

Final Miraculous Thoughts

To say that the weekend of *Miracle on 34th Street* was great is putting it mildly. I am so proud to have been part of this wonderful cast of on-stage and off characters. Several newcomers who have never before been in a show, some who have not been on for years, and the veterans who just seem to come back for more ALL made it stupendous... well, judging from the great numbers and reviews from the audience. There were several performers I have worked with previously whom I consider it a delight to work with. Others that I have watched from being in audiences and have wanted to work with or have heard good things about. And some of the most adorable kids starting out (when they are on stage... off-stage in the basement could get a bit hairy). But overall, another worthwhile venture.

I always find myself totally grateful yet humbled by all the comments especially when it is directed to my own performance. So hard to define what that feeling is but always remember to take it all in stride and acknowledge that it is a total group effort. Especially for this show with a few of the casted performers decided to not show up during the rehearsal process after they had been called and said that "Yes, I'll be there. I'm still in it!" Thank Heaven for our director of many hats who stepped into at least three cameo roles.

Several on-stage and off memorable moments. One of my favorites occurred opening night when "Duncan" made his appearance as a witness during Kris Kringle's sanity hearing. The reindeer keeper walked over to the witness box, took off his hat, and off came his wig! I also had fun during the courtroom scenes BEFORE Sawyer was fired!

Thanks Carmen, Bruce (the Totally maniacal and vicious Kringle), Harriet and Carol (had a ball during the courtroom scenes before Sawyer was fired), Bobbi Jo, Terina and Natalie,

Travis, Michael, John (I can't believe he fired me), Dusty, Bill, Carla, Beth (who did not flash me THIS show... LOL), Anna, Stefanie, Kate, Sydney, MacKenzie, Grace, Riley, Julia, Racer, MaGuire, Terri Lynn, AND MARY. Still not so sure about the karaoke celebration Saturday night/VERY early Sunday morning but it was.... Interesting.



Sawyer learning from Mrs. Walker about Macy's new Santa Claus. I had a ball working with Terina and the entire cast!



Sawyer asking the "dangerously deranged" Kris Kringle a simple mathematics problem. Bruce was an exceptional Santa!



A little eye twirl goes a long way. With the vicious maniac.



The entire cast. Thank you all for a wonderful experience!

Nuttin' For Christmas

Last night... Another Op'nin... Another Show! Have to work at 8 this morning so I saved my post til 7:17AM. This is WHY I LOVE THE STAGE! The first moments of a live production in front of an audience is so exhilarating. So pleased and blessed that nearly all of the evening was a tremendous success! Thursday night, Mare informed us that we had nearly 100 reservations for just this one night. This might not be anywhere near capacity but A HUGE number and they were very receptive. At least 15 of those reservations were for my family and co-workers plus I saw others that I knew during the meet and greet.

The cast was tremendous! Everyone from the "dangerously deranged" Kris Kringle to the smallest elf were in top form. Sitting backstage, one my favorite scenes is when the kiddies sit on Santa's lap telling him their wishes. And if you know the 1947 classic, the little Dutch girl sends an "AWWW..." tingle.

Following the show as I made my way into the house, the bank manager yelled over her shoulder to me. When I made my way to my family members, my mother informed me that I would be getting "nothing for Christmas, this year." **YES!** "Kris's" 17/18 year old nephew informed him that he wanted to come up on stage and punch me. Another huge compliment. Finally, a Village Player regular elated that in her opinion I was "the star of the show." (**SHUCKS...** I don't know about that...).

The Huber ghost must have been pleased with the production as he wrecked havoc with the light and sound in a few bits. Nothing like the scene in *Hound of the Baskervilles* in which "Selden" is found lying dead and the spotlight failed to go down so I could rise and exit the stage.

However, following the show Mary had to rush off the stage as

an older gentleman had fallen outside and needed medical attention. Some of the steps at the front of the theater are in great need of repair and apparently the audience member had stumbled over them... BADLY. Praying that the gentleman is not seriously injured. Hopefully, this sends a message to the building owners to repair the steps as I have noticed their condition over the course of the last few years.

