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“Ease on Down the Road” with Near West Theatre’s *The Wiz*
Large, multi-racial youth cast lights up the stage February 10-19

CLEVELAND – Near West Theatre continues their “SuperAllInclusivisticArtfullyPrecocious” 2016-17 season with beloved Broadway gem *The Wiz*, a multicultural, contemporary musical interpretation of Dorothy’s adventures through the Land of Oz. Director Kelcie Nicole Dugger has imagined a mysterious, opulent and fantastical production of this groundbreaking Broadway show, featuring a large, multi-racial youth cast ages 9-15 who bring Oz to life in a funky sing-along journey down the yellow brick road.

The Wiz is a sassy and soulful counterpart to its classic predecessors. In stark contrast to the pastoral, rural Kansas of traditional adaptations, this version of L. Frank Baum’s timeless coming-of-age tale is set in a severely realistic urban environment rooted in modern African-American culture, and infused with a dazzling mix of rock, gospel, and soul. Dubbed “The Super Soul Musical,” this large-scale, big-budget production was a breakthrough for Broadway in 1975, featuring an all-black cast and winning 7 Tonys including Best Musical. It was subsequently adapted into a film version in 1978 featuring Michael Jackson and Diana Ross, and more recently produced as part of NBC’s Live Musical series.

“Almost everyone knows the story ‘*The Wizard of Oz*,’” says Dugger, “but there’s so much more to it than ‘There’s No Place Like Home.’ These four friends aren’t just seeking home, a brain, a heart, and some courage; they are really all on a quest to become whole people. They’re searching for the missing pieces that will make them, and their lives, complete.” In this way, *The Wiz* delves deeper into the heart of the iconic story, highlighting Dorothy’s mature realization that her journey has taught her that all she needs to do to find her true Home is to look inside her own heart.

This multi-dimensional aspect of *The Wiz* makes it a perfect match for [Near West Theatre’s mission](#). During the first two weeks of an extended, unique rehearsal process, substantial time is set aside for the cast to dig into the piece itself. Actors share observations, feelings, and related personal experiences, and engage in comprehensive discussion around the relevance, meaning and messages of the production. This practice, along with concentrated community development efforts, creates cohesion, trust, and a “family” energy in the cast. This both empowers the actors and strengthens the production itself by fostering mutual investment and communal growth.

As always, Near West Theatre’s volunteer actors are diverse in race, neighborhood, age, size, physical ability, and acting experience. They range from ordinary city and suburban residents on stage for the first time, to actors familiar to the Near West stage and Northeast Ohio audiences. With this second season in their new facility, Near West continues to enjoy and explore the possibilities that their new wheelchair accessible, climate controlled building provides.

Reserved Star Seat tickets are \$25; general admission is \$10 for adults and \$8 for children 12 and under. Tickets are available at nearwesttheatre.org or by calling 216-961-6391 weekdays, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The theater, constructed as part of the Gordon Square Arts District capital campaign, is at 6702 Detroit Avenue.

Near West Theatre is grateful for ongoing operating support from the [Cuyahoga Arts and Culture](#), [Ohio Arts Council](#), and additional 2016-2017 season support from Patron Sponsor [Consolidated Solutions](#). Near West Theatre is a member of Greater



Cleveland Community Shares. Community Shares supports local nonprofit organizations working for long-term, sustainable solutions to build a stronger Cleveland. Learn more about Community Shares and supporting social justice through workplace giving at www.communityshares.org.

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The Wiz

Adapted from "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" by L. Frank Baum

Book by William F. Brown

Music & Lyrics by Charlie Smalls

Near West Theatre Production, February 10-19, 2017

Cast

Felix Albino (Tin Man), Livia Begue, Isabella Capuano, Kiley Check, Josh Davis, Adelisa DeJesus, Zoe Douglas (Aunt Em/Glinda), Ray Ervin, Micah Evans, Nadia Evans, Connor Fields (Scarecrow), Giles Foster, Drew Gibson, Julia Gutia, Jouvert Guy-James, Zoe Hess, Ellie Hill, Hannah Horton, Rielle Hubbard, Ronald Hubbard, Sophie Hull, Angellise Irizarry, Moriyah Faith Jackson, Zeakia Jordon (Dorothy), CJ Jorgensen, Nate Jorgensen (Lion), Jack Lange, Connor Marrott, Jackson Marshall, Ian McLaughlin, Chloe Mihelich, Joshua Mink, Brett Nicholette, Ella Nosse, Sophie O'Leary, Finn O'Malia, Rachel Ploenzke, Ellie Ritterbusch, Shadarrria Robinson, Kayla Slater (Addaperle), Natalie Surdy, Cole Tarantowski (The Wiz), Tannayia Thomas, Tyler Thompson, Dashiell Tidrick, Anna Van Farowe, Kyanie Vazquez, Calista Zajac (Evillene).

Production staff

Director: Kelcie Nicole Dugger. **Music Director/Keyboard Conductor:** John Krol. **Assistant Music Director:** Scott Pyle. **Production Manager:** Michael Stein. **Assistant Production Manager:** Ryan Wolf. **Technical Director/Facilities Manager:** Josh Padgett. **Assistant Technical Director/Video Designer:** Perren Hedderson. **Scenic Designer:** Cameron Caley Michalak. **Properties Designer:** Monica Plunkett. **Lighting Designer:** Adam Ditzel. **Sound Designer:** Joshua Caraballo. **Costume Designer:** April Rock. **Choreographer:** Josh Landis. **Stage Manager:** Kate Atherton. **Assistant Stage Manager:** Allan Stubbs.

Performance dates

Fri., **Feb. 10** – 7:30 p.m.

Sat., **Feb. 11** – 7:30 p.m.

Sun., **Feb. 12** – 3:00 p.m.

Fri., **Feb. 17** – 7:30 p.m.

Sat., **Feb. 18** – 7:30 p.m.

Sun., **Feb. 19** – 3:00 p.m.

Suggested performance listing:

Near West Theatre, 6702 Detroit Ave., Cleveland's Gordon Square Arts District. 216-961-6391 or nearwesttheatre.org. *"The Wiz"* Feb. 10, 11, 17, & 18 at **7:30 p.m.**; Feb. 12 & 19 at **3 p.m.** Reserved Star Seat: \$25; General Admission: \$10 adults, \$8 children ages 12 and under. *"The Wiz"* is presented by special arrangement with Musical Theatre International (MTI).