

# Wrap Session

Well today was our finale for *You Have the Right to Remain Dead*. You just had to be there to understand how much fun the entire experience was. The show itself was brilliant but the cast was another memorable group to work with and I befriended a 4th grade boy who was one of our “plants” in the audience. Was it Saturday night when John exclaimed that he heard “gunshots fired... sounding like Pt-oo! Pt-oo!” Today, I KNOW it was him who nearly gave away the KEY clue to the entire show when he stated that instead of Harnell saying “Carefully” as he exited the stage he actually said “Careful, Leigh.” Yesterday, as I mentioned previously, an innocent member of the audience figured out the clue by herself which is understandable.

And yes, I played Harnell Chesterton, “Your narrator for our little bit of mayhem. A host to a muhdah as it were.” And I WAS the one who was murdered. I must tell you that the first few times I practiced being carted out in a wheelchair with my head down, eyes closed, and trying so hard NOT to move was some of the hardest times I have ever had on stage because some of the accents from the other characters and the lines are so funny that it was nearly impossible to not crack up. Then I am covered up and wheeled off the stage “with the rest of the props” (how degrading). The funny thing is... I never knew what position I would be in after the others are finished poking and prodding me to make sure I was indeed “dead.” This afternoon, I was so messed up that my head was dangling over the side so far that I could not possibly fit through the door frame. I attempted to slowly but unobtrusively straighten enough to be pushed off stage.

At the end of the show after the murderess is revealed, I am pushed back on stage still covered with the afghan (“You were knitting a dog?” a line that got a groan most performances). Last night, I tried to raise my arm and give a royal wave.

This did not work as, somehow, I became caught up and ended up bringing part of the door frame with me. I always did manage to have “Fat Daddy’s” hat on top of my head on top of the afghan.

[Justj](#) and his youngest were in the audience this afternoon on their way to Ft. Wayne. He knew from the outset that I would be the one murdered (or maybe he was hoping that I would be but “Don’t assume”). He however thought that the killer would be Blanche, the long suffering director who has had enough of Harnell’s “padding his part” by giving the audience insight on how to solve a murder. She very nearly gives the narrator the old hook treatment while he is giving his spiel from his box seat. I felt like both Statler and Waldorf but was not able to offer my sarcastic remarks to the play within the play. Instead, I read “Doris’s” book of Complete Shakespeare (usually the Scottish play beginning with the letter M that is considered bad luck to mention in a theatre).

Following the show this afternoon of course came the striking of the set. Travis and Mary came over after their Little Shop production was over. Then, the remaining cast and crew members enjoyed pizza and each others company. I have a really difficult time breaking away from a show; this one has been so much fun that I think it will take a bit longer.

Hopefully, I will not have to wait too long for the next show. In a few weeks, I do plan to return to the Huber to audition for *It’s A Wonderful Life*.

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## Two In One

Day two of three of the play saw both an afternoon matinee as well as an evening show. I am glad that we had the extra

performance so that some of my friends in the Little Shop cast could come and watch our show. I saw two of them, but the third must have been in a hurry to get out. Lucky [Mare](#) pretty well gave away the huge clue of the show during the audience participation part and she swore that she did not know but just used her deductive talents. However, the cast glossed over the revelation until the proper time.

Following the matinee, we walked to the nearby home of one of our youngest cast members who graciously hosted a cast party between shows. Ate some chili and other goodies. As a tip of the hat to the show, I took some donuts. Really fun time getting to know the cast further. Great times and we played some Apples to Apples.

I think our best audience so far was tonight's crowd and not just because I had quite a few family members and friends who are like family. And I got a gift bag! Erasable highlighters... very cool with two bottles of Coke Zero and a can of Lay's Chips. And a surprise guest that I did not see coming... Cathy DUKES! THANKS ALL! Extremely easy to perform for an audience who is really receptive and participates. I REALLY like these shows. A small faux pas, I was responsible for some minor set damage, but we won't get into that.

Tomorrow, the wrap up but like I said in a previous post... "whenever one door closes, another is soon to open."

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## Something Creaky This Way Comes

Tonight was opening night for *You Have the Right to Remain Dead* and what an opening it was. For a Friday night during

football season with many homecoming games going on, I thought the crowd was a decent size and it is very difficult to fill every seat in the venue. I still cannot say enough how gorgeous and amazing it is to be on the jewel of a stage. Both times I have been in shows at the Huber I have been spoiled.

I thought that among the best moments were some of the sound effects. There are many great effects that heighten the atmosphere of the show and tonight we had the heater going. Not to worry, because I was for a bit. Everyone I talked to in the audience thought the noise was part of the show... including a few friends who had a great time playing "whodunit." The entire audience seemed to get into the participation act but it could have started a bit sooner. And we were promised that the noise from the heater would be addressed.

Following the show while shedding my costume and persona of Harnell Chesterton, I learned that one of my castmates is a Red Sox fan (I won't hold that against him). My Yankee coat was hanging on a hangar and Alex noticed it and we each offered our condolences to each other. By the way, the Bombers are up 2-0 in the ALDS after beating the Twins 4-3 in 11 innings.

And I think I have made a new friend who has found out about my sterling personality. the director warned me to watch myself or she would find something to throw at me during the show. What is it that I do... honestly?

I think I have found a new favorite show that will be really hard to leave when Sunday's matinee is over. I think this will be number 3 replacing Rooster and right behind Donnie and "you-know-who."

Lets see... 14 hours 52 minutes to go...and counting.

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# I'm Lovin' It!

