

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!!!

I'm Sure It Will Be Fine

Well.. less than two weeks to go! I can't believe how difficult it has been to find two female voices to join me in a few numbers not to mention an accompanist. Well... I have the pianist after losing two when the date had to be changed a couple of times. At today's rehearsal, I practiced in the sanctuary of the church which houses my instructor's new studio. Very nice for the most part. K even got to sit in the pews and really critique and I was even pleased with

MOST of the selections. She had very few notes on all but one song that was a virtual train wreck. We got through each of the pieces except for one in about a half hour. We ran out of time before getting to the final piece. Not the final piece as I am being accompanied by guitar on my opening piece (something new for me but I think will work nicely) as well as my finale which is going to have **NO accompaniment!** I also am considering the possibility of videoing the evening. If anyone is willing, then I would be open to the possibility as a few of my wonderful friends are either unable or unsure if they are able to come. I would also be open to an encore if I hadn't already paid \$80 to my pianist... reality check from my school days when I had to pay one for each lesson ;). In any case, if all goes well I would not be against the idea of doing a new set down the road... maybe More Songs I Have Learned. Followed by Even More Songs I Have Learned. And Still More Songs I Have Learned. NAH... I think more creative names would be in order.

Blessings

We always knew that we were blessed with our 5 healthy babies, but the reality of how blessed we really were is beginning to sink in. Our first 4 children were very easy, content, healthy babies, so our 5th child, Luke, has rocked our world a little bit. He has always been an intense baby; very energetic, playful, sleepless, alert and specific about his wants and needs. But during the past few months, he's been sick as well, so the poor little guy is having trouble being comforted. We've taken him to the doctor a few times, and he's been diagnosed with bronchitis and an ear infection. As if these illnesses were not enough, his chest x-rays show he has an enlarged heart. We are currently praying that this is

not a symptom of something seriously wrong with little Luke's health. My husband made me promise not to google it since we've made a few medical scares in our family worse by scaring ourselves with random internet information. We are currently waiting for our appointment with the pediatric cardiologist. Scary stuff.

I will continue to update when I can. In the meantime, prayers for Luke would be wonderful ☐

THAT's more like it!

For the 25th anniversary celebration of Broadway's longest running musical, a special performance of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera* was presented at London's Royal Albert Hall. This fully staged extravaganza was filmed for release on video; however, it was also released to a select number of movie houses throughout the world. Over the course of the next month or so, the special is highlighting Great Performances on PBS. Last night, I DVR'd the event and began watching it after I returned from work. **WOW!** Totally made me forget the totally lifeless movie released a few years ago! This actually made me feel as if I were in the audience front row. When actually in a live audience, I have always had the opportunity to see the action from afar taking in the scope and beauty of the theatrical setting without seeing all the nuance of the performers. The filmed rendition allows the viewer to really watch the actors on stage. During *The Music of the Night*, you can actually see the Phantom "pulling the strings (or chains)" that Christine wears as he places her under his hypnotic spell. Of course, after the magnificent piece, the station had one of their pledge drive breaks... somehow I knew that would be one of the high points at which

they would interrupt programming. No wonder it was on for a good 3.5 hours!

Filmed stage productions are a funny thing. They either work by drawing you in and holding your attention or fail in some degree. I recently watched the Angela Lansbury version of *Sweeney Todd*. Honestly, no matter how hard I tried I could not get into it. I guess that the process in which filming events such as these has changed in the last 30-40 years. The Phantom experience was so different because the audience seemed to be part of the show. I guess that makes sense since the show is set in a theatrical venue. I am looking forward to watching the rest of the show (even with the breaks).

It has been a long time.

I guess it has been a while since I've posted anything here. I guess I've been a bit lax at keeping up anything resembling a blog. Life has been a bit busy recently.

Life seems to get in the way of my random thinking. I guess that right now my original purpose for writing this blog has not been needed. My mind doesn't seem to require a weekly emptying. So I guess I will be taking this blog in a new direction. As soon as I figure out exactly what that direction is, I will continue to blog.

I will keep you posted...

Putting It All Together

Well... with just a little over three weeks to go, I FINALLY tracked down a capable accompanist who is not going to bail on me. This morning, we met at the studio and it sounded great (even if my accompanist was doing little more than sight reading). While K did a fine job of playing for me, it allowed very little time for her to focus on what I was doing and what to critique. Happily, she had very little to comment on except for a few spots I KNEW could have been better.

Usually the first time hearing the full accompaniment for a piece (rather long... let me see... 11), makes me a bit apprehensive especially when I'm not sure of the pianist's ability. But as I have been taught over and over the best ones will follow you and BOY did he ever! I think the addition of the full accompaniment only enhanced many of the pieces. I can't wait to hear what the final product will produce!

"Songs I Have Learned" is going to be bookended by two (what I feel are) more inspirational pieces. A bunch of fun character-driven tunes (my favorite kinds) and some emotional ballads will comprise the remainder of the set that will be divided into two. Each of the songs hold a special place in my heart a lot of which I will share.

