



# Debut stage show opens in WyCo amphitheater

By Bob Evans

Just when the treat of tornados ends for Kansas, a different tornado blew into Providence Medical Center Amphitheater, (formerly Sandstone) as “The Wizard of Oz” opened Aug. 1 with never seen before graphics and projection from the original 1939 historic music.



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The show opens at 8p.m. nightly and produced by Theater League brings live musical theatre to western Wyandotte County. The stage that has hosted a myriad of name entertainers and concerts has never produced a stage musical—until now. And, to make the musical special, original movie backgrounds will be seen for the first time in a live production.

“Dorothy and Toto are back in Kansas for the biggest stage production ever of ‘The Wizard of Oz,” Spinning Tree Theatre said. “A cast of 50 recreates the classic movie, with all of the great songs, fantastic costumes and unforgettable characters – just like the MGM movie, but live! onstage in suburban Kansas City,” claimed Spinning Tree Theatre.

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Direction for the show comes from Michael Grayman-Parkhurst while choreography comes from Grayman-Parkhurst, co-founders

of Spinning Tree Theatre. The show is produced by Theater League of Kansas City that ushers in the bigger Broadway shows at The Music Hall and The Kauffman Center, annually.

“For the first time ever, actual scenes from the famous MGM motion picture will be incorporated into a live production of the famous musical. Munchkinland, the Emerald City, Poppy fields and the Witch’s castle will all come alive at Providence Amphitheater in this state-of-the-art production,” Spinning Tree said.

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According to Mark Edleman, producer, “Tams-Witmark licenses the musical. They represent Warner Brothers, which bought the MGM film library many years ago. Since WB owns the musical, I asked the folks at Tams if I could approach WB about licensing shots from the show– stills I could use as backgrounds. I watched the film several times, notating the timing on the shots I wanted. Then I made a deal with their Theatrical Ventures division– the same office that handles their Broadway productions– to use these shots (and a couple of animated scenes– the tracking shot of Munchkinland and the “Surrender Dorothy” scene) in our production.”

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The idea for “The Wizard of Oz” in Wyandotte County came from the idea to create an annual production of the musical for tourists as well as for local family enjoyment. With The Legends nearby, the Ag Hall of Fame, the KS Speedway, and T-Bones nearby, what a wonderful location to add a live theatre production for tourism.

“We started working on this in early 2017,” Edelman said. “I was reminded of this when I ran into Bridgeete Jobe, who runs the KCK County Visitors Bureau, Carol Marinovich, who was the

mayor of KCK for many years and grew up in Wyandotte County—was very helpful in introducing the project to City leadership. And I've known Chris Fritz, who runs the venue, for 30+ years (We presented at Starlight in the 80s.).

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“Knowing how hard it would be to cast shows this summer, Michael, Andy and I picked principals whose work we admired and signed them up early. I saw Chelcie (Abercrombie) and Robert (Hingula) in “Into the Woods” and introduced myself after the show. “The Wizard of Oz” contains a great cast— and Andy and Michael got a lot out of the Munchkins,” Edleman said.

In the past, stage versions of the Judy Garland movie have just never worked, but this new attempt at the story adds many local students to sing and dance as Munchkins and enlists a cast of 50. This is the largest cast for a staged version of “The Wizard of Oz.”

“The Wizard of Oz” is very well done. The show has taken and changed some characters to make it work better on stage. The show is now more of a stage musical with dance added and “jitterbugs” in Act II to capture Dorothy and Toto. As for Dorothy, Chelcie Abercrombie delivers a more optimistic hopeful when she sings “Somewhere over the Rainbow,” as opposed to the more lonely and melancholy Judy Garland version. Dorothy wants a better life and what she learns in her dream helps her realize the love that has always surrounded her.

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The addition of the movie projections as a background remind of old backdrops used by so many productions in the past before technology created the moving sets and fewer blackouts.

The MGM projections make the audience remember the 1930 movie and the colorful OZ and Emerald City.

This version of “The Wizard of Oz” feels and looks more like musical theatre. Dialogue has been added. Characters have expanded. Music is fuller and more throughout the show. And, while Dorothy remains the focus of the show, her co-stars can and will steal the spotlight as the show progresses.

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Chelcie Abercrombie gives a good performance as Dorothy Gale. But watch out: Devon Barnes as Elvira Gulch/Wicked Witch of the West plays her part with malice and humor. She’s mean, hateful, and humorous at the same time. The other three standouts in the show are Dorothy’s sidekicks, Scarecrow (Jordan Fox), Tin Man (Brian McKinley), and Cowardly Lion (Robert Hingula). The five leads just make the show a joy to watch.