No, not McDonald's but the feeling this day always brings. Not sleeping much the night before (I think I finally got down about 3 this morning and slept until about 9). I watched Superman: The Movie to further unwind. I got up totally rested, totally excited, read my pal's blog post sending wishes to Travis, Mary, and I in our respective shows. Break a leg guys! I don't know even how to describe the feeling or if everyone gets the same as a show opening approaches, but it is TREMENDOUS! Giddy as a school boy (to coin a phrase) kind of feeling with a bit of the butterflies which is no more than the adrenaline and excitement building until that moment when the curtain rises and you have an audience looking up at you. So... in the next 5 hours and 52 minutes I will TRY to relax just a little, look over my lines a bit (as I always do) get to the theatre (maybe even before the director, herself), NO makeup (!!!!!). WOO HOO!

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## Final Dress

Yes, tonight was the final dress rehearsal for [You Have the Right to Remain Dead](#). We had a few snags but nothing that will prevent us from having an AWESOME opening night tomorrow. We were instructed to come home, get a good night's sleep, relax tomorrow (glad I have the day off), and look over our lines. Very sound advice from a first time director who has done a sensational job! I love directors who just let the actors do their thing and offer critiques when they are needed

AFTER the rehearsal is completed. Just another fantastic experience!

NOW my little pitch: to all of you readers who are planning to attend [\*Little Shop of Horrors\*](#) PLEASE do so. My request is this: the show I am in runs THIS WEEKEND ONLY (four shows, one Friday, two Saturday shows, and one Sunday matinee). *Little Shop* has a total of 7 performances over two weekends (one of which I WILL BE attending... three good friends in the cast notwithstanding). So you have ample opportunity to enjoy both because they are both excellent shows. Ok.. plug over.

After tonight's rehearsal, I came home and watched an EXCELLENT movie. I can only say this without giving away the whole movie because there is sooooo much to tell. *Inside Man* in a nutshell features a powerhouse cast of two Academy Award winners (Denzel Washington and Jodie Foster) plus the talented Clive Owen and Christopher Plummer. Of the plot, I will say that it concerns the perfect bank heist. Never boring and has many layers and intricacies. I find that cooling down from the excitement of the evening before a show opens is best spent indulging in not so ordinary things. I will watch the shows I have DVRed(?) at a later date.

Once again, I have had the pleasure of working with new cast members (I have now worked with TWO Heffelfinger guys) and once again ventured out into another fantastic venue! Thanks everyone.

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## Here There Be Trekkers

Tonight was our first dress rehearsal complete with newspaper reviewer and minus one key character from the production... UGH! I dunno... week of opening with 4 rehearsals to go and one

of the major cast members is at a meeting but I guess it must have been important. So we had a fill-in read lines from the audience. The reviewer for the Crescent is very personable and has been exceptionally favorable in a few of the WCCT shows he has critiqued and the first show I was in with the Village Players. He even quoted a line from a review of one of my characters: "A gleefully unrepentent psycho" or something like that. He must have remembered seeing *Grease*?

Before we began, the subject of *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* was addressed by Mr. Greer. Particularly, the *Enterprise's* fly over, around, and into the behemoth ship that took what seems an eternity to sit through. We then focused on the number of Trek fans in the cast of which there are many. The youngest female in the cast is named Katherine Janeway after the first female character to lead a Star Trek television series as captain of the *U.S.S. Voyager*. Another has a husband who has thousands of Trek books. I used to read the novels from time to time but have since lost track unless there is a really special one.

A third really got my interest soaring. It seems that she is a relative of DeForest Kelley (R.I.P) who played my personal favorite character of all Trekdom: the inscrutable, crusty, curmudgeonly Dr. Leonard H. "Bones" McCoy. She, however, did not inherit the searing blue "Kelley eyes" as her brother had.

Ok... back to the rehearsal. I think that with the absence of one of our actors, it went awfully well. Hopefully, this will be the LAST time we are minus a performer. But how fun was that to discover something new about so many in our small cast? Hopefully, our kindly reviewer does not print TOO much about the murder mystery in his article... no spoilers. As soon as I see it, I will make note of it in another post.

3 Days, 22 Hours and counting...

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# Putting It Together... Again

The title seems vaguely familiar so, I added to it. The next week will be exciting, nerve wracking, late, but overall great fun. The week leading up to the performance. The cast and crew got a taste of that this evening when the elaborate effects were added for the first time. There are many light cues and sound effects throughout the play. It took a bit of time to get them all set up so we got started with the rehearsal a bit later than usual which was fine with all involved. We would have to do it eventually anyway. It gave those of us on stage a chance to reminisce about some of the worst movies ever made. Bo Derek in the blockbuster movie [Tarzan the Ape Man](#) was tossed out. Honestly, I have never seen that version of the legend. Some mentioned that Ms. Derek's role in the feature *10* was better since her role was nothing more than running along the beach. Has anyone seen the (I imagine) horror classic, [Basket Case](#)? Me, neither. Finally, we did get to the Ed Wood classic [Plan 9 From Outer Space](#) which I have seen and I agree with most critics in saying that IT IS the worst movie ever made. However, I still think it is hard to beat the original holiday classic [Santa Claus Conquers the Martians](#).

Finally, about a half-hour late, we did get through the show with only minor trouble. However, with still a few rehearsals left, I'm sure it will be all good. At least we did not wait until Sunday to put it all together. The rain outside also added a new dimension of intrigue.

I just learned that if you are interested in attending a performance (October 9-11), you may now make reservations on-line through the following [link](#)



Ah, the excitement is building!

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## 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! MWAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA! 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.