



VCE Playlist Materials  
THEATRE STUDIES UNIT 3

"Page to Stage"

# WICKED

The untold true story of the Witches of Oz

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## THEATRE STUDIES UNIT 3

### "Page to Stage"

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# WICKED

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## THEATRE STUDIES UNIT 3

### “Page to Stage”

THIS SECTION OF THE RESOURCE  
WILL FOCUS ON  
UNIT 3 OUTCOME 3.

It will focus on core areas of the study design, including:

- context
- theatre styles,
- elements of theatre composition,
- interpretive choices,
- theatre technology and production roles.

# WICKED

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## ◆ CONTEXT ◆

Students studying Unit 3.3 will focus on

- The 1998-2003 period the music, lyrics and book were written in.
- The context of the world of the play.

The musical WICKED is based on the 1995 Gregory Maguire novel *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*. Gregory Maguire's novel is based on L. Frank Baum's novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* published in 1900 and the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*. Maguire's novel explores the untold story of the Wicked Witch of the West. The musical WICKED (2003), with its book by Winnie Holzman and music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz, is based on this revised telling of the classic tale of Oz.

The written context for WICKED is rich as there is contextual and creative influences that run over a century of Oz inspiration, from the original Baum book to this incredible mounting of the show. When WICKED premiered in 2003, the world was experiencing significant social and political changes. Post-9/11 sensitivities, concerns about political leadership, and issues of discrimination and social justice were prominent. These themes resonate in WICKED, as the musical touches on topics such as the nature of evil, the complexity of morality, the misuse of power, and the dangers of propaganda.

Winnie Holzman's description of the process of writing the Wizard exemplifies the way they were inspired by the world around them: "When we started writing WICKED in early 1998, the Bill Clinton scandal had just broken out. Everyone was reeling with the absurdity and horribleness of what we'd all been through with that scandal. And we ended up talking about the Wizard a little bit like Clinton, somebody who had these weaknesses. Then, while we were developing the script, George W. Bush took power. And the Wizard changed. He became more dangerous. We were just responding to what was going on around us. I mean, in the middle of writing, New York City was attacked on September 11. And you would have to have been living under a rock not to see what was going on around you. We already had a story that had to do with power and the nature of using power. We had to ask, 'What does it mean to be powerful?'"<sup>1</sup>

Stephen Schwartz, too, describes the influence of American politics on both the musical and the Maguire book: "Gregory's book is firmly set in Oz, but it parallels events and political situations that we know of on earth, both current and from the more overtly fascist days. We were very aware of them when we wrote. I'm not trying to imply that references in a song like "Popular" are as dark as that, although I think "Wonderful" is pretty dark. Gregory's Oz is basically a fascist society. We didn't push that far – we made it more about American politics. Depending on what colour state you live in, you have a view of how close to fascism we are right now."<sup>2</sup> Producer David Stone echoed the sentiments: "What's fascinating to me is that Gregory wrote the novel in 1995, as a response to the ways in which our government lies to us, from Watergate through the Gulf War. Stephen and Winnie started writing it in the late '90s. And then it became more relevant after September 11 and this particular administration."<sup>3</sup>

The plight of Doctor Dillamond and the other animals clearly references the context of Nazi Germany and the treatment of Jewish people during the Holocaust. Holzman and Schwartz would have picked up on these contextual references in Maguire's novel. Throughout the production we see Oz slowly decay into a totalitarian fascist state where the 'animals' are gradually deprived of their rights. Holzman and Schwartz present the Wizard as a manipulator, subjugating the animals for the greater good of the people of Oz. Of course, it becomes clear that he is actually doing this to remain in power. As Doctor Dillamond observes, "the best way to bring folks together, is to give them a really good enemy." (Act One, Scene 13)

<sup>1</sup> *The Grimmerie*, pg. 36

<sup>2</sup> *The Grimmerie*, pg. 36

<sup>3</sup> *The Grimmerie*, pg. 36



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The context of the-world-of-the-play is harder to pin down precisely.

The world of WICKED is set in the fictional Land of Oz, an imaginative and fantastical realm first created by L. Frank Baum in his Oz book series, starting with *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. The setting of WICKED is prior to, and eventually concurrent with, the events of Baum's original story, specifically the arrival of Dorothy from Kansas.

This fantasy world is characterised by its vivid and diverse landscapes, ranging from the emerald-green opulence of the Emerald City to the other parts of Oz. The society in Oz is complex and stratified, featuring a variety of creatures, races, and magical beings, each with their own cultures and histories.

In terms of time, WICKED doesn't specify a particular period in relation to the real world; it exists in its own timeless fantasy setting. However, there are elements that might remind the audience of different historical periods, such as the twisted Edwardian sophistication of the Emerald City.

The political and social context of Oz is critical to the plot of WICKED. The story delves into themes of power, corruption, prejudice, and propaganda. Oz is under the rule of the Wizard, who, despite his charming public persona, runs a repressive regime, particularly against talking animals and other beings who are seen as different or threatening. This aspect of the story allows WICKED to explore deeper themes of identity, otherness, and the nature of evil, set against a backdrop of political intrigue and moral complexity.

L. Frank Baum, in his original *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and subsequent Oz books, **did not specify a particular date or historical period for the setting of Oz**. His portrayal of Oz was as a fantastical, timeless realm, separate from the real world in terms of historical context or specific time period.

Baum's narrative begins in Kansas, depicted as a rural, agrarian setting, which **many interpret as reflective of the late 19th or early 20th century**, given the book's publication in 1900. This assumption is based on the lifestyle, farming practices, and the overall depiction of rural American life presented in the book. However, once the story moves to the Land of Oz, the setting becomes purely fantastical.



The Cast of WICKED,  
Sydney 2023 Production.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby

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## ◆ LINKING CONTEXT ◆

The contexts of the three key periods in the creation of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* (1995), and *WICKED* (early 2000s) are distinct, yet there are thematic and historical elements that link them:

**L. Frank Baum (1900):** When Baum wrote *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, America was experiencing significant changes. The turn of the century was marked by technological advancements, the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution, and the beginning of modern consumer culture. There was also a sense of American optimism and the idea of a new kind of American fairy tale, which Baum contributed to with his Oz series. Additionally, the political allegories in Baum's work, though debated, reflect the economic and political issues of his time, such as the debate over monetary policy (the gold and silver standards).

**Gregory Maguire (1995):** Maguire's inspiration for *Wicked* came from the world around him. "In 1990, I moved to London with my then-boyfriend when the first Gulf War started. I found myself riveted by how the British press vilified Saddam Hussein to galvanise public opinion in support of the military action against Iraq. I mean, I agreed that Saddam Hussein was a villain, but my politics were less important than my noticing how the British press used certain words to draw attention to the need for military intervention. I came back from London at Easter time and found that, without my quite having noticed it, my politics had shifted way to the right. And I took myself to task for it: 'Wait a minute. You're a progressive liberal. How did this happen? How did you lose your moorings so quickly?' That's when I realised that I could marry these concerns to questions I had when I first thought of the idea of *Wicked*: Was it possible for someone to change his moral stripe? To be born blameless and become evil? Or does one have kind of a kernel of evil inside, like cells that are predisposed to be cancerous?"<sup>4</sup>

**Winnie Holzman and Stephen Schwartz (late 1990s):** Holzman and Schwartz began working on the musical *WICKED* in the early 2000s. This was a time marked by the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, growing political divisiveness, and heightened awareness of global issues like terrorism, environmental concerns, and human rights."



<sup>4</sup> *The Grimmerie*, pg. 19

# WICKED

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## ◆ LINKING CONTEXT ◆

### ◆ Connecting Events and Themes

**Technological and Cultural Changes:** Each period saw significant technological and cultural shifts that influenced how stories were told and perceived. Baum's industrial-age optimism, Maguire's reflection on a globalised and complex world, and Holzman and Schwartz's response to a post-9/11 society, all represent the evolving American narrative.

**Political and Social Allegories:** From Baum's potential allegories of his time's economic politics to Maguire and Schwartz's exploration of themes like propaganda, authoritarianism, and social justice, each work reflects the political and social consciousness of its era.

**Redefining Good and Evil:** All three works challenge the traditional notions of good and evil, a theme that seems to gain complexity and depth with each retelling, reflecting the evolving moral and ethical landscape of each respective era.

While the specific contexts of each work differ, they are linked by how they reflect and respond to the technological, cultural, political, and social changes of their times, providing a unique lens through which to view the evolving American narrative.



Shewit Belay, Robyn Nevin  
and Sheridan Adams,  
Sydney 2023 Production.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby



# WICKED

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## ◆ THEATRE STYLES ◆

### Musical Theatre

**A genre that combines songs, spoken dialogue, acting, and dance to tell a story. The musical components are integral in advancing the plot and exploring characters' emotions and motivations.**

#### ◆ **No Good Deed**

This song demonstrates musical theatre's ability to convey complex emotions through song. Elphaba's frustration and sense of betrayal are powerfully communicated, furthering her character development.

#### ◆ **Dancing Through Life**

This number highlights the lighter side of musical theatre, using dance and ensemble singing to explore themes of youth, carefreeness, and social dynamics at Shiz University.

