

It has been a long time.

I guess it has been a while since I've posted anything here. I guess I've been a bit lax at keeping up anything resembling a blog. Life has been a bit busy recently.

Life seems to get in the way of my random thinking. I guess that right now my original purpose for writing this blog has not been needed. My mind doesn't seem to require a weekly emptying. So I guess I will be taking this blog in a new direction. As soon as I figure out exactly what that direction is, I will continue to blog.

I will keep you posted...

Putting It All Together

Well... with just a little over three weeks to go, I FINALLY tracked down a capable accompanist who is not going to bail on me. This morning, we met at the studio and it sounded great (even if my accompanist was doing little more than sight reading). While K did a fine job of playing for me, it allowed very little time for her to focus on what I was doing and what to critique. Happily, she had very little to comment on except for a few spots I KNEW could have been better.

Usually the first time hearing the full accompaniment for a piece (rather long... let me see... 11), makes me a bit apprehensive especially when I'm not sure of the pianist's ability. But as I have been taught over and over the best ones will follow you and BOY did he ever! I think the addition of the full accompaniment only enhanced many of the pieces. I can't wait to hear what the final product will produce!

“Songs I Have Learned” is going to be bookended by two (what I feel are) more inspirational pieces. A bunch of fun character-driven tunes (my favorite kinds) and some emotional ballads will comprise the remainder of the set that will be divided into two. Each of the songs hold a special place in my heart a lot of which I will share.

Yesterday at work, I was approached by a customer who had just come from the theatre’s revival of *Esplanada in da Moonlight*.

She had heard in the intro to the show that I would be presenting a show on March 16th. I definitely will need to attend Saturday night’s show (an extended night) to see if this was so... not that I had not planned to see it before, just haven’t found an open date on my calendar. I was asked if I would be interesting in performing at a special ceremony commemorating the 100th anniversary of Clem (the Civil War statue that was injured a few years ago in the “microburst” that destroyed our village hall). The service is scheduled for Memorial Day following the ceremony at the cemetery. I said I would be happy to and to keep me informed of the details.

Speaking of hometown events, the Boys’ High School Basketball team has completed its regular season. **A PERFECT 20-0 record!!!** The first time in school history! I have not been to a game in many seasons and I do kind of miss them.

Perhaps, I will be able to make one of the games on the tournament trail. We shall see.

A Gift from God?





Heaven is for real. Absolutely true. But is this story for real? Did Colton Burpo really go to Heaven and meet Jesus, his great grandfather, and his sister who died in a miscarriage? Does the painting made by a girl who has had visions from God and confirmed by Colton to be accurate really depict the likeness of the second person of the Trinity? There were a couple of things in his account that troubled me, but I think you will be doing yourself a disservice not to pick this book up at your library or bookstore, read it for yourself, and make your own judgment. Be sure to click on the images for more information on the Burpos and on the girl behind the painting.

Songbird

Yes, as you may have guessed I am adding my own thoughts on the music of one Whitney Houston. Saturday evening, I received a text from my cousin asking me if I had heard of Whitney's passing. Right after reading the message, I checked out the hub of social activity and sure enough there were already 20 posts devoted to the diva. Growing up in the 80s, I was lucky enough to have lived to see and hear the infectious music of two powerhouse phenomenons: both of them are gone. However, they each left an indelible mark on the music world that still has yet to be surpassed. In the 1980s, Ms. Houston shared a stat of having 7 number one singles in a row! Not only was she a pop diva but frequently returned to her gospel roots with such notable entries as the soundtrack to her film *The Preacher's Wife*.

The 1990s was also a high point for Whitney with the monstrous

film and soundtrack to *The Bodyguard* which featured a cover of Dolly Parton's "I Will Always Love You" as well as performing what is arguably the finest performance of the National Anthem of any Super Bowl. Who else can claim to have had their version played on radio stations across the country weeks after it was presented?

Say what you will about the tragic life outside the music. I choose to leave that for the tabloid mongers. Anyone who lived during the 80s-90s can name at least one Whitney Houston song. Like it or lump it, her music is infectious whether it be a hit pop ditty that makes you want to get up and dance (With somebody who loves me) or a powerful torch song. OH... and lest I forget, she served as the Executive Producer and Fairy Godmother on a multi-ethnic version of a televised version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella*.

My favorite Houston's song is a duet with Jermaine Jackson that I do not believe was a major hit. I only discovered it as part of a Greatest Hits compilation more than a few years ago.

