

# My Stage Debut, Sort of...

Well, ok, so last Sunday wasn't really my stage *debut*; I acted in about 4 stage plays when I was a kid, and three quarters of those roles were in *The Wizard of Oz* ☐

But somewhere along the line, I developed a severe stage fright, and I haven't come close to the front of a stage since I auditioned (and wasn't chosen) for the part of Thor in *The Nerd* in 1990. I've worked in many various capacities behind the scenes and on the members' boards for a few of our local community theater groups in recent years, and if ever someone was brave enough to inquire, I would always reject and adamantly refuse the offers of roles to be portrayed onstage in front of an audience – just way too nervous, and I've actually had many a nightmare about having to get onstage!

But a few weeks ago, my husband and I became involved in our church's semi-annual *Kidstuff*, which is a small collection of skits and musical numbers aimed at instilling a virtue in its audience, this time being 'compassion'. So my husband was rehearsing for *Kidstuff*, and I was tagging along to rehearsals as I usually do when he is in a play. I was asked by the director (who is also the school nurse in my two oldest daughters' school district) if I would "just stand there and hand out prizes" during one of the skits. Always being willing to help providing it doesn't get in the way of my family life, I obliged, and next thing I know I am a character complete with a name, Fran Hootenhiener! So I guess you could say it was my stage debut as an adult! The director was right though, I really just had to stand there during one of the skits and hand out cookies, but I even had an introduction by the extremely handsome game show host (my real-life husband) where I had to smile and even give a little wave to the audience while I showed off my cookie prizes. I was incredibly nervous beforehand, but I got through it without fainting or doing anything really embarrassing like throwing

the cookies at someone or dropping my tray. I think it helped that 90% of the audience was kids and also that our little show had a more divine purpose than simple entertainment. It was quite a different experience to work with a cast and crew who were coming together to teach kids a virtue versus a community theater production where the goal is to entertain paying adults. Not that one is better; it's just a matter of personal preference, I think, and it helped me to be less nervous.

And I think this experience helped me for what was to come last night... because of the weather, the two other small group leaders for the 7th grade girls at youth group were unable to make it, so I was in charge of ALL the 7th grade girls last night! It went better than I thought, even though I really don't like to be the one in charge of a group. But, such is life, and I'm just happy I didn't know about it until we arrived last night otherwise I would have been a nervous wreck all day. And the youth pastor's face when he told me I was the only teacher who could make it was just priceless, haha!

I'm not saying I will ever get on stage again, but for this one time, I actually had some fun!

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## **On This Night Of A Thousand Stars**

Last night was the [theatre's](#) (check out the new and improved website) annual awards night and it was filled with comedy, excitement, and a few tears. The group lost a great asset this year and there was a fine tribute given in her honor by the interim president... very few dry eyes remained after that.

Conveniently, our fantastic host chose this moment to have an intermission. I think it was a fantastic touch to honor a lady who along with her husband have added so much to our group.

One of the highlights of the evening was a skit showcasing some of the characters from the past season as well as inserting themes from a 2002 production of *A Christmas Carol* which I was not a part of but have heard a great deal about. This was also written by the talented MC who also provided a series of Jib-Jab videos on the projection screen for even more hilarity.

Another bit of humor was provided by the adorable couple who entertained with a parody of the song "One Day More" from the musical *Les Miserables*.

Overall, each of the awards were very well received. However, I must say that i am biased when it comes to the special awards given out. [Justj](#) and Carol each continue to go totally above and beyond. J has been our unofficial videographer for several productions and single-handedly repaired the large, leaky roof which was so prominent during our summer production.

I would say that Carol is one of several ladies who act as honorary mothers to the group. I had the profound honor of working with her backstage during *The Nerd* in September. She was a great help in bringing the food used on stage, cleaning up cottage cheese, and helping keep a certain young boy under control backstage. Both of these honorees exemplify the hard work and dedication necessary to keep a small community theatre afloat.

This brings me to daughter of one of these award winners (and she knows this is coming). The director of the upcoming production of *Over the Tavern* is looking for someone to fill the role of the 16 year-old daughter, Annie. Megan is about to turn 21; however, those around her and especially myself

(as she will attest) feel that she would be wonderfully cast. She agreed to read the script but made sure to voice her concern that she has at least one evening class during the week. I proceeded to remind her that she bailed on our trip to Florida in October but the play is right in town and I'm sure the director would work around her if she fit the part. Megan has constantly said that she has wanted to get back on stage and this would be a fine opportunity □ Ok... i think that is enough prodding. Anyone else care to join in? Maybe this will encourage her to comment.

