

# Poor Poor Joseph

The last two days saw the first weekend of auditions for [Fountain City Festival's](#) production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. I can't say how much I adore this show. I have tried out for one production, was cast in another, and look forward to being in another. I went to try out this morning with my 14 year-old niece. I guess I should have helped her by letting her listen to the music since the vocal portion of the audition consisted of singing selections from the show. Before going into the audition room, the auditioners had the opportunity to watch a streaming video of choreography to one of the songs. EVERYONE had to learn the dance, youth choir included. I, of course, perfectly learned the steps.

I went into the room and was greeted by the director (whom I have worked with before... very fun), two assistants, and the accompanist. I was asked to perform one song and then perform another selection. Felt good and thank goodness I did not use up all my energy from the choreography which was video taped allowing the directors the opportunity to once again view my fabulous (uh, hunh) footwork.

I see one drawback. I learned that Friday's audition had about 10 high school age auditioners (and one extremely talented 30-something). When I arrived at the locale with Shelby, there were 4 others (two adult performers whom I have had the pleasure of working with before and two young gentlemen). Needless to say, this show REQUIRES a much larger cast of energetic performers of all ages. Hopefully, more people show up next weekend. Perhaps a few of my fellow tangenteers could make the short (or not so short) trek to dazzle audiences.

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# Where You Can Eat And Get Gas Or Get Gas And Eat

Tonight, a group of self-anointed "cougars," Megan, and I (the only male) traveled to Findlay to see a production of [\*Pump Boys and Dinettes\*](#). Before our hour and a half trek began, piling into the minivan was almost worth a few dollars to see itself. I would have gladly given up my front seat but to see the ladies crawling over each other to get a seat was priceless. We drove through quite a bit of rain... so much for the "Slight chance of evening showers."

For dinner, we decided on a place called The Gathering that was right beside The Tavern in the Inn (I almost thought I was back in NYC at Tavern on the Green). I decided on the restaurant's signature ribs. Thank goodness, I decided on the Piglet order instead of the full-rack Oinker platter. I barely finished the half-rack. Guess I was not as hungry as I was when I tackled the full-pound sirloin burger.

This show itself was billed as "a country music review." However, while most of the music had a country feel, I did notice a few pieces that had a rock sound from the 50s-60s. The music was ALL ORIGINAL. Since the show was a review, the plot was totally secondary and seemed to be spliced together from old bits of Hee Haw corn. The small cast included sisters Rhetta and Prudie Cupp who run and operate the Double Cupp Diner and the three main attendants at the garage/filling station next door. The leader of the Pump Boys, Jim, seemed to be the MC of the evening and introduced the ladies man, Jackson and the more suspicious, L.M. The pit was included on stage and the two guitar players, pianist, and drummer each seemed to have personalities of their own without saying a

word. I would say my favorite selection was L.M.'s recollection of a week he spent while attending the concert of a certain buxom blonde country legend.

The set really made you think you were in a small backwater town in Carolina where the men far outnumber the ladies (inbreeding). Where beer is home brewed as well as the 'shine and a cow eats the field of marijuana (be sure to have that milk tested).

After the show, Megan and I were encouraged to check out the green room in the basement. Although the ceiling was a bit low (thank you Megan for pointing that out as I hit my head more than once), I must say that I found myself thinking of making a switch. There was furniture galore (comfortable furniture), a large television which served as a monitor showing the action on stage (very nice to have), as well as cast pictures from previous shows. As the Fort Findlay Playhouse is also constructed inside a hollowed out church, it made me wonder how many theatres have been converted from places of worship.

On another note, it seemed that the [Fort Findlay Players](#) stole our theme idea for a season (or more members of their board were more receptive to the suggestions). Next year, the theatre is doing a Salute to Hollywood by presenting a series of plays that were also movies. Shows like *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *House of Frankenstein*, *Singin' in the Rain*, and *The Wizard of Oz* (the version based on the 1939 classic film), and *The Odd Couple* are on the season. See... it is possible.

