

# Sharing the Stage with a Monkey

Tonight was my first recital EVER and the first time I have been on a stage since I graced the halls of Baskerville Hall WAAAAAAAY back in October. Last Thursday, K was not sure where in the program of 12 students she wanted to put CC and I. When I arrived at the Little Theatre, I found out that we would be last! "Who would want to follow you?" she asked. WOW!

I have always, ALWAYS, ALWAYS wanted to perform the showstopping "Master of the House" from *Les Miserables* and I am so glad that it was the piece I chose to do. Not to worry, plenty of other things I want to do, too. In the context of a recital, the song lends itself beautifully to a bit of audience participation. I needed two "Monsieurs" to come in at various times during the song. One was a fellow student (named Davy Jones) who was more than willing to fill the bill. The other was a little (or more so) hesitant about the bit since he had no advance knowledge. But happily, he played along. Thanks justj! I do think the guillotine in my old age would be the way to go.

If I had one critique, it is the size of the stage we performed on. The other 11 participants were all seated upstage and all the equipment limited the amount of movement I could do. I could always do more with the song no matter the size of the stage... so not really complaining!

The end result was **EXTRAORDINARY!** An audience member said that I was "the best Thenardier" she had ever seen. I'm not sure how the other 11 did but they sounded good. CC and I were in the green room until it was our turn. Kind of a grand introduction if you will. Either that or she did not want a slovenly innkeeper and his wife slopping up the stage the

entire time ☐

Thank you CC, justj, Monkeyman, and K for making my first recital super! And in all the excitement prior to heading for the theatre, I forgot to take my rat poison but did take it before typing the post.

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## 5 Days More

Well... the last lesson before the recital went very well indeed. The second half of my duet adds much to the piece and it should come off with much hilarity. I have ALWAYS wanted to perform this piece and it was one of several I had picked out on my first lesson back in July (THANK YOU, C for recommending that I start taking them).

I would like to invite all of my fellow tangenteers to the event on Tuesday May 10th at the Little Theatre. The recital is divided into two groups. The first group of 12 takes the stage at 6PM, the second act (the one I am part of ) rises at 7:30. Because of the limited amount of seating and the number of performers, I am inviting only a select few family and really close friends.

Hopefully, many of you will be able to come cheer us all on. ☐

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## Throwing Bricks At The Huber

Misleading title but it works. Tonight was the monthly board meeting for [FCF](#) and a festive mood was created. Amongst other

topics discussed was possible promotions to get the word out about *The Wizard of Oz* coming next summer for 4 sure-to-be spectacular performances. One idea bandied around was throwing bricks at the crowds watching the annual Jubilee Parade. Unfortunately, the idea was for FOAM bricks painted gold. I probably could come up with some real bricks... not sure if any are still left from the demolishing of the old town hall (haven't really noticed lately).

After the meeting, I went to dinner and had a great time as always and a mysterious spirit paid for our meal. All eyes turned to me when the waitress announced that our bill had been taken care of. Honestly, it was not me this time. Totally innocent THIS time! Happy Birthday once again tomorrow, Taylor!

Finally, I headed over for my nephew/Godson's Christmas concert which had been postponed from last Monday when we had our first pre-winter storm. As always, the Huber is a glorious site for a concert of any magnitude but it just creates a magical, festive atmosphere this time of year. This season, it is easy to see why the Junior High and High School bands combine: the senior High only has **10** members. Get some of those choir members to join. The concert was wonderful!

Everything from selections from *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* (one of the band director's personal favorite holiday specials... who am I to argue) to a few jazzy selections (didn't really care for a jazz arrangement of *Silent Night*... call me a traditionalist).

A few of the choral pieces took me back almost 20 years. A more traditional *Silent Night* ALWAYS creates nostalgic, bittersweet memories. As Jeff remarked, at least we could stand for the final song: Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" from *Messiah*. I wasn't sure if anyone was actually going to stand until one brave soul got to his feet. Two seconds later and I would have risen. I have always said that ending a concert with the piece is a sure-fire way to get a standing ovation.