Finally, the evening wrapped up after a group of us again congregated at the host's home. I have not laughed and had such a good time in awhile. i also got to see many friends I have not seen in quite a while including a former co-worker whom I have not seen since last New Years.

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## **A Whole New World**

During our community theater's run of The Nerd, they designated one of the nights "80's Night" since the play was set in 1985. I enjoyed the opportunity to visit the local thrift stores with a mission – looking for components to complete my 80's look. 2 thrift stores are within walking distance so I just packed up the little ones in the double stroller and off we went. I found things with ease – a gaudy Mickey Mouse sweatshirt that I cut up to make it off-the-shoulder, a black lacy Madonna-like skirt, jelly shoes, hoop earrings, leggings, ankle socks... I was ready to go!

And of course, what 80's look is complete without makeup and lots of it? I read a hint on a website about dressing for 80's parties – "In the 80's, we didn't accessorize – we

“excessorized” and LOVED it!” So I braided my wet hair in the morning, and by evening when I took out the braids, I achieved the “crimped” hair look I was going for. I pulled out the electric blue nail polish (though I ended up regretting that later since I forgot to buy nail polish remover and I was stuck with electric blue nail polish for a few days until I had the time to get to Walmart – OOPS), and I piled on the purple and blue eye shadow. It was lots of fun to get dressed up like a goofball – I may consider being an 80’s time machine traveler for Halloween. But anyway, while I was getting ready for 80’s night, I had a flock of admirers. My 3 little girls aren’t used to me putting on makeup, dressing up, painting my nails, or spending lots of time on my hair (note to self – next time I dress 80’s, I need some Aquanet!) – I’m just not the kind of gal who does – or has the time to do, for that matter – these things regularly. It was like a whole new world for them, and they gawked in awe as they watched me get ready. My oldest kept running up to her room to look for jewelry to use – everyone wanted to help, which was like a whole new world for *me*.

80’s night was a few weeks ago, and the girls are still asking to have their nails painted and for us to do each other’s makeup, much to my husband’s dismay. He’s never liked makeup and says he wants our girls to be at least 18 before they can wear it. I’ve tried explaining to him that there is something innate in little girls that make them like dressing up and putting makeup on – it’s just how little girls are made. Being a male, he doesn’t get it of course, and so I imagine we’ll have many a debate in this house once the girls get to the teenage years and want to wear makeup regularly. For now, I don’t have a problem using it as a “toy” once in a while, as long as it’s supervised and I can guide my girls to having the right opinions about makeup, especially when it comes to self-esteem issues – makeup does not make you prettier, you do not NEED makeup, it can be harmful to your face if you use it incorrectly, etc. So until they become teenagers, this is a

way we can have fun together, and I also view it as an important bonding experience. One of the things I remember doing with my sister the most while we were growing up is her doing my hair and makeup, and I don't remember ever fighting while we were doing that. Anyone who knows my girls realizes how much we need an activity that Taylor and Sammie can do together without fighting! So if you see me walking around with a hideous makeup job someday, just remember that my face was probably painted by an 8, 4, or 2 year old!

**\*\*YOU ASKED FOR IT!!!\*\***



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## The Nerd

Since my friend C is in the play called The Nerd (hopefully still is, considering his medical troubles as of late) I thought I would share something I embarrassingly have enjoyed watching on the internet. Embarrassing because it's not exactly family friendly. In fact, if you have young ones around, do not watch any of these shows. In fact, don't even go to the link I am going to provide. You have been warned.

What does this have to do with The Nerd? Well, the one I write about is James Rolfe, otherwise known as the angry video game nerd. He unfortunately reminds me a little about myself playing video games sometimes. I can get really angry after playing a tough game for awhile. This is probably one of the reasons I don't play them much anymore, and when I do they are often easy ones made for kids. Anyway, Rolfe plays really bad video games on purpose just to show us all how bad they are, and to have a little fun with it. Unfortunately, his reviews are laced with profanity during the "angry" moments (just an act I'm sure) which is why I only grudgingly admit to watching them. Besides reminding me a little bit about myself, I am entertained watching video games which is probably why I continue to watch them. I download video game movies from [World of Longplays](#), [Speed Demos Archive](#), [Recorded Amiga Games](#), [TAS Videos](#), and more. This form of voyeurism, watching others play games, comes from when I was a young teen. I enjoyed arcades a little too much. When I would run out of money, I would stay and just watch others play. As far as I remember, I didn't get much strategy tips from this, just enjoyment.