One performance down... TWO TO GO!

Happy 100th Birthday

This year marks two centennial anniversaries. Of course, the most famous being the launch and sinking of the ~~SS Minnow~~ (err,,) *RMS Titanic*. Today, our village celebrated the anniversary of the dedication of Clem, the Civil War Monument that first stood at the intersection of Michigan Avenue and Indiana Street until it was moved to its present location on July 22nd, 1972 (just under a year before the author of this post made his own appearance in the world). Clem's dedication date was May 30th, 1912 but what a lovely (if a little warm) day to honor him.

My preparation for the day began shortly after my recital. I had been asked if I would be interested in performing a few songs for the day around the time of "Songs I Have Learned" but really had hard little aside from the inquiry. The songs I had to choose from was vast. I figured two from the Civil War era would be appropriate or anything patriotic. I decided on first, "Aura Lee" a little ballad written during the period which lent its melody to a very popular song made famous by a past artist which was the title of his first movie. ANYONE?!

(no cheatin). With some help, I also decided on "Just Before the Battle, Mother" another lovely tune that was popular (with different lyrics) on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line.

I was going to perform the pieces accompanied by my guitar-playing coach. Unfortunately, she forgot that she had a prior commitment today. I eventually decided that I would sing them *a capella* unless a suitable accompaniment track could be found. Fortunately, yesterday I was informed that another performer for the event had a copy of "Aura Lee." Because I was really unfamiliar with my second selection, I decided to sing "America the Beautiful." A good thing I did, because the other singer was singing "Just Before the Battle..."

This morning, I made my way to the bandstand where the accompaniment tracks were waiting. I could have sung them either way but the tracks were both easy to perform to even if they were in a lower key.

So, after the Right Honorable Mayor /Friendly Friar made his opening remarks and the high school band played a few pieces, I was invited to take the stand and performed my "five pieces." It could have been five; however, the other singer stole at least three of the pieces I had considered ("Oh, Shenandoah," "Battle Hymn of the Republic," as well as the aforementioned piece). I was congratulated on my performance by several members of the crowd who braved the temperatures.

At least there were not trains that passed by as happened a few years ago when my cousin and I performed during our summer festival.

All in all, a fun little ceremony and a very fitting tribute to Clem and all the service men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Hopefully, we all made a special effort to remember them today but also everyday.

Diamonds and Roses

Last night was Kathrines's 6th Annual Recital (it was my second). I began the day going for one last run-through (for both of us as she accompanied me). Following my triumphant gig a little more than a month ago, I was challenged to get out of my Musical Theatre box and try something a little more artsy. "The Little Irish Girl" was a fun piece which not only allowed me the opportunity to attempt an Irish brogue but also a chance to portray the gentleman suitor and the titular figure of the piece along with the "pigs that number seven." Must have left them at the "cabin".

Following my rehearsal, I had time to come back home and relax for a few hours and bake the cookies I was taking (I think the Acus' will have more than a few cookies for a while). I was told that there was a great shortage for the reception 6 years ago. The young man who informed her of this had a plate containing 7 cookies! Good call that! So for each subsequent recital, more than enough parents or performers step up and provide.

Last year, the students were divided up into two separate shows to allow for the limited confines of the Little Theater. Carol and I were the final performance of the night and were sequestered in the green room so that M. And Mme. Thenardier could be revealed in magnificent fashion. Last night, I was the second student on stage following Davey Jones whom I thought had passed on a few months ago (but no, this was not the lead singer of the Monkees... I think I may have mentioned him in last year's wrap).

Because I selected the piece little more than a month ago, I was pleased with the result. Members of the audience must

have thought so, too! After my performance, I sat with Tiff, Keith, and Trudles who all were complimentary. At intermission and at the reception, Mr. Ed (who delighted the audience with a glorious performance of "All Glory, Laud, and Honor" on the church's piano) remarked how amazed he was with my voice. Other audience members remembered "Master of the House." Glad I am so memorable!

