

Classic Sherlock Holmes Tale Told

Last weekend, we drove some 200 miles on Friday night, which culminated in rush hour in Chicagoland. Saturday was go-go-go, but no complaints here since we got to see Jack Hanna's stage show, something I have been waiting over a decade to see! After a (much too) short visit with family, we were on the road again late Saturday night, and traveled the 200+ miles back home again, arriving about 2am. We got up early for church, and with my blurry tired eyes, I carefully went over my lesson plan for my 1st grade Sunday school class since I was anticipating a special guest. I'm happy to report that my class went off without a hitch, so thank God for answering my prayers – after leaving it in God's hands, I was not even nervous about it, which speaks volumes if you know me and my ability to let my nervousness get to me!!

So needless to say, by Sunday night, I was wiped. But I had been asked by some friends to attend the special press night of their stage play, the Sherlock Holmes mystery *The Hound of the Baskervilles* to write a review for our local paper. I happily obliged, especially because seeing the show on this particular night helped our finding-a-babysitter situation. I didn't know how I would like a Sherlock Holmes stage play as I had never found the books entertaining. But I was entertained by the show, so I decided to put my review on my blog since some of my readers won't be able to see it in the paper. Note that each actor brought something unique to the show, but I was unable to include rambling accounts of each individual performance due to spacial limitations. If you are anywhere near Hicksville Ohio this weekend, I hope the following review will make you want to stop by the Huber Opera House to enjoy a great autumn mystery on stage!

From the Bryan Times – Thursday, October 14, 2010:

HICKSVILLE – While the leaves fall outside, an early darkened evening or a chilly autumn afternoon spent taking in a live stage play is especially enjoyable while viewing a chilling mystery.

This weekend, the historic Huber Opera House in Hicksville comes alive with a classic Sherlock Holmes whodunit, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Join the Hicksville Village Players this weekend as Holmes, Watson, and other curious characters guide you through the tale of the hound that haunts the halls of the Baskervilles. Intended for the audience to piece together, the show is a puzzle whose clues are carefully and individually laid out by the intriguing cast of characters.

Sherlock Holmes, the know-it-all yet admirable mystery-solver is extraordinarily portrayed by Bill Murphy. The audience is held captive while Holmes connects clues between puffs of his pipe. Nicely complementing Murphy's natural Holmes as the ever-faithful, always reliable assistant Watson is Travis Heffelfinger of Hicksville. Heffelfinger's Watson is dependable and sharp-witted, and he is observant enough to attain the job of Holmes' eyes and ears while protecting their client, Henry Baskerville. John Robinson of Bryan portrays Henry, a man who is fearful for his safety while he remains inquisitive as he tries to deduce who – or what – might have murdered his uncle. Providing clues and distractions alike for the famed detective are Dr. James Mortimer (Corey Fowler) and Beryl Stapleton (Lindsay Clem).

Once the investigation carries Holmes and the audience away from Baker Street and into the isolated countryside, strange stories are spun of murder, mayhem, thievery, and betrayal. Around the mysterious moor, the secrets begin to spill, and it becomes apparent that the odd collection of characters might not be as they appear. The audience joins Holmes as he tries to figure out if either the peculiar Mr. Stapleton (compellingly played by John Overberg of Montpelier) or the lady-like Laura Lyons (depicted elegantly by Courtney

Widdifield) can be trusted. Can Holmes' client, Henry Baskerville, presume that the keepers of Baskerville Hall, The Barrymores (persuasively illustrated by Jamy Shaffer of Edgerton and Amber Garza of Antwerp) are truthful witnesses? Why, "It's elementary, my dear Watson!"

*In the atmosphere of the historic Huber Opera House, the wonderfully directed *The Hound of the Baskervilles* will transport you back to 19th century London and directly to Baker Street with Sherlock Holmes himself. The curtain opens Friday and Saturday nights, October 15 and 16 at 7:30pm and on Saturday and Sunday afternoons at 2:30pm on October 16 and 17.*

You Cain't Say No to OKLAHOMA! by Jamiahsh

Yes, my first byline appeared in today's local newspaper.

