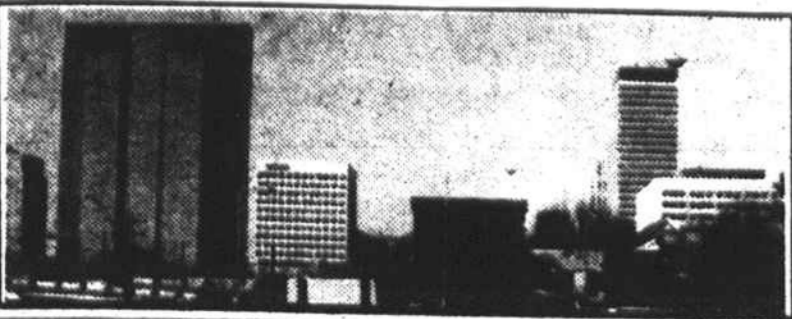


# Community News B1



## Off To See The Wizard

### 'The Yellow Brick Road' leads to Stevens Center

By ROBIN BARKSDALE  
Community News Editor

Diana and Michael eat your hearts out! "The Wiz" is coming to Winston-Salem, and this time the stars are a group of Carver High School students.

The students are taking their much-touted performance to the Stevens Center for an encore presentation of the show they performed earlier in the spring. The spring show was good enough to catch the eye of several members of the community, one of whom suggested that the students do the show again. He also negotiated the opportunity for them to perform in front of a larger, Stevens Center audience.

"I saw an off-Broadway production of the play, and I saw the performance that the Little Theater did here. They were both very good. I saw the performance by the kids at Carver, and I thought that it was as good as the other shows that I had seen. It was at that same level," said Michael Mason, who with Bill Trotman is underwriting the June 4 production at the Stevens Center. "I was very impressed with their show and with the energy and the professionalism that they showed."

After seeing the spring show, Mr. Mason went to talk with the cast members and discovered that some of them were considering further study in the performing arts. Encouraged by their enthusiasm, he decided to "give them an opportunity to see what a real professional production would be like."

That opportunity, he said, has included more than just appearing on stage. The cast has been involved with promoting the show and making special appearances, in character, around the community. Some cast members are scheduled to make an appearance with Mayor Wayne Corpening Thursday. Mr. Mason said that participating in such tasks makes the production a true educational experience for the students.

"We decided to attempt to underwrite the production to give them an educational opportunity," said Mr. Mason, who previously has worked in production promotions. "We're trying to make this as much like a professional production as possible and allow them to have some fun, too. We always hear negative things about teen-agers. It's good to know that there are some positive things that they are doing, too."

The 32-member cast is directed by Ann Moye and Hal Tise, school drama presentation veterans. The duo have worked together at Carver for more than 15 years and are presenting the most recent in a long line of performances sponsored by the Carver Drama Club. But they said that this show in particular has a lot of meaning both to them and to the students in the cast.

"I think most of them see this first as a challenge. Then second, it is a challenge for them to really grow as actors," said Mr. Tise, who also organized choreography and set design for the production. "We have a relatively inexperienced cast. Not many of them had had much drama training. Not only did we have to teach them the parts, but we had to teach them the basics of drama. But they've learned very quickly."

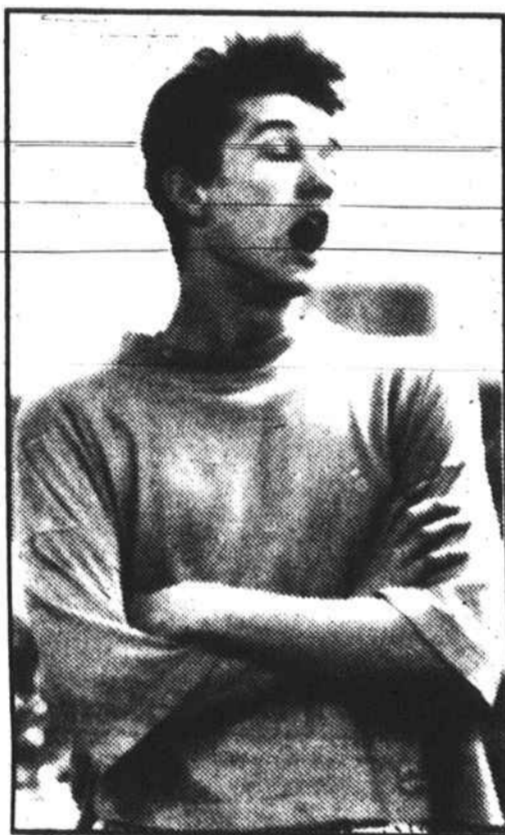
"The Wiz" is the Broadway version of the popular movie, "The Wizard of Oz." Diana Ross and Michael Jackson had starring roles in the stage production during its Broadway run. An updated, upbeat version of the classic work that starred Judy Garland as "Dorothy," "The Wiz" features more dancing, more movement and more "hip" characterizations. For instance, the soft-spoken, ever-smiling good witch from the "The Wizard of Oz" is transformed into the friendly, but fame-seeking, self-indulgent "Addapelle." And the cast includes the "Funky Monkeys," the "Winkies" and an animated yellow brick road that dances along with the lead characters on their journey to Oz.

