

# BOWING

**T**he lights dim. The crowd awaits. A thin curtain is all that separates you from an audience full of people ready to laugh, gasp, cry, and cheer as you deftly deliver the dramatic performance of a lifetime.

Unless you forget your lines, that is. Then that large and welcoming audience can start to feel like nothing more than a roomful of eyes witnessing every agonizing second of silence.

Theater: not for the faint of heart! But despite all the stomach butterflies and unexpected speed bumps it often provides, the payoff can be truly magical.

For the youth in one ward in Maryland, USA, acting and theater are more than just a hobby. "It's my happy place," says Mary A., a high school senior. "Our theater group has a really strong family vibe."

The youth in this ward have many different hobbies and interests. Theater, though, is common ground. "All of us are involved in theater," says Sonja G., also a senior. "It's a really good place to get together and make something great."

For this group, the appeal of the open stage is obviously a big one.

So it wasn't a small thing when an upcoming school play was announced that made them feel uncomfortable.

## Plot Problems

"I had no idea what this particular show was about," says Nathan H., a senior. However, he soon got the feeling that the play in question wasn't just any old production. A few friends from school started asking him if he planned to

# OUT

*The spotlight  
was ready.  
But these  
youth weren't.*

actually audition this time. Intrigued by why they'd ask, Nathan did some research.

"I looked into it and made a decision based on what I found that I wasn't going to be a part of this show."

He wasn't the only one. "Once I learned about the story, I didn't audition," says Carolyn K., a junior.

"It wouldn't be appropriate for me to be up there on stage to show these characters."

This wasn't merely a matter of waiting for the next show to come around, either. For the seniors, it would be one of their last chances to perform at school. This was also the only musical of the year. "It was devastating," Mary says about the prospects of not being in a show with her friends.

Sonja, who would have been stage manager for the musical, also chose not to join. "There was not really a way for me to do my job and not watch the things I wasn't comfortable with," she says. One by one each of the youth in the ward decided not to participate.

The director asked the students to please reconsider, but their decision held. Soon, the director paid the rights for the show (payment which could not be refunded), auditions were held, and parts were cast. Everything was looking like a done deal. And then along came a snowstorm.

## Plot Twist

Right when things were getting rolling with the musical, an enormous snowstorm shut down that part of Maryland. They were out of school for over a week.

During this time their theater director—who some of these youth think of as a kind of second dad—gave the matter a lot of thought. This director, who is a



### STAND TRUE

"Be a friend to all, but never compromise your standards. Stand true to your convictions and faith."

Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Your Wonderful Journey Home," *Ensign*, May 2013, 128.

Christian from another faith, had been praying about what to do. Before school resumed after the big storm, the drama group got some big news. Mary said, “He sent a text. The text said, ‘I’ve been praying and I don’t feel right leaving out the Mormon kids. You’ve got until Tuesday to come up with a monologue and a song.’” (That’s theater-speak for get ready to audition.)

Yes, the director decided to drop the original musical entirely. And just like that, the curtain beckoned once more.

“We were all really excited!” Carolyn said.

The youth all jumped at the chance to help in the new production and have enjoyed rolling up their theatrical sleeves once more.

## Plot Fix

Now, not all stories of this nature can have this kind of a happy ending (on or off the stage). Most of the time, choosing not to participate in something inappropriate doesn’t result in such a significant reversal. But even realizing that they’d be missing out on one of their favorite interests, the youth were at peace with their choice. “I had finally come to terms that it’s OK,” Mary said.

From the start, this group of youth kept each other strong and helped one another live the gospel. “It was easier for us to stand up for our beliefs because there was more than just one of us,” says Sonja. “It’s good when you have friends and you can stand together.” NE

