

My Stage Debut, Sort of...

Well, ok, so last Sunday wasn't really my stage *debut*; I acted in about 4 stage plays when I was a kid, and three quarters of those roles were in The Wizard of Oz ☐

But somewhere along the line, I developed a severe stage fright, and I haven't come close to the front of a stage since I auditioned (and wasn't chosen) for the part of Thor in The Nerd in 1990. I've worked in many various capacities behind the scenes and on the members' boards for a few of our local community theater groups in recent years, and if ever someone was brave enough to inquire, I would always reject and adamantly refuse the offers of roles to be portrayed onstage in front of an audience – just way too nervous, and I've actually had many a nightmare about having to get onstage!

But a few weeks ago, my husband and I became involved in our church's semi-annual Kidstuff, which is a small collection of skits and musical numbers aimed at instilling a virtue in its audience, this time being 'compassion'. So my husband was rehearsing for Kidstuff, and I was tagging along to rehearsals as I usually do when he is in a play. I was asked by the director (who is also the school nurse in my two oldest daughters' school district) if I would "just stand there and hand out prizes" during one of the skits. Always being willing to help providing it doesn't get in the way of my family life, I obliged, and next thing I know I am a character complete with a name, Fran Hootenhiener! So I guess you could say it was my stage debut as an adult! The director was right though, I really just had to stand there during one of the skits and hand out cookies, but I even had an introduction by the extremely handsome game show host (my real-life husband) where I had to smile and even give a little wave to the audience while I showed off my cookie prizes. I was incredibly nervous beforehand, but I got through it without fainting or doing anything really embarrassing like throwing

the cookies at someone or dropping my tray. I think it helped that 90% of the audience was kids and also that our little show had a more divine purpose than simple entertainment. It was quite a different experience to work with a cast and crew who were coming together to teach kids a virtue versus a community theater production where the goal is to entertain paying adults. Not that one is better; it's just a matter of personal preference, I think, and it helped me to be less nervous.

And I think this experience helped me for what was to come last night... because of the weather, the two other small group leaders for the 7th grade girls at youth group were unable to make it, so I was in charge of ALL the 7th grade girls last night! It went better than I thought, even though I really don't like to be the one in charge of a group. But, such is life, and I'm just happy I didn't know about it until we arrived last night otherwise I would have been a nervous wreck all day. And the youth pastor's face when he told me I was the only teacher who could make it was just priceless, haha!

I'm not saying I will ever get on stage again, but for this one time, I actually had some fun!