



Greenwood eNewsletter January 2010



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Do you have news to share or an event you'd like publicized to the Greenwood community? We're always looking for ideas for the eNewsletter, so let us know about anything you'd like to see included in an upcoming edition. Just e-mail your editor at sbergman@mnorch.org

Greenwood Goes Hollywood!



Greenwooders have been known to achieve fame and fortune in a variety of fields, but there haven't been a whole lot of movie stars to roam the fields of Cummington. So when cellist and current senior camper Aaron Wolff found himself starring in a major Hollywood blockbuster this fall, word got around pretty quickly. Aaron,

who recently moved with his family to Boston after several years in Minneapolis and London, showed up for an open casting call in Minnesota to try out for the role of Danny Gopnik in *A Serious Man*, the latest opus from legendary sibling directors Joel & Ethan Coen. (Past Coen Brothers hits have included *Fargo* and *The Big Lebowski*.) He beat out 400 other teenage boys for the role, and wound up on big screens from coast to coast as the hilariously troubled son of an even more-troubled father.

We caught up with Aaron (*pictured at left with Ethan Coen*) by e-mail to ask about his experience working on the film. Here's what he had to say...

Q: First of all, how exactly does a kid from Minneapolis with no film credits to his name

wind up in a major Hollywood movie in the first place?

A: Well, the Coen Brothers, at least for this film, did not want any big names. Since it is a very personal film, they wanted to go back to their roots [in the Twin Cities.] The majority of the speaking roles went to Minnesotans.

Q: Is acting something you've always wanted to pursue, or was this something new for you?

A: I've always liked acting -- theatre as well as the movies. When I lived in England, I saw probably over a hundred plays in five years. Then, when we came back to the US, I participated in my school's musical every year. This year I got the lead role of Wallace in *Women and Wallace*, an incredible student-directed production at school. I suppose that acting is secondary to music, at least for the time being. But it's funny how I spend pretty much my whole life playing and working hard on the cello, then suddenly this huge acting opportunity comes along without much effort on my part. Acting is also a great method of getting to know yourself -- playing different roles pushes your limits, your confidence...

Q: How much freedom did you have as an actor to create Danny's character? Did the Coens more or less tell you exactly how they wanted each scene to play out, or was there a fair amount of freedom to experiment?

A: The Coens are famous for their limited instruction. Every scene requires just one rehearsal, and then we're shooting. Mind you, they are not disorganized in the slightest. You can tell, even just by reading the screenplay, that they have planned out every little detail, and it really shows on film. In *A Serious Man*, there's so much going on that isn't exactly obvious. On set, everything is so smooth. Each and every member of the crew is a master at his or her job no matter how big or small. There is such peace and contentment. Yelling would be unthinkable.

Q: How many of your fellow campers this past summer knew about *A Serious Man*? It hadn't come out yet, but it was making the festival rounds, I believe. Were you a Greenwood celebrity, or still just plain old Aaron?

A: I don't really know. I'd say about half of them. The trailer actually came out during [camp], and I took a few friends to The Old Creamery to watch it on [counselor Russell O'Rourke's] laptop. Then everyone knew... everything at Greenwood spreads before you can blink. I think most people who know me disregard the fact that I was in this movie. I feel like people see it as just another part of me, which is how I see it, so that's good. So yeah, I guess I was still plain old Aaron. But if *A Serious Man* had come out in July, it would've been really neat to have made a mass pilgrimage to Northampton one Sunday to see the film with everyone.

Q: Lastly, which is more thrilling: attending the premiere of a major Hollywood film that you star in, or playing the Mendelssohn Octet (or insert your favorite Greenwood group to date) in the barn?

A: Well, they're both thrilling in different ways. The premiere was absolutely enthralling,

but also terrifying. The same goes for performing the 4th movement of the Ravel String Quartet on a Saturday night in July. I've realized how much society puts movie actors on a pedestal. Greenwood is something very close to my heart, and the Ravel String Quartet is such an amazing piece, so it's sort of like a double whammy. *A Serious Man* was a blast, the movie was excellent, and going to the premiere was thrilling, but not any more than performing a great piece for some of my favorite people at my favorite place.

\$10K For Kids Is Only A Click Away...

Greenwood alum (1990s vintage) Lesley Chen is living in El Paso, Texas these days, working as general manager of the El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestras. She sent word late last month that the EPYSO is in the running for a \$10,000 grant from Clorox, but they'll only get it if they rack up a huge number of votes on Facebook. The EPYSO was chosen as one of the top 30 finalists for the grant out of over 5,000 applicants. The top five groups in the Facebook vote (which will be open through January 17th) will win the \$10K and a feature in People Magazine. Only Facebookers can vote (and you do have to add an application), but you can vote every day. "We are the only music program in the running, and we could really use this money," says Lesley.

So how about it, Greenwooders? If you're on Facebook and you'd like to help out Lesley and the kids in El Paso, here is the link:

http://apps.facebook.com/brightfuture/causes/4624_epsyos

We hope you e hope you find these newsletters fun to read and contribute to, but we realize that not everyone may want to receive them. If you would like to opt out of receiving future editions of the newsletter, please click the link at the very bottom of this e-mail. Thank you.



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