

## **Wicked History**

### **Stephen Schwartz Comments on Wicked's History: the Show's Development Up to the Broadway Opening, and it's Influence Over Time**

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#### **SECTION 1 – Wicked Inspiration**

##### **Wicked inspiration**

Question:

Stephen, Just out of curiosity. Did you have any special fondness of the movie "The Wizard of Oz" when you were younger that may have sparked your interest in making a musical out of "Wicked"? I think it is great that you've staked your claim on this piece of OZ history. I was just wondering if you felt a special connection with the film that prompted you to read the book and then write the musical. I can really feel passion in the music that comes when someone really has worked hard and poured their heart into something. It's a great piece of theatre and you should be proud. I love your work and am actually in rehearsals for my high school's production of "Godspell," which, might I add, is another great piece of theatre. I hope all is well with you and I hope to hear from you soon. - Joe Lezza

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thanks, Joe. I think it's hard to imagine any kid who has a passion for musicals not being affected upon seeing THE WIZARD OF OZ. But I think what appealed to me more, when I first came across Gregory Maguire's novel and was immediately smitten with the desire to adapt it as a musical is the theme, one which has always fascinated me: Looking at a familiar story or characters from a different point of view, and thus revealing that life is not as simple or as black-and-white as we tend to think. That and the fact that I have always been interested in stories of people who are perceived as "different" and feel themselves alienated from "normal" society. Many of my other shows deal with these themes, but WICKED seemed to me almost the perfect embodiment. Thanks for your interest and enthusiasm for the show. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

##### **Inspiration Question**

Question:

Quick question for you, Michael: When you were helping Stephen prepare for WICKED, about how many times did you, he, or both of you watch the original movie "Wizard of Oz" - how about read the "Wicked book" for inspiration??

Answer from Michael Cole

I don't think Stephen watched the movie once while he was working on WICKED. I could be wrong, but it really wasn't about the movie. I think he may have read the script of the movie to check on certain facts as they realized early on that they had to make WICKED "match up" to the movie. Also, I don't think Stephen or Winnie actually read the novel WICKED while they were working on the musical. I know they referenced it on occasion, but not nearly as much as you would think. This would be a good question for Stephen, so why don't you remind me about it in late September. I'll forward it to him then. I'm embarrassed to admit that I haven't read the entire novel yet. Stephen loaned it to me and before I could really get into it, he snatched it away from me. I now have an autographed copy from Gregory Maguire (the new release with the Broadway cover and pictures) and I'm going to throw it in my bag and start reading it on the train to and from work. Thanks for the reminder. :) Michael

## **SECTION 2 – Wicked's Development**

### **Wicked's development**

Question:

Terrence McNally has been quoted as saying "I worry that in the process of developing my new play I lose it." Were there any changes made during rehearsals or previews that, while perhaps ultimately necessary, you wish had not been required?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I very much agree with Mr. McNally. If there is one chief lesson I have learned through experience working in the commercial theatre, it is how easy it is for a writer to become deflected from his or her original goals for a project. The act of collaboration and the pressures brought to bear in bringing a project to fruition necessitate constant adjustments and compromises; plus of course, the writer himself is always striving to improve the work. So what I have learned is that it is vital to articulate for oneself the goals of the project at the very beginning and to check in periodically with that to be sure that they are being maintained. I had several discussions on WICKED in which I would say about a specific suggestion that, while it sounded good, it actually changed the intention of the show too greatly and that therefore a different solution had to be found.

### **Lyric/book Collaboration**

Question:

How much did you and Ms. Holzman directly comment on each others' work? Did you make any major lyric changes because of the way the book developed? Did she make any changes based on your lyrics?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Winnie and I worked extremely closely together throughout the process. I always wait for book material to exist before I begin writing lyrics, and of course I make changes throughout the process as the book continues to develop. A superficial example would be the "Ozisms" (words slightly altered from English) that Winnie invented for her book and that I then added to lyrics (e.g. in the opening number, Glinda urging the citizens of Oz to "rejoicify".) But many of the concepts for songs were Winnie's (she first proposed the idea for a "hate at first sight" song that became "What Is This Feeling?") and many of the titles (during a brainstorming session, she came up with the brilliant song title "For Good", for instance.) Similarly, the lyrics continued to affect the book, and of course, I contributed structural ideas, concepts for scenes, and even a couple of jokes (I'm embarrassed to say that Glinda's reference to "the poor little dog ... Dodo" is mine.) The point is that we functioned as a team, and that the individual credits belie the true working relationship.

### **It isn't easy being green**

Question:

Did I note a subtle homage to Jim Henson and Kermit The Frog in the opening of Wicked, when it was said, "So you see, it couldn't have been easy...?"

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

You'd have to ask Winnie Holzman. It's her line. But it's interesting, isn't it, that the standard "odd color for characters" seems most often to be green -- witches, the Hulk, the Martian "little green men", and Kermit's famous lament, for examples.

