

# THE WIZ

## The Beginning:



## The Wiz performs at Portland's Paramount

NBC critic Leonard Probst stated it very well: "THE WIZ is cleverly conceived and enormously funny... The best adult/children's entertainment to reach Broadway since *The Magic Show*. THE WIZ is Black magic, sassy, original and a trip worth taking." THE WIZ is coming to the Portland Paramount for two performances on Wednesday and Thursday, March 18 & 19 at 8 PM.

And what a hit THE WIZ is! The winner of Seven Tony Awards including Best Musical Score, THE WIZ is playing to standing room audiences on tour everywhere.

THE WIZ is a contemporary musical treatment of L. Frank Baum's "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz." William Glover, Drama Critic for the Associated Press stated his enthusiasm in contemporary hyperbole, "THE WIZ is a wow! Even Judy Garland fans can cheer. A giving, colorful, jovial musical." In contrast to much of Broadway's recent offerings, the music from THE WIZ is happy and upbeat -- a compelling reason

for capturing the Grammy Award's coveted Best Album of the Year Award.

The nationally touring stage production appearing here will contain all of the production elements so beloved in the Broadway production including the irrepressible dog Toto. Originally written by William F. Brown with musical score by Charlie Smalls, this all new national touring production of THE WIZ will be produced by Barry Singer of Kim-Todd, LTD., in association with Broadway Productions' Dyke Spear, Executive Producer who will be handling tour direction and promotion. Spear and Singer have become North America's most active producers of touring Broadway attractions. Their joint efforts have culminated in national tours of HAIR, OH! CALCUTTA., JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR, GODSPELL, and GREASE in over one hundred and seventy-five American and Canadian communities during the past five years.

### ACT ONE

Early in 1903, a musical comedy opened in New York City at the old Majestic Theatre on Columbus Circle called "The Wizard of Oz." It was the first stage adaptation of L. Frank Baum's classic children's story. Repeating the success it enjoyed out of town the previous fall, the Grand Opera House in Chicago, it took New York by storm and ran for eighteen months. It became one of the greatest successes of the first decade of the century, surpassed only by "Floradora" and "The Merry Widow." Ann Laughlin played Dorothy, Arthur Hill played the Cowardly Lion, but the overnight hits in the show were two minor vaudeville stars, Fred Stone as the Scarecrow, and David Montgomery as the Tin Woodman. Stone's brother Edwin also gained considerable notoriety as Imogene the Cow.

Imagine the Cow? Wait a minute! How does that concept fit into "The Wizard?" Well, in 1902 the director, Julian Mitchell, decided that training a real dog to play Toto was too time-consuming a chore, and that it would be enormously difficult to have an actor perform as a dog (although that feat was neatly accomplished five years later in "Peter Pan" when Nana was portrayed by a human being.) So Dorothy's pet dog became a pet spotted calf, and Imogene the Cow worked with much success. Touring companies of "The Wizard of Oz" were still playing to packed houses across the country as late as 1911.

### ACT TWO

Early in 1975, a musical comedy opened in New York City at the new Majestic Theatre on West 44th Street called "The Wiz" its latest adaptation of L. Frank Baum's classic children's story. Repeating the success it enjoyed out of town the previous fall, in Baltimore (where it premiered October 21, 1974), Detroit, and Philadelphia, it's been taking New York by storm and is already one of the most successful all-Black musical comedies yet produced.

All-Black? Wait a minute! How does that concept fit into "The Wizard?" Well, in 1971, Ken Harper, the producer, intent upon trying a new version of the familiar property, hit upon the idea of an exotic production using an all-Black cast. William F. Brown wrote the book; Charlie Smalls composed the score; Geoffrey Holder directed; George Faison choreographed, and the result? As Ted Kalem of *Time* magazine said: "The show, with all new music and lyrics, is saucy with Black urban humor. Its talk is jumping jivernacular, its walk a big city strut, its dances have a blowtorch frenzy, and its songs range from a warm gospel glow to the rock beat of a riveter mining asphalt."

Curtain?

Not likely. Oz seems to be an institution that will be reborn many times, many ways, in many generations.

### THE WIZ: WHO'S WHO

#### Ray Harris

Ray Harris - Scarecrow - Mr. Harris is a young dancer/actor from Ohio. He has danced with the Alvin Ailey Dance Company since 1978 and has performed with the celebrated group in New York's City Center and the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. With the Alvin Ailey Workshop Company, he toured Trinidad and Barbados earlier this year. Earlier in his career, he was a member of the Daton Contemporary Dance Company and the Karamu House Dancers. He was a soloist on the *Merv Griffin Show* and performed in several Karamu House theatrical productions including the role of Barnaby in "Hello Dolly."

