

# A Very Intimate Beginning

Tonight was the opening for the murder-mystery dinner theatre at the Quarterline Cafe. It was really intimate because we had a grand total of **5 audience members!** But it was really fun, the paying customers seemed to enjoy themselves as they played along and attempted to guess whodunit and why to win a fantastic prize. Our overall effect had to change a bit and hopefully when we get more audience members, it can go back to our original plan! But improv... what can you say? If the paying public is entertained then it is all good!

I must give a shout out to the crashers who shall remain nameless. They traipsed right on in. "Stella" went out to greet them, then they walked out. I attempted to fit them into the plot by acknowledging the late comers and suggesting that they may be two more possible suspects. It must have worked because after we wrapped, I told the cast who they were and everyone knew that I must have known them. Apparently, they were making reservations to one of the remaining two performances.

So, while fun and intimate, a few more audience members would be helpful so that we can do some of the more physical bits we had been working on. Call for reservations (419)485-0253!

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## The First Important Modern American Musical

That seems like an oxymoron since the United States originated the concept of the musical. It seems like we were in competition with our cousins across the big pond in the

1970s & '80s with the Second British Invasion and the shows of Andrew Lloyd Webber and others like *Les Miserables*.

Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II began their collaboration in 1943 with the musical *Oklahoma!* While it may seem dull and passe by today's demand for bigger, flashier, even bordering on the cinematic, this show set the standard for which all musicals are judged. This summer, [Fountain City Festival](#) will be presenting this benchmark classic. *Oklahoma!* was innovative for several reasons. Most importantly, it established the "book musical." For the first time, the plot, music, lyrics, and choreography became integrated. No longer would there be a story divided by songs and dances that did nothing to advance the plot.

It did not begin with a big chorus number as had been the practice in operettas. Curly enters singing one of the many songs of the American Song Book: "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin.'"

Something else that was totally unheard of... the title song was not even heard until the end of show.

The invention of the "Dream Ballet" was first used to foreshadow coming events and delve inside the psyche of a main character.

While the simple plot of every day life in turn of the century Oklahoma Territory seems corny 70+ years later, *Oklahoma!* will forever hold a spot in the formation of the modern musical. Better shows may have come along since and seem to overshadow it, but without it the concept of the musical would be far different.

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# The Silent Willies

Last night, I attended WCCT's annual Willie Award Ceremony. I had a good time with many of my wonderful friends I have made over the past nearly four years and two I made just over a year ago! Before I attended the event, I bought a small bouquet for my favorite nominee. When Megan and I arrived at the Little Theatre, I was shocked to see that Carol had already taken care of our \$15.00 admission. Thanks, Carol but it wasn't really necessary. I got a table toward the front of the house: one of only two tables that would sit Travis, Mary, Carol, Megan, and I. And later, the Dukeage crashed our small party. But it was all good... love ya, Cathy Dukes!

The evening's entertainment featured our hostesses in prerecorded bits as mimes. Between each of the awards presented, a filmed scene in which they interviewed several Willie nominees was shown. The bit looked oddly familiar to me.

I really enjoyed the recognition of some of the foundation members of the theatre and the challenge to the younger members to take up the torch. I did not like the laundry list of nominees for many of the categories. It made it appear that if you were in a show, you were nominated. I realize that recognition is important, but really about half of the nominees were present.

OK... here is a list of the winners... congratulations to you all!

Best Male Cameo

Denver (Bullfrog...Honk)

Best Female Cameo

Marylyn (Mrs. Harper, *Miracle on 34th Street*)

*Best Supporting Actor*

Denver (the role and show fail me... sorry, but I will guess  
Phillip, *The Lion in Winter*)

*Best Supporting Actress*

Sharon (Sister Clarissa, *Over the Tavern... YEAH, MOM*)

*Best Actor*

Gene (Kris Kringle, *Miracle on 34th Street*)

*Best Set*

*Little Shop of Horrors*

*President's Awards*

Crystal and Shelley (The Weekenders)

Bob ("for wearing a teddy" in a previous season)

*Best Show*

*The Lion in Winter*

*Congratulations on a great season and may 2010 bring another  
year of great shows.*



# Better Unheard?

Since I was unable to deliver it vocally, I will post it for posterity.

