

# Here I Come, To Save The Day...



I saw a photo yesterday. It was of a matchbook from Harlequin Dinner Theater (Rockville Md). The Harlequin was one of my families' favorite venues for an evening's entertainment. I found it unique in that the waiters/waitresses that took drink orders and served them at intermission were also members of the cast. They were usually from the chorus but sometimes a supporting actor or actress would serve a table or two. It was fun to see our server play a character onstage and I guess they were happy for the opportunity to make some tips.

I've only had two dinner theater experiences as an actor. And the only reason I had the second one was because my wife coerced me into it. The first one was an unmitigated disaster.

It was just after college. I found myself stranded in Toledo Ohio due to some financial miscalculations on my part. While I waited for my coffers to be refilled, I had some spare time so I did theater at night. A couple of shows with the Toledo Repertory Theater led to a paying gig at the Commodore Perry Dinner Theater. The show was How The Other Half Loves, a British sex farce.

The production was rough. The audience was rougher. The producers, thinking a comedy would be well served if the crowd was in the proper mood to laugh, offered ridiculously low prices on their alcoholic beverages. By the time the show started, the audience was half in the bag. Instead of making them laugh, their inebriety just prompted heckling.

What may prove to be my lowest moment onstage came when I, playing a husband who is having an affair with the wife of his boss, stepped out of what was presumed to be the bathroom and appeared onstage wearing a towel as a cape, a big S on my chest sculpted with shaving cream while wearing a pair of Underoos two sizes too small – with a plastic Mighty Mouse embarrassingly glued to a location where I would have rather not had the audience's attention drawn. It has taken me decades but I have finally blocked out of my memory the comments and catcalls that were hurled my way.

I determined that my time in Toledo would be cut short. The very minute my contract at the Commodore Perry ended, I loaded my car with the few possessions I had and hit the highway. No lie... I literally left that night after the curtain call. My embarrassment trumped my lack of funds. I figured I would drive until I was out of gas and money. And this I did... and survived to tell the tale.

*Michael Ondrasik and Home Video Studio specialize in the preservation of family memories through the digitalization of film, videotapes, audio cassettes, photos and slides. For more information, call 352-735-8550 or visit our [website](#).*