
Please feel free to forward this to anyone you think would be interested and have them sign up on my website (www.aroljahns.com) if they would like to receive the HWI in the future. Likewise, if anyone feels they have received this email in error or feels they already get enough junk mail, simply reply to this and type "unsubscribe" as the subject heading and I will remove you from the list-serve. Thanks.

Hi team (cause I really feel that you are all on my team),

GREETING:

Thanks to all of you who visited my website. 85 hits on launch day! That's over 60% of the HWI subscriber list! Then again, as I think about it, a good chunk of those hits were me going to my website to see how many hits there were. And come to think of it, I'm sure my mom went to the site several times to see how famous her son had become that he now has his own website! So, thanks Mom and the two other readers who checked out the site. I appreciate it! No, seriously, I did get some great feedback from many of you on the site and have tried to implement many of your suggestions. One suggestion - putting someone else's photo up on the home page to draw more visitors – was a clever one, but alas, not a viable option at this time. Thanks though.

THIS ISSUE'S HIGHLIGHTS:

- Arol books lead role in children's musical and a SUPER role in the Opera "War and Peace" at the MET
- ZUZU gig a triumph at The Bitter End! More dates in March.
- Arol snags Internship at a Casting Director's office.

WHAT I HAVE DONE:

ACTING:

I have been very busy and have had moderate success in this category since the last Insider. I booked a lead role in a children's musical, "marched" my way onto the stage of the Metropolitan Opera and did voice over work as Howard Cosell, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

Once Upon A Time

As I had been lamenting the dearth of auditions for me in Manhattan, I decided to branch out and send headshots and resumes to some regional theaters. I immediately got an audition

for a children's musical called "Once Upon A Time" – based loosely on the story of Hans Christian Anderson at the Castle Theater in Budd Lake, NJ. Honestly I think the only requisite for getting an audition was the willingness and means to get your butt to Budd Lake – about 1 ½ hours west of the city. Fortunately for me, it is only 30 minutes away from my parents' house. The Castle Theater is a really cute venue shaped – oddly enough – like a castle, sitting about 50 yards from a good sized body of water – uh...that'd be Budd Lake. Inside we continue with the castle theme, the walls richly decorated with colorful tapestries as well as framed photographs of some of the Castle's great performances (in addition to children's theater they put on serious works like Shakespeare each season).

My audition was a two-parter. First, Matt, the music director, would bang out a few tunes on the ivory and I would do my best to pretend I could sing. There were two of us auditioning at one time. My partner, or competitor as it were, was a stage actor who had achieved some success – his resume seemed to me to be four pages long and chock-full of theater credits. Then again, if it was anything like my resume, a good portion of it was complete crap. We both made it through the singing portion with relative ease – after all, we are basically talking about nursery rhymes here. Then came the acting phase of this Battle of the No-Name Stars. Stan, the artistic director, is a small, pudgy man with a permanent smile on his face and an obvious "long time" love for the theater. He and a friend had created the Castle Theater over twenty years ago and, without any state funding, built it into the thriving palace of art that it is today.

I won't bore you all with the play by play of the audition, but it is interesting to note how/why I got the part and my adversary, lets call him "Master Thespian", did not. We were asked to do a dramatic reading of a portion from the play. We would attempt it on our own and then Stan would give us some direction to follow. Now, I'm not saying that Master Thespian is a better actor than I am, but I got the part simply by following direction. I'm sure my first shot at it was abysmal, but I gave the director everything he asked for in my subsequent efforts and I could tell he was pleased. By contrast, Master Thespian would listen to Stan's direction and would completely ignore it in favor of a very similar rendition to his first attempt – which, by the way, was not at all suitable for young children. So the takeaways here? Know your audience and always listen to your director. After you get the part, you can try to incorporate your own ideas into the role.

Now Stan seems to have taken a genuine liking to me (not in that way, although my hunch is he is that way). Not only did he cast me in “Once Upon A Time” and is encouraging me to try out for a part in their production of “Romeo and Juliet” and “I Hate Hamlet”, but he gave me a voice-over part in a play he wrote called “History of America”. In this children’s musical the Revolutionary war is depicted as a boxing match between the original 13 Colonies (“Kid America”) and the Brits. Stan wanted to record me as Howard Cosell commentating the fight. My voice-over would then be played at each performance during the boxing match and the live actors would react to my commentating. It was some quick cash and I was in and out in one hour. Despite my near-perfect rendition of Mr. Cosell, in the end I decided on another, generic announcer voice. Howard Cosell spoke very slowly – never more than a few words at a time – and they wanted their announcer to speak rapidly and with overabundant energy. I could not, in good conscience, sacrifice the integrity of my Howard Cosell impression so I went with an alternative selection. I also can be heard as the voice of Thomas Jefferson reciting snippets from the Declaration of Independence and James Madison (4th US President) declaring war on Britain. I had no idea what these two sounded like and come to think of it they probably would have had English accents at that time, which I missed completely. I did them both as a sort of regal cross between Abraham Lincoln and Felix Unger from “The Odd Couple”. By the way, not that you guys will be traipsing out to Budd Lake to see this, but performance dates, etc. can be found on my website (www.aroljahns.com).