Yesterday at work, I was approached by a customer who had just come from the theatre's revival of *Esanaba in da Moonlight*.

She had heard in the intro to the show that I would be presenting a show on March 16th. I definitely will need to attend Saturday night's show (an extended night) to see if this was so... not that I had not planned to see it before, just haven't found an open date on my calendar. I was asked if I would be interesting in performing at a special ceremony commemorating the 100th anniversary of Clem (the Civil War statue that was injured a few years ago in the "microburst" that destroyed our village hall). The service is scheduled

for Memorial Day following the ceremony at the cemetery. I said I would be happy to and to keep me informed of the details.

Speaking of hometown events, the Boys' High School Basketball team has completed its regular season. **A PERFECT 20-0 record!!!** The first time in school history! I have not been to a game in many seasons and I do kind of miss them. Perhaps, I will be able to make one of the games on the tournament trail. We shall see.

A Gift from God?





Heaven is for real. Absolutely true. But is this story for real? Did Colton Burpo really go to Heaven and meet Jesus, his great grandfather, and his sister who died in a miscarriage? Does the painting made by a girl who has had visions from God and confirmed by Colton to be accurate really depict the likeness of the second person of the Trinity? There were a couple of things in his account that troubled me, but I think you will be doing yourself a disservice not to pick this book up at your library or bookstore, read it for yourself, and make your own judgment. Be sure to click on the images for more information on the Burpos and on the girl behind the painting.

Songbird

Yes, as you may have guessed I am adding my own thoughts on the music of one Whitney Houston. Saturday evening, I received a text from my cousin asking me if I had heard of Whitney's passing. Right after reading the message, I checked out the hub of social activity and sure enough there were already 20 posts devoted to the diva. Growing up in the 80s, I was lucky enough to have lived to see and hear the infectious music of two powerhouse phenomenons: both of them are gone. However, they each left an indelible mark on the music world that still has yet to be surpassed. In the 1980s, Ms. Houston shared a stat of having 7 number one singles in a row! Not only was she a pop diva but frequently returned to her gospel roots with such notable entries as the soundtrack to her film *The Preacher's Wife*.

The 1990s was also a high point for Whitney with the monstrous

film and soundtrack to *The Bodyguard* which featured a cover of Dolly Parton's "I Will Always Love You" as well as performing what is arguably the finest performance of the National Anthem of any Super Bowl. Who else can claim to have had their version played on radio stations across the country weeks after it was presented?

Say what you will about the tragic life outside the music. I choose to leave that for the tabloid mongers. Anyone who lived during the 80s-90s can name at least one Whitney Houston song. Like it or lump it, her music is infectious whether it be a hit pop ditty that makes you want to get up and dance (With somebody who loves me) or a powerful torch song. OH... and lest I forget, she served as the Executive Producer and Fairy Godmother on a multi-ethnic version of a televised version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella*.

My favorite Houston's song is a duet with Jermaine Jackson that I do not believe was a major hit. I only discovered it as part of a Greatest Hits compilation more than a few years ago.

And her remarkable Anthem from 1991:

She could have so over done this but chose to keep it straight and simple and is all the more powerful for it. Thank you Whitney!

Repentance, revival, and a whole lotta fun

RING* *RING* *RING

Yawn, time to get up already? Hey wait- it's not wakeup time! I distinctly remember setting my alarm for 7:25- it's only 6! Thanks junior leader- I know we didn't want a repeat of last year (no alarm went off, late for breakfast...) but this is a tad ridiculous... Guess what readers? He didn't even wake up- right back to sleep after I nudged him and told him his alarm went off. Let me clarify. ***He*** went back to sleep, I just lay there for the next hour... I don't think I'm the only one who didn't get back to sleep after the false alarm, but at least whoever else awakened they kept quiet. So, 7:25 rolled around and most of us got up. There was only one who didn't, and that is always a fun thing. No, no buckets of water. Can't have **that** much fun. ☐ Only one though, so again, not as much fun as it could have been.

Breakfast was great- eggs, bacon, sausage, I think there were pancakes? Starting to forget- good thing this is only two parts. They even had hot sauce out for the eggs- they know me well! Session 2- starting with a few Angry Birds shorts. Wait- Angry Birds is a 'toon now? Have I been under a rock? Anyway, find a bunch of them at [RovioMobile on Youtube](#). Here's one as a sample- they are in hi-def too, so change the quality and go full-screen with it!

