

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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MEDIA RELEASE

October 24, 2014

Skylight Music Theatre follows the Yellow Brick Road in a new production of THE WIZARD OF OZ

Milwaukee, WI – Skylight Music Theatre is creating a new production of the award-winning musical *The Wizard of Oz*. The production runs November 21, 2014 through January 4, 2015 in the Cabot Theatre at the Broadway Theatre Center (158 N. Broadway, Milwaukee WI).

The Wizard of Oz is a charming stage production that is based on the 1939 MGM film and L. Frank Baum's novel, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Skylight will be performing the 1987 Royal Shakespeare Company's adaptation of the 1942 production commissioned by the St. Louis Municipal Opera company. Royal Shakespeare's version more closely recreates the film than its earlier predecessors.

The 2014 production of *The Wizard of Oz* will mark the first time Skylight Music Theatre has produced this epic musical in all of its 56 year history. In true Skylight form, it will take certain artistic liberties with the production. The first change that patrons may notice is that the opening "Kansas Scenes" are set in the 1930's Dust Bowl unlike like the novel which predates the Dust Bowl by 30 years. The juxtaposition of the dry and gray Dust Bowl against the lush and colorful Land of Oz will be a striking one. Skylight's artistic team describes their production as a more innocent version of the story than the brassy Technicolor film version. Despite some changes, all the familiar songs and characters remain intact along with musical numbers such as "Jitterbug" which was ultimately eliminated from the film version.

"I feel *The Wizard of Oz* is ultimately a child's survival guide to the grown up world. Dorothy confronts bullying, omnipotent yet flawed adults, as well as her fears of loosing the one thing she loves more than anything else, her dog, Toto. In the end, Dorothy realizes family is where you will always feel safest", explains Lindy Brovsky, the show's stage director.

Skylight Artistic Director Viswa Subbaraman adds, "*The Wizard of Oz* will represent everything that Skylight does so incredibly well. *Oz* is a first-rate musical theatre piece written on many levels. Children and first-time theatre goers will appreciate the spectacle of live theatre while more experienced theatre goers will be impressed by the complexity of the story and our top-notch professional production."

MEDIA RELEASE – “THE WIZARD OF OZ” AT SKYLIGHT MUSIC THEATRE

CREDITS

By L. Frank Baum
with Music and Lyrics by Harold Arlen and E.Y. Harburg

Background Music by Herbert Stothart
Dance and Vocal Arrangements by Peter Howard
Orchestration by Larry Wilcox
Adapted by John Kane for the Royal Shakespeare Company
Based on the Classic Motion Picture owned by Turner Entertainment Co. and distributed in all media by Warner Bros.

PRODUCTION TEAM

Stage Director Linda Brovsky
Music Director Leslie B. Dunner
Choreographer Pam Kriger
Scenic Designer Peter Dean Beck**
Costume Designer Kristy Leigh Hall
Lighting Designer Peter Dean Beck
Sound Designer Gary Ellis
Assistant Music Director Colleen Schmitt
Stage Manager Kelly Bowes Turner*

ORCHESTRA

Flute, Piccolo, Recorder Scott Metlicka
Alto Sax, Clarinet, Bass Clarinet Ronald Foster
Tenor Sax, Flute, Clarinet Blair Bielawski
Baritone Sax, Flute, Clarinet Curt Hanrahan
Trumpet Tom Schlueter
Trombone Kyle Samuelson
Bass Tom McGirr
Drums/Percussion Michael Lorenz
Keyboard Anne Van Deusen
Keyboard Kerry Bieneman

CAST

Dorothy Susan Wiedmeyer
Hunk/Scarecrow Ryan Cappleman
Hickory/Tin Man Doug Clemons
Zeke/Lion Andrew Varela*
Aunt Em/Glinda Susan Spencer*
Gulch/Wicked Witch Liz Norton
Prof Marvel/The Wizard of Oz Rick Richter
Uncle Henry/Guard Christopher Elst
Toto Hillie, Snowy
Ensemble: Michael Black, Cleary Breunig, Kathryn Hausman, Shawn Holmes,
..... Peyton Oseth, Anna Pfefferkorn, Stephanie Staszak, Matt Zeman

*Proud members of Actors Equity
**Proud member of United Scenic Artists

MEDIA RELEASE – “THE WIZARD OF OZ” AT SKYLIGHT MUSIC THEATRE

KEY BIOGRAPHIES

Susan Wiedmeyer (Dorothy) - Susan has been seen previously in Skylight productions of *Les Misérables* (Cosette) and *The Sound of Music* (Maria understudy). Other Skylight credits include *Sunday in the Park with George*, *The Rivals*, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Pirates of Penzance*. Other highlights include *Candide* (Milwaukee Opera Theatre) and *Brigadoon* (Music by the Lake). This spring, Susan will perform the role of Yum-Yum in Milwaukee Opera Theatre's production of *The Mikado*. Susan is an Encouragement Award Winner from the Wisconsin District Metropolitan Opera Auditions and holds music degrees from St. Olaf College and UW-Milwaukee respectively. Susan is thrilled to return to Skylight Music Theatre- a place that has been like home for the past five years, and truly, there really is no place like home.