*Pump Boys and Dinettes* was just a fun bit of escapist fun that just flew by. The vocal talent was extraordinary and the choreography was simple yet energetic. I could see myself doing it. That again is saying A LOT.

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# Sometimes I Amaze Even Myself

Once again my reputation has followed me. I walked uptown this afternoon to deposit three checks (ok... deposit two and cash my State Refund). At the bank, I had the pleasure of meeting the new, quite personable manager. I was immediately impressed. First, he identified me as the "guy from the grocery store." So, I formally introduced myself. He then began his spiel to see if I knew how to get the store to switch banks. I told him it was not me... he would probably have to go to the big guy himself (Good luck with that). I know the manager would be of no help. That put me off a bit as I am not that high on the feeding chain, but after I was totally amazed.

He then mentioned that he has seen me in the paper (been a while) and on stage many times and asked what was coming up. Well... next weekend I have an audition for the 10th Anniversary of an area theatre's production of *Joseph*... His daughter is also planning to try out. I asked if she had been to the theatre's website where she could download an audition sheet as well as follow a link to some MIDI files of the songs from the show. I have been going over "Benjamin Calypso" and other songs since discovering the link.

This summer also marks the 10 year anniversary of my foray into community theatre. I auditioned for [FCF](#)'s first summer show but did not get a part. Happily, I did not let this deter my efforts (a LOT of HELP from a certain teacher who is now helping from above did not hurt either). The following summer, I tried out for a [neighboring production](#) of *Joseph* and got my first role in a non-school show... and a monster was born. The first few years, I tried out for summer shows only. The manager of my FPOE was not too keen on even that

much rearranging of my schedule. But the fabulous person in charge of the front end pleaded my case. And the rest I will elaborate on later. Always keep them wanting more (where have I heard that before).

But I will once again be auditioning for one of my favorite ALW shows. Now if only the rights had not been taken away for the other (a toss up between Cats and Aspects of Love ... WOW... so not).

[poll id="18"]

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## Yet Another Theatrical Tragedy

It seems that recently there have been a number of tragedies happening in the theatrical world most of them involved in small companies. Last weekend a full-scale murder occurred at a reunion picnic for the Town and Gown Players of Athens Georgia. This theatre has performed everything from classic Shakespeare to Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals to the screwball comedies of Woody Allen. As a proud member of the [community theatre](#) of my own corner of the world, my heartfelt condolences go out to not only the families of the victims but to the entire theatre, as well. Three of the members of the 55 year old company were shot. As with the feelings I hold for many in my own community theatre, these three were seen as members of a second family.

Two of them were the technical wizards behind many productions who built elaborate sets. The third was the small theatre's president, herself a veteran of numerous on and off stage roles. That is what is so special about community theatre:

Everyone has the opportunity to be involved in every aspect of a show. An actor has as much to do backstage as on whether it be helping to construct the set, paint a wall, sell tickets, or clean the restroom the Saturday before a performance opens. Sometimes it really does seem like a second family that has its share of disagreements and squabbling, but the final results are usually (if not always) well worth the effort. Members also become life-long friends.

Although I have never had the opportunity to meet these three people, my heart goes out to them and their families both immediate and theatrical. Please keep the [Town & Gown Players](#) in your thoughts and prayers. By following the link you can read about the three victims as well as view and sign a condolence book.

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## **The Beginning of Another Super Weekend**

This weekend is turning out to be another super fun one that started Saturday. I watched the double episodes of The Office from Thursday night (don't remember what I was doing when they were on at their scheduled time, but no spoilers since I'm not sure if my faithful readers caught them both). The, I went across the street to watch the nieces and nephew in the Easter Egg hunt. I attempted to convince my sister to take them to the theatre's hunt, but apparently, she wanted to partake in the adult hunt. I have yet to participate with the big kids because I really do not relish the chance to get trampled... or like my older brother fall down and lose the eggs that he had picked up. I thought about it this year, but before the time came, I was invited to go to the zoo.