I've often wondered what would happen if the performance was not up to par. After an hour and a half, I don't think anyone wanted to sit down again.

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## Christmas Two-Fer

Looking for a bit of Christmas spirit (not THAT kind of spirit)? My nephew Alex, Megan, and I found a smattering at the Huber tonight as the Village Players presented a duo of one act plays. Things got started with an adorable retelling of the immortal Nutcracker story. Most of the cast was made up of children with a few adults in the mix to keep things under control. There were whole families taking part in some of the roles! And what would the tale of little Clara and her Prince on a magical Christmas Eve be without the classic music of Tchaikovski's ballet. There were also some of the dances thrown in: The Waltz of the (ADORABLE) Snowflakes, The Chinese (Tea) Dance, and of course The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy. And the Snow Queen really sent shivers down my spine.

BRRRRRRRRR! And WHO was behind the Owl Clock who kept popping up in rhyme?

After intermission, O. Henry's classic tale of unselfish, sacrificial gifting was presented. What better way to remind us all what the Christmas season is all about than by seeing a young couple give what they "think" is their most valued possession in order to purchase a gift for their true love.

Be it by reading the printed story, seeing it presented on stage, or watching the Mickey and Minnie version, *The Gift of the Magi* has always been a personal favorite of mine. And the narration wasn't bad, either ☐

After the performance, my trio greeted the cast... most of whom

I have either worked with previously, been directed by, or been reviewed by (“a raised eyebrow speaks volumes” still cracks me up!). Travis received his giant nutcracker director’s present... very appropriate. No present for Amber, yet. And of course, my young companion had to endear himself to everyone. Calling Miss Mare “a gift from God?!” Honestly...

I did forget how much I adored the two sets. The Nutcracker was full of fun colors, a giant tree, over-sized sweets, and the razzle-dazzle of the season. The polar opposite was true of the second show. The young couple’s (by the name of Young, coincidentally) abode was dark and dreary. Both sets captured each tale beautifully.

A really fun evening full of friends and Christmas magic.

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## **A Bear-y Rockin’ Holiday**

AH... the holiday programs continue. Last night, my first grade niece, Alyssa, and fifth grade nephew, Alex had their Elementary Christmas Program. Unlike Elizabeth’s production of *Seussical, Jr.* last weekend, every student in grades K-5 were involved. However, the evening was divided into 2 (or three if you count the 6th grade guitar class) musical extravaganzas.

The youngest 3 classes presented *A Bear-Merry Holiday* in which the Kindergartners were dressed in brown as Grizzly Bears. The first grade group as white Polar Bears. The second graders transformed into either Black or Panda Bears. Some of the highlights of this show were the angry, rapping grizzlies who promised to “be good.” However, when they thought they were not being watched, returned to their rappin’ ways.

"Panda-monium" found a group of pandas chasing each other in a circle... not much room on the stage and one nearly fell down; however, I think this might have been slightly intentional as the near stumble looked a bit choreographed.

After two intermissions (after the K-2 were finished and following the guitarists), it was time for the big kids to present *Santa's Rockin' Christmas Eve*. The televised variety show featured an array of musical talent everything from a 60s Motown girls group, to a bluesy Mrs. Claus, to a Beatles-esque fivesome (ok, the Beatles were the fab 4) who made the girls swoon and faint.

There were more individual character roles in this production and I would have to say that my favorite was the quick talking, frequently "ad-libbing" emcee Swingle Kringle (brother of the guy in the red suit who everyone was waiting to make a surprise appearance) who was often admonished for his penchant for going off the cue cards.

When Santa finally arrived, he did not come alone. He and his back-up group performed the traditional holiday Disco hit, "S.A.N.T.A." I think the costumes could have been a bit more creative for that number. Perhaps not the traditional garb of a police officer, construction worker, Native American, biker dude, and military guy but a little more than just the jolly old elf in his polyester suit.

