

My Oscar-Caliber Father

By Shawn Douglas

NOTES

Written as a personal, narrative poem, the free-verse style also allows a performer to consider using this selection as a Dramatic Interpretation. This piece of literature is written for a female performer; however, by changing *daughter* to *son*, a male may also choose to interpret this poem. The drama mask icons are simply visible to show the performer where to turn her/his pages in the manuscript. The key to this selection is portraying the narrator with 100% honesty. Humor is found throughout the beginning of the poem; however, the humor should never be forced. Audiences should identify with the theatrical references throughout the poem. The key to performing this selection competitively is three-fold: portray the likeability of the narrator, understand the humor, and do not give away the dramatic ending of the poem at the beginning of the performance. It is the narrator's job to take the audience on an emotional journey. This poem is about the love and respect for a father. Ultimately, after laughing along with the narrator, the audience should be moved by the loss of the father at the end of the poem. Warm vocals and facial expressions will easily help the performer convey that love and respect.

My father's first role was during his junior year of high school

Playing the character *George*

In Thornton Wilder's Pulitzer-Prize winning drama,

Our Town.

To hear my grandmother speak of it,

It should have been called *His Town*.

Every night, over one-third of the theater

Was filled with out-of-town relatives

And family friends.



When my father went away to college,

He starred in over twenty productions,

Playing everything from an androgynous *Lady Bracknell*

In a gender-reversed production

Of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*

To *Captain Hook*, J.M. Barrie's beloved antagonist in *Peter Pan*.

If you were to ask my father, however,
About his *favorite* production,
He would say, unquestionably,
William Shakespeare's classic tale of two star-crossed lovers,
Romeo and Juliet,
Because *that* is where he met my mother.
Even though he was prancing about the stage as *Benvolio*,
And my mother was the lead prop mistress.
To hear *him* tell it,
The magic they shared in the wings
Far-surpassed what the audiences saw
From the two title characters onstage.



It was *after* this production,
That my father took on the first
Of, what *he* called, his two most *important* roles.
He became a devoted husband to his lovely bride, *Juliet*.

That really is my mother's birth-given name.

Juliet.

Ironic, isn't it?

Especially considering my father's birth name...

Joe.

Not Joseph. *Joe*.

Suffice it to say, initialed wedding gifts

Were not only *appreciated*, but *practical* as well.



Three years after college,
My father landed himself in his *second* important starring role,
The role of *Father*.

Although to hear my *mother* tell it,

He took on yet *another* new role...

That of *Director*,

Telling her how to *burp* me,

How to change my *diapers*,

And how to lull me to sleep

With a medley of *Rodgers and Hammerstein* show tunes.

Mother? Well, she was

Just a girl who couldn't say no.

She did remind him, however, that in college,

She was indeed the *lead* prop mistress.