I had not been to the [Toledo Zoo](#) for sometime. The last time I remember, I was on a field trip with an acting class from BGSU. We went to observe and study the animals and then use some of their mannerisms in order to develop a character. Yesterday, I really enjoyed the hippos who were in their pens awaiting feeding time. Quite humorous to see the hungry beasts open their gaping mouths, roll around in their pools of water, and finally leave their calling card after they had finished.

I also really loved the sloth bear. There were two... one was much more animated than his companion. He was very social and came up to the transparent barrier, sniffing at people, car keys, ballcaps, and just about anything e could find. The other bear just reclined in the hammock, seemingly to say... "HAHA! I know how to live! I don't have to make a spectacle of myself!"

After the zoo, we went to a small diner where I indulged in a Nickburger: a full-pound of ground sirloin with lettuce, onion, tomato, and pickle (YUCK! pickle). I was really hungry... so I was not surprised that I ate the whole thing. The fries were a different story.

This morning at mass, I again sang with the choir. The opening song was well-known to me but apparently, someone (without informing me) had the idea to transpose the hymn down at least two flats. Nothing I could not handle and I discovered that a low A is starting to come along. After mass, the Easter Bunny had stopped by the church as each member of the choir received a REESE'S PEANUT BUTTER EGG (ahhhhhh!!!!!! HEAVEN).

Then, the family (all fourteen of us) went to Ritzy's (or is it Rita's... sorry Derek) for a buffet. My friend's generally comment on the behavior of their four little ones at restaurants. I guess I should point out that most of the 7 nieces and nephews are beyond the age of running around and

dropping food on the floor; however, nothing compares to a three-year old who announces to the whole banquet room that "I HAVE TO GO POTTY!" Not embarrassing at all, I found the announcement rather humorous. Later, the same little angel wanted a kiss from grandma. Yet, if you saw the little girls face covered with butter, some mashed potato, and I think some strawberry pie glaze, I'm sure you would have second thoughts. I believe that I must have still been recovering from my battle with the Nickburger, because I did not eat too much. Or maybe, I knew that we will be having a birthday celebration later this evening.

Did you know that certain fans of [marshmallow peeps](#) put the concoction on everything including pizza. They also microwave them. Of course, peeps aren't just for Easter anymore.

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## The Plays The Thing

Our community theatre, in it's infinite wisdom, has decided to limit the number of musicals to one per season. I suppose that I can see the need for this. A good, well-known musical is much more expensive to produce than a play. However, it has been pointed out time and again that musicals are the bread and butter of most theatres and if the right musical is chosen and performed well, they generally bring in more money than most plays. Most of the musicals I have either been involved with or heard about have done well (with one exception but the reasons for the financial loss were many).

The problem is... trying to find plays that will bring in audiences. It has been suggested that we attempt to focus on seasonal shows. In October, I cannot wait to be part of the all cast production of *Little Shop of Horrors*. In December,



we are performing *Miracle on 34th Street*. Both shows would appeal to the seasons.

For next season, we already have the musical locked in. *Taffetas* is going to be done in October 2010. I suggested doing another Christmas show like *A Christmas Story* (yes the movie has been turned into a stage play that I think would be a riot to perform). There are also any number of versions of Dickens' perennial favorite, *A Christmas Carol*. I also mentioned via email a suggestion given to me for future October shows: *Dracula*. Are there any other shows that would fit into other seasons? A good romantic comedy for February. Something like *Honk!* for future spring shows?

Or another possibility, our theatre has within it at least two people who have the fantastic knack of playwriting. Many times, these are given spots entitled "independent projects." I think that if someone has a piece ready for performance it should be included as part of the season.

So, if any of my readers hiding in the shadows have any suggestions, please come out and suggest them. I still think that it would not hurt to do *Romeo and Juliet*. I know most people cringe at the idea of bringing Shakespeare to a small stage, but I say why not take a chance?

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## **A Brother, A Butcher, A Baker, Or Any Old Part?**

I have officially decided which show I will be auditioning for this summer. While I loved my experience in the melodrama a few summers ago, I have to go with the big musical extravaganza of [\*Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat\*](#).