After the performance, we came home for our annual viewing of the 1938 version of *A Christmas Carol*. One tidbit gathered from the pre-show introduction: Scrooge was originally supposed to be played by Lionel Barrymore who had for years performed the role over the radio and was the original choice.

However, just before filming was to begin, Mr. Barrymore took a nasty fall and was unable to be in the film. He would create a role just as curmudgeonly (love that word) some eight years later, Mr. Henry F. Potter, himself. Tonight, the Muppet's take on the Carol is on. Haven't seen that one in

years!

Another fun-filled holiday extravaganza. Monday night (weather permitting) I will take in my final concert at the glorious Huber... weather permitting of course. We could be in for a bit MORE of the white tonight into Sunday.

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## Eric And The Beast On A Rag

I did get to sit in the audience of the City Band Wednesday night. I wasn't sure if it was going to be at the bandstand or at its alternate venue. Before finding that out, I decided to locate the place of my Thursday afternoon voice lesson which was easier to locate than the directions given by my new coach. I googled the address and it was a breeze to find. Especially with the number written on the mailbox. The house was buried by a wooded area but really easy to find. All I had to do was turn off of U.S. 6 onto County Road 13 and it was .3 miles away. Then, with plenty of time to spare, I went to Wal Mart and ran into some old friends and saw the truck belonging to another but was not able to find him. I must have been on the wrong end of Electronics (or he could have been hiding). ☐

After discovering that the concert would be at the ice rink with five minutes to spare, I decided that given the choice, I would have rather directed Stars and Stripes this week as opposed to last (not complaining, just sayin'). I just think this week's concert had better music. Many songs I was already familiar with... "12th Street Rag" I had sung in choir and played sometime. Of course, a different arrangement than I am accustomed to, but I would have enjoyed sitting in the low brass section playing "Selections from *Phantom of the Opera*"

and the title tune from the animated classic turned hit Broadway show "*Beauty and the Beast*."

Speaking of Phantom, my brother turned to me and stated that the high school at which he serves as the tech advisor will be performing the musical next year. I did not believe him until I looked [on line](#) and discovered that the rights have just indeed become available from R&H productions for high school and amateur productions. There had been "test" runs a few years ago overseen by Lord Lloyd Webber's Really Useful Group company. But how did the small school get the rights so quickly? Hicksville had better "Got Talent" to pull this off.

I imagine that the rights are probably for a tailored production of the musical.

I asked Liz if they were going to come next week for the announced ice cream social "before and during the concert." I don't think she realized where she will be next Wednesday because she didn't know if they would be or not. Probably not since they will be at Disney World. Maybe they could borrow Aladdin's magic carpet, Carpet. I'd rather be there when it is not so hot!

A fun concert moved to a different venue to be "safe rather than sorry."

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## **Fearless At the Jubilee**

AHHHH, my moment had arrived! What a great rush! It was almost like being on a roller coaster. Thank you Terry for the opportunity by donating the gig to the WCCT. Back in January while waiting for my pal to come over the radio during the Blizzard Auction, I heard the item up for bid. I thought it would be an extraordinary and priceless experience. A

female bidder and I went at it and I finally got it for \$72,341.56. LOL ☐ If I had that much money, I am sorry to say that I would not be here.

Prior to the 8 o'clock start time, the director had a few words of encouragement and asked me for a bio. I actually thought about giving him one last night, but his intro was just fine. I had some family (biological and chosen) in the audience and apparently a sizable fan club as I heard a loud cheer come over the crowd as I was called to the podium.

After another helpful assist in starting the tempo, I was really ready to roll... no false start tonight. I was maybe the tiniest bit nervous until I gave the down beat and the opening strain of *The Stars and Stripes Forever* began. I was in control and I relished every moment of it.

