

The Wizard of Oz Review Author Julie Petrucci

For their summer production this year Young NOMADS chose *The Wizard of Oz*. Having seen the film more years ago than I care to admit to, I can still recall the sense of disappointment at the beginning when everything was in black and white and then Dorothy was whisked over the rainbow and everything became technicolour.

The staging of this show is a real challenge as it involves twenty-seven different scenes. Lots of thought had gone into the excellent set (designed and built by Alan Gleed and Nigel Whitney and beautifully and skilfully painted by Fiona Harvey-Maguire) which with the added use of various cloths all looked splendid. Together with the super props - particularly the poppies - and beautiful costumes (Sarah Smith) the whole production was truly colourful from start to finish. Lighting (designed by Jamie Maquire and operated by Jim Bourne) and sound (Liam Corbett) were good but that old bugbear body mics raised its head a few times which meant some lines were lost. Not all problems here were down to the technician. As a performer you need to bear in mind - particularly if you are new to using body mics - that you still need to project. Projection is an important part of performance. Excellent make-up for the main Principals, particularly Scarecrow, Tin Man, Lion and Wicked Witch.

Musical Director Nicholas Sheehan did a really good job of guiding the young cast through what is a quite complicated score although at times the overloud music did overpower the young voices. As always Jodie Corbett's dance routines were good and well within the performers' skill set and were therefore executed well.

Given the plethora of talented young actors Young NOMADS has, Director Andy Thorpe chose to use two teams of Principals alternating performances. In the main all named roles were a credit to the production and though inexperienced they all gave good accounts of themselves. Here I would add a couple of general comments. When you are gaining experience it is good not to fall into the trap of speaking too quickly. Everyone speaks faster than they think they do, especially when the nerves and adrenaline kick in. I am sure your Director mentioned it a few times. Train yourself to deliberately speak slower to counteract the speed which nerves add to a performance. After all you spend time learning the lines but it is a waste if we cannot understand them because they are delivered too quickly. I did feel that The Wizard should have had either an assistant, a pocket or a bag to produce the degree, watch and medal from rather than having to dash behind the scenery each time. It impacted on the importance of his speech.

On the second night of the show I saw Team Two. Lily Thorpe as Dorothy gave a very good performance showing excellent stage presence coupled with a nice voice. She worked extremely well with her three companions in her search for the Wizard. Esme Latta must be congratulated on an excellent portrayal as Scarecrow, matched by the fine performances of Ted Piccaver as Tin Man and Tegan Hegarty as the Cowardly Lion. All four delivered their songs with confidence.

Over the rainbow there were the Munchkins, who all looked splendid. All knew their song and dance routines and delivered them confidently. In a 'suitably evil' performance as the scary Wicked Witch, Zara Fisher was very good. Ione Collins as Glinda had good diction, a nice singing voice, and she looked lovely. Completing the cast of Principals was Leia Schultz supremely confident as Professor Marvel, Lucas Pedzinski as The Wizard of Oz and not forgetting Hugo Kingsley-Pallant as Toto. Excellent support also came from Elodie Massuaerd as the horrid Almira Gulch. Aunt Em and Uncle Henry (Rosie Wells and Chloe Watson) and the Guard at the Gates (Emily Poole).

Of course with such a large cast it is not possible to mention everyone but suffice it to say each person put in every effort. However, I would be negligent not to mention the contribution to the production of the members of the Ensemble who were kept busy throughout the show as Munchkins and Citizens of Oz not to mention trees, crows, monkeys, Winkies, Jitterbugs and Poppies.

I am sorry not to have seen the Team One principals, Martha Harvey (Dorothy), Emily Poole (Scarecrow), Oscar Owen (Tin Man), Harry Bearmond (Lion), Olivia Savage (Glinda) and Courtney Parker (Wicked Witch), as I am sure their performances would have been equally enjoyable.

Well done to all concerned in all areas of this production which showed that NOMADS' next seventy-five years and beyond is in safe hands.