

There's No Place Like The Merry Old Land Of Oz

Yesterday was quite the busy day. It began around 9AM as I went to the area chamber of commerce office to sell tickets for FCF's production of *The Wizard of Oz*. Quite an experience (fun but at times busy). Answering phones, waiting on the line of theatergoers, marking charts, getting the tickets, running credit cards, and attempting to keep an accurate count of sold tickets was fun. Of course there were down times, but by 5PM, each of the 4 performances were really close to 300 with Friday night just one ticket shy of 400. I found it amazing that Thursday night's opening is the second strongest. Sunday afternoon is a typical slow day but Saturday night?! Ah well... it was only Tuesday.

After selling tickets, I had a few hours before I needed to be at the Arts and Ed building to sit and review said show. I must say that it was much easier to review Oz since it remains one of my perennial favorites than it was my first time doing a review for (Cr)OKLAHOMA! It certainly took less time... or maybe last night's show ended sooner. I must apologize for any omissions to the cast as I attempted to include everyone including the adorable Toto. At review time, the programs had not yet arrived and a full cast list was unavailable. However, most of it was available on the theatrical group's [website](#). So after completing my task, and forwarding it on to the President, my second review will soon be on the printed page, if not on the screens of cyberspace. Hopefully, it will appear before the show completes its one weekend schedule.

There's No Place Like The Merry Old Land Of Oz

by Jamy Shaffer

In 1900, Lyman Frank Baum published the novel *The Wonderful*

Wizard of Oz having no idea the impact that the little children's book would have on the world. Twelve sequel novels, stage plays, and silent movies followed. However, it was the 1939 beloved classic motion picture starring Judy Garland that would catapult the tale to atmospheric proportions. This weekend only, under the very capable direction of Beth Schweitzer, Fountain City Festival presents the most faithful stage adaptation of the cherished film.

McKenzie Frazier leads the cast as Dorothy Gale, the young naïve farm girl who dreams of going "Over the Rainbow" and escaping the dull, lifeless Kansas prairie. Miss Frazer who is in her late teens does a fine job of portraying the young dreamer by use of subtle body gestures and a childlike voice that give Dorothy just the right mix of naivete and, at times, fear.

As in the movie, the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion each are characters from Dorothy's Kansas life recreated in more colorful, dramatic fashion. Brian Coon is exceptional as Hunk who, in Oz, becomes the man of straw with no brains. Coon's agility on stage is phenomenal as he falls down, picks himself up, and puts the stuffing back in.

Casey Wood delivers a dramatic Hickory/Tin Man. Even for a character with no heart, Wood does a fine job of portraying the emotions he lacks. His stiff movements on stage are wonderful as he stands as if posing for his statue.

The third friend Dorothy encounters along the Yellow Brick Road is hilarious slapstick at its finest. Adam Coon is brilliant as the Cowardly Lion. Even as Zeke, Coon is remarkable as he runs away in the face of danger. Once in the costume of the fearful king of the forest, he goes all out with his perfect comedic timing and fabulous stage presence.

Amy Vondeylen is hideously delicious as Miss Gulch/Wicked Witch of the West. Her over the top, extremely melodramatic,

villainous portrayal is sure to draw hisses and catcalls from the audience.

Caprianna Parrish brings a delightful, airy quality in her portrayal of Glinda, the Good With of the North. Her costume, like many of the other characters' is almost a direct replica of the original film version.

The Great and Powerful Wizard of Oz himself is brought to fine life by Tom Schweitzer. His showman approach to the character is just the thing needed to portray the humbug who is a good man but a very bad wizard. Hopefully, this comes as no surprise to anyone.

Anyone who has ever seen Keith Day in action knows what a fine character actor he is. Mr. Day displays a great sense of warmth but befuddlement as Uncle Henry along side Sarah Schaper as Auntie Em. Later, he brings the same greatness to his role as the Guard at the Gates of the Emerald City.

What is Oz without the adorable munchkins? There will sure to be a collective sigh and laughter as Marlee Yoder, Katherine Seaman, Vivien Ewing, Hannah Goodrich, Kayla Arnold, Veronica Nichols, and Lizzy Canield portray the female variety. Austin Damrod, Cory Yosick, Jesse Short, Seth Short, Milo McRobbie, Logan Psurny, Mason Frazer, Mason Bassett, Wyatt Short, Keegan McCashen, and Micah McCashen play their male counterparts.

