

SISTER GREGORY IN PHONE CONVERSATION WITH RICHARD HALLIDAY 8/4/59

As the script is now, the Captain is cold. He is almost unattractive until very late in the play.

Anything that's attractive about the Captain is told us, we never see it. Elsa tells us. The housekeeper tells us, "He never used to be that way". Maria tells us, when she tells the Abbess. But we never see it ourselves. I think you have to prepare the audience for the change.

"In "South Pacific" we were prepared for the change in Nellie. She was fun from the beginning. So is Maria. And her scene with the children is delightful. But the Captain -- Of course, the actor can do a great deal, but I didn't find it in the script.

That's why a scene seems needed where we could see something underneath that cold exterior - it's only at the end of the play where he becomes attractive.

Even when he's with the children alone, after Maria leaves, there doesn't seem to be any warmth. Here and all the way along, everyone is more astute, more intelligent than he is. He seems to have to be told the score.

The only scene where I think he is even likeable is the last scene - after they're married. It's unbelievable that anyone could change him so quickly - it's not there in the script ... In the cold script, I just couldn't like him. I wasn't prepared for his change. And I don't want to "be" "told" about him - I want to see for myself. I hope that if they do write a new scene, we will see some of the potential in the man.

In the Captain there isn't even anything human.

As a woman, I'd much rather get my hands on Max!

Just to test it, I had two of the Sisters read a part of the script - to get their reactions - to be very sure it wasn't prejudice on my part. Their reaction was: "He's cold - just cold."

The very fact that Maria had the temerity to give him back the whistle - she must see under that coldness, something - at that point we're almost willing to go along with her - she's astute - there's something there we don't see - but we've got to see!

Any man who has a basic something about him would be disturbed about the children being alone. He says to the housekeeper - a line that bothers me very much - "I'm going tomorrow if we can get a governess." A normal father would not do that. He would at least find out what kind of a governess he was getting. People will react against that. You know how we are with children and dogs! ... The Captain's never home except when they change governesses. Why?

Every time we see the Captain, he's negative - but when people talk about him, they're (He's) positive.

I don't care how much you grieve over the loss of a wife, he shows no tenderness ever. In the scene with that delightful little child - if we could just see once where he broke through his guard. I want to see him when his guard is down, because none of us can keep it up 24 hours a day. Sometime when he's alone and he "loos astounded", he should show weakness, in a movement perhaps. I want to see his guard down before Maria gives her life and her love to him - I want to know

that he is capable of tenderness. Maria is a child and therefore follows her heart.

Think the opening is just magnificent. I don't think I've ever seen a character set so quickly and so perfectly. In "The Nun's Story" for instance, the nuns weren't happy. Your story tells the story of those who are. Thos of us who are happy haven't time to write a book about it!