

What occupies me, other than reading?-The middle lane.

Not that I ever lived in the fast lane, but, in retirement, life has slowed down, if not into local traffic, at least into the middle lane.

In the before times (before retirement and before CoVid), I would tell my classes what concerts, movies, and plays we had gone to in the past week or so. I did it in part to seem more human (see, I have a life), and to try and share my delight in cultural activities. For those in AP Biology who lasted that long, there was even usually a slide show of art at the end of the year, after the exam, for the same purpose.

Now that CoVid restrictions are lifted, my wife and I have restarted our cultural life and I thought that today I'd share some of that life with you. Lucky you.

In today's dangerous world, it is not a good plan to tell people you're out. It makes your home a target. So, these events will all be things we've done in the relatively recent past, rather than future or upcoming events.

The pandemic upended the applectart and many artists found ways to present their material on streaming platforms. While that has been reduced, it hasn't disappeared and we've enjoyed live-streamed concerts, plays and ballet that weren't otherwise available locally. While we started listening to Morgan James (you can look her up on YouTube) at a pre-pandemic, in-person concert, since then she hasn't performed in South Florida. We get our fix of her voice through Stagelt and, recently, a pair of streamed concerts at Joe's Pub in New York. At one point, she did a Stagelt concert every week, but, now that she and her husband, Doug Wamble, are touring again with her band, the Stagelt shows are rarer, but still worth our time. There are lots of great artists on Stagelt, but Morgan James is our go to on that site.

Locally, if you like the big sound an orchestra makes, one of the most amazing takes is the Nu Deco Ensemble. They perform classics, write their own, create suites from modern artists and bring in guest performers. They work with their guests, orchestrating their music, putting an ensemble behind the guest artist's originals. For most of the guests it is the first time they've had a full orchestra with strings and brass supporting their sound. They've had guests like the Columbian group Monsieur Perine, Tank and the Bangas, Victoria Canal, Mirändä, St, Paul & The Broken Bones, Will Liverman and Lucius. They perform all over the place. This year they have concerts at the Knight Concert Hall (2000+ seats), the North Miami Beach Bandshell, and, they will perform at The Colony on Miami Beach. They also are doing a smaller venue series of 3 shows at the Citadel. We have never been disappointed by one of their shows.

We also enjoy more traditional orchestras. There is the Miami Symphony Orchestra and the Symphony of the Americas. Both are excellent, and when they fit our schedule, we try and attend.

Another pleasure we share is classical ballet. There was a wonderful performance of *Rita Finds a Home*, a ballet for children with a narrator telling the story, as the dancers performed. I may still be a child, since I really enjoyed that performance.

The Miami City Ballet does 4 main shows each year. They dance at the Arsht Center, the Broward Center, and, if you are farther north, at the Kravis Center in West Palm Beach. This year they are titled the Fall, Winter and Spring Mix and they are concluding their season with Swan Lake.

They also do the Nutcracker each December. I don't think we'll be going this year. I suppose if you have children, going annually can be worthwhile, but, for me, while I like it and am frequently called childish, once a decade is probably enough.

Back when I was in high school and college, one of the seminal folk groups was Crosby, Stills, Nash (and sometimes, Young). They were part of the Laurel Canyon "scene" which included (but was not limited to) The Mamas and the Papas, Joni Mitchell, Buffalo Springfield, Poco, Frank Zappa, Doors, Eagles, Carole King, etc. The list is virtually endless and harks back to different time. Today, when any of these admittedly old timers performs locally we try and go. While some performers do little more than reprise their old hits with some new music, Graham Nash (who recently performed at the Parker) tells stories about the music that enrich the live performance above and beyond a recording, even a recording of a live show.

Like Graham Nash, Andy Summers, who once was part of a large, stadium filling group (the Police) now tours on his own. Being big Police fans, his show at the Parker Playhouse was a must see. Andy Summers is also a published photographer, and the projected background pictures were a treat. Since there were no accompanying musicians, the "band" was digital, and you could think about it like "guitar karaoke."

We attended a poignant show in early November at the Aventura Arts and Cultural Center. *Silent Tears: The Last Yiddish Tango* was a series of poems written by Holocaust survivors set to Yiddish Tango (who even knew there was such a thing). While neither my wife nor I speak Yiddish, there was a simultaneous translation on the screen behind the performers. We like the Aventura Arts and Cultural Center for its small theater feel, and this was a show that tugged at feelings.

The pandemic sort of got us out of the habit of going to movies at the theater, it is too easy to stream them, and while the big screen experience is an upgrade, it is less so than for concerts, plays or ballet. The movie itself is more or less the same at home or at the multiplex. I imagine that in the not to distant future, watching a movie with wrap around glasses will provide a better experience than the theater. On the other hand, a concert is not the same as a recording. To refer back to Andy Summers, none of the songs he performed at his live concert sounded exactly like the originals.

As an example of where the live event is an upgrade, we went to Rocky Horror Picture Show on the big screen, with a shadow cast, costume show and Barry Bostwick. Back in the day (faster lane), Rocky Horror was a midnight film in Coconut Grove for years. Complete with costumes and audience participation. The event at the Knight Concert Hall echoed back to those days. Let's do the time warp again!

We also attend some local theater. For me, size of the house is an issue. Broadway theaters generally seat 500 -1000, with only a few seating up to 2000. Touring shows in South Florida are in venues that seat well over 2000. Slope is also an issue. My recollection is that Broadway theaters are steeper, meaning you are closer to the stage even if you are in the back, rather than in our performing arts centers which have gradual slopes and by the rear of the orchestra, you need binoculars.

In the past we went to many touring shows, but lately we are more likely to be found at the small venue companies and shows.

Our favorites are Slow Burn Theatre, which performs in the Amaturo theater (<600 seats) at the Broward Center and Zoetic Stage which performs in the Carnival Studio Theater (up to 225 seats) at the Arsht Center. Recently Slow Burn had a run of *Into the Woods* (a Stephen Sondheim musical) and *The Little Mermaid* and Zoetic Stage had *Clyde's*. Slow Burn only does musicals, while Zoetic Stage does a full range of theatrical shows ranging from comedies to dramas to musicals. The Carnival Studio also hosts City Stage which recently had a run of *La Gringa*. Each summer City Stage puts on a series of short (less than 10 minutes long) plays called "Summer Shorts" as well.

As you can see, we do try and keep busy. One problem with trying to do so many events is that there are conflicts. A concert we can't attend because we already have tickets to a play or ballet on that date. I'm really not joking. That has happened twice already this year and juggling events is a real thing.

Thanks for watching, listening or reading. Drop me a line in the comments below, or a feedback, the link is on the page, or email me at drg.atm@gmail.com. Let me know what you have seen and recommend.

Feel free to spread the word. A tree falling in the forest and all that.

For now, I have to put on shoes. We're going out.

The script is not an exact transcript of the podcast, but, rather the script that was read. I can't help but adlib. Again, thanks for reading, listening, or watching.