

A Year Full of Ups And Downs

2010... What a year! So much happened that I do not know where the time went! It started off LAST January when I received my first two awards for acting in *You Have the Right to Remain Dead* (as everyone's ill-fated, lovable, hammy narrator... Harnell Chesterton) and for bringing the Grinchi Scrooginess of Mr. Henry F. Potter to life in *It's a Wonderful Life*. Even my best friends gave up a Bears' playoff game to share in my moment as well as family!

I can't even fathom the reality that I had limited myself to only two plays this year. I tackled my first lead role in the three person DRAMA, *Miracles*. I hope that Dawn and Rebekkah share in my belief that this play was one of the best shows I have ever been a part of. Thank you Beth for pushing for this show to be done and spreading its important, powerful message.

Chris next challenged me to seek out a new vocal coach. I had wanted to find one ever since Emily passed; however, I was uncertain as to whether I could find one as determined to help me in what I need to do. Thank God, he helped me find Kathrine. I could not ask for a better coach. I just adore people who know where your talent lies and are willing to guide you with suggestions on how best to cultivate them. Over the years I have had and continue to have some of the best!

I also became a board member of a new theatrical group in which I get to spend more time with my friends and help to bring *The Wizard of Oz* to the stage next summer. I also had my first byline when I reviewed the company's production of *(Cr)Oklahoma!* last summer.

My final performances of the year came in the Mare helmed production of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* in which I played a dual role as Barrymore, the caretaker of the Baskerville

estate and as the doomed Selden who met a rather grisly demise. Each production lends some challenge as well as fun working with old friends and making new ones.

The fact that I only limited myself to two shows this past year allowed me to do some very cool things with my friends.

In July, we went to Cincinnati to the zoo and then to Kings Island. I had not been to one of my favorite parks in several years and to go and be treated as V.I.P.s was extraordinary.

Not to mention the multiple game nights (from which I just opened 2011), chats in person and via I.M.ing. Just good times!

Of course a year is not all roses. On January 5, we lost our beloved Aunt Carol to cancer. Gone long before her time but held on longer than many thought she would. And more recently, my brother separated from his wife. I think that ultimately with the help and guidance of prayer and the love of family and friends striving forward yet remembering the special times only make us stronger.

So as we bid farewell to 2010, wrap up the holiday season and look ahead to the new year, I wish all of you the very best of peace, joy, and happiness.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind?

Should auld acquaintance be forgot, and days of auld lang syne?

For auld lang syne my jo,

For auld lang syne,

We'll take a cup of kindness yet,

For auld lang syne.

HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE... GOOD NIGHT!

Magic Moments At The Huber

When someone makes it not only into our weekly hometown [scandal sheet](#) but also in the column of the papers longest, active writer, the whole town knows it. For the Sunday matinee of *Miracles*, I was surprised by a group of 2 “minor senior citizens” and a few others “who are really working at being seniors.” Max’s column, “Magic Moments” is similar to a weekly blog in which she chronicles her day-to-day life as well as publishes a few recipes culled from her stack gathered over her eventful life. Full of insight and humor the post is always worth a glance.

Along with Maxine and the 2 minor senior citizens (who I had been told may be coming) was “Grandma” Margaret. Ever since my maternal grandmother passed when I was 8, she and the late “Grandpa” Roy filled the void. Three of my favorite memories:

- The summer following my 4th grade year my poodle, Buffy was put to rest. The following Christmas, we received a parakeet which we named Corky, after Margaret.
- Following a Thursday night college band rehearsal, Roy and Margaret came up to take me home for the weekend. I would also receive periodic care packages and notes of encouragement.
- After the passing of my two day old nephew, Zachary, (by this time) Deacon Roy and Margaret traveled to Indianapolis to bring the baby to E-town.

Just a few of the magic moments my family has shared with two of our village’s finest. Thank you Ruthie and Steve for bringing her. One of the cast had to “pay special attention” to the group after the performance.

I DID IT!

I set out to do something different and challenging. Judging from many of the surprising comments I received after each performance and how I felt about myself after each performance was exhilarating! Exhausting, yet exhilarating. *Miracles* is such a departure from the scene-stealing, character roles audiences have come to admire(?) about me. I could have done *OKLAHOMA!*. *Seussical* would have been pure fun. But nothing could have prepared me for the emotional roller coaster of my first three-person cast, lead actor role. It was so worth it in every way imaginable. I really think that the greatest part about it was the shock I gave so many audience members.