I was happy that I got to sit in the audience for the rest of the evening. This gave me the chance to see the other students and ensembles from young to more seasoned. There was a mix of genres from Christian to Country to Elvis to Lance's "Orphan's Tears" (a rap) and a little Broadway. Kathrine's little guy, Drew, gave his first performance on voice and guitar which was really cool! Over the last several weeks, I have heard Rob practicing "Burnin' Love" with Kathrine backing him on percussion (he is wrapping up as I arrive for my weekly lesson). The only thing missing was the high pitched female (or is it Elvis in falsetto) "AH, AH, AH" towards the end. I forgot to ask why they were missing. I also heard one of my favorite pieces of any genre that I must track down.... think I will save that for another time.

There were also door prizes. Inside two of the programs which I distributed, there was a rather huge drawing of a rose. Totally unmistakable. The two program holders each received a rose bush.

Not sure about the rest of the audience, but I thought the recital was lovely. Although sitting through 24 performances might otherwise seem dull, each student gave their best, entertained and flowed.

I saw someone standing up taking pictures throughout the evening so one or two may be coming.

The End Of Songs I Have Learned

Yesterday was an emotional roller coaster. Thursday night, I hardly slept at all... maybe 5 hours tops (which some people I know are lucky to get in a week ;)). Being off stage for almost a year and a half created a huge amount of excitement and at the beginning of the day a little nervousness which I know surprised even me but several things throughout the day alleviated that fear. By the time I was ready to leave for the theater, I was ready to go... physically and mentally.

Adrenaline still there but the fear I seemed to be feeling was gone (if indeed it was fear). I arrived at my designated time and was soon joined by my accompanist and my cousin who joined my coach and I in a trio. I ran through just two of my more problematic numbers and waited on the other two participants to arrive to run through my pieces with them.

With a half hour to spare and the first audience members began to arrive, I headed backstage to put the finishing touches on my attire. While it does still fit (a fact that amazed my pal :)), I need to use suspenders to hold the pants of my tux up.

Thankfully, I have lost some weight since my days with the BGSU Men's Chorus. Moments before I went on stage, my best friend, third brother, and mentor came back and led one of my traditions: the pre-show prayer. Unfortunately for both of us, he and members of his family have been really under the weather for a while so he had to leave. But I was SUPER glad that he came behind the curtain for a pep talk, prayer, and hug (don't care if I catch whatever they are having). I'm sorry they had to miss it knowing how much they have meant to me in the past 6 years but their health is so much more important.

A little high school game on the BGSU campus with a victory meaning a trip to the state tournament, kept all but 7 of my immediate family members from attending but what I had left was an audience full of wonderful friends plus my two sisters and 4 of my nieces (Kyli came down to the stage after I completed the show and gave me a hug). The music was great; however, I hope no one asks me to emcee an engagement in the near future. I am so better suited to a scripted show than attempting to offer extemporaneous (there's your .10¢ word of the day) comments between songs... Awkward to say the least.

But the duet and trio of the evening went remarkably well and my solos went as well as I could hope. I am told that video clips are ready but either my cousin goofed on my email address or there was a goof up along the way somewhere. In either case, when I get them I will post them (maybe those awkward extemporaneous comments scattered throughout were omitted). I detest watching myself on film (most of the time). I can handle Morat from time to time but that is about it.

20 years

I cannot believe it has been that long since I portrayed one Daniel Francis Hannigan in my high school senior year. This afternoon, I had the pleasure to sit and enjoy the final performance of an area company's production of "Annie." I was NOT disappointed. Several of my theatrical colleagues and friends had roles on stage at the glorious Huber. Crystal was remarkable as "Aggie" Hannigan. ALWAYS a powerhouse performance displaying the deliciousness of the marvelous character in song, movement, and action. It is very difficult to pick which "sister" I prefer.