But the original theme, "Believe in yourself," still is emphasized in the modernized production. Mr. Tise said that the students became so involved in the play and what it actually meant, that they were able to overcome their own obstacles.

"This is a play about believing in yourself and I think that a lot of these kids had doubts about themselves when they first started," said Mr. Tise,



photos by Sam Greenwood



Clockwise from top, Hal Tise prepares a set design; Margo Scales as "Evillene"; Mia Thompson (Dorothy), Maurice Brown (the Lion), Shawn Robinson (the Tin Man) and Christchon Bradley (the Scarecrow); and Chad Fulton as the "Royal Gatekeeper."

photo courtesy of Carver High School

who teaches English and journalism. "But after doing this play and getting into it, they believe that they can go to the Stevens Center and perform. They believe in themselves and in each other. They really understand what this play is all about."

Mrs. Moye said that the play initially was a challenge because it was a departure from the productions the Drama Club previously had sponsored. The school's band provides music for the production, and Mrs. Moye said that the fact that the music was something completely new to the band members posed an additional challenge.

"The music was different. The band had never played anything from Broadway before, but they've adjusted and now they love doing it," said Mrs. Moye, who teaches drama, theater and English at Carver. "They love these songs and they think that this is all they're supposed to do."

Mrs. Moye said that audition calls attracted a variety of students. The

success of previous plays and of "The Wiz," she said, make it easier to attract students for auditions.

"Most of these kids come out just for the opportunity to perform and because of their love of drama and being out front," she said. "Some are versatile enough to be athletes as well as artists."

Mr. Tise said that the students will take something additional to stage credits with them when the curtain closes on Sunday's performance.

"Most of them are learning a big lesson and that's discipline," said Mr. Tise. "They're learning stage discipline as well as discipline in other parts of their lives. This has helped them become responsible people."

"The Wiz" will be presented at the Stevens Center at 8 p.m. Sunday, June 4. Tickets are available from members of the Carver cast, the directors and by reserved seating at the Stevens Center box office.



Patrice Mitchell examines the bricks made by her great-grandfather, George H. Black, for Old Salem's fire house. Mrs. Mitchell is a recent graduate of Salem College.

photo by Sam Greenwood

## Old Salem bricks hold special memories for Salem grad

By ROBIN BARKSDALE  
Community News Editor

Many years ago George Black laid the bricks at Old Salem's Home Moravian Church. Two weekends ago, his great-granddaughter graduated from the school, surrounded by the history that her great-grandfather helped establish.

Mr. Black was known internationally as a master brickmaker. His reputation crossed cultures and races, but he was known best to his family simply as "Poppa."

His 21-year-old great-granddaughter, Patrice Mitchell, became aware of her great-grandfather's celebrity when she was in the third grade. He was the subject of class videos and films, and his name was mentioned often on field trips to Old Salem. But it wasn't until her recent graduation that she actually realized the impact of his accomplishments.

"I was sitting there Sunday thinking how much I wished he could have been there," Mrs. Mitchell said. "But graduation was

extra special for me because I knew that my great-grandfather had helped build Old Salem and that he is a big part of Salem."

Mr. Black made the bricks that are Old Salem's library, Home Moravian Church, the fire house and in the sidewalks throughout the community. He also made bricks for buildings in historic Williamsburg, Va., in the 1930s. Mr. Black spent two months in Guyana as a State Department goodwill ambassador teaching natives the process of making bricks.

He is listed in A History of Forsyth County, where two pages recount his achievements and historical significance. Charles Kuralt brought his CBS television "On The Road," to Winston-Salem to film a segment on Mr. Black.

Mrs. Mitchell said that Mr. Black rarely talked about the accolades that he received. She said that he was more inclined to discuss his life and his family, although he did occasionally recount tales of the time he and his brother, Will, began working with bricks.

"I don't know why all this fuss is being made over an old colored man," Mr. Black told Emily Wilson, who wrote a book on his life and accomplishments in 1979.

Mrs. Mitchell said that her great-grandfather was humble about his place in history and was more concerned about maintaining his mental sharpness than conversing about himself.

"The best thing was that he was 103 and he could tell you all of our names. He knew the names of all his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The good thing about it was that 'Poppa' had his mind in good condition. That was important to him. He had a sister who lived to be 106 when she died, but her mind would come and go and she couldn't remember things very well. But Poppa remembered things. He asked about all of us the day before he died," said Mrs. Mitchell. "All of us knew how important what he had done was. But he didn't tell us about it. He was humble about it. But we all feel it is a big thing for the family."

Mrs. Mitchell said that her father, Willis Black, always pointed out the places in the city that were made with his grandfather's bricks. She said that when her father and his brother were very young they helped Mr. Black haul bricks into Old Salem. As she grew up, she said, her father was careful to teach her about the place the family patriarch had in local history. When she decided to enroll at Old Salem College, Mrs. Mitchell said that her father laughed at the irony of her attending school there and about how much things have changed over the years.

"Whenever my father dropped me off at school here, he would make it a point to tell me, 'These are the bricks I helped put down,'" said Mrs. Mitchell. "He told me about how he helped Poppa haul bricks in for the fire house and the church. So I knew where the bricks were that my great-grandfather had made for Old Salem. I think my graduation was extra special for my father. He

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