

Just When You Thought It Was Over...

BAM!!! Winter returned earlier today with another blast. Not that we were expecting anything less since it is only approaching the end of February. I had rehearsal from 1-4 (4 being rather optimistic since I had to leave at 4.45 to be at work by 5). The drive over was rather problematic: snow covered road the entire 10 mile journey, but I did make it (did you expect anything less?). I arrived around noon to complete my costuming... THANK HEAVEN THAT IS DONE! Now, we just have to wait for my final outfit to arrive from the costume shop in Toledo opening week (hopefully it fits). But Grandpa is now fully clothed. The costume mistress made a wonderful, very astute comment. She told me that she knew that I had been a theatre veteran for two reasons: (1) my talent and (2) my security in dropping my pants without hesitation to try on costumes. Well... my security in the latter is limited to the costume room. I have yet to be cast in a role in which I have been required to drop my drawers (quite frankly, at present, that would cause a moments pause).

One of the highlights of today's rehearsal was the trolley. It is really going to be something. Not quite complete, but enough that it could be moved on and off stage. I must say that I was quite impressed with the organization and pace at which it was pushed on and off for one of the signature numbers of the show.

Grandpa's songs must have impressed... well, I was told that I could be heard. Unfortunately, the part that could be heard was harmony that was supposed to be mixed with Tootie and Agnes' melody line. I have often been told that one should never work with children or animals on stage. Funny thing is, I have never had reason to believe it. Wonder why?

Happily, the road back was snow clear for the most part although the wind was horrendous. But, who knows what tomorrow will bring.

Stalking Deer In St. Louis

Last night was the first night we have been on the Huber stage. I have been in the audience to watch a production of School House Rock, Jr (think I've mentioned that before). However, stepping onto the stage was something else entirely. An actual stage raised above the audience with an orchestra pit beneath. Even a balcony in the audience and a thrust stage. For being our first time on the stage, I thought it went really well. We did manage to plunder our way through Act 1.

When I was not needed on stage, I was in the costume room looking for costumes. I was enamored by the number of hats I found... everything from a fez, to a beret, to a genuine deerstalker which Sherlock Holmes himself would feel at home in. I just need to find a light, summery suit. Meet Me in St. Louis is set over the course of one full year so the actors on stage need to convey the change of seasons. There is a Halloween and a Christmas scene as well as summer and spring. Many costume changes. Every time I come on stage, I have at least one article of clothing unlike any other I wore previously. So... night one on a new stage was fun and inspiring. Different, not necessarily better, from the stages I have been on in the past few years ☐

One... Two... Three aaand One... Two... Three

Tonight's rehearsal was full of fun. We had a visitor from an area newspaper who may also be of help in the costuming area. She was there to discuss the show individually when we were not needed in a scene. "John Truitt" and I happened to be available at the same time (it was not the scene in which we are part of). As I introduced myself to the interviewer, "John" said "I know who you are. You look just like your brother." Apparently, the young man is a self-acclaimed nuisance to my oldest brother at school by dropping in on him quite frequently with computer problems. Knowing my brother quite well, I doubt if he sees the teenager as a nuisance.

Part of the fun was watching people attempt to waltz as well as trying to dance myself. Then, the real challenge came: waltzing and talking at the same time. At least I only have one line to remember while I dance. Hopefully, waltzing will come back to me on Sunday when the choreographer joins us.

I also found a lot of other humorous possibilities as well as some very quick costume changes... how fun THOSE will be.

Fun In A Different Costume Room

Tonight's rehearsal was extremely interesting and cut short because of our limited space. The stage was being used for final dress rehearsals for the production of [Steel Magnolias](#) going up this weekend. The community room in the building

(which has been used as our practice area prior to the stage opening up) was being used by another civic organization. Our final option was to use the costume room. On Sunday afternoon when I found out that this was where we would be practicing, I had to laugh. The WCCT costume facility is wall to wall, floor to ceiling, full of rods, shelves, totes, and boxes full of clothes with very little space to move around. Tonight, I walked into a room that was much larger and less packed with clothes. Maybe this was because it seemed that there was a fraction of the costumes present. There was still a limited amount of space.