Denver, Denver. WHAT A HOOT! He portrayed not only Drake (Warbucks' butler) but one of FDR's cabinet members and a dog catcher as well. Each character was entirely different in appearance, tone, and characterization. From an Irish brogue to the not-so-stiff English servant, he stole the spotlight in every scene he was in! AND YES, he can sing!

I have always been a huge fan of the Hooverville scene. The song which "Likes to Thank Herbert Hoover" for putting hundreds of former employed citizens on the streets is a really fun bit which I was a part of in my second go round. Mary and a few of my other friends doubled (or tripled) in this scene, as Warbucks' servants, and a few other cabinet members.

Finally, Annie herself was a delight. Her charisma on stage fit the role perfectly. Her singing and speaking voice held just the right amount of power, spunk, and naivete. For whatever reason, the production had a different actress stepping into the role both weekends.

I make it a point to never critique roles I have previously played (not that I am biased or anything) ☐

WELL DONE CAST AND CREW!!!

A Break From The Chaos

So glad that I got to take in 2 SUPER shows last weekend amid all the hectic goings on otherwise. As I pointed out in my last post, *Nunrackers* was hilarious, kudos once agin to to Mare for going the extra mile by steppin out on stage to fill the role of Sister Amnesia as well as serving as director! Yesterday, I was lucky enough to take in my other home away

from home's production of one of MY favorite holiday gems LIVE ON STAGE! I know that I have mentioned my family's extreme love of *A Christmas Story*. Each year to get a viewing in, I have to stay up after mass and catch one of the showings during TBS' 24-hour marathon while everyone else is all settled in for a long winter's nap. This year, Christmas Eve mass is even earlier so I should be able to catch the midnight show!

Seeing the show on stage ALMOST made up for that one viewing!

Things have been crazy around the house the last few weeks so I was not able (or did not take the time) to make reservations before all 6 performances were sold out. This has not happened for a scheduled WCCT show since the 1978 production of *Fiddler on the Roof!* I know of at least one NON-scheduled show that was a sell out, but I won't go there (something about a karaoke). In any case, my vocal coach who played Ralphie's mother made arrangements for me to attend. They had to turn 20 people away who had called the reservation line.

Almost everything from the movie was brought to wonderful life in front of our eyes. The tire changing episode, the rattle trap furnace battles, Randy's mummification with the arms that would not stay down, the "Fra-JEE-lay" leg lamp, the Bumpuses' dogs (unseen but heard), the "triple dog dare," and of course the "*official Red Ryder, carbine action, two-hundred shot range model air rifle! With a compass in the stock and a thing which tells time.*" My only qualm was the absence of the original soundtrack as Ralphie and friends are being chased by the notorious Scut Farcas. Everyone on stage perfectly captured the essence of the characters being portrayed from the adult Ralphie down to little Drew. But I have to make note of the two brilliant actresses. Tiff was her typical showstopping brilliant as Ms. Shields with her margin marking quill. Seriously, anytime she is on stage the audience is in store for a treat!

I had never before seen Kathrine on stage; however, she was

extraordinary! Her total presence on stage was wondrous! Her facial mannerisms, her voice, each little quirk and nuance MADE Mrs. Parker a delight to see. Her chemistry with The Old Man was one of many highlights of the show!

Now here is a bit of some of my favorite scenes in the movie or the complete theatrical trailer which I have never before seen:

A Day of Performances

I was fortunate enough to take in two musical performances today. It began as I attended the dress rehearsal of my nieces's elementary Christmas program. *A Bug's Christmas* was adorable. 2nd Grader Alyssa had a speaking role as a wood nymph. Before the show began, she caught a glimpse of my from the risers and waved to me. Although it was at times difficult to understand what the 70+ kids were singing, it was quite fun. My favorite segment was the "12 Bugs of Christmas."

