

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.)

May I Return...

What a day! I took two of my nieces to Journey Oz as the cast and crew prepared for what is sure to be a [WONDERFUL](#) production next weekend. I once again will be playing reviewer Tuesday night. Today, the cast and crew provided an on and back stage experience tailored to the entire family.

Munchkins, Winkies, the Wizard, Wicked Witch, Scarecrow, Cowardly Lion, Tin Man, and Dorothy were on hand for photo ops and previews... and "her little dog, too." Alyssa and Sydney were both quietly excited at the site.

After, Megan texted me and asked if I would like to accompany her to an area production of [Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat](#) which starred two thespians I have had the honor of performing with previously. So after grabbing a bite to eat and dragging her to church as I had to sing, we headed out. Tim has really grown as an actor and delivered a

FINE performance. Crystal as always was stellar as one of the trio of narrators. This is the first time I have known of a production utilizing more than one narrator and it worked nicely. The entire cast looked like they were having such an outstanding time. In every show, it is important to believe that the people on stage are actually enjoying what they are doing. Joseph perhaps a bit more than any other because it can easily slip into "cheese." The gentleman portraying "Levi" is the husband of a friend of mine who I have known since my pre-school days. Could not find him after the show to congratulate him. Just one of many shows that never gets old for me either watching or performing in. Nine months is a long time. But soon I will be on stage delivering the list of songs I have been perfecting.

A very fun day spent with loved ones doing things I love to do.



Sydney and Alyssa with the
Cowardly Lion

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.

Best In Film

Seriously, how many different groups must we listen to in order to determine what is the best film of all time? We already have the periodic AFI specials. Tonight we had another group telling us which was supposed (I believe) to take the popular vote into account. One of several genres I caught was "Best Musical." Of course, I had to comment on that one. I took umbrage with the five choices and their placement. Now we have "Best Kiss?" OH< PLEASE! Back to the

topic at hand...

Best Musical:

- *West Side Story* (1961) I don't believe that there has ever been a more celebrated movie musical... winner of 10 Academy Awards. The Romeo and Juliet story told amidst the backdrop of gang infested New York City. Elvis was offered the lead role of Tony; however, turned it down because he thought it would tarnish his image if he were associated with a film that dealt with violence. Fascinating, since one of his earliest films, *King Creole*, dealt with just that. I, personally would have placed this one higher.
- *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) **Classic, CLASSIC, CLASSIC!** Gene Kelly dancing and singing with a 103° temperature while being drenched by a mixture of water and milk (because water alone did not show up well enough). My favorite scene, Donald O'Connor's "Make Em' Laugh" song and dance.
- *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) **WHAT!!!! Totally missed out on this one!** Especially when you look at the next two. One tidbit I was not aware of: at times, Judy Garland could not stand working with Toto because his breath was so awful. Help me out, Taylhis... have you heard THAT one?!
- *Grease* (1978) While I do enjoy a viewing from time to time, this one gets on my nerves. Maybe it is from all the times my siblings and I were allowed to stay up past our bedtimes to watch it on a school night... maybe it was the drama of a certain community theatre's production. Definitely voted too high... should have been #5 at best. Well... at least the horrendous *Dirty Dancing* was not in the top 5. I guess there are some who consider it a musical.
- *The Sound of Music* (1965) The most profitable movie musical of all time. With inflation taken into account, it has made over \$1 billion placing it third all time

behind *Gone with the Wind* and the original *Star Wars*. I would have a hard time deciding between this and *Oz* as the top musical. Both are personal favorites.

At least they got the "Top Action Film" correct. *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. No bloody Indiana Jones and the... placed before the title. When did they add that, anyway? I dunno... would anyone be game for a fifth installment? Harrison Ford would be if the story was right. Just do away with Indy's son.

Feeling Adventurous

I'm not sure if it was the 60°+ weather of the past weekend (sure felt good) or just the idea of a little return to normalcy (whatever that is) but I have decided that this week I am going to set out on a few of the things I have been missing out on. Last Friday, I ventured out to get my first refill on my meds. A 90 day fill up... I guess I really am going to be on it for A LONG TIME, but it is for the best.