#### ◆ **One Short Day (Storytelling Through Dance)**

The energetic choreography in this number captures the excitement and wonder of Elphaba and Glinda's visit to the Emerald City, visually telling a story of exploration and awe.

#### ◆ **Glinda's Bubble Dress (Elaborate Costumes)**

Glinda's entrance in a bubble dress is visually stunning and epitomises the over-the-top, fantastical element of musical theatre costumes, reflecting her character's flamboyance and charm. When designing Glinda's costume, costume designer Susan Hilferty said:

*"Glinda is the epitome of good, so I did research by asking little girls what goodness looks like.*

*They said like a princess, like a bride. I collected and studied pictures of Queen Elizabeth II from her coronation, Lady Diana's wedding dress, and all of the dresses that are emblematic of perfect femininity. When you look at any of the English coronation images, it's hysterical, because it's all about impressing in a certain way. Even Queen Elizabeth, in the 1950s, wore a crown and a long robe and held her sceptre, and I wanted to tap into that. Glinda is also connected to the sky, sun, and stars. That influenced her tiara and wand. The sparkles on her dress are all about that, too. She symbolises lightness, air, bubbles."*

*(The Grimmerie, pg. 120)*

#### ◆ **The Ozian Citizens' Costumes (Elaborate Costumes)**

The citizens of the Emerald City wear vibrant, elaborate costumes, creating a visually rich and fantastical setting that enhances the storytelling. Susan Hilferty described it as "no-holds-barred, delirious dressmaking", and made use of animals in the designs.<sup>5</sup> Many of the costumes incorporate animal remnants such as fur and feathers, fitting into the political issues of the story.

#### ◆ **Defying Gravity (Witty Lyrics):**

The line "And nobody in all of Oz, no Wizard that there is or was, is ever gonna bring me down!" is powerful and cleverly encapsulates Elphaba's defiance and transformation.

#### ◆ **Dancing Through Life (Storytelling Through Dance)**

The choreography in this number reflects the carefree and superficial lifestyle of the students at Shiz, contrasting with Elphaba's more serious and introspective nature.

<sup>5</sup> *The Grimmerie*, pg. 119

# WICKED

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## ◆ THEATRE STYLES ◆

### Musical Theatre

#### ◆ Popular

This song is filled with witty lines like "It's not about aptitude, it's the way you're viewed, so it's very shrewd to be, very very popular like me!" which cleverly convey Glinda's personality and social commentary as well as using end rhymes and mid-sentence rhymes.

Focusing on this one line from "Popular" you can see the intricate lyrics and rhythm of the music working in tandem to create a sophisticated, thoughtful and evocative moment.

It is a clever piece of lyric writing for several reasons:

#### Rhyme and Rhythm:

The lyric employs a catchy rhyme scheme that enhances its musicality. The words "aptitude," "viewed," and "shrewd" create an internal rhyme, making the line both pleasing to the ear and memorable. Additionally, the rhythm of the words flows naturally, adding to the song's playful tone.

#### Wordplay and Double Meaning:

The lyric cleverly plays on the double meaning of the word "shrewd." Typically, "shrewd" refers to having sharp powers of judgment, but in the context of the song, it's used to suggest that being popular is a smart strategy for social navigation.

The juxtaposition of "aptitude" (innate ability or talent) with the concept of being "viewed" (perceived by others) highlights the song's theme about the superficiality of popularity and societal perception versus genuine talent or ability.

#### Character Insight:

These lines give insight into Glinda's character. They reflect her belief that social perception and popularity are more important than actual skills or intelligence, revealing her superficial understanding of success and acceptance.

The lyric also subtly hints at Glinda's own insecurities and her reliance on popularity as a means of self-validation.

#### Social Commentary:

This line offers a critique of societal values, where appearances and perceptions often outweigh true abilities and qualities. It's a commentary on how society tends to value superficial traits over genuine skills or depth of character.

By framing this message in a light and humorous way, the song invites the audience to reflect on these themes without becoming heavy-handed.

#### Advancing the Narrative:

This line is sung by Glinda to Elphaba as she tries to make Elphaba more popular. It serves not only as a moment of comic relief but also moves the plot forward by illustrating the growing dynamic and differences between the two main characters.

Overall, this line from "Popular" is a good example of how musical theatre can weave together clever wordplay, character development, thematic depth, and narrative progression, all within a few short lines of a song.



Sheridan Adams and Courtney Monsma, Sydney 2023 Production. Photographer: Jeff Busby



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## ◆ THEATRE STYLES ◆

### Musical Theatre

#### ◆ For Good

The lyric "Because I knew you, I have been changed for good" beautifully encapsulates the transformative power of Elphaba and Glinda's friendship, using simple yet profound language.

#### ◆ The Wizard's Costume (Elaborate Costumes)

The Wizard's costume, often embellished and reflecting a certain grandeur, visually portrays his role as a leader and a showman, hiding his true nature behind a façade.

#### ◆ The Witches' Costumes (Elaborate Costumes)

Both Elphaba's and Glinda's costumes throughout the show, especially their transformation into the iconic Wicked Witch and Good Witch, are central to their character development and the visual storytelling.

#### ◆ No One Mourns the Wicked

The opening number uses dance and movement to set the scene of Oz after the Wicked Witch's demise, providing context and background for the story that unfolds.



Courtney Monsma,  
Sydney 2023 Production.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby

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## ◆ THEATRE STYLES ◆

### Musical Theatre

#### How "Defying Gravity" Exemplifies Musical Theatre

"Defying Gravity", a standout song from WICKED, exemplifies musical theatre in several distinct ways:

##### Context in WICKED:

This song is a key moment at the climax of the first act, where Elphaba makes a decisive choice to embrace her true self and defy the unjust rules and societal constraints of Oz.

This song is a quintessential example of musical theatre, showcasing dramatic crescendo, powerful vocals, and integration of plot and character development. It marks Elphaba's transformation and decision to defy societal expectations, encapsulating the emotional climax of the narrative. The song opens with a D flat chord – what Schwartz considers "the strongest sound on a piano" – and becomes increasingly rhythmic as her power grows. It ends on a higher pitch, so the song is "flying" along with the character.

##### Integration of Music, Lyrics, and Storytelling:

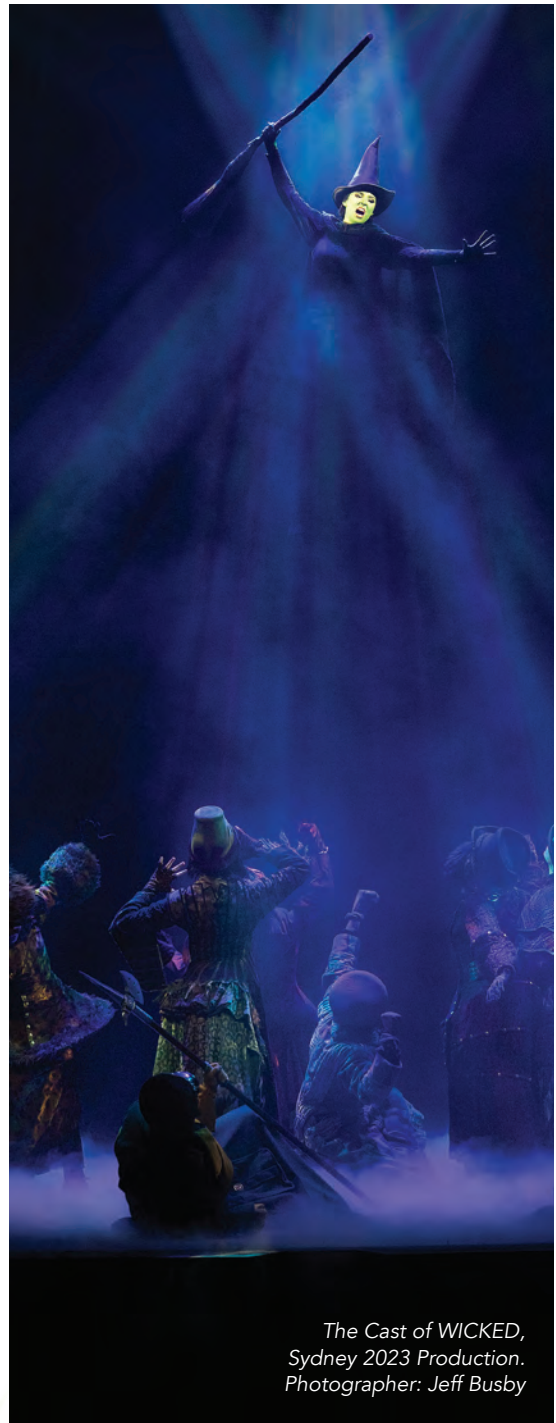
"Defying Gravity" masterfully blends music and lyrics to advance the narrative. It signifies a critical turning point in Elphaba's journey, capturing her decision to reject societal norms and embrace her own path. The opening lyrics, "Something has changed within me, something is not the same," set the stage for her transformation.

The music evolves from a contemplative start to a powerful climax, mirroring Elphaba's emotional and psychological journey. The dramatic orchestration and ascending melodies amplify the sense of liberation and defiance.

