

Little future Broadway stars



**Thien
Huynh**

In the City

Jobert Sevilleno, the program director at Kindred Spirits Orchestra (KSO), had always wanted to stage *The Wizard of Oz* musical. But he could never find the right actors to play the Lollipop Kids in Munchkin Land.

These days, he has more than enough munchkins to choose from — thanks to a program called Broadway Kids Live!

Over the past year, the Kindred Spirits Orchestra provided a select group of children from the GTA with skills in singing, dancing and acting during a rigorous one-year training program.

From the 115 applications received, 70 children were

invited to audition live in front of a panel of judges led by Maestro Kristian Alexander, music director of the KSO.

A final cast of 14 children was selected to work with a professional vocal coach, conductor, choreographer and drama coach on selected Broadway repertoire.

All that practice and training will soon be showcased as the kids gear up to perform live on stage at the Markham Theatre for the Performing Arts on May 6.

Tickets to the show are available at markhamtheatre.ca.

The young cast will perform favourites such as *The Sound of Music*, *Cinderella*, *Oliver!*, *Annie*,

Hercules, *Mulan*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*, *The Little Mermaid*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Mary Poppins*, *Les Misérable*, and *An American Tail*.

“In addition to the children performing, there is also a 65-piece orchestra on stage, a synchronized video projection on a giant screen behind the orchestra, special light and sound effects, several costumes changes, hundreds of props and a narrator ...the kids put in a lot of work to delight audiences,” says Sevilleno.

“We found some really talented children. But at the same time, you have to remember that they’re just kids.”

During one rehearsal for *An American Tail*, 10-year-old Luka Mihajlovic was playing Fievel, the boy mouse, and refused to hug 10-year-old Leya Herschel, playing a girl mouse, at the end of their song together.

You’ll have to excuse Luka for being a diva — his YouTube channel has over one million hits.

But Leya is no understudy either — she won first place for vocal music in the North York Music Festival.

“It took hours to convince them to hug at the end of their song. Luka was just saying ‘No, no, no.’ And Leya was saying ‘Let’s just get it done,’” recalls Sevilleno.

“Then they finally gave each other such a long hug that we had to break them up to move on to the next scene.”

With so much mini-talent at his disposal now, Sevilleno is already dreaming about another musical that would be a perfect fit for his diminutive students: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

Thien appears Fridays. Contact him at thienh112@yahoo.com