

## The Audition

On a Friday night in the early 80's, in early December, it was painfully cold and I was cranky. I had a long week of second grade and just wanted to stay home. "We got tickets on sale and Flo says this is the best show she's ever seen!" My mom was trying to get me excited about going to this new musical her friend Flo saw. I wasn't buying it. I just wanted to watch 'Frosty' on TV under my warm pink blanket. An hour later, I'm sitting in my seat at the majestic Orpheum Theater in Minneapolis, swinging my legs and grumbling to myself. The show was 'Annie' and within the first few notes of the overture, I was transfixed. By the time it ended, I was transformed. It was the best kind of spell I had ever experienced. I knew this because my legs were shaking and I had a hard time getting out of my seat, it was that powerful.

The show featured kids my age singing, dancing, having a great time. The plot was the stuff of fairy tale fun. And the songs! I couldn't stop singing them. I woke up the next morning belting out 'Tomorrow' and 'Maybe' and had a scratchy throat by late afternoon. I knew one thing for certain: I wanted to BE in that show! I would be in that show-some day, somehow. I read the bios of the kids in the cast and they were all from New York or Philadelphia. Would I have to move? If need be, sure! My voracious enthusiasm didn't waver weeks or even years after that first time seeing 'Annie'.

In early December, four years later when I was eleven, I got a brochure in the mail with postings of upcoming productions at a theater in St. Paul. I turned the page and let out a scream. “MOM!!!” She thought I broke a bone or something. “They are doing ‘Annie’ at Chimera!” Finally, I am FINALLY going to be in the show. This is my chance- my golden once-in-a-lifetime chance to sing those songs, wear those costumes, be an ORPHAN! I couldn’t wait. I had months to get ready. I found out in December and the show would run that summer. I called the theater and got the audition dates on the calendar- April 13 and 14. I was also told to prepare an up-tempo song, not from the show, and learn a short dance. Cool- I can do that! I picked my song, ‘Do Re Mi’ from ‘The Sound of Music’ and religiously practiced every day.

After months of waiting, the Saturday of the audition was here. I was ready. I wore my light blue cords, pastel colored heart turtle neck and a matching blue sweater- hair pulled back in two plastic yellow barrettes. The outfit was dressy enough but casual enough for whatever dancing was going to happen. I was nervous and excited. My mom dropped me off at the front door- “I’ll be back in an hour” she said. I confidently walked inside. There was a sign with an arrow ‘Annie Auditions Downstairs’. I darted down the stairs and stopped cold. There were a lot of girls at this audition. A lot. I swallowed- but that’s okay. I’m ready. I filled out the paperwork and waited at a table with a couple girls I knew from school. One of them whispered we would have to do a cartwheel. WHAT?!?! “Whoa, stop....a cartwheel?!” I asked with a sinking feeling in my stomach. I didn’t know how to do a cartwheel, I didn’t

PREPARE for a cartwheel. Could this mean my 'Annie' hopes are officially dashed? What seemed like an eternity later, it was my turn. I was grouped with five other girls and we each took turns singing our song. I gave it my all! When it came time to do the cursed cartwheel, I got my legs up as high as I could, but I knew deep down, I blew it. I had a whole week to re-play and re-live the audition minute by minute. Maybe my voice cancelled out the bombed cartwheel? They would let us know that following weekend if we made it to a callback.

The days and hours dragged on and on. When that Friday finally arrived, I knew it wouldn't be long for the word to come. So I waited by the phone....and stared at it. My mom urged me to go outside, "It's too nice of a day to be trapped in the house." True- but what if I missed the phone call? By Sunday night, I knew- there was no phone call to miss. That seven year old girl seeing 'Annie' for the first time- promising herself she would be on that stage someday....well, looks like that wasn't going to happen.

I had just turned 30 years old and found myself still checking audition notices. 'Annie' stuck with me in more ways than I was aware of. I pursued a career in TV news although I did entertain the possibility of acting. Given my luck with auditions, probably best to keep it as a hobby. One April afternoon, I spotted a notice for 'Annie' auditions. Dare I try out? But it's way across town....and I would have to miss a friend's wedding.....and I have a full time job....and there are weekend rehearsals. The 'stuff of life' seemed to have choked out the voracious

enthusiasm of my childhood dream. That bugged me. So, I showed up at the audition, sang a song from 'Chicago' (thank the stars, no cartwheel involved this time) and learned a little choreographed dance. Two days later, I got an e-mail with a cast list and my name under 'Chorus/Ensemble'.

Well....I'll be darned. I got a part in 'Annie'! The girl got what she set out to do so many years ago. Did it work out exactly the way I wanted or envisioned it? No way. And that's the bizarre beauty of the thing.