##### Character Development:

This song marks a pivotal change in Elphaba's character. Facing discrimination and identity struggles up to this point, the lyrics "I'm through accepting limits 'cause someone says they're so," reflect her defiance against imposed constraints and her acceptance of her own identity and power.

The moment transcends Elphaba defying gravity literally; it symbolises her metaphorical rise above her challenges and limitations, marking a significant development in her character arc.



The Cast of WICKED,  
Sydney 2023 Production.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby



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## ◆ THEATRE STYLES ◆

### Musical Theatre

#### Emotional Impact and Audience Engagement:

"Defying Gravity" connects deeply with the audience, touching on universal themes of freedom, self-acceptance, and resistance against injustice. This resonance makes it a cathartic experience not only for Elphaba but also for the audience.

The emotional power of the song is elevated in performance, which blends vocal strength with expressive acting, immersing the audience in Elphaba's emotional state.

#### Production Roles and Visual Spectacle:

The staging of "Defying Gravity" is a visual spectacle, characteristic of musical theatre. As Elphaba sings, her ascent above the stage literalises the theme of defying gravity. This visual effect is not only a technical wonder but also a symbolic representation of her empowerment.

The use of lighting and special effects during this scene enhances its dramatic impact. Strategic spotlighting, shadow play, and colour shifts intensify the emotional depth and underscore Elphaba's transformation.

#### Impact on Musical Theatre:

"Defying Gravity" has become an anthem of empowerment and is among the most recognisable songs in contemporary musical theatre. Its widespread popularity transcends WICKED, symbolising the genre's capacity to create powerful, memorable moments that resonate broadly.

The song's success demonstrates how musical theatre effectively combines storytelling, music, and performance to create impactful, lasting art.

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## ◆ THEATRE STYLES ◆

While musical theatre is the dominant style of WICKED, the show also includes aspects of many other theatre styles.

### Comedy

A theatrical style that uses humour to entertain and often to provide a satirical commentary on societal norms. It can involve situational comedy, witty dialogue, and comedic characters.

- ◆ **Popular:** Glinda's attempts to give Elphaba a makeover are filled with humorous dialogue and situational comedy, making it a perfect example of comic relief in the midst of a more serious narrative.
- ◆ **The initial meeting at Shiz University:** The contrast between Elphaba and Glinda's personalities creates humorous situations, exemplifying how comedy can arise from character dynamics.
- ◆ **Witty exchanges and one-liners:** Glinda's humorous lines throughout the musical add a comedic element, lightening the mood and providing a contrast to the more serious themes.

### Drama

This style focuses on serious, emotional themes, character development, and often explores complex relationships and moral dilemmas. It aims to evoke emotional responses from the audience.

- ◆ **The unfolding of Elphaba's journey:** Her transition from a misunderstood student to the Wicked Witch showcases drama through its exploration of themes like ostracism, identity, and defiance against authoritarian figures.
- ◆ **Elphaba and Fiyero's relationship:** Their evolving relationship, marked by complexity and depth, provides a dramatic counterpoint to the overarching political and social themes.
- ◆ **The Finale:** The revelation of the fates of Elphaba and Glinda is dramatically poignant, encompassing the culmination of their emotional and moral journeys.



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## ◆ THEATRE STYLES ◆

### Magical Realism

**A literary and artistic genre that introduces magical elements into a realistic setting, creating a world where the supernatural is accepted as part of reality. It's used to explore complex themes and ideas in a nuanced way.**

The existence of talking animals and their subsequent silencing in Oz reflects magical realism. This element adds a layer of fantasy to the otherwise realistic social issue of oppression and censorship.

Elphaba's magical abilities, particularly her inherent power and the way she learns to harness it, blend the magical with her very human journey of self-discovery and defiance.

The enchantments used throughout the story, like the levitating bubble of Glinda or the flying monkeys, seamlessly integrate magic into the world's fabric, enhancing the narrative while maintaining a sense of realism.



Adam Murphy, Sydney 2023 Production.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby

### Political Drama

**In theatre, this style focuses on the relationships between public policy, political events, and the characters who navigate these spheres. It often comments on social and political issues.**

The Wizard's authoritarian rule over Oz and his manipulation of public perception is a clear example of political drama, highlighting themes of power, propaganda, and political corruption.

Madame Morrible's role as an agent of the Wizard and her manipulation of Elphaba and Glinda for political ends showcases the intertwining of personal ambitions with broader political machinations.

The social division and discrimination against Animals in Oz, particularly the restriction of their rights and voices, reflects political drama's focus on societal structures and the impact of political decisions on different groups.





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## ◆ THEATRE STYLES ◆

### Dystopian Fiction

**A genre that explores social and political structures in a dehumanized, totalitarian society, often under the guise of a utopia. It involves themes of repression, surveillance, and loss of individual freedoms.**

The portrayal of Oz under the Wizard's rule, where dissent is suppressed, and propaganda is rampant, mirrors a dystopian society where appearances are deceptive, and freedom is curtailed.

The use of surveillance (like spies and the magic book) to control the population and maintain power is a hallmark of dystopian fiction, evident in the way the Wizard and Madame Morrible manage Oz.

The systematic othering and dehumanisation of certain groups in Oz, such as the Animals and their gradual loss of speech and autonomy, echo the characteristics of a dystopian society, where certain groups are oppressed to maintain the illusion of a harmonious society.

### Tragedy

**A form of drama that typically depicts the downfall of a main character, often due to a combination of fate, character flaw, or societal pressures. It elicits feelings of pity and fear in the audience.**

Elphaba's journey from an idealistic young woman to a societal outcast is tragic, and her transformation into the Wicked Witch reflects the impact of external judgment and internal conflict.

The complex relationship between Elphaba and Glinda, where their deep friendship is strained and ultimately altered by circumstances and choices, carries a tragic element, underscoring the cost of personal convictions and societal expectations.

The eventual fate of Elphaba, who is misunderstood and vilified despite her good intentions, is a classic element of tragedy, highlighting the themes of sacrifice and the harsh consequences of standing against prevailing norms.



*Courtney Monsma and Sheridan Adams,  
Sydney 2023 Production.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby*

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## ◆ THEATRE STYLES ◆

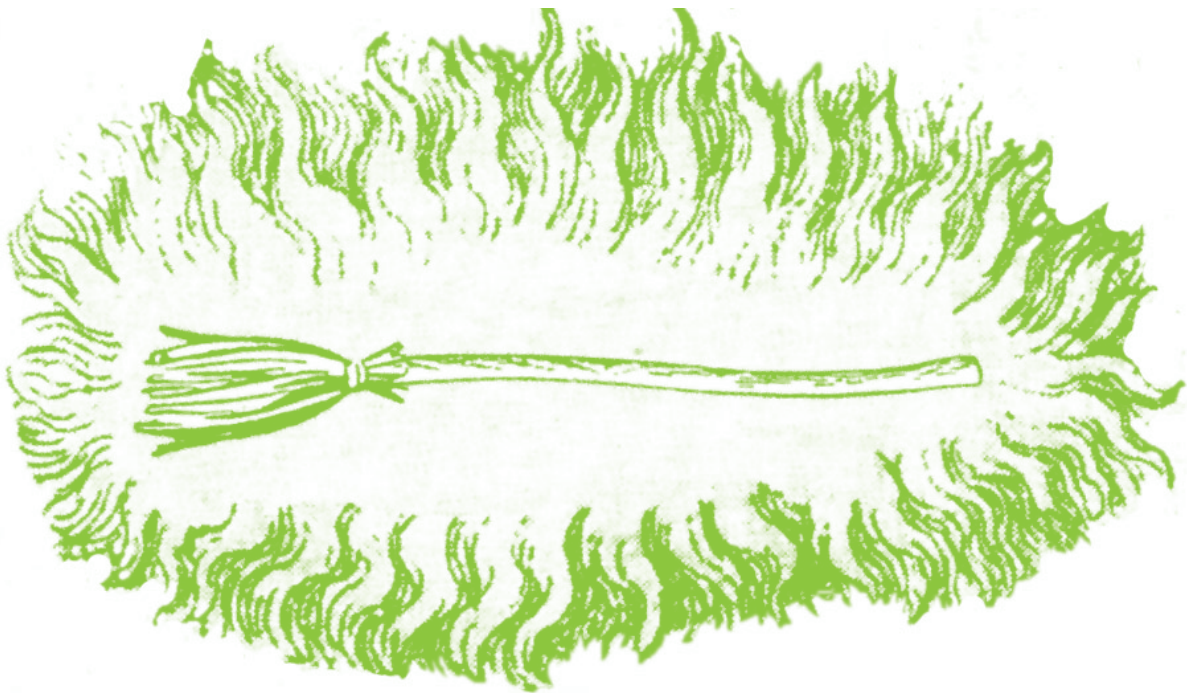
### Romance

**Involves the development of a relationship between characters, typically focusing on love, emotional conflicts, and personal growth.**

The love triangle between Elphaba, Glinda, and Fiyero adds a romantic dimension to the narrative, exploring themes of love, loyalty, and heartbreak.