As for Providence Amphitheater, the sound and lighting were mostly good. Some minor technical problems with sound can easily be corrected for subsequent shows. But overall the technical aspects work well. The venue, much smaller than Starlight or Shawnee Mission’s Theatre in the Park features the best of both worlds. Providence has actual seats for the main area and is much smaller than the other venues, yet large enough to host much bigger shows and audiences. Perhaps more musical-theatre offerings will continue.

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The entire production comes from a tandem of quality, known producer/choreographers—Michael Grayman-Parkhurst as director, and Andrew Grayman-Parkhurst, choreographer. The rest of the production team responsible for “The Wizard of Oz” are: J. Branson, scenery design; Peggy Kellner, costume design; Nicole

Jaja, lighting design; Jae Shanks, sound design; Emily White Winter, stage management; Shannon Smith-Regnier, costume coordinator, Shara Abvabi, digital coordinator; Michael Hudgens, production manager; Eric Palmquist, props coordinator; Pete Weber, company manager; Jamie Leonard, assistant lighting designer; Mark Ferrell, musical director.

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The cast in order of appearance as listed in the program is: Chelcie Abercrombie as Dorothy, Prudence as Toto, Keshana Cook as Auntie Em (Emily Gale), Nathan Dale Short as Uncle Henry (Henry Gale), Robert Hingula as Zeke (a farmhand), Brian McKinley as Hickory (a farmhand), Jordan Fox as Hunk (a farmhand), Devon Barnes as Elvira Gulch, Dick Wilson as Professor Chester Marvel, Keshana Cook as Glinda (the Witch of the North); Citizens of Munchkinland: Emily Anderson, Conner Bickle, Jillian Bosch, Kendall Ficken, Sutton Hamm, Charity Harris, Christian Harris, Madeline Hendricks, Ethen Hensley, Chloe Hochanadel, Brooke Jenkins, Marshall Jones, Landry Ledom, Aubrey May, Charlie Moore, Savannah Mueller, Shianne Mueller, Mia Kate Musick, Megan Norris, Gabriella Petelin, Gage Phannensteil, Jonathan Raymond, Kaitlyn Seim, Finley Sitzman, Aria Smith, Creighton Smith-Allaire, Layna Talbott, Tajhuana Thorpe, Eden Tow, Cole Wood-McKeown, Macy Wright, Lauren Younger; Nathan Dale Short as Mayor of Munchkinland,

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Sheridan Mirador as Coroner, Callie Fabac as Barrister, Charity Harris, Madeline Hendricks, Josephine Pellow as Lullabye League, Christian Harris, Marshall Jones, Gage Phannensteil as Lollipop Guild; Devon Barnes as Wicked Witch of the West, Jordan Fox as Scarecrow, Jake Bartley, Sheridan Mirador, Josephine Pellow as Crows, Brian McKinley as Tinman, Darcie Hingula, Devyn Trondson, Ryan Tucker as Apple Trees, Robert Hingula as Cowardly Lion, Jake Bartley, Addison Landes,

Callie Fabac Charity Harris as Poppies, Dick Wilson as Emerald City Guard, Jake Bartley, Callie Fabac, Charity Harris, Darcie Hingula, Marshall Jones, Addison Landes, Sheridan Mirador,

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Josephine Pellow, Siena Radice, Ashley Elliott-Rowe, Devyn Trondson, Ryan Tucker, Dashawn Young as Ozians; Dick Wilson as Wizard of Oz, Jake Bartley, Callie Fabac, Sheridan Mirador, Siena Radice, Devyn Trondson, Ryan Tucker, Dashawn Young as Winkies, Nathan Dale Short, Ryan Tucker as Winkie Generals, Marshall Jones as Commander of Flying Monkeys, Christian Harris, Marshall Jones, Charlie Moore as Flying Monkeys, Jake Bartley, Charity Harris, Darcie Hingula, Addison Landes, Sheridan Mirador, Josephine Pellow, Siena Radice, Ashley Elliott-Rowe, Devyn Trondson, Dashawn Young. as Jitterbugs.

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Tickets may be purchased online through the website: at [www.WizardOfOzKC.com](http://www.WizardOfOzKC.com) and thru Ticketmaster, or in person at the box office prior to the performance.

**NOTE TO PARENTS & Grandparents:** Photos were taken by Paul'luc. He has over 500 photos available for purchase. His contact info follows:

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Tags: "The Wizard of Oz", Providence Medical Center Amphitheater, Theater League of Kansas City, Kansas City Theater, Kansas City Performing Arts, Kansas City Arts & Entertainment, Wyandotte County Events, Kansas City Kansas