

SVCT's The Wizard of Oz

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Mary Beth Anderson plays the role of the Wicked Witch of the West during the dress rehearsal for the South Valley Civic Theater production of The Wizard of Oz.



Elizabeth Calisi, playing the role of Glinda, Good Witch of the North, and Megan Griffin, playing the role of Dorothy Gale, performs with the munchkins during dress rehearsals for the South Valley Civic Theater production of The Wizard of Oz.



Megan Griffin, playing the role of Dorothy Gale, performs with Kel Whisner, playing the role of Professor Marvel, during the dress rehearsal for the South Valley Civic Theater production of *The Wizard of Oz*.



Megan Griffin, playing the role of Dorothy Gale, performs with Travis Blanchard, playing the role of the Scarecrow, during the dress rehearsal for the South Valley Civic Theater production of *The Wizard of Oz*.



Rob Christopher, playing the role of the Tinman, Mark Balattel, playing the role of the Cowardly Lion, Megan Griffin, playing the role of Dorothy Gale, and Travis Blanchard, playing the role of the Scarecrow, perform during the dress rehearsal for the South Valley Civic Theater production of The Wizard of Oz.



Rob Christopher as the Tin Man, Mark Blatell as the Cowardly Lion, Megan Griffin as Dorothy and Travis Blanchard as the Scarecrow in South Valley Civic Theatre's production of "The Wizard of Oz."

Photo: Kathy Tom

From the first moment the adorable Megan Griffin appeared in a checked jumper over a white short-sleeved, puff-shouldered blouse buttoned to the neck, her brown hair pulled back into long pigtailed with that breathless expression of panic on her face, I had a feeling I was in good hands and when she sang "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," I knew it. She nails Dorothy Gale to the barn door and puts winsome, silky singing Judy Garland right out of mind. She has a terrific voice with a crystal edge. She commits to the naïve style of the piece completely making her character real within the context of the show. But so do all the sixty-five cast members who are completely, joyously re-enacting the film.

Do I need to recount the story of a young girl who finds herself magically transported to a fairy-tale world where she makes friends with little Munchkin people, meets a good witch, makes an enemy of a bad one, enlists a talking Lion, a Tin Man and a Scarecrow as companions to travel to the Emerald City to beg the wonderful Wizard of Oz to help her get back home to Kansas, only to have the giant talking head send her on an impossible mission to seize the witch's broomstick leading her into desperate danger, not to mention "Lions and tigers and bears...oh, my?" Thought not.

The noble trio is strong. Travis Blanchard makes a fine Scarecrow singing well and serving up the loose-limbed dance breaks in "If I Only Had a Brain" on a silver platter. Rob Christopher is picture perfect as the Tin Man (kudos to costumer Michelle Griffin, makeup designer Jan Lance and tinsmiths Ray and Mike at All-Rite Custom Manufacturing) and sings an endearing "If I Only Had a Heart" as he tap dances as well as the constraints of his costume allow. Mark Blatell borrows most of Bert Lahr's schtick as The Cowardly Lion and makes it his own. He sings well, especially in "King of the Forest."



Mark Blatell as the Cowardly Lion sing "King of the Forest" as the Tin Man (Rob Christopher), the Scarecrow (Travis Blanchard) and Dorothy (Megan Griffin)hand it to him in South Valley Civic Theatre's production of "The Wizard of Oz."

Photo: Kathy Tom

As Glinda, the Good Witch of the North, Elizabeth Wagner-Calisi is ideal, beautiful as required with a superb voice. Mary Beth Anderson as the Wicked Witch of the West, with de rigueur green skin, pointy nose and long fingers has a swell cackle and a droll, self-consciously evil demeanor. And I like the crisp marching of Kel Whisner as the Gate Guard. To all the Munchkins, Ozians, Jitterbugs, Flying Monkeys, Winkies and Crows – well done!

Colleen Tom-Blanchard's crisp direction keeps this behemoth enterprise moving and music director James Chipman gets the most out of his fine twelve-piece orchestra.

"The Wizard of Oz" runs through July 7 at the Morgan Hill Community Playhouse.