Entertainment



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Theater magic

Journey to wonderful land of Oz

Performances of the Birming-ham Theatre production of "The Wizard of Oz" continue through Dec. 15. For ticket information, call the box office at 644-3533. The Birmingham Theatre is at 211 S. Woodward.

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If your heart's desire is two hours of pure nostalgic fun, then follow the yellow brick road to the Birmingham Theatre and see their wonderful 'The Witard of Oz.

In a lively production that is both familiar and unique, there are many clever embellishments to this restagging of the classic MGM movie musical.

musical.

The story unfolds from the vantage point of L. Frank Baum (William Brown), author of the original
Oz books, as he struggles to meet the
demands of his publisher and keep
up with his characters, who seem to
have taken on a life of their own.

BAUM NARRATES the play and also fills in for several minor characters, changing his voice for each frown landless the role smoothly, and he starticulate annualities are not several minor that the starticulate annualities are repeated by the starticulate annualities. The show opens with a nasty confrontation between Baum and his publisher, W.W. West (Darren Matthias), with the latter flourishing his umbrella as he exits in a huff. So it makes perfect sense that in this production the same actor plays a male Wicked Witch of the West, excessing power with his magic umercising power with his magic um-brella. Matthias is appropriately

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Barbara Michais

nasty without being too melodramatic, and he brandishes tongue-incheek humor as much as wicked

cheek humor as mucn as wicacensers.

As Dorothy (Diane Della Piazza) and her (riends make their way to the Emerald City, all of the familiar Harold Arlene Y. Harburg songs are intact. Additional music and lyrics have also been added by Worth Gardner, the production's creator as well as director and choreographer.

well as director and choreographer.

THERE'S STILL the bouncy rhythms of "Yellow Brick Road," "We're Off to See the Wisard," "If I only Had a Brain," and "Ding Dong the Witch Is Dead," and the hauntingly lovely "Over the Rainbow."

New additions include "Oplimistic Volces," sing Las Vegas-style by the Emerald City Witches in fluorescent green skih-flight jumpositis, and a second act reprise of "Over the Rainbow" played on various instruments by the Emerald City Ozmosia and sounding like a bad high school band.

It's refreshing that the show can

band.

It's refreshing that the show can poke fun at itself. During an umteenth reprise of "We're Off to See the Wizard," Dorothy stops the mu-

sic and confronts Baum with a sour inquiry of "Is this the only dance we get to do?" Assured that it is, she demands, "Why don't you at least try to develop it?"

DELLA PIAZZA'S Dorothy is pert and perky, and she has a pleasant singing voice. John Schlappa makes a very lovable Scarcerow, the rubbery-legged fellow in search of a brain. Bob Arnold is a totally winning, adorable pussycat as the Cowardly Llon in search of courage. Howard Kay is fine as the rusty Tin Man in search of a heart, though his character is never given as much personality as his companions. The absolute show-stealers are the Munchkins, who are so outrageously founly they deserve to star in a sequel or better yet their own TV series. The chorus of little people pop up waistshigh through trap doors and the course of the property bedies and arms are dressed to funky, psychodielic exclusions, and their heads appear disproportionately large. As they dance they sometimes flop over and must struggle to right themselves. From the moment they ap-DELLA PIAZZA'S Dorothy is pert



Howard Kaye (left), Diane Della Piazza, Bob Ar-nold and John Schlappa in a scene from the "The Wizard of Oz."

pear, both adults and children how with delighted laughter.

Paul Shorit's costumes are traditional for the principals, wildly creative for some of the chorus numbers. His set designs function very effectively, especially the yellow brick road that forms a double spiral upwards but always returns those who transverse it back to where they started.

Pyrotechnic tricks from the witch's umbrella, a flying bed, and

Barbara Michals is a retired Southfield English teacher. A the-ater critic for the last 17 years, she is an inveterate playgoer who regularly catches up on all the New York productions.



Students let talents fly in 'Peter Pan'

Marnie Baumer of Garden City plays Peter in the Bonstelle The-atre's production of James M. Bar-rie's "Peter Pan," Nov. 29 through Dec. 8.

Dec. 8. Originally written for the Llewelyn-Davies boys, who were friends of Barrie, Peter Paul' is the story of a little prefer paul is the story of a little prefer being with the Darling children, sets off on an adventure to Neiern-Never Land.

The Bonstelle Theatre is on the campus of Wayne State University, 3124 Woodward Detroit, call 577-2872 for tecks information.

Also appearing in the show are Jennifer George of Farmington Hills, Todd Hoffman of West Bloom-

Crazy Papa's

field, D. Robertson Welcher of Westland, Rachel Loiselle of Southfield, and Michael J. Serpiglia of Troy.

Baumer, a sophomore majoring in theater at Wayne State University in Detroit, plays Peter Pan, the boy who wouldn't grow up. She is a graduate of Garden (Liy High School.

Earlier this year, she appeared in children's show, "Step on a Crack," at the Hilberry Theatre and Crack," at the Hilberry Theatre and Crack," at the Hilberry Theatre and Crack, and t

Marian High School in Birmingham, and is also a member of Wayne State's touring dance troupe, Movin' Theatre.

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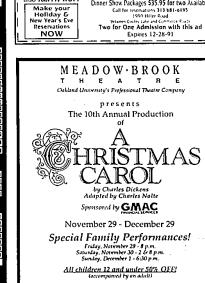
Serapiglia, a senior majoring in theater at WSU, plays Nana, the canine nanny to the Darling children, and a Chicaninnee Tribe member. He is a graduate of Troy High School and recently performed at Walt Disney World and played roles in "Chicago," "Paper Dolls," "Anything Goes" and "Cinderella" at the Bonstelle. He is also a member of Movin' Theatre.



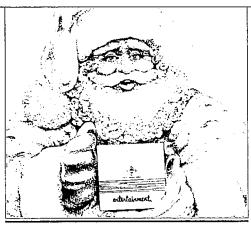
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