

# Off goes the beard...

Ok, not quite yet, but soon. To prevent too many facial hair similarities on stage, I volunteered again to shape, shave or grow out my beard. The final decisions by myself and our esteemed directors is for me to have a full goatee. Do I mind? Not really. I tend to view the hair on my head and face as part of the character I present to the audience. I've grayed my hair, shaved my beard and even offered to shave my head for one show. Almost anything for the arts. There are a few things I won't do for community theater, but so far no one has asked me to do any of those things.

My only real concern with shaving of the facial hair is the current temperatures in NW Ohio. I am going to have to remove some of my natural insulation. It is amazing how much more warmth I have with a full beard. Why oh why didn't I always have it? The answer to that is simple, I couldn't grow one for many years. My youngest is now 17 and she doesn't remember too many times when I've been beardless. I have what I call a lazy man's beard. I don't shave because it saves me time. Plain and simple. Now that I've had this beard for most of the last 17 years, I am comfortable with it. I feel more comfortable when I have a beard. It has become part of who I am now. As with the characters on the stage, my beard is part of my character.

When it is shaved and trimmed I may have to share a picture with my wonderful readers...

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## Talent in a small town

As [jamiahsh](#) so aptly put in his blog, the talent show last night was exactly as advertised. I won't say it was too much

prayer, since a local church was the host, facilitator, and the final say in all things. It was their show. Also most of the talent was from local church groups, it was bound to be a religious event. That being said the talent supplied a very good show.

My bias to my youngest and her group does not prevent me from saying they were not the best group out there. I do believe one member of the group was the best talent in the event. A wonderful performance on the violin. My musical skills are almost nonexistent. I tend to notice flaws in performances by watching the face of the performer. If this young lady made a mistake while playing, her face and body language never showed it. For me it was a flawless performance.

The young lady who sang the selection from "Phantom of the Opera" also blew me away. I don't care for that type of music, and really never appreciated the show, so this is saying something. She would have been my second place finisher.

The praise group that performed an inspirational skit to music was also very good. I could acknowledge the hard work and talent that went into the performance, but it did not have the spiritual affect on me that it had on so many others in the audience. A fine performance, surely in my top 5, but not my first place choice at all. Number 3, sure I could see that. They did have home field advantage and I'm very certain that threw them into first place.

This was a mostly entertaining show. I do feel the judges have watched to much reality TV. It was as if they thought more of their commentary than they did of the performance. So many times I was very confused by the commentary and following scores. Like I said, I know very little about music, but I do understand human nature. I feel they wanted to give each performer a sense of worth, but then gave their real feelings with the scores. I can't help but feel that this confused the performers as much as it did some of the audience.

This was a 3 hour show, and it could have been cut down to two hours without some of the judges banter. Their were family, friends and community members in the audience. I'm sure they really couldn't have cared less about the judges' opinions. They wanted to see the performance.

Now one final thing. This was definitely a way to showcase the talent in the area, but it was also a fund raiser. A perfect formula for a fund raiser too. Lots of talented young people of High School age and younger given a chance to appear in a individual showcase of talent. This brings in a lot of family and friends. The auditorium was full. At 6 to 10 dollars a head, this was a very good fund raiser. One suggestion for them in the future. Open up the try outs for a good will offering. Many groups did not get in to the final show. I'm sure many more family members would have wanted to see that.

As for the YouTube... I would need to check on that. Too many minors in the acts. Trying to get permission of the talent and/or parents involved?? We are a small community, and I'm sure many parents would be against having their kids on the internet. If I can talk my youngest into letting me, I can get her vocals on YouTube, but only with her permission.

Fun evening except for the judges...

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## My Bloody Valentine 3D

It's almost embarrassing to admit that I saw a movie called, "[My Bloody Valentine 3D](#)". But the reason I'm writing a blog about it is because I actually *liked* it. A true slasher film; the grisly violence was excessive. But I actually didn't find myself rolling my eyes at the constant gore fest, which is what I did during the last few movies in the Saw franchise.