Nothing beats a big, fun, and energetic musical. Plays are fun to do but for the past well... forever, if a musical is being done, I am all for it. Now... which role to try out for...

- the Elvis channeling Pharoah? I am an Elvis fan, but not the best Elvis channeler.
- Potiphar... never cared for the role. I can't recall but I think that he was double cast in another role in productions I have been involved with.
- The baker or butler could be fun, but limited roles... possibility.
- There are a few of the 11 brothers (good men and true) I could see myself as and if anyone knows the show and myself well enough they should be able to take a stab at at least one of my choices.
- Jacob... well, I did just finish playing Grandpa Prophater.
- Joseph, himself? I dunno... how old was Donnie Osmond when he stepped into the part in the 90s?

Well, I have a few weeks to narrow my choices unless I decide to say give my anything and sing everything from the show.

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## Only ONE Good Reason...

that I am glad my last on stage theatrical experience was only a three night affair (no pun intended). I returned "home" tonight to a marvelously hilarious yet intriguing tour de force. [The Lion in Winter](#) is a brilliant play that has everything: comedy, drama, comedy, backstabbing, COMEDY, a steller set, did I mention comedy. There were at most 30 people in the small audience but everyone of those thirty were in stitches (maybe it was the three in the third or fourth

row... but it was really that funny and not at all what I expected.

First, I MUST commend the hard work that went into the scenery constructed that turned the small stage of the WCCT into the castle of King Henry 2nd at Chinon, France at Christmas circa 1183. Tapestries, stone walls, a throne and such depth and perspective that you would have thought that you were actually inside the castle. BRAVO Karen for another magnificent set!

The cast is totally phenomenal. I must commend the newcomer to the stage who gave simpering, whining life to Prince John. The newspaper review did not do his performance its due credit.

Nor did it do justice to the performance of Prince Geoffrey. The audience could see the brilliant machinations going on in his head. What little he said in words while the others bickered and plotted aloud, he more than made up for in his presence and movement. Brilliant portrayal, my [friend](#)!

I must give huge praise to the King and Queen themselves. When King Henry was on stage, he OWNED the stage. Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine was Katherine Hepburn personified... maybe even a bit better. Their scenes together were magic.

The entire cast, crew (the scene changes were very necessary to the effect and done well), direction (brava Shirley and Alice). King Philip was portrayed by an actor who is a huge fan of the show and rightfully so. His onstage time may have been limited but what he did with that time was masterful. Richard the Lionhearted was portrayed with fiery passion for battle and blood yet had a tender side. Alais, mistress of Henry II, was also well cast.

As the [trailer](#) says: It will make you laugh, cry, and go HUHN? Definitely check out the final performances of *Lion in Winter* this weekend. And I did see a bit of typecasting as my friend so fleetingly commented upon.

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# OH, BILLY!

Since I have developed a slight writer's block, I will expand on the subject I like most. Therapeutic in the days following the close of a show that came and went so quickly. It seems like only yesterday (in reality back in January) that I received a phone call asking if I would like to audition for a musical that was not being done by the WCCT. I was not apprehensive in the slightest. A few weeks prior, I had auditioned for *Lion in Winter* and then thought... why not? IT IS A FULL-SCALE MUSICAL. Plus, I had been involved with two other groups prior to joining my home away from home. This would give me a chance to reach other audiences and spread my name around and meet more people with the same passion. Little did I know that I would be helping to bring fresh faces "home" to play in my backyard.

When reading the finished playbill, I noticed that "Lon" had previously played Seymour in *Little Shop of Horrors* and considers it his favorite role. Coincidentally, we are doing the show in October just in time for Halloween. Since this production is all cast (everyone who auditions is cast), I decided to approach Travis about it and he was really excited. As soon as he rearranged his directing duties, he informed me that he was indeed available. He even said that he was open to any part: there are no bad parts in the show. RIGHT YOU ARE!

