

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.

Elementary Chinese Proverb

So after mass tonight, I took two lovely, entertaining young girls to watch me niece in her elementary school's production (not program as the director informed us before the curtain rose... the distinction is the mere formality of budget) of *Mulan, Jr.* I was really impressed by the entire production, the set design and costuming (for nearly 80 3rd-5th or is it 4th-6th grade... WOW!) was very well conceived especially for an elementary school show. The backdrop was a very impressive painting depicting Chinese mountain scenery. But the costumes were one of the highlights of the show. I'm not sure how many tailors were used but we were informed that they were all handmade.

For such a young cast, I was really impressed by some of the performers. My favorite was the evil leader of the Huns, Shan Yu. A tall, imposing figure dressed in black with his small entourage. His voice was also quite commanding.

I also thought that the young lady portraying Mulan had a very nice voice.

I must have been trying too hard to locate Elizabeth, but I still think the costuming was so well done that it was difficult to spot her. Taylor actually pointed her out to me. Oh, yeah... that's her in the purple robe!

There were also some miscues that were not entirely the cast's fault. A few times the miked performers were not heard because the sound tech failed to have them on. However, one young man must have been delayed in his entrance because I heard someone on stage whisper, "Where's ...?" Ah, the magic of live children's theatre. Overall, I really thought it was adorable and Taylor and Sammie seemed to enjoy themselves which made it even more worthwhile. Plus, they even brought a gift for our star. The Huber Opera House was filled to

capacity (well... the main level) which was something I had not seen since *St. Louis*. I guess it is true what they say about audiences with children on stage, but **80!!!**

I also got a very early Christmas present. A blast from the past, actually. I know someone in my family had the Parker Brothers [Six Million Dollar Man](#) board game. I knew as soon as I saw the box that I had played it years ago. LOVE IT... **THANKS!** Plus we had time to play a quick game or three before the night ended.

Wrap Session

Well today was our finale for *You Have the Right to Remain Dead*. You just had to be there to understand how much fun the entire experience was. The show itself was brilliant but the cast was another memorable group to work with and I befriended a 4th grade boy who was one of our “plants” in the audience. Was it Saturday night when John exclaimed that he heard “gunshots fired... sounding like Pt-oo! Pt-oo!” Today, I KNOW it was him who nearly gave away the KEY clue to the entire show when he stated that instead of Harnell saying “Carefully” as he exited the stage he actually said “Careful, Leigh.” Yesterday, as I mentioned previously, an innocent member of the audience figured out the clue by herself which is understandable.

And yes, I played Harnell Chesterton, “Your narrator for our little bit of mayhem. A host to a muhdah as it were.” And I WAS the one who was murdered. I must tell you that the first few times I practiced being carted out in a wheelchair with my head down, eyes closed, and trying so hard NOT to move was some of the hardest times I have ever had on stage because

some of the accents from the other characters and the lines are so funny that it was nearly impossible to not crack up. Then I am covered up and wheeled off the stage "with the rest of the props" (how degrading). The funny thing is... I never knew what position I would be in after the others are finished poking and prodding me to make sure I was indeed "dead." This afternoon, I was so messed up that my head was dangling over the side so far that I could not possibly fit through the door frame. I attempted to slowly but unobtrusively straighten enough to be pushed off stage.

At the end of the show after the murderess is revealed, I am pushed back on stage still covered with the afghan ("You were knitting a dog?" a line that got a groan most performances). Last night, I tried to raise my arm and give a royal wave. This did not work as, somehow, I became caught up and ended up bringing part of the door frame with me. I always did manage to have "Fat Daddy's" hat on top of my head on top of the afghan.

[Justj](#) and his youngest were in the audience this afternoon on their way to Ft. Wayne. He knew from the outset that I would be the one murdered (or maybe he was hoping that I would be but "Don't assume"). He however thought that the killer would be Blanche, the long suffering director who has had enough of Harnell's "padding his part" by giving the audience insight on how to solve a murder. She very nearly gives the narrator the old hook treatment while he is giving his spiel from his box seat. I felt like both Statler and Waldorf but was not able to offer my sarcastic remarks to the play within the play. Instead, I read "Doris's" book of Complete Shakespeare (usually the Scottish play beginning with the letter M that is considered bad luck to mention in a theatre).