The three apple trees who seemed to have a larger on stage role than in the movie are played by Jeremy Scott, Jared Wigent, and Thomas Vandal.

Some of the Witch's Winkie guards ("O E O Yo Ah") are played by Cameron Lyons, Austin Teegarden, Mason Bassett, Wyatt Short, Evan Raub, and Jeremy Scott.

Other Emerald City Ozians are played by FCF stalwarts Ron and Linda Jinks, Noelle Goodson, Sara Yosick, Nanci Frazer, Briana Gearhart, Megan Fry, Maddi Heisler, Kathleen Walsh, Remy

Cousino, Emma McCashen, Chloe McCashen, Heather Teegarden, Edwina Phillips, Sandy Bowers, and Faith Stambaugh.

So... take your own journey along the Yellow Brick Road and go Over the Rainbow as FCF presents *The Wizard of Oz*. Thursday July 28th – Saturday July 30th at 7:30pm and Sunday July 31st at 2PM. Unlike years past, the show runs only one weekend at the Bryan Arts and Education Building. Tickets are \$10 each and may be purchased at the Bryan Chamber office or by calling 419-636-2247. Don't miss this cherished family-friendly show!

(Jamy Shaffer is a veteran community theater performer who has been involved in more shows in the Northwest Ohio region on and off stage than even he can count.)

On The Other Side Of The Audition

Since my leg still will not allow me to audition for a full-length show, I had to settle for assisting the audition process for [FCF's](#) production of one of my all-time favorites, *The Wizard of Oz*. Although it was fun hanging out, signing the auditioners in, I really REALLY wanted to be one of those who filled out the form, had his headshot taken, and led down the long hallway to face the three rather intimidating ;)judges. It was so hard to just not throw caution to the wind and say "To heck with it!" and grab "Master of the House" out of the car and deliver my best Lion. I really don't think it would have been so hard if it was not THIS musical (ok... who am I fooling?). But I WILL be back on some stage in some venue soon! I am confident in that!

In total, we had 22 people sign in. Most of them were teenage girls. We had a few young kids and a few adults but no where near enough to choose a cast of this shows magnitude. We really need more of the same to come in tomorrow from 9am-2pm.

I think we had two guys total. Squirmy even held back a few minutes after his audition ended and asked how I am doing. Better... just annoyed, but I'm plowing through it.

So... if anyone in the area is available (Age 8-80+) stop by the Wesley United Methodist Church in Bryan from 9-2. Kids... be prepared to sing "Happy Birthday"; "Row, Row, Row Your Boat"; or some other like song. Adults... have a two minute prepared song and be prepared to read from the script. To say that I wish I could audition is an understatement, but I know what must come first.

BOY DID I NEED THAT!

My adventures for the week have been very rewarding and gratifying. Monday, I went to a board meeting of which I have not been since January ☐ Everyone was happy to see me and inquired about my well-being and progress. Slow but sure and gimping along but progressing however little. After the meeting, C,L, and I went to dinner and had a nice, engaging conversation that entailed a lot of topics not the least of was some possibilities about my next great adventure. One **VERY PROMISING** possibility will depend upon my current manager. Since I seem to see her less and less frequently, I left her a message informing her of the possibility. I just pray that she makes a decision that will be beneficial to both of us. I told her I will not pursue anything until I am as close to 100% as possible.

Today, I went to my first voice lesson in three months. I was immediately bombarded by two adorable boys. One who kept regaling me with jokes typical of a three or four year old.

By the time the 6 year old was read to whoop me at Battleship, it was time to begin my lesson. I did AMAZINGLY well for sitting in a chair... of course, I tried to sit with correct posture. But I narrowed my recital choices to two.

One requires a female to join me. K informed me that there are a few of her other students who would be up to the challenge but she hesitated to have a teenager perform the number with a 30 something. So, she allowed me to try finding a guest performer. Very fun piece while just a bit challenging. I can think of a few ladies I would enjoy performing with.

So... while still gimping along, the two days venturing around helped immensely! Being with great friends and doing what I love to do definitely helped! Just learning to accept the fact that it is a talent which I need to begin to share more and more. One of the many gifts I have been told that I possess which can only come from Above. Thank Him for that!

PLUS... as an added plus, I got to catch up with a GREAT friend from my WM days. Via facebook on which I found her a few weeks ago. Go to chat a bit, discuss lots of things including the dismissal of our former boss which seems to be interesting yet surprising all at once.

