

Meet Me In St. Louis

I've certainly heard of the musical Meet Me In St. Louis, especially being a fan of the late great Judy Garland, but I had never before seen it until last night. A great friend played the role of Grandpa, and we were delighted to have the opportunity to watch him age some 40 years and to be able to return to the stage.

First, I'll begin with the venue. The play was performed in a historical building in Hicksville, Ohio called the Huber Opera House. As I learned in the director's introduction before the show, the Huber was originally built by a wealthy man who wanted a place to stage-test his plays between Chicago and New York; I'm thinking some time in the late 1800's; not exactly sure on that. I do know that one of their stage curtains was created right around the time Meet Me in St. Louis takes place – 1903-04, and the gorgeous curtain depicting angels in a boat was hanging last night in all it's glory. The Huber is simply gorgeous. I especially enjoyed seeing the pictures of it from the 1990's and how far it's come since then. The owner of it at that time decided to trash the place when he found out he was going to lose it, and trash it he did. The place was an utter disaster; they even went so far as to rip one of the opera balconies from the wall. Apparently downtown Hicksville was not a place you wanted to be after dark at that time (coming from the 'burbs of Chicago, that's particularly amusing to me – I mean, Hicksville Ohio dangerous? Yeah right!), and the city wanted the Huber torn down. Some very dedicated individuals earned a lot of money and worked their butts off to restore it and give us back the beautiful theater it is today – and I was lucky enough to be able to see a show in it.

As for the show itself, I will say that Meet Me in St. Louis will never be one of my favorite musicals. The cast and crew of this particular production did a wonderful job, but I just

can't identify with a cast of characters who randomly break into song at the strangest moments and whose greatest conflicts in life include relocating and deciding who to take to the local dance. That being said, I still had a great time. I really enjoyed being transported back in time, and it was both interesting and refreshing to see how much respect children had for their elders back then. My friend Jamy was awesome as Grandpa, and I don't think I'm being biased. He definitely stood out as one of the better singers, and I was even surprised to see that Grandpa Smith is a much better dancer than Morat Notboratnichkov – one of the other characters I've seen Jamy portray on stage. The little girls in the play were simply adorable, and adding to the fun of the evening was bumping into a couple of friends whom we didn't know were going to be there. Overall, a fun evening out away from the kids, and I even learned a thing or two, which I'll share below. Congratulations Jamy on a job well done!

Random Meet Me in St. Louis Trivia

- Ice cream cones and cotton candy were introduced at the 1904 World's Fair which was in St. Louis. I thought it was really neat that they chose to serve these as intermission refreshments last night at the Huber.
- The 1944 movie Meet Me in St. Louis starred Judy Garland, but at first she refused the role because she was tired of taking childish roles. After a talk with director Vincente Minnelli, she was convinced to take the role of Esther Smith, and it became one of the favorites of her career. Judy and Vincente got married and had a daughter, Liza Minnelli, who went on to become an award winning actress and singer; earning an Oscar, a lifetime achievement Grammy, two Tonys, and an Emmy award throughout her career.
- Two single recordings from the movie Meet Me in St. Louis became hits by Judy Garland before the movie was even released: The Trolley Song and Have Yourself a Merry Little

Christmas.

– During the shooting of the large dinner scene (where one of the older sisters receives a long distance call from her beau in New York), Margaret O'Brien caused mischief on the set. She would change the cutlery around and put two napkin rings beside a plate. The prop man would say, "Please, Maggie dear," when he would liked to have shaken her.

Meet Me In St. Louis, Louis

WOW. I was totally amazed today by a phone call I received from my brother. He works at a nearby school in a town in which their local [community theatre](#) is having auditions for their production of [Meet Me in St. Louis](#). The director asked him if he thought I would like to audition so he called me at noon to ask. The call was brief so I did not get to ask a lot of detailed questions but enough to know that I am excited about the opportunity. How the director knew me, I do not know but something tells me that big brother had something to do with it.

I know very little about the stage production, but have seen the Judy Garland movie it is based upon. Both tell the story of the Smith family from St. Louis. The time is 1906 and the St. Louis World's Fair is about to begin. The family is content, love is in the air and then, financial devastation hits the family and it is decided that they will need to move to New York.

In researching the show, I found the role of the patriarch, Mr. Alonso Smith, to be quite appealing. He is described as a "charming yet commanding lawyer." I am also told that he stomps around the ground a lot. A father with a wife, a son,

and four charming daughters. Well... at least there is the son. Now if they can just age me about 5 years. I don't think they can make me look like a teenager-early 20 year old. But whatever part I fit.. if any.

Featuring some classic songs ("[The Trolly Song](#)" and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas") I am told that the musical is very fun and I am looking forward to another audition. Maybe not with my normal group, but as a wise woman once told me... "Don't hide your light under a bushel basket." Sage advice.