After my conducting was done, Terry reclaimed the baton and told me that it was "Very Well Done!" I knew it was. It felt that good! After the concert was over, I greeted my family, friends, band mates, well wishers and walked with Megan, Carol, and Brock to the Little Theatre. I still had one mission to complete but I did not see him at the concert. I walked to C&Ls house after phoning them to see if it was all right to stop over for a few minutes. After I got no response, I KNEW they had to be there somewhere. After making a lap around the square, I decided to hang around with a few of the remaining band members. Within moments, here comes Tay and Sam. PERFECT! Strangely enough, they were really close to the bandstand and had a great view of my moment in the spotlight!

Then I saw C, pushing Beebs and Dis in the stroller. I was not leaving until I gave my mentor and friend his birthday present (an hour or three early but who knows what tomorrow will bring). He admitted that he knew nothing about directing but said I looked good. Any compliment is a good one! Then we walked the grounds watching the little ones ride. I went on the Rock and Roll Wheel with the fearless one. Think a

ferris wheel on which you are in a cage which flips around as the ferris wheel turns. It was fun!

Then at 11, a cart driven by Jubilee workers came around and told a group of teenagers to disperse as it was closing time. The adults with the four little ones were ignored.

Tired but not tired. It was so much fun. I wish my work schedule allowed me to be off Tuesday and Wednesday nights throughout the summer. Thanks Terry, Polly, and the Bryan City Band for an unforgettable experience. Another addition to me resume, too!

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## Have Tuba Will Play

I was excused from work a half hour early tonight, so I decided to go to the inaugural [Bryan City Band](#) concert of the season. One of my best friends has played trumpet in the band since high school. The new director is someone I have known for the past umpteen years. I just learned tonight that Emily was the band director of the city's high school just prior to Mr. Krause's assuming the position. THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO! (sorry, Terry).

As I was making my way to finding a spot to enjoy the magnificent concert, I heard Carol shout my name so I ventured over her way and enjoyed the music together. Marches and medleys of tunes were the order of the day. Of course, my favorite selection was "Marches from Broadway" (imagine that). But there are many more great marches from the Great White Way than "Before the Parade Passes By," "Comedy Tonight" (wasn't aware that that is a march), and "Seventy-Six Trombones." In a grab bag from "The Fifties" we heard another ("March of the Siamese Children") as well as a reprise of

those trombones and cornets right behind.

Next Wednesday (as I previously made known), I will be making my directorial debut. The director told me to be at the high school for rehearsal Tuesday night. We would run through my piece and then I could leave. **WHAT!?** **Sounds like a waste of gas to me.** Someone (I think it was either my oldest brother or my godson) suggested that we find a spare tuba. **WHOO HOO! BRING IT!** So, if they remember to bring the horn, I will not only be conducting but sitting in to play as well.

So... come on, come all. But, be warned, it is the week of the Jubilee so come early for prime parking. I'm not excited or anything.

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## **Think Big... Be Bigger!**

Another aspect of the first dramatic lead role kinda snuck up on me in the days leading up to the opening. It just seems that whenever I set out to do something new theatrically or musically I can feel the hand of my guardian angel on my shoulder. I even make a point to visit Emily's graveside at these times. And I have come to the realization that I KNOW she would be really proud of my accomplishments as I am, she would also be advising me to more. I still think that her voice was coming through as I told Beth that I "need to be BIGGER" although I know that the director was primarily addressing my fellow female actors. I was not joking. But all three kept insisting that I did not need to be bigger than I already was.

To that end, I am beginning a search for a vocal coach in this area. Not just ANY vocal coach. They need to be willing to PUSH me, be as demanding as I am on myself. I have to be

able to trust that they will do that! Any ideas? I have been without a vocal coach for almost 3 years. A mentor I have and I am forever grateful for that. I just need someone to help develop my theatricality even more. Who knows to where it will end? Perhaps to get that first big musical lead in community theatre (my next goal) ... maybe even BIGGER... AND THEN... **BIGGER THAN THAT!** And not because someone told me I should or should not but because **I told me**. Sounds like a challenge issued to myself. However far it takes me is my decision and as a sage once told me... "The Sky's the Limit!" Not that I would hesitate to ask for any help would be great.

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## **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.