



68 Main Street, Torrington, CT 06790 (860) 489-7180 [www.warnertheatre.org](http://www.warnertheatre.org)

***For Immediate Release***

July 31, 2009

**Contact:**

Steve Criss  
Marketing Director  
(860) 489-7180 x 125

or

Lynn Gelormino  
Public Relations Coordinator  
(860) 489-7180 x 157

### **Where Are They Now?**

Three actresses reminisce about playing the world's most famous farm girl on the Warner Stage  
by Joyce Schwartz

August marks the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the classic MGM film "The Wizard of Oz" starring Judy Garland. In honor of the historic occasion, the Warner looks back at the local actresses who have embodied the role of Dorothy on the Warner Stage and asks them to reflect on their experience and catch their Warner family up on what they are doing now.

*Like Dorothy, Trecia Sedlak took life's journey only to find that there was truly no place like home.*

To Trecia (Austin) Sedlak, the first of three actresses to portray Dorothy in previous Warner Theatre productions of The Wizard of Oz, the walk down the Yellow Brick Road was just a detour in her journey to move up and out. "When I was young I wanted out," Sedlak recalls, "I wanted big: big lights, big money, big success."

Sedlak, who was pursuing a Communications degree from the University of Connecticut, discovered the Warner during a summer internship writing press releases and selling tickets in the box office. The internship kept her in touch with the theater world she loved, but it was only after a friend persuaded her to try out for the Wizard of Oz, that she took her place in the Warner spotlight. Remembering her audition experience she recalls, "I was scared to death. I didn't think it was possible that I could get the part."

For Sedlak, creating the role of Dorothy for the Warner stage was an experience that has stayed with her throughout her life. She credits the late Jim Fritch, the Warner's first Executive Director, with giving her the confidence to command the stage. "He took me under his wing. He saw the potential." Fritch's guidance and encouragement transformed the college intern into the pigtailed little girl from Kansas and enabled her to walk on stage to sing to a packed house, carrying a basket and a real dog under her arm. "It was surreal," she said. "I couldn't believe I could do it."

With admiration and affection, Sedlak reminisces about the Warner's early years and the people she met in the cast and crew. "It was community theater at its finest. The people were there because they loved it and the egos were small and few." Wistfully she remarks that its growth has made it harder to get roles there, pointing out that the operation is more polished and less like the "Mom-and-Pop" business it was. All the same, she appreciates the changes at the Warner, commenting, "when I walk in there I feel the love. I'm sure that Jimmy (Fritch) is looking down and feeling very happy. This is just what he wanted."

Graduation from college allowed Sedlak to start a new journey. She moved to Virginia, was married and went back to school earning a degree in Medical Technology. Upon graduation, she built a career in organ donation. Her career, as well as a divorce, led her to relocate to Washington D.C. where she worked in organ recovery and

later in hospital development. However, her family, friends and fond memories of her time in CT eventually led her to make another change and she returned to the Nutmeg state.

Once home, community theater became a place to reconnect and it was at the nearby Thomaston Opera House that she met her husband Stephen Sedlak who offered her the job she describes as the most challenging she has ever had---wife and mother to two children. Of being a stay at home mom, she says, "It's great. I love it." Asked if she missed being in the theater, Sedlak reflected for a moment and answered, "Not now, but who knows? When the children are in school I might decide to get a job at the Warner."

--- . . . ---

***A journey through the Land of Oz and a lot of hard work, has led Erin Fritch to her Broadway debut.***

At thirty, Erin Fritch could as convincingly play Dorothy, the Kansas teen who wanted to fly "over the Rainbow," now as she did when she played the iconic role twice at the Warner. With dark hair cascading over slim shoulders and large dark eyes set in a youthful face, her appearance belies the maturity and sense of direction that have developed in the years she has spent preparing for a career in acting.

"Acting is in my blood," says Fritch. "When I was three I was a Munchkin at the Warner". However, Erin's very first appearance on stage was in utero when her pregnant mother danced in a production of PIPPIN, directed by Erin's dad, Jim Fritch. In the eighties, when his wife was studying for a P.H.D., he often took Erin to rehearsal with him, where the backstage environment became her home away from home.

After graduating High School, Erin applied, auditioned and was subsequently accepted into the Tisch School of Drama, a division of New York University. At Tisch, Fritch remembers the advice the school's Dean told her, her classmates and their parents during his opening address. He assured them that their tuition money would prove to be a good investment, even for those who never acted professionally. As she recall's he asserted, "Acting teaches people-skills and the life-skills acquired as a result of acting training are of enduring value." In Erin's case his prophecy was certainly fulfilled. Since graduation she has been self-supporting and on a steady path to success.

In 2006, Fritch was cast as the understudy for lead actress Amanda Peet in the Broadway revival of Neil Simon's smash comedy BAREFOOT IN THE PARK. As an understudy she was expected to be ready to go on stage at a moments notice. Ready she was, with only one full-cast rehearsal under her belt, Fritch made her Broadway debut and played the role several times during the show's run.

On Television, she has most recently appeared on ABC's Emmy-winning comedy UGLY BETTY, the soap AS THE WORLD TURNS, LAW & ORDER: CRIMINAL INTENT as well as NBC's WILL AND GRACE, where she shared an episode with iconic funnyman Gene Wilder. She also had a small roll in the 2002 Golden Globe-nominated movie IGBY GOES DOWN starring Kieran Culkin, Claire Danes, Jeff Goldblum and Susan Sarandon. In between, network television and movie gigs, she does commercial work which she says "pays the bills".

