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the pink pastor

by Rev. Clinton Crawshaw
Email: pastor@bigesymcc.com
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Look at the world through Easter eyes.

Easter is all about ritualizing and celebrating the memorial of an event – an event that forces us to reexamine the everyday world around us, and see it through the eyes of the redeemed; through eyes open to transfiguration and transformation. These eyes are no longer bound by society, expectation, guilt or even fear of death – they are eyes that can see the glory of God in all things.

We probably all live with things, people and in places that we love – we are surrounded by extraordinary transcendence; birds, flowers, trees, butterflies, clouds – all things that leave small children breathless with awe, and yet we take them for granted. It is a part of our everyday functioning that we put our awe to bed and frequently never wake it up.

It would be like a perpetual acid trip to see the world always in its 'glory state' – and yet this would be closer to living in 'reality' than the workaday blindness we drift through the world in. Easter reminds us that the things we name and dismiss are extraordinary, that men killed on crosses rise from the grave, that thieves executed are seated in glory, and that men and women weighted down by feelings of sin and guilt – struggling through dreary lives of labor and strife are actually shining things, beloved of God and radiating the glory of their creation.

My parents taught me all about transcendence. My parents are both professional artists, and as a child they taught me to observe things for what they are, and not 'name them and dismiss them'. In this way a tree becomes not just a 'tree', but a blaze of yellow ochre, Hooker's Green and Crimson Alizarin. We rave about the beauty of light falling on fence posts, and the majesty of power lines crossing sunlit fields – from them I learned that there are no ordinary things.

Trees and colors, clouds, mountains and seas all were examined and their glory extracted and praised and discussed.

My parents taught me how things REALLY are, not how to ignore them.

Try taking up painting as a way to look at the world aright again, and leave behind the workaday blindnesses of our life! It is a very good exercise, and once you grasp the transcendence in the everyday world, then the message of Easter doesn't seem so strange. God poured out into a human being, and giving his life for all humanity is a little easier to grasp when you see just how extraordinary and wonderful humanity really is. When you treasure the diversity and richness of humanity and cease to avoid it or tame it then God's passion and compassion for that same humanity flows naturally from God's creation of that same humanity.

To the disciples, Jesus was something very different to how we see him – he was an everyday fact, and a fleshy presence that ate, slept, went to the bathroom and drank. Even though their minds may have told them over and over that he was something extraordinary, it is unlikely that their workaday blindness could have been completely

suppressed. It was only in the miraculous, in the Transfiguration on Mt Tabor and in the ultimate transfiguration of the Easter Resurrection that they were able to see the truth. It was not a change; it was a revealing something that had always been there. This same truth lies to some extent in all of us – we are vastly more than 'oursweating selves'; we are Spirit and Flesh, and emotion and intellect **and** sexuality – we are whole people.

In the Bible important things often seem to happen on mountains and in deserts. Our perceptions are altered when we move away from our 'business as usual' environments and get to see things clearly. Our moments of transfiguration and transcendence are often set in places where we gain perspective on our society and our workaday lives. Mountains diminish the works of humanity to toy scale, and immerse us in greater reality. Deserts do the same through distance and lack of mundane competition. Their openness and their vastness force us to rest in reality, and prevent us from packing inventions and familiarities around us to hide our vanity and our smallness from the vastness of God.

Each and every one of us must find our 'Easter eyes'; must allow ourselves to be open to transcendence and change. It is only the glimpse of **reality** – of the eternal, that draws us toward God. When we are content to lie in the clutter of human concerns and worries we deceive ourselves that coping with that clutter is in some way success, is in some way growth, when in fact it is too often a permanent retreat into superficiality and distraction.

We all too easily become like some elderly folk, who shut themselves in their homes collecting debris, newspapers, clutter and filth like a bug walling up its burrow – outside may be glorious sunshine, cool crisp winds, extraordinary sunsets and dew adorned sunrises, outside may be the unveiled glory of God, inside is the unholy fug of a ruined life – the tragic remnants of human hope.

Where we deceive ourselves more than anything else is in the belief that filling our lives with cats, old newspapers and filthy clothes is somehow worse than filling it with Lexuses and leather sofas – social approval and shiny careers.

Both lives are too full of trash to allow for the light of reality. Both lives are too full of trash to let us see the glory if this Easter world.

Rev Clinton Crawshaw is the Pastor of The Big Easy Metropolitan Community Church in New Orleans. The Church meets every Sunday for our Whole Church Praise and Worship Service at 5.00pm at 1333 S. Carrollton Ave. (St Matthew's church) NOLA 70118 – ring or email for details. Our smaller 'liturgical' service is held in the chapel at 1.00pm. revcrawshaw@yahoo.com 504 214 4340. www.bigesymcc.com.

trodding the boards ...from 33

of steel. And such a cutie, too!

Gina Abromson was just right as the afraid-of-success daughter Suzanne, by turns sweet, smart and neurotic. Kevin Songy nicely brought out Rob's intelligence and common sense, a man more liberal

than his Orthodox parents but conservative enough to espouse "traditional" values.

James Howard Wright, as David & Suzanne's decent father, was a man more concerned with his tennis game and business than his emotions but, when pushed, could make how he felt perfectly clear. Wright is an actor new to me and I look forward to seeing more of his work. In what could have been the most challenging role, the "Jewish mother", Tonia Aiken wisely didn't try to effect a Jewish accent and, though betraying hints of a Southern (or New Orleans) one, came off in a beautifully shaded performance as a decent woman with wide-ranging interests caught between her personal desires and wanting what's best for her children.