I would like to first thank everyone in the three shows I was in for making me feel so welcome this past year. I want to thank all my directors; Virlyn, Beth, and Travis. I want to thank everyone sitting at my table:

- my parents for putting up with me which is not always easy
  - my brother for recommending me to Virlyn for *St. Louis*
  - Megan and Carol for their unfailing support
  - Lisa for telling me to go “where my talent is appreciated”
  - and my wingman, Chris, who is always there behind me in EVERYTHING and who, if you did not already know, has created a whole new website for the Village Players.
- THANKS PAL!

I also want to thank everyone I have had the pleasure to work with on and off the stage over the past year. Working with such a fantastic group of people has made the past year Wonderful. I want to especially thank Greg, Dawn, Mary, and Travis who have all been there since last January.

OK... so maybe it is a good thing I was not expected to give a speech. I would surely have been given the music cue to wrap it up long before I was ready.

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# Some Fun To End A Rather Dismal Week

Tonight was the annual banquet/awards for the Village Players.

Someone once thought that the awards were known as the Hickies. Personally, I would change the name right away ("I got a Hickie...where's yours?"). Presently, they are known as the Villies. I must say that I believe my table of family of 8 thoroughly enjoyed the entire event. It was very relaxed, informal, and just plain fun. Kudos to Mary and her helpers.

Poor thing was frantic because of little things, but it came off nicely.

I really wanted a table large enough to sit my group of originally 7. Late last night, while not being able to sleep after the events of the past week, I really wanted my oldest brother there so I sent him a message on his facebook wall..

He was instrumental in my getting the role of Grandpa Prophater in *Meet in in St. Louis* last January. By a happy occurrence, the table was right by the food so we got to go first.

The evening began with a recap of last year's shows... 3 of which I was pleased to be a part of and the fourth show I thought was great. Then came a preview of the upcoming shows:

*The Curious Savage, Miracles, The Hound of the Baskervilles,* and an, as of yet, undetermined holiday show... but the ones being looked into sound GREAT. Director's Awards were also presented. I am pleased to say that Chris was recognized for his contribution to the theatre's website (and this would not be the end of the table's night).

Later, came the excitement of the award presentations. First up... Best Cameo by an Actor presented to... **ME!** for his role as Harnell Chesterton in *You Have the Right to Remain Dead.*

Later, the award for Best Supporting Male Actor presented

to... **ME!** for his role as Henry F. Potter in *It's a Wonderful Life*. I swear I only voted for myself once. I don't know if it is fortunate or not but I guess we were not expected to give a speech; however, I did come prepared. I should have taken the initiative and gave it anyway (but, I will save them for my next post).

Honestly, I don't know who was prouder of my night: me or my "wingman." Chris was absolutely ecstatic. His motivation, compliments, and just plain being there are just so great.

The rest of the awards from what I can remember are

- Zuzu Bailey (Best Cameo by an Actress, *It's a Wonderful Life*)
- Katie, the maid (Best Supporting Actress, *Meet Me in St. Louis*)
- Esther Smith (Best Lead Actress, *Meet Me in St. Louis*)
- George Bailey (Best Lead Actor, *It's a Wonderful Life*)
- Travis (Best Director, *It's a Wonderful Life*)
- Mary (Best Producer, *It's a Wonderful Life*)
- Best Set (*Meet Me in St. Louis*)
- Best Costumes (*Meet Me in St. Louis*)
- Best Tech (*It's a Wonderful Life*)
- Best Show (*It's a Wonderful Life*)

Ok... next post: my speeches. A fabulous time organized by Mary and her help.



# A New Adventure Awaits

I got an email tonight that has lifted my spirits quite a bit!. There is a new theatre group just starting to get on its feet in the area. I was invited to be a member of the cast for its second show coming Valentine's weekend. What little I know about it (don't even have a title) is that it is another Murder Mystery with a twist... full of improv. Kind of a scary word that, but when was the last time I turned down a challenge? This will also stretch my acting chops even further by seeing how well I act under pressure. Could be fun and yet another venue to conquer. Three rehearsals only... whoo whee! Sounds fun.

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# That Which You Take With You

Is only what you put into it. I don't know if it is the play, the cast, the character, the direction, but it is probably the whole lot combined into one that makes a production completely worthwhile. *It's A Wonderful Life* is so brilliant because it tells the tale of an everyman who is shown that one person can indeed make a difference to those people around him. I humbly submit that everyone involved in this production set out to and accomplished this in extraordinary fashion, Through all the hard work, goofiness, talent, and everything, each member of the cast, crew, direction team put their hearts into it and hopefully it came through in the splendid audiences we had each performance. If I made even one audience member hate my take on the "Evil" Henry F. Potter then I did exactly what I set out to do. As Mother Bailey so frequently intoned "You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch!"