Following the show this afternoon of course came the striking of the set. Travis and Mary came over after their Little Shop production was over. Then, the remaining cast and crew members enjoyed pizza and each others company. I have a

really difficult time breaking away from a show; this one has been so much fun that I think it will take a bit longer.

Hopefully, I will not have to wait too long for the next show. In a few weeks, I do plan to return to the Huber to audition for *It's A Wonderful Life*.

Two In One

Day two of three of the play saw both an afternoon matinee as well as an evening show. I am glad that we had the extra performance so that some of my friends in the Little Shop cast could come and watch our show. I saw two of them, but the third must have been in a hurry to get out. Lucky [Mare](#) pretty well gave away the huge clue of the show during the audience participation part and she swore that she did not know but just used her deductive talents. However, the cast glossed over the revelation until the proper time.

Following the matinee, we walked to the nearby home of one of our youngest cast members who graciously hosted a cast party between shows. Ate some chili and other goodies. As a tip of the hat to the show, I took some donuts. Really fun time getting to know the cast further. Great times and we played some Apples to Apples.

I think our best audience so far was tonight's crowd and not just because I had quite a few family members and friends who are like family. And I got a gift bag! Erasable highlighters... very cool with two bottles of Coke Zero and a can of Lay's Chips. And a surprise guest that I did not see coming... Cathy DUKES! THANKS ALL! Extremely easy to perform for an audience who is really receptive and participates. I REALLY like these shows. A small faux pas, I was responsible

for some minor set damage, but we won't get into that.

Tomorrow, the wrap up but like I said in a previous post...
"whenever one door closes, another is soon to open."

Something Creaky This Way Comes

Tonight was opening night for *You Have the Right to Remain Dead* and what an opening it was. For a Friday night during football season with many homecoming games going on, I thought the crowd was a decent size and it is very difficult to fill every seat in the venue. I still cannot say enough how gorgeous and amazing it is to be on the jewel of a stage. Both times I have been in shows at the Huber I have been spoiled.

I thought that among the best moments were some of the sound effects. There are many great effects that heighten the atmosphere of the show and tonight we had the heater going. Not to worry, because I was for a bit. Everyone I talked to in the audience thought the noise was part of the show... including a few friends who had a great time playing "whodunit." The entire audience seemed to get into the participation act but it could have started a bit sooner. And we were promised that the noise from the heater would be addressed.

Following the show while shedding my costume and persona of Harnell Chesterton, I learned that one of my castmates is a Red Sox fan (I won't hold that against him). My Yankee coat was hanging on a hangar and Alex noticed it and we each offered our condolences to each other. By the way, the

Bombers are up 2-0 in the ALDS after beating the Twins 4-3 in 11 innings.

And I think I have made a new friend who has found out about my sterling personality. the director warned me to watch myself or she would find something to throw at me during the show. What is it that I do... honestly?

I think I have found a new favorite show that will be really hard to leave when Sunday's matinee is over. I think this will be number 3 replacing Rooster and right behind Donnie and "you-know-who."

Lets see... 14 hours 52 minutes to go...and counting.

Saturday Night's Alright

maybe not for fightin' but good times. I wanted to go to church at 4 at one of our sister churches. However, I had forgotten that the 4 o'clock mass is no longer in existence after the recent twining (or tripling since it involves three churches). I wanted to attend the Weekender this to show my support of one of my former castmates: Andrew who was in *Idol Night* and *School House Rock* with me. Tonight's offering was a mixed bag of Broadway tunes performed by a group of young adults. Pretty good for their age. I must say that Andrew has improved much in the past 2 years... a very deep bass which is developing very nicely. His rendition of "I Am I Don Quixote" was one of my favorite numbers of the evening. He also sang "Send in the Clowns" from *A Little Night Music*. At first, I thought... oh great. Not that I am not a big fan of the song (I think it is one of Sondheim's masterpieces) but I have heard it so many times. However, when was the last time I heard it sung by a guy? Not often.