In the poorer quality Saw movies, some of the violence doesn't really even make sense. It's almost like they're trying to see how far they can go, how shocking they can be, and what they can get away with, even if it's not integral to the plot. My Bloody Valentine 3D actually has a well-developed, interesting plot. If you don't pay attention to the newspaper headlines that *come out of the screen* in the beginning of the movie (very cool 3D effect – definitely more on those later), the plot might actually be hard to follow. I know, a good plot is unheard of for a slasher flick, but I was even left to piece together some plot details after the movie was over. Not that it was *too* hard to follow, just a lot of continuous action that makes it difficult for one to think about character relationships and how they relate to the plot while also watching the movie. So for my best attempt at a plot synopsis, here we go...

Harmony is a small mining town where everyone knows everyone else, and the mine is the lifeblood of the town. The filmmakers very successfully give the audience a good feel for the sleepy little mining town. Decades ago, there was an accident in the mine which was initially blamed on the owner of the mine, Hanniger. When it was found that the victims of the mining accident were actually brutally murdered, it was blamed upon the sole survivor of the accident, Harry Warden, who is left in a coma. A few decades later, he wakes up and slaughters 22 people, including a group of teenagers having a party at the mine. Four of the revelers make it out alive, and flash forward 10 years to now. Hanniger's son (he was one of the 4 survivors) returns to the town as a new rash of murders unfold, and he finds himself accused of the brutal crimes. There's actually more to it than that, but this kind of gives you an idea about the movie. The plot and direction of the movie allow the audience to never be sure who to suspect of the murders, and there are various twists and turns. Very well done for a horror movie, especially one belonging to the slasher genre. Now on to the 3D effects...

3D does not often work for me because my eyesight is very uneven – I have near perfect vision in my left eye, and terrible vision in my right eye. But I was sure to bring my eyeglasses, which kind of levels the playing field for my eyes, and so when I wore the 3D glasses on top of my regular eyeglasses, the 3D worked very well. I've been to various 3D shows at Disney World and Universal Studios, and I would say those are the best of the best – but even they don't always work for me; sometimes I have to squint to be able to see the 3D. But now it seems there have been some advancements in the technology, and it's clear the movie industry wants to showcase these advancements given the rash of 3D movie previews I've seen in the theaters recently. Among the 3D features that will be out in 2009 are: Monsters and Aliens, Up, Disney's a Christmas Carol 3D, Ice Age 3, and Toy Story in 3D. But anyway, My Bloody Valentine 3D was very cool – the entire movie was actually in 3D for me, and all I had to do was sit there – no fiddling with glasses, no squinting... and that was a first for me. The murderer's weapon of choice is a miner's ax, and there were many times it would actually appear to come out of the screen (along with disgusting bits of gore, of course)! Besides that effect, other things about the movie were cool because of the 3D as well; even scenes that consisted exclusively of dialogue.

As one reviewer on imdb.com mentioned, My Bloody Valentine 3D does not take itself too seriously – and that's a good thing. In fact, a few months ago when we first saw the movie's preview and tagline "Nothing says 'date movie' like a 3D ride to Hell!", we thought it was a joke... you know, one of those "previews" that actually ends up being a commercial. But it was for a real movie, and so we couldn't resist venturing to the big city to utilize a free voucher we had gotten on a previous visit to see the otherwise expensive 3D ride to Hell. If you are a fan of horror movies, My Bloody Valentine 3D is a must-see. I'm not sure how this movie would translate to a regular screen. It might still be a good horror movie,

but given the 3D effects, it was nothing short of awesome! I would almost classify it as a sort of haunted house experience, except you're sitting in a seat and not walking around. If you look at it that way, the \$13.50 price tag (\$11 matinee) would be a bargain for the over 90 minute experience compared to admission at most haunted houses. Of course, haunted houses don't have the extra-long, very gratuitous nude scene, which I could have definitely done without, but since that's my only complaint about the movie, overall I would definitely consider it an afternoon well-spent with hubby (no we did not take the kids to this feature!) After all, nothing says 'date movie' like a 3D ride to Hell! Apparently so!

