

THE WIZARD OF OZ

Book by L. FRANK BAUM

With music from the M.G.M. Picture THE WIZARD OF OZ

Lyrics by E. Y. HARBURG

Music by HAROLD ARLEN

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Songs included:

"Over the Rainbow", "If I Only Had a Brain", "If I Only Had a Heart", "If I Only Had the Nerve", "The Jitterbug", "Munchkinland", "Ding Dong the Witch is Dead", "We're Off to see the Wizard" and "The Merry Old Land of Oz."

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CAST in order of appearance:

AUNT EM	...	Betty Sanders
UNCLE HENRY	...	Sam Page
JOE	...	Guy Bartlett
DOROTHY	...	Bridget Thornborrow
SORCERESS OF THE NORTH	...	Jane Wilkinson
MAYOR	...	Francis Hayling
FARMER	...	John Finner
BARRISTER	...	George Howell
CORONER	...	Graham Wagland
WITCH OF THE WEST	...	Maureen Muller
SCARECROW	...	Charles Rogers
TINMAN	...	Mark Baker
LEO	...	Nick Lucas
FIRST GENERAL	...	John Finner
A PRIVATE	...	John Finner
A LADY OF OZ	...	Graham Wagland
LORD GROGUE	...	Mary Jenkinson
FIRST VISITING WITCH	...	Charles Rogers
SECOND VISITING WITCH	...	Betty Sanders
TITIA	...	Sam Page
OZMAS	...	Guy Bartlett
THE WIZARD OF OZ	...	Jeremy Hunsell

FARMHANDS, MUNCHKINS, MUNCHKIN CHILDREN, GENERALS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN AND CHILDREN OF OZ.
Obeys Ayres, James Lind, Jane Ross, Sherry Sanders, Neville French, Geoffrey Mountford, Peter Phipps, Susanah Colman, Stephen Cole, Muri Goodwin, Judith Hall, Lindsay Swanson, Kathryn Todd, Susan Walker, Linda Wall, Josephine Watt, Lesley Wilton, Richardson Williams.

DIRECTOR: DOROTHY DILLAM

MUSICAL DIRECTOR: TONY AYRES CHOREOGRAPHER: ALWYN PROBERT

A wizard 'Oz' at the Loft

"THE Wizard of Oz" at the Loft Theatre, Leamington Spa, was a sell-out before it even opened.

Which says a great deal for the anticipatory sense of the people of Warwickshire.

It really does deserve every packed audience it gets. After a slow and uncertain opening scene it fairly blossoms into life, thanks to a splendid trio of Lion, Tinman and Scarecrow and to a duo of lady magicians — one goody, one bady.

Dorothy, the wide-eyed little girl in the middle of it all, is played by two 14-year-olds, on different nights, of course. I saw Bridget Thornborrow and she performed with an amazing confidence and style. Jane Wilkinson was singing and dancing her way down the yellow brick road while Miss Thornborrow is reading.

But it is those characters with the shortcomings, i.e. a shortage of brain, heart and courage, that really catch the imagination and fix it firmly in the land over the rainbow.

Richard Baker is a soft-

spoken English Scarecrow, Bernard Goodrick a north country Tinman and John Finner is a Brooklyn Lion. The combination is irresistible. Each has developed a special character, style of movement and intonation that directly complements the others but has a very positive individual impact.

It will be a long time before I forget their charm, an appeal which owes nothing to starchy sentimentality and everything to the talents of the actors involved.

It is also worth mentioning that their costumes and make-up are ingenious and impressive. But then so are most things in this production, directed by Dorothy Dillam, and even if the singing from the chorus is not so powerful as it might be it is tuneful enough and comes as an extra to a show that could well get by without it.

In the battle of magic, Pamela Harding is the regal and beautifully dressed Sorceress of the North (she also happens to have the pick of the female singing voices) and Carole Davies is the Witch of the West, a very funny performance this, brilliantly playing on the paradox of the evil lady's intentions

and her housewife's attitudes to brews and recipes. The witches' tea party, at which she plays hostess, is superb.

"The Wizard of Oz" is a first class piece, glittering with ingenious effects, events and concepts and with the humor of L. Frank Baum's script.

The Loft have given it a first class performance. Once those large chorus scenes have had a little bit of life breathed into them and the timing is improved a little so that we are not left standing around for musical cues, there will be hardly a fault to find in it.

P.W.

OLD-STYLE MAGIC IN LOFT'S WIZARD

As we waited for curtain up on Wednesday's first night performance of "The Wizard of Oz" at the Loft Theatre my 11-year-old companion flicked languidly through the programme. "This old-fashioned magic stuff is so boring. I wish they'd do something modern like Dr Who," he said.

So it should be recommended enough if I say that as the story of Dorothy and her magical trip beyond the rainbow unfolds, the erstwhile young sophisticate was falling about in his seat at the comedy, gazing impressed at the splendid visual effects, and blushing with delight as the Tin Man singled him out for a pat on the head during a romp through the auditorium.

It's comforting to know that "old-fashioned magic stuff" smoothly presented by a talented company can capture the imagination as surely as more lavish television

spectacle. Dorothy Dillam's production sticks closely to the film (and is none the worse for that) adding some interesting touches with pretty dance routines choreographed by Alwyn Probert, and attractive, but not too ambitious, stage and lighting effects.

ROMP

The cast romp along in fine style and good voice — headed on the first night by Bridget Thornborrow as a thoroughly charming Dorothy. During the

run she will alternate in the role with Jane Wilkinson. Richard Baker's brainless Scarecrow is a delight, nicely teamed with the "North Country" Tinman of Bernard Goodrick and Nick Lucas's cowardly Lion — straight from the Bronx.

Carole Davies turns in a gem of a performance as the wicked Witch managing to both look and sound like Bette Davies at her hazy best. "Wizard of Oz" runs until January 12. If you're still young enough to like old-fashioned magic you won't want to miss it.