When the group of performers took the stage, I asked Megan..."Where's Andrew?" I did not recognize him at all! Gone was the beard and longish hair I had become accustomed to. He looked that different!

The rest of the performances were good as well. A very strange arrangement of "Someone Like You" from *Jekyll and Hyde*. A choral performance of "Bui Doi" from *Miss Saigon* (good but [Mr. Whatever's](#) rendition was better... not biased here, Chris's performance just brought chills both times) and a few songs from *Songs from a New World*, a show I am not very familiar with. And the Little Theatre was just packed... hopefully, the free will brought in a few dollars.

Once again... great job Adam, Jason, McKenzie, Preston, Andrew, and Jessi. Plus, Patti's job as accompanist was no small feat. Some of those songs had to be killers to play!

One more post from the evening later... stay tuned. Different Bat Time, Same Bat Site.

They Know Me So Well

Tonight, I HAD to attend the opening night performance of the WCCT's latest melodrama to show my support of one of my dearest friends who had a couple of roles in the show. When I arrived, I knew I was in for a treat. There was a duo of western lawmen who began to harrass me (?) with the rifles. They even went so far as to frisk me. They made sure that I made my donation of a canned item for the area food banks. The officers repeatedly told audience members to look out for me and threatened harm upon my person if I got out of line.

In the preshow address, the three stooges pointed out that the

audience show boo, hiss, and cheer but in no way were we to throw anything. I thought that was totally unfair. Two summers ago, I was in *Love Rides the Rails* and was unmercifully pelted by popcorn, Skittles (you know who you are), and other things I am sure. I thought I was the hero of the piece but judging from the audiences' reaction, I was anything but.

[Wild Oats](#) has all the traditional elements of the best of cornball melodramas: heroes, villains, damsels in distress, mistaken identity, and plot twists galore. The strong-willed heroine (the aptly named Kate) and the hero Jack were both wonderful. The villainous Ike Gammon had a slimy appearance and a voice that just made you want to hiss and catcall. The duo of Croftus Thunder and his trusty Indian sidekick (astride his mount) Corporal Crow were a hoot. I must say that my favorite roles were a duo of hilarious stock characters named Mr. Kliegle and Mr. Leko who drew applause each time they made an appearance. And don't forget the all-important cameo of the Marshall who saves the day. There is also Ephraim Smooth a smooth preacher who steals several moments.

All in all a wonderful performance. I think the theatre should consider doing a summer melodrama every year. They are very light-hearted and fun not only to watch but to be in. Totally un-P.C. as a lot of issues get a fair amount of ribbing. But why do they always pick on me? Seriously, am I really that bad ☐

All The World's A Stage

and all its men and women merely players.

As You Like It (II,vii, 139-40)

I have often been asked what type of stage I enjoy performing on most. In response, I usually state that it depends upon what is being performed. Sometimes, a show is grand in scale and is meant to be presented on a HUGE stage with a HUMONGOUS audience. Other times, a play is more intimate and is meant for a more intimate setting. I have been watching a Josh Groban concert on PBS tonight (after the Yankees were defeated by the Red Stockings). Being pledge drive time, there are frequent breaks and during one Josh was interviewed. He had recently performed at Madison Square Garden: one of the world's grandest venues. This evening's taped performance was much more intimate: smaller stage, closer audience (in which he could see the "whites of their eyes"), almost a jam session in front of maybe 100 fans. Once again, I was in total awe. Such talent! Singing in Spanish, Italian, as well as English. Taking lyrics that I have no idea what the translation is yet conveying their message brilliantly. Looking forward to the concert version of *Chess* coming next week. Although it is a concert version, it will be my first time seeing any version of the cult musical.