Before we began, I met the young man who will be playing John Truitt, the “boy next door.” We have something in common: both of us are featured in a youtube video. And of course, this lead to the introduction by everyone’s favorite Liswathistani. This drew quite a reaction (a good reaction) from everyone there. I made sure to invite everyone to look up the video. “John” and “Grandpa” share one brief moment on stage together. One of the highlights of the evening was seeing “John” learn how take an on-stage punch from a girl. I had an experience taking an on-screen punch during a melodrama, In one performance, the hero’s fist actually collided with me... OOPS ☐ OOPS again, I took an on-STAGE punch.

By the time we had finished (early), we had blocked the largest scene in the musical and one smaller scene. Some good Grandpa moments in those scenes including a very lovely, tender moment with Esther... right before we do that thing that will be taught this weekend... looking forward to that ☐ .

I Get Ideas

Tonight was the first night that the fun began to take shape at rehearsals. Especially when you are with a new cast, it does take a few rehearsals to get acquainted. But I was greatly impressed with the two youngest girls who have for the most part memorized each of the songs they are part of at least in the first act.. "Tootie" has an adorable solo all to herself which is sure to be a crowd-pleaser. She also has a cute little choreographed ditty with sisters "Esther" and "Agnes." And the two young ladies looked great while the older sister admitted that she did not know the steps as well. But it really looked good for the second week of rehearsals.

As for GRANDPA, let me just say, the director has given me a very long leash from which to create the character and there is a lot to give character to. In fact, Mr. Prophater is in a scene with the young ladies in the family room in which he has no dialogue. I was quick to ask... what is he supposed to be doing? "You'll think of something." My eyes lit up and I felt a rather mischievous grin come upon my face. COOL

Given the fact that we were practicing in a very small music room in a church while the theatre was being used for another production, we had very limited space to choreograph our on stage movement but we managed to basically take a stab at entrances and minimal (dare I say) dancing. But I have some ideas during the title song to interact with the family octet.. pending director's approval of course. Guidelines: Grandpa is a rather eccentric old man. Lots of Possibilities.

New Venue... Same Drama

The other night before rehearsal really got started (before it was supposed to begin), I got a chance to become further acquainted with some of the people involved in the up-coming production of *Meet Me in St. Louis*. While the theatre and people involved may be different, one thing remains the same: the drama involved in operating a community theatre. The director for the musical described how she became the board's president after the previous head stepped down. She then made it known that she is the thorn in many a side. If I had not known better, I would say WCCT had changed faces and buildings. Then, "Lon" passed around invitations to an up-coming membership drive ("No thank you, one is enough for now... thanks" ☐).

We also discussed more on things that would be needed for Grandpa; particularly, the necessity of having multiple versions of the same item. A different one for each scene he is in (which is quite a few). How's that for cryptic? But for being the first week of rehearsals, I think it is going well... of course, we have yet to add an orchestra. I suggested that we do as a few Broadway shows have done recently, have the actors on stage play. I believe that recent productions of [Company](#) and [Sweeney Todd](#) have each had principal players playing instruments. I can see Grandpa Prophater blowing away on a tuba on stage when not singing.

Boomp, Boomp, Boomp

Tonight was the first rehearsal for *Meet Me in St. Louis* (Louis). I wondered how the Louis was to be pronounced (Louis

or Louie) and while reading the script it did not take long to discover which it was. In the very first scene, it is little precocious Tootie who makes it abundantly clear how it is. The first night was a rather informal introductory session between the "Smith Family Octet:" Tootie, Agnes, Lon, Rose, Esther, Mrs. Smith, Katie, and Grandpa Prophater. You will be able to see why Mr. Smith is not part of the group if you come and "meet me at the Fair." I tell you the music for the group will take some work as there is all kinds of out there harmonies, strange intervals, and KEY changes (the poor musicians). Definitely some work at the keyboard is called for, but we did manage to get through the first four songs of the show (three involving the ensemble and one featuring the lead, Esther). We may have to be careful because it seems that the title song is reprised throughout a great deal of the show.

As for Grandpa Prophater himself, I foresee a great deal of makeup. The actress playing my "daughter" while not OLD is more mature than I. I have yet to meet the "son-in-law". I think the young people portraying the children will be fun to work with. "Lon" looks like he could be a college freshman. "Esther" has a youthful appearance and a wonderful voice. The two youngest "Agnes" and "Tootie" seem like they will be able to charm audiences.