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## **A Tale Of Ponder-grossa and Wally World**

This morning, I was treated to a story by the boss involving a dinner at an area steakhouse (one of my least favorite places). The couple went to an area Ponderosa and Unfortunately for them, chose the WRONG place to sit. Sitting at a table near them was a rather large, loud, and unruly bunch. She even commented that it made a Shaffer gathering seem tame ("Hardy-har-har-har"). As the dinner progressed, the neighboring party kept throwing biscuits at each other. Diane's husband commented that if one happened to hit him he would go to the other table and throw it at the adult(?) at the table along with a few epithets (there's your .50 word for the day). Soon after, one of the flying biscuits ricocheted off one of the children and came within inches of hitting Tony... did not hit him. Seconds later, a three year old got hold of a lemon and threw that. Not sure how close that got. I'm not sure why no one complained about the crowd, I guess

it has been a while since I have eaten at a Ponderosa, but see little has changed.

Which brings me to my second tale of this post. It seems that my father was shopping in my FPOE. He was looking for a bottle of shampoo which my mother had run out of in her beauty salon. Dad, bless him, has a real problem tracking things down. If he does not know exactly what he is looking for and where it is at... forget it. He eventually used his cell phone to call and say he could not find it. Why not ask an associate you ask? AHHA, HE DID. Apparently, he picked the wrong associate because they were "TOO BUSY" (direct quote) to assist him. WHHOOOAAAHHH... WAIT A MINUTE!!!! It is a good thing I was not with him because the first thing I would have done is gently tell this associate that he would help me or I would go to another associate to see if they were too busy. I know your boss and I am sure that he would be willing to help me. I have been thinking about doing some investigating by going to the store one Wednesday evening to see who was working in the Health and Beauty Department and see if they are too busy. It could be that the associate was busy, but that is certainly no way to treat ANY customer aside from the fact that they are in there at least once a week and drive 12 miles to get there. Dad did eventually find the shampoo after Mom described the bottle to him over the phone. It's been a while since [taylhis'](#) last WM post... thought I would contribute.

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**Getting Exactly What Was**

# Advertised

A group of friends and I attended an area talent showcase of extremely gifted teenagers. Who says that tomorrow's leaders are destined for failure? Sponsored by a local church, many of the acts were religious in theme from very powerful interpretive dance/signing to an intriguing dramatic presentation. However, there were a few pianists, a very talented violinist, and some EXCEPTIONAL female vocalists. One of the worship bands who performed, Exclamation, featured a friend who is a regular member of our game night and has been on stage several times. I sat beside her father and I could tell that [j](#) was as proud as can be of his youngest as was I. One of the critiques made by the judges was that their diction was TOO crisp?! That caused me to raise an eyebrow. I cannot tell you how many times I have been told to ENUNCIATE almost to the point at which I was over enunciating. I can see instances where dialect in a song would cause diction to be stressed differently, but the song Exclamation sang definitely was not one. I wonder if the group's mentor had been sitting in the audience and what her reaction was.

One of the solo vocalists I have had the pleasure of performing in ensembles with previously. She sang a glorious rendition of "Think of Me" from *Phantom of the Opera*. This junior in high school is already a three-year member of an area city's opera. She definitely has a very bright future ahead of her.

I was also greatly impressed by an 11th grader who chose to perform an aria, [Amarilli, mia bella](#). I did not begin singing Italian art pieces until after high school with a trained vocalist. This young lady commented that she had received a LITTLE(?) training.

There were other performers who played an instrument that in my opinion must be learned from birth. I greatly admire

anyone who can come close to mastering ANY stringed instrument. A junior in high school performed her violin solo seemingly flawlessly.

I must say that some of the interpretive dances were perhaps some of my favorite segments... even if one of the groups seemed to be toted higher than the others as they were formed from young members of the evening's sponsoring church. Another of the groups performed to "You Raise Me Up." This song is very special to me as it was the last song that I worked on under Emily's tutelage and I don't think I gave it its true potential. This is definitely a song that I would like to revisit, I think I am ready to.

