

# Creative Block

Call it a New Year's resolution if you like, but I am embarking on a new, exciting creative venture. Details will be coming as they progress. Let's just say that I am planning to put my gifts to good use here in the near future. As I have been pondering how best to use these gifts, I have been brainstorming A LOT but am having a bit of an issue with actually turning these ideas into something concrete and worthwhile.

On my other ongoing pursuit, my voice lessons continue to prosper. As I expected, one of the hardest pieces (ok... THE MOST difficult) is one that is quite deceptive. Literally beating my head over it ☐ Rather reminiscent of that little School House Rock show I was involved in a few years ago.

Songs you grew up with but when you are faced with performing them, they present quite a challenge. However, whoever said that I did anything easy? I'm always up for a challenge.

Otherwise, everything else seems to be passing for whatever is normal for my family. No one has been checked into the "Hilton" since New Year's Eve and he Jeff was released Monday in time to watch the Buckeyes flounder. Now thanks to some great decisions made by a previous coach and members of the team past and present, OSU will not be eligible for post-season football for another year.

Hope everyone has rung in 2012 safely, healthy, and lovingly.

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# To Life, To Life, L'Chaim

Well... week one back at work following my rather eventful stay at the doc shop is over. I don't think I've ever been so exhausted. HOWEVER, I am noticing a bit of improvement.

Almost non-existent is the discomfort in my upper leg where part of the clot is/was. Now, I have to contend with the same in my lower leg. Once again, I HAVE to thank you all for your warm thoughts and most importantly your prayers. If not for you my friends, family (those I was born into and those I feel just as close to), and lurkers, I feel that I might not be here posting this latest entry... but we won't dwell on that TOO much.

Perhaps it is the fact that I have never felt so... I dunno what the right word is... IMAGINE THAT! but it seems that it has been months instead of weeks since I was at the hospital. But I continue to make a list of things I WILL do once I am walking at my normal pace: Taking my 2-3 mile walk every three days; Walking the 2 blocks to work instead of driving (Who says I was inactive before my clot formed?); Seeing my friends I have not seen since January and those who visited... or were in... the hospital; Auditioning for two summer shows and seeing which I fit better. And finally and most important to me, realizing the great turning point I have reached following such a life altering... or is it affirming... event in my life. I will let you know what that great adventure is as soon as I set out on it.

Another thing I really miss is my weekly voice lesson. So many great things were happening there and as soon as I REALLY get back on my feet, they will continue! There may even be some additions to my repertoire (aside from the myriad classic stage and screen songs) which I have been encouraged to take on not only from a great friend but also by my coach as well.

But FIRST, I must continue to pray and strive to improve even

more every day. Thank you all once again. I guess I can look back on these posts and thank Him for everything.

I know this is my blog to post what I will, but I hope that these latest entries are perhaps a tiny bit as meaningful to the reader as are to me to roll out and reflect on.

**AND GOOOOOOOO BUCKEYES AND BULLDOGS!** Ohio State just won the Big 10 Tournament and continues in March Madness. And my high school alma mater basketball team is two games away from going to the state championships.

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## **Big Little Things I NEED To Get Back Into**

I dunno... I just pray that I get to feeling more like your friendly neighborhood Jamiahsh soon. I know it is going to take time and I am an optimist but really I do miss the things I was able to do before all this began (putting my voice lessons on hold, missing theatre board meetings, Oscar party... but I did get to participate over the web, little things that may seem trivial that mean so much to me). With time, prayers, and good thoughts I **KNOW** that I will be on stage, in the choir loft, at game night cleaning up playing Oodles, and most importantly of all... just being with the greatest group of friends ever. I really do feel blessed and thank all of you for your well wishes and prayers as I have been doing more and more of the past few weeks.

Monday, I went for my first blood work. Tuesday, I was called and was informed that it came back good. Wednesday, I returned to the doctor who is quite happy with the progress I have made and that my numbers are good. However, I will most

likely be on coumadin (a blood thinner with a hint of rat poison ☐ ) for the rest of my days because of the clots in my lungs. He assured me that the clots will dissolve in time.

No more testing for 4 weeks and no more doctor visits for 3 months... will that be **JUNE?** when little ones will still be going to school after the long winter.

