

# Off The Book & It Feels Soooo Fine

YAHOO!!! I took the plunge and ditched the script for the entire rehearsal. As a wise scientist once stated: "Once you set your mind to it, you can accomplish anything." I will not say that I was perfect but I felt good after the evening was complete. So fun and ultimately rewarding... now I can begin the tweaking of my character. We also attempted to run the show using the lights: extensive blackouts, many light tricks and sound effects that will definitely need to be worked out during the next three weeks. Hopefully, our tech crew will arrive soon to get all of their cues. The entire cast was fumbling around in the dark on numerous occasions tonight but no one was seriously injured... yet. I even got to provide a word following the run through. As I have stated previously, this show is much more than an audience-participatory murder-mystery, I think it closely rivals some of the best melodramas out there. I mentioned that most of the characters have lines that can be delivered as asides to the audience. That was one of my few complaints with the last melodrama I saw staged... there were asides but the director chose not to have them blatantly directed to the audience which limited the amount of booing and cat-calling.

This new internet is crazy cool. So much faster than the old Verizon. Just sitting here makes me feel like a kid in a candy store. Three weeks to go and our rehearsal schedule has changed so that we now have practices every night except Saturday. Well... if they are needed (and I think they are, there is just so much to work out technically as well as theatrically).

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# 17 Days 5 1/2 Hours And Counting...

and still actors still have their scripts on stage! Ok... so I'm one of them but it is more of a crutch than anything else. Besides, as I said there are still 17 days until the curtain goes up and the "NO BOOK" deadline is set for Friday. I think tonight I will go completely off book. I don't need it! There are just a few of those incidental phrases that throw me off every time during the rehearsal process.

This is kind of a different role for me. One reason being, I have the opening line of the show. Nothing can start until I say so! I can hold the audience, my fellow thespians, the directors, everyone in the palm of my hand! MWAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA! I may have had the opening line for *School House Rock* but that was recorded.

Oh, yes... I received some fliers at last night's rehearsal which I took around town to display along with some Oktoberfest announcements. So come one come all to the [Huber theatre](#) October 9-11 and solve the mystery of whodunwhat to whom.

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## A Case of MPD?

Monday night at rehearsal, we had about half the cast present without either of the directors. This greatly limited the amount of work we could accomplish. It was decided that we

would once again run lines. Quite often in these situations, actors are asked to read multiple roles. I ended up being three of the four male parts. At times this was quite humorous but most of the time it gave me even more insight into my own character; who is Harnell Chesterton and what makes him tick (or in terms most theatre performers can relate: What is his motivation? UGH!) I believe I have a firm grasp on Mr. Chesterton's persona. However, for reasons that will hopefully be quite clear to those in the audience, I am having a bit of trouble with his lines, but they are getting there. I have such a grasp that the assistant director told me that I was perfectly cast. Two weeks in and my reputation has already preceded me! C'est impossible! No worries... by week's end, I should be good. I just need to visit my area Goodwill's for a white dinner jacket.

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## **I Am Playing The Part Of The Plant**

OOOPS... wrong show... or is it?. Tonight was the read-through for my latest on-stage endeavor. I will say that reading the script with the actors (*sans* one) was an absolute RIOT! *You Have the Right to Remain Dead* is much more than an audience-participatory murder mystery, it almost plays like a melodrama. I believe I alluded to the fact that this is a play-within-a-play with the actors portraying actors on stage as well as the characters within a very Tennessee Williams-esque production. It will be quite a challenge to keep under control as the hilarity ensues throughout. All of the actors are on stage throughout the entire show. Among the colorful cast of characters are the actors within the local community theatre, the director, the teenage backstage manager, and an

inept detective who I believe will be very reminiscent of Columbo (rumpled trenchcoat, tattered notepad, and all).

The fun begins when one of the "actors" is murdered. Each of the remaining thespians (on and off stage) and the audience itself is suspect. Everyone has a different motive for doing the poor sap in and it is up to Officer Bainbridge to discover whodunit, how, and why. Nothing is as it seems, the clues pile up at a hilarious rate, until the guilty party is revealed. In order to find out who did what to whom and with what it was done to whom be sure to come to the Huber Theatre October 9-11. A double show on October 10. Judging from the read-through this will be yet another memorably great production but aren't they all memorable...good or bad?

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## **I Hate Long Waits**

WOW! This has to rank amongst the quickest audition results I have ever gotten. Monday morning at 10AM (mere hours after I auditioned), I got a phone call from the assistant director of *You Have the Right to Remain Dead* and was asked if I would like to accept the coveted, intrigal part of Harnell Chesterton. I'm not sure how much he's involved but from what I read, he has a LOT to say and a hilarious bit. Looks like yet another great role!

