

## Wicked: A Great Contemporary Musical

Recently I went and saw *Wicked*, named one of the most 'Popular' contemporary musicals of the last twenty years, with my best friend. Here is the main cast: Alyssa Fox assayed the role of Elphaba, Carrie St. Louis assayed the role of Glinda the Good, and Ashley Parker Angel (of *O-Town*) assayed Fiyero the love interest of both witches. Originally recorded with Broadway legend Kristin Chenoweth as Glinda and contemporary Broadway star Idina Menzel (also the original Maureen of *Rent*) as Elphaba, this musical has run on Broadway and in national tours for over ten years.

Come join me as I defy Gravity with Elphaba, soar the high notes with Glinda and dance through life with Fiyero.

*Wicked* is known as the true tale of the witches of Oz. What is 'wicked'? Was the Witch of the West truly 'wicked' or was it all just perception and lies? It is a tale of friendship and hardships of being different. This musical is based on the novel by Gregory Maguire. My suggestion to many is to go see the show. The musical story explains more than the novel did as far as details about Elphaba's past and her powers.

Back to the show. It opens with the munchkins rejoicing that the Wicked Witch of the West is dead. Glinda is rejoicing with them as a public figure of happiness and uplifts the munchkins spirits. With the opening of the show and 'No One Mourns the Wicked' the question is posed why the witch was wicked? What causes wickedness? Was she born that way or was wickedness something that was thrust in her path for survival? The audience learns that Elphaba's mother had an affair and from the time Elphaba was born she was different.

When a munchkin asks Glinda about her friendship with the witch we are transported back with Glinda to school. Glinda now recounts the tale of how she knew Elphaba in their days and 'Dear Old Shiz'.

From the moment Elphaba first walks into the school Madam Morrible, the headmistress, notices that Elphaba is gifted with the power of sorcery. Madam Morrible even suggests that Elphaba's gift could someday help her meet the wizard and make her dreams come true. Elphaba is intrigued that her life could change she could be adored for being different as she sings 'The Wizard and I'.

Meanwhile, the 'popular' Galinda (as she was formerly known before changing her name) is forced to room with the loathsome and disgusting looking Elphaba. Neither of these girls is overly thrilled about rooming together and join in singing 'What is this Feeling?' as they each express their 'unadulterated loathing' for each other.

While these two hash out their differences, a bigger problem is taking place in Oz. Animals are losing their rights throughout the land. They are no longer allowed to teach and many are losing the ability to speak when the government works to subdue them. Sounds like we have our own Nazi party in Oz, doesn't it? This is bad news for Doctor Dillamond, the goat teacher at Shiz. Elphaba sympathizes with her professor as it appeals to her own problems of being different. But she fails to believe that 'Something Bad' could reach Oz.

A new student now arrives on the scene. Fiyero becomes the love interest as he teaches to be 'brainless' and invites in joining him in 'Dancing Through Life.' This is also the beginning of the friendship between Elphaba and Galinda. Feelings also develop between Fiyero and Elphaba but Elphaba quickly realizes she's not the girl that Fiyero is seeking.

This wizard has sent for Elphaba. When things are not going well at school Elphaba invited Glinda along to the Emerald City. Both witches now meet the Wizard, who true to writing still has no real power. When Elphaba is disappointed by the Wizard, she escapes the Emerald City and decides to try to learn the extent of her power alone, thus 'Defying Gravity'.

After a brief intermission the show continues. Elphaba has been declared "wicked". All of Oz is on the lookout for this terrible menace the plagues all of Oz. Elphaba has returned after much work alone with her power. She wants to make right all of the horrible things that have happened in Oz. Fiyero betrays Glinda, who still believes he is the one to help run off with Elphaba. After the death of Elphaba's sister and Glinda has allowed a little girl to walk off with the precious shoes (yes we still seek those shoes) Fiyero risks his life to allow Elphaba to escape.

Elphaba attempts to save Fiyero but fails. This has been her third attempt to right a wrong. She couldn't save the animals or Doctor Dillamond. She was unable to help her sister who was paralyzed at birth. And now Fiyero. She declares 'No Good Deed' will she attempt again and if all Oz believes that she is wicked, then wicked she will be.

Glinda comes to stop her friend from the madness and save the little girl. An unexpected friendship has proven that good things can appear when least expected. In this scene Elphaba chooses to surrender and yes, water melts the Wicked Witch of the West.

In this Finale the audience is brought back to the beginning of the show. Glinda mourns her lost friend and the munchkins rejoice the Wicked old witch at last is dead.

This show is fantastic and has some amazing tie-ins the Wizard of Oz as we know it. So what makes one wicked? Are we born to the path assigned to us by fate? Or is it a case of no good deed goes unpunished? You decide if the Wicked Witch of the West was truly wicked or just misunderstood.