

The Wizard of Oz

Native Montrealer gets starring role in North American premiere of Andrew Lloyd Webber new stage adaptation

By Mike Cohen
The Suburban

TORONTO- The North American premiere of Andrew Lloyd Webber's new stage adaptation of *The Wizard of Oz* (www.wizardofozthemusical.com), now playing at Toronto's Ed Mirvish Theatre (formerly the Canon), is simply delightful.

While Danielle Wade, 20, who captured the title of Canada's Top Dorothy in CBC TV's *Over The Rainbow* reality series last fall, is getting most of the headlines as the lead, native Montrealer Lisa Horner is front and centre as the Wicked Witch. A veteran of the Shaw and Stratford Festivals, Horner said she decided on a stage career when she was very young. "My mom was part of the Montreal West Operatic Society, specializing in Gilbert and Sullivan operettas," she told *The Suburban* in an interview last week. "One day when I was 11 I came home and told her I wanted to perform. I have not looked back since."

Wade, who endured a gruelling eight weeks and 16 episodes for the CBC show, actually hails from a Windsor, Ontario suburb called LaSalle. "I have never been to Montreal," she told *The Suburban*. "But a lot of people have mentioned there is a community called LaSalle. Maybe one day I will visit."

Wade recently completed her second year at the University of Windsor, where she studies acting. "When I first auditioned for the TV show I didn't even think I would make it to the top 100," Wade admits. "Here I am now. I have met Andrew Lloyd Webber in person. I have the lead role in a big Toronto Mirvish production. This is what I want to do for the rest of my life and I am off to a really exciting start."

Mirvish Entertainment officials note that the musical

is scheduled for an extended run, with plans to eventually tour in the United States. I attended a Sunday matinee and the audience was full of families with young children, many of the little girls dressed as Dorothy. Wade and Horner both received well deserved standing ovations. Even the kids cheered for the frightening witch.

"If the kids are not scared of me then I am not doing my job," laughs Horner. "I remember watching the movie when I was young. I was always terrified of the witch and the monkeys."

Even though I have seen the movie at least a dozen times, not to mention amateur productions of the show, I still found myself very much intrigued by the entire storyline. Two little dogs share the role of Toto and Wade says they are very well trained. "I love dogs and have one of my own," she says. "Our Totos listen pretty well, but when they don't I have to work it into the show. It gives me a chance to work on my improv."

Both the set and the costume are magnificent. The scene in which Dorothy is swept into Oz following a twister is particularly impressive. The actors portraying Scarecrow, Tin Man and the Lion totally nail their roles along the journey through

the magical Land of Oz to meet the Wizard and obtain their hearts' desires.

Among the few Montrealers who cracked the Top 100 in CBC's *Over The Rainbow* was NDG's Miranda Tuwaig. "I did end up watching the show and I really liked it," she says. "The winner, Danielle, was the girl I thought should win. She has a great personality and a powerful voice. I'm very happy with the outcome."

The performance schedule is Tuesday to Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; and Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday at 1:30 p.m. The Ed Mirvish Theatre is located at 244

Victoria Street. Tickets are \$35 to \$130. For more information call Ticketing: 416-872-1212 or log on to www.mirvish.com. Please see this Friday's *Suburban Magazine* for more on this musical.



Lisa Horner in full attire as the Wicked Witch.

PHOTO BY CYLLA YON-HEIDEMANN

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The board of directors of the Julius Richardson Foundation of CSSS Cavendish is deeply saddened to learn of the untimely passing of Jean-Pierre Ménard.

His membership on the board and wise counsel for more than 30 years will be greatly missed.

We wish to offer our sincere condolences to his family.

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