Ryan Cappleman (Hunk/Scarecrow) – Ryan Cappleman, a Milwaukee actor, choreographer (4-time Tommy Award Winner), musician, and teacher is thrilled to be returning to Skylight after performing in last season's production of *HAIR* (Woof). He has been seen in the Off Broadway production of *Waiting...a Song Cycle* and regionally in *Pinkalicious*, *Goodnight Moon* (Northbrook Theater for Young Audiences), *Big, Rudolph* (First Stage), *Packer Fans From Outerspace* (Vogel Hall), and *Assassins* (Windfall Theater). Ryan teaches for Danceworks' Madhot Ballroom and Tap program, and other organizations in the greater Milwaukee area. Ryan can be seen in the upcoming productions of *Into the Woods* (Skylight), *Capps off to Hollywood* (Sunset Playhouse), and *Busytown* (Northbrook). Ryan can also be heard on *Tallymoore*, the debut album, and at Irish Festivals around the country. Endless thanks to Ray, Viswa, and Lesley, this wonderful cast, staff, crew, family, friends and Gio. For Brianna and Candy, who love the classics, and Laurie and Jules, who always remind me that the dreams you dare to dream really do come true.

Doug Clemons (Hickory/Tin Man) – Doug has been seen most recently as Wallace in *The Boy Inside* (Milwaukee Chamber Theatre) and as Claude in *HAIR* (Skylight Music Theatre). Other credits include *Jesus Christ Superstar* (In Tandem Theatre), *Iolanthe* (Milwaukee Opera Theatre), *A Little Night Music* (Windfall Theatre), *The Last Romance* (Boulevard Theatre) and backup vocals for Michael Bubl . Doug has enjoyed performing with Florentine Opera, Sunset Playhouse, and as a soloist in the Door County Opera Festival and Choral Arts Society of Southeast Wisconsin. His upcoming roles include Peter in *Bare: A Pop Opera* (Soulstice Theatre). Endless love to Matt and his remarkable family of friends.

Andrew Varela (Zeke/Lion) – Andrew was last seen on the Skylight stage in *Les Misérables* (Javert), the role he originated and performed over 1,200 times on the record breaking 25th Anniversary Tour. Broadway credits include *Les Misérables* (Jean Valjean), *Sunday in the Park With George* (told a joke that made Sondheim laugh at the cast party), *Little Women* (took our baby on tour - what were we thinking?) and Alan Menken's *King David* (Broadway debut). His other roles include the Phantom in the national tour of *The Phantom of the Opera*, the Pirate King in *Pirates!* (awesome), Jud in *Oklahoma!* (crazy), Growltiger in *Cats* (only the 2nd worst dancer) and Rooster in *Annie* (the worst dancer). Andrew has been featured in various symphony concerts across the US and Asia and is married to the best witch ever. Watch for Andrew in commercials for Steinhafel's and Briggs and Stratton this holiday season. Visit AndrewVarela.com and follow Andrew on Twitter @AndrewVarela525.

Susan Spencer (Aunt Em/Glinda) – Susan is happy to return to Skylight after performing in last season's *Les Misérables* (Fantine). A graduate of Greendale High School and UW-Stevens Point, Susan moved to New York City, performing at the famed Radio City Music Hall and on Broadway in *Les Misérables*. She lived in Hamburg, Germany where she performed in *Cats* (Grizabella), *Into the Woods* (Rapunzel) and concerts with symphonies all across Europe. Other productions include *Passion* (Clara), *Little Women: The Musical* (Jo March), *Evita* (Eva) and at First Stage in Milwaukee, *Miss Nelson Is Missing!* (Viola Swamp). Susan may also be recognized from her TV commercials for Olay Pro X, Steinhafel's, Fleet Farm, the Wisconsin Lottery or the TLC television show *A Baby Story* which featured the birth of her son, Oscar. Susan is happily married to the Cowardly Lion who is - spoiler alert - neither cowardly nor feline. Follow Susan on Twitter: @Dramaticsu and visit susanspencervarela.jimdo.com