And her remarkable Anthem from 1991:

She could have so over done this but chose to keep it straight and simple and is all the more powerful for it. Thank you Whitney!

Repentance, revival, and a whole lotta fun

RING* *RING* *RING

Yawn, time to get up already? Hey wait- it's not wakeup time! I distinctly remember setting my alarm for 7:25- it's only 6! Thanks junior leader- I know we didn't want a repeat of last year (no alarm went off, late for breakfast...) but this is a tad ridiculous... Guess what readers? He didn't even wake up- right back to sleep after I nudged him and told him his alarm went off. Let me clarify. ***He*** went back to sleep, I just lay there for the next hour... I don't think I'm the only one who didn't get back to sleep after the false alarm, but at least whoever else awakened they kept quiet. So, 7:25 rolled around and most of us got up. There was only one who didn't, and that is always a fun thing. No, no buckets of water. Can't have **that** much fun. ☐ Only one though, so again, not as much fun as it could have been.

Breakfast was great- eggs, bacon, sausage, I think there were pancakes? Starting to forget- good thing this is only two parts. They even had hot sauce out for the eggs- they know me well! Session 2- starting with a few Angry Birds shorts. Wait- Angry Birds is a 'toon now? Have I been under a rock? Anyway, find a bunch of them at [RovioMobile on Youtube](#). Here's one as a sample- they are in hi-def too, so change the quality and go full-screen with it!

Annnnnnd- we lost. I believe I said last time we didn't win any of the minute games, so you already knew this. Oh, well. Moving on, we worshiped and our family pastor gave part two of the lesson. We didn't focus much on the prayer in chapter two so much as what it meant- Jonah repented. Still miraculously alive in the fish, he went to his knees (figuratively I'm sure- not much room in a fish I wouldn't think...) and communed with God. In the end, as you probably know already, the fish (relieved I'm sure) spat him up onto land and so ends the chapter. Small group discussion back in the cabin and then-game time! Plinko (isn't that trademarked by a famous pricing game show?) in the lot- oh wait. The snow caused a change. Instead we played snow soccer. Not much to say here- one ball, then two, three, large balls, giant earth ball... I'll let your mind play this one out. Unfortunately halfway through someone caused the earth ball to deflate, meaning when we switched games with the other two teams they sadly didn't get to use it. We switched to acquire the tire- a steal-the-bacon game where there were inner-tubes (alas, I don't think 10-and-11-year-olds could handle actual tires- something about the weight of them...) ranging in size from small car to tractor, and point values from 50 to 1000. The big tractor tire was of course the 1000-pointer (how many kids would it take to lift a tractor tire? Good thing they were just inner tubes!). All they had to do was drag it over their line, with kids from the other team latched on to the other side of it dragging it in the opposite direction. Easy, right? ☐

Lunch time- the expected chicken nuggets and mac & cheese. This reminds me of a couple years ago when I was sure the mac and cheese was really mac and yellow food coloring, but the last couple years it was definitely pretty good. I still long for BBQ sauce to dip the nuggets in, but ketchup was fine. After lunch was cabin rest- wait, no it wasn't- this wasn't summer camp nor was it Michigan despite the constant references to cabins (classrooms, really), so we were allowed to treat the kids as if they were in a workhouse if we wanted

to. Okay, not really, but there was no cabin rest. Just straight to session 3: revival. Chapter 3 of Jonah started the story again, this time he entered Ninevah and gave them the warning from God. Much to Jonah's dismay Ninevah was repentant and God withheld judgment. Chapter 4 expounds on this more, but that was the 4th session which no one was there for since they had gone home. That's right, there was no fourth session. Revival was a good note to exit on, right? Following a good up-front game, good worship, excellent teaching, and very productive small group time was the next team game involving giant slingshots and fla-vor-ice popsicles. Last year the only goal was to get the popsicles on the roof, but this year they put up a giant target. They could go for the roof as well, but the biggest points were the bullseye and... the pastor. That's right, our pastor came out a couple of times and made himself a target worth double the points of the bullseye. I think the other team grazed him, but no direct hits that I could tell. Maybe the other two teams fared better. Or maybe he walked off a happy pastor. ☐

The other game was inside and improved from last year- an ice-block relay. The kids got to ride a large ice block to the other side of the gym and back. It was improved as they made the blocks thicker this year so they didn't fall apart after extended use. I think a couple teams last year had to switch to scooters toward the end. Extra points were given after awhile if they rode superman-style, on their bellies with arms held out in front like flying through the air. Leaders had a turn as well. Same with the tire game earlier- I forgot to mention it.