War and Peace

The MET is putting on the Opera “War and Peace” for the first time in the US (I believe it originated in St. Petersburg, Russia). It is an absolutely HUGE production, with a blockbuster budget, an amazing set and the largest cast in any opera ever. I saw the casting call for MET “soldiers” in Backstage magazine and, figured since I didn’t have anything else going on, why not make a little money and, more importantly, be able to say I “played the MET”! They call us “SUPER numeraries”, which is apparently the theater equivalent of ‘extras’. We are to play Russian soldiers that the famous opera singers will use to deliver melodious arias of inspiration in the fight against Napoleon and his far superior French troops. This role is the theatrical equivalent of the guys in “The Patriot” who stand behind and around Mel Gibson and get blown away while no one notices.

The audition itself was fairly amusing. We all lined up outside this old church near Lincoln Center at 9am on a Saturday, freezing our tailfins off. As I looked around, I chuckled to myself, comfortable in the knowledge, that all these fine, young men were relegated to doing extra work while, I, an up-and-coming star was doing this merely for a lark. Well.....it helped me withstand the cold anyway. The role does not require any speaking or singing, just a lot of marching. The audition was just that. We marched around the nave of the church in groups of eight following commands (in Russian!) from our “drill sergeant” Sasha – a handsome, young Russian man hired for his acrobatic and stage combat training (he is a member of the performance gymnastics troupe “Zero Gravity”). All you needed to do was have a right and a left foot and you were in. Having said that, they were being somewhat selective and you wouldn’t believe how many actors have two left feet. From each group of eight about 75% would make it on to the fitting room phase where we would have to measure at least a 40” chest in order to fit the uniforms. Despite my relentless workout regimen I came up a tad shy, but when I promised to pump up between the audition and the performance, I was allowed to stay.

We have been in rehearsal now for a couple of weeks for a part that involves only two of thirteen scenes and only has really one complex choreographed segment. It really shows you the amount of work that goes into one of these productions – and we are just the extras!!! Oh, sorry, SUPER numeraries (for some reason they always capitalize SUPER, but I’m not sure why). As I said, this is the largest opera production ever with the most number of performers on stage at one time. In my scene there are about 140 soldiers (SUPERS) and another 50 or so ballet guys (who are also soldiers) and another 40 principals (the big guys like Dmitri Hvorostovsky – “the hot, creamy Russian baritone with smoldering looks” according to the NY Daily News). It truly is a spectacular show that you should definitely check out if you have any tolerance for operas. Show times can be found on my website.
Warning: Don’t go to see me unless you think you can pick me out of 140 guys that all wear identical uniforms and helmets. See you there mom!

Casting Intern

One of the best moves I have made recently is to take a one day per week internship at Mackey-Sandrich Casting – a NY casting agency. Not having gone on many film auditions yet, I had not heard of these guys, but as I have been mentioning my internship to people I am finding out that these guys are one of the biggest. You wouldn’t know it from their office – a small, non-descript, 3rd

floor walk up in Chinatown. However, they have been sole or primary casting directors for some of the biggest blockbuster films including “When a Man Loves a Woman”, “The Hunt for Red October”, “The Fugitive”, “Patriot Games” and “Of Mice and Men”, just to name a few. (Incidentally I got the opportunity through my ‘consultant’ at TVI – an acting studio. Basically she hooked me up in exchange for purchasing a class at TVI. You scratch my back.....).

While a lot of what the interns are required to do is answer phones and take messages, the real value of the internship comes from just listening to the casting director (a pleasant, but very businesslike woman named Amanda Mackey) and the assistant casting director (an extremely nice, but super anal man named Sig de Miguel). It is eye opening to say the least to hear/see what goes on on the other side of the audition table. I have only been at MSC for a few weeks, but I am already seeing (1) how competitive it is for every role – and that is even for the marquee name actors and (2) how little it is based on talent. I was chatting with a fellow intern who was saying that knowing the behind the scenes stuff really diminishes his confidence. I smiled and nodded, but really I have always thought that knowledge is power and knowing what casting directors want and how they think is invaluable to an actor and just the edge I need to beat my competition.

