

Theatre Review: The Wizard of Oz

By Karen Aagaard

Ross Petty is Toronto's undisputed overlord of offbeat family entertainment. And once again, Petty lets his true, twisted colours show in his latest winter pantomime: *The Wizard of Oz*.

Starring scene-stealers **Jessica Holmes** and **Dan Chameroy**, *Rock of Ages* alums **Elicia Mackenzie** and **Yvan Pedneault**, as well as the inimitable Petty himself, the two-hour show received a Ring Pop-topped thumbs-up from my date for the evening: a two-year-old named Harry. (Oh, and I liked the show, too. Thanks for asking.)

Harry particularly enjoyed the musical's poppy soundtrack ("Born This Way" saw him bopping up and down with giggly conviction), and I found myself laughing at, well, everything. From the slapstick stunts, to the nyuck-nyuck-worthy one-liners, to the artfully executed double entendres (both scripted and improvised, it seemed), *The Wizard of Oz* is, simply, *funny*.

Chameroy's **Aunt Plum** (a character the Stratford staple has played in past Petty pantos) is, as one might expect, relentless in his (erm, her?) delivery of zingers; targeting the Ford brothers and even Petty's wife **Karen Kain**, the sequin-skirted Plum shows little — make that *no* — restraint. While I particularly enjoyed Holmes' spirited performance as the lisping **Splenda the Good Witch** (unabashed bias disclosure: I edited Holmes' parenting column for *Post City Magazines*), Harry seemed to favour the Cowardly Lion-Scarecrow duo, performed by **Steve Ross** and

Kyle Blair respectively. And how did I deduce such a thing? As soon as Ross and Blair appeared on stage, Harry called out “Lion scarecrow! Lion scarecrow!” for a good minute or so.

While my accompanying theatre critic was whisked away by his parents just before the show’s conclusion (he is two, after all), the show is a smashing success. Let’s just hope Harry dreamt of Holmes’ sweet-as-aspartame Splenda — and not Petty’s (delightfully) rude-and-crude **Wicked Witch**.

The Wizard of Oz, [Elgin Theatre](#), runs until Jan 6.