

ARTS

Published: Sunday, March 28, 2010

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New Hampshire writer has created popular new trilogy related to beloved classic

By PAMME BOUTSELIS Correspondent

From the time he was just 2, Joshua Patrick Dudley has been enthralled by the world of Oz.

His mother and grandmother read the Oz books to him at that young age and throughout his childhood in Hooksett. The first time he watched the MGM classic film version of the stories with his twin sister and mother, Dudley became "obsessed with this magical land and its inhabitants."

"It was wonderful for me to see all the characters brought to life that I had read about in novels," said Dudley, 24. "The MGM movie itself is a masterpiece, especially considering the time period it was made in. The colors, sets and special effects are the reasons I was so fascinated by it."

Throughout his teen years, Dudley explored a new love: performing onstage, which led to his appearance in more than 80 shows throughout his teens and early 20s. Much to his delight, four of the shows were Oz-related, and he portrayed the beloved Scarecrow in three of those performances.

He has also portrayed Riff in "West Side Story," Doody in "Grease" and Seymour in "Little Shop of Horrors."

His love of the stage brought him to New York City, where he studied at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy.

"I would dance, sing and act for 50-plus hours a week," Dudley said. "I performed at local venues in the city, such as nightclubs and bars, performing original hip-hop music."

Shortly after completing school, Dudley's family incurred a significant loss with the death of his grandmother. He decided to write a book in her honor, and began to work on the first installment of what would become a trilogy of books about the world of Oz.

"One night, I woke up from a dream where I had visited Oz with my twin sister," Dudley said. "I thought it was such a neat idea that I didn't return back to bed. Instead, I spent the entire night on my computer, writing a rough idea for the first story."

"The dream I had was very realistic; most of it was fun and fancy free, but there dark parts, nightmare sections that I knew would make a great book."

Unlike many novels, Dudley's four main characters are actually real people – he and his twin sister, Tamara, along with two of his best friends in real life, Tommy and Laura.

"All of my novels feature a lot of local personalities from in and around New Hampshire," Dudley said. "Almost every character that isn't from Oz, in the novels, is someone from the real world."

In the third and final novel of the series, he'll introduce his dearest friend [Generated by wordy PDF on Fly.com](#)

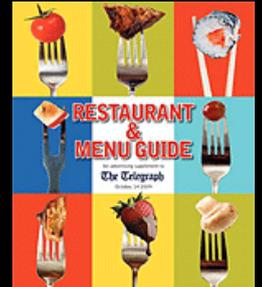
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Courtesy photo Joshua Dudley, who is offering kids the chance to land a role in "Lost in Oz."

LAND A ROLE IN OZ

To participate in a contest to land a cameo role in Joshua Patrick Dudley's third Oz novel, simply write an essay of 200-500 words explaining who your character would be in Oz and e-mail it to LostinOzCameo@yahoo.com. Entries should include the entrant's name, age, e-mail address and mailing address.



DeProfio, and one lucky reader, as well.

His books, "Lost in Oz" and "Lost in Oz: Rise of the Dark Wizard," have garnered a sizeable fan base nationwide, much of it reinforced through correspondence with readers, classroom visits and appearances at "Wizard of Oz" festivals throughout the country.

"Almost each and every student that I have talked to has begged to be a character in my book, so I thought I'd give them a chance," Dudley said.

The result is a contest that will enable one winner to land a cameo role in his third Oz novel. The winner will be selected by Dudley and will be notified by e-mail on Jan. 1, 2011, and announced on the books' official Web site.

The response thus far has been overwhelmingly good. Dudley has received more than 200 entries to date, with more coming in daily. He can't wait to read each entry and see where his readers' imaginations have taken them.

Dudley said members of the Oz community were originally put off by his first book, "Lost in Oz." He said that some feared parts of Oz were just too dark.

"Once they compared my work with the original L. Frank Baum stories, it was clear that Baum's vision of Oz was even scarier than mine," Dudley said.

He receives hundreds of e-mails each month from kids all over the country who tell him they like his version of Oz and the twist it put on the classic tale.

Although the book was initially geared toward teen readers, Dudley realized it was a mistake to target just that audience.

"Oz is, was and always will be about the children," he said. "My books seem to be the most popular between grades five and nine."

Dudley has visited about 20 schools throughout the country, discussing the story of "The Wizard of Oz," his own personal take on it and the book publishing process. His first appearance was at Hooksett Memorial School, where his mother is a fifth-grade teacher, and it has built from there.

"We discuss the basic building blocks of writing a story," Dudley said. "Then after the lesson comes the best part, an interactive writing session where the kids write the story with my guidance, adhering to the lesson I have just taught them. It is a truly rewarding experience and the best part of my job."

Now living in Manchester, Dudley is a full-time writer these days, although he spends a significant amount of time doing all that's entailed in promoting his work, acting as his own booking and press agent, and his Web site creator. He also writes and records his own music, another of his passions.

While there are illustrations in all three of his books that were drawn by W.W. Denslow, the original illustrator of "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz," Dudley began creating computer images, using various 3-D rendering software and Photoshop, for his second and third books. He plans to release the entire collected trilogy at the end of 2011, and the release will feature all-new images that he has created for each chapter of all three books.

From the beginning, the work had been planned as a trilogy.

"I always knew what I wanted the stories to be," Dudley said. "I have an odd fascination with the number three. I think it brings good luck, so I knew that it would take me three books to tell my complete story."

Dudley's books may be purchased through amazon.com, bn.com and lulu.com. Bookstores such as Barnes & Noble may not have the books on the shelf, Dudley said, but they'll be happy to order a copy for you.

To learn more about Dudley or his books, visit www.joshuapudley.com or www.LostinOzBook.com.

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