

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 its 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.

What Is Your Favorite Restroom?

Sometimes it is very difficult to find the moment when you know that a show is going to be great (at times, it may seem that the moment never comes). For two shows I was very proud to be a part of the moment arrived quickly. The first time I held up four fingers and cackled for my audition for *The Clinic*, I knew that Donnie would be a great part (whoever got it ☐). For *Idol Night* it came when I read aloud the first line spoken by Morat ("**HELLO EVERY PEOPLE!!!!**"). Tonight, sitting at the theatre reading through lines for *Little Women*, I thought this is going to be good. We not only read through the first act, but the director kept going back and asking the cast questions to make them analyze the character and scene they were reading. Who is your character? What is he/she trying to say and do? How is he/she saying it... is he confident or shy? Much more fun and productive to analyze as a group instead of alone.

Before we got into all of that, we had an ice breaker of introducing ourselves. Name, part, past experience, and favorite restroom. OK.... so it was not favorite restroom but

the director changed it to such after someone misheard him. Guess who?!

My name is.... I will be playing Braxton Prendergast, the evil aristocratic stock villain in Jo's stories. My favorite experience on stage was portraying Morat Notboratnichkov in Idol Night at the Karaoke Place. My favorite restroom is the ladies room at Ohio Stadium (long story).

The director made it a point to comment that the video is still on youtube... (I still have yet to learn how to embed videos on my posts as well as other things). So...You a know Morat. It will be a year on Sunday May 11, which ironically enough, I just learned is Morat's birthday.

Later, we were asked what our own personal goal for the show is. I said to wear either a hoop skirt as some of the cast do or pumpkin pants which I was told I would be doing.

So, it should be another enjoyable month and few days. Aren't they all though?