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Munchkin hopefuls strut stuff at Garden seeking part in 'Oz' play

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Hopping around in rainbow-striped, knee-high socks and neon green T-shirts, Munchkin hopefuls did patty-cake dance steps and sang "Ding Dong the Witch is Dead."

"The Munchkins are so happy!" beamed 10-year-old [Jessica Doherty](#), vying for a spot Tuesday in an upcoming stage production of "The Wizard of Oz."

"I always wanted to be like the Munchkins and be so happy and excited like them while I'm on stage," said the [Murray Hill](#) cutie while on stage at [Madison Square Garden](#).

Eleven teams of 12 competed for the role of the quirky little people who greet Dorothy when her house lands atop the Wicked Witch of the East.

To qualify, they had to be ages 8 to 13, weigh less than 100 pounds and be under 5 feet tall.

For some, it was the highlight of their young lives.

"I worked so hard to get up to this moment," said pretty [Emily Trias](#), 12, of [Hartsdale](#), [Westchester](#) County. "And to perform at Madison Square Garden? I'm just so ecstatic."

The parents were also thrilled.

[Barney Griffin](#), 54, a musician-composer from [New City](#), sat proudly through the audition of his 11-year-old daughter, also named Emily, listening to the same tune dozens of times.

"To watch your kid blossom into a performing artist is both fulfilling and exciting," he said.

The [New York](#) stop of the national tour of "The Wizard of Oz" will run at the Garden's theater from March 25 to April 5. Tickets are on sale at the box office or via [Ticketmaster](#).

As the show hits each major city in the nation, it looks for local kids to play the Munchkins. Choosing two of the 11 teams that battled it out was tough, acknowledged assistant choreographer [Lauren Kadel](#).

"It's [New York City](#), so you're getting the best of the best," she said as the tryouts waited to find out who'll get the chance at over-the-rainbow fame.

In the end, Jessica Doherty and her fellow troupe members from Broadway Artist Alliance Youth Performance Ensemble in [Manhattan](#) were selected, as was the Random Farms Kids Theatre Group of Westchester, which included Emily Trias.

"We went into this just wanting to participate. I'm pretty stunned," said an elated [Anya Wallach](#), producer of the Westchester group. "Now we have a lot of work ahead of us."

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