

# Not Even Thinking About It Yet

I know that it is only a bit over three months away but it will be here before we know it. I already have a standing invitation to help my new neighbors around the block prepare for their Christmas spectacular which they did annually while living in the Carolinas. Plus, auditions for Miracle on 34th Street (in lieu of the postponed Sound of Music) are next week, Yesterday, I was informed that Wally World has already started hauling out the holly not to mention the return of layaway. I remember when there was lawawat (I can't even spell it correctly) year-round.

Yesterday at my voice lesson, I saw a stack of Yuletide books underneath K's keyboard, Tis the season, already? Not to worry, I have a few weeks to decide on a few to work up as "I learn faster than most of the other students." Any suggestions? I have always wanted to put a nice "Ave Maria" in my rep AND this would fulfill a request for a foreign language selection.

Another remark from the neighbors (TK is an E-Town native) is the absence of things that were a part of our small town about 20-25 years ago... no more bakery, the town goes to bed with the sun, the second grocery no longer exists. I told her that Halloween consists of one hour Trick or Treat and a parade to the fire hall for a costume judging. Black Friday is another parade with Santa being driven on his Fire engine sleigh to the fire hall and then he returns to the North Pole after only one night of listening to the wishes of the little ones. And what happened to the carolers who would go door-to-door. She just shook her head when I told her that Scouts (Boy and Girl both) haven't done it for years. Kind of sad.

I guess I have been thinking about the holidays (in a way) for

a few months while I have been receiving FB posts of holiday lights set to sounds of the season and photos of A Christmas Story scenes (which will be making its Broadway musical debut soon.... eh... I'm sure it will be successful but, really?!)

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# Where Do We Go From Here?

My lesson this morning was mostly a reflection on the journey I have been on for the last nearly 1.5 years and what a journey it has been! I guess I did most of the leg work from picking the songs, order placement, finding an accompanist, arranging for the space, finding the female voices I wanted to join me in the ensemble pieces, and probably most importantly, being the one who led the production on stage. I still say the blurb between pieces was awkward but I have been assured that they came across heart-felt in that they explained the personal reason behind most of the songs. Overall, I was really pleased as was my vocal trainer.

Next step, finding a piece for the recital coming in about 6 weeks. I did not think much about that over the weekend aside from considering one of my shows (did I just say that) character-driven pieces that I would love to do again but was not sure if it would be venue appropriate. I was assured that it would be so it will go on my short list.

After this experience, I really want to go out of the box in what I bring to the table. While I am a certifiable character performer, I really want to broaden my scope and dip into whatever genres I can (well... a few not so much, but). K tells me that she would love to hear me tackle some art pieces. Not necessarily in a foreign language because there are plenty of English pieces. I know one from way back when that I would like to give a whirl and she loaned me a book and CD that is full of them. We looked at a little Irish ditty that sounded fun. I'm sure that my creative energy will once again peek out. I already have 2 pastabilities.

And once again, much too soon, I had over gone my lesson time.

However, I got paid a huge compliment before leaving: My coach could “sing with me all day.” Aww shucks.

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## I'm Sure It Will Be Fine

Well.. less than two weeks to go! I can't believe how difficult it has been to find two female voices to join me in a few numbers not to mention an accompanist. Well... I have the pianist after losing two when the date had to be changed a couple of times. At today's rehearsal, I practiced in the sanctuary of the church which houses my instructor's new studio. Very nice for the most part. K even got to sit in the pews and really critique and I was even pleased with **MOST** of the selections. She had very few notes on all but one song that was a virtual train wreck. We got through each of the pieces except for one in about a half hour. We ran out of time before getting to the final piece. Not the final piece as I am being accompanied by guitar on my opening piece (something new for me but I think will work nicely) as well as my finale which is going to have **NO accompaniment!** I also am considering the possibility of videoing the evening. If anyone is willing, then I would be open to the possibility as a few of my wonderful friends are either unable or unsure if they are able to come. I would also be open to an encore if I hadn't already paid \$80 to my pianist... reality check from my school days when I had to pay one for each lesson ;). In any case, if all goes well I would not be against the idea of doing a new set down the road... maybe More Songs I Have Learned. Followed by Even More Songs I Have Learned. And Still More Songs I Have Learned. NAH... I think more creative names would be in order.

