

Young cast does wonders with summertime 'Oz'

By DONALD V. CALAMIA

The Southfield Summer Music Theatre presented a colorfully delightful version of "The Wizard of Oz" last weekend at Southfield-Lathrup High School.

Performed by local high school students under professional supervision, the group succeeded in transforming L. Frank Baum's timeless classic into a musical production enjoyed by young and old alike.

Director Eric M. Johnson assembled a young cast whose high energy levels and sheer enjoyment of their roles outweighed whatever lack of polish this show might have had. Few individual performances were outstanding. It was the sum total of the performances that made this show succeed.

The cast was obviously working hard at being an ensemble company, a difficult feat to achieve for even an accomplished cast.

It was pleasing that the show was directed toward both the children and the adults. Lines concerning Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (the movie studio that produced the famous "Oz" movie in the '30s) and a "loose lion" went well above the children's heads but were appreciated by the adults.

THESE AND OTHER assets more than made up for a few staging problems encountered throughout "The Wizard of Oz," especially towards the end of the show. Group scenes, particularly in the throne room of Oz, sometimes got a bit muddled, with performers blocking their view from the audience.

As choreographed by Angelina Fiordellisi, the youthful cast moved extremely well about the stage. Dancers obviously were given routines to belt their skills, as group dance numbers were well executed throughout the show.

Especially well choreographed was the crowd-pleasing "Jitterbug" number in the first act.

Program expands to 5 days

The syndicated "Lee Murray Show," currently heard three days a week on 20 radio stations throughout Michigan, will be a daily weekday feature on stations beginning Aug. 25.

A former Troy resident, Mrs. Murray has been characterized as a "warm vocal shouter." She is familiar to radio listeners for her program dealing with interests and concerns of the contemporary individual.

She is also well known for her work with various commodity groups and her extensive work with the Michigan Department of Agriculture.

For the last 10 years her program has covered a broad scope of subjects geared to both men and women — the brown-bag lunch, the weather, health, casual entertaining, ethnic dining, and the customs and backgrounds of many ethnic groups.

MRS. MURRAY helps keep listeners informed about immediate problems. She speaks of the gold market, beating inflation, and an upcoming show will deal with tornadoes.

Mrs. Murray writes and produces her own show. At periods of her life she has been a high-fashion model, an ad agency copywriter, an actress and stage director, a puppeteer, a TV hostess and producer, and women's director for a major radio station. Plus a wife, and mother of three boys.

To get her story she has gone down in a submarine, gone up in a cherry picker, driven in a featured race at a drag strip and flown with the Blue Angels, the Navy's exhibition flying team.

She has judged cooking contests, interviewed celebrities, given dancing lessons and auctioned for Channels 56 and 23 fund drives.

Slapstick film next

Kirk Douglas will star in "Home Movies," a 1980 film directed by Brian De Palma ("Get to Know Your Rabbit" and "Greetings") at the Detroit Institute of Arts Detroit Film Theatre on Friday.

Two showings are scheduled, at 7 and 9:30 p.m., in the museum auditorium. Tickets may be purchased in advance through the art institute ticket office (832-2730) and at the door.

Called "primal family slapstick" by critic Pauline Kael, "Home Movies" zeroes in on the comic, irreverent, comic results of a film making class as instructor Douglas encourages his students to become "stars of their own lives." The film also features Vincent Gardenia and Nancy Allen.

On Saturday, Sir Alfred Hitchcock's 1943 thriller "Shadow of a Doubt" will be shown at 7 and 9:30 p.m. Joseph Cotton stars as the "merry widow murdered" in the film Hitchcock considered his finest American effort.

For ticket information and a detailed listing of all Detroit Film Theatre weekend movies through Dec. 20, call the Detroit Institute of Arts ticket office.

review

Musical director Darien Martus utilized each and every voice in the cast, with pleasing harmonies heard throughout each song. Unlike some of the dialogue, most voices were crisp and clear and could be heard throughout the auditorium.

Leading the cast as Dorothy was raven-haired, rosy-cheeked Nichole Hakim. Though she attained the warmth, sincerity and charm that is needed for

this role, Ms. Hakim had the habit of relating more to the audience than to the other characters on stage.

This may have been intentional to insure that her soft voice would carry throughout the house, but the distraction sometimes caused focuses to shift within scenes, unintentionally separating her from the rest of the cast.

AS THE SCARECROW, Rod Masserman astounded the audience with his physical pliability. His breathtaking agility and light-footedness more than made up for his occasionally repetitious and monotoned line delivery.

Most self-assured performer on

stage was John Hett. As the Tin Man, Hett appeared completely comfortable in his role. He had his strut down pat and consistently added little facial gestures to embellish his songs and dialogue. Occasional lack of good projection did not stop Hett's performance from being one of the best all-around in the show.

It was naturally, though, the Cowardly Lion who stole the show.

In the tradition set forth by Bert Lahr, Lenny Simon's Lion was not only lovable but witty and charming. His dialogue was well-timed and well-delivered. Although his singing voice was probably the weakest of the four main

characters, Simon belted out his songs in such a way as to make them seem totally in character.

Other fine performances were given by Munchkin Mayor, Warren Treisman; the Wicked Witch of the West, Tali Flam; her skeletal assistant Tibia, Ted Mahon; and the Wizard of Oz, Scott Mahon.

Costuming by Barbara Olesczuk was finely executed. Colorfully designed outfits splashed across the stage which added to the show's excitement and glitter.

KIMBERLY KIRKPATRICK's multi-levelled abstract set, dressed by Cole

Nagy, also enhanced the total production.

Technical direction and lighting by Ron Swedel complimented sets and costumes, setting the appropriate mood for each scene.

The final touch — fine musicianship of Andrea Fahey, Paul Marvin, Peter May, Paul Johannes and Darien Martus — insured the show's triumph.

This was producer John Puchalski's first show for the Southfield Summer Music Theatre, sponsored by the Department of Parks and Recreation. Doing a children's show after a long succession of adult musicals was risky, but it worked.

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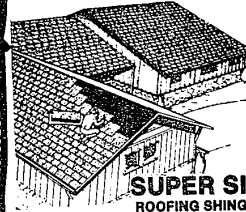


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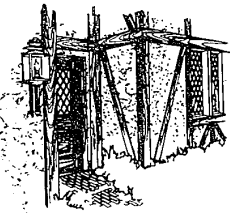


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