So, our little corner of the world does indeed possess some exceptional talent in our youth. What a blessing to have evenings such as this to showcase it. Although I knew going in that the evening would contain some religious flavor, I for one think that it had just a smidgen too much for my taste. Not enough to totally turn me off but I am sure that there were some in the audience who may have been a bit uncomfortable. I also grew weary of the panel of judges giving their critiques which did not always make sense although they were all three trained professionals in the field. Seventeen acts with critiques for each seemed to drag at times and the comments and the "stars" awarded did not always match up. Just give the critique and move on. And above all, eat the microphone. Plus, be sure to enunciate but not too much.

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# A Rather Un-Read Through Read Through

This morning, I was to sing at a funeral in church. The service was to begin at 10.30. About 10.25, we were informed that some of the deceased's family had not yet arrived at the funeral parlor so it would be a bit until the service started. At 10.50, one of the altar boys came up to the choir loft and said that it would be 5/6 minutes before we started. The organist finished playing a piece, then put on a disc that filled the time. At 11.15, we finally began. The strange thing was, the few people who had forgone the procession that began at the funeral parlor kept looking back at me as if I knew what was going on. One good thing about the service other than the fact that it finally went smoothly, the organist and I got a raise □ not that that is a great thing. I do not jump at the chance to sing at funerals but will when asked and I am available.

Following the service, I went down to the basement to pay my respects. I know the family, not well, but enough to feel the need to go down and enjoy their company, briefly. I had to be at a read-through this afternoon.

Well, I was informed last night that the director was unsure how many people were going to be able to be present to read. So about 2.30, she decided that no one other than the musical director, producer and grandpa were going to come. We discussed costuming and was delighted to learn that their costume room is every bit as disorganized as the one I am accustomed to. I wonder how their prop room is.

So I then came home, read through the prompt book and chorus book on my own and came to the conclusion that Grandpa Prophater will be another memorable role. I am part of many songs in which I have solo lines (why be in a musical if you

are not going to sing?... one of the other aspects of the show I could do without, but... my two left feet will just have to do) and have a better part than the role I was encouraged to read for at auditions. In fact, this afternoon I was complimented on my reading of Grandpa at auditions. I did get introduced to the young girl who will be playing the role of Tootie who was encouraged to practice being loud and obnoxious. Was it too late to change roles? Oh, wait... sorry (don't think I can be loud and obnoxious not to mention the other two obvious qualities that would prohibit me from assuming the part).

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## **Back in the day...**

There was a time, when I was in college that I wanted to be a teacher. Specifically, I wanted to teach High School Math. While in college, I did specialize in computers, I took the exact same classes for a teaching position. For the first 2.5 years of college, I was sure I would either program video games, or teach High School Math. I don't do either of those. I'm not sure why I never tried the video game programming, but I do know why I didn't go into teaching.

It started with an introduction to student teaching. Not the full fledged student teaching, just 1 week in a 9th grade general math course. These were not troubled kids, just your normal everyday kids in small town Ohio. The problem is that they didn't know basic math. Things I remember learning very early in grade school. Other things I learned in 6th, 7th and 8th grade. Not any really advanced stuff. Things like  $33 + \underline{\quad} = 72$ . They were struggling. By the end of the first class, I was frazzled. The second day in I was in charge of a lesson. The teacher prepared it for me, and I just had to study in the previous evening. I stood in front of a class of dazed faces.

The day before, I was helping individual students during their study period, today I saw the same faces on every one of the students. They didn't want to be there. They had no interest in math. My lesson went as well as could be expected and the teacher was impressed by the way I handled myself. I was to observe the next two days, and design my own lesson for Friday. We would talk about it after the Thursday class.

The next two days were just really getting to me. I found that my patience grew less as the week went on. Everyday I needed a few hours just to unwind from 1 class period. I wasn't sure what was causing this reaction. In talking with the teacher, he thought I just had nerves from a public speaking encounter. I thought that could have been the problem. My lesson on Friday when Ok, I developed a 'fun' review of the weeks lessons. The teacher gave me the thumbs up to go ahead, he seemed to think his students would like it. If they did, I couldn't tell. Stuff they were giving earlier in the week was forgotten on Friday. Stuff drilled over and over again the day before was missing from their memory. If it had been a quiz, they would have had some very poor grades. My nerves were worse that Friday afternoon. Yes, maybe it was speaking in front of so many people, I did have that problem with theater just a year earlier.

