, Arthur Freed's production unit, responsible for nearly all of the classic MGM musicals of the 1940s and '50s, was so queer it was known in the industry as "Freed's Fairies." Likewise for the creative teams behind the current hits *Chicago* and *Hairspray*, as well as nearly every high school production since the dawn of time.

But lots of straight men create musicals and lots go to them, although I'm sure many a

Give 'em the old razzle dazzle

Gay men and musicals

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARC

by Marc Acito



mother has brought her sissy boy to a matinee of *Annie* and gone home singing, "My son'll come out...tomorrow!"

So what is it about musicals? Here's an eight-letter word for my attitude: W-H-O-C-A-R-E-S?

Musicals are fun; they're buoyant and joyful and not prone to a lot of introspection. Look at *Cats*, which is a two-hour pageant to see which feline gets into kitty heaven. (Again, W-H-O-C-A-R-E-S?) They should post a sign in the lobby saying, "Warning: This musical contains material which may insult your intelligence."

And even a classic like *Oklahoma!* is just a simple story about who Laurie will choose to escort her to the box social, which sounds to me like a lesbian potluck.

Critics of the form snipe that "people in real life don't burst into song." Oh yeah? I know guys who are so queer they not only burst into song, they burst into flames.

Presumably one of the reasons *Chicago* is such a hit is that it solves this problem by making all the songs occur in the character Roxie

Hart's head. Now don't get me wrong; I loved this movie. (Richard Gere has the role of a lifetime as a sleazy lawyer. And Catherine Zeta-Jones has the role of a lifetime as an opportunistic gold digger who'll do anything for publicity. She also plays one in the film.)

But the critics miss the point. Musicals are back because we need them. Now more than ever. This is a form that blossomed during the anxieties of a world at war; in fact, research shows that Carol Channing actually started touring in *Hello, Dolly!* during the Crusades.

We miss seeing movies with scenes like the one where Renée Zellweger dances on top of the word "Roxie" in lights, although to be more accurate it should have said,

"Anoroxie." (I thought she was terrific, but it's definitely time for this girl to go back on solid foods. Rumor has it she collapsed in rehearsals from exhaustion and was faxed to the hospital.)

Even the stepchild of musicals, the beach movie, is being revived with a spring break-themed film recently rushed into production starring *American Idol*'s Kelly Clarkson and Justin Guarini, the latter of whom is clearly destined for greatness because he has Barbra Streisand's hairdo from *A Star Is Born*.

I think we should just recut all the current movies to make them musicals. For instance, in *Far from Heaven* when Julianne Moore walks in on Dennis Quaid with another man, you could splice in some footage of him as Jerry Lee Lewis singing, "Goodness gracious, great balls of fire!"

And in an effort to lighten up *Gangs of New York*, you could use the scene in *Charlie's Angels* where Cameron Diaz dances in her Spider-Man underpants.

Now if we can just figure out how to get Nicole Kidman singing "Material Girl" into *The Hours*, we'd be set. Like the song says, "Wouldn't it be lovely?" And that, my friends, is *The Gospel According to Marc*. ☐

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