Piazza's only misfire were the special effects to accompany David's description of Valhalla which looked more Walgreenian than Wagnerian.

Over 16 years since its much maligned debut, **Twilight of the Golds** remains intellectually stimulating even if we still can't determine a child's sexuality from genetic testing...and, maybe, even with more advanced testing techniques, never will. Though it may have lost some of its urgency from a time when being "gay=AIDS=death" in many straight people's minds, with a little tweaking of outdated references (Ivan Boesky, Phil Donahue, etc.), ATNO's production demonstrated that a revival of **Twilight** might now find a more receptive audience.

While **The Twilight of the Golds** may not be in the same league as such other American family dramas as **Long Day's Journey Into Night** or **Death of a Salesman**, it certainly did not deserve the unvarnished scorn that Brantley heaped upon it. Given that it was one of his first reviews in the **Times**, perhaps he was just trying to show that he had a set of balls as big as Frank Rich's.

Steal Away at the Anthony Bean Community Theater

Take five senior women in Depression Era, gangster-infested Chicago; one young girl who wants to do good deeds; a bank that refuses to offer a loan; and a collection of guns and pistols, and the result is Ramona King's **Steal Away**, the first play ever done at the Anthony Bean Community Theater and recently revived in honor of the theater's 10th anniversary. As one audience member was heard to say, "This is too crazy." Well, it was. But it was also fun.

Jade Radford's Tracy gets the wheels turning by suggesting to her grandmother and four of her friends that they rob a bank to help support their Negro Women's Organization for Youth Education which has just been turned down for a bank loan. ("They said colored children don't need no education," Grandmother Stella says. "They got a lot of ways of spitting on you.")

The rest of the talky Act One has the women deciding "Will they?" or "Won't they?" Act Two has them getting ready to do the deed, its aftermath and, as two of the women act out a shoot-out (don't ask!), the funniest scene ever seen at ABCT. Though none of this is to be taken too seriously, it was refreshing to view a portrait of a group of educated black woman in the 1930s; how many other plays can boast of that?

Nadine Cutno, Gail Glapion, Morgan Lawrence, Venita Matthews and Linda Merritt, along with Ms. Radford, brought King's natu-

ral sounding dialog to life. In a group of skilled comedienne, Cutno stood out for her amusing line readings and humorous physical shtik with Matthews right behind her. As Grandmother Stella, Glapion was solid and added a dollop of gravitas to the proceedings, and while it didn't seem like Lawrence was the same age as her co-stars, this 17-year-old actress had me convinced she was at least in her 40s.

On John Grimsley's tasteful set, Anthony Bean's direction was well-paced and extracted all the humor that was to be had from King's script. Here's to ABCT's next ten years!

13 at Le Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré

I have no doubt that Alexis Bruza, Nicholas Dayton, Caleb Engen, Morgan Laurent, Maddie Mateer, Jonathan May, Christopher Newhouse, Rilan Roppolo, Ximone Rose, Catherine Simpson, Sarah Stuckey, Dillon Tauzin and Dylan Campbell Troost will go on to bigger and better things given the estimable amount of talent that they display in Le Petit's current production of **13**. Well, I don't know about bigger, but certainly better.

With a score by Jason Robert Brown and a book by Dan Elish & Robert Horn, **13** diagrammatically relates the tale of a soon-to-be-barmitzvahed New York City boy who moves to a small town in Indiana with his mother when his parents split up. He tries to get in with the "cool" kids but discovers his true friends are the school geek and the disabled kid. It's like an afternoon TV special with music, an adult version of how kids think, feel and express themselves.

That would not be too bad if the music was at all distinguished. But Brown's songs all tend to be in the same relentlessly perky mode whether referencing **Fiddler on the Roof** or **West Side Story**. Perhaps this was the fault of the arrangements, but I waited in vain for a power ballad or a patter song or, well, anything slightly different as too many tunes went on endlessly.

Director/choreographer Blake Coheley did as good a job as the material allowed, never letting the momentum flag. All the kids danced and sang like pros and if there were a few rough patches vocally, it could've been due to the strain of the opening week's rehearsal overload. Likewise, if it was occasionally difficult to understand some of the words, I'm not sure if the fault lay in sloppy diction or glitches in Steve Roussel's sound design.

As the fish out of water, Roppolo projected a sweetness that sometimes seemed at odds with his determination to fit in; a true NYer might've just tried to rise above these hicks but who knows what goes through the mind of a 12-year-old. Ximone Rose fulfilled the leading lady promise indicated by her Passionella in NOCCA's **The Apple Tree**, though, even being a person of color in a small Midwest town, with her innate stylishness, I wonder if she would ever be an outsider; it might've been interesting had she and Morgan Laurent, as Kendra, switched roles. Laurent was fine as the object of too many boys' affections, but though cute'n'blonde, she winningly conveyed a certain insecurity that might've been used to even better advantage as one not in the "in" group.

Not surprisingly, the baddies—Brett the jock with the hots for Kendra and Lucy, Kendra's skanky best friend who schemes to get Brett for herself—had the best, most clearly defined roles and Tauzin & Simpson made the most of them. Newhouse as Archie, who's not above using his disability to get what he wants, brought an endearing bitchiness to what could've been a saccharine sweet interpretation.

That Le Petit teamed with NOCCA to showcase the future of New Orleans' theater talent is a wonderful thing. I hope this partnership continues. But how about doing something a little more worthy of the performers' talents next time? For starters, how about Elizabeth Swados' **Runaways**? First done in 1978, it's time for a new generation to bring this Tony-nominated musical to life.

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