



There's Still Magic in Oz: Tuacahn's Timely Tribute to a Classic

Description

Ivins, UT There's no clearer sign that summer has arrived in **Utah** than the return of **Tuacahn's** outdoor theatre season, nestled in the red rock canyons of **Ivins**. Tuacahn's 2025 production of *The Wizard of Oz* transforms a familiar journey with technical spectacle, thoughtful design, and just the right touch of theatrical magic.

Directed by **Michael Heitzman**, this production stays true to the charm of **L. Frank Baum's** classic tale, enhanced by **Harold Arlen** and **E.Y. Harburg's** iconic score, while infusing new energy through innovative staging and a strong cast. From the opening cyclone to the sparkling **Emerald City**, **Tuacahn's Oz** offers more than nostalgia—it offers wonder.

One of the most beloved tales returns to Tuacahn, brought to life with daring flying maneuvers, dazzling pyrotechnics, stunning costuming, larger-than-life special effects that make this outdoor venue extraordinary. Audiences follow **Dorothy** as she's whisked away over the rainbow to the magical land of **Oz**, where she joins forces with a **Scarecrow**, a **Tin Man**, and a **Cowardly Lion** to find her way home. But danger lurks around every corner as the **Wicked Witch of the West** schemes to steal the enchanted ruby slippers—now on Dorothy's feet—once worn by her fallen sister.

Eric B. Anthony (Scarecrow), Davey Burton Midkiff (Tin Man), Mollie-Claire Matthews (Dorothy), and **Eric B. Anthony (Scarecrow), Davey Burton Midkiff (Tin Man), Mollie-Claire Matthews (Dorothy), and Nick Berninger (Cowardly Lion) in *The Wizard of Oz* at Tuacahn.**

Photo by Leavitt Wells

Context: The Legacy of Oz

In a theatrical landscape filled with Oz reinterpretations—from the cinematic nostalgia of the 1939 **MGM** film, to the revisionist spectacle of **Wicked**, to the joyful, Black-centric retelling of **The Wiz**—Tuacahn's production finds a confident place by honoring the heart of the original while embracing the possibilities of modern stagecraft. The stage version used here, adapted in **1987** by **John Kane** for the **Royal Shakespeare Company**, faithfully recreates the beloved film with added theatrical flair, using the original songs by **Arlen** and **Harburg**.

â??Tuacahnâ??s Oz doesnâ??t reinvent the storyâ??it reminds us why we fell in love with it in the first place.â?•
â??Rhetorical Reviewâ??

Julie Cardia (Wicked Witch of the West), Eric B. Anthony (Scarecrow), Davey Burton Midkiff (Tin Man)
Julie Cardia (Wicked Witch of the West), Eric B. Anthony (Scarecrow), Davey Burton Midkiff (Tin Man), Mollie-Claire Matthews (Dorothy), and Nick Berninger (Cowardly Lion) in *The Wizard of Oz* at Tuacahn.
Photo by Leavitt Wells

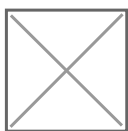
Where *Wicked* reframes the story through political allegory and *The Wiz* infuses the journey with gospel, funk, and a celebration of Black identity and culture. Tuacahnâ??s *Wizard of Oz* leans into a family-friendly classicism enriched by technical wonder. Rather than subverting the source material, this production revels in its familiar rhythmsâ??then elevates them through spectacle, sincerity, and stunning design. It proves thereâ??s still magic to be found somewhere over the rainbowâ??and itâ??s a particularly smart choice for a year nestled between the two-part *Wicked* film release, when audiences are already primed to return to the land of Oz.

Mollie-Claire Matthews (Dorothy), Photo by Leavitt Wells
Mollie-Claire Matthews (Dorothy), Photo by Leavitt Wells

A Visual Spectacle in Motion

Tuacahn is known for its grand scale, and Oz lives up to that reputation. **Bryce Cutlerâ??s** video projections breathe cinematic life into the stage, from gently swaying **Kansas** telephone lines to a poppy field that seems to stretch for miles. The tornado sequence is particularly striking, seamlessly blending projection, lighting, and sound to immersive effect.

Nate Bertoneâ??s scenic design complements the projections with functionality and charm. A glowing yellow brick road unfurls and retracts with effortless precision, guiding both characters and audience deeper into **Oz**. Costume designer **Ryan Moller** walks a delicate line between homage and innovation, each look is updated from the classicâ??offering a subtle but powerful visual choice that makes each scene more interesting than the last.



