

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.)

You Cain't Say No to OKLAHOMA! by Jamiahsh

Yes, my first byline appeared in today's local newspaper. VERY exciting and fun how it came about. Last Thursday, I received an email asking if I would like to go an review the local production of *OKLAHOMA!*. The extremely talented regular reviewer of theatrical productions was unavailable for press night. The fact that he is also the president of the board for the non-profit theatre group also might have played a role. So, I quickly replied and was really excited about the opportunity.

Just prior to the beginning of my voice lesson, I hear my cell phone ring (and no it is no longer what I was informed was the theme to "Sex and the City..." never seen either the tv show... or the movie). I quickly got the details... time was the most

important thing, the rest I pretty much figured out on my own.

A small town community theatre needs positive feedback from the media. These are not paid professionals performing here.

As I have said before, the show is not one of my favorites for many reasons... chief among them is the length. However, I am pleased to say that [Fountain City Festival's](#) performance was top notch. It was very easy to mention all of the principal actors and a few of the veterans who have been involved in the eleven shows the group has produced (two of which I have been in).

The production team decided to remain totally faithful to Rodgers and Hammerstein's original. So faithful that only 8 measures of the score were dropped. Everything gelled nicely; the acting, singing, orchestra, set, costuming, and choreography were all superb. Where most groups may drop such moments as the Dream Ballet for the benefit of time or the lack of decent dancers, the sequence was included and it was extraordinary. In fact, all of the big dance numbers were high energy and very engaging. All of the performers on stage (from Curly all the way to the cameo performers) remarkably brought their roles to life. The director also was involved on stage... very fun. He surely had a lot of help from his production team. I have also worked with the vocal director and pit conductor in the past.

While there was a lot of good to put in the review, it was hard to put into a coherent article. Who wants to read a review containing the same adjectives over and over. I had to put in a bit of the history... which was easy for the show which kicked off the modern musical... as well as enough of the plot to engage anyone who might not know the show. Plus be kind to everyone involved. Finally... shortly after 1AM Friday morning (about the same amount of time it took for the entire show), I forwarded a copy. It only took a three editions of the paper to see the light of day. It could have stood a bit of editing to reflect the show dates. I just hope no one tries to attend

a performance tonight.

So... anyone in the area who wants to see a great performance of the most classic of modern musicals... check out the remaining shows this weekend. Just forget how dated the material is. I do think there is an audience for these light-hearted shows. And as the banner on the website says: Professional Quality Theatre in Northwest Ohio. And another piece to add to my resume! Right up there with a little television performance.

73 Is The New 23

Last summer, I posted on the story of a young little leaguer who was snubbed because he was TOO GOOD. Well, maybe he can take a lesson from Ken Mink who at 73 years young is the oldest living college basketball player. Mr. Mink is a 6' shooting guard for [Roane State Community College](#). At first when he initially tried out for the team the other players, coaches, everyone involved though it was some kind of hoax and the man just escaped an insane asylum. However, there is more to the tale.

In his earlier days after a successful Freshman season (1955-56), Mink was excused from Lees Junior College in Jackson, KY. He was called to the President's Office and was expelled from the institution for soaping the basketball coach's office and putting shaving cream in his shoes... although Mr. Mink denies it more than 50 years later. No due process in those days so the youngster had no recourse but to go home, but was never far from the courts (basketball).

Along with Ken is his wife of 11 years, Emilia (68), who can be seen at every game wearing a retro- cheerleading outfit of

poodle skirt, sweater, saddle shoes, and pom-poms.

You can watch Ken Mink in action [here](#)... number 54. Although he is eligible for three more seasons, the athlete feels that one will be enough. Way to go!!!

Early Morning BatPost

Before I get into the meat of my post, I would like to apologize to my new theatre chum whose name I could not remember until tonight. All I have to do is recall the name of a state capitol that shares its name with an omelet... hopefully, it does not come to that. I am terrible.

Anywho, *The Dark Knight* is an interesting problem. There are pros and cons to the latest caped crusader adventure. As anyone who has access to any type of media knows, this is Heath Ledger's swan song. His Joker is the highlight of the movie. Everything about him just reeks of sadistic villainy. Just looking at him is enough to send chills up and down one's spine. But more than that, his entire characterization was evil to the core. I am sure that there will be parallels drawn to the performance (there already have been) and his untimely demise; yet, he was utterly phenomenal and should be remembered for it.

I found one aspect to be both a plus and a negative. I actually liked some of the depth of the key players. However, there was a bit (or A LOT) more than we needed. It seems that we knew the life story of EVERY character who has a name and this made the movie drag at times. Anyone who is remotely familiar with Batman knows that he fights to clean up the corruption within Gotham City... However, it seemed you could only count on one officer to be totally uncorruptable. I will

say that it is a case of too much of a good thing. That being said, I believe that Mr. Nolan has gotten the characters and the overall atmosphere right in this film as well as *Batman Begins* (there are no nipples in the batsuit, and Bruce Wayne IS a playboy millionaire... although it is probably billionaire by now... and who is not above falling asleep in his own board meetings after an evening of “fun”).