I'm not entirely sure what the director envisions for Grandpa's appearance but I am reminded of that wonderfully gifted character actor Nackvid Keyd whose sole cinematic credit was as Mr Dawes, Sr. in [Mary Poppins](#). I frequently catch myself playing, replaying, slo-moing, rewinding, and fast forwarding his appearance in the bank everytime I watch the movie. It seems like a rather dull time will be had by all (HEHEHEHE). **KIDDING OF COURSE!**

WHAT THE HUSK IS A RUSK?!

I'm glad you asked. A [rusk](#) is a rectangular, hard, dry biscuit or a twice baked bread, commonly called zwieback. These biscuits are often used in child weaning. They also, apparently, go quite well with garbanzos. The dish plays a pivotal and hilarious role in our fast approaching production of *The Nerd*. The cast had their first practice run through the entire piece tonight and except for about a page and a half being jumped over. It went EXTREMELY well. Although, a certain nephew of mine could stand to jump on his entrances a bit quicker. I'm not one to shirk blame since I was beside him and missed telling him of one of his upcoming moments. But for it being only his second time on stage, he is doing quite well.

I have failed to mention one of my cast mates from *Little Women* who has also had limited stage experience. She plays the role of Clelia Waldgrave, the dim bulbed wife of Warnock (Worncock, Ticky, Tocky, Tacky, whatever his name is) and mother of the precocious Thor. Clelia has some funny moments herself, not the least of which involves dishes.

One of my other favorite parts is played by that guy who has a name that reminds me of an omelet (not to worry Colorado). Axel is one of the characters who shares the secret of the show (to find out what the secret is you have to get your reservations in soon). Some of his on screen antics are sure to bring down the house. "Hideous pagan ritual" indeed.

So... just over a week to go before our production of [Larry Shue's](#) side-splitting comedy *The Nerd* makes its debut, be sure to [reserve your tickets soon](#).

Hiccups

With less than two weeks to go until opening night, I would say that our community theatre's production of [The Nerd](#) is coming along quite nicely. Today was the first rehearsal during which no scripts were allowed on stage. For the most part everything went rather smoothly, but of course there were those few "hiccups" as the director called them. But a large portion of the lines are so incidental that it is really difficult to time and memorize. There are lots of "What"s, "Excuse me"s, etc that may not seem important but as scripted they add so much to the humor of the piece. And pooooor Rick, I don't know how many times he has to explain the rules and procedures of a game called "SHOES AND SOCKS." One of his FAVORITE parts of the entire play along with his display of musical prowess. But once again, he is just indescribable.

The gentleman who is playing the role of Willum is also beginning to come into his own. He brings a nice sense of bewilderment to the scene. Not sure of what he should do under the circumstances he finds himself under; just trying to make everyone in his home (welcome or unwelcome) happy.

Tansy is growing as she finds herself trying to stand by her man but at the same time becoming really frustrated at Willum's ineptitude. She really is like a chicken running loose running from the kitchen to the living room. I would have a hard time remembering what I need to bring, when I need it, and when to bring it on stage. Just take a breath and do it. Above all CONFIDENCE.

So... only 12 more days till curtain. I know I am not going to be favored by all involved for counting days; but, I would be even more excited if I were on stage. Yet, I am beginning to

become secure in my role of helping make sure everything runs smoothly behind the stage (not totally... never that, but adequately so. More on the remaining cast later.

Requiem Aeternam

Good heavens this music is HARD!!! It isn't even the fact that it is written in Latin!! I have had enough vocal training to at least fumble through that. But the parts are just all over the place and some of the parts have notes that do not even make any kind of sense. Oh! Excuse me. I have been trying to practice this piece (*Fauvre's Requiem*) which I just had to say I would be part of during the sanctuary dedication at St. Patrick's Catholic Church . It is not to say that I do not enjoy it; it is sooo FRUSTRATING!!!! It is nearly impossible to practice on your own because listening to the CD is so hard finding when to come in and finding the right notes. I find myself at the piano just plucking the keys. At least last Sunday there were five tenors at rehearsal. I think it was actually easier to be around other singers who tried to sing the same part. While I was a student at Bowling Green State University, I performed in a presentation of *Verdi's Requiem* and that actually seemed easier. Perhaps the fact that the choir at B.G. was actually composed of men and women who more or less had a clue about how to perform it instead of throwing a bunch of people together made a difference. But I am sure that it will all come together in the next month. Especially after we get some bodies to fill the risers. Fifteen voices are not going to be heard over an orchestra. But, I have every confidence that it will be a great success.