The synopsis of the story focuses on the teenage, institutionalized, autistic girl named Eve. Her teacher, Kate, wants to believe that Eve is a savant and “uses” the technique of [facilitated communication](#) in order to “convince” Tom that his daughter is in fact writing a book of poetry, is going to be on national TV, and will be an inspiration to millions. However, is there more to this than meets the eye?

Of course I’m biased, but I thought Tom was the most demanding character of the three. A middle aged hippie lawyer who lost his wife to cancer while attempting to raise his autistic daughter... in and out of a thousand specialists who questioned his ability to love and care for his daughter even feeling that he is being blamed personally for her condition. He turns his back on God and does not visit his daughter for two years until he receives a call from the school telling him that there had in fact been a “Miracle.” A really lost soul...a shell of a man... an emotional wreck.

Gone was the buzz that accompanies the comedic scene-stealing

character roles. But there were bits of humor sprinkled here and there. (“As the hair on your head recedes, the hairs in your nose start growing faster”). Battles with the teacher. Destruction of school equipment... boy did THAT feel good every night... thank goodness for Duct tape ☐ I did take a bit of artistic license by introducing a favorite bit of my childhood into the play.

Once again, I have **NO IDEA** who said that comedy was hard! One day, I would like to be cast in another **BIG** dramatic role. But for now... I need a good, light, fluffy musical or just a fun comedy full of character roles.

But, as I said this afternoon as I called the real star of the show to the stage at curtain call, Beth found this treasure and put it together. In January at the annual banquet for the Village Players, I knew I wanted to at least audition for the role. Hopefully, her passion for the piece showed through our performances which were not exactly sell-outs, but for a show like this... the message and the audience reaction to the message needs to come first. Another rewarding aspect... each audience had at least one person who had been touched by autism.

If You Say It Loud Enough, You’ll Always Sound Precocious

Yesterday, we had a double show with a party thrown in between the two. At the matinee, my mentor who just happens to be one of my two best friends was in the audience. While most of the people in attendance who know me are rather surprised by what

I do on stage in *Miracles*, Chris had no doubt at all. He and Lisa are **BEYOND** what I call the best! Words cannot describe how much they mean to me. After the afternoon show, Mary was throwing a cast party. I had to ask if I could bring my ardent supporters along. I was really happy when they told me that there had been some cancellations to justj and company's "sold out" dinner theatre.

While at Mary's, we all got to meet Beth's seven year old daughter... and believe me, Jordan let us know how old she is! She is so full of life, precious, and precocious. I, along with C & L, marveled at how much alike she and a certain newly turned six year old are! **HAPPY BIRTHDAY, SAMMIE! LOVE YA, KIDDO!**

Last night's performance had a really appreciative audience as well. I think it is awesome how many people this show has touched and taught. All theatre cannot be light and fluff. But, I think it is time for the return of a fun, fluffy musical. If not light and fluffy, then a serio-musical. There ARE a few of those floating around, aren't there?!

Is He My WHAT?!

Opening night was GREAT! The audience was both receptive and appreciative of the drama. I think the storm only added to the mystique. We were warned in our pre-show pep talk to project more even with our microphones just in case we could not be heard over the elements. OH, BOY! I DO GET TO BE BIGGER AFTER ALL! I have to say we have improved 1000% since Monday night. My family, very dear friends, and past co-stars were in the audience. "Clarence" was especially enthusiastic in his praise. So many audience members were really surprised

by my very dramatic turn.

Speaking of family members... my brother (who is 4 years older than I) was asked if I was his father. Knowing the culprit, I was only mildly surprised by the tale. "Uncle Billy" is just a bit on the eccentric side. I've only been acquainted with him since being in *It's a Wonderful Life* way back in December. Of course, he was a "plant" for *You Have the Right to Remain Dead*. But, we had a good laugh.

After the show, we had a small after party with lots of good, fattening food. I did, however bring a fruit bowl. But man am I BEAT! I'm usually up for a late night cast party but this show... while *Miraculous*... is draining.

You still have three more chances to catch the *Miracles*. Tomorrow (2.30 and 7.30) and Sunday (2.30) at the Huber in Hicksville, Ohio.

Tonight... Tonight

And to think just earlier this week I was kicking and screaming. No longer. I am soooo excited about this show! And I know it is going to come across the stage over four performances! Why would I ever think that the stage would let me down? It hasn't yet. Have I ever let it down? I know we are going to do it justice for Beth who had been pushing to get this profound work on the stage ever since she read it. It is especially meaningful to her. If you want to know why Beth is so passionate about it, you will have to come and see [Miracles](#) for yourself this weekend at the Huber Opera House in Hicksville (that's OHIO, not NY).

