The Sting of Rejection

Nope, didn't even make the callbacks. There was a message waiting when I got home the day after stating that I did not make the show. It's been a long time since I didn't make a show. This is not what it sounds like- in recent history I have only tried out for Oliver! and It's a Wonderful Life before Dracula. I didn't even try out for Jekyll & Hyde, only responded to a plea for more actors. Unfortunately along with a rejection comes a void that can't be filled, a void of never knowing why. Was something wrong with my audition? It was only a singing audition and I feel I sang just fine. The accompanist didn't always keep up- was that counted against me? I did a performance, not just the song. Maybe I should have stood there and just sang? Maybe my hair which I forgot to get cut bothered them? Maybe they used the "Will you be willing to be in the ensemble/chorus" question as a weed-out tool- I said no because I would rather try out for Noah than be in the chorus- at my age I have this privilege, do I not? Did someone find this blog and see I would rather be in Noah? Was it even about me at all? I do know it is a relatively small cast for two groups- yes it is a joint production between two groups. Oh, well. I am now free to try out for Noah whenever those auditions happen, assuming they don't just pre-cast it since there is such a small cast. If I make the show I will know for sure not making Dracula was a God thing (someone was praying for me). Of course, considering the message of the Dracula story, it may just be a God thing no matter what happens.

Come to think of it, I *was* rejected more recently- when I did a general tryout for Metropolis last summer. I was never called back for anything. Well, that was professional theatre so it was expected. I do so wish I could just call and ask, but I know that would be improper, so I will just continue to wonder.

One boy for sale

Or rather, just over 100 boys and girls in the production of Oliver! I saw last night. There was a boy, a former student in the 4th/5th grade class at my church who invited me to come. His older brother, also a former student, helped out by running a spotlight. How could I say no? Even though *they* never saw *me* when *I* was in Oliver! just two years ago… I was so disappointed then that not a single student from my church came, or at least told me they came if they did. I advertised this to them for a few weekends, but nothing. Oh, well.

This rather large production is apparently typical of Christian Youth Theater. This organization started out west, but became a reality around here when someone move to my wonderful state and received permission to branch out here. Now there are many branches just in the Chicago area, all under the CYT-Chicago umbrella. This isn't ordinary community theatre though. In order to allowed to audition for a show the kids are required to take one of several theatre classes through this organization. Obviously not a deterrent at all judging by the size of these shows, and even in the number of CYT shows some of them have been in according to the program. The quality wasn't bad at all. The characters for the most part were very convincing and if there were any slipups I didn't notice. I did have a couple of issues with their Fagin, but of course since I played the part myself this is only natural. I wish I could remember what those issues were now. Anyway, the boy who I came to see, Brian, played an orphan at the beginning of the show, then appeared twice more later during chorus numbers. During Food Glorious Food he nearly slipped up when he saw me in the audience, front and center. Interesting spot they sold me- I guess it pays to

come by yourself and get those prime spots when groups fail to completely fill up a row!

I was a bit disappointed at a couple of things though. First off, the show was shortened quite a bit. The running time was about 1:55, and that included a 20 minute intermission, making the actual running time 1:35. Since the original show has a running time of well over two hour you can see a lot was not there. I Shall Scream and Oom-Pah-Pah were two full songs that were cut, and were probably the most obvious to go considering the group. Bill Sykes's song, My Name, was cut in half for some reason too though the one who played him did a fine job. Many scened were abbreviated as well. Ones I noticed most (again having been *in* them before) were some scenes in Fagin's Lair. However, these weren't the only places shortened. The scene where Noah Claypole is introduced was snipped (Oliver just leaves right after Where is Love?). The scene at the end where everything goes south for Sykes and Fagin's gang was shortened to the point where Sykes doesn't even get killed (Nancy still does though), and the scene at the end of Act I where Oliver goes out with Dodger to pickpocket, then gets falsely accused was missing entirely! Well, that whole thing aside I was also disappointed that for a production so well done they for some reason chose not to have a live orchestra. Everything was sung to recorded music. I'm sure they must have had a reason for this, but even so this took something away from the show. Outside of this, and I should stress that shortening the show sounded much worse in writing than it actually was, it was a very good production. Christian Youth Theater is something that should be considered for many other areas.

In any event, if you want to know why I didn't post yesterday this was why. Interesting thing: according to Brian he was considered for the role of Oliver, but at 12 years old he was a little tall in comparison to their pick for the Artful Dodger. Instead they cast an 8-year-old who did a fabulous

job considering his age. This brought my thoughts back to a certain Little Shop of Horrors production where their original pick for Orin, who later dropped out, was actually shorter than me so when considering who would play Seymour they went with someone smaller and I got stuck with being the understudy. However, I should be happy with that because had the show not been sabotaged by a distraught producer who though he should have been director I wouldn't have been considered at all as I was still kind of a weak actor at that point. Did I get all of that right, O great admin who directed this show?

It's Just A Flesh Wound, Honestly

Tuesday night's American Idol will feature the finalists performing the music of Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber. I really do not have a problem with this per se. However, I do recall on several occassions when the judges have commented that a contestants performance is better suited for the Broadway stage and not what would make a good money-making pop star. To me, the finalists should be well versed in multiple genres of music. Why should they appeal to only screaming, teenage fans? There are other outlets for people with some degree of musical talent.

There have actually been attempts to integrate musical theatre songs into the realm of "popular" culture. In the late 70s, the soundtrack from the movie *Grease* generated several songs which were popular hits. In the late 90s, the British boy band Boyzone had a modest US hit with the song "No Matter What" from Webber's *Whistle Down the Wind*.

Recently, former American Idol contestants have also gone on to appear on the musical stage. Third season champion Fantasia Barrino was cast as Celie in *The Color Purple*. In January 2008, second season runner-up Clay Aiken joined the cast of *Spamalot* as Sir Robin.

While the music of the theatrical stage may not appeal to everyone, it will be very interesting to see the American Idol contestants takes on the songs of Andrew Lloyd Webber. They may introduce audiences who would otherwise steer clear from the genre or one of them may become tomorrow's Broadway star.