

# ultimate Pasadena

## Take a trip to `Oz'

August 11, 2010 2:18 pm

Greg May wrote:



**Chelsea Sanders plays Dorothy in a cast that includes Janet Sharpley, left, Jeff Coletta and Revis Bell in Pasadena Little Theatre's production of *The Wizard of Oz*.: Pin Lim photo**

By FLORI MEEKS

Since Pasadena Little Theatre began preparing for its summer production of *The Wizard of Oz*, director Katie Reed has started noticing a surprising number of references to the classic children's movie on the radio, television and conversations around her.

"It really is a great show, and it's part of Americana," said Reed, who is putting on the show with music director Phyllis Harris and choreographer Joan Peeples.

"It's set in America, Kansas, out on the prairie. You have a girl dealing with a boring life. Then she goes on this amazing journey."

The girl is seeking a wizard to realize her dream of returning home, Reed said. "What she discovers is she had the power all along to do what she wanted to do. Isn't that the American story?"

*The Wizard of Oz* is on stage Aug. 20 through Sept. 12 at the **theater**, 4318 Allen Genoa Road in Pasadena.

Performances are 8 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays and 3 p.m. Sundays. Tickets are \$14.

The musical will incorporate the music and lyrics from the 1939 MGM film score by Harold Arlen and E.Y. Harburg with background music by Herbert Stothart.

The cast includes Brittany Roberts and Chelsea Sanders alternating as Dorothy, along with Revis Bell as Hunk and the Scarecrow, Jeff Coletta as Hickory and the Tinman, Janet Sharpley as Zeke and the Lion, Julie Owen as Madam Marvel and Oz, Ashley Bagwell as Glinda the Good Witch and Rose Trauschke as Miss Gulch and the Wicked Witch.

Reed said she's loved every minute of preparing the musical, but it hasn't necessarily been easy. "There have been technical challenges," she said. "The witch sets the scarecrow on fire. "I don't want to give it away, but we're going to use a completely safe approach."

The melting Wicked Witch scene was a bit tricky, too. "Actors get really mad when you ask them to disintegrate," Reed said.

The show also will feature flying monkeys and a tornado, which transports Dorothy and Toto to Munchkinland.

Dorothy's house lands on the Wicked Witch of the East after the storm, another less-than-popular stunt for actors.

Ultimately, Reed put long stockings on the legs of a giant stuffed duck she was using for another aspect of the production to create the look of a witch in ruby red slippers pinned beneath the farm house. "Those are the kinds of things you have to do in community theater," she laughed. Reed estimates that 50 people are involved with this show, including a cast of about 30 actors, 14 of them children.

"They are also doing an absolutely wonderful job," Reed said. "They're a constant source of humor and joy."

Bagwell said she's been having a blast as Glinda the Good Witch.

"You know the best thing about working with the kids in this musical is remembering the magic of *The Wizard of Oz* movie as a child and seeing it come to life on stage," said Bagwell, who also performed with the theater as a girl.

"Glinda reminds me of being a princess, but all grown up."

Sharpley said she grew up watching the movie, too, and her favorite character was always the Cowardly Lion.

"He has the funniest lines," said Sharpley, who was pleasantly surprised to find Reed was open to a woman playing the part in the Pasadena Little Theatre production. "It has been amazingly fun."