

## *A Note from the Artistic Director*

Directing for me is not a job, it is a passion. Like all talents, I believe it was given to me by God for the expressed purpose of blessing others and bringing glory to His name. I am honored and privileged once again to sit at the helm of Bluffton Youth Theatre and lead all the wonderful youth that He has entrusted to me. Each day I give thanks not only for them, but for their families who dedicate their time into making BYT one of the best youth theatres (in my humble opinion) in the nation.

From auditions to casting to costume and scenery design to the camp itself- these past few months have been a whirlwind of activity. It's not always easy and I often find myself exhausted at the end of another all-day practice, but when I look at the beautiful faces of each and every youth who continue to work so hard to put on an excellent show for you all I am filled with true joy. While the path is not always easy it consistently builds my faith and solidifies my belief that God has called me to this.

While I have directed over one hundred shows, this is my first time directing *The Wizard of Oz*. I am often able to see parallels between the stories in these plays and the true story of God's love for all of us and this play is no exception. I can see the sacrifice of my Lord Jesus Christ laying down his life for me in Dorothy's quest to stand up to the Wicked Witch and in her willingness to take the blame for Toto's wrongdoings. I can hear the voices many encouraging me to stay the course that God has designed for me, just like the Munchkins encourage Dorothy to follow the yellow brick road. I can see the tendency to put our hope in other people rather than God, just like Scarecrow, Tin Man, Lion and Dorothy do when they seek out the Wizard, only to find that he too is fallible. And this serves as reminder to me that that while others will inevitably fail me, the God I serve is "able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us." (Ephesians 3:20)

Even though so many can sing the famous words that cause our minds to wonder off "somewhere over the rainbow" and think, a place like that is only a dream, I follow a God who says that it is not a dream. When I look to Him for answers and follow His ways, I indeed find myself "where troubles melt like lemon drops." I am learning to live in that place and my hope is that all will see that God is real and that His Kingdom is in reach of anyone who so desires it. Dorothy merely clicks her heels and utters the oh so famous words "there's no place like home, there's no place like home, there's no place like home." So simple, yet so profound. It only takes a few words to enter into God's Kingdom - no pomp, no circumstance, no fancy or frills, just a few words - "Jesus, I surrender and I ask that you be my God."

Thank you again, for hearing my heart and letting Bluffton Youth Theatre bring a big smile to your face!

Cynthia Ford  
Founder and Director of BYT

## *A Note from the Stage Manager*

Why did you come to this show? Did you grow up with the story of Dorothy Gale's journey through Oz? Do you know someone up on the stage? Do you sing "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" and become filled with happiness from the nostalgia of a special song? Regardless of how you ended up in that seat, watching in anticipation when the curtain opens, I ask you one thing. Watch everyone.

Many times when we go to see shows, we focus on the leads or only on who we came to see. But for one moment, look further. Pay attention to every Munchkin, Apple Tree, Jitterbug and more. Think about the crew behind the scenes and when they come to bow after Dorothy, keep up your energy and clap just as loud for them. Because every cast and crew member on that stage has worked incredibly hard and they deserve the same recognition as so called "bigger parts".

When you leave the theatre after the show, don't speak of who was best on the stage. Instead think of how each child developed their character and how no one person will play that part the same. Speak positively of each actor or actress and greet them on stage as you get their autograph. At Bluffton Youth Theatre, we believe every part is equally important and we teach the cast and crew to remember that when they see the cast list for the first time.

So once again, watch the leads, the ensemble, the crew. Clap for everyone when they come on stage. Remember how amazing these children are for putting on this show in only 3 short weeks. Because they all deserve your love.

Jennifer Ford  
Stage Manager