

ARTS & LIFESTYLE

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Inside: Jewish nominations for Emmys

Life lessons in Dahl's chocolate coated musical



Paul Slade Smith stars as Willy Wonka in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Photos: Jeff Busby

Despite the fun and fantasy in the musical *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, which sees Jewish actor Jake Fehily make his professional stage debut, there's also a serious message. Danny Gocs reports.

ENTERING Roald Dahl's fantastical chocolate-filled world of wonder with the eccentric Willy Wonka, endearing Grandpa Joe and the delightful Oompa Loompas is not all fun and games, as Melbourne Jewish actor Jake Fehily makes clear.

Fehily, 23, is thrilled to be in his hometown to play Augustus Gloop in the stage musical *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, which opens at Her Majesty's Theatre on August 15 after a seven-month season at Sydney's Capitol Theatre.

"It has been very successful sea-



Jake Fehily makes his professional stage debut in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

son since its Australian premiere in January," Fehily told *The AJN*. "I'm looking forward to the Melbourne season as it's always great having family and friends in the audience."

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory sees Paul Slade Smith – who was part of the original Broadway production – star as Willy Wonka, the world's greatest chocolate maker. Veteran actor Tony Sheldon plays 90-year-old Grandpa Joe and Lucy Maunder (who starred in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* and *Matilda*) has the role of Mrs Bucket.

Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* was first published in 1964 and has proved to be an enduring children's favourite. It was made into a film starring Gene Wilder in 1971.

In the musical Willy Wonka is reopening his factory for five lucky Golden Tickets winners as chocolate lovers around the world go crazy for Wonka bars.

Gloop just loves to eat chocolate bars every day and when he finds a ticket he jumps for joy, but on entering the factory his greediness leads to his downfall.

"I like that the story is not just a happy one about imagination. The whole idea is that imagination and



Jake Fehily as Augustus Gloop (centre) and Octavia Barron-Martin as Mrs Gloop.

beauty and all these nice things come with a price," said Fehily.

"At Wonka's factory are these rules and challenges. It's not just a beautiful world of chocolate where they can come and go. Once they enter the factory, they realise that there are rules and regulations that they have to abide by, or else they will not be able to experience the actual wonder."

Wonka's string of strict rules provide powerful lessons about greed.

"It is particularly relevant for the current generation, which gets everything it wants, that such behaviour can lead to not achieving your full potential," said Fehily, who is excited about working with a new team of kids playing Charlie Bucket.

"It emphasises that kids like Charlie

Bucket are grateful, caring, honest and kind – that's what's important in life rather than excess and getting everything you want."

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory marks the professional debut for Fehily, who studied at Bialik College. As a teenager, he starred in two seasons of the ABC's *You're Skitting Me*, and was featured on *Prank Patrol* and in Tim Winton's feature film, *The Turning*.

On stage he performed in *The Full Monty*, *21 Chump Street* and *Bare: The Musical* at Chapel Off Chapel last year.

"The role of Augustus Gloop has been hilarious – it's the best role that I could wish to play in the show," said Fehily.

"It's funny and silly and designed to inject energy and fun into the show."