After the games we cleaned out our cabins so the younger kids could use them during church later and not have to work around backpacks and sleeping bags, then we had free time. Not so free, just the appearance of free. That is, they were free to play the games within their assigned area. There were six areas. Really, five- they tried to separate the games in one

of the rooms, but we just let them play whatever they wanted instead- they were the games in the room they play every weekend so they already knew what they liked and what they didn't. The gym had the best games- a return of gaga-ball in a less-permanent court than at camp, and they got to play nine-square this time. On the other side was the explosive volleyball-like game of nuke-em. Look up my summer camp recap for explanations of all of these. The final room consisted of crafts, karaoke, and board games. Okay, scratch karaoke- apparently they didn't actually have it though the schedule showed it. Oh, well. The boys were only in there 15 minutes before dinner was called anyway, clever scheduling on the church's part as this is a less interesting thing for boys generally. The girls got a shortened weekend-games room time, but everyone got the full half-hour of gym time.

The end is drawing near. Dinner time with spaghetti, a video, then parents arrived for a short recap, worship time, and closing ceremony with the announcement of the winner- the team we played against all the Saturday games. The original idea (did I mention this already?) was to play against two different teams (Friday night was a four-team game), but the way they did the cabins that would have pitted boy-strong teams against girl-strong teams so we wound up playing the team that was most in line with ours. To clarify, there were three cabins that made up each team unlike summer camp where we had four. Two teams had two boy-cabins and one girl-cabin. Vice-versa for the other two teams. I would like to add that moi noticed the absence of the big song from summer, which became one of my favorites, and made a special request to do it since, after all, this was an extension of summer camp. The worship team practiced Like a Lion during the afternoon and had it ready for this closing worship time. Kudos to the band for that.

With the closing ceremony over, all that was left was to part ways. We moved to the gym and the parents claimed their

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Okay, one last bit. I tend to avoid naming people and places and whatnot, but my church makes these videos public and I only have about two readers (partly my own fault I know) so I will just go ahead and link to the official video online. Now you don't have to imagine much of what I wrote- does the video hold up to your imaginations? ☐ No, you won't get to see me on the ice block, so keep on imagining. ☐ Careful eyes will spot me a couple times though... Sadly, no HD version. ☐

[vimeo]<https://vimeo.com/36104897>[/vimeo]

And hey, nice song they used! Adventurous people may find summer camp videos as well...

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.

January 2012

My blogging style has changed – maybe temporarily, maybe permanently. It's evolved, if you will, to meet the growing needs of my family. I no longer have time to sit down 5 times a week and write about my thoughts, my plans, my stories, my ideas, nor do I have the time to detail my agenda. With 5 kids now and all of the new things we're doing (new baby, homeschooling, new career for both Hubby and I, new ministries...), I rarely do find myself sitting down and when I am, it's rare that a computer is in front of me. So for awhile, I will just post updates on the members of my family and our lives. This will still serve as a way to keep in touch with those who read my blog (those especially that I cannot find as much time as I'd like to talk on the phone with because of all the noise in my house – phone conversations are nearly impossible at certain times of the day!), and my blog will also continue to serve as a family diary for us to look back on someday and enjoy together. Updates:

Family – we began homeschooling last fall, and we still like it. We've had to make some adjustments to our planned curriculum since new little bro Luke (born Oct 7 2011) is quite a happy though demanding handful. We began co-op on January 9, which is a local program they have here at a church for homeschoolers. We go every Monday, and each grade level participates in 3 different classes taught by the moms of the group. Since it's our first year, I don't have a class to teach yet – I pulled nursery duty. Yep – 3 hours every week working in the nursery with my little Luke and about 5 other babies – Luke is the only boy. My husband asked me how I managed that one (because I LOVE babies!), and I don't know – lucky I guess!! Apparently there are some ladies who don't