Sunday morning will be my first day back at work... which means I will miss another of my friends' performances at their church. **UGH!**

At least I am in good company. Last weekend during an Oscar party, tennis great [Serena Williams](#) was rushed to a hospital.

Apparently, she had clots in her lungs. I know that she has been laid up for a few months with other injuries but if this can happen to an active professional sports figure then I guess it can happen to a 30-something guy who truly enjoys taking long, brisk walks (something else on mu "can't wait to get back to doing" list).

Once again, thank you all for all of your thoughts and prayers. I pray to and thank God everyday that He and my special angel are watching over me. I believe that He is not finished with me yet. Now how to take those things I feel so strongly about and use them in such a way as to show glory to Him. Being a song leader and occasional choir member at mass is a great start...

Thanks again and All Glory and Praise to Him!

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## 7-10-2007

Another year and eleven minutes older...o maybe not exactly, I'll have to find out what time I actually entered the world.

Well... yesterday, I had to run to the big city and get my picture snapped. I abhor having my mug shot for my little piece of plastic for three years. Look at the little smiley sticker, drop your jaw, now move slightly to the right. UGH! A fashioned model has it easier and they get paid for it!

Then, I endured a long nine hour work day. Better yesterday than today especially when I get three days off in a row! I don't have to be back until TUESDAY! Today, I have to go to an audition for *Hound of the Baskervilles*. I believe that I have stated that I will not be auditioning for either Holmes or Watson. I think my talents are better served in a return to a more character driven role this time. And I do not believe that the detective or the good doctor had facial hair... Watson, perhaps.

Tonight, mass at 6 is being given in memory of Aunt Carol. After that, the sky's the limit. Spontaneity on your birthday is always fun!

Well... 22 minutes into another year. Tired, maybe I'll get some sleep.

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## Family Time

This morning, Mom and Dad and I went to pay our respects at the funeral home. None of us could go last night so we went for the gathering before they processed to the church. We KNEW that the rather small church would not hold many people and with 10 children, 38 grandchildren, and who knows how many great grandchildren, there would not be many places available for other than very immediate family members. I was hoping to catch Britt there but she must have been running late.

After, we returned to watch Elizabeth play basketball. A riot watching the young girls begin to develop. Autumn was great although she missed a shot and her mother yelled "**USE THE BACKBOARD!**" Yep, definitely her father's daughter ☐ . I thing Elizabeth did more sliding across the slippery floor. More than once, she got the ball and OOPS... whistle blows and traveling called.

I was also asked if I would like to get tickets to *Wicked* coming in April. Of course... most musicals are worth at least a try.

And tonight, I am taking my sister and two young ladies to see the [Santa Claus](#) play. They have been asking, and asking about it and finally it is almost here. I must say that I am pretty excited myself.

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## In His Hands

The next few weeks will not be easy ones. This morning, we learned that my "Aunt" Lu's (my Uncle Bob's current wife) mother passed away last night. A very long-lived lady... sweet as anything who lived a very prosperous life (91 years young with 12 kids, I think). She was a huge fan of the WCCT and she would come to shows quite often either with Lu or Father Fred. I remember that following *Grease*, she and Lu came to the basement to say Hi. She was also the Grandmother of one of my best friends.

Yesterday, we learned that Aunt Carol (Bob's first wife) is nearing the end of her long fought battle with cancer. Definitely will be very hard this one. Care givers were at her house with my cousins and the rest of her family to prepare them (as much as can be expected anyway.. can anyone

really be prepared?) I'm not really sure how long she has been fighting, but it has been a great while in and out of remission until finally there is no more that can be done except to pray for Carol. So many great memories growing up, spending the night with my cousin until it was deemed inappropriate for Alicia and I to stay over at each others house (I think I was 8). At get togethers, we would always devise a plot whereby we would con the parents into allowing this. Very few people refer to me as "James" but I got so used to it that I expected Carol to address me as such. I remember a Christmas gift she gave me a few years back in a large envelope with "For Your Eyes Only" printed on the front. You will have to use your imagination to determine what was inside and it had nothing to do with the 12th 007 movie ☐

So... could be a rough few days ahead. Not the most opportune time of the year but I don't think there really is an appropriate time. But at least their suffering soon will be ended and will soon be in a much better place.

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## Who Advises The Advisor?