Over The Rainbow In A Different Oz

Tonight sees the opening of what sounds like a different

production of [The Wizard of Oz](#). Produced by Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber, the London premiere has all the elements of the classic 1939 movie however, it has added elements which (according to Sir Andrew) make it more suitable to the stage.

Added are 4 songs which give Glinda, The Wicked Witch of the West, and the Wizard a chance to use their singing chops.

Apparently, the Good Witch's short bit in Munchkinland does not count as a song. For the new songs, Lloyd Webber re-teamed with lyricist Tim Rice a partnership which dissolved 30 years ago after *Evita*.

Casting for Dorothy was done in what seems to be the Lord's new-found trademark: the televised talent show. He did it for Joseph, Maria in *The Sound of Music*, and now for Oz. I dunno about this American Idol meets theatre concept.

A familiar name was cast in the title role. Michael Crawford (the original Phantom of Lloyd Webber's production) was number one on the list. I can actually picture Mr. Crawford in the roles of Professor Marvel and the Great Humbug. Wonder how many other roles he will be filling. [Taylhis](#), how many parts did Frank Morgan have in the movie?

This July, [Fountain City Festival](#) will be performing a version closer in production to the original movie. As soon as I get back on my feet... I really pray that it is soon... I look forward to helping to bring one of my favorite shows to the stage.

Throwing Bricks At The Huber

Misleading title but it works. Tonight was the monthly board meeting for [FCF](#) and a festive mood was created. Amongst other topics discussed was possible promotions to get the word out about *The Wizard of Oz* coming next summer for 4 sure-to-be

spectacular performances. One idea bandied around was throwing bricks at the crowds watching the annual Jubilee Parade. Unfortunately, the idea was for FOAM bricks painted gold. I probably could come up with some real bricks... not sure if any are still left from the demolishing of the old town hall (haven't really noticed lately).

After the meeting, I went to dinner and had a great time as always and a mysterious spirit paid for our meal. All eyes turned to me when the waitress announced that our bill had been taken care of. Honestly, it was not me this time. Totally innocent THIS time! Happy Birthday once again tomorrow, Taylor!

Finally, I headed over for my nephew/Godson's Christmas concert which had been postponed from last Monday when we had our first pre-winter storm. As always, the Huber is a glorious site for a concert of any magnitude but it just creates a magical, festive atmosphere this time of year. This season, it is easy to see why the Junior High and High School bands combine: the senior High only has **10** members. Get some of those choir members to join. The concert was wonderful!

Everything from selections from *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* (one of the band director's personal favorite holiday specials... who am I to argue) to a few jazzy selections (didn't really care for a jazz arrangement of *Silent Night*... call me a traditionalist).

A few of the choral pieces took me back almost 20 years. A more traditional *Silent Night* ALWAYS creates nostalgic, bittersweet memories. As Jeff remarked, at least we could stand for the final song: Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" from *Messiah*. I wasn't sure if anyone was actually going to stand until one brave soul got to his feet. Two seconds later and I would have risen. I have always said that ending a concert with the piece is a sure-fire way to get a standing ovation. I've often wondered what would happen if the performance was not up to par. After an hour and a half, I don't think anyone

wanted to sit down again.

Looking Ahead

Tonight was my introduction into a new theatre board. I think this organization will be a fun, challenging, and ultimately rewarding crowd to be a part of. Hopefully, the passion I have for the dramatic arts will be beneficial. This summer, the group will be presenting the beloved, immortal classic *The Wizard of Oz*. I have dreamed of playing one particular role for as long as I can remember.

However, another nearby group will be presenting another of my favorite shows. I believe that I have mentioned a time or two that I have been in two separate productions of *Annie*. Back in 1992 at good ol' EHS, I played Rooster. Daniel Francis Hannigan will forever be one of my most memorable and favorite roles. Back in 2001 (I believe it was), I was cast as a Hooverville-ite and as one of Daddy Warbucks' servants. As we approach the 35th anniversary of the musical's Broadway debut (and it's planned 2nd revival in 2012 as part of the celebration), the opportunity to audition for Rooster once again would be a delight!

Thank goodness, I have a few months to ponder the conundrum.

For any lurkers who may be out there who deem themselves qualified to fill one of the PAID technical (director, pit director, vocal director, etc) positions for a full-scale version of the *Wizard of Oz*, visit the [Fountain City Festival](#) website within the coming weeks for more information. If you drop by the website now, you can take a tour of the past few summer shows the group has produced.