Later this afternoon, I am going to attend my first FCF board meeting since this all began (back in January... I refuse to miss more than 2). I am so excited to be able to get back and help get one of my favorite shows rolling along. I have finally come to the conclusion that thinking too much about auditioning for either [The Wizard of Oz](#) OR [Annie](#) (at another area theater) needs to take a backseat until I am 100% ready to go. Even then, I really want to focus on what lies ahead after I reach that goal. Still thinking about what that is going to be.

Thursday, I am going to my first voice lesson since January. K informed me that I picked the perfect time to do so. Her students are preparing for their annual recital and she was hoping that I would be back on my feet ready to go by then. I will pass along the details once I am confident that I will be strong enough to participate. God and everyone else knows I want to be but I am still being a bit realistic. It has nothing to do with my vocal ability; hopefully, my physical ability will be there as well.

AND FRIDAY.... **MY FIRST GAME NIGHT SINCE JANUARY!** I cannot wait until I see some of my friends whom I have not seen since the start of 2011. Even those I have seen since. Hopefully, I

can convince a little buddy of mine that I do not live in the hospital. ☐

Goal setting and pushing forward just a bit surely will not impede my progress. After all... the doctor wanted me to go back to work the day after I was released from the hospital.

And in all this time, I forgot to wish my fellow Tangenteers a HAPPY THIRD BIRTHDAY! It has been a very fun and at times thought-provoking adventure and I truly enjoy continuing to get to know some of my best friends even better through their life experiences and thoughts! And WELCOME TO SPRING... it HAS been a long winter.

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.

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 tour of the past few summer shows the group has produced.

How Long Did'ya Stay Fresh In That Can

Over 70 years and still as beautiful as ever. I may have seen *Wicked* on Easter Sunday. I may have enjoyed it... even appreciated it but there is not even a remote chance that I will ever LOVE it as much as the original 1939 masterpiece *The (Wonderful) Wizard of Oz*. I remember watching it as a young boy on CBS once a year on a Friday night pre-empting *The Dukes of Hazzard* and *Dallas* (heartbreaking that my mother would miss a week of J.R.). I was one of those kids who held a cassette recorder up to the television every time a song came on. I memorized where every commercial break would be. Tonight, Turner Classic Movies had its first of two trips down the Yellow Brick Road over the holiday weekend (tomorrow at 8PM is the final showing this time around).

Why is the movie so beloved? I don't think any two people has the same reason. For me, there are many reasons why I watch it year in and year out. The theatricality for one. The set

looks like it was created on a huge stage. Painted backdrops. You can tell that the land of Oz is created artificially and that is part of the movie's charm.

The casting is brilliant. Even at 17, Judy Garland portrayed a magnificent young Kansas farm girl. She won a special miniature Oscar for the role in Best Performance by an Adolescent (I believe the official award was). To generate the on-screen chemistry between Dorothy and Toto, the dog Terry lived with Garland for a time prior to filming. The actress became so enamored with the dog that she asked the owner for permission to adopt female canine. The trainer knew what a gold mine he had as he turned to offer down.

As has been reported quite frequently, the classic "Over the Rainbow" was actually cut from initial screenings of the film. The song was thought to have slowed the action of the film. However, level heads soon prevailed and who can imagine the film without it. 1939 is considered to be the year of the classic movie. More classics were made during that year than any other in history. Another little film, *Gone with the Wind*, also premiered and was the odds on and run away winner at the Academy Awards. Oz was a cinematic hit from the start but it took a few years and re-issues before MGM felt that it was a financial success.

Of course my favorite part of the masterpiece, is one of my favorite character roles... The Cowardly Lion. But to carry around an 80+ pound costume must have needed a large amount of physicality. I could do it, though!

Who wouldn't mind getting up at 12; starting to work at one; taking an hour for lunch; and then at 2 be done? Or being clever as a gizzard? Wait a minute, clever as a gizzard? Unless there is a reference to something other than a bird's internal organs.

My Stage Debut, Sort of...

