

## Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk

PRESENTS

# The WIZ

by Conor O'Sullivan

Coming from a rural Primary School into the sea of students in Mounthawk can be exciting, yet can also create a slight sense of apprehension. However, as soon as you step foot into a room of fellow castmates in a Mercy Mounthawk production, those perturbed thoughts of not finding your people are instantly diluted by a joyous community of acceptance and celebration. Reflecting on my years in this school, I don't find myself reminiscing upon the long hours of studying or the stressful exams - despite their importance - but I ponder upon the infinite laughs and lifelong friendships I have found through past productions such as '*High School Musical*' along with '*Hairspray*' and of course this year's production of '*The Wiz*'.

From the moment auditions began the excitement was palpable, as students stepped outside of themselves to embrace this bold and lively musical. The dedicated cast, from students that have never stepped foot on stage, to seasoned thespians like myself, went beyond their comfort zones to find their true selves through this touching storyline. The magic of this show is not limited to the cast,

as our immensely talented team of teachers worked tirelessly to bring this powerful story to life on the Siamsa Tíre stage. Although managing the 120 students involved in this show was undoubtedly challenging, our core team composed of Molly Giltenane, Caitríona O'Sullivan, Frank Houlihan, Rachel O'Neill, Sharon Courtney, Janette Condon, Mairéad Ryan and Elaine Costelloe, along with a team of over 20 teachers, invested countless hours into creating this show for us.

*The Wiz* is a reimagined, soulful take on the classic *Wizard of Oz*. It is all about finding your way home, discovering courage, learning to trust your heart, and recognising the strength that lives within you. The themes couldn't have been more fitting for a cast made up of students preparing to step into their future. From the heartfelt ballads, to the spectacular choreography, this production is a true testament to the passion of our students and school community. It was our final bow, a celebration of everything we've learned and created together.



Rehearsals were filled with long hours of hard work, and moments where it felt like we'd never get that dance right or remember that tricky harmony. But we also laughed, bonded, and built something truly incredible together. We supported each other through every mistake and celebrated every small victory. Although an unfortunate snow storm stole some rehearsal time, we still persevered to opening night. Our first show was pure magic. As the lights dimmed and the first notes played, we weren't nervous. We were ready. We were proud. Our transformative costumes helped us completely embrace our characters and take the audience on a journey to Oz through a whirlwind of glitter, song, fog machines, and the occasional technical difficulty. When the curtain finally fell, we stood together, hand in hand, feeling like we had accomplished something bigger than ourselves.

On behalf of the entire cast I would like to thank everyone who made this show possible; the teachers who believed in us and worked behind the scenes with costumes, sets programmes, and of course our Principal Mr. O'Roarke for granting us this creative outlet. I have been involved in many shows with Mercy Mounthawk, but can sincerely say that *The Wiz* was more than just a musical. It was a farewell and an accumulation of everything we've become. As we pass the torch on to the younger years we hope they cherish these moments together on stage and continue this legacy, because before you know it you'll be moving on. As we ease on down the road to whatever comes next - college, work or travel, we take with us the lessons this show taught us. We've learned that sometimes the hardest journeys lead to the most rewarding destinations, that friends can become family, that you are stronger "if you believe".