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# A VERY PRODUCTIVE LESSON

It is getting very close... about a month and a half (of course, February is a VERY short month!!!!). However, I am very, VERY pleased with where I am at this point in the process. After all, I have never before embarked on an adventure quite like this... from infancy to finish, my OWN creation but I would be lying if I did not tell you that I am really excited! K told me that we are definitely where I need to be just going through each piece one by one over and over again. I see two of my list are more challenging than others for reasons that are very apparent to both of us! Definitely will be focusing on those this week.

I was thrilled by one of her comments today! It seems that her family was listening to one of the songs I will be performing (one of my top picks... one that HAD to be on the program). She informed me that my interpretation outshines the artist who performed the song in the OBC (Original Broadway Cast for those of you not in the know). Let me reiterate that this will be an extremely family-friendly show with no questionable songs or staging (I'll save that for my grand 20th spectacle). In fact, I would not be surprised if I incorporated a bit of audience interaction throughout. Not to worry, I would know who **NOT** to call upon. St. Patty's Day weekend... I have a spot to fill perhaps a nice Irish tune.

It seems that I have been a walking billboard for my terrific coach. Not one but two people have asked me how to get in touch with her. My cousin, who is in a band, told me that she has been trying to find a good vocal teacher and was unaware that there was one in the immediate area.

In other production news, it seems that "the other me" has

made quite an impression. The promotional photo for the theatre's redux of *Escanaba in da Moonlight* features a gentleman who just happens to share names with me but bears little resemblance. Numerous people around the area have come up and asked me how the play was going. At times, I have forgotten what they were talking about and inform them that it is not me in the cast. I have worked on stage with J2 but not this time.

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## A Halloween Audience Of One

I have had a great Halloween thus far. I did decide to go to my voice lesson in costume (anyone who remembers my costume from last year... recycled but still worth it). It did give me an idea for a quick costume change for "Songs I Have Learned."

I felt like Sky Masterson or "Good Ol' Reliable" Nathan Detroit from the musical which an area high school will be performing in the spring.

I had a guest sitting in on the lesson this morning. Seems that K has a female intern working with her who just completed her senior year at Appalachian State and is now at Bluffton University continuing on her Music Therapy degree... my coach had to visit the loo so I became acquainted with my audience of one. I only made it through 3 of my songs but after today I feel almost PLEASED with the most difficult piece and EVEN MORE confident with another. "The phrasing and coloring at the end were perfect drawing the audience right in." I felt like I was on *American Idol* or *Broadway Star* (if such a thing existed). Definitely one of my top three out of the 12 and to receive such praise with 4 months to go.

However, the costume lent itself perfectly to another song

that I chose not to focus on. Perhaps it was a sign that I should use some more “Friends” to fill a little space. We will see.

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## Sold Out Two Months Ahead

WOW! I learned at my weekly voice lesson that the local community theatre’s production of *A Christmas Story* already has two dates sold out! Not sure if a show has had sold out dates two months ahead in this area, but this is the first I know of. K will be playing the role of Ralphie’s mother and her little man will be playing a little boy... no lines but he is already being instructed to develop the character to give himself some business on stage.

Now that I am five months out from my weekend gig, I have begun to plow through my books to find new things (or old things that are worth digging out) to not let my list become a lesson in tedium. I dug out a favorite that I have never before been able to get because of range... (guess which part gave me fits). Two octave range from a low A-flat to a floating high A-flat. Poor K was commenting from the keyboard on the 5 flat key to the 4 (or is it 5) sharp key. I probably should also pick some unfamiliar pieces just to take me out of my comfort zone. I also visited an old friend that will be a part of the evening. I really do not want to add too much to the program but if it goes from 45 minutes to 120 minutes before February... NAH! No one wants to see me on stage **THAT** long ☐

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# Time To Get This Thing On The Road

My lesson was delayed an hour today as K had to take her youngest to his very first day of school. I remember my mother taking me my first day every year up until the fifth grade after which I had to do more than walk out the front door. I do not remember my first day of preschool; however, I do remember that it was in a church in B-own not far from my current lesson locale which itself is a converted place of worship now serving as the South Campus of the local Y.

