



OCTOBER 2010

Gridiron Gang

The team behind *Lombardi* makes a run for Broadway...and beyond

by Melissa Rose Bernardo

If you say the name "Vince Lombardi," you probably think of the Vince Lombardi Trophy, awarded annually to the winning Super Bowl team. Or—if you're a regular New Jersey Turnpike driver—perhaps you recall the rest stop bearing his name. And depending on how much ESPN you watch on any given Sunday, you may know that he's widely regarded as the greatest pro football coach ever—despite his relatively brief NFL career (he fell victim to colon cancer in 1970 at age 57). But are there enough Hall of Fame stats to fill a Broadway drama?

"You could do a 90-minute play—a two-hour movie!—just on what he did for the black ballplayers," says erstwhile "Wonder Years" patriarch Dan Lauria, who's almost eerily qualified to star in *Lombardi*. (Did they put out a casting call for Brooklyn-born Italian-American ex-college football players with high school coaching experience and gap-toothed grins?) "You could do a two-hour movie on how his obsession hurt his family life. You could do a two-hour movie on his first year at Green Bay—taking a team that was 1-10-1 to 7-5 and the next year playing for the championship."

Drawing on David Maraniss' richly detailed 1999 biography *When Pride Still Mattered*, playwright Eric Simonson—a Wisconsin native and proud Packers fan—zeroed in on "a moment" in 1965 (just before the Pack began its record streak of three NFL championships). "He was a winning coach, he was a celebrity, but the last two years he came in second and it practically killed him," says Simonson, who also tackled the coach in 2007's *Lombardi: The Only Thing* at Madison Repertory Theatre. "I invented this reporter character—a W.C. Heinz-esque sportswriter (Keith Nobbs)—"who's arranged to stay with them [the team] for a week; he's supposed to write a feature."

Simonson also brings linebacker Dave Robinson (Robert Christopher Riley), "Golden Boy" halfback/placekicker Paul Hornung (Bill Dawes) and running back Jim Taylor (Chris Sullivan) into the huddle. But *Lombardi* isn't all stirring locker room speeches, bone-crushing tackles and fourth-and-goal, do-or-die power sweeps.



Dan Lauria (above) as the legend of the field, Vince Lombardi. (Below inset) the man himself

"I wanted to write a play that would reach across the football field. That's one of the big reasons [Vince's wife] Marie is in it," explains Simonson. (Lauria is all smiles over his onstage wife, Judith Light: "We're old friends. I was her pimp"—he takes the briefest of pauses—"on 'One Life to Live.'")

Lauria believes *Lombardi* will bring in both "typical Broadway audiences" and "the truck driver who's never been to a play," particularly with the NFL's promotional blitz. "What [producer] Tony Ponturo wants to do is two weeks at every NFL city," explains the actor. "We gotta deliver a play that people will talk about—so even if they don't get to New York, they'll go see it when it's playing at their regional theatre. The pressure's on! *Lombardi* would love it." ♦

BACKSTAGE

THE ACTOR'S RESOURCE

OCTOBER 7-13, 2010

WEEKLY PLANNER

OCT. 7-13

TUESDAY, OCT. 12

Touchdown Tuesdays Talkback Series. Discussion on new Broadway play "Lombardi," following its 7 p.m. performance. Featured speaker is David Maraniss, the author of "When Pride Still Mattered: The Life of Vince Lombardi." Circle in the Square, 1633 Broadway at 50th St., Manhattan. 9 p.m. Through Dec. 7. Free with ticket to "Lombardi." (212) 307-0388. www.circlesquare.org.

Backstage

BONEAU / BRYAN-BROWN
Morning Line

Total Weekly Circulation - 9,116

Monthly Online Readership - 45,951

OCTOBER 5, 2010

GREEN DAY FOR B'WAY

Rocker's stint boosts B.O.

By GORDON COX

The box office at "American Idiot" had the time of its life last week — at least so far — thanks to a weeklong stint from Green Day frontman, Billie Joe Armstrong, in one of the musical's major roles.

Punk tuner jumped a whopping \$600,000 to pull in \$1,092,334 for the frame, playing to auds at 93% of capacity. Sales easily rep a record for the show, which has seen B.O. fluctuate over its weeks on the boards. Tuner topped out at about \$870,000 in June; the week before last, in what is traditionally a slow time for Broadway, receipts came in at \$480,000.

Sales spike is particularly impressive given the last-minute nature of the Armstrong appearance, confirmation of which came just a couple of days ahead of his first perf Sept. 28.

While "Idiot" jumped to third place in the frame's top ten, "The Addams Family" (\$801,683) sank in the rankings due to the scheduled vacation of Bebe Neuwirth, who toplines the show with Nathan Lane.