So, while it was lengthy and had lots of down time between action pieces I did consider it worthwhile to be among the first to see *The Dark Knight*. The major action scenes were fun to watch and as I keep commenting, Heath Ledger was phenomenal as the Clown Prince of Crime. The hype about that is totally true. Plus, it was awesome just to be among friends old and new (if I can just remember names). Also, I was the only person brave enough to bring my bucket for BYOB night at the movies. We did arrive before midnight after all ☐ .

I almost forgot to mention my favorite bit. DA Harvey Dent’s line:

You either die a hero or you live long enough to see yourself become the villain.

Prophetic sentiment.

Framed Hare

For several decades, movie directors have attempted to seamlessly blend live action and animation. In the 1945 film [Anchor’s Aweigh](#), Gene Kelly danced with Jerry Mouse. Dancing penguins served as waiters in *Mary Poppins*. Michael Jordan played basketball with Bugs Bunny and a multitude of other

[Looney Tunes](#). There must be several other examples; however, one of the finest films to combine animated characters and live actors is 1988's [Who Framed Roger Rabbit](#). Bob Hoskins plays Eddie Valiant, a middle-aged detective investigating the murder of Marvin Acme (owner of Acme Products and Toontown). The prime suspect: Roger Rabbit, star of Maroon Cartoons. Roger is "framed" for the murder after he discovers that his beloved wife Jessica played patty cake with Acme. Valiant (who's brother was killed by a toon) reluctantly agrees to help Roger clear his good name. But, the plot takes a back seat to the cameo appearances by hundreds of cartoon characters. Black-and-white as well as color toons interact with each other as well as with their human counterparts. Bugs Bunny, Mickey Mouse, Daffy Duck, Donald Duck, Betty Boop, and Droopy are just a few of the animated characters seen throughout the movie. Donald and Daffy's dueling piano scene is priceless. With the cast of characters seen throughout the movie, everyone is sure to find their favorite. Although a majority of the toons were created in the 1940s, most are easily recognizable.

Second star to the right...

and straight on til morning. This quote is from Sir James M. Barrie's [Peter Pan](#). Since the character's introduction in 1902, the boy who never grew up has been the subject of stage plays, movies, cartoon series, books, AND PEANUT BUTTER. In 1991, Steven Spielberg brought to the big screen an adventure that few thought imaginable: a grown up Peter Pan in the film [Hook](#).

Robin Williams is cast as lawyer Peter Banning who has no time for his young son Jack's baseball games and carries his cell phone wherever he goes. In an ironic scene at the beginning of

the movie, the cell phone goes off during his daughter Maggie's performance of (what else) "Peter Pan."

The Banning family travel to London to honor Granny Wendy and her orphanage. While there, Jack and Maggie are kidnapped by Captain Hook. Wendy informs Peter that he is indeed Peter Pan and the children have been kidnapped in an attempt to lure him to Neverland for one final battle. Unwilling to believe Wendy, Peter is eventually knocked out and dragged by Tinkerbell to Neverland.

The title character is played magnificently by Dustin Hoffman. The makeup makes him almost unrecognizable. Part of the fun in watching the DVD is seeing how many actors you can discover in the background: Phil Collins and Glenn Close both have small cameos.

Hook makes even the most stubborn of adults believe that buried deep inside of themselves there is a bit of the kid which all of us have inside. A great family film.

Be Careful What You Watch

Last weekend was quite eventful: a wonderful performance of *Murder with a Silver Spoon* at Orchard Hills followed by a gathering to watch a movie. I have seen parodies and spoofs of the suspense movie *The Ring* on television almost since the movie was released in 2002. WOW... it is that old and I had yet to see it?! I have always enjoyed a good suspenseful film and this is definitely a very strange one. You really need to pay attention and not drift to catch all of the nuances.

Naomi Watts plays Rachel, a young journalist who investigates the mysterious death of her niece. At the wake, Rachel

overhears a group of teenagers discussing a video which a number of students watched 7 days prior to mysteriously dying... all at the same time on the same date. After watching the video herself, Rachel begins to see the exact images which were on the recording. These images lead the investigator on a race against time to prevent not only her death but also those of her young son and his father.

Perhaps the most mysterious character in the film is Rachel's son, Aidan (David Dorfman). The child seems to have a very eerie connection to the mystery. He draws pictures of people's deaths days before they occur. It is almost as if you expect him to utter the much quote phrase "I see dead people."