Eric B. Anthony (Scarecrow), Davey Burton Midkiff (Tin Man), Mollie-Claire Matthews (Dorothy), and Nick Berninger (Cowardly Lion) in *The Wizard of Oz* at Tuacahn.
Photo by Leavitt Wells

Technical Marvels and Moments of Awe

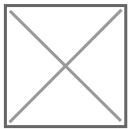
This is a production defined by technical bravura. Flying effects by **Paul Rubin** (with equipment from **Flying by Foy**) elevate the magicâ??literally. From **Glindaâ??s** bubble to the winged monkey that

swoops down over the audience, the airborne sequences are thrilling and fluid. Even more impressive is the puppetry. **Scott Molampy**'s full-body tree puppets are a standout—animated, expressive, and capable of hurling oversized apples across the stage with jaw-dropping accuracy. The flaming visage of **Oz**'s head is another showstopper, creating a visceral moment of awe and power.

Another moment of theatrical delight comes during the snowfall in the poppy field—a magical effect using soap-like foam that vanishes as it hits the ground. It's a visually stunning interlude, made even more powerful by Glinda's soaring vocals in the following number. **Jillian Butler** hits shimmering high notes that elevate the moment into something truly ethereal, reminding us that even small musical bridges can become emotional highlights when performed with precision and heart. Tuacahn's Oz is filled with small, surprising delights.

The Wicked Witch's smoking broom, the parade of real animals (including horses, goats, sheep, and baby cows), and Toto's flawless obedience all add to the immersion. It's a world so carefully crafted that even the snow—really a disappearing foam—feels enchanted.

Yet, not all effects soared. The iconic hourglass felt underwhelming in both scale and urgency. These theatrical flourishes aren't just eye candy—they serve the story. Moments like these remind us that Oz is, above all, a place of enchantment.



Eric B. Anthony (Scarecrow) and Mollie-Claire Matthews (Dorothy) in *The Wizard of Oz* at Tuacahn.

Photo by Leavitt Wells

A Dorothy Worth Following

Mollie-Claire Matthews as Dorothy delivers a grounded, expressive performance, carrying the emotional arc of the show with grace and heart. She brings humor, vulnerability, and physicality to the role—navigating a space that demands both large-scale presence and sincere intimacy. Mathews' rendition of "Over the Rainbow" is not only vocally strong but also emotionally resonant.

As the Scarecrow, **Eric B. Anthony** brings comic charm, supple physicality, and an infectious sense of joy. His dancing shines—audiences who saw him as Sebastian in *The Little Mermaid* will recognize his precision and playfulness. That said, the tempo of "If I Only Had a Brain" felt a touch restrained; a quicker pace or added dance break could have given Anthony the spotlight he clearly deserves.

Davey Burton Midkiff brings strength and pathos to the Tin Man, grounding the character in sincerity rather than slapstick. Midkiff's performance is heartfelt, with "If I Only Had a Heart" delivered not as a punchline, but as a genuine yearning. While the Tin Man can sometimes fade into the background between the more animated Scarecrow and Lion, Midkiff holds his own—offering a tender, understated performance that gives the trio its emotional anchor.

Nick Berninger is phenomenal as the Cowardly Lion, striking the perfect balance between nostalgia and nuance. His comedic timing, expressive physicality, and warmhearted delivery make him a crowd favorite—a performance that honors the beloved original while feeling fresh and joyfully alive. In his solo, *“If I Were King of the Forest,”* Berninger dons a dramatic black cape reminiscent of Elphaba’s from *Wicked*—a clever costume choice that adds a sly theatrical wink to Oz aficionados while reinforcing the scene’s comic grandeur.

Jillian Butler’s **Glinda** glides in with elegance—literally—descending in a glowing pink hoop that evokes classic stage magic. Her performance is vocally rich, with crystalline soprano notes that reach higher than most traditional interpretations. The result is a Glinda who feels not just kind and sparkly, but commanding.

Fred Inkley was especially memorable as both Professor Marvel and the Wizard, offering a performance full of wit, empathy, and spontaneity that anchored several key scenes. He captures the character’s contradictions well—the charm of a traveling fortune-teller, the theatrical bravado of a snake oil salesman, and the vulnerability of a man caught in his own web of lies.

His advice, though confidently delivered, is often hollow. *“Hearts will never be practical until they are unbreakable”* sounds wise until you think about it—and realize it’s a dodge, not a truth. Likewise, his claim that *“a heart is not judged by how much you love, but by how much you are loved by others”* reflects a troublingly selfish framing of love, prioritizing external validation over genuine care. These moments reveal just how fragile the Wizard’s illusion really is. When Dorothy finally says, *“If you were really great and powerful, you would keep your promises,”* the moment lands with emotional precision—cutting through the smoke and mirrors to reveal what truly matters.

