

Backstage: A Charlie Brown Christmas

November 2016



***Christmas time is here
Happiness and cheer
Fun for all the children call
Their favorite time of year***

A *Charlie Brown Christmas* was a holiday staple growing up. First shown in 1965, I was 3 years old. Most folks my age have likely seen it many times and have continued the tradition with our kids. With its simplicity, children's voices, and Snoopy's antics, it seemed the world was a blue and white soft blanket of peace and love. This holiday season going into rehearsal for the live stage version, with the fabulous music of Vince Guaraldi, it felt like going back to a simpler time.

But simpler was not the reality. There was nothing simple about the 60's. Our country was at the height of the civil rights movement. Just 2 years earlier Martin Luther King wrote his seminal "Letter from Birmingham Jail," arguing that individuals have the moral duty to disobey unjust laws. Just several months later he delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial.

The next year the 24th Amendment abolished the poll tax, which had been designed to make it difficult for poor blacks to vote. And in July of that year President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibiting discrimination of all kinds based on race, color, religion, or national origin.

1965 was the march across the Pettis bridge in Selma Alabama. That "Bloody Sunday" was the catalyst for pushing through the voting rights act.

As the 60's continued we saw race riots, strengthening of anti-discrimination laws, *Loving vs Virginia* ending discrimination against interracial couples and in '68, the murder of Martin Luther King.

***Olden times and ancient rhymes
Of love and dreams to share***

2016 has been a tumultuous year with the loss of so many profound and discerning messengers of our time -Leonard Cohen, Gwen Ifill, Prince, Edward Albee, Harper Lee, David Bowie, Elie Wiesel, Morely Safer, Muhammad Ali to name but a few. Then there is the presidential election of course. As the current hit musical *Hamilton* observes, "the world turned upside down."

While we may long to crawl back under that blue and white blanket of peace and love, perhaps returning to the lessons of that so called "simpler time" is just where we need to go.

***Oh that we could always see
Such spirit through the year.***