Fiyero's transformation from a superficial prince to a deeply caring individual who falls in love with Elphaba demonstrates the romantic theme of transformative love.

The relationship between Elphaba and Fiyero, especially as it deepens and faces challenges, exemplifies the power of romantic love to transcend societal boundaries and personal struggles.





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## ◆ ELEMENTS OF THEATRE COMPOSITION ◆

WICKED cleverly applies the elements of theatre composition through a multitude of production roles. Below are some examples of this.

### Motion

This refers to the movement of performers and elements on stage. It's not just about the physical movement of actors, but also the movement of set pieces, props, and even the use of lighting to guide the audience's attention. Motion can be used to convey emotions, create rhythm, and develop the narrative.

◆ **Direction:** See the choreography of the scene "One Short Day," where the movement of characters uses motion to create a bustling Emerald City.

#### "ONE SHORT DAY" FOOTAGE

◆ **Hair and Makeup:** At the start of the show, Elphaba's hair is tucked away in a long braid, but as her character develops it unravels; by the second act, when she has embraced herself and her powers fully, she wears it loose, allowing it to flow with her like her cape and loose dress. These hair and costume choices deliberately offer opportunities to enhance motion.

◆ **Set:** Glinda's entrance sees her descend onto the stage in a moving bubble. The movement of scenic elements allow further opportunities to explore motion.



Sheridan Adams,  
Sydney 2023 Production.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby



The Cast of WICKED,  
Sydney 2023 Production.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby

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## ◆ ELEMENTS OF THEATRE COMPOSITION ◆

### Rhythm

**Rhythm in theatre is about the timing and pace of the performance. It includes the cadence of dialogue, the timing of entrances and exits, pauses and silences, and the overall tempo of the scene or play. Rhythm helps in creating tension, maintaining interest, and enhancing the emotional impact.**

◆ **Direction:** "Dancing Through Life" is the scene where Fiyero and Glinda first connect romantically. It is fast-paced and upbeat, and features a full ensemble around them, whereas Fiyero and Elphaba's romantic scenes are much slower, and only the two of them are onstage. The quick tempo of Fiyero and Glinda's scene reflects the shallow and superficial nature of their fast-paced relationship, whereas the slowness of Fiyero and Elphaba's relationship highlights how meaningful it is to both the characters and enhances the depth of their emotions for one another.



The Cast of WICKED,  
Sydney 2023 Production.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby

◆ **Sound:** The orchestral score's pacing matches the emotional rhythm of the narrative. See the performance of "The Wizard and I", where the song becomes faster with Elphaba's increasing excitement to meet the Wizard.

#### "THE WIZARD AND I" FOOTAGE

◆ **Lighting:** The Ozdust Ballroom scene makes use of pulsing lights, creating a rhythmic atmosphere reflective of a high-energy, youthful school dance.



The Cast of WICKED, Sydney 2023 Production.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby



# WICKED

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## ◆ ELEMENTS OF THEATRE COMPOSITION ◆

### Variation

This involves changing or varying elements in a performance to keep it engaging. Variation can be seen in aspects like dynamics in performance intensity, variations in set and lighting, and differences in characters' interactions. It prevents monotony and keeps the audience engaged.

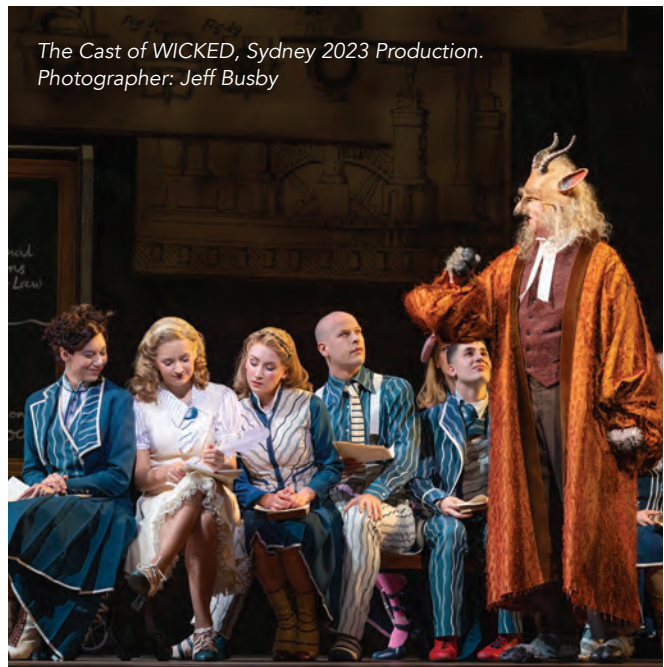
◆ **Acting:** The range of emotional expressions and physicality displayed by the lead characters, especially Elphaba and Glinda, is seen in the expressive and fast-paced song "Popular" where the two girls begin to establish a friendship despite their very clear differences.

◆ **Costume:** The costumes vary greatly from the subdued and uniform attire of the ensemble characters to the extravagant outfits of the lead characters. See the image below, where the Shiz students are dressed all in the same colours and complementary pattern. Only Glinda looks different with a cream vest that marks her as unlike her peers. Dillamond's costume, however, shows the greatest variation, in a traditional earthy coloured robe that shows that unlike Glinda, who is still part of the group despite her higher status, Dillamond has never been part of the group at all.

◆ **Sound:** The show features varying soundscapes to create different atmospheres; from the hustle and bustle of the busy Emerald City, to the lively, youthful halls of Shiz University, to the eerie, mysterious environment as Morrible uses her own magic powers to cast spells in the second act.



Sheridan Adams and Courtney Monsma,  
Sydney 2023 Production  
Photographer: Jeff Busby



The Cast of WICKED, Sydney 2023 Production.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby



# WICKED

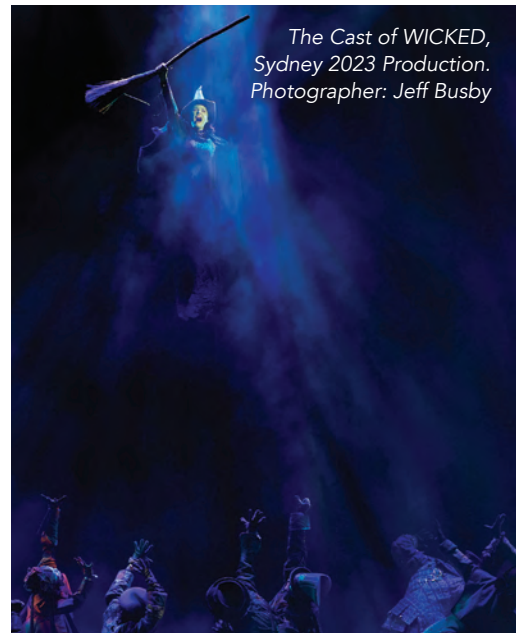
The untold true story of the Witches of Oz

## ◆ ELEMENTS OF THEATRE COMPOSITION ◆

### Emphasis

**Emphasis is about highlighting or focusing on certain elements of a production to draw the audience's attention. This could be a key moment in the narrative, a specific character, a dramatic revelation, or an important thematic element. Emphasis can be achieved through various means like lighting, sound, movement, or acting.**

◆ **Direction:** Focusing audience attention on key moments, like Elphaba in "Defying Gravity". Elphaba is elevated above the mob, and holds her broom up to show her defiance.



The Cast of WICKED,  
Sydney 2023 Production.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby

◆ **Costume:** In this moment in the engagement scene (pictured right), Glinda's emotions are the focal point; by dressing her primarily in shiny pale green that catches the light, rather than in dark emerald green that blends into the green set like the rest of the characters, she draws the attention of the audience.



The Cast of WICKED,  
Sydney 2023 Production. Photographer: Jeff Busby

◆ **Lighting:** The spotlight on Fiyero and Elphaba during "As Long As You're Mine" highlights the intimacy of this moment, emphasising their relationship and their separation from the rest of the world.



Liam Head and Sheridan Adams,  
Sydney 2023 Production. Photographer: Jeff Busby

# WICKED

The untold true story of the Witches of Oz

## ◆ ELEMENTS OF THEATRE COMPOSITION ◆

### Cohesion

This element refers to the unity of all components of the production. Cohesion ensures that every part of the performance, from acting to set design, works together harmoniously to tell the story. It's about creating a seamless and unified presentation where all elements contribute to the overall narrative and thematic goals.

◆ **Costume:** The coordinated costume design reflects the overarching themes and era of the setting. See the Shiz University uniforms below where despite the individual outfits not being identical to one another, when the students stand together they still appear as one cohesive group.

◆ **Sound:** Stephen Schwartz wrote three musical motifs for Elphaba. The first is “the sound of the wicked witch ... she’s strong, she’s scary, she’s powerful; she’s who we think the wicked witch is”.

The second is reflective of “her true power” that sounds like “a building self-awareness” as Elphaba becomes more confident in herself.

The third is the “Unlimited” theme, which is a dreamier, more wholesome sound showcasing her hopefulness and aspirations of goodness. All three of those motifs are repeated throughout the show, creating a layered and cohesive character through music, and they are the building blocks for all Elphaba’s songs.