Julie Cardia stands out as the Wicked Witch of the West with relish and razor-sharp timing. Draped in green and crackling with menace, her performance is equal parts theatrical and delightfully wicked. She relishes the role’s iconic lines without turning them into caricature, allowing the character’s fury and bitterness to simmer beneath the surface. Her entrances—often accompanied by plumes of smoke and a broom that literally smolders—are thrilling, and she commands the stage every time she appears. Cardia’s Witch isn’t just a villain; she’s a force of chaos, jealousy, and theatrical glee.

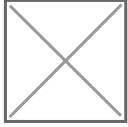
The youth ensemble brought energy and cohesion, especially in **Munchkinland**, and Mr. Baum, the real-life pup playing Toto, deserves a special round of applause.

default watermark



â??Spectacle, sincerity, and an adorable dogâ??what more could you ask for over the rainbow?â?•

â??*Rhetorical Review*â??



Jillian Butler (Glinda), *The Wizard of Oz* at Tuacahn, surrounded by the vibrant Munchkin ensemble.

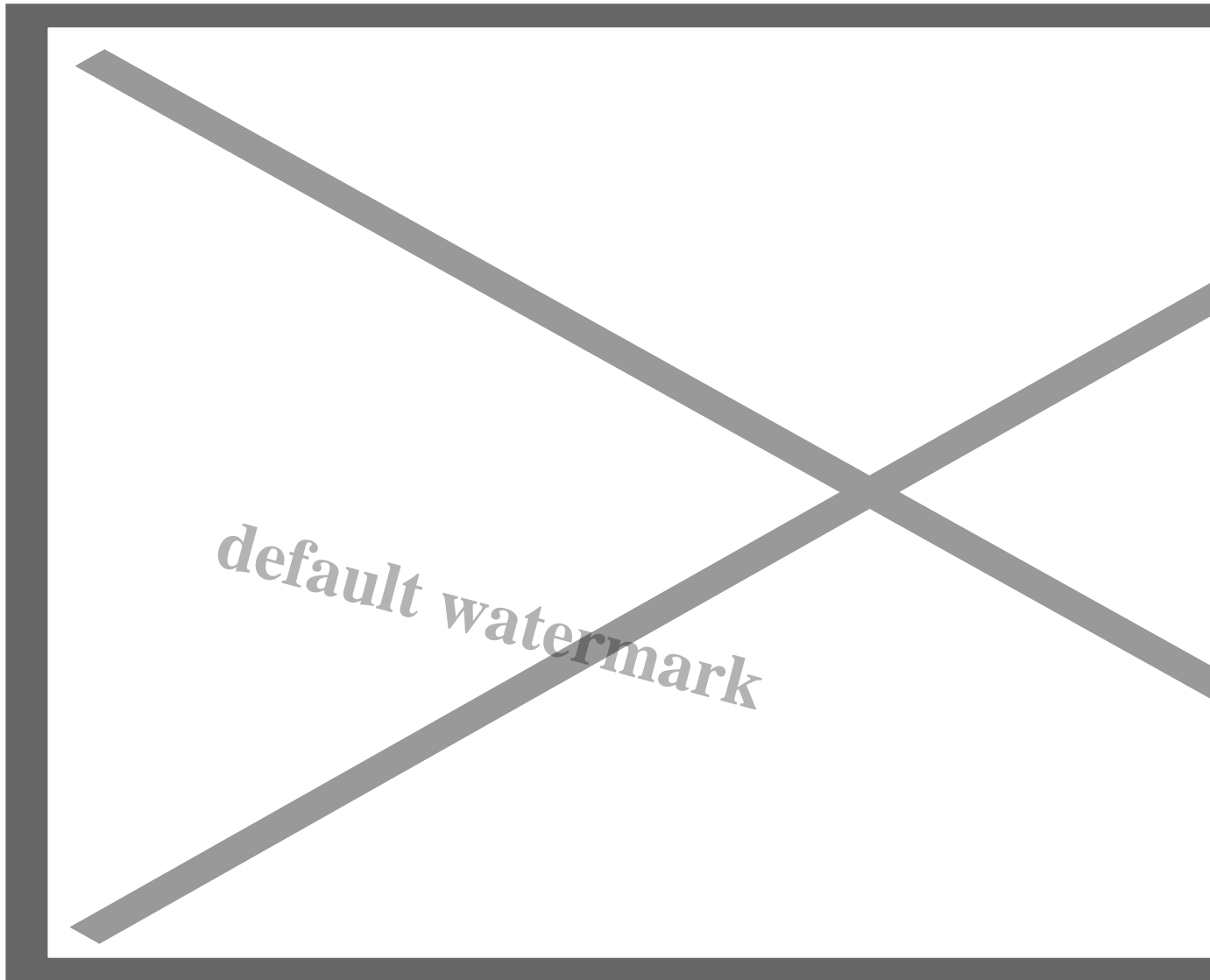
Photo by Leavitt Wells

Choreography, Music, and Direction in Harmony

Choreographer **Robbie Roby** navigated the complexities of working with a mixed-age cast with skill. The movement was clean, dynamic, and well-suited to the outdoor stage. The ensemble numbers had clarity and style without overreaching. **Daniel Mollett**'s orchestra offered lush live accompaniment, grounding the production in a rich musical landscape that elevated every moment.