Recently, I received an email from a high school friend asking for advice on auditioning for a movie role. She has never acted before but knew of my passion for theatre and decided to come to me for whatever reason. I have never tested for film, but gathered that my stage experiences would help. Here was my reply:

*That sounds cool. I have never auditioned for film before, but I can't imagine it being any different from stage. Being a first timer, there will be anxiety which is good to have...*

*it gives you energy. I still get it... anyone who says they never get nervous at an audition because they have done it so often is lying through their teeth but the more experience you get in auditioning the easier it becomes to use the nerves to your advantage. Not sure what to expect... do you have a script or is it a cold reading? Do you have to have anything prepared ahead (monologue?) . The best advice I can give is to go in, do what the director asks and have fun (the most important thing). The minute you walk into the site you ARE at the audition. Most of the auditions I go to start out by introducing yourself. This is as important as reading from the script or anything else they ask you to do. The first impression is the most important... be yourself (Sounds cliché and corny, but is very true). And don't let your inexperience get you down... everyone has to start somewhere. With your personality, I am really surprised that you did not try out for anything in school, but... never too late. Break a leg! Let me know if there is anything else you need and let me know how you do.*

Apparently, she felt really good about the audition, because she sent me an email Saturday after the audition and told me that she used my advice. She was nervous but went in and presented herself as best she could and even talked to one of the writers and the casting director. Her husband, another EHS alumnus was in the store tonight and related how excited she was and how grateful she was for the advice. Unfortunately, she has to wait until April 6th to hear about call backs, etc. I would be driven insane waiting that long. She is even anticipating minoring in theatre at the University of Toledo where she started taking classes last fall. "Theatre is fun" she said. I even told her that she needs to take advantage of the theatre around her.

This is not the first time I have shared advice and my love of my favorite thing. It seems that I am quick to pick out members of any cast who are inexperienced and offer words of

encouragement and take them “under my wing” as it were.

My problem is this: If I find it so easy to encourage others (friends, new acquaintances who more often than not turn into friends), why can't **I** find the encouragement to go further? I have conquered (or at least been on) 6 stages in my little corner of the world. I love everyone of them. I have made the best friends I have EVER had in two of these venues because the bond many of us share is so strong. I get encouraged by many of them and yet... here I sit. Have I become so “comfortable” here that I will never try (again) to go above and beyond? I know I am just rambling and many of you may not understand how strong this thing is (I'm not even sure I do at times) but to me if someone finds himself trying out for every show in his community theatre (even when he is not cast... just picks himself up and tries again and again) and even ventures to other groups from time to time, well... **AND I know** that **I** solely am the one who has to come to terms with it. Maybe one day soon I can decide to take another friends advice to heart and believe that:

*“There are no limitations in what you can do except the limitations in your own mind as to what you can not do.”*

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## **Adrenaline Overload**

WOW... here it is 2AM wee hours of opening night and I cannot sleep. Really, the last time this happened was opening morning of my favorite show and I got even less sleep for obvious reasons.. chief among them being I had to be up SUPER early to be on television promoting that show. Plus, I had a good excuse then ... I was used to being up at those crazy hours since I worked 3rd shift at the time.

Now, as Diamonds are Forever is nearing the end, maybe I will be able to just lay back and close my eyes... oops there is a yawn... maybe sleep is on the way. Better to crash now than on stage tonight, eh? But it's so much fun to feel this rush. Theatre is MY anti-drug. And there goes the Bomb Surprise between the legs of Mr. Wynt and over the side of the cruise ship he goes. And James Bond will return in Live and Let Die and I will sign off and let the adrenaline rush wear off.

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## Holiday Cheer that Hits With A Bang So Hang... With Fa-La Cool And The Gang

Tonight a group of friends and I went to support a theatre family member who is part of her high school swing/show choir (and her beaming [papa](#) as well). I won't delve too deeply on the performance, but will say that one of the songs deeply touched me. I know I have mentioned the beautiful piece entitled "Believe" from the magical movie [The Polar Express](#) sung so majestically by [Josh Groban](#). It has become one of those songs that I **HAVE** to listen to at least 50 times each holiday season. It speaks of the magic of dreams and how as people grow older they often lose sight of those dreams. But just look in the eyes of a child and often you can see, remember, and believe what it was like to be that young and have that wonder inside. Of course, for some of us that wonder can so easily be reignited or may never have left. I get goosebumps all over just hearing the song everytime. Just a chill runs through my entire body. Maybe those words are trying to tell me something?