I don't care what show it is, how many lines I have, or how long I am on stage, I ALWAYS find it so Darn hard to break away. Two weeks were definitely not long enough for this show. I loved all the carts, pictures (Jeff's portrait *Chance of a Lifetime* truly captured the image of Stewart and Reed). Even the card addressed to "The Evil One" from my Traitorous Secretary was beautiful.

Now... a few tidbits from the history of the movie, itself:

- Lionel Barrymore (Mr. Potter) convinced Jimmy Stewart to accept the role of George Bailey, despite Stewart's feeling that he was not up to it so soon after WWII)
- Mary was Donna Reed's first starring role.
- Lionel Barrymore also played Rasputin (hmm... something to shhot for?)
- Instead of "Auld Lang Syne" the original ending was supposed to be "Ode to Joy"
- The film was voted "Most Inspirational Film of All Time" and "Most Powerful Film of All Time" by the American Film Institute.

So there we have it... the end of a Wonderful Show with a Wonderful Cast, Wonderful Crew, Wonderful Direction and Producing, and most importantly... **WONDERFUL AUDIENCE! THANK YOU ALL FOR MAKING THIS TRIP TO POTTERSVILLE SO MEMORABLE!**

I almost forgot about the donuts in the wheelchair. If you missed them they were something which "George" will take with him.

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# The End Of A Wonderful Show

Well.. "Once again we have saved humanity as we know it. And the good news is they are not going to prosecute." (Anyone care to take a stab at that?)

Today wrapped up one of my favorite stage roles and experiences. Although I have become almost used to a one weekend run this year, it is going to be really hard to close the two week run of this show. The cast, crew, direction, producing for this Wonderful production was top notch. I got to work with two awesome friends I have made this year and a few others who were there at the beginning back in January. So thanks especially to Travis, Mary, Greg, and Dawn. Lots of laughs along with the hard work!

This afternoons crowd was superb! Potter kept drawing laughter from the crowd thanks to a few WCCT regulars. Such great accolades... seriously did I really deserve them? "George" even mentioned that he had a rough time during our first scene together. But one of the crowd mentioned that I was spot on in every aspect. Vocalization, presence, command, total characterization.

After peeling some tape off the stage floor and helping load some flats onto the truck, I went upstairs to the costume room to help organize a bit. A picture was taken that I will let the photographer share and that is as far as I'll go with that. Then, we had leftovers from our Friday night feast.

Closing thoughts in my next post.

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# A New Week... A New Goon

Well... Friday night began our final weekend of performances and this was another dandy. My goon had to take over the lights and sound, so I had to hire a new man. Good help is sooo hard to find. I am happy to say that my new employee did an admirable job... except for one moment when I had to crack the whip and prod him a bit faster by ad libbing a line. All of my friends and family who came tonight loved the show and again I was booed. As long as I know that it is for a good reason, then I think the jeers are almost as good as getting cheers.

After the curtain fell on our fourth performance, Mare led another small group on the nickel tour of the Huber. Including a few people who just moved to the area from Ft. Wayne where one of them worked at the glorious Embassy Theatre (I have not been there for years).

Finally, it was time to feast at the cast party. And what a cast party... catered Italian spread: lasagna, fettucini alfredo, bread, salad, and (as is typical) more than enough desserts. Leftovers for tomorrow. We presented Trav with his director's gift of a nice copy of *Tom Sawyer* among other trinkets.

There was one minor technical glitch. Somehow, during the off time, the sign that magically changes from "You Are Now In Bedford Falls" to "Pottersville" became damaged and did not work for tonight's show.

Once again, thanks to everyone: cast, crew, director, producer, and most of all.. Wonderful audience members for another tremendous show!

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# Now Why Couldn't We Have Taped This?

tonight, the cast had a brush up rehearsal. Necessary when you have a two weekend run to keep it fresh in our minds so it doesn't become stale. Well... it may not have become stale, but it was far from sane! It was just a fun, goofy time something that could have definitely made the gag reel of the DVD. No sets, no curtains, bare stage, and a cast full of clowns. Mr. Potter somehow became acquainted with some tinsel while getting himself from place to place *sans* Goon. George couldn't keep a straight face while being raked over the coals. Clarence and Potter continuing their quest for world domination in the sequel... who said the angel gets his wings? What a Wonderful time! **Bring on the final weekend!** But don't let it end too soon.