Asked about what she sees in her future, Fritch whipped out a purple Iphone and scrolled to a picture of David, her life partner of four years. Together they go on skiing trips and family visits, returning to Brooklyn where they grow tomatoes and herbs on the roof of their apartment building. David's avocational life as a musician takes them to interesting gigs and concerts in Manhattan and to the many interesting little restaurants in their neighborhood. Her obvious delight as she describes her life in New York leads one to conclude that Fritch has indeed gone "Over the Rainbow " and might, with good luck and characteristic hard work, go "way up high."

*Kentucky native, Becca Kloha, relocated to Torrington to pursue her dream and left to make it a reality*

When Becca Kloha talks about her life in the professional theater world her voice shimmers with joy and optimism. Kloha, who played Dorothy in the Warner's most recent production of OZ, is now in Auburn, New York playing the lead role in the musical comedy No No Nanette at the Merry-Go-Round Playhouse. Surely good reviews that have called her recent turn as "a gem - poised, perky, and multi-talented" and "utterly charming" have bolstered her outlook and long days of Monday through Sunday rehearsals haven't diminished her enthusiasm for musical theater.

Kloha, a Kentucky native who intended to be a classical ballet dancer, left her home when she was fifteen to study at the Nutmeg Conservatory for the Arts in Torrington. While her time in Torrington was busy enduring the rigors of professional dance training and completing her high school education at Torrington High School, it was her limited free time where she explored musical theatre at the Warner that she credits as the pivotal turning point in her life. The cast, the comradeship, and the mentoring from her director, the late Mary Riley, were influential in setting her on a different course. She recalls the advice from a mentor who said, "If you can sing and you can dance, you can probably act. You should consider musical theater. It will give you triple the opportunity for success".

Kloha recalls the story of her Dorothy audition with humor, remembering the long brown wig she wore that she and her mother had bought and braided into two pigtails. "I was so nervous waiting to hear if I got the part," she said. "It's everyone's dream role. When Mary (the director) called she told me that she had good news, and bad news, and asked 'Which do you want first?'" Kloha chose the good news and, thrilled with the answer, braced for the bad. "I hate the wig!," Mary told her, "It has to go."

After her run as Dorothy and with the support of her parents, Kloha left her professional dance training to study musical theater at Webster University in St. Louis, Missouri. "The Warner showed me the possibilities," she points out, "but I needed to have my talents honed." After college, she says she felt, "ready to go out there."

Now, Kloha continues to fast track her career by building her professional theatre resume. After No, No, Nanette, she heads to Stages St. Louis, a professional regional theatre, where she will play Agatha and serve as the understudy for the role of Sarah Brown in Guys & Dolls. Then when that show wraps, she plans to return to her home in Woodside, a neighborhood located in Queens, NY, where she undoubtedly will go out on more auditions until she lands the next gig. Factored into her future is her fiancé, an actor currently in the professional national tour of the Broadway smash Jersey Boys. Of their time spent apart working on their careers, Kloha muses, "At some point our marriage will come before our careers, but right now what I want to do is make a living in the theater and have an effect on people the way the arts have had on me."

The Warner Stage Company's current production of *The Wizard of Oz* is directed by Tom Cochran with musical director, Neil Pagano and choreographer, Kristen Jacobsen. Join us and hundreds of our own local "munchkins" on our trip to Oz: Saturday, August 1 & 8 at 2pm & 7:30pm, Sunday, August 2 & 9 at 2pm and Friday, August 7 at 7:30 pm.

Tickets for this production are \$18.50, \$21.50 and \$24.50. For more information on purchasing tickets, please contact the Warner Theatre Box Office at (860) 489-7180 or visit the Warner Theatre Online at [www.warnertheatre.org](http://www.warnertheatre.org).

*The Wizard of Oz is sponsored by Brower, Organschi & D'Andrea LLP, Attorneys at Law*

*Season Media Sponsors: Republican-American, FM97.3 WZBG and Fox 61.*

## THE WARNER THEATRE

Built by Warner Brothers Studios and opened in 1931 as a movie palace (1,772 seats), the Warner Theatre was described then as "Connecticut's Most Beautiful Theatre." Damaged extensively in a flood, the Warner was slated for demolition in the early 1980s until the non-profit Northwest Connecticut Association for the Arts (NCAA) was founded and purchased the theatre. The Warner reopened as a performing arts center in 1983, and restoration of the main lobbies and auditorium was completed in November 2002. In 2008, the new 50,000 square foot Carole and Ray Neag Performing Arts Center, which houses a 300 seat studio theatre, 200 seat restaurant and micro-brewery and expansive school for the arts, was completed. Today, the Warner is in operation year-round with more than 160 performances and 100,000 patrons passing through its doors each season. Over 10,000 students, pre K—adult, participate in arts education programs and classes. Together, with the support of the community, the Warner has raised close to \$17 million to revitalize its facilities. NCAA's mission is to preserve the Warner Theatre as an historic landmark, enhance its reputation as a center of artistic excellence and a focal point of community involvement, and satisfy the diverse cultural needs of the region. To learn more about the Warner Theatre, visit our website: [www.warnertheatre.org](http://www.warnertheatre.org).