"Katie" was also excited about the opportunity to audition for a role on Skid Row. She was cast in Hicksville's production but unfortunately circumstances arose that caused her to drop out. Mary has been a stage veteran for many years and has a fabulous presence. Both of them will make a great addition.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the young man who played "John Truitt." He really grew from the first time I heard him at the piano trying to sing. However, his enthusiasm and ENERGY led to the creation of a fine performance that generated a number of chuckles from the audience even if he did get beat up by a girl. Being a junior in high school who had never before stepped foot on stage, I think he did a tremendous job. In fact, he felt that he had fallen under the tag of "high school jock" who wanted to try something else. He even told me that he was apprehensive about what his friends would think and that they might come to a performance to disrupt it. Totally needless fear. I know more than a few school athletes who also excelled musically and theatrically... triple threats? I was really proud how far he had come in his stage debut. Good luck to you, Nate!

Hopefully, I can find a new tangent to go on soon. I am sure that some of my readers are growing tired reading on the same topic although I could spend hours singing the praises of this one.

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## **I Enjoyed His Second Childhood Immensely**

They say a hat makes the man. Grandpa probably would say that a hat (as well as a suit) is like a man and likes to step out once in a while (pretty girl or no pretty girl). One of my favorite parts of Meet Me in St. Louis was the enormous array of wonderful hats I got to wear as Grandpa Prophater. I pick out most of them from the costume room at the Huber and one was brought by the producer. Grandpa went from a genuine Shriner's fez with tassel and all kinds of bells and whistles

to a Holmesian deerstalker cap on Halloween to a huge Admiral's hat and one more that I will expound upon in a moment. There were a few plain, ordinary hats that were just not wild enough. There were only two scenes in which Grandpa was not seen wearing one: a dinner scene with the family and the Christmas Ball (although I thought the old Civil War vet would have looked smashing in a top hat with his old tuxedo he had gotten out of mothballs).

The Admiral's hat presented a few problems as I began to learn how to wear it. I thought it should be worn "sideways" with the ends at the sides. Then, I had it on backwards with the tailfeather hanging over my face. Finally, I got it right amidst thunderous applause. The first time I rehearsed with it, the entire cast had to stop the scene from laughing. I was told that I looked like Cap'n Crunch which was where I got the inspiration to wear the cap sideways. I also had to be careful entering during the very serious scene as the audience roared as I snuck in through the kitchen door after performing Grandpa's favorite pastime: eavesdropping.

The deerstalker was my idea. It added a nice touch to the Halloween excitement of egging on "Agnes" and "Tootie" in their quest to throw flour into the faces of evil cat poisoners and other monsters. It also helped in discovering the truth behind the mysterious injury to Tootie's lip.

I had discovered a fez in my combing of the costume department. However, a much better one was found complete with medallion to wear around my neck and handy pouch to store them in. I felt like I should be in the Shriner's Convention scene in Bye, Bye Birdie or the Grand Poobah of the Loyal Order of Waterbuffalo.

My next to final costume was by far the most challenging, but one of the most entertaining. The family is awakened EARLY by Mr. Smith on Christmas morning. I KNEW Grandpa had to have a memorable outfit for sleeping. I knew exactly what I wanted.

The turquoise robe was already there. The costume mistress took my measurements for a long nightshirt and the *piece de resistance*: a wonderful multi-colored, tassled nightcap. I loved it. After the scene, not so much. I had to make the fastest change I have ever made into my summer outfit for the World's Fair. The hardest part of the role. At one of the dress rehearsals, I came out clutching the night shirt and made everyone think I was Linus from the Peanuts comic strip. Thankfully, I was able to devise a scheme to change quicker.

I think this will be my final post for *Meet Me in St. Louis*. Each production I have ever been in has been different than the last. Each performance of every production I have been in has been different than the last (for better or worse) but that is the beauty of live theatre. Everyone involved has to be on their toes and at their best. That is one of the many things I will always cherish about it.

To those who made a trip to St. Louis, I hope you had a great ride. To those who could not, my apologies. I hope that one was surely watching from above saw me continue to grow. There are better shows out there but I think big, happy, family-friendly shows need to be done if not only as an escape from today's troubling reality.