**Stephen Schwartz for Wicked Active Learning via WICKED The Musical UK on YouTube**

◆ **Lighting:** The harsh red lighting in the scene pictured right builds on the red of Morrible’s lipstick and dress, using the coloured lights to illustrate the evil nature of her character.





# WICKED

The untold true story of the Witches of Oz

## ◆ ELEMENTS OF THEATRE COMPOSITION ◆

### Contrast

Contrast in theatre can involve juxtaposing different elements to highlight their differences. This can be through contrasting characters, themes, scenes, or visual elements. Contrast is used to create visual interest, develop complexity in the narrative, and enhance the understanding of characters or themes.

◆ **Costume:** The elaborate, colourful attire of the Ozians contrasts with Elphaba's simpler, darker clothing, emphasising her 'otherness.' Even in "One Short Day", when Elphaba and Glinda's friendship is at its closest, Glinda's bright yellow dress complements the emerald green costumes of the citizens of Oz, whereas Elphaba's plain black outfit indicates that she will never be accepted in this community.

◆ **Hair and Makeup:** Elphaba's iconic green skin provides an immediate visual contrast between her and the rest of the citizens of Oz.



The Cast of WICKED,  
Sydney 2023 Production.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby



Sheridan Adams,  
Sydney 2023 Production.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby

◆ **Props:** See below the change of Nessarose's chair from a modest, brown wood chair when she is a student at Shiz in Act One to the elaborate, elegant, red-and-gold design in Act Two, symbolising her shift in status and power.



The Grimmerie, pg. 110-11

# WICKED

The untold true story of the Witches of Oz

## ◆ DIRECTION ◆

**Karen Johnson Mortimer** is the Australian Resident Director of the 2023-24 tour of WICKED, and has worked on the show since 2011.

**How does the blocking and staging of the opening number, "No One Mourns the Wicked" set the tone for the show?**

At the top of the show the map flies out to reveal a mob of citizens leaning over something that clearly is of great concern. We see they are discovering that the Wicked Witch has been melted and they are finally free of the terror that has ruled their lives. As they break and start to sing "No one mourns the wicked", they move around the stage in twos and threes celebrating and decrying all evil things about her. Glinda then arrives in the bubble, their saviour, and confirms to them that Elphaba is indeed dead, calming them with promises that life in Oz now will be "good". She walks among them, retelling the story of Elphaba's life and demise and steps back into the bubble. She is to fly to the next town to bring them the good news too.

**How does the staging of "For Good" reflect the evolving relationship between Elphaba and Glinda?**

The staging of "For Good" is very minimal and simple. It is basically an opportunity for Glinda and Elphaba to acknowledge and reflect how deeply their friendship has developed. The lyrics deliver the sense of maturity that both women have grown into. They honour one another and also apologise to one another for past transgressions. There is only one real move in this staging, and it is on the lyric "and just to clear the air". The move is Elphaba shepherding Glinda slightly downstage as she begins her apology.

**How do you hope WICKED will resonate with today's audiences, and what do you believe are its key messages or themes?**

I believe the key messages of WICKED to be that:

1. True friendship can be found despite people having opposing views in many areas. Elphaba and Glinda are polar opposites at the beginning of the show, but their journeys and their growth are enriched by knowing and learning from each other.
2. Always to be true to yourself and to your own moral standards. The general media and social media can be sources of propaganda and twisting of the truth. In WICKED Elphaba refuses to work with the Wizard when she realises his dark intentions. She escapes and hides out as a fugitive. This turn of events causes the Wizard and Madame Morrible to declare Elphaba a wicked person, who is responsible for all the physical agony caused to all the monkeys. They stir up the crowds to hunt her down and kill her. They completely switch the truth to serve their evil ambitions.
3. Simple but true, never judge a book by its cover.

# WICKED

The untold true story of the Witches of Oz

## ◆ DIRECTION ◆

**What skills are involved with overseeing the Australian production of one of the most successful shows on Broadway and how does it differ from other productions you have worked on and why?**

The main skill required in overseeing such a production is to fully realise the vision the originating creatives developed and presented. This cuts across all departments... cast, musical department, wardrobe, makeup, stage management and crew. This applies to most shows but with WICKED it is even more important as WICKED is set in an imaginary but very stylistically specific world. My job is to make sure that every aspect of our show is presented every single night as if it was the first night which honours that vision. Every audience deserves that experience.

My job also requires me to prepare understudies through rehearsals to be ready at any given moment to go on in one of the major leading roles. Rehearsals are also regularly scheduled with the cast to keep the show fresh and tight.

The difference between WICKED and many other shows I've worked on is the major technical requirements executed throughout the show. The set itself is an intricate mix of automation of major set pieces and harness flying, as well as special effects. Co-ordinating these seamlessly is imperative.

**How does the team collaborate to ensure a unified interpretation of the script across all design elements?**

All heads of departments meet regularly to discuss the maintenance of the show as well as cast issues. These issues are broad based and are basically maintained through note sessions and/or rehearsals. Normally the company management team are the "go to" department that fields all the above and decide what steps need to be taken to achieve the outcome of a correctly interpreted performance.

[Hear more from Karen Johnson Mortimer](#)





# WICKED

The untold true story of the Witches of Oz

## ◆ DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY ◆

In 2013, a series of videos called “Behind the Emerald Curtain” took the audience behind the scenes and explored the technical aspects of the show.

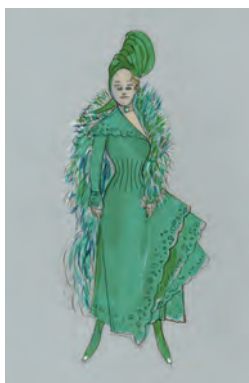
[CLICK HERE](#) for the full catalogue of videos.

## Costumes

*The costumes for WICKED were designed by Susan Hilferty.*

**Susan Hilferty on designing for WICKED:** In many ways, I consider myself a historian, a sociologist, and an art historian – in addition to all the other things that I do with clothes. To me, what was so exciting about WICKED was trying to understand a world that had a connection to the turn of the century as we know it. But I also had to incorporate the idea that animals talk, that there is magic, and that there are Munchkins in this place called Oz. So, the design process meant researching history and creating a parallel universe. My research focused on the period in which Baum wrote the books, from 1900 to about 1920. So, in a way, it's centred on the Wizard, who is our representative in Oz. The Wizard is somebody from 1900 who has gone up in a balloon and somehow drifted over to Oz. So, I created a style I call "twisted Edwardian." It's Edwardian-era suits and dresses, but asymmetrical-the collar might be off centre, or the cut of the dress twists around crazily.<sup>6</sup>

### Emerald City



*Design Tracks for WICKED*

In the Emerald City costumes, Hilferty incorporated animal remnants into her designs, showcasing the wealth of the city, the disregard for animal life and the blatant persecution of anyone considered different or lesser. Even as Animals are being stripped of their rights, Emerald City citizens pay no attention and flaunt their elaborate formalwear as long as they are being kept happy by the Wizard.

<sup>6</sup> *The Grimmerie*, pg. 119

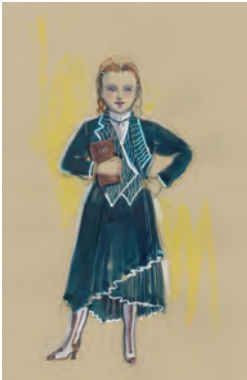
# WICKED

The untold true story of the Witches of Oz

## ◆ DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY ◆

### Costumes

#### Shiz University



*Design Tracks for WICKED*

When designing the Shiz University uniforms, Hilferty devised the idea of a “Shiz school store” where students could mix and match different tops and bottoms that all had the same Shiz pattern. This “struggle between individuality and uniformity” portrayed by Hilferty in the costumes is a recurring theme throughout the show.<sup>7</sup>

#### Glinda

To research Glinda’s costume, Hilferty interviewed little girls on what they thought goodness looked like, and received the responses of “princess” and “bride”. As a result, Glinda’s costumes have been heavily inspired by key moments in the British monarchy, such as Queen Elizabeth I’s coronation and Lady Diana’s wedding; dresses that are “emblematic of perfect femininity”. Even Glinda’s tiara and wand are influenced by Queen Elizabeth II’s crown and sceptre from the 1950s.<sup>8</sup>



*Design Tracks for WICKED*

Glinda’s costuming is also heavily connected to the sky, sun, stars, air and lightness. Her clothes are always light colours and her wand and tiara are shaped like stars.

