



If you find the city a little too crowded, The Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn, New Jersey isn't hard to reach. There *A CHRISTMAS STORY* is having a top-notch Broadway-level revival (through Jan. 3).

Although a musical about a kid wanting a gun may seem insensitive considering what's been going on in the real world, we must remember that Little Ralphie Parker doesn't want the BB-gun to **CREATE** mischief, but to **PREVENT** it – even to the point of defending a teacher who doesn't appreciate his English compositions.

That leads to the score's best song, "Ralphie to the Rescue," which co-authors Benj Pasek and Justin Paul gave the right Western touch to the point where you also can feel the wind come sweepin' down the plain.

My favorite non-musical moment? A tie between two. First, after Ralphie and his younger brother Randy get into yet another verbal fight ("Did, too!" is the response to "Did, not!" repeated at least a dozen times), Ralphie in a separate incident gets in terrible trouble with his parents – causing Randy to cry and moan "Daddy's gonna kill Ralphie!" Yes, he loves his brother after all.

The other wonderful moment, of course, comes when Ralphie gets precisely what he'd wanted for Christmas. The audience enthusiastically applauded along with me, for no matter how old you are, you still remember when you desperately wanted Some Certain Toy as a holiday present and – wonder of wonders, miracle of miracles -- got it.

And if you can't get to New Jersey, let alone New York?

Well, maybe there's a production of *A CHRISTMAS STORY* near you. If so, make sure you attend. It's one of the best holiday presents you can give yourself.