Tonight, I had promised Mare Mare that I would man the ticket table for the Village Players' production of [Nuncrackers](#). I had the opportunity to see and participate in a production of the original *Nunsense* back I still can't believe **20 years ago!** **on my high school senior trip!** I did not know that I would be making punch and setting up for the opening night after party as well. While taking the money from a couple and hoping they enjoyed the show, a gentleman commented in a rather gruff, opinionated tone: "We'll try." I said that sounded like a comment Mr. Potter would make.

I must say if you want to continue your holiday celebrations with a good hearty laugh then this show is for you. Nuns singing a grab bag of tunes. A scatter-brained amnesiac sister. A Julia Child-inspired cooking segment. A version of Tchaikovsky's classic ballet not to be missed. VERY strong singing! BRAVO Mare (who doubled as director and last minute actress), cast, and crew! A phenomenal production all around!

Soon, very soon. Fourteen months is FAAAAARRRRRRR tooooo L0000000000NG for me to be off stage. I hear that *The Sound of Muc (err...) Music* is coming for next holiday season.

But it was totally enthralling to settle down with many of my friends after the show and meeting some people that I have heard a lot about! Just walking into the theatre made me realize that I have been away too long. The Huber really is the gem of the area!

Date Set

Well... I finally set the date in which I will put on glorious display that which I have been concentrating on for sometime.

It is just less than 5 months away but it will be here before I know it. Even with this leg of mine the last 7 months have not been slow... although I am sure others would disagree ;). I checked the school calendar to see if there was a weekend when there was no school event going on so there would be no excuse for some to not attend ☐

[At my latest blood test on Monday, I was informed that the blood is right where it needs to be. Not too thick, not too thin, but just right. Just call me Goldilocks]

Why so long? I had a feeling there was going to be a wait with not one but two shows in October, the Christmas show in December, the awards night in January, and any other events scheduled in between so February was the first month available.

In the meantime, I will dig through the books, find more material for future use, and focus on the program without making it stale. I was reminded of some of the splendiferous music from *West Side Story* the other night courtesy of "Glee."

Music, yes... choreography not so much. Plus, I suppose I can look back at the foreign pieces I had glanced at a few months ago. A small challenge.

I do see ads on television for *Jersey Boys* (the Frankie Valli and the 4 Seasons story... one of the few jukebox musicals I would like to see) set to play the Stranahan in February, too. Maybe it ISN'T that long away.

Who Knew In NW0?

Tonight, I joined Megs to partake in a concert performed by The Black Swamp Strings of which CC is a cellist. I remember learning a month or so ago that the concert was this weekend but I was not sure of the date, thank heaven my friend invited me to come on my SATURDAY OFF!

The music was phenomenal! It ranged from Bach's *Jesu. Joy of Man's Desiring* (one of the most beautiful pieces EVER written) to more contemporary fare such as theme from *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Schindler's List*, and "All I Ask of You" from *The Phantom of the Opera*. Another favorite of mine... Brahms's *Hungarian Dance No. 5* was also presented. I know that almost everyone has heard this piece somewhere.

I was particularly impressed with the age range of the musicians. There were several who had just or were about to graduate high school who started with the group at age 14 back in its "garage days." There were also the seasoned veterans. I don't know how long it takes to become even close to being proficient enough on a stringed instrument to perform with a group of this talent, but it seems like you would have to start at birth!

One of our neighboring audience members has a nephew who was a member of the group who is now a professional musician. He will soon be heard on the scores of two of this summer's sure-fire hits: Steven Spielberg's *Super 8* and *Cars 2*. He is also

in the Santa Barbara Orchestra. I guess it is possible to achieve a life-long dream no matter where you grow up. The audience member told me to congratulate "my wife" on a great job! Sorry, she only plays my wife on stage. ☐

THANKS MEGS...Had lots of fun! And great job, wife ☐ Until next time.

Here is Brahm's Hungarian Dance for those of you who think they have never hear it!