## **Freeman**

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whirling effect; a trap door for the storm cellar; and using LED lights to create the witch's "burning" broomstick and her exit from the stage as she is "melting."

Waltner and Stucky worked with the tornado scene, while Stucky worked with the pyrotechnics, Carlson said.

In addition, the stage has been extended 14 feet and can support the weight of scenes where about three dozen cast members — including about 30 Munchkins played by the Freeman Area Children's Choir — take to the stage, Carlson said.

"We met last November, talking about what is feasible," he said. "The LED lights really help. We throw off five or six different color scheme. You can change colors as the show goes

A wide range of other efforts rolled smoothly behind the scenes, Carlson said.

Michelle Hofer, the set designer, created a mock miniature model of the entire stage. She designed the set using art from the book "Wizard of Oz." She transposed an exact replica of Emerald City on a flat, using black lighting and green fluorescent paint.

Costume director Margie Waltner created, among many things, the flying monkey costumes while make-up director Jill Hofer created flying monkey masks that adhere to the faces.

Jeremy Handel of Wildcat Manufacturing in Freeman created the Tin Man costume, including prosthetic devices, Carlson said. Jarrod Preheim, who works for a local construction company during the day, committed a minimum of 150 hours working on the sets, he added.

"I wouldn't be surprised if there are some moments when people applaud the technical aspects because of how it gets done," Carlson said.

Wherever they are located at one of several sites, cast and crew members can keep track of the stage action through a closed-circuit monitoring system, said crew member Jay Hofer.

"There also isn't a lot of room on the wings for the cast to watch and wait," he said. "This way, they know when it's their cue and they need to be on stage."

Hofer emphasized the closed-circuit camera contains absolutely no video taping or reproduction of any kind that would violate copyright

"We have the connections to monitors in the dressing rooms, make-up room, below the stage and to an adjoining hall where the Munchkins and other cast members stay during the production," Hofer said.

"With a monitor under the stage, the cast and tech crew can see what is needed in terms of raising and lowering the trap door that acts as the storm cellar."

## READY FOR OPENING NIGHT

The "Wizard of Oz" has all come together Jeremy Waltner's guidance, Lori Hofer said.

"Jeremy is an outstanding director because he surrounds himself with good people. He seeks out the best people not only for the cast, set design, costume, props and technical crew," she said.

"It's all been positive. He has a big vision, and he wants it to be the best and biggest. He has the ability to sell it in many ways, that people want to be part of something."

As for herself, Hofer is ready for the curtain to rise.

"By the time this is done you

"By the time this is done, you have found yourself performing before thousands of people," she said. "I try to tell myself that the hard work is over and this is the fun part. That's what I like about theater, entertaining people."

Waltner said he feels pride in the finished product.

"This is as professional as amateur theater gets. We are not rehearsing between the two weekends. When it opens this Friday, that's the way it goes," he said.

"This is one sweet show. It's all about going home, that there's no place like home. And who doesn't want to go home?"

## CAST

Dorothy: Lori Hofer
Aunt Em: Lois Wollman
Uncle Henry: Paul Balzer
Tinman/Hickory: Collin Waltner
Scarecrow/Hunk: Evan Waltner
Lion/Zeke: Jerry Hofer
Professor/Wizard: Will Ortman
Glinda: Sonja Waltner
Wicked Witch of the West:

Guard: Kerry Hofer Munchkin Mayor: Shay Saarie Munchkin Coroner: Philip

Munchkin Barrister: Jonathan Olthoff Munchkin/City Father 1: Annie

Carlson

Munchkin/City Father 2: Olivia

Munchkin/City Father 2: Olivia Boese

Munchkin Braggarts: Paige Heckenlaible and Journey Mehlhaf Company: Alison Bodewitz,

Company: Anison Bodewitz, Ronda Bodewitz, Polly Carlson, LeRoy Epp, Megan Eisenbeis, Justin Eisenbeis, Judy Graber, Ryan Haggerty, Kaitlyn Mehlhaf, Riley Mehlhaf, Miranda Miller, Paul Ortman, Penny Saarie, Austin Van Diepen, Michael Van Diepen, Monte J. Waltner, Bethany Wollman, Hannah Yoder Munchkin chorus: Kaylee

Bethany Wollman, Hannah Yoder Munchkin chorus: Kaylee Auch, Kaitlyn Epp, Ashley Fink, Natalie Goosen, Jeffrey Graber, Meridith Graber, Marissa Hofer, Vanessa Hofer, Tayaih Miller, Haylie Palmer, Gorge Sanchez, Jackson Waltner, Stephen Waltner, Lacey Wipf, Sara Wipf, Andrea Wollman





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