

## Wicked wows! Something wicked is here in town

### Enter Stage Left

SHARMAN YARNELL



And *Wicked* it is. It's the Tony Award winning Broadway production that has been thrilling crowds for years. This is one of those shows that anyone who loves Theatre must see. You will never look back on the old *The Wizard of Oz* with the same feeling as you did as a child.

As a musical, *Wicked* is beautifully written with substance and meaning conveyed through the libretto, lyrics (Stephen Schwartz) and dialogue (Winnie Holtzman). It takes the audience on a wonderful flight of fancy and imagination.

Often when you watch a play or movie, you wonder what happened in a particular character's life to make her the way she is: mean and vicious or kind and giving. What makes someone grow into an angry adult, a revolutionary, an animal activist?

Gregory Maguire's book, *Wicked: The life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*, is loosely based on the original book of L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*. It delves into the life of a young girl who is laughed at, tormented by other children, is studious, and, yes, different. The story of *Wicked* is told from the perspective of the witches, with references to most of the characters in Baum's original work. It tells the story of what was transpiring before that tornado transported us all to the Land of Oz.

In the original, Baum never named the witch that almost brought Dorothy and gang down, the witch played by Margaret Hamilton in the movie. His Wicked Witch of the West was green skinned, in the stereotypical black, pointed witch's cap and pointed shoes. Now, thanks to Maguire, she has a name: Elphaba.

Maguire worked a bit of magic himself when formulating the name Elphaba. He did so out of L. Frank

Baum's name, taking the phonetic pronunciation of his initials. So L.F.B became El-pha-ba.

*Wicked* plays into stories within stories; those that we, as adults can relate to. (Indeed, there is probably a wonderful book to be written for every character Baum created.) It has all the pain and suffering that some children go through. There is a resistance movement, a love affair, a father who turns out a disappointment. And then there are the hate mongers and rumour mills. The story plays into a lot of what goes on in our own society today.

*Elphaba* is played by Christine Dwyer, who has an incredibly powerful and rich voice, full of emotion, carrying the story along through its ups and downs with great technique and attention paid to all the nuances required of story and script. Her depiction of a young girl, taunted by classmates, ignored by her father, is profoundly heartbreaking and sets the stage for what is to come. The dominance and strength she finally discovers takes her to extraordinary heights at the end of act one, both literally and figuratively. Her spirit soars. The audience is left in awe.

*Glinda* (at first called *Galinda*) is played by Jeanna de Waal, a lady who knows how to tweak the stereotype of the ditsy blonde into a perfect comedic-dramatic portrayal, with a voice that could knock you out, and a personality that embraces the audience in its shallowness, and yes, depth of character, too. All at the same time. She obviously loves the role, enjoys the company and gives the audience some great moments of fun. Her voice is strong and her comedic timing perfection.

At last, a show that is a superb vehicle for women, who don't often get good, fleshed out parts. Originally loathing each other, they develop a friendship as time goes on and Glinda sets her mind to changing Elphaba - but the lady is too much of a revolutionary and...did I mention that she loves animals that she tries to save them!

*The Wizard of Oz*, Paul Kreppel, comes on stage with great bravado and command of the moment and slowly shrivels to an ordinary man whose tyranny is gradually weakened as we all begin to see through him and his ways.



Jenna de Waal as Glinda and Christine Dwyer as Elphaba the Wicked Witch of the West star in *Wicked* at PdA until August 26

The entire ensemble, consisting of these highly professional and skilled performers - all of them - clearly enjoys what it is doing and projects a stage full of fun.

The lighting, sound and special effects are outstanding. The set and costumes take the audience into a storybook world of make-believe and munchkins. And the orchestra is superb.

All and all, *Wicked* is not to be missed. It is a wonderful evening of enlightenment and revelation of a story involving characters that stoked our imaginations as children.

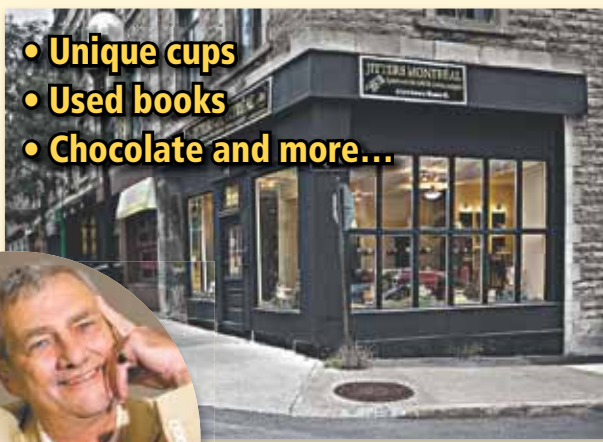
You will be, as I was, absolutely, wonderfully 'Ozified'.

Evenko is picking up on a Broadway tradition. People can take part in a lottery for tickets simply by showing up two and a half hours prior to the show. Their names will be placed in a lottery drum. Thirty minutes later, names will be drawn for a limited number of orchestra seats at \$25 each, cash only. This lottery is available only in-person at the box office, with a limit of two tickets per person. Lottery participants must have a valid photo ID when submitting their entry form, if chosen, when purchasing tickets.

*Wicked* is on at Place Des Arts until August 26. For more information: PDA Box Office 514-842-2112, 1-866-842-2112 [www.evenko.ca](http://www.evenko.ca)

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