WAIT! I think I have gone off an another tangent. Coming up in a few short months is the WCCT's production of *Little Shop of Horrors*. This is going to be done at the smaller of the two venues. I think it will be quite interesting to discover how we are going to have the huge flesh-eating Audrey II on a small stage as well as the scenery for Skid Row. Seems like a lot, but if it comes off it will be awesome and I think the intimacy of the smaller, in your face venue will have an even more dramatic effect.

So, although I have kind of given a roundabout answer to my own question, it really does have more to do with the type of production being staged. I like being part of big, theatrical extravaganzas that call for a huge setting. I also am comfortable in a small, intimate space in which you can see the audience and know that there are actually butts in the

seats.

The Third Smallest Town In Texas

WOW... how hysterical! I continued my part in establishing relations between the WCCT and the [Village Players](#) by attending a production of Greater Tuna. I'm not sure if there could be a less politically correct, laugh out loud play. Taking place largely at radio station OKKK (get it?) operating on 250 (help me out here Mare) watts in really backwater, hickville Tuna, Texas, two actors embody 20 citizens of the town. Travis and Alex... man I don't know how they did it... had accents for each character that were perfect and mannerisms that were a hoot.

Some of my favorite characters:

- Bertha Bumiller (married to Hank who is a member of such civic minded organizations as Smut-Snatchers and a committee to reduce the number of blacks in literature which has banned such books as *Roots*, *Huckleberry Finn*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. And the group is also looking into Shakespeare's other works)
- Stanley Bumiller (son of Hank and Bertha a juvenile delinquent)
- Charlene Bumiller (high school senior daughter who has been trying for 7 years to be make the cheerleading squad with no success whatsoever but seems to be the town's poet laureate)
- Jody Bumiller (youngest child has a pack of 8-10 dogs provided by "puppy pusher" and humane activist, Petey

Fisk who has a speech impediment)

- Reverend Spikes (Baptist minister and leader of the Smut-Snatchers. Alex delivered IMHO the finest speech in the play by eulogizing the greatness of the deceased judge)

During the extraordinary amount of costume changes, there were PSAs broadcasted. One of my favorites was an ad for Spatula Warehouse where if you buy 10 spatulas you can get one for a penny. Definitely not for everyone, but if you can put aside most of your morals and are able to laugh with the play as they satirize almost every politically correct thing imaginable then definitely look for [Greater Tuna](#) and its sequels.

Make Way For Ducklings

(Wait! I think there is an actual children's book of that actual title). Tonight, a good friend and I attended the newest offering of the community theatre... BOY it seems like forever since I have been on stage... hopefully, that will change in a week or so. Before the show, we decided to try the newest rave among fellow tangenteers... The Four Seasons... a nice, cosy restaurant. Some day, I will be brave and try some Mediterranean cuisine, but tonight I had lasagne which was quite good and extremely filling. I was told that I was a bad influence as my companion skipped on the wrap she was going to get and decided upon fettucini alfredo instead. The prices were quite reasonable and the food was quite excellent. Sounds like this may become a new pre-show gathering place.

HONK! was extremely adorable. Everyone knows the tale of The Ugly Duckling about the outcast duckling who grows into a

beautiful swan, but this musical expands the tale introducing a gaggle of other animals and relates the beautiful story of the lengths a mother will go to show not only her son but those around her that it is not what is on the outside but what is inside that counts.

I will have to say that my favorite part of the show was a Busby Berkeley-inspired song and dance production number led by a bullfrog. I also loved the wiley old cat. Two characters I would have had fun portraying, but I was involved with another musical at the time of auditions.

I also ran into a gentleman who also tried out for Joseph last weekend. He informed me that he auditioned for the role of "Geriatric Joseph." I, for one, am glad that I did not list the title role on my audition sheet because one of the requirements is the need to be comfortable on stage with out a shirt. I may have the vocal chops, but I'm not quite to the point at which I am ready to be on stage bare chested. I guess I need to work on that.

After the show, the three of us (we pick up a stowaway) headed back to what we were promised was a party at a local tavern, but when we arrived, it was closed so we headed to Taco Bell for a drink. A great night of fun theatre.