want to deal with diapers and fussy babies and all that, but for me, there couldn't be a better job for me to serve at co-op. My other kids really like co-op. Beeber (age 3) is in Preschool, and he came home the first week with a "carrot project" – the top of a carrot in a cup of water. It was supposed to grow some green out the top, but ours didn't. He didn't seem to mind though. It's funny because when he handed me his carrot as I was picking him up, I thought it was the remainder of what he had done with his snack until the teacher explained it to me – haha! Disney is in Kindergarten at co-op, and she really likes it. Since we've decided to homeschool our kids beginning at 2nd grade, Disney is also in public school preschool, and she loves both of them! The older girls enjoy co-op too; it gives some of the structure of school without all the unnecessary rules and drama, and the classes are taught from a Christian perspective. I like that the kids are held accountable to other adults besides their parents for their assignments and quizzes. The Sunday-Monday rush is taxing for our family since we have seven bags to pack Sunday night for co-op AFTER a big weekend spent getting ready for church service, but it's worth it and we are settling into a routine. Wednesday sees us leading groups at youth group, and we had a friend offer to take the 3 middle kids to AWANA and they really like that. Thursday we have Bible study, and as I said, much of our weekends now consist of planning Sunday church service and TRYING to find time to rest and relax. Overall, we're busier than ever, but I feel happier than ever – God is so great! I felt so run-down and was having a really hard time for a few months, but I had some checkups with the doctor and think I got the problem solved. I feel better than I have in years and I can't thank God enough!! Now we just have to get Hubby some more sleep since he is waking with Luke all night, every night AND working 2 jobs, not to mention all of the help he gives me around the house.

The past few months, I've learned better to accept the circumstances of life as seasons that are constantly

changing. I've also learned to better accept that the way things are now are most definitely going to change in a few months. I've learned to look forward to seeing what God has in store for my family rather than to let the ever-changing dynamics of our lives fill me with fear, dread or worry. As far as things at the new church, we've set up a wonderful childrens ministry, and we have about 20 kids that come every weekend. This is an AMAZING thing when you realize that the church had 0 kids attending only 4 months ago. We have been contemplating ideas for a youth ministry (tweens and teens) as well as some other things, and only God knows where we will be with that in a month or two. As I tried to say, things change so fast that it's difficult to update it all on my blog, especially when this post alone has taken me a few weeks of having to put it aside and come back to add more later in order to finish it!

Before I stop writing for the day, I do want to share an amazing God story we got to witness this past Sunday. My husband had been up late most of last week writing his sermon, and there was a pancake supper at church on Saturday night. I ended up staying home with my boys because I was feeling run down and Luke was crabby and oozing things from places (you don't really want more details, trust me... baby stuff). So late Saturday night, Hubby decided to start telling God in prayer that he needed rest, and I was doing the same. Sunday morning, I was making my runs for church – I am the designated driver for the childrens ministry. Many of the kids that come to our church need rides because their home situations are... let's say complicated. Our church is located in the middle of the country about 6 miles from town, so I make 2-3 trips there in the morning to pick up the kids and to drive my own family. Sunday we saw a man riding a bike on US Route 6; his bike was pulling a trailer that normally is used for pulling children, but his was loaded with supplies. I wondered if he was homeless or someone who was making a long trek because it isn't all that unusual to see someone journeying down US 6 –

our little corner of the world seems to be on the way to everywhere! So we see people journeying down 6 from time to time, but not usually in the winter. On my last run, as I pulled into church, I noticed the man on the bike was also pulling into church. I got the kids settled, then went out to welcome him. Turns out, his name is Michealangelo, and he had been on his journey on his bike for FOUR MONTHS! He's from Los Angeles, and he began by biking north in California, and then coming out this way headed to New York – because God sent him on this journey. He saw the sign for our little church on US 6 and decided to stop. Michael has amazing faith, and he had amazing stories to tell! My husband asked him if he would share some of these with our congregation, and Michael obliged, even after sharing his concerns about the way he was dressed. I don't have the time to go into all of the amazing details of the personal touches that God put on this story – I've already burnt the eggs that I was cooking and the house smells disgusting. But I will sum it up briefly: Michael's unexpected visit meant that my husband's sermon that he had carefully prepared was not used last week because we were treated to the testimony of Michael instead. So my husband can rest a little easier this week knowing that his sermon is already prepared. Also, we've been talking in our own family and at church about really living a Godly life and what that looks like; we've been trying to make opportunities to GO OUT and serve God rather than just sitting around, doing the same old things for US. Michael's testimony reaffirmed these concepts – here is a man who has devoted his entire life to doing what God wants him to do. He left the life that he knew and WENT OUT THERE and is sharing the Word... And here I am frustrated because my words are failing to convey the story... And I wish I could find the links to the info about this guy on the internet. Hubby found them so maybe when he gets home from work I can ask him and add them to my blog.