Under **Heitzman**'s direction, the show flows: transitions are smooth, and the blend of classic and contemporary sensibilities feel balanced and intentional.

Want a taste of the magic? Listen to highlights from the original film soundtrack [on Spotify](#) or view Tuacahn's official show trailer [on YouTube](#).



Nick Berninger (Cowardly Lion) delivers his solo number with heart and humor in *The Wizard of Oz* at Tuacahn.

Photo by Leavitt Wells

Why This Oz Matters Now

At a time when modern reimaginings dominate the theatrical landscape, *The Wizard of Oz* at Tuacahn dares to lean into timelessness. It doesn't attempt to outdo *Wicked* or reframe the narrative through a postmodern lens. Instead, it asks us to remember—to reinhabit a story that shaped generations, and to see it again with fresh wonder under the stars.

This production may not offer radical reinterpretation, but it does something equally valuable: it restores our belief in the magic of theatre itself. In a world where cynicism often wins, *Oz* offers courage, heart, brains—and a clear path home.

Whether you're a lifelong fan of Dorothy's journey or simply seeking a night of enchantment, Tuacahn's *Wizard of Oz* is an unforgettable ride down the yellow brick road. And maybe, just

maybe, youâ??ll leave with a renewed belief in the simple truth thatâ??s carried generations:

Thereâ??s no place like theatre.

Show Details

The Wizard of Oz

• **When:** Nightly performances, **Mondayâ??Saturday at 8:45 PM**

• **Dates:** Now through **October 23, 2025**

• **Where:** **Tuacahn Amphitheatre**, 1100 Tuacahn Drive, **Ivins, Utah**

Runtime: Approximately **2 hours 15 minutes**, including a 15-minute intermission

• **Tickets:** [\\$63â??\\$145 \(pricing varies by seating tier\)](#)

• **Box Office:** 800-746-9882

• **Parking:** Free on-site parking available

• **Weather Policy:** As an outdoor venue, performances are weather-dependent; bring layers for cooler desert evenings

• **Accessibility:** Wheelchair-accessible seating available; assisted listening devices provided upon request

• **Age Recommendation:** Family-friendly and appropriate for all ages (children under 3 not permitted)

• **Website & Tickets:** tuacahn.org.

[Directions](#)

Cast of The Wizard of Oz â?? Tuacahn 2025

Mollie-Claire Matthews â?? Dorothy

Mr. Baum â?? Toto

Jillian Butler* â?? Aunt Em / Glinda

Randal Keith* â?? Uncle Henry / Emerald City Guard

Nick Berninger* â?? Zeke / Cowardly Lion

Davey Burton Midkiff* â?? Hickory / Tin Man

Eric B. Anthony* â?? Hunk / Scarecrow

Julie Cardia* â?? Miss Gulch / The Wicked Witch of the West

Fred Inkley* â?? Professor Marvel / The Wizard of Oz

* Indicates a member of the Actorsâ?? Equity Association

Cast

Category

1. Musicals
2. Reviews

Tags

1. Bryce Cutler
2. Classic Theatre
3. Costume Design
4. Daniel Mollett
5. Eric B. Anthony
6. Family-Friendly Theatre
7. Flying by Foy
8. Fred Inkley
9. Ivins Utah
10. Keola Kinghorn
11. Keolanani Kinghorn
12. L. Frank Baum
13. Live Performance
14. MGM Film
15. Michael Heitzman
16. Mollie-Claire Matthews
17. Musical Theatre
18. Outdoor Theatre
19. Oz Reimaginings
20. Projection Design
21. Puppetry in Theatre
22. Red Rock Theatre
23. Rhetorical Review
24. Robbie Roby
25. Ryan Moller
26. Scenic Design
27. Scott Molampy
28. Southern Utah Events
29. Stage Effects
30. The Wiz
31. The Wizard of Oz
32. The Wizard of Oz Adaptations
33. Theatre Lighting
34. Theatre Nostalgia
35. Theatre Review
36. Theatrical Magic
37. Tuacahn 2025 Season
38. Tuacahn Amphitheatre
39. Utah Arts
40. Utah theatre
41. WICKED

default watermark

Date

2026/04/08

Date Created

2025/07/27

Author
keola06

default watermark