<sup>7</sup> *The Grimmerie*, pg. 119

<sup>8</sup> *The Grimmerie*, pg. 120

# WICKED

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## ◆ DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY ◆

### Costumes

#### Elphaba

In contrast to Glinda, Elphaba's costuming grounds her; she is connected to the earth and the colours and textures of her dresses are inspired by fossils, stalactites, and striations. In her Shiz costume, she wears heavy boots and a cap that can be pulled down low over her face.<sup>9</sup>



*Design Tracks for WICKED*

<sup>9</sup> *The Grimmerie*, pg. 120



# WICKED

The untold true story of the Witches of Oz

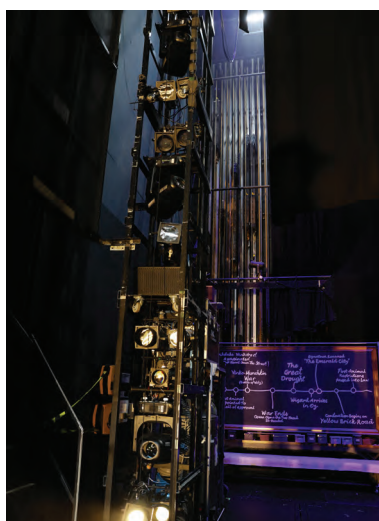
## ◆ DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY ◆

### Lighting & Projections

#### Lighting Effects

*Kenneth Posner, lighting designer for WICKED, primarily used old-school technology.*

He lined up his lighting design closely with the story, using lighting to tell the audience exactly where to look at different points, with so much going on across the stage throughout the show. Moving lights and LED fixtures create dynamic and colourful lighting schemes.



*Sydney 2023 Production.  
For educational use only.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby*

The green LED display was not a part of the original lighting design, but was instead implemented when WICKED first opened in London at the Apollo Theatre. The creative team liked it so much that it was introduced on Broadway and is now an integral part of the lighting design of the show.<sup>10</sup>



*Backstage, 2023-24 Australian Production.  
For educational use only.*

Hear from the Broadway lighting designers and electricians

<sup>10</sup> Thom Widmann,  
'WICKED: Lighting: Lighting Plot',  
WICKED The Musical on [YouTube](#)

# WICKED

The untold true story of the Witches of Oz

## ◆ DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY ◆

### Lighting & Projections

#### Notes from Hugh Hamilton, Lighting Designer 2023-24 Australian production of WICKED

The lighting design follows the overall design of WICKED. The set lighting matches the scenic design, drawing focus to certain elements on stage and hiding others, for example the levitation effects in “Defying Gravity” or the wires for the flying monkeys. The use of complementary set lighting can also transform the set from one place to another.

The WICKED Australia team is a very professional team who have been working on the show for a long time. There is extensive planning involved and important conversations regarding integrating modern technology into a twenty-year-old design.

#### Projections

Utilised for backdrop visuals, transforming scenes and settings with dynamic digital imagery; projections are a crucial part of the WICKED set and lighting design and play a part in building the magic of WICKED. Projections designer Elaine J. McCarthy got her inspiration from playing with visuals created from organic materials, such as wood chips and dry ice, rather than relying purely on digital.



Sydney 2023 Production.  
For educational use only.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby

The curtain warmer for WICKED (pictured above) features a projection of green and twinkling lights over Emerald City, giving the map a magical feel before the show even starts.

Hear from the original Broadway projections designer

# WICKED

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## ◆ DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY ◆

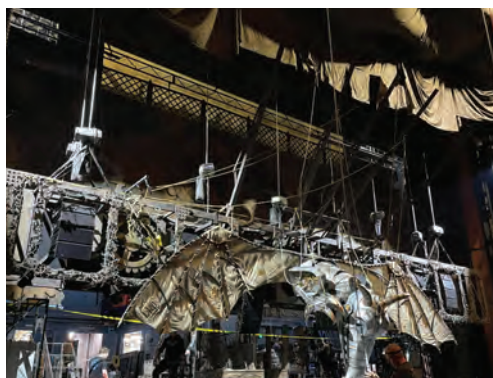
### Set

*Eugene Lee is the scenic designer of WICKED.*

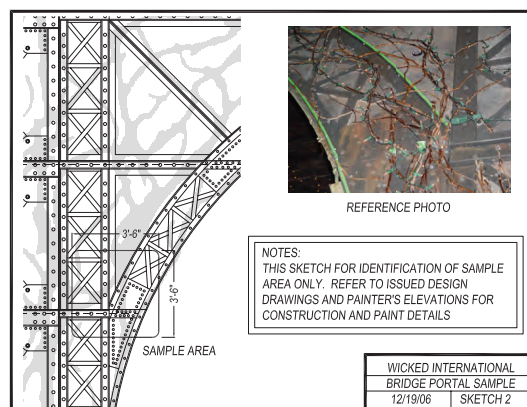
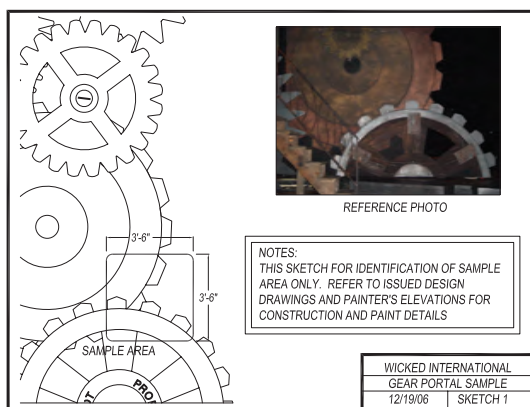
He was heavily influenced by the illustrations in the Baum and Maguire novels, rather than the script or the 1939 film. In particular, Maguire’s description of the Clock of the Time Dragon inspired what became the core of Lee’s set design: the mechanical dragon that sits above the stage, and the cogs and gears of an old clock, intertwined with nature and crawling vines, that form the arch around it.<sup>11</sup>



*WICKED Stage Model.  
For educational use only.*



*Backstage, 2023-24  
Australian Production.  
For educational use only.*



*WICKED Set Design Samples. For educational use only.*

[See here for more about the dragon clock](#)

<sup>11</sup> *The Grimmerie*, pg. 90



# WICKED

The untold true story of the Witches of Oz

## ◆ DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY ◆

### Set

#### Automated Set Pieces

To help transition from scene to scene, Lee created automated set pieces, such as the shifting of set elements in the cornfield scene, pictured here.



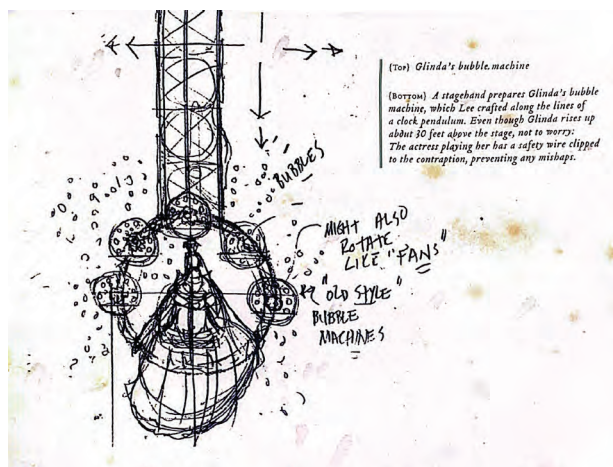
Sydney 2023 Production.  
For educational use only.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby

Another automated set piece is Glinda's bubble. Lee stayed with the idea of the clock, designing it to look like a mechanical pendulum.



Backstage, 2023-24  
Australian Production.  
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See right an early sketch of the bubble:



The Grimmerie, pg. 103

# WICKED

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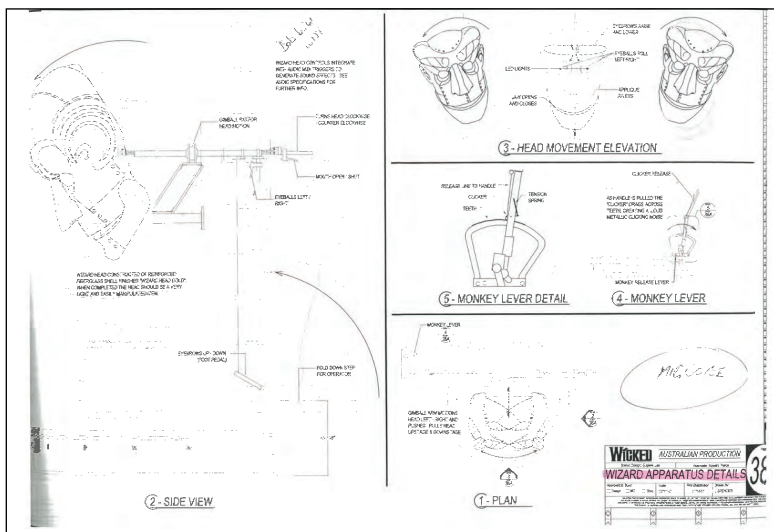
## ◆ DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY ◆

### Set

The iconic Wizard head is another automated set piece – see below the plans for the build:



Sydney 2023 Production.  
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Photographer: Jeff Busby



Wizard Apparatus Design Details. For educational use only.

Hear more from the Broadway scenic designers

# WICKED

The untold true story of the Witches of Oz

## ◆ DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY ◆

### Props

WICKED makes use of automated and mechanical props, like the lion in the cage, that moves in a lifelike manner. This enhances the storytelling and contributes to the magical realism of the world of Oz.

*Sydney 2023 Production.  
For educational use only.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby*



### Sound

*Tony Meola is sound designer for WICKED.*

The sound includes advanced microphones, amplification, and speaker systems to ensure clear and immersive audio for the audience.