From a pure “WOW” standpoint the internship is rewarding as well. I overhear Amanda and Sig on the phone saying things like “Ok, so we’re out to Sigourney Weaver” for this film and “we are waiting to hear back from Woody Harrelson and Harrison Ford” for that film. “Oh and lets try to get Kate Hudson” for this role and “have we heard back from Jennifer Connelly” for that role. I took a call from Sigourney Weavers’ agent who left me Sigourney’s home number so that the director of the movie we are casting for could contact her over the weekend. Pretty cool eh? Now why couldn’t Penelope Cruz’s agent call with her home number? I also took a call from Griffin Dunne (of 1981’s “An American Werewolf in London” fame) who is now a writer/director of a film that we are hoping to cast for. I was so tempted to gush to him how much I loved American Werewolf, but I held my tongue in favor of professionalism. The bottom line at this place is they are connected to Hollywood like it’s nobody’s business. A veritable umbilical cord to the stars! And I mean to suck as much placenta outta this puppy as I possibly can. Stay tuned.

WRITING:

Not much happening here. I am still finishing up the screenplay of the short story I wrote, but my fiction writing has taken a back seat now to the acting and the band.

MUSIC:

ZUZU's NYC city debut took place on Monday, January 28th at 10:30pm Well, actually we didn't take the stage until after 11pm – so a genuine thanks to all of you who showed up...and stayed. For new readers (and for those skim readers out there) ZUZU is a band made up of my former college friends. We played together my senior year at Bucknell University and then when I left to travel Asia for six years they continued to write music and perfect their folk/pop sound. Now that I am back in the US they have been kind enough to let me play with them at some of their live gigs. Actually, the deal is, if I get them gigs, they let me play. It's working out well so far.

On the night of the gig at The Bitter End everything was going well. Despite Susan and Colin getting over head colds, the band was all there on time and was as prepared as we could be. The group playing at 8:30pm was an acoustic hodgepodge of past-their-prime stars and some pretty good up-and-coming talent. But we were a band that had practiced together with great songs and a tight sound. We felt confident. That confidence was shattered when the next band Bluu took the stage. These guys were.....well....awesome - as anyone who sat through them to get to us can attest to. They had the full compliment of sound, including a sax player, they had three part harmonies like Earth, Wind and Fire and oodles of stage presence. We were devastated. While we are a completely different sound, Bluu is what is generally referred to as a "hard act to follow". On the bright side, even if we sucked, at least our friends would have gotten their money's worth.

We eventually did go on, and while we were all a bit nervous and made our mistakes here and there – including my guitar strap coming undone mid-song – we played a good set and the crowd seemed to enjoy it. More importantly the booking manager at The Bitter End liked the crowd and offered us future dates on the spot (it's all about the \$Franklins\$). We insisted that we did not want another Monday gig and we wanted to go on earlier. We got what we asked for. Our next performance at The Bitter End will be Thursday, March 14th at 8:30pm. Mark your calendars!

When it rains it pours, a day after our gig, I got a call from the booking manager at another live music venue (The Elbow Room)

saying he loves ZUZUs music and gave us several dates in March to choose from. We declined this initial offer in order to concentrate on getting a good crowd at The Bitter End, but will likely play there or elsewhere else sometime in late spring.

By the way, my dad thinks we should change the band's name to "Arol Smith" (say it fast) to trick people into coming to see us. Thanks dad. Nice suggestion.

THIS ISSUE'S STATISTICS:

Days since becoming an "actor": 220

Number of Films: 3

Number of TV shows: 0

Number of Theater shows: 4

Number of Subscribers to the Insider: 149

Website Hits: 1,185. Ok, so I started the counter at 1,000.

(www.aroljahns.com).

Mood Meter:

Mixed. While the New Year started on a high with the exhilaration of successful auditions and getting paid to perform (albeit in small denominations), I am getting restless. As I see fellow actors that I work with getting guest spots on primetime TV shows and "Under 5" (less than 5 lines) roles on soap operas I know that that is where I should be as well and I believe it is a matter of marketing - getting my face and work seen by casting directors. To the end I am embarking on a mailing campaign assisted by an acting career consultant acquaintance of mine, Donna Desideri, who is planning to offer me her services for free including mailing labels for casting directors and theaters - a value over \$6,000 for a year of mailing. This she will do in exchange for helping to sell one of her businesses (in addition to a 10% success fee of course). So, with renewed vigor I enter a new stage of my acting career - focus on getting on TV.

LAST ISSUE'S STATISTICS:

Days since becoming an "actor": 218

Number of Films: 3

Number of TV shows: 0

Number of Theater shows: 1

Number of Subscribers to the Insider: 138

Website Hits: 0 (www.aroljahns.com). IT'S FINALLY UP AND RUNNIG!! Thanks to Shawn Gross and Icrossing Designs. Check it out!

Mood Meter: High. My juices start flowing every time I start thinking of potential projects (theater, film) and just getting out there and auditioning. Having the prospect of income (independent consulting) gives me a little financial security as well.