

# 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.

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## **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?!

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## **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.

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## 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!*

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## 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 tooooo 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!

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## 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.

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# 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.

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# 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.

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## It Takes A Village

Or at least 8-10 actors on stage and some behind the scenes performers. My review of The [Village Players](#) opening show of the 2010 season will be brief so as to not give away to those who have yet to see it. And if you have not then definitely try to make the final performance tomorrow afternoon! Most assuredly an ensemble piece led by the hilarious Mary as Mrs. Savage.

I have to say that another actress on stage (who I take full credit for) also was fabulous. Courtney, who played Mr. Potter's little seen secretary in *It's a Wonderful Life*, amazed me as Mrs. Savage's greedy daughter.

A real life father/daughter duo whom I have worked with before also had fine chemistry especially in one bit! I saw a lot of



built up emotion in that ironic moment ☐

A fine job by all that I got to share with my brother and his kids!

Also fun was a survey the audience was asked to fill out.

- Is this your first time seeing a VP show? (No, but I've been in more than I have seen).
- How did you hear about the show... check all that apply. (An X on each line including "Other"... cast members forced me to come... HAHA!)
- Finally, the shows you would like to see on the stage... (No less than 10, two provided by Joshua. *Our Town* and *Twelfth Night* both of which he has read in his 7th grade gifted class. The rest were 8 that I have wanted to be in. Including one that will probably be tossed. But if another group can attempt to persuade their board to do a show full of blood and gore then why can't another do a show based on real people that actually has some intelligence behind it? Just a suggestion...)

A good way to kick off the season and a chance to sit back and be entertained. But not too long... three months is too long to be off stage ☐

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## **There's Always OKLAHOMA!**

For someone else ☐ Honestly, I don't have anything against the show. I still say that not for Rodgers & Hammerstein's first collaboration, the modern musical would be far different. But the wait is over. I received a message in my facebook inbox from the director of *Miracles* that told me that she had some news regarding casting! Not to worry... it's not

bad. I immediately grabbed my phone and was ecstatic after receiving the news. I was the only one she and the producer of the show had firmly had in place. Does this mean that I was the only guy to audition? Tom is the only male role in a cast of three. Oh, well who cares if I was?

After getting off the phone, I struck up an online conversation with one of a few people I had to tell first. I even had him thinking it was another JS (Jerry Seinfeld, Jerry Springer... forgot about him somehow). He was about to phone the police to arrest the director for slander until I came clean.

This role is going to be memorable for several reasons. Not only is it a serious drama (with some bits here and there of lightheartedness), but it is the smallest cast I have ever been part of. I am really excited to see how well I am able to pull it off. I have also been informed that the director is going to have her way with me (ok... so she definitely did not phrase it quite that way). The subject of the show is very close to her and it is going to be done her way. I totally agree! Plus, my limited experience in such shows can only benefit greatly by a director who knows what she wants. But I'm not worried: It will be work but it will be fun!

So... let the fun work begin! Does this mean that I need to add a new category?