The evening also took me back humanah years to my final holiday concert and the festive medley that the choir sang, entitled *Cool Yule*. I don't remember the entire plot but I do remember that Santa (played by your's truly) and Mrs. Claus had to rap... and I'm not talking about present wrapping here. This was the second time that I had put on the red suit and black boots. In fifth grade, I was the jolly old elf in our elementary Christmas musical *Santa and the Snowmobile* in which a slick salesman almost convinces Santa to abandon his team of eight tiny reindeer for a gas-propelled vehicle. I do remember doing some improvising as the sound of the snowmobile was not properly cued. I think I gave the cardboard cutout a good swift kick and said to heck with it. This was long before you-know-who or I would have uttered a quick you-know-what.

Children sleeping, snow is softly falling  
Dreams are calling like bells in the distance

We were dreamers not so long ago  
But one by one we all had to grow up  
When it seems the magic's slipped away  
We find it all again on Christmas day

Believe in what your heart is saying  
Hear the melody that's playing  
There's no time to waste  
There's so much to celebrate  
Believe in what you feel inside  
And give your dreams the wings to fly  
You have everything you need  
If you just believe

Trains move quickly to their journey's end  
Destinations are where we begin again  
Ships go sailing far across the sea  
Trusting starlight to get where they need to be  
When it seems that we have lost our way  
We find ourselves again on Christmas day

Believe in what your heart is saying  
Hear the melody that's playing  
There's no time to waste  
There's so much to celebrate  
Believe in what you feel inside  
And give your dreams the wings to fly  
You have everything you need  
If you just believe  
If you just believe  
If you just believe  
If you just believe  
Just believe  
Just believe

Ok... look at those words. Definitely. Not just on Christmas Day.

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## For Good

It has been just over a week since Emily's memorial service; however, I had to include one of the most emotional moments. A soloist sang a song that I knew that I had to know but at the time could not remember from where. It was THAT powerful. While listening to my library of songs on my itunes shuffle, the song [For Good](#) from the musical [Wicked](#) played. AHAHA. Just hearing the words to the beautiful song took me back not only to the service but through many of my most cherished moments with Emily. Amazing the power of the gift that she helped me cultivate for so many years.

I've heard it said  
That people come into our lives for a reason

Bringing something we must learn  
And we are led  
To those who help us most to grow  
If we let them  
And we help them in return  
Well, I don't know if I believe that's true  
But I know I'm who I am today  
Because I knew you...

Like a comet pulled from orbit  
As it passes a sun  
Like a stream that meets a boulder  
Halfway through the wood  
Who can say if I've been changed for the better?  
But because I knew you  
I have been changed for good

It well may be  
That we will never meet again  
In this lifetime  
So let me say before we part  
So much of me  
Is made of what I learned from you  
You'll be with me  
Like a handprint on my heart  
And now whatever way our stories end  
I know you have re-written mine  
By being my friend...

Like a ship blown from its mooring  
By a wind off the sea  
Like a seed dropped by a skybird  
In a distant wood  
Who can say if I've been changed for the better?  
But because I knew you  
Because I knew you  
I have been changed for good

And just to clear the air  
I ask forgiveness  
For the things I've done you blame me for  
But then, I guess we know  
There's blame to share  
And none of it seems to matter anymore

Like a comet pulled from orbit  
As it passes a sun  
Like a stream that meets a boulder  
Halfway through the wood

Like a ship blown from its mooring  
By a wind off the sea  
Like a seed dropped by a bird in the wood  
Who can say if I've been  
Changed for the better?  
I do believe I have been  
Changed for the better

And because I knew you...  
Because I knew you...  
Because I knew you...  
I have been changed for good...

Everyone has at one time turned to someone be it a parent, sibling, friend, teacher, or even a complete stranger and been changed profoundly in some way. Thank you for being that someone to not only myself but to all those whose lives you touched, For Good.

  
 [Wicked \(Piano/Vocal Selections\)](#) (A New Musical) By Stephen Schwartz.

Songbook for voice, piano and guitar chords. This edition is in standard piano/vocal format with the melody in the piano part. 120 pages. Published by Hal Leonard. (HL.313267)

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