Following last night's final dress rehearsal, our director

commented that we all need to be bigger... more dramatic. **WHAT?! I NEED TO BE BIGGER?** (Never before have I been told that). No, no, not you. I was referring more to the ladies. As we were hanging around the parking lot, I kept reminding Beth of her statement. **I WILL BE EVEN BIGGER!** My two co-stars, director, and producer all laughed and said... Please, don't! (Oh... come on.)

Curtain up! Light the lights!

You got nothing to hit but the heights!

We'll be swell. We'll be great.

I can tell. Just you wait.

That lucky star I talk about is due!

Honey, everything's coming up roses for me and for you!

Miracles Are All Around

Sorry for the gaps between posts but really hard to find time between working at 6AM Monday morning. Getting to bed at 3AM Tuesday morning. Reading, rereading, typing, retyping, running lines with my sister, rehearsal and everything else. After Monday night's practice I was not sure what I had gotten myself into. But after some kicking and screaming (mentally) I think we are ready. Monday night was just a BAD practice as the few people who were there in the audience to take pictures, etc could tell you. I have NEVER been in a show that was in such a bad way that soon to performance. So... I was up until 3 o' clock going over my lines until I was ready to explode. Then, I got up Tuesday morning and had my sister run them with me.

Last night's rehearsal was a noticeable difference. Not without the occasional missed line but no one shouted "LINE!"

and we made it to the end. After rehearsal, Beth and I went to [Mary's](#), hung out, ate, and ran lines again. This morning, I ran lines again. Do you think I may be overdoing? Maybe it is just the new experience and I'm trying toooooo hard because I KNOW the lines. I just need to RELAX!! Remember why I am up on that stage and it is not because of one line (although...HAHA, Beth!)

So after getting off work at 5, I will head over. Look over the script again and be miraculous!

One Week To Go

After tonight's rehearsal, I am even more excited. There are some issues to be ironed out but what show doesn't all the way to opening. Mary send me a text during rehearsal commenting on one of the aspects of the show. Something that is very noticeable but I think is essential and makes it even more challenging, but I did agree. Even more I think I NEEDED to be in this show to see how far I could push myself.

One of the issues was staging. The director specifically pointed me out and I could not have agreed more! In one scene, I was not sitting how I needed to be to interact with "Eve." It will be remedied. Madame Director commented on my facial and body expressions. Seriously, do they stand out THAT MUCH!

Bring... it... on.

And the Yanks finally came home and won a game after the near sweep by the team from Motown.

Scary But Exciting

I don't know if it's because this is the most dramatic show I've ever been part of, the smallest cast, or a combination of the two but I'm really starting to feel a bit of pressure. I keep going through the script and I'm doing fine (just a few beats I'm having trouble with)... I dunno. Of course, we did just get on stage. I guess I need to take my "teenage daughter's" advice and relax! Don't let the pressure overwhelm me and above all HAVE FUN! This **IS** what I love to do!

We had a bit of tech tonight: lights and sound from Trav. Flashing lights.. HAHA! One day I'm going to get lurkers to comment even ones who have told me have tried but don't get their comments posted. Not because I haven't been checking for those in moderation.

There is a lot to enjoy about [Miracles](#) as I thought there would be and it will be fantastic! They don't call it hell week for nothing! The cast is fun (not forgetting the director now) and "Kate" told me that she is having a ball working with me once again. A week and a day (oops, make that a week) to curtain.

A Gold Star For Me

So the last two nights have been dedicated to walking through [Miracles](#). We were warned that we would be "using book as little as possible." However, it was more of a see how much

we know with less than 3 weeks to go! It is so difficult to feel comfortable until we get on the stage. The VPs do not get the stage until 2 weeks prior to curtain... probably the one thing I do not enjoy with the group. However, I am really pleased with the amount of memorizing I have been able to do thus far. I surprised myself. Still some work to be done there but I was pleased.

Many of the dramatic beats are coming along nicely as well. Even I can't believe where they are at this point! Imagine where they will be in a few weeks. I'm really going to surprise a lot of people... myself included. I got a gold star Monday night and heard some "WOW"s from the director tonight. Even a "Well done, Mr. Shaf."

I must say that this is my most emotionally draining stage experience to date. I will definitely be ready for a lighter show very soon. But I am lovin' the challenge of the drama. I wonder if the countdown widget is back! Time to add one.