

Sixth-Grade Broadway Revue

Jim Richards

Reb Tevye is in the shower singing
“If I Were a Rich Man.” He’s eleven,
my son, and suddenly in love
with Broadway music because Mrs. Hale,
whom he affectionately calls
The Bomb, has inspired him. This little football player

singing “Bless Your Beautiful Hide”
is shorter than every girl in his choir class. He can’t hit
either *O* in “Oklahoma,”
but this doesn’t stop him from belting as he sits
at the kitchen table doing his math.
I get to wear a wig, he says one day after school,

and a dress when we sing
“Standing on the Corner Watching All the Girls.”
He himself seems surprised
by his enthusiasm. One night he showers
too long, singing
“I Believe” from *The Book of Mormon* over and

over. He comes out
warm and wet, clean as a rinsed white rose, a towel
crunched in one hand to keep it
around his waist, his bare chest a lit lamp. *Dad*, he says,
we learned a song in school
about Mormons. I knew this was coming. *It tells about*

some stuff we believe. I've heard it,
I say. It's supposed to be funny. He doesn't believe me,
is sure it's sincere, is excited
that he and his friends are singing together about
what makes him
different. People will laugh, I say, when you sing it

at the concert. *Why?*
he asks, smiling, incredulous. I try to explain, but he
doesn't believe. When the night
of the concert arrives, the flame of his excitement
for *Wicked, The Sound*
of Music, has suffocated. His face is dim, looks

as though he wants to rush
through each song. There is no pleasure in it anymore.
His movements are like
a kid waiting in line at the grocery store.
When the medley
finally morphs into "I Believe," it's clear that this

is the test he's been waiting for.
His light returns, his face beams with sincerity as he belts,
A Mormon just believes!
his mouth in a tight, high-note smile, his eyelids clenched,
his freckled forehead moist,
his arms slowly rising from his sides, when the laughter

begins. His eyes shift. He can't believe it.
He sings louder and more earnestly, his face reddening,
the laughter growing stronger,
his whole body ringing against the roars as if one voice
sing-screaming *believe, believe,*
could save him from the truth, and them, and all of us.