Unlike another show I know that has been cast for a month and a half and has less than 8 weeks to curtain, rehearsals for this begin next Monday with a read-through. The costume matron (the same as for *Meet Me in St. Louis*) wants to get started immediately with her excellent ideas. If anyone saw MMiSL, you surely remember the wonderful costumes created/hunted down for that show... including the menagerie of

hats worn by Grandpa Prophater. I can't wait to be back onstage in general but to be back on the Huber stage will be a treat!

AHHHH... show dates are October 9-11 with a matinee and evening show on Saturday. So those of you cast in Little Shop have no excuse for not seeing it.

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## The Only Fella At Auditions

Does this mean I got a part? If not, I will turn in my license to act tomorrow. Truthfully, I was the only male at tryouts. That is not to say that there were not other audition dates. In fact, this was the last one and the best time for me to go.

The play is entitled *You Have the Right to Remain Dead*. It is billed as an audience-participatory murder mystery comedy. The director describes the play in the play as Tennessee Williams on steroids. At least two character names made me think that (Fat Daddy and Blanche or Big Daddy from *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and Blanche from *Streetcar...* has anyone seen the Simpsons' episode in which Marge plays Blanche and Ned Flanders plays a bare-chested Stanley in a musical version).

The audition was almost too relaxed... but NOT complaining. We sat around a table in the community room adjacent to the stage. Being 90+ degrees outside did not help to cool off the room a whole lot. However, it sure beat the alternative of walking upstairs. I was up there last winter and noticed the warmth then. So, we just sat around the table chatting a bit, going over the plot and characters for those of us who were in the dark, and read some scenes from the script. I said too relaxed because there were times that I forgot that I was actually auditioning and almost cracked myself up just reading

the lines.

In attendance were the directors, another female auditioner who I knew as the costume designer from *Meet Me in St. Louis*, [Mare](#) (who was there to give moral support and serve as an additional line reader since she is in WCCT's *Little Shop of Horrors* whenever that is going to get started), and myself. We waited for two hours for others to come, but... We were having so much fun that we just kept reading lines, changing characters, and allowing me to become acquainted with the show in general. After, we sat around the table becoming acquainted with each other.

And I should be finding out tomorrow which if any part I get and the read-through is August 24th. Perfect, I hate long waits.

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## Shedding Some Moonlight On The Clinic

Saturday was the day that the theatre collaborated with [Moonlight Productions](#) to make the movie version of one our plays from a few years ago. This is the first time I have been involved in such an endeavor but have sat through a few acting classes in which we discussed the differences between live theatre and film. Going in, I knew that there was going to be stops, starts, and the possibility of some jumping around in the script. I actually thought it quite ambitious to think that we could shoot the film in one day.

Some of the actors from the stage version of *The Clinic* could not make the filming; however, the talent that was recruited assumed the roles quite nicely.

When I had posted about a friend who is going to be making her feature film debut, I had forgotten about the possibility of filming *The Clinic* for Jay's production company. Hopefully, this will help him to get a film submitted to film festivals to help his company grow. Chris has already gotten the screenplay, which was adapted from his stage play, submitted to a festival in Arizona. However, the deadline for film submission is the end of April.

I actually felt for the people who had to sit there and watch those in scenes and await their turn. While I was in the scenes that were shot, most of my dialogue and craziness have yet to be shot. Most of the cast agreed that we should have had time to rehearse prior to filming. I would agree with that sentiment but it was difficult enough to find a time to meet that fit everyone's busy schedules. I, for one, had a great time participating in a new medium. I have been on film before but during live broadcasts so this was something entirely new but very exciting. Chris was very humorous in his role as director using the clapper and forgetting to say "cut" when he needed to stop the scene (Scene C3; Take 259, etc. HEHE) I'm sure with the multiple cameras running, there will be plenty to have on a blooper reel. I just hope that the film is good enough to help get Jay's name out there. Wrapping up next Saturday. Hopefully, we all can look over the script and become more familiar with it and get through smoothly but I am confident that it will **BE GREAT!!!**

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## The Plays The Thing

Our community theatre, in it's infinite wisdom, has decided to limit the number of musicals to one per season. I suppose that I can see the need for this. A good, well-known musical

is much more expensive to produce than a play. However, it has been pointed out time and again that musicals are the bread and butter of most theatres and if the right musical is chosen and performed well, they generally bring in more money than most plays. Most of the musicals I have either been involved with or heard about have done well (with one exception but the reasons for the financial loss were many).

The problem is... trying to find plays that will bring in audiences. It has been suggested that we attempt to focus on seasonal shows. In October, I cannot wait to be part of the all cast production of *Little Shop of Horrors*. In December, we are performing *Miracle on 34th Street*. Both shows would appeal to the seasons.