Liz Norton (Gulch/Wicked Witch) – Liz Norton is happy to be back spending another holiday at Skylight Music Theatre after first appearing in *The Sound of Music* in 2012. Recent Milwaukee credits include *Carrie: the Musical* (Margaret White), *Pal Joey* (Melba), *Ragtime* (Emma Goldman), *Follies* (Phyllis), *Company* (Joanne), *The Full Monty* (Jeanette), *Mame* (Mame), *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (Spider Woman), and *Annie* (Hannigan). Upcoming credits include *La Cage Aux Folles* at Marriott Lincolnshire. Deep gratitude for the love and support of JCMP.

Christopher Elst (Uncle Henry/Guard) – Christopher is an Associate Instructor with Dueling Arts International and an Advanced Actor/Combatant with Recommended status in all weapon disciplines taught by the Society of American Fight Directors. Christopher has designed violence for many productions in 2014, including *Skin Tight* (Mercury Players Theatre), *Phaedra's Love* (World's Stage Theatre), and *The Understudy* (Renaissance Theatre Works). His favorite onstage roles include John Wilkes Booth in

MEDIA RELEASE – “THE WIZARD OF OZ” AT SKYLIGHT MUSIC THEATRE

Assassins (Windfall Theatre), the Baker in *Into the Woods* (Off-the-Wall Theatre), and Winston Smith in *1984*, a role he will reprise at the Alchemist in 2015. He thanks his wife, Marcee, for tolerating late nights and joint locks. You can learn more about Christopher here: <http://www.christopherelst.com>

Rick Richter (Prof Marvel/Wizard of Oz) – This is a dream come true for Rick and he sends out a HUGE THANK YOU to whoever had the courage, heart and hopefully wisdom to cast him in this show! Yes, this is Rick's debut at Skylight but he is hopeful for many more to follow! Rick is a local actor with favorite credits being *Fiddler on the Roof* (Tevye), *Camelot* (King Arthur), *A Christmas Carol* (Scrooge), *It's a Wonderful Life* (George Bailey), *Diary of Anne Frank* (Otto Frank), *The Fantasticks* (El Gallo), *The Wizard of Oz* (Cowardly Lion) and *Beauty & the Beast* (Gaston). Rick would like to acknowledge his family and friends who have always supported and encouraged him in following his passion! Thank you all! Finally, for Mom, Patrick, Carmelina and Gordie who exemplified the saying, “that a heart is not judged by how much you love, but by how much you are loved by others.” YOU ARE LOVED BY US ALL! You can follow Rick at www.rick-richter.com

Linda Brovsky (Stage Director) – Linda Brovsky's innovative productions have been seen at the San Francisco Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Seattle Opera, Los Angeles Opera, San Diego Opera, Opera Theater of St. Louis, Florentine Opera, Pittsburgh Opera and Cincinnati Opera among many others with repertoire ranging from standard classics to world premieres. Recent credits include *Don Quichotte* (Canadian Opera Company--debut), *Rigoletto* (Seattle Opera), *La Bohème* (Lyric Opera of Kansas City) and *Le Nozze di Figaro* (IVAI-Tel Aviv, Israel). Musical theatre credits include the 50th Anniversary Tour of *Oklahoma!* (Troika Organization), *Happy End* (Court Theater), *Carousel* (Opera Grand Rapids), and *Countess Maritza* (LA Opera) and as well as the development of a new musical, *By Grace*. She has served as a guest speaker for the National Arts Club, the Guggenheim Museum's "Works in Progress" series, the American Opera Project's "New Works" series, and as a jurist for the Douglas Moore Foundation for New Composers.