Annnnnnd- we lost. I believe I said last time we didn't win any of the minute games, so you already knew this. Oh, well. Moving on, we worshiped and our family pastor gave part two of the lesson. We didn't focus much on the prayer in chapter two so much as what it meant- Jonah repented. Still miraculously alive in the fish, he went to his knees (figuratively I'm sure- not much room in a fish I wouldn't think...) and communed with God. In the end, as you probably know already, the fish (relieved I'm sure) spat him up onto land and so ends the chapter. Small group discussion back in the cabin and then-game time! Plinko (isn't that trademarked by a famous pricing game show?) in the lot- oh wait. The snow caused a change. Instead we played snow soccer. Not much to say here- one ball, then two, three, large balls, giant earth ball... I'll let your mind play this one out. Unfortunately halfway through someone caused the earth ball to deflate, meaning when we switched games with the other two teams they sadly didn't get to use it. We switched to acquire the tire- a steal-the-bacon game where there were inner-tubes (alas, I don't think 10-and-11-year-olds could handle actual tires- something about the weight of them...) ranging in size from small car to tractor, and point values from 50 to 1000. The big tractor tire was of course the 1000-pointer (how many kids would it take to lift a tractor tire? Good thing they were just inner tubes!). All they had to do was drag it over their line, with kids from the other team latched on to the other side of it dragging it in the opposite direction. Easy, right? ☐

Lunch time- the expected chicken nuggets and mac & cheese. This reminds me of a couple years ago when I was sure the mac and cheese was really mac and yellow food coloring, but the last couple years it was definitely pretty good. I still long for BBQ sauce to dip the nuggets in, but ketchup was fine. After lunch was cabin rest- wait, no it wasn't- this wasn't summer camp nor was it Michigan despite the constant references to cabins (classrooms, really), so we were allowed to treat the kids as if they were in a workhouse if we wanted

to. Okay, not really, but there was no cabin rest. Just straight to session 3: revival. Chapter 3 of Jonah started the story again, this time he entered Ninevah and gave them the warning from God. Much to Jonah's dismay Ninevah was repentant and God withheld judgment. Chapter 4 expounds on this more, but that was the 4th session which no one was there for since they had gone home. That's right, there was no fourth session. Revival was a good note to exit on, right? Following a good up-front game, good worship, excellent teaching, and very productive small group time was the next team game involving giant slingshots and fla-vor-ice popsicles. Last year the only goal was to get the popsicles on the roof, but this year they put up a giant target. They could go for the roof as well, but the biggest points were the bullseye and... the pastor. That's right, our pastor came out a couple of times and made himself a target worth double the points of the bullseye. I think the other team grazed him, but no direct hits that I could tell. Maybe the other two teams fared better. Or maybe he walked off a happy pastor. ☐

The other game was inside and improved from last year- an ice-block relay. The kids got to ride a large ice block to the other side of the gym and back. It was improved as they made the blocks thicker this year so they didn't fall apart after extended use. I think a couple teams last year had to switch to scooters toward the end. Extra points were given after awhile if they rode superman-style, on their bellies with arms held out in front like flying through the air. Leaders had a turn as well. Same with the tire game earlier- I forgot to mention it.

After the games we cleaned out our cabins so the younger kids could use them during church later and not have to work around backpacks and sleeping bags, then we had free time. Not so free, just the appearance of free. That is, they were free to play the games within their assigned area. There were six areas. Really, five- they tried to separate the games in one

of the rooms, but we just let them play whatever they wanted instead- they were the games in the room they play every weekend so they already knew what they liked and what they didn't. The gym had the best games- a return of gaga-ball in a less-permanent court than at camp, and they got to play nine-square this time. On the other side was the explosive volleyball-like game of nuke-em. Look up my summer camp recap for explanations of all of these. The final room consisted of crafts, karaoke, and board games. Okay, scratch karaoke- apparently they didn't actually have it though the schedule showed it. Oh, well. The boys were only in there 15 minutes before dinner was called anyway, clever scheduling on the church's part as this is a less interesting thing for boys generally. The girls got a shortened weekend-games room time, but everyone got the full half-hour of gym time.

The end is drawing near. Dinner time with spaghetti, a video, then parents arrived for a short recap, worship time, and closing ceremony with the announcement of the winner- the team we played against all the Saturday games. The original idea (did I mention this already?) was to play against two different teams (Friday night was a four-team game), but the way they did the cabins that would have pitted boy-strong teams against girl-strong teams so we wound up playing the team that was most in line with ours. To clarify, there were three cabins that made up each team unlike summer camp where we had four. Two teams had two boy-cabins and one girl-cabin. Vice-versa for the other two teams. I would like to add that moi noticed the absence of the big song from summer, which became one of my favorites, and made a special request to do it since, after all, this was an extension of summer camp. The worship team practiced Like a Lion during the afternoon and had it ready for this closing worship time. Kudos to the band for that.

With the closing ceremony over, all that was left was to part ways. We moved to the gym and the parents claimed their

.
. .
. .
. .
. .
. .
. .
. .

Okay, one last bit. I tend to avoid naming people and places and whatnot, but my church makes these videos public and I only have about two readers (partly my own fault I know) so I will just go ahead and link to the official video online. Now you don't have to imagine much of what I wrote- does the video hold up to your imaginations? ☐ No, you won't get to see me on the ice block, so keep on imagining. ☐ Careful eyes will spot me a couple times though... Sadly, no HD version. ☐

[vimeo]<https://vimeo.com/36104897>[/vimeo]

And hey, nice song they used! Adventurous people may find summer camp videos as well...