



*"I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being." - Oscar Wilde*

This was supposed to be a straight review of "Elton John's Aida," the latest musical extravaganza at the Arts Center on Hilton Head. That was my plan. But a funny thing happened the day after I saw that big, bold, *spectacular* production. I saw a small, gentle, *delightful* production of "You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown." (This time, the venue was USCB.) That very same day, my husband was at the WJWJ studio giving his final performance in a daring, *provocative* production of "True West." Meanwhile, ARTworks had just wrapped what I'd heard was a terrific,

*innovative* production of "Painted Alice." (And now I'm completely out of adjectives.)

How could I confine my comments to "Elton John's Aida" (fabulous as it was!) when folks all over the Lowcountry had been turning themselves inside out for months – physically, emotionally, logistically – to give the gift of theatre, often to audiences far too small in number? Granted, these shows had finished their runs – nothing I could write would help boost attendance now – and "Aida" still had a few weeks left. But I just couldn't let those other shows fade from memory without some kind of modest homage.

Because making a play is *hard*. Those who involve themselves in that pursuit do so because they love it, but that doesn't make it any less difficult. Most people producing theatre here in Beaufort have to do it around their "day jobs" and rarely expect to be paid for their efforts. What they *do* expect – or hope for, anyway – is an audience. After weeks and months of exhausting work, they expect the people of their community to turn out for them.

And it just doesn't happen. Not like it should, anyway. There are plenty of reasons why, of course. Perfectly good reasons. We're too busy. We're too broke. We're too tired. We've got 1000 channels on TV. We've got Netflix. We've got Hulu and YouTube. Why should we rouse ourselves from the comfort of our couches, dress ourselves in something that doesn't involve elastic, and plunder our poor, beleaguered wallets when we've got it so good (and cheap) at home?

Hey, I'm just as lazy, low on funds, and addicted to "Glee" as the next gal. I feel your pain. I *share* our pain. So, don't worry – this is not one those columns in which the self-righteous Culture Champion mounts her high horse to brow-beat and guilt-trip her readers into "supporting the arts" – as if going to the theatre were your civic duty... some kindly, sacrificial act of altruism. No, folks – this is a sales pitch. I'm not here to tell you why supporting local theatre is good for the community, good for the economy, and good for the cast and crew. I'm here to tell you what's in it for *you*.