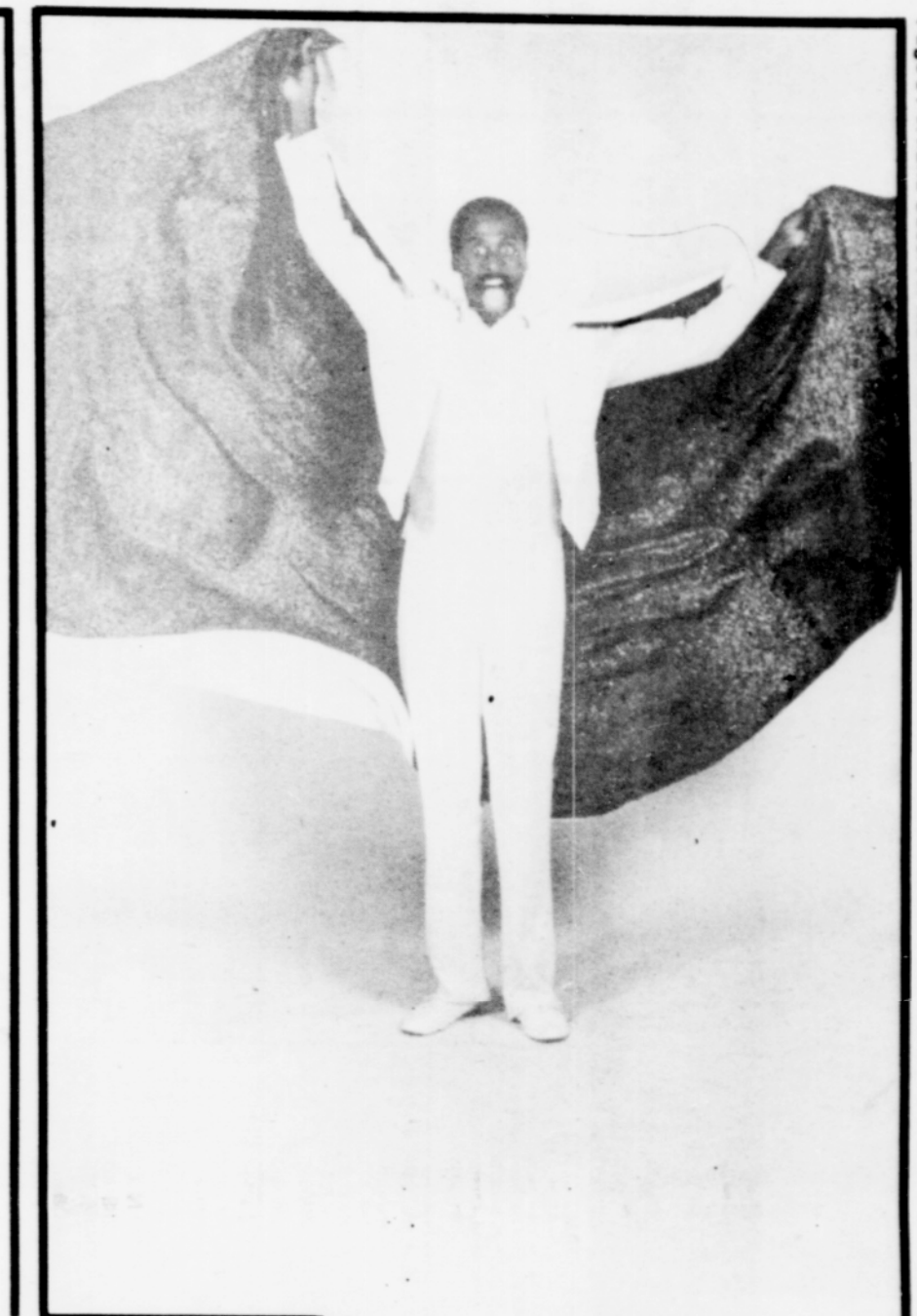
#### Larry Brown

Larry Brown plays the Lion in this WIZ production. His stage career began while attending North Carolina Central University serving as featured vocalist with the University Touring Chorale. Since then, his stage credits have included fulminations in "Off-White," Nathan Detroit in "Guys and Dolls" and the Billy Holiday Theatre production of "Tambourines to Glory" in New York City. The versatile singer and actor hails from North Carolina and dedicates his performance to his family and friends, his main source of inspiration.



Martine Girault

Martine Girault as Dorothy - Martine's professional career began in the role of Tuptim in a local production of "The King and I," a role in which she received most favorable reviews from the *New York Daily News*. In 1979, 15 year old Martine toured Philadelphia, Baltimore and New York as Lilly Mae in "The Me Nobody Knows." In June of 1979, Martine starred in the first all-Black version of "The Wizard of Oz" in the role of Dorothy, originally played on the screen by Judy Garland. At the age of 16, Martine is a thorough professional. Besides singing, dancing and acting, she speaks French fluently.



Preston Smith

Preston Smith - is the Wizard! Previous stage experience for Preston Smith includes the portrayal of Tony in two productions of *West Side Story* and the leading role in *Rhimes and Times of Edward Eliscu*, a revue which he performed in the summer of 1978 and 1979. The 6'1 tenor who makes his home in Danbury, Connecticut, did lead vocals with "Coalition" and "Carisma" from 1971 through 1978. More recently, he has been performing with an accompanist in clubs in New Haven and Avon, Connecticut.

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Time: 5:00 - 9:00 PM

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Sponsored by The Oregonian Ladies"

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Door Prizes

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