

Local dancers get a taste of performing in the Big Apple



Emily Seratch, Hazleton, and Madison Woods, Kingston, will be performing at the WaMu Theater at Madison Square Garden this weekend in the 'Wizard of Oz.'

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The yellow brick road has led straight to the Big Apple for two area girls. Emily Seratch, 11, Hazleton, and Madison Woods, 8, Kingston, will share the spotlight with the wizard onstage at the WaMu Theater at Madison Square Garden today through Sunday in the national tour of "The Wizard of Oz."

Seratch and Woods will play Munchkins in the first act of the show and Winkies in the second act. They are among 24 children selected from a group of 144 who auditioned.

The girls are members of Broadway Artists Alliance of New York City, an organization that provides young artists with professional training in musical theater arts. Acceptance is by audition only.

Jennifer Johns, founder of the BAA organization, said her goal is to create a learning program that enables young artists to develop skills necessary for a career in musical theater arts.

"They are learning from the best of Broadway," she said in an interview last week.

It was their involvement in the BAA that afforded Seratch and Woods an opportunity to perform in the national tour of "The Wizard of Oz."

Seeking to cast local talent as Munchkins and Winkies for every stop on the tour, representatives of Madison Square Garden approached the BAA requesting a group of 12 children to participate in an audition. Seratch and Woods were chosen to be part of the BAA group.

In late February, the girls' group auditioned along with 11 other groups, each group consisting of 12 members. The audition was open to groups from New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Pennsylvania.

Home from New York after a week of several practices and a master class at the BAA, Woods said she was excited about the show.

"It's a great opportunity to be in it, to be part of a professional group," she said.

Woods is a third grade student at Chester Street Elementary School. She is the daughter of Dr. Allen and Susan Woods. A student at the David Blight School of Dance, Wilkes-Barre, and a vocal student, she also attends singing, dancing, and acting master classes with the BAA in New York City.

Along with dance and vocal competitions, Woods has been cast in productions of the Kids Innovating Stage and Sound Theatre Company, an organization that performs through local theaters. She has performed at The Little Theatre of Wilkes-Barre, and the Music Box Dinner Playhouse, Swoyersville.

Woods appeared on the David Blight TV show in 2008, and in a commercial for Main Street Bridal. She has modeled dance attire for a catalog.

In her spare time, Woods likes to design and make outfits for her Barbie dolls. She would like to be a fashion designer, but her future plans include performing, also.

"I'd love to be in a Broadway show, off-Broadway or even not in New York," she said.

Seratch is a sixth grade, straight-A student at MMI Preparatory School, Freeland. She is the daughter of Frank and Sarah Seratch. She has studied singing, dancing and acting since she was 5-years-old. Seratch is a student at the Anna Marie School of Dance, Hazleton. She also studies at the Total Education Art Center of Hazleton.

She competes in voice and dance and performs at the PA Theatre of Performing Arts and Backstage studios in Hazleton. Seratch was recently nominated for an NEPA award for Best Juvenile Actress for her role in "WillieWonka and the Chocolate Factory," performed at the PA Theatre of Performing Arts.

A recent member of the BAA, she was chosen to be part of the audition group after taking a winter intensive session. Though Seratch has already traveled to New York five times for practices, she also studies and practices at home with a learning DVD preparing for the show.

Sitting at a McDonald's between activities last week, Seratch recalled wanting to be a teacher when she was in fourth grade. She added that as she grew older she became more interested in acting.

"When I grow up I want to be on Broadway, or just act," Seratch said.