For next season, we already have the musical locked in. *Taffetas* is going to be done in October 2010. I suggested doing another Christmas show like *A Christmas Story* (yes the movie has been turned into a stage play that I think would be a riot to perform). There are also any number of versions of Dickens' perennial favorite, *A Christmas Carol*. I also mentioned via email a suggestion given to me for future October shows: *Dracula*. Are there any other shows that would fit into other seasons? A good romantic comedy for February. Something like *Honk!* for future spring shows?

Or another possibility, our theatre has within it at least two people who have the fantastic knack of playwriting. Many times, these are given spots entitled "independent projects." I think that if someone has a piece ready for performance it should be included as part of the season.

So, if any of my readers hiding in the shadows have any suggestions, please come out and suggest them. I still think that it would not hurt to do *Romeo and Juliet*. I know most people cringe at the idea of bringing Shakespeare to a small stage, but I say why not take a chance?

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# Only ONE Good Reason...

that I am glad my last on stage theatrical experience was only a three night affair (no pun intended). I returned "home" tonight to a marvelously hilarious yet intriguing tour de force. [The Lion in Winter](#) is a brilliant play that has everything: comedy, drama, comedy, backstabbing, COMEDY, a steller set, did I mention comedy. There were at most 30 people in the small audience but everyone of those thirty were in stitches (maybe it was the three in the third or fourth row... but it was really that funny and not at all what I expected.

First, I MUST commend the hard work that went into the scenery constructed that turned the small stage of the WCCT into the castle of King Henry 2nd at Chinon, France at Christmas circa 1183. Tapestries, stone walls, a throne and such depth and perspective that you would have thought that you were actually inside the castle. BRAVO Karen for another magnificent set!

The cast is totally phenomenal. I must commend the newcomer to the stage who gave simpering, whining life to Prince John. The newspaper review did not do his performance its due credit.

Nor did it do justice to the performance of Prince Geoffrey. The audience could see the brilliant machinations going on in his head. What little he said in words while the others bickered and plotted aloud, he more than made up for in his presence and movement. Brilliant portrayal, my [friend](#)!

I must give huge praise to the King and Queen themselves. When King Henry was on stage, he OWNED the stage. Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine was Katherine Hepburn personified... maybe

even a bit better. Their scenes together were magic.

The entire cast, crew (the scene changes were very necessary to the effect and done well), direction (brava Shirley and Alice). King Philip was portrayed by an actor who is a huge fan of the show and rightfully so. His onstage time may have been limited but what he did with that time was masterful. Richard the Lionhearted was portrayed with fiery passion for battle and blood yet had a tender side. Alais, mistress of Henry II, was also well cast.

As the [trailer](#) says: It will make you laugh, cry, and go HUH? Definitely check out the final performances of *Lion in Winter* this weekend. And I did see a bit of typecasting as my friend so fleetingly commented upon.

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## That Which Gives Life Takes It Away

I am not one for searching out a play and just reading it for the sake of reading it. Funny that... I love theatre, I am on a play-reading committee at my local theatre, but yet I find reading plays a chore. However, give me a script to memorize or audition for and... ZAP... I'm right there. Plays are meant to be performed anyway... not read for leisure.

In my efforts to help the theatre choose a season for the 2010-2011 season, I came across a remarkable play full of symbolism and allegory. Entitled *The Diviners* by Jim Leonard, Jr., it tells the events of a backwater Indiana hicktown (Zion, population...40) one fateful summer. The lead character is Buddy Layman (age 14 or 17 according to the script). He is a mentally challenged boy who also is abundantly curious in

all things. He has only one fear (that I could gather from the script). Ironically, this fear is also his greatest gift to the town.

One of the other major players is C.C. Showers. He is a 30-year old preacher who has abandoned his congregation in favor of finding a new way of life... in midwest America during the Great Depression. It is never specifically stated in the script, but I found myself reading more into the plot than was actually there. But I think there are some moments in which my summation could be proven (as my playscript analysis professor instructed the class to do several times). But Mr. Showers and Buddy form a bond that ultimately leads the young man to overcome his fear.

I was totally engaged in all of the symbolism in the play. It had me from the very first page until the very end. In one sitting, I was able to read, laugh, and believe in the play. I find it really tragic that I had never heard of the play until recently and definitely will put it on my list for suggestions for the upcoming season. On a footnote, *The Diviners* had its professional debut in **1980** and starred [Robert MacNaughton](#) as Buddy. Who is Robert MacNaughton? He played Elliott's older brother Michael in [E.T. – The Extra-Terrestrial](#) . Oddly enough, I did remember the character's name although it was probably said no more than five times the entire movie.