Then I got a job as a college tutor. Getting other college students ready for tests, quizzes and just helping with their assignments. 1 on 1 stuff, some of these kids were friends of mine. Trying to give them a heads up on some basic math. Same thing with my patience. It was all I could do to not throw the math books at a head or two. Why didn't they know this stuff? It is all so basic. Why didn't they learn this earlier? What happened to math instruction in the High Schools? What happened to basic logic? Hmm. No easy answers. But that was one of my longest semesters at school. I needed the job to help pay for school, but I really hated the job I had. I'd rather wash the uniforms of the various sport teams (did that

as a freshman).

To relax I started spending a lot of time in the computer center. Computers didn't argue that they were right. They did exactly what they were instructed to do. The computer never questioned the rules. At the end of that semester, teaching was out and computers were in. I didn't apply for my senior year of student teaching and I knew that I never would.

And what was the straw that broke this camel's back? One of the kids I tutored had a section on some of the basic Algebra rules. The very stuff that makes Algebra work. It was the "Commutative Property of Addition". That old  $A + B = B + A$ . I tried telling this person that it was a rule. It was one of the things that made Algebra work. I remember explaining that there were just a very few rules that made math work. We spent a good two hours going over this again and again. At the end of the time, I was asked how I knew all this worked. My reply was simple. It works because it was designed that way. The answer back was, "Oh, Ok". I thought that was the end of it. The next session, the student brought back sheets upon sheets of paper with many, many math equations written on it..

$1 + 2 = 3$ ,  $2 + 1 = 3$ ,  $3 = 3$ ,  $1 + 2 = 2 + 1$  ...  $999,999 + 1 = 1,000,000$  ..  $1 + 999,999 = 1,000,000$  ..  $1,000,000 = 1,000,000$  ..  $1 + 999,999 = 999,999 + 1$  ... and so on. I don't know how long this was worked on, but was a lot of paper and pencil lead wasted. All to say "I guess it works, I couldn't find anything that didn't. I didn't have the nerve to say, that this could go on to infinity and never give you an incorrect answer unless you added wrong. All I said was, "Yep its a rule, and you can't break it." I just shook my head. I guess I could have had fun and changed a rule or two. Can you say Abstract Algebra or Non-Euclidean Geometry?

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# A Great Character Role


HOOORAY FOR ME!!!! I got home from work and saw that I had a message on the machine. Unfortunately, the caller did not leave a message when the device picked up. Fortunately, the caller id listed her name and phone number. I had to wait until the parents got home so I could use her cell phone (yet another reason I need to look into one of those) as we do not have long distance at the house. While waiting, some of my best friends who have been as anxious as I to learn the results of the audition called to find out.

I eventually got a return call informing me that I did indeed get a part. I think this will be another memorable role. I will be playing Grandpa Prophater, the father of Mrs. Smith. I was informed that this is a wonderful character part. HOW DID SHE KNOW!!! Maybe it was the bio sheet I turned in last night. After thinking over the lines I read last night at the audition, it occurred to me that it would be great fun to wear lots of make up in order to look like a 60+ year-old. The director even told me that she had me down as Alonso, the patriarch of the family. However, she informed me that I would be able to do a lot with the older man. The websites I checked out to see in which musical numbers I will be part of, I could find none but I was sure he had parts in songs which the family was a part of. I will know more tomorrow after our read-through. Plus, after I discussed with my friend, I decided that venturing out to another theatre is definitely a great thing. Can you tell that I am really excited about this?! Another great character role!!!!

I dunno all this and I have known the director for about an hour. What an impression I must have made!!

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# No By Candlelight

Last night, in the sub-zero actual temps not to mention the wind factor, the electricity for what seemed to be the whole town went out about 10PM. We lit some candles for a bit of light. I decided to finish the novel I had been plowing through this week and was requested to voice my comments on it. So for new commenter, [Paul](#) I will relate my feelings on [Doctor No](#) .