Also down notably was "Fela!" (off by 22% to \$409,442), in a dip perhaps attributable at least in part to the absence of replacement star Patti LaBelle from the Saturday evening and Sunday matinee perfs, two of the week's strongest sellers along the Rialto.

Broadway Top 10: Sept. 27-Oct. 3

Show (Theater)(Prod. category)(Seats)	Week's gross receipts Potential gross receipts	Prev. week's Gross receipts	\$ Change Avg. ticket	Attendance Capacity	Attendance Per	Perfs to date Top ticket price	Gross to date Opening date
Wicked (Gershwin)(M)(1809)	\$1,507,992 \$1,566,495	\$1,495,013	\$12,979 \$104.61	14,415 14,472	99.6%	2,862 \$130	\$496,862,953 10/30/2003
The Lion King (Minskoff)(M)(1677)	\$1,266,452 \$1,526,632	\$1,269,344	-\$2,892 \$109.49	11,567 13,416	86.2%	5,341 \$127	\$725,110,967 11/13/1997
American Idiot (St. James)(M)(1709)	\$1,092,334 \$1,326,940	\$480,566	\$611,768 \$85.56	12,767 13,672	93.4%	209 \$125	\$19,534,567 4/20/2010
Jersey Boys (August Wilson)(M)(1228)	\$1,086,925 \$1,172,640	\$1,088,466	-\$1,541 \$112.36	9,674 9,824	98.5%	2,019 \$120	\$279,807,815 11/6/2005
Promises, Promises (Broadway)(M-R)(1747)	\$995,858 \$1,608,290	\$981,598	\$14,260 \$90.37	11,020 13,976	78.8%	207 \$135	\$28,256,346 4/25/2010
Billy Elliot (Imperial)(M)(1421)	\$982,542 \$1,327,900	\$1,000,428	-\$17,886 \$93.18	10,545 11,368	92.8%	780 \$135	\$124,069,835 11/13/2008
Memphis (Shubert)(M)(1470)	\$864,646 \$1,264,304	\$916,070	-\$51,424 \$90.13	9,593 11,760	81.6%	422 \$130	\$35,774,126 10/19/2009
Mamma Mia! (Winter Garden)(M)(1498)	\$840,632 \$1,385,392	\$821,598	\$19,034 \$77.23	10,885 11,984	90.8%	3,704 \$126	\$431,903,987 10/18/2001
The Addams Family (Lunt-Fontanne)(M)(1519)	\$801,683 \$1,407,240	\$929,655	-\$127,972 \$90.00	8,908 12,152	73.3%	231 \$135	\$34,861,115 4/8/2010
The Phantom of the Opera (Majestic)(M)(1615)	\$682,836 \$1,349,510	\$691,135	-\$8,299 \$72.35	9,438 12,920	73.0%	9,427 \$120	\$786,284,967 1/26/1988

Reported box office receipts are followed by the week's paid attendance (including standees) and percentage of the week's total capacity represented. The theatrical week begins Monday and extends through the following Sunday. Unless otherwise specified, the week consists of eight performances. Abbreviations and designations are (P) play, (M) musical, (So) solo show, (Sp) specialty, (MB) multiple-bill, (R) revival, (Rev) revue, (FL) foreign language presentation, (E) estimated figure, (perf) performances, (pr) previews, (PW) previous week, (LW) last week, (Sub) indicates a subscription-based venue, while (BA) indicates that the production is presented under the Broadway Alliance plan. © 2010 Variety Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction or distribution strictly prohibited. Compiled by Sam Thielman

Overall, however, sales at many Main Stem productions picked up, with slippage at individual shows proving largely unremarkable. Total Broadway came rose about \$800,000 to \$17.3 million.

Three of the five shows in previews last week — including "Time Stands Still" (\$395,233), "La Bete" (\$355,030) and "Lomardi" (\$188,215) — played their first full weeks of eight perfs, thereby adding further coin to the pot compared to the prior sesh.

Also in previews were "Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson" (\$284,719), up just barely and continuing the edgy alt-tuner's expected slow start, and "A Life in the Theater" (\$310,430), the David Mamet revival that saw sales fall by 10% (although attendance was up a bit).

Overall, Main Stem attendance rose slightly over the same week last year, climbing to 222,529 for 28 shows on the boards vs. 218,000 for the same number of productions in 2009.

Total sales seem likely to continue to step up in the week leading up to Columbus Day weekend, which generally brings a boost to the B.O.

Daily Variety

Total Daily Circulation — 24,740
Monthly Online Readership — 951,558

NEW YORK POST

October 6, 2010

Page Six®

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We hear . . .

THAT Giants legend **Frank Gifford** and Broncos great **Floyd Little** are just two NFLers who have seen the Broadway show "Lombardi," about the legendary Green Bay Packers coach.

NY Post

Total Daily Circulation - 508,042
Monthly Online Readership - 4,024,329

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Morning Line
