

## Finding unconditional love through community theater

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A handful of beautiful people at BPI

Last night, I visited Beechmont Players (BPI) for the first time since I ran sound for the esteemed and much loved Larry Behymer's "My Friend, the Fox" in 2004. At that time, BPI performed its shows at Clermont College. On the last night of the production, the sound system broke. I had to play the remaining sound cues from a boom box off to stage left.

It was funny, but it also caused me to second guess myself about wanting to be involved with community theater at all. At the time, I still carried a lot of guilt about a BPI friendship that had gone sour and felt lost because of a BPI romantic relationship that had ended badly.

I had many mixed feelings about the stage. But wanting to make amends, even if solely within myself, is a large part of why I applied for the position I hold today as Cincinnati Theatre Examiner. I went back to BPI last night to audition for their upcoming show, "Unnecessary Farce" by Paul Slade Smith; and because I knew that in order to do my job properly, I first had to head home.

Since 2004, BPI has moved into the Anderson Center at 7850 Five Mile Road. It's an amazing facility with a state-of-the-art tech room, two large changing rooms instead of just the tiny one where everyone had to change together, even a green room with a refrigerator. I felt like I'd fallen asleep in a coat closet and woken up in paradise.

But what was more amazing to me was that not only did everyone remember me, everyone was happy to see me. I was a prodigal child returned home. Each person I saw was either already my family member whom I hadn't seen in years or was a new friend from the first moment I spoke with them.

Being home reminded me of how much I love the Beechmont Players and of the importance of raising awareness in the minds of those who don't yet know the love and friendship that being a part of community theater can bring. Just like with our own families, residing so closely together enables others to get to know you in ways that you never could have imagined. The way you relate to various characters, how easy or difficult it is for you to meld your own personality into that of someone beautiful or vile, being put into surprising situations that would never occur but for being in a performance, your work ethic, its magnetic pull towards those who are emotive and insightful--all of it teaches others and ourselves something about our own characters. It's possible that we learn more about those with whom we act than we do about anyone else.

Many people say that actors and theatre-workers come together because of a need for drama. But these traits are also part of what enables us to accept--not just to forgive one another, but to overlook each other's faults as though they never happened in the first place. Unconditional love grows like wild ivy across a stage. Community theater is the one place I know of where a person can truly be themselves and be loved for it.

If you've never been a part of a community theater, then you have no idea of the passion and beauty you are missing. You shouldn't just walk to your nearest theater; you should run. Your family is waiting.

**For more information:** Please visit [www.cinstages.com](http://www.cinstages.com) to find a community theater near you and for all the latest news on auditions, upcoming shows, and volunteer opportunities. To reach me, you can write to [liz\\_crowe@hotmail.com](mailto:liz_crowe@hotmail.com) or call me at (513) 254-3199. Pictures are especially welcome.