

LIFE ON STAGE

Season 2, episode 12

When I was 8 (eight) years old I participated in a program called 4-H. One activity that I did with my club was write and present a skit that represented the values of 4-H. Those values are head, heart, hands, and health. We created a skit with action and music. We did a great job. We won a trophy and got to present our skit at the state fair. It was my first time acting and I loved it.

When I was 10 (ten) years old I joined the school choir. Choir taught me to breathe correctly and to project my voice. I gained confidence and, with practice and experience, I learned to control my nerves.

When I was 12 (twelve) years old, I acted in another skit about a scientist. All the kids in seventh grade participated in the skit, but I had one of the leading roles. I was very proud of myself!

I wanted to act more. In high school there were three theater productions per year: one in the fall, one in the winter, and one in the spring. The fall play was a drama or a comedy. The winter play was a short one-act play for competition. The spring play was always a musical.

I had small roles in productions of "Charlotte's Web" and "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers", but when I was 15 (fifteen) I got what I considered to be the best role, the role of Annie. It was very special for me to be on stage and sing the famous lyrics: *the sun'll come out tomorrow! Bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow, there'll be sun.*

My school's auditorium is a special place. As a matter of fact, the whole high school is special. The construction of the school lasted 3 years and cost \$4 million in the year 1922 (nineteen twenty two). The auditorium copied the Capitol Theater in New York and has elegant architecture. The walls are decorated with paintings with gold detail. The six crystal chandeliers were imported from Belgium. The organ was imported from Germany and is one of only 3 that still exist from that company. There is a balcony and seats for almost 2000 (two thousand) people.

The auditorium also holds a lot of mystery. As it is a very old space, there are stories of ghosts. Even I have stories about the ghosts there.

One Saturday I was working with three friends to clean the prop room, the room that holds all the objects we use in theater productions like cups, bags, dishes, fake flowers, and more. I went down to the stage and I heard something. A lot of tourists come to see the auditorium so I wasn't scared. However when I looked out at the

seats from the stage, I didn't see anyone. I was about to return off-stage to the prop room when I heard a girl crying.

I said hello, but there was no answer, the girl kept crying. I looked through all the seats and I finally saw her in the balcony. I didn't understand why she was on the balcony. Tourists entered the auditorium through a specific door and all the other doors, including the doors to the balcony, should be locked. The girl was very young, six or seven years old. She had brown hair and was wearing a white dress. I talked to her. I told her that I would come get her and we would find her family.

I left the stage and ran to the balcony stairs. When I got to the doors to the balcony, they were locked. I couldn't get in. I returned to the stage to tell the girl that I was going to look for help and that everything was going to be okay, but when I looked at the balcony, the girl wasn't there. My friends were on the stage and I asked them if they had seen the girl on the balcony, but they hadn't seen or heard anything.

The most famous auditorium ghost in my old high school is in seat J-47. There are a lot of rumors about that ghost. The most popular rumor is that a man died in that seat during a play. Now he watches all the productions from that seat. There are even photos of the ghost in his seat, but a lot of people say they are fake. I saw those photos in person in the 90s and the camera that took them. I don't know if they are real or fake, but I do know that there is a presence because I have felt it.

The seats in the auditorium bounce upright, unless someone is sitting in them. Seat J-47 is almost always down, like someone is sitting there. Also, the space around the seat is always cold. But the biggest reason I know there is a presence is because I have seen the ghost during theater performances and practices.

In my last year of high school we did a very fun comedy musical called "I'm Sorry the Bridge is Out, You'll Have to Spend the Night." It is a funny musical about a couple that has to spend the night in Dr. Frankenstein's house during a horrible storm. The doctor has other guests like Dracula and his girlfriends and the wolf man and his mom. Each person in the mansion wants to use the man or woman to advance some evil plan.

I played the woman in the couple and it was my favorite role. The play began with a completely dark auditorium. Andy, the man, and I walked to the middle of the auditorium and I screamed - it was what I was supposed to do. After I screamed in the dark auditorium, we turned on flashlights we were carrying and a spotlight lit us up. Then we slowly moved to the stage.

One night after my scream when we passed seat J-47, the air got very cold and the flashlights in our hands stopped working. I saw a figure in the seat and I wanted to

scream again, but I had to keep acting. I saw the figure a few more times during the performance. I asked my friends about it and a few of them said they saw something white in that area too.

I loved my high school theater. I was in it almost every day. My last role in that special auditorium was not planned. I dreamed of becoming a director after graduating, so I took the position of Assistant Director. Unfortunately, the leading actress lost her voice and then had a family issue. She couldn't continue and we didn't have an understudy. I had two weeks to learn all her lines and songs. At least I already knew all the stage directions.

On opening night I was very nervous that I was going to forget something, but everything turned out really well. After finishing I went out to greet the public. My dad was crying, which isn't a big deal because my dad always cries. He hugged me and told me that one song I sang in the play was very special for him. It was a song he heard on the radio with his dad. My grandpa died when my dad was only 23 and hearing that song brought him back to his childhood.

Love makes the world go round, love makes the world go round. Somebody soon will love you, if no one loves you now. High in a silent sky, love sings a silver song. Making the Earth whirl softly, love makes the world go round.

I studied theater in college. I took part in several plays on stage and behind the scenes. I worked in a costume studio and with lightning equipment. I directed skits and a complete play. I acted, danced, and sang. But none of that impacted me as much as my time on stage in my beautiful high school auditorium.

I have not been on a stage for years and I really miss it. Each time I see a play I remember the energy and emotion I felt. Maybe someday I will act again, but for now I am content with my leading role of mother, teacher, and storyteller. Thank you for being my audience.



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