VERY exciting and fun how it came about. Last Thursday, I received an email asking if I would like to go an review the local production of *OKLAHOMA!*. The extremely talented regular reviewer of theatrical productions was unavailable for press night. The fact that he is also the president of the board for the non-profit theatre group also might have played a role. So, I quickly replied and was really excited about the opportunity.

Just prior to the beginning of my voice lesson, I hear my cell phone ring (and no it is no longer what I was informed was the theme to "Sex and the City..." never seen either the tv show... or the movie). I quickly got the details... time was the most important thing, the rest I pretty much figured out on my own.

A small town community theatre needs positive feedback from

the media. These are not paid professionals performing here.

As I have said before, the show is not one of my favorites for many reasons... chief among them is the length. However, I am pleased to say that [Fountain City Festival's](#) performance was top notch. It was very easy to mention all of the principal actors and a few of the veterans who have been involved in the eleven shows the group has produced (two of which I have been in).

The production team decided to remain totally faithful to Rodgers and Hammerstein's original. So faithful that only 8 measures of the score were dropped. Everything gelled nicely; the acting, singing, orchestra, set, costuming, and choreography were all superb. Where most groups may drop such moments as the Dream Ballet for the benefit of time or the lack of decent dancers, the sequence was included and it was extraordinary. In fact, all of the big dance numbers were high energy and very engaging. All of the performers on stage (from Curly all the way to the cameo performers) remarkably brought their roles to life. The director also was involved on stage... very fun. He surely had a lot of help from his production team. I have also worked with the vocal director and pit conductor in the past.

While there was a lot of good to put in the review, it was hard to put into a coherent article. Who wants to read a review containing the same adjectives over and over. I had to put in a bit of the history... which was easy for the show which kicked off the modern musical... as well as enough of the plot to engage anyone who might not know the show. Plus be kind to everyone involved. Finally... shortly after 1AM Friday morning (about the same amount of time it took for the entire show), I forwarded a copy. It only took a three editions of the paper to see the light of day. It could have stood a bit of editing to reflect the show dates. I just hope no one tries to attend a performance tonight.

So.... anyone in the area who wants to see a great performance

of the most classic of modern musicals... check out the remaining shows this weekend. Just forget how dated the material is. I do think there is an audience for these light-hearted shows. And as the banner on the website says: Professional Quality Theatre in Northwest Ohio. And another piece to add to my resume! Right up there with a little television performance.

All In The Family

Ok, OK, **OK!!!!** Some people may get sick of me talking about this (hopefully not many) but for the past month the [Bryan Times](#) (a newspaper in rural Northwest Ohio) has had a feature entitled "The Love of My Life." Various people have commented on their spouses, families, other people, and a few have described activities they enjoy. While I have yet to find that special female, I would find it very difficult to distance myself from the theatrical world. There is just something so magical about stepping onto a stage and transporting an audience into another place and time and allowing them to see into that world for a brief moment. I believe that the goal of any performer should be to entertain. However, there are times when the people on stage have the power to move and to educate an audience.

The magic of theatre is not limited to the performance. The sense of camaraderie people feel who have been in multiple shows together creates a sense of family. There is set building, set unbuilding, rehearsals, show planning committies, and countless other aspects of preparation to undertake. Most important of all (well... maybe not) come the parties!!!!!! There does not even need to be a reason to have a party just a chance to get together and play games (Balderdash

is a good game, “spizzerinctum” anyone?). The spizzerinctum at the party emitted a very strange odor. I dunno... can spizzerinctum have an odor? Yes, but of course.

But no matter if you are willing to stand upon a stage in front of 10 or 10,000 audience members, work behind the scenes, or just sit in the audience there is always a place for everyone in the theatrical family. Not all of us can paint a wall and make it look pretty.