The lesson itself was GREAT! much better than last week's when we only made it through 2 songs. Today, we breezed through 6 of the 11 songs in 40 minutes (lost track of time and since none of us had anywhere pressing to we did not stop). One piece still had some problems but was better than the last time we attempted it. So, I think after we see how the remainder goes next week, I will be setting the date for the fruits of my labor to be put on display... no pun intended. NOW if I can just get over this cold/allergies that seem to have latched onto me. ☐

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## The Buzz, Buzz, Buzz of Those Irritating Bs

Good rehearsals and not so good rehearsals... all good just some better than others. Yesterday was one of those "some better than others." ☐ Only made it through two songs... the last 2 on my song list. The first song was the one giving me all the headaches. Probably concentrating to hard... relax! And the



note I was having trouble with was a lot of bs ... no really there were probably 10 of those little devils wrecking havoc, but they felt like a load of well... HEHEHE However, I decided that instead of throwing the song out the window and not wanting anything more to do with it, I decided to go back for round number two. Much improvement!

The second piece always had some problems for one big reason. I had made a copy for myself and let K have the original. Looking at both copies, I discovered that I had two pages in reverse order! Fixed everything! And not one flaw... THIS TIME! ... "I AM my own worst critic"

I also purchased a copy of K's new debut CD. Kind of a folksy sound that I really like. She wrote most (if not all of the 12 songs) herself and included her oldest son in one of my favorite pieces on the disc "1 Plus 1 Is Drew." Follow the [link](#) to the website to preview the effort and perhaps purchase the album digitally or a hard copy.



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## **Different Bat-Time/Different Bat-Channel**

...or different location. It has been three weeks since my last voice lesson. The first week was due to the fact that I was needed at work earlier than usual and K was on vacation the last two. To add even more confusion, we are now meeting Monday afternoons at an entirely new location. A nice and cozy studio which harkens back to vocal lessons of the past. For the most part, the three week hiatus did not hurt a bit. There were two notable exceptions. A few of the more

character-driven pieces (from the same show mind you) were not exactly up to par. **UNHEARD OF!** I was not pleased with those two. Ah, well... guess which two of the list will be pounded this week ☐ However, we plowed through most of my pieces leaving 3-4 to continue with next week. In all, we made it through 6 in slightly more than half an hour.

I believe that I have mentioned that the songs I have chosen to perform will be very family-friendly to accommodate my many nieces, nephews, and other special little ones who may poppin. Something for everyone to enjoy so no one needs to ponder whether or not to bring the little ones.

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## Almost There

Well... it has been just over a year since I BEGAN taking voice lessons. For obvious reasons, I have not had a full year's worth. However, I think I have made fine progress in the 8 or so months I have had. I am S000000 close to polishing the 10 songs I have chosen to put before an audience including 3 or 4 selections which require more than one voice. One piece was described by K as being very difficult to sing not because of the notes but because of the character. Perhaps, but it is a fun character piece that I am so excited to finally be performing... definitely the one which needs the most polishing considering I just picked it a few weeks ago.

One of the other pieces is having a bit of intonation problems. Written in the key of C... one of those that should be easier than I am making it. As a test, it was suggested that I put my finger in my ear to hear what I was flubbing. VOILA! Not only did it help the intonation but created a

fullness that was missing from the song. Now all I have to do is get the finger out of my ear. Not one of the most comical of songs.

As far as the repertoire... old favorites, new challenges, ALL FUN and I can't think of any that all ages cannot enjoy (well... maybe one, but that has been taken care of). So... now I need to get these other talented individuals on board whom I have had in mind since picking these songs.