Well, back to AVGN. Rolfe often has themes for the reviews he does. When a popular movie comes out, he will do a series of games based on that movie. Yep, he has recently done Indiana Jones and Batman games. He also does some holiday themes, like halloween and Christmas. From a technical standpoint, they are really pretty good. I have watched nearly all of them (I skipped just one I think- a certain type of Atari game theme which makes his page pretty much not safe for family...). This guy is quite popular too as he has had some knock-off reviewers. One did I think just one video calling himself the Christian Video Game Nerd. He just mimiced one of Rolfe's videos substituting "nicer" words for profanity in places, but the "anger" is still there. There is also a Happy Video Game Nerd, who reviews some of the better games. He stole the AVGN theme song, substituting his own lyrics. Anyway, if you haven't done a search yet by now, the Angry Video Game Nerd

site is at... Hmm. I talked of one page, but it seems the page has moved. The reviews are now categorized by year so they are not all family unsafe, but still be careful. The site is at [Cinemassacre.com](http://Cinemassacre.com).

Another review favorite of mine is a bit more family friendly. Someone took it on himself to review all Nintendo (NES) games from day one of its Japanese release in the early eighties. He calls his series [Chrontendo](#) (click for link). He as also just started chronicling Sega's SMS system from the same time. I am in the process of downloading episode two of ChronSega right now. If you have broadband, do yourself a favor and download the larger DIVX videos. The quality is much better than the MP4 streams.

Anyway, that's it for now for this look into the psyche of this substitute teacher. I wonder if I should get a job with Comcast. Still bad pay, but If I work eight hours daily I will start with what I am getting as a sub, plus I will have benefits and plenty of opportunity for overtime pay too...

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## **Actor: Not Believable as a Human Being.**

If you've seen friends you might remember the episode when Joey, a often unemployed and ridiculously bad actor, gets a review that reads "Not believable as a human being."... Well, today I am the received such acclaim.

I am in a local production of the Nerd and play the title character or Rick Steadman; the Nerd.

With such choice phrases used as "over the top" and "upstages



the others” and “hard to believe he is a real person” it is indeed time to ask myself the question... Am I as bad as Joey?

The good news is the show itself got a good review and so did some of my VERY WELL DESERVING castmates!! ☐ ☐

Oh well. I can only learn for next time. I have always found myself a little better at dramatic roles; not a character actor am I. For now I will have to live with “not being believable as a human being” – or at least “hard to believe he is a real person”.

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## What's All This About Hugh Downs?

I felt too restless to write blogs, but I'm too tired to take the kids anywhere, so it's either write in my blog or sit here on my computer looking up scary ailments that could be afflicting my husband. So blogging it is...

As you may have read on other tangents.org blogs, our community theater is about to open its production of The Nerd – an (I still hate putting the word “an” in front of hilarious, but oh well) hilarious comedy written by Larry Shue. My husband is portraying the Nerd, a character named Rick Steadman, who is without any social ettiquette whatsoever, to put it mildly. He does an excellent job at the part, if I do say so myself, and that's a compliment, really it is – he's not a nerd in real life! In the play, Rick has an autographed picture of Hugh Downs, and all this time during rehearsal, I've been wondering, who is Hugh Downs? The name sounds familiar, but I didn't know anything about him, so I looked him up. Turns out he is a fellow Ohioan, born in

Akron, went to high school in Lima, and he's still alive. He anchored the newsmagazine show 20/20, hosted the Today show, was the announcer for The Tonight Show with Jack Paar, and he also hosted the game show Concentration.

So having an autographed picture of Hugh Downs *is* quite nerdy. But then again, I looked him up on wikipedia, so what does that make me?

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## The Mighty Thor

(Sorry If I disappoint fans of the Marvel Comics' character). Tonight was another fun evening of auditions at the community theatre. [The Nerd](#) came under my radar my sophomore year at BGSU. I performed a scene as Rick Steadman in an acting class. After reading my copy of the scene, I immediately searched out a copy of the full script (and not from the college library). After reading the play, I was immediately enamored with the over-the-top character and said if ever I found a chance to audition for it, I would soooo be there. I nailed the scene in school and was told in my comments from the instructor that if he ever needed a white [Steve Urkel](#), he would look me up. I guess that was a compliment.

At the audition, I saw some returning thespians and one or two newcomers (always nice to see). On the audition form, I listed that I would like to try for Rick and Thor (an 8-13 year old brat). I did get to read the part of the brat while kneeling. I was told that if I could shrink about 3 feet, shave, and grow some hair on my head I would be considered.

When the time came to read for the title role, I attempted to fit in a few snorts where applicable, roll the eyes a bit, change my voice slightly so it had a bit of a "adenoidal"

sound (which the stage directions call for) to it. The first scene was the scene in which the cast is introduced to the nerd. Hilarious.