Leslie B. Dunner (Music Director) – Former Music Director of the Joffrey Ballet, Resident Conductor of the Detroit Symphony, and former Assistant Conductor to Kurt Masur at the New York Philharmonic, Leslie B. Dunner recently conducted and staged the Chicago South Shore Opera Company's production of Verdi's *La Traviata* and conducted Opera Ebony's production of Mozart's *Così fan Tutte* in New York City. Last season he conducted William Grant Still's *Troubled Island*, rated Chicago's best classical music/opera moment of 2013. Dunner conducted at the Opening Ceremonies for the 2011 International Pan American Games in Mexico, and South Africa's 2010 FIFA World Cup Games. Dunner also conducted Mzilikazi Khumalo's opera *Princess Magogo* with Opera Africa at Den Norske Opera in Oslo, Norway. With Dance Theatre of Harlem, Dr. Dunner conducted international tours to the Salzburg and Tivoli Festivals, the former Soviet Union, the historic 1992 tour to South Africa, performing for Nelson Mandela, and the 1988 tour, including a gala performance for Diana, Princess of Wales. This past summer, he returned to South Africa to conduct the Kwa-Zulu Natal Philharmonic's Starlight Pop Opera concert, and this season he returns to the South Shore Opera Company for additional concerts, and the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra to close their season. Dunner has also guest conducted in Canada, Mexico, Venezuela, Russia, Estonia, Portugal, Italy, and Spain. Ballet engagements include ABT, New York City Ballet, Washington, Orlando and Madison Ballets, London's Royal Ballet, Birmingham's Royal Ballet, Michigan Opera Theatre, and The South African Ballet Theatre. His two most recent recordings, *Five Movements in Color* by Mary Watkins, and the groundbreaking *Symphony in E minor* and *Piano Concerto in One Movement* by Florence Price, are available from Albany records.

Pam Kriger (Choreographer) – Pam is delighted to be back at Skylight where she has choreographed and directed numerous productions including *White Christmas*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *A Day in Hollywood/A Night in the Ukraine*, and *Fiddler on the Roof*. In addition to her Skylight work, she has worked at many regional theaters and serves on the faculty at Cardinal Stritch University where she directs and teaches theater dance. Previous credits include *Syncopation* and *Red Pepper Jelly* for Renaissance Theaterworks; *Loose Lips Sink Ships*, *Muskie Love*, *Strings Attached* for American Folklore Theatre; *Groucho*, and *A Life in Revue* for Next Act Theatre; *Urinetown* and *Into the Woods* for UW Madison Theater; and *The Spitfire Grill* and *The Drowsy Chaperone* at CSU. Future projects include *Toy Camp* at CSU and *Legally Blonde* at UW Madison.

Colleen Schmitt (Assistant Music Director) – Colleen Schmitt is thrilled to be involved in *The Wizard of Oz*! She is the Music Director and keyboardist for T.I.M. The Improvised Musical, and has been involved in several pursuits within the music community, including studying Music Composition and Technology at UWM. She has performed everything from opera to rock, having fronted a few bands in the Milwaukee area. She has Music Directed and performed in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* with Smithereen Productions and *Waiting...A Song Cycle* with The World's Stage Theater Group, which performed Off Broadway in June of 2013. She made her debut at The Milwaukee Repertory Theater this fall as the flirtatious pianist in *Forever Plaid*, and as the rehearsal accompanist for *The Color Purple*. Colleen will portray Pozdnyshév's wife in the Midwest premiere of *The Kreutzer Sonata* with Renaissance Theaterworks this spring at The Broadway Theater Center.

MEDIA RELEASE – “THE WIZARD OF OZ” AT SKYLIGHT MUSIC THEATRE

Kristy Leigh Hall (Costume Designer) – Kristy Leigh Hall, costume designer, has worked in Chicago, Washington, DC, New York and regionally. She is excited to be making her Milwaukee debut! Her Off Broadway designs include Woody Harrelson's *Bullet for Adolf*, *Feather: a Musical Portrait* (NYMF), *I Forgive You*, *Ronald Reagan* (Theatre Row). NY regional designs credits include *Treasure Island*, *next to normal* and *Proof* at Theatre Three. In Washington, DC, she has designed *The Illusion* (Forum Theatre), *Minnie the Moocher* (Pointless Theatre), *Genesis Reboot* (Synetic Theatre) and *That Face* (Studio Theatre). Her most recent designs in Chicago were for *Twelfth Night* and *I Wonder if it's Possible to Have a Love Affair... Things I Found on Craigslist* (UIC Theatre). Upcoming, Kristin will design *Ivanov*, (UIC Theatre), *The Sweeter Option* (Strawdog), *Stick Fly* (Windy City Playhouse) and *The Who and the What* (Victory Gardens). Thank you to Linda, Viswa and Misha. Love to her family and Ryan. Hall is on the faculty at the University of Illinois at Chicago. www.kristyleighhall.com.

