

# WICKED IDEAS FOR MUSIC

## WICKED Songs (suitable for upper primary and secondary students)

*Pre-teaching preparation for teachers: A very detailed musical analysis of the songs, handy for teachers when preparing lessons, has been written by Robert Vieira: <http://www.musicalwriters.com/musicals/s-z/WICKED-1.htm>*

**Teachers of Music can use the content in the following activity, as well as that given in the links, over several lessons up to a term in both theory-based and practical classes.**

Teachers will find the music in WICKED useful for aural, performing and composing tasks, and that students will very readily engage with the content – particularly if they have seen the show.

- **Performing:** As many of the songs can be technically difficult, teachers should read and play through the score first to see what will be suitable for their classes. Details of the vocal score are given in the “WICKED Resources” section below – note that the songs are written in “concert” version rather than the version performed in the production.
- **Composing / Aural:** Advanced students may be interested in using music from WICKED as a model for creating their own music. Schwartz’s own account of the ideas he used when composing WICKED can be found at <http://www.musicalschwartz.com/WICKED-musical-themes.htm>. Teachers can have classes analyse the music by having students focus on elements such as:

**Rhythm** values / syncopation and how this can convey emotion; for example –

The syncopation and use of awkward rests in Galinda’s line “It’s really sharp don’t you think” in “Dancing Through Life” to convey her lack of honesty.

The use of sustained longer notes in the chorus of “Defying Gravity” – this contrasts with the shorter note values in the phrases in the verse, in order to show Elphaba’s new-found confidence.

**Melody** in terms of pitch, intervals and phrasing; for example –

The use of sequence in the chorus of “Dancing through life” – the same pattern is more or less repeated three times, but each time it starts on a note one step lower

Different intervals are used in the melodies of each song to make them more distinct as well as to convey the feelings described, such as the descending minor 7th used at the end of each phrase in “For Good”, and the repeated ascending and descending perfect 4th in the “loathing” line from “What is this feeling”.

Pitch is used in many different ways to enhance content in the lyrics, such as the sustained high note on “rise” in “Rise above it” from “What is this feeling”; and the repetition of the single note E at the start of “I’m not that girl”, firstly in the introduction and continued by the first two phrases “Hands touch, eyes meet”, which is used to convey Elphaba’s nervous excitement.

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**Harmony**, not just in terms of the chords or tonality but also the use of counterpoint; for example –

“What is this feeling”, along with other songs from the show, combines two melodies from earlier in the song, each sung by a different performer.



## EXTENSION ACTIVITY

*Stephen Schwartz has acknowledged that some melodic content from Howard Arlen’s compositions in The Wizard of Oz has been used in the songs from WICKED – some intentionally, some subconsciously (see the link above to read the conversation with Mr Schwartz)! Teachers can have their students see if they can hear these, such as:*

- “The Wizard and I” uses the famous repeated minor 3rd sequence from the line “Someday I’ll wish upon a star” in “Somewhere over the Rainbow”
- “Defying Gravity” and other songs from the show use the so-called “Unlimited” theme, which has the first seven notes of “Somewhere over the Rainbow”  
though with a different rhythm



## WICKED Music (suitable for students in years 7 to 10)

*Pre-teaching activity: Students are to compare their most and least favourite types of music - popular, classical, folk, jazz, rap and so on. Discuss: in your opinion, what styles of music will last for future generations? Why might this be the case?*

**This is a single-lesson activity that can be used at the end of a lesson or as a “fill in”.**

1. Using online video / audio or browsing CD / mp3 collections at school, students collect songs of different styles or traditions that they are able to identify.
2. As a class, listen to this collection of songs and identify those that have a style similar to a particular song in WICKED. For example, *Popular* is similar to a 1950s “bubblegum” pop song, *As Long as You’re Mine* has a strong rock feel, the opening to *No One Mourns the WICKED* has an operatic style, and Stephen Schwartz has said that the rag-time *Wonderful* is “deliberately meant to evoke the music of old-time America”.
3. Discuss – what features of the song you found makes it similar to the corresponding song in WICKED? Was it instrumentation, melody, tonality, tempo, chord progression, or something else?