The second bit was a solo part in which Rick makes himself comfortable in his 'Nam buddy's apartment. He unpacks a music stand, book, and tambourine (of which none were provided) and proceeds to butcher "The Star Spangled Banner." I made like I was banging the instrument at opportune moments on the sofa, my head, leg, etc. while doing my best to ruin our National Anthem. A friend mentioned that I could be arrested for such a travesty. I thought being booed ala Roseanne would be enough. I hope that I was "over-the-top" enough to please the director.

Although some would balk at the opportunity to play a nerd, I relish the chance to bring Rick Steadman to life once again, this time for a paying audience. Hopefully, a great friend (who I was actually surprised to see since he and his wife are expecting some day soon) will be cast with me. Usually, he has been directing or directing and acting; but I really would like to be cast in a show where he does not wear so many hats. But even if neither of us get a part, there is always the next show. More auditions tomorrow night. Then what a nice birthday present it would be if I get any part (similar to last year after I found out that I was cast as the standout character in a previous show... although some do say I stand out in whatever part I am given... dunno) ☐ .

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## Something Wonderful

The end of the run of a show brings mixed feelings. For most, it is a feeling of relief that a show has completed its run

and it is time to move on and get back to their normal lives. I do not know how many feel as I, but a run of six shows just does not seem enough. Sure we are not paid professionals but honestly, our little theatre does wonderful work and deserves every bit of the applause it receives every night. Not just the applause, but the acquaintances made during the 6 weeks it takes to stage a show is marvelous. Each production is different, the cast, the set, the crew, nothing is ever the same. You may get a mixture of cast members in subsequent shows, but each time I am part of a show I let each cast member become a part of me. Sharing each others triumphs as well as those times we are "pushed" in order to accomplish what the director as well as ourselves know we are capable of. It is just difficult to leave something that starts with an empty stage and grows into "Something Wonderful..." (a little tune from *The King and I*). Tonight, while waiting in the orchestra pit for my set change, I began to feel my closing depression set in (a day early but nonetheless there). I would not say that this happens every show, but definitely with the best of them. But, with the closing of one show usually comes auditions (at least) for the next show. So, tomorrow will be the final performance of *Little Women*, but looking ahead to July 7th I see auditions for *The Nerd*.



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## **Poppies... Poppies Will Put Them To Sleep**

Yes, Spring has finally arrived. For most, that means looking forward to making plans for the summer getaway. For me it means looking forward to auditioning for one of two (or this

year... three) big musical productions in the area. I narrowed my choices down to two this week. I really wanted to audition for a production of [The Wizard of Oz](#). I have always wanted to be the Cowardly Lion... a fantastic character role if ever there was one. I contacted the director of the show to ask about performance dates. Alas, they begin in mid-July (after auditions for another play I am extremely excited about trying out for (now be nice)... [The Nerd](#). **And yes, I will be auditioning for the title role**, but of course will gladly accept any part offered to me.

Even while considering the possibility of dreaming that "If I Were King of the Forrrrrrest" (not Queen, not Duke, not Prince), the more logical option seemed to be to try out for the musical that is closer to home with the group I have been involved with for the past two years. It will save a bit of money on the gas tank as well. So... according to an email I received earlier today, I will make my way tomorrow to audition for a role in [Little Women](#) (and yes, there are male roles in the production).

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## What A Feelin' :) )

This afternoon I got to sit with some friends at our local Business and Industry show in order to promote our theatre. When we had passers-by inquiring about upcoming shows, it was kind of fun. Even when we had no one to inform, it was enjoyable to sit, chat, and people watch.

There were several people who asked me, personally, what my next role would be. That is really great!. I just finished doing the dinner theatre and am always eager to do the next show. But to have people actually come up to you, tell you

that they enjoy your performances, and actually ask what is on the horizon... just indescribable. Even people I do not know approached me about it. It is just soooo cool!!!!!! Then there were a few who found it strange that I would be involved in a theatre group. Apparently, they do not know me very well, do they. Just trying to describe how much joy I get being involved in any way large or small is phenomenal.

What is on the horizon for me? Welllll... I just found out that there are several male roles in [Little Women](#). I read the novel years ago but did not remember too many male characters, but I will be sure to research the musical before auditions. This summer a local group is also staging [The Music Man](#). I found this very strange because the classic musical has been done so much that it seems stale. I also love the play *The Nerd* which I know I will be trying out for. So there are at least three productions that I have a great interest in.

Just knowing that there are people who see and remember shows you are involved in creates such a fantastic feeling.