

John Nollson

AND TOTO TOO?

Election night in Kansas is always a fearsome time for old Democrats. Alerted to the arrival of the customary Republican tornado, whole families take refuge in their cellars until the storm passes and the damage can be assessed. It was no different for Dorothy in November of 1980; her aunt had seen the funnel cloud on the horizon and she shoed the children into the shelter.

This time the wind was far stronger than expected, so great that Dorothy and her dog were lifted out of their cellar and blown hundreds of miles to the East. Fortunately they were gently deposited in a large grassy spot; in fact, they had come to rest not far from the famous Washington Monument in Washington, D.C. The wind had died down, but not before it blew skyward hundreds of white sheets of paper. Dorothy watched them float down to earth, and she picked up one or two of them to see what they said. It was hard to make them out, they were all so different. But every one of them had the same word neatly printed across the top: RÉSUMÉ.

"Toto," said Dorothy to her faithful canine companion, "I don't think we're in Kansas any more."

"I don't know how we're ever going to get home," the little dog replied. "It's getting late, and if we don't get home soon, we will miss our dinner."

"Yes," said Dorothy, "and all our friends in Kansas will be terribly worried. Well, we will just have to find our way back."

They set out in what they thought was a westerly direction. Fairly soon, they reached the highway and they decided to stop for a rest at a roadside picnic place. They noticed a funny-looking man at one of the tables. He was studying a piece of paper that looked a lot like the ones Dorothy had seen floating in the air.

"Excuse me, sir," said Dorothy. "Toto and I are trying to find our way back to Kansas, and I wonder whether you could help us."

"I would like to help you," said the man, "but I'm quite incapable of helping anyone. I'm the Tin Man, you see, and my joints are so stiff from want of oiling that I am barely able to move. My joints have been stiff for many years. I served in the Eisenhower administration, and they haven't been lubricated since. I was hoping that you would be able to help me."

"How can I help you?" asked Dorothy.

"Oh," said the Tin Man with great poignancy, "Oh, if only I can get to see the great Oz in Washington, or even his secretary. Oh, if only I can get him to look at my résumé! Why, then I'm sure I'll be able to find all the oil I need so that I can be lithe and limber once again."

Dorothy was touched by the pleading tone in the Tin Man's voice and decided that she could not leave him there by the roadside.

"Don't worry, Tin Man," said Dorothy reassuringly. "Toto and I will help you get to Washington so that you can meet the great Oz."

And with that, she helped the Tin Man to his feet and managed to get him walking again, even though his joints, to tell the truth, creaked quite noticeably.

They had not gone very far when they noticed what appeared to be a man lying by the side of the road. Dorothy rushed to assist him, while the Tin Man creaked behind.

"Dear me," said Dorothy, her voice showing grave concern, "you do seem to be in something of a pickle."

"Yes, I am," answered the prone figure, "my insides have been leaking and I am no longer able to stand erect."

Dorothy noticed that there did indeed seem to be straw poking out through every seam of the man's rather florid clothing.

"Yes, child," the prone man continued, "I'm the Scarecrow, and I'm never going to make it back to Washington to see the great Oz. But you are young and sprightly. Perhaps if I give you my résumé you'll take it to Oz for me, and he will send his retainers out here to rescue me."

"Oh, there's no need for that," said Dorothy, as Toto wagged his tail in agree-

ment. "I shall gather up some of this dried grass and, in a jiffy, you'll be good as new."

And, true to her word, Dorothy stuffed the man with grass and, with a stitch or two, he seemed as good as new.

"Thank you, little girl," said the man, clearly pleased with his new shape. "I am the Scarecrow, and I'll be your friend for ever and ever."

"But why would a scarecrow want to see the great Oz in Washington, D.C.?" Dorothy asked.

"You see," said the Scarecrow, "I used to work at the White House. I was a member of President Nixon's staff. Every so often they would prop me up against the iron fence to frighten all those demonstrators. But then the demonstrators stopped coming and they had no further use for me. One day, they dumped me by the roadside, where I have been until the very moment you found me."

"That wasn't very nice," said Dorothy, disapprovingly.

"It's a rough game," said the Scarecrow, knowingly. "But I know that as soon as the great Oz hears that I'm back in town, he'll let me have my old job back."

"But there aren't any demonstrators anymore," said Dorothy.

"Well, not yet," the Scarecrow agreed, "but they'll be back."

So Dorothy, Toto, the Tin Man, and the Scarecrow all set out to find the great Oz.

They had not gone all that very far when they came upon a motley-looking lion. He looked up at the four of them, but he could manage only the faintest roar.

"You're not very frightening for a lion," Dorothy said.

"No," the lion agreed, "I'm not very frightening at all. The only person I scare is me. I'm a quite cowardly lion, you see. In fact, I'm not very brave at all. But I'm sure that if I were able to see the great Oz, he'd give me a very important position in the government, and then everyone would be afraid of me."