Well, ok, so last Sunday wasn't really my stage *debut*; I acted in about 4 stage plays when I was a kid, and three quarters of those roles were in The Wizard of Oz ☐

But somewhere along the line, I developed a severe stage fright, and I haven't come close to the front of a stage since I auditioned (and wasn't chosen) for the part of Thor in The Nerd in 1990. I've worked in many various capacities behind the scenes and on the members' boards for a few of our local community theater groups in recent years, and if ever someone was brave enough to inquire, I would always reject and adamantly refuse the offers of roles to be portrayed onstage in front of an audience – just way too nervous, and I've actually had many a nightmare about having to get onstage!

But a few weeks ago, my husband and I became involved in our church's semi-annual Kidstuff, which is a small collection of skits and musical numbers aimed at instilling a virtue in its audience, this time being 'compassion'. So my husband was rehearsing for Kidstuff, and I was tagging along to rehearsals as I usually do when he is in a play. I was asked by the director (who is also the school nurse in my two oldest daughters' school district) if I would "just stand there and hand out prizes" during one of the skits. Always being willing to help providing it doesn't get in the way of my family life, I obliged, and next thing I know I am a character complete with a name, Fran Hootenhiener! So I guess you could say it was my stage debut as an adult! The director was right though, I really just had to stand there during one of the skits and hand out cookies, but I even had an introduction by the extremely handsome game show host (my real-life husband) where I had to smile and even give a little wave to the

audience while I showed off my cookie prizes. I was incredibly nervous beforehand, but I got through it without fainting or doing anything really embarrassing like throwing the cookies at someone or dropping my tray. I think it helped that 90% of the audience was kids and also that our little show had a more divine purpose than simple entertainment. It was quite a different experience to work with a cast and crew who were coming together to teach kids a virtue versus a community theater production where the goal is to entertain paying adults. Not that one is better; it's just a matter of personal preference, I think, and it helped me to be less nervous.

And I think this experience helped me for what was to come last night... because of the weather, the two other small group leaders for the 7th grade girls at youth group were unable to make it, so I was in charge of ALL the 7th grade girls last night! It went better than I thought, even though I really don't like to be the one in charge of a group. But, such is life, and I'm just happy I didn't know about it until we arrived last night otherwise I would have been a nervous wreck all day. And the youth pastor's face when he told me I was the only teacher who could make it was just priceless, haha!

I'm not saying I will ever get on stage again, but for this one time, I actually had some fun!

“Only One Thing I Want Ya Fellas Ta Do...

Talk me out of it!”

This is my favorite line from one of the most classic movies

of all time. If there is one person within posting range who has never seen the 1939 version of *The Wizard of Oz*, I would seriously have a hard time believing it. The scene involves Scarecrow and Tin Man attempting to bolster the Lion's courage as they are about to enter the Witch's castle to rescue Dorothy. Just as he is on the verge of charging into the Lion's den, the feline returns to his old ways.

Back in the days when cable television was in its infancy, I remember well a Friday night around Halloween when the movie was played annually. Friday night because *The Dukes of Hazard* and *Dallas* (ho hum) were preempted. Tonight, it was shown on Turner Classic Movies so this was my yearly trip down the Yellow Brick Road. It's funny, I can almost remember where all the commercial breaks were inserted. Yet another classic I wish I could see again for the first time. A five year old screamed with delight and a four year old hid her eyes whenever "the green witch" was on screen.

A few years ago, I had the pleasure of assisting in the production of the musical for EHS. Although very faithful to the cinematic version, there were a few additions. There was a covered bridge that the quartet and Toto attempted to cross; however, the Wicked Witch of the West enchanted the bridge making it revolve so Dorothy and her companions got nowhere fast.

Another addition was the Jitterbug sequence which was actually cut from the movie. On screen, the Witch makes mention of the insects as she sends her army of winged monkeys to the Haunted Forest. The dance sequence was filmed and put on the cutting room floor.

I know there is at least one person who would possibly (if not probably) agree that *Oz* would make a good addition for a community theatre season. If we are looking for famous, well-known name shows, is there any more famous, well-known, sure to get butts in the seats and people to audition (ahhem).

Just a thought.