At the conclusion of From Russia With Love, 007 was seen unconscious and near death from a lethal stab inflicted by the boot of the evil Rosa Klebb. Of course, he survived or else we would not be discussing the follow-up. To further his physical and emotional recovery, the agent is sent on a relatively breezy assignment to Jamaica to investigate the disappearance of service man Strangways and his secretary. Bond's investigation leads him to Crab Key, a small island off the coast of Jamaica where the mysterious Chinese-German Dr. Julius No operates a seemingly innocent sanctuary for birds and harvests the guano (bird dung) for use as fertilizer. I know, I know... goofy. However, that is only the genius' cover for his ingenious plot for world domination. And I actually think this is my favorite of Fleming's villains so far. We get to delve into the good doctor's past (although I think the title is more self-proclaimed, unless I missed something).

When Bond arrives on Crab Key with his associate, Quarrel, he finds the lovely Honeychile Rider. He finds her armed with a small knife protecting her trove of seashells. And unlike the movie, she is NOT clad in the MEMORABLE, eye-catching white bikini with weapon belt fastened to her waist... use your imagination.

This is the first novel to feature a bit of the fantastic. One of Dr. No's items of destruction is a fire-breathing dragon... the same as in the movie. It is used to keep visitors away from the island and eventually captures Bond and Honey and brings them to Dr. No's fortress where his ultimate goal is explained. Bond and Honey are separated and face torturous demises. The evil doctor has a fetish for studying the pain and endurance of his victims. Bond is put through a gauntlet of increasingly deadly obstacles.

The best thing about reading these novels is being able to see inside the mind of the characters. What does Bond really think about his profession? Who is he? What makes him tick and how much pain can he endure? Fleming's study of ornithology is also put to good use. Oddly enough, Bond's name comes from the author of a book on the study of birds. OK... GEEK... it's all right. Even through 22 movies, there is more to learn about him. However (hopefully) this may well be the last literary adventure I get to experience for a few months as the stage may be calling me. Thankfully, I had only a few pages to finish. I don't think my eyes could have taken a lot more as the candles did not put out much illumination. About 1.30am, I was awakened by the power coming back on or maybe it was the grateful feeling of the warmth returning.

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## **Half The Fun Was Getting There**

Tonight (as opposed to last night for some reason... can't understand why), I made my way to auditions for Meet Me in St. Louis. Very strange, because I was informed by my dear, sweet brother that they were at 5pm. I arrive at the theatre at

4.45. I am always the first to arrive and usually the last to leave. So, I try the door... locked. I go back to my car til 5... still locked. Ok... maybe he misunderstood and it was at 5.30. So, I go to McDonalds for supper and wait. 5.30... nothing. So, I decide to travel to brother's house to see what was up. I get to the house and he asks me why I was not at auditions. Were they not at 5 o'clock? No.. they were at 7. Apparently, he called my house at 4.45 to tell me this. OOPS. So, I head BACK to the theatre.

When the director arrives, she announces my identity as a Shaffer but does not remember my name. SHE is exceedingly glad to see an adult male at the auditions (they must have a an ample amount of younger fellows Tuesday night). That is a good sign. I think the two parts I read for (Alonso Smith and grandpa) would be great. We sat around a table, very informally and read a few scenes. In one scene, Mr. Smith comes down stairs for dinner and trips over his daughter's roller skate.... you can take it from there That could be fun to play. The scene I read as grandpa was hilarious, too. I would be willing to wear lots of makeup. That would bring a laugh in and of itself. We then sight-sang a few songs. I thought I did reasonably well for not knowing either piece... but there were some wierd harmonies and interval leaps, but I think I did well.

Then, we were asked if we had brought anything to sing. Always prepared as I am, brought "Benjamin Calypso" from *Joseph*. Complete with strangely cool accent, I sang a bit and drew a chuckle from the crowd. Following that showstopper, we all joined in a chorus of "The First Nowell" which is part of the show.

Well... we are to learn of the casting choices tomorrow night with a read-through Saturday afternoon. It sounds like a fun time and the director seems to be very personable, so... we will see what happens. Show dates are March 6,7,8... so really not a lot of time to produce a full-scale musical. Now time to

joining the gang at Dunder-Mifflin in a new episode.