



Members of Stouffville Dance Centre (left) Brooke Maddock, Maddock and Narissa. The three aspiring dancers helped unveil *The Wizard of Oz* in May.

Aspiring dancers learn the ropes at centre

KATE GILDERDALE
Correspondent

When Stouffville's Dance Centre unveiled *The Wizard of Oz* in May, it was more than just a polished, imaginatively choreographed recital; it was an evening of exuberant, magical entertainment for both dancers and audiences as they travelled together along the yellow brick road to "the lovely land of Oz."

From the opening bars of the cyclone with its wild, flashing lights and leaping, whirling dancers, to the performers' final farewell accompanied by the wistful strain of "Over the Rainbow," the pace never flagged.

Even those whose interest in dance was minimal couldn't fail to be impressed by the smooth professionalism of the show.

This year's recital, the sixth created by Dance Centre Director Michele Green, was a striking departure from previous years, in which each class had traditionally performed a single, individual item.

While the younger dancers in the first half of the program had separate numbers, the "Wizard" stood on its own as a complete show, bringing together more than 80 students from a variety of different ballet, jazz and tap classes, and successfully moulding them into one cohesive unit.

It may have appeared to be an effortless performance, but it involved many months of preparation to put together the music and choreography before getting the students to start work on their dances.

"I thought of doing the Wizard of Oz the day after last year's recital," recalls Michele. "It has so many main characters and there's so much music; I felt the students were ready for this kind of challenge."

"I could see things in my mind; first I had to picture which classes I would use, then I had to find suitable music." That entailed weeks of searching through music from both the original *Wizard of Oz* and *The Wiz* as well as countless other pieces, before going through the complex task of taping and editing.

"The transition music between dances was difficult. About 30 seconds at the beginning of the poppies' dance is from a whole different record from anything else I'd been using," she explains. "I had to edit it to fit in with what followed. I taped the whole thing at Christmas and then my tape recorder went wrong and I had to start again."

Despite the endless taping sessions, "I still love that music. I could listen to the entire soundtrack over and over again and not get tired of it," she says.

As well as ensuring the music suited the ability of each class, Michele had to avoid situations in which students, many of whom take several different classes, ended up in two successive dances. It was no simple task.

"A lot of kids in the Munchkins (Grade 2 ballet) were also in junior jazz, so I made

From the opening bars of the cyclone with its wild, flashing lights and leaping, whirling dancers, to the performers' final farewell accompanied by the wistful strain of "Over the Rainbow," the pace never flagged.

the jazz group lions, to give them time to change," she notes. "There were just a couple who had to cope with quick changes."

While preparations for the show were underway, she also had to contend with moving to a new studio during March break.

"I had to start choreographing in January while I was getting ready to move. I used it as an outlet to get away from the construction," she says.

She always saw *The Wizard* as a single show, rather than a series of different items; "I think that's why it flows," she says.

When she became stuck on one part, "I would move on to whatever was next in the show. When I was close to finishing, I could see the whole thing in my mind and I would get very excited just listening to the music and imagining how it would be," she said.

The hard part, she says, was "when what was in my mind had to become reality."

She was amazed how well things went from the start. "I couldn't believe that it was working so well. Most of the time you have to change a lot, or make the best of how it develops," she says. "But it was really coming out exactly the way it was in my mind. Most of the changes were for the main characters, because they had so much acting on the side."

Michele would talk the characters through their parts. "They were getting the messages and working on their own way of getting them across; it was more important for them to feel comfortable with themselves," she said. Her experience both as choreographer and performer was invaluable in guiding the students, she believes.

And she was quite impressed with the way the students supported each other in the final week of rehearsals.

"When one group messed up on their number, the others felt sorry for them and went all out to make up for it," she says.

When students had finished their own parts, they would ask to stay and watch the show. "They got to the point where they all knew each other's dances."

When full rehearsals started, "it was like putting a puzzle together. The character dancers were tentative at first, then they started to feel more

and more at home with their parts," she says.

The whole cast performed magnificently, she adds. "Everybody made it work; I

And there was no doubt the audience shared her enthusiasm. "I had fathers coming backstage with tears in their eyes, and one man from Toronto said that if his daughter's recital was half as good as this, he'd be thrilled," she says.

was ready to take that show on the road."