*Backstage 2023-2024 Australian Production.  
For educational use only.*

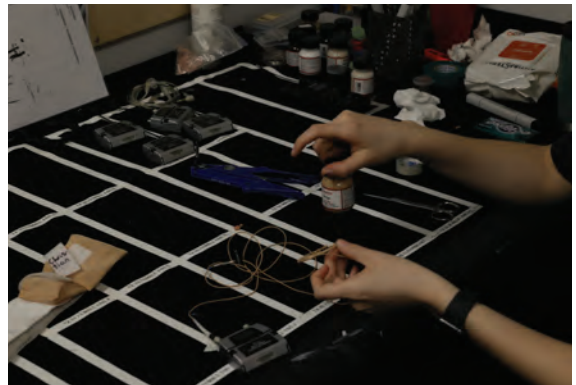


#### Wireless Microphones

There are approximately 40 wireless microphones for WICKED which are worn by actors to ensure their voices are heard clearly throughout the theatre, even during elaborate dance numbers. The volume and direction of each individual microphone are controlled by the sound team.

See right a wireless microphone being painted to blend into the makeup of the actor.

*Sydney 2023 Production. For educational use only.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby*



Hear from the original Broadway sound designers and engineers.



# WICKED

The untold true story of the Witches of Oz

## ◆ DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY ◆

### Sound

#### A Conversation with David Young, Music Director 2023-24 Australian production of WICKED

How do you hope WICKED will resonate with today's audiences, and what do you believe are its key messages or themes?

I think the story of WICKED is inherently relevant to the issue of race and prejudice towards anyone who looks different or may be judged on their looks. This is a universal theme, and because Elphaba is green, unlike people, we really feel for the character without necessarily knowing why. Especially with so much social awareness about bullying amongst young people, this can help the show resonate with people who relate to Elphaba's struggle.

Are there any specific quotes from the book/libretto of WICKED that resonate deeply with you or have influenced your creative approach to this production?

I think Doctor Dillamond's quote "The best way to bring people together is to give them a really good enemy" resonates in a political sense. We constantly see this in politics where other parties are made as scapegoats.

Consider the very general stage direction "Scene Fades As Shiz Students Appear" – a director may come up with many ways the cast could 'appear'. What are your favourite interpretations of the stage directions, lines of dialogue, lyrics, or musical moments in the production?

This particular transition is a favourite of mine, because of the challenge of getting the ensemble to sing together like a choir while they are all on different parts of the stage. It is one of the most difficult sequences musically for that reason as they can't all hear each other. Another favourite is going from the classroom scene into the Courtyard, with the statue coming forward, a very simple idea but with the magic of lights, sound and music all changing at the same time it's a wonderful transition. WICKED is also unique because in most musicals you feel like you have seen the entire set in Act One. But there are two spectacular scenes in Act Two, being the Fallen House scene and the Kiamo Ko Castle scene. I think this give the impression to the audience that there is a lot more scenery than there actually is.

What skills are involved with being tasked with overseeing the Australian production of one of the most successful shows on Broadway and how does it differ from other productions you have worked on and why?

Every show I have ever worked on has its own unique character that makes it difficult. In WICKED it is the sheer size of the production with so many things musically, vocally, and orchestrally to co-ordinate. Also being an older show not much of it is recorded on tracks like some more modern shows. WICKED is 99.9% all live which is another great challenge.

# WICKED

The untold true story of the Witches of Oz

## ◆ DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY ◆

### Makeup

*Joe Dulude II is the makeup designer of WICKED and created Elphaba's green look.*

#### ◆ **Greenifying Elphaba**

To create Elphaba's green skin, a colour foundation is applied, followed by MAC Chromacake in Landscape Green, which functions like a watercolour paint. This is first applied using a wide Japanese brush to the jawline and the face and then smoothed out using a larger brush. A smaller brush is used for areas like the hairline. Then, a waterproof powder goes on before the "regular" makeup: eyeliner, purple and brown contours, and a Golden Olive pigment which is brushed over the face to add sparkle. A spray fixative is used to prevent the green from coming off. In Act Two, Dulude darkens Elphaba's look by adding lashes, smudging her eyeliner, emphasising her eyebrows and contour, and adding a darker green to her lips.<sup>12</sup>

#### ◆ **Special Effects Makeup**

The show includes prosthetics and makeup techniques to transform actors into fantastical characters like anthropomorphic animals.



*Sydney 2023 Production.  
For educational use only.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby*

Hear from the original Broadway makeup team

<sup>12</sup> *The Grimmerie*, pg. 132

# WICKED

The untold true story of the Witches of Oz

## ◆ DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY ◆

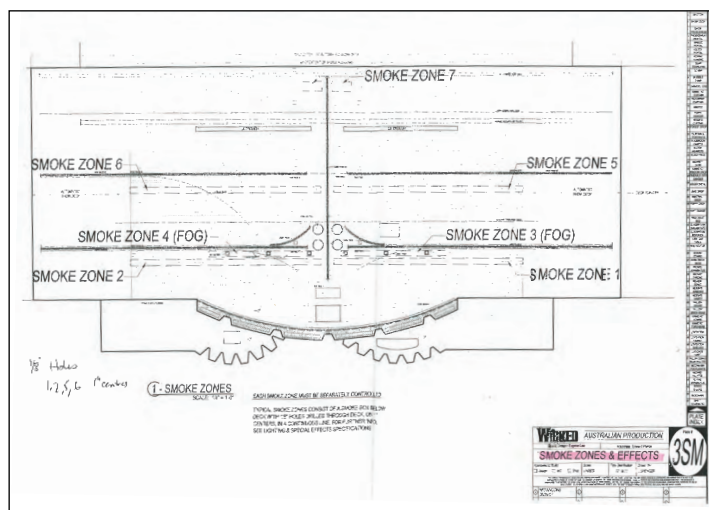
### Special Effects

Haze, fog and smoke machines (atmospherics) are all employed to build the atmosphere of the show and enhance the eerie or mystical ambiance in scenes.



Sheridan Adams, Sydney 2023 Production.  
Photographer: Jeff Busby

See below the smoke plan for WICKED:



Smoke Effects Plan.  
For educational use only.

Hear more from the Broadway special effects designers and electricians on the atmospherics as well as the other aspects of special effects used throughout the production.



# WICKED

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## ◆ PAGE TO STAGE ◆

Use the following stage directions and quotes to help you discuss possibilities of the script in performance.

**Glinda descends from on high on a mechanical swing that spews soap bubbles...** (Act 1, Scene 1)

- How does Glinda's grand entrance set the tone for her character and the overall magical atmosphere of Oz? Consider the collaboration between actors, directors, and designers to achieve this moment.
- If you were directing this scene, how would you enhance the visual spectacle of Glinda's entrance while ensuring it aligns with her character's essence?

**Elphaba grabs the book of spells, pages through it furiously—** (Act 1, Scene 14)

- What lighting and sound design choices would you make to highlight the intensity of Elphaba's discovery and her desperation in this moment?
- In portraying Elphaba's urgency, how can an actor physically embody the character's growing power and determination? Discuss the director's role in shaping this portrayal.

**The Wizard pulls a lever and the back of the stage opens to reveal an enormous cage full of chattering shrieking monkeys all with wings on their backs.** (Act 1, Scene 13)

- How does the reveal of the winged monkeys impact the audience's perception of the Wizard's true nature? Consider the visual and auditory elements that can enhance this reveal.
- If you were designing the set for this scene, how would you ensure the reveal is both surprising and seamlessly integrated into the narrative flow?

**Suddenly what should come floating up but – THE BROOM which has freed itself from the door handle! It floats towards Elphaba!** (Act 1, Scene 14)

- Discuss the symbolism of the broom in Elphaba's journey. How can lighting, sound, and movement be used to underscore this symbolic moment?
- As a director or designer, how would you choreograph this scene to capture the magic and significance of the broom choosing Elphaba?

**A DOOR IN THE FLOOR swings open and Elphaba followed closely by Glinda clambers up into...** (Act 1, Scene 13)

- How does the use of a trapdoor contribute to the element of surprise or transition within the story? Consider the technical challenges and creative solutions in staging this effect.
- Reflecting on the characters' development, how would you direct this entrance to highlight their evolving relationship and the story's progression at this point?

**As the SOUND OF THE CYCLONE builds in fury...** (Act 2, Scene 4)

- How does the sound design here enhance the dramatic tension and foreboding of the moment?
- In staging this scene, what other theatrical elements would you incorporate to ensure the cyclone's impact is both felt and heard by the audience?
- How can the actors' performances intensify the sense of impending doom?



# WICKED

The untold true story of the Witches of Oz

## ◆ EXAMPLE QUESTIONS ◆

This resource aims to provide you with the skills to analyse and evaluate this production of WICKED. From context to elements of theatre composition, theatre technologies, playscript interpretation and so much more. Below are some questions you could trial when analysing and evaluating this production for Unit 3.

**There are three example answers at the end.**

**Discuss the role of lighting design in enhancing the magical elements of WICKED.**

**In your response, refer to:**

- A specific scene or moment from the production.
- How the lighting design interprets specific stage directions or dialogue from WICKED's script.

**Evaluate the use of costume design in portraying character development throughout WICKED.**

**Consider:**

- One or more specific moments from the production.
- Corresponding stage directions or dialogue that highlight the costume's impact.