Peter Dean Beck (Lights and Scenery) – Peter Dean Beck has designed scenery and/or lighting for over three hundred productions in North America. Among his opera credits are *Falstaff*, *Turandot*, *Manon*, *Don Giovanni*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Romeo et Juliette* for such companies as Atlanta Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, Virginia Opera, and Chautauqua Opera. He has designed productions of *Andrea Chenier*, *L'Italiana in Algeri*, *Macbeth*, *Elektra*, and *Tristan and Isolde* for Hawaii Opera Theatre, where he has been principal designer for twenty-nine seasons. For Skylight, his designs include *Les Misérables*, *Sound of Music*, *The Music Man*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and four Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. His work for dance includes *The Indigo Girls Project* for Atlanta Ballet and *The Nutcracker* for Ballet Hawaii.

Gary Ellis (Sound) – This is Gary's eighth season as Skylight's resident sound designer. He is so glad to have a part in creating such amazing music theatre! Shows he has designed and mixed include *Rent*, *Avenue Q*, *Les Misérables*, *In the Heights*, *Adding Machine-The Musical*, *Pump Boys & Dinettes*, *Daddy Long Legs*, *The Music Man*, *White Christmas*, *Sunday In The Park With George*, *The Spitfire Grill*, *The Producers*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Gary studied technical theatre at San Francisco State University. Previously, he worked at The Santa Fe Opera, Theatreworks in Palo Alto, CA and Summer Repertory Theatre in Santa Rosa, CA.

Kelly Turner (Stage Manager) – Kelly is delighted to continue her work at Skylight Music Theatre as Production Stage Manger for *The Wizard of Oz*. She has the immense pleasure of stage managing Skylight's season debut of Rossini's *Cinderella*. Last season, Kelly stage managed Skylight's productions of *Fidelio*, *El Cimarrón* and *I Hear America Singing*. Other stage managing projects for Skylight include *Sing Me a Story*, *Here's a Howdy Do*, *Beyond the Ingénue* and *Everything from Ray to Z*. She assistant directed Skylight's *Pump Boys and Dinettes*, Opera Tampa's production of *La Traviata* and Sunset Playhouse's production of *Six Degrees of Separation*. Prior to moving to Milwaukee, and before her stint as fulltime mother to two wonderful children who are now young adults, Kelly stage-managed shows throughout the San Francisco/Bay area.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

Act I

- Opening Chorus (Girls)
- Over The Rainbow Dorothy
- Munchkinland Chorus (Girls)
- Munchkinland Musical Sequence Glinda, Dorothy, Munchkins
- Yellow Brick Road Munchkins
- If I Only Had a Brain Scarecrow, Dorothy, Crows
- We're Off to See the Wizard Dorothy, Scarecrow
- If I Only Had a Heart Tin Man, Dorothy, Trees
- We're Off to See the Wizard (reprise 1) Dorothy, Tin Man, Scarecrow
- Lions, Tigers and Bears Dorothy, Tin Man, Scarecrow
- If Only I Had the Nerve Lion, Dorothy, Scarecrow, Tin Man
- We're Off to See the Wizard (reprise 2) Dorothy, Tin Man, Scarecrow, Lion
- Poppies Chorus, Glinda, Dorothy, Scarecrow, Tin Man, Lion

MEDIA RELEASE – “THE WIZARD OF OZ” AT SKYLIGHT MUSIC THEATRE

Act II

Entr'acte.....	Chorus (Girls)
Merry Old Land of Oz.....	Dorothy, Scarecrow, Lion, Tin Man, Guard, Osians
Reprise: Merry Old Land of Oz.....	Dorothy, Scarecrow, Lion, Tin Man, Guard, Osians
King of the Forest.....	Lion, Dorothy, Tin Man, Scarecrow
March of the Winkies.....	Winkies
Jitterbug.....	Dorothy, Lion, Tin Man, Scarecrow, Bugs
Jitterbug (reprise).....	Bugs
Winkies March (reprise).....	Winkies
Winkies March with Friends/Over the Rainbow (reprise).....	Winkies, Scarecrow, Tin Man, Lion, Dorothy
Ding Dong! The Witch is Dead.....	Winkies
Graduation.....	Scarecrow, Lion, Tin Man

TICKET INFORMATION

Performances of *The Wizard of Oz* will take place in the Cabot Theatre at the Broadway Theatre Center, 158 N. Broadway in the Historic Third Ward of Milwaukee. **Tickets are generally \$22.50-\$85.00 (plus tax)** and can be purchased in person at the Broadway Theatre Center Box Office or by calling (414) 291-7800 Monday – Sunday from noon – 6:00 p.m. Tickets may also be purchased online at www.skylightmusictheatre.org. Group, student, senior and other discounts may also be available. Ticket prices are subject to change.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information can be found at <http://www.skylightmusictheatre.org/shows-events/on-stage/the-wizard-of-oz>