Several pieces of trivia about *The Ring* caught my attention. Primarily the fact that the movie is a remake of the recent Japanese film, *Ringu*. Also, the movie was directed by Gore Verbinski who directed the "Pirates of the Caribbean" trilogy.

The Ring is an intriguing suspense thriller which holds the viewers attention. Although it does have one scene of (I'm sure and would hope) simulated animal endangerment, it is relatively devoid of gore. It is a fairly intelligent mystery.

Spread Some Sunshine

☒ Any family who sees themselves as dysfunctional needs to watch the movie *Little Miss Sunshine*. The Hoover clan gives new definition to the term. At the head of the household, we have the motivational speaker (played by Greg Kinnear) who is himself a total loser. The frazzled, chain smoking mother (Toni Collette) whose idea of a home-cooked meal is a bucket of fast food chicken... cleverly disguised as NOT KFC. The

clinically depressed, suicidal uncle (the brilliant Steve Carell) who lost the title of #1 Proust student to the new lover of his ex-boyfriend. The rebellious, teenage, Nietzsche follower who has taken a vow of silence (Paul Dano). **FINALLY**, we have the fun-loving, expletive shouting, drug addicted grandfather (Alan Arkin). They all pile into the family VW van in order to take little Olive (Abigail Breslin) from Albuquerque to Redondo Beach to compete in the Little Miss Sunshine beauty contest.

While on this road trip, the Hoover's learn some valuable lessons. You should never apologize for yourselves no matter how dysfunctional you are. Little girls who eat ice cream may or may not get fat. **AND** (strangest of all) pornography can be viewed as a sign from God; or at least be useful when pulled over by the police.

While the film contains a magnificent ensemble cast, one character in the movie deserves extra credit. The poor van that almost seemed to have a personality all its own. It should have been given a screen credit. Its broken horn gave voice to the pain it must have been feeling as it continued on the long journey with a bunch of kooks. Not since **THE ORIGINAL** Herbie the Love Bug has a Volkswagen been as memorable a character as any human.

The Amazing Spider-Man

Returning to the genre of superhero franchise movies, one of the most successful series of movies in the last decade has been the three Spider-Man films. I believe that what has made these films so special is that they each retain the same core cast: Tobey Maguire (Peter Parker/Spider-Man), Kirsten Dunst

(Mary Jane Watson), and James Franco (Harry Osborne). Plus, Sam Raimi has been the director of each of the movies. So many times a franchise fails because it goes through multiple directors. The four main people involved in these films have each stated that if any of the others were to leave then they would also. I do not think a good Spider-Man movie could be made if any of them were to step aside.

Each of the films develops the three characters in new ways, primarily the main character. The original film shows how Peter becomes the webslinger and begins to accept the sage advice of his Uncle Ben: "With great power comes great responsibility." *Spider-Man 2* finds the hero attempting to find a balance between his life behind the mask and that of Peter Parker. *Spider-Man 3* takes Peter on a journey of his dark side and forces him to see how far his power can take him.

So many times action/adventure movies are just that: action, adventure but no character. With a director such as Sam Raimi who really cares about the characters he is putting on film, the three Spider-Man films thrived. Not only do audiences thrill to the escapades of "your friendly neighborhood superhero" but they also see into the life of Peter Parker and the characters around him.

Tis the season to be Mary

Ok... it is not Christmas time. However, as we are under a dreaded Winter Storm Warning I felt like talking about one of my favorite Yuletide movies. As I was playing Scene It with my niece earlier this evening, this question was raised: "In the National Lampoon Vacation movies, what was the nickname of

Clark Griswold's son?" Of course anyone who has seen the misadventures of the Chicago suburban family knows the answer: Rusty.

Christmas Vacation is my favorite of the four films (yes, there were four... let us not forget the travesty that was *Vegas Vacation*). It shows the hapless Griswold clan as they do their best to entertain their whole extended family (both sides mind you). Everything from chopping down the family Christmas tree to the reading of "A Visit from St. Nick" on Christmas Eve. My favorite scene from this classic has to be Clark hanging from the eavestrough attempting to staple lights onto the roof. I can imagine my father doing the same thing... even attaching his coat sleeve to the roof and sliding down with the collapsing ladder.

One nitpicky bit though. Speaking of Rusty (as well as Audrey, the daughter), they seemed to age differently in each movie. The young man seemed to decrease in age between *European Vacation* and *Christmas Vacation*. Rusty was played by Jason Lively (?) in Europe and by Johnny Galecki (before he was cast as Darlene's boyfriend on "Roseanne") at Christmas. I often wondered why the change in age. It's not as if Chevy Chase, Beverly D'Angelo, and Randy Quaid could decrease in age. Just a minor quibble to an otherwise hilarious holiday tradition.