**Analyse the integration of sound design and musical scoring in creating the emotional landscape of WICKED. Reference should be made to:**

- Specific examples of how sound design and music complement each other.
- Dialogue or stage directions that align with the sound and music cues.

**Assess the effectiveness of the set design in establishing the setting and mood of WICKED.**

**Your analysis should include:**

- How the set design supports a specific scene or moment.
- Relevant stage directions or dialogue from the script.

**Explore how makeup design contributes to the visual storytelling of WICKED. Discuss:**

- A particular character, transformation, or moment.
- Specific script elements that are enhanced by makeup design.

**Investigate the application of pace, timing, and tempo by the actors in WICKED to enhance the narrative's rhythm. Include:**

- Examples of rhythm variation.
- Specific dialogue or stage directions.

**Examine how props are utilised in WICKED to symbolise thematic elements. Consider:**

- One or more significant props used in the production.
- How these props are referenced in the stage directions or dialogue.



# WICKED

The untold true story of the Witches of Oz

## ◆ EXAMPLE QUESTIONS ◆

**Describe how the heightened language of WICKED is realised by the actors during the performance.**

**Refer to:**

- Specific moments that highlight exaggerated or heightened linguistic elements.
- How these elements align with the content of the playscript.

**Discuss the portrayal of time and place in WICKED through the collaborative efforts of the production team (costume, set, lighting). Reference:**

- How these production roles collectively establish the play's setting.
- Dialogue or stage directions that are particularly relevant to the portrayal of time and place.

**Analyse the incorporation of historical and/or political influences in WICKED, focusing on how these aspects are reflected in the performance. Include:**

- How the actors embody these influences.
- How production roles enhanced these influences/themes.
- References to specific dialogue or stage directions that highlight these themes.

**Evaluate the creative team's interpretation of the original contexts of WICKED in the production.**

**Discuss:**

- Specific decisions made to adapt the script's contexts for contemporary audiences.
- How these decisions influenced the overall production.

**Analyse the use of theatre styles identified in WICKED's script and how they were realised in performance. Consider:**

- Examples of theatrical styles used.
- The effectiveness of these styles in engaging the audience.

**Discuss the evidence of the creative team's decisions in interpreting WICKED for performance.**

**Focus on:**

- How these decisions impacted character development and plot progression.
- Specific moments in the production that highlight these creative decisions.

**Critically evaluate the role of the director in shaping the vision of WICKED for the stage. Include:**

- The director's approach to interpreting the script.
- How the director's vision was realised through production elements.

**Explore the application of theatre technologies in WICKED specifically focusing on their role in enhancing the narrative. Address:**

- Specific technologies used and their impact on the production.
- How these technologies supported the interpretation of the script.





# WICKED

The untold true story of the Witches of Oz

## ◆ EXAMPLE QUESTIONS ◆

**Describe the use of elements of theatre composition in WICKED such as cohesion, contrast, and emphasis. Discuss:**

- How these elements were used to shape the audience's experience.
- Specific examples that demonstrate effective use of these elements.

**Analyse the collaborative efforts of the production roles (e.g., costume designer, lighting designer) in developing the script for WICKED in performance.**

**Consider:**

- The integration of different production roles.
- The contribution of each role to the storytelling.

**Evaluate how WICKED utilises theatre technologies to create immersive and/or spectacular experiences for the audience.**

**Focus on:**

- The innovative use of sound, lighting, and stage technologies.
- How these technologies enhanced specific scenes or moments.

**Discuss the interpretation of WICKED's themes through the production's design elements (costume, set, lighting). Analyse:**

- How design elements were used to highlight themes.
- The effectiveness of these elements in contributing to the thematic exploration.



# WICKED

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## ◆ EXAMPLE ANSWERS ◆

**Evaluate the use of costume design in portraying character development throughout WICKED.**

**Consider:**

- **One or more specific moments from the production.**
- **Corresponding stage directions or dialogue that highlight the costume's impact.**

In WICKED, the costume design plays a pivotal role in illustrating character development, particularly evident in the transformation of Elphaba, the future Wicked Witch of the West. A standout moment showcasing this evolution is during the Act 1 finale, "Defying Gravity", where Elphaba's transition from a misunderstood, green-skinned girl into a powerful, defiant witch is marked by her costume change. Initially, Elphaba's costumes are subdued, reflecting her outsider status and desire to blend in despite her green skin. However, as she embraces her identity and powers, her costume shifts dramatically to a more elaborate gown with a cape, symbolising her newfound confidence and acceptance of her distinctiveness. This moment is underscored by the corresponding stage direction that sees Elphaba rising above the stage, defying gravity, and the dialogue, "Something has changed within me, something is not the same," which aligns with her costume's transformation to signify her internal and external metamorphosis. The costume design not only enhances the visual storytelling but also deepens the audience's understanding of Elphaba's journey, using visual cues to complement the narrative's themes of identity, acceptance, and defiance. Through these thoughtful costume choices, the production team effectively communicates Elphaba's growth, making the costumes an integral part of the storytelling in WICKED.

**Describe the use of elements of theatre composition in WICKED such as cohesion, contrast, and emphasis. Discuss:**

- **How these elements were used to shape the audience's experience.**
- **Specific examples that demonstrate effective use of these elements.**

In WICKED, elements of theatre composition such as cohesion, contrast, and emphasis are utilised to create a compelling narrative that captivates the audience, guiding them through the emotional and thematic journey of the story. These elements not only enhance the storytelling but also deepen the audience's engagement with the characters and the plot.

Cohesion is evident in the integration of musical numbers, dialogue, and production roles that ensures the narrative flows smoothly from one scene to the next. The use of recurring musical motifs, such as the melody of "Defying Gravity", weaves through the storyline, connecting various moments and reinforcing the themes of friendship and empowerment. This musical cohesion helps the audience to emotionally engage with the characters' journeys, creating a unified storytelling experience.

Contrast is used to highlight the differences between Elphaba and Glinda, and their contrasting views on life, morality, and friendship. This is visually represented in their costumes, hair, and makeup, with Elphaba's dark, earthy tones starkly differing from Glinda's bright, shimmering gowns, flowing blond hair and natural skin tone. The contrast is also thematic, with the play exploring themes of good versus evil, acceptance versus rejection, and the complexity of moral ambiguity. By presenting these contrasts, WICKED invites the audience to reflect on the nature of goodness and the societal norms that define it.



# WICKED

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## ◆ EXAMPLE ANSWERS ◆

Emphasis is placed on key moments in the narrative to draw the audience's attention and highlight pivotal developments. A prime example is the climax of the first act, "Defying Gravity", where emphasis is achieved through a combination of lighting, music, and performance to underscore Elphaba's decision to embrace her true self and defy societal expectations. The staging of this scene, with Elphaba literally rising above the stage, emphasises her empowerment and the thematic core of the play, leaving a lasting impact on the audience.

**Evaluate the creative team's interpretation of the original contexts of WICKED in the production. Discuss:**

- **Specific decisions made to adapt the script's contexts for contemporary audiences.**
- **How these decisions influenced the overall production.**

The creative team behind WICKED skilfully interprets the original contexts of the musical to resonate with contemporary audiences, making strategic decisions in script adaptation, set, and costume design that not only honour the source material but also enhance its appeal to modern sensibilities. One of the most notable decisions is the adoption of a twisted Edwardian aesthetic, which permeates the costume design for the Emerald City, providing a visually stunning scene that bridges the gap between the fantasy world of Oz and themes relevant to today's society.

The set design, which incorporates a fascination with progress and innovation, cleverly juxtaposes the magical elements of Oz with the darker, more complex issues at play, such as social injustice and moral ambiguity. This juxtaposition is critical in making the narrative accessible and relatable to contemporary audiences, who can draw parallels between the fictional world of Oz and the real world. The use of gears, clocks, and industrial motifs throughout the set not only enhances the visual spectacle but also hints at the underlying themes of time, fate, and the mechanisations of society.

These creative decisions significantly influence the overall production, providing a rich, immersive experience that captivates audiences. The twisted Edwardian costume aesthetic, combined with the thoughtful adaptation of the script's 1900-ish contexts, ensures that WICKED transcends its fantasy setting to deliver a powerful, resonant message about acceptance.





# WICKED

The untold true story of the Witches of Oz

## ◆ CREDITS ◆

This education guide includes references to materials from:

*Wicked: The Grimmerie, a Behind-the-Scenes Look at the Hit Broadway Musical* (US)

By David Cote (Little Brown, 2005)

*Behind the Emerald Curtain* (US)

Created by Sean McCourt and Anthony Galde

[Available on WICKED The Musical on YouTube](#)

*Wicked Active Learning* (UK)

Created by Wicked The Musical UK

[Available on WICKED The Musical UK on YouTube](#)

Or at: <https://www.wickedactivelearning.co.uk/>

This guide also includes quotations and excerpts from the musical WICKED (2003), book by Winnie Holzman and music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz.

## ◆ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ◆

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All WICKED education materials related to the VCE Theatre Studies curriculum were overseen, researched and edited by **Zara Denham** and **Jane Ross** of **The Culture Farm**.

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