But anyway, it was a magical Sunday, and I am thankful that I got to be a part of it! I will leave you now with a little

update about my little Luke – he tried his tot wheels for the first time in January. He likes it, but only for short periods of time. He is a grown up little guy in a baby's body with a baby's attention span. He loves to stand, and practice walking ALREADY even though he is not yet 4 months old. He also loves to watch other kids in action – his sisters and brother and also the kids at co-op and at youth group. WOW – I really have to blog more often! Once I got going, I had so much to say but not enough time to say it... sorry that I was kind of all over the place, but that's the price I pay for sitting down and trying to do this with all these kids running around and my many tasks to accomplish! Until next time...

lukes first time in tot wheels.mov

Coming Soon to the Great White Way

Seems like spring is the beginning of the new Broadway season. Guess they have to get in to hit that Tony deadline. In any case, I see a gaggle of revivals, hollywood turned stage productions (for better or worse), and one-man shows among the already established shows.

It appears that there is a new revolving door musical aiming to hit a certain demographic (in this case screaming adolescent females). Daniel Radcliffe ended his employ at the World Wide Wicket company back in early January. Darren Criss (from Glee) Succeeded him for a two week run. And now, Nick Jonas is in the Business until July. Hope that this does not become the next Chicago with every teenage heartthrob stepping

into the role of J. Pierpont Finch. A good show should stand on its own. On a side bar, Radcliffe and Criss have more in common than H2\$. Darren's production company (began at all places at the dreaded school up north) created the internet sensation "A Very Potter Musical."

Opening soon for a limited run is the newest entry in Disney's production juggernaut. *Newsies*, a little movie musical from the 80s that starred a young little-known actor named Christian Bale. I do not think it was a major hit but has legions of cult fans ☐

Ghost: The Musical. The less said the better. Sounds like a mess and I don't mean because of the famous clay scene.

In the new revival scene there is a play and a favorite musical about to hit NYC. Phillip Seymour Hoffman is going to fill Willy Loman's shoes along with Andrew Garfield (the *Amazing Spider-Man* not the musical the new reboot of the cinematic saga) in *Death of a Salesman*.

Now for the show that I have had my eye on ever since the news arrived. Lord Lloyd Webber's masterpiece is coming back! ~~*Starlight Express* that WONDERFUL engine that could will be skating back into the heart of theatre goers in March.~~ *Jesus Christ Superstar* enjoyed a new production in Canada last summer and is making its way to the Neil Simon Theatre in March. I just hope that this production is better than the 90s offering that was dreadful and they had the audacity to film it for all to see (not that the 1973 version was the work of genius but King Herod was much more interesting).

Finally... for a very limited run, the performing wunderkind known as William Shatner will be gracing the stage for the first time in 50 years in a one-man production all his own. I can only imagine...

Rebellious ducks, or something like that

Continuing the medical theme from summer camp, enter the 2012 4th and 5th grade winter retreat held right at our church. The older kids get to go all the way to the camp in Michigan for two days, but as a cost-saving measure for the parents I am sure, this crowd gets one night with no travel necessary outside of being brought to church. That suits me just fine and allows more to come who otherwise would not. I know of one family for sure whose junior-higher wasn't going to be able to go to his retreat though his younger brother was at ours.

I arrived Friday night just a smidgen late and check-in was well underway. In fact, most of my cabin was already settled in and watching the opening movie which entertained them while waiting for the official start. I joined my colleagues upstairs and helped settle in the stragglers. Did I mention that Friday was the day of a major snowstorm? After driving on snow-packed roads from Algonquin to Elgin and back home, I and a hundred moms, dads, and other leaders slogged down the roads to make this event, the only one not canceled. But I am sure parents would brave even more to ~~be rid of their young-uns~~ give their brood an opportunity to draw closer to our Lord and Savior. Though there was one cabin that had several boys missing by the time the main event started, mine was complete (at least it was by dinner time when the last trooper arrived). I even had a couple of repeat campers from summer, one of which I hadn't seen since then as he attended the church's school, but not regular church on the weekends- at least the one I serve at. Even my junior leader was the same. Yep, Mad Cow Disease was represented in full. What?

Oh, yes. Remember the medical theme I mentioned? Well, all the cabins were named after diseases and cures. Most girls would never go for a cabin labeled SARS or mad cow disease, so they naturally got the cures while the boys proudly represented their diseases.

Once the movie was shut off in the middle (sorry for those who may not have seen it before...) and rules had been gone over, it was time to get into things with a game of course. That game was Duck Hunt.