"Why would everyone be afraid of you?" asked Dorothy.

"Because I'd be a regulator. No one would be able to do anything unless I permitted it. Why, maybe I wouldn't even let them burn coal in the winter, no matter how cold it got!"

"That wouldn't be very nice," said Dorothy. →



"Yes, I guess not," answered the Cowardly Lion. "But how else can I get people to be afraid of me?"

"I certainly don't know," said Dorothy, "But from what I've heard, the great Oz is a wise and kindly man, and I'm sure he'll be able to think of lots of other ways for you to get your courage back."

It was getting late now, so the five of them decided to go to sleep and resume their journey in the morning.

They got an early start and reached the capital about lunchtime. They learned from a friendly policeman where the great Oz had his office, but an unfriendly policeman at the main door refused to let them in. Fortunately, Dorothy had a dollar bill which, she thought, could be converted into ten dimes for ten telephone calls. But since the time this story was first written, the cost of a telephone call has risen to fifteen cents.

They gathered around a telephone booth and dialed the great Oz's number.

Unfortunately, Mr. Oz was not in at the moment, but he would be back to them as soon as he could. No, it was not known when the great Oz would return because he was in a meeting. Yes, the great Oz did remember them from the old days. Of course, the great Oz believed they could make a useful contribution to the new America. No, it was quite impossible; the great Oz's secretary was not authorized to give out his home number, nor even his home address. Yes, the great Oz did have a post office box, but it was filled to overflowing. Yes, they should check back with the great Oz in the morning.

"Humpf," said Dorothy, after placing her sixth telephone call, leaving only one useless dime, "I'm beginning to wonder whether there really is any Oz at all."

"No Oz?" said the Tin Man, the Scarecrow, and the Cowardly Lion in unison. "Why, child, of course there's an Oz.

There's always been an Oz and there always will be. Why, the next thing you'll be telling us is that there's no yellow brick road either. But everyone knows there is one, and everyone knows where it leads."

"Arf," said Toto in approval. "Arf, arf, Oz is!"

"Well, I still don't believe you," said Dorothy, "and I'm going back to Kansas. The rest of you can spend the rest of your lives trying to get through to this Oz of yours. But I don't think you'll ever find him."

"Please don't give up," said the Cowardly Lion. "Just try one more telephone call. Who knows, maybe he'll be back from his meeting."

"But all we have left is one dime, and that's not enough," Dorothy protested.

They fell silent.

"Gee," said the Tin Man after a while, "things sure have changed since I was around here. Why, in the good old days, you could call Oz collect!" □

Aram Bakshian, Jr.

REQUIEM FOR A BEATLE

Shot in the dark.

Mark Twain once remarked that Richard Wagner's music was not as bad as it sounded. For a number of people with a serious interest in music, the same applied to the Beatles; properly arranged and performed, some of their work was artistically as well as commercially successful. John Lennon and Paul McCartney—especially McCartney—understood that only melody can make a song weather changing fads and generations to become a true ever-green.

This simple but often-overlooked musical fact was brought home to me by a lovable and rather unlikely friend in his villa overlooking Vienna seven years ago. My friend was the late Robert Stolz, Austria's last waltz and operetta king. Robert was ninety-two at the time, still actively composing and conducting, and I was twenty-nine. But it was the venerable little maestro who defended the Beatles' music when I made a disparaging remark about it. "My boy, you haven't really listened to their music because you don't

like *them*," he told me, going on to point out the melodic quality of several popular Beatles tunes. "A good melody—and the Beatles have created more than one—is like a beautiful, strongly woven piece of material. Unless it's slashed to bits it can withstand all manner of mistreatment and still preserve its texture, its tone, and its inherent appeal. And besides," the maestro smiled, blinking his clear blue eyes, "as our great Viennese *philosophe*, Karl Kraus, once asked, what is Beethoven's Ninth compared to a familiar tune played by an organ-grinder when the tune is tied to a memory?"



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What indeed? For many members of my generation (though not, I hasten to add, for me) the Beatles were a musical extension of self—sometimes echoing and sometimes foreshadowing the set of virtues, vices, conflicts, ideals, and delusions which they thought of, probably mistakenly, as uniquely theirs.

One hopes that they were wrong because, if they were right, even the best music of the Beatles is doomed to automatic oblivion the moment the last member of the Beatles Generation signs off some time in the middle of the next century. I don't expect this to happen, because what is best in their work is not shackled to the sixties—although much of what was worst is, and many of their more rabid fans (including John Lennon's alleged killer) seem to be.

The latter fact was painfully obvious even before Lennon's blood had congealed on the pavement in front of the Dakota Apartments. His slaying unleashed a '60s style media orgy—swarms of cameramen, photographers, interviewers, and weeping, laughing, swaying, humming, and occasionally zonked Beatles fans, plus a big