"The kids pulled it together," she continues. "They were so tuned in to what it was about and that's what makes it special. When they went onstage, it felt like 80 little pieces of myself out there."

And there was no doubt the audience shared her enthusiasm: "I had fathers coming backstage with tears in their eyes, and one man from Toronto said that if his daughter's recital was half as good as this, he'd be thrilled," she says.

One woman presented her with an orchid after she and her husband had seen the show.

With more than 1,300 people attending the three performances, and a total of 280 young students, the Dance Centre continues to provide Stouffville with both classy entertainment and a learning environment for aspiring dancers.

Herongate Barn Dinner Theatre
Altona Rd., Pickering
Back By Popular Demand
Another Hilarious Comedy
DIRTY WORK AT THE CROSSROADS
Playing From May 12th-June 24th
For Reservations & Information Book early to avoid disappointment
Please call 294-0426

The Conductor's Station
NOW OPEN 40 TABLE DANCERS
175 ANDERSON AVE., MARKHAM 471-1760
THE ONLY ADULT ENTERTAINMENT LOUNGE IN MARKHAM & SURROUNDING AREA
THIS WEEK FEATURING COVER GIRL RIVA ROSE
A SEXY BEAUTY
GIANT SPORT SCREEN EXCELLENT FOOD MENU PLUS DAILY HOT BUFFET NON-STOP ENTERTAINMENT FROM 12 NOON-1 A.M.
CALL 471-1760 For bookings ask for NICK or ALEX

DON'T PAY TIL LABOUR DAY
We think you deserve some credit for choosing the efficiency experts.
100% Financing No Money Down
Enjoy the comfort of Lennox quality air conditioning and heating products NOW and don't pay until Labour Day.
AUTHORIZED DEALER Consumers Gas
Lennox HS16 air conditioning
Lennox Gas Heat The Pulse
LENNOX Heating/Air Conditioning
BRIDLEWOOD HEATING • AIR CONDITIONING
CALL US NOW
MARKHAM SCARBOROUGH Call 752-9444
AJAX PICKERING Call 427-9261

markville cinema 4
FAMOUS PLAYERS
IN THE MARKVILLE SHOPPING CENTRE Hwy. 7 & McCowan Rd. Telephone 927-SHOW
WEEKDAYS DOORS OPEN 6:30 SATURDAY & SUNDAY CONTINUOUS from 1:10 FREE PARKING Directly in front of cinema entrance on NORTH parking lot
NOW PLAYING!
1 INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE SHOWTIMES: 7:05, 9:40 PARENTAL GUIDANCE
2 DEAD POET'S SOCIETY SHOWTIMES: 6:45, 9:30 PARENTAL GUIDANCE
3 SEE NO EVIL HEAR NO EVIL SHOWTIMES: 7:20, 9:45 ADULT ACCOMPANIMENT
4 STARTREK V SHOWTIMES: 7:00, 9:15 PARENTAL GUIDANCE
THIS THURSDAY JUNE 22. SPECIAL SHOWING OF BATMAN 10:00 P.M.

GUARANTEED WEIGHT LOSS!
with our new **Thin 4 Life PROGRAM**
It's Impossible to Fail!
"Reach your goal within a specified number of visits or continue the program free until you do! New clients only."
LOSE 55 LBS. BY LABOUR DAY!
If you are 170 lbs. you can be 118 lbs!
If you are 180 lbs. you can be 128 lbs!
If you are 190 lbs. you can be 135 lbs!
If you are 200 lbs. you can be 145 lbs!
Individual Results May Vary
LOSE 30 LBS. BY JULY 31ST!
If you are 150 lbs. you can be 122 lbs!
If you are 160 lbs. you can be 131 lbs!
If you are 170 lbs. you can be 141 lbs!
If you are 180 lbs. you can be 150 lbs!
Individual Results May Vary
Call now for our Grand Opening Special
Thin 4 Life WEIGHT LOSS CLINIC
50% OFF ALL PROGRAMS
MARKHAM 5293 Hwy. #7, 294-0030
VISA and MasterCard welcome. Open 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mon-Fri. Weight Loss Clinic International, Inc. 1989