

Musical recalls Cupid's painful arrows

BY TREVOR LAUTENS, SPECIAL TO NORTH SHORE NEWS APRIL 12, 2013

HELL, I work hard. Have two jobs. Attend university. Pretend to be a landlord. So I'm taking the day off - just lazily writing about myself.

This shameless self-indulgence was touched off by a clipping of a North Shore News ad for *The Boy Friend* at Capilano University.

I clip a ton of stuff. Maybe two per cent stimulates, or becomes background for, published columns or actually goes somewhere. But this ad crawled insistently to my eye last Saturday morning. It demanded I go to the closing performance. *The Boy Friend* is special.

It's a frothy little English confection that genially satirizes the musicals and comedies of the 1920s-1930s. Sandy Wilson, who created it, and nothing else so successful, happily cannibalized the spirit of that era's shows.

It's set in France - when not at war, the English and French find each other impenetrably droll - at a young ladies' finishing school on the Riviera. Usual formula: Boy meets girl. They fall in love, of course. (Sticky business, love.) They're poor. All they want is a room in Bloomsbury.

Presto, finally they confess they've posed as poor - both, to their shame, belong to wealthy, aristocratic families.

Boisterous finale. Standing ovation. Everyone leaves happy. In fact the performance was so fluffily light-hearted that I awoke next morning with a happiness hangover, very rare.

Fine, but what's the personal angle, as we say in the biz, why did I move my tired bones to see Capilano's revival - saucily directed by Gillian Barber, artfully choreographed by Shelley Stewart Hunt, steering the kids' wonderful talent and energy?

Because, a lonely, travelling lad just turned 20, I saw the original West End production at Wyndhams Theatre, London, in 1954, only 59 years ago.

Regretfully, weeks later, having seen the original, I passed on the New York version of *The Boy Friend* and thus missed the Broadway debut of a 19-year-old English girl playing Polly, the lead female role. A star was born.

Her name, wait for it: Julie Andrews. (Aside: Vancouver's Stanley Theatre 50th anniversary season includes a big Andrews hit, *Mary Poppins*.)

The Boy Friend still plays in my aging heart. You see, my precious heartthrob then was also named Pollie/Polly. A pixie. I devotedly wrote her daily while on my downsized Grand Tour of Europe. Days before returning home I got a letter. Are they still called "Dear John letters"? As kindly as possible, she stated that another, more sophisticated older man had stolen her away.

In Paris' grey November rains I stumbled along the banks of the dark, brooding Seine, striking

melancholy poses. Fate meant me to be a poet, suffering. It was wrong.

Since then my heart has been broken by so many women and patched up so often that it looks like a road map of Switzerland.

- - -

Stephen Hume has no peer in his decades of commitment to women's right, native rights, and all manner of good causes, especially British Columbia's environment.

So when the Vancouver Sun columnist exposes as essentially fraudulent the stunningly expensive "green" fluorescent light bulbs purported to save power - with far shorter life than advertised, but above all as fire hazards that contain dangerous mercury, requiring clean-up instructions longer than the Versailles Treaty - sit up and take notice.

The federal government was persuaded to phase out - make illegal - "old-fashioned" incandescent light bulbs by the end of 2014.

Big blunder. Reverse this fast, Ottawa.

- - -

Big-money tower-builders met this week, slaving over the North Shore as The Next Big Thing. Most North Shoreans consider (any more) bloated, alienating towers as welcome as a plague of boils.

Onni outrageously bullied Couns. Pam Bookham and Rod Clark in a big ad - its president Rossano De Cotiis, even hinting their words about Onni's proposed towers at 13th and Lonsdale were "defamatory" - huffily took away its marbles, then convinced North Vancouver City to accept the deal on a 43 vote (Bookham, Clark, Guy Heywood opposed).

Grosvenor financed a poll that - miraculously! - showed strong support for its oversized project at 1300block Marine Drive in West Van, reverse of an Ambleside and Dundarave Ratepayers Association poll, then sliced off 30 feet (developers always plan concessions to take the sting out of protest).

Next up, the Laljis aim for two towers totalling 620 units smack on the Park Royal White Spot site, as if present construction and access aren't alienating enough.

Traffic over the bulging bridges? Not the big boys' concern. That's for the little people, like present residents, to work out.

- - -

Hot cross buns are an Easter tradition. A Gulf Island bakery distributed to stores in the Victoria area what it named "Agnostic Buns" - hot cross buns minus the crosses.

Clearly a calculated affront to Christians. But in multicultural Canada, the Judeo-Christian faith that shaped this nation's laws and rights can be insulted with impunity.

tlautens@telus.net