### **Opposing Characters**

Question:

Mr. Schwartz: I really just want to say how much I love your musical, the songs with their rhyme scheme, the music and its incredible interpretation of feeling and thematic references, and the dance choreography. All together, the show is just wonderful. I have been wondering how it was possible to create two foils, and opposing, characters (Elphaba and Glinda) that the audience loves for their personality. To the audience, neither is truly "evil", further blurring the lines between good vs. evil, which is a major conflict in the show. So, how did you do it? Thanks!~Bethany

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thanks, Bethany. I think that in American musical theatre and screenwriting these days, too much emphasis is often placed on having a "hero" and a "villain", a good guy and a bad guy, as in cartoons. Even when we did the animated feature PRINCE OF EGYPT, one of our goals was not to make the character of Rameses a "bad guy", but someone who found himself, by reasons of birth and character, in opposition to our hero (Moses.) The truth is that people can often be honestly in conflict without one or the other being villainous. Very few people are completely and totally evil, with the possible exception of Vice President Cheney. So all my collaborators and I did in writing Elphaba and Glinda was to try to understand them, get inside their heads and hearts, and write each of them from her own point of view. Thanks again for your enthusiasm for WICKED, and for your interesting question. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

### **Ozisms**

Question:

Disgustified. You have no idea what you've done to me. I can't get this word out of my head. It's like a one word tongue twister. I can't even say it the same way consistently (and no, I'm not mentally retarded). I'm curious about all the words that were coined for Wicked, both in song and dialogue. Was there a concerted effort to create a whole new lexicon of Ozian words? Was this your creative decision or a collaborated effort? Someone on the internet compiled the following list of words from Wicked: As a wordsmith, I'd love to hear your commentary on them.

Rejoicify, outuendo (as opposed to innuendo), confusifying, linguification, definish, de-greenify, disgustified, disturbance, scandalacious, hideodious, graditution, devastrated, moodified, braverism, surreptitally, discoverates, disrespectation, and festivating. Have you coined new words in your other works?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

The idea of the "Ozisms" originated with book writer Winnie Holzman, who was trying to create a language that was immediately comprehensible to audiences but suggested that we were in a different

world. The "innuendo/outuendo" line and the word "confusifying" and some others were in the very first draft Winnie gave me of the early scenes. Once I saw what she was doing, I thought it was a brilliant idea and began to incorporate it into the lyrics as well. If you notice, she also takes familiar cliché phrases and alters them slightly, so that for instance, "thrilled to pieces" becomes "thrilled to shreds", etc. This is just one of the many ways in which Winnie is a brilliant writer. Thanks for noticing and asking about it, Stephen Schwartz

### **Biggest challenge**

Question:

Mr. Schwartz, *Wicked* is one of the most creative and important shows Broadway has seen in years. What was the biggest musical challenge for you with *Wicked*?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thank you. I think the biggest musical challenge was trying to come up with a coherent sound for the show that didn't sound as if it came from our world, but believably could be "Ozian" (except for the Wizard's number, of course, which I thought should sound very old-time American). I experimented with trying to invent a different scale or system of harmonization, but that just became wearisome to the ear very quickly and was pretty inaccessible. So then I just tried to write in my own style, but to avoid any of the "pastiche" type numbers that I often use in my other scores (like "All for the Best" from *GODSPELL* or "In Pursuit of Excellence" from *CHILDREN OF EDEN*.)

### **WICKED Q&A - and questions on Musical Theatre**

Question:

What are for you as a writer/composer, the key elements of musical theater?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

To me, the key element of musical theatre is structure. How does one answer the questions: what is the journey of the story? what does the leading character want? how are the characters changed by pursuing what they want? The writers have to work out what is the best structure to tell their story. All other decisions and details flow from that.

Question:

How much are the characters in your shows, especially in *Wicked*, representations of real humans?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

All characters, whether they are green witches, talking gargoyles, or God himself, should be representations of "real" humans, with real motivations that cause their actions.

Question:

In what way did you and Winnie Holzman start creating the character Elphaba?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

We began by working on the structure of her story, by asking ourselves what does she want, how does she go about trying to get it, what are her obstacles, and how does the journey and the relationships she forms along the way change her? We decided too that she was smart and impulsive, and those two characteristics affected how she responded to events.

Question:

What is the influence of the music on the characterization of Elphaba?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I would state it the other way -- the character of Elphaba influenced her music -- its energy, passion, and high emotionality -- because that's how her character felt to me in music.

Question:

What else would you like to share about (the creation of) the character Elphaba?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

For some reason, the character of Glinda was easier for Winnie to write initially than for me, so her dialogue informed how I wrote music and lyrics for Glinda. Conversely, with Elphaba, I seemed to have a more immediate feel for her than Winnie, so she was first created more in the songs, and how she spoke developed from that.

### **SECTION 3 – MUSICAL AND NOVEL**

#### **WICKED from book to musical**

Question:

I am writing my senior thesis paper on the book and adapted musical Wicked. I had a few questions I hoped you could answer for me that I may include in my paper. I realize you have a very busy schedule but any help you could provide would be very much appreciated and I thank you in advance for your time.

My paper is based on the transition the story has taken from book to play. My thesis states that their elements lost in the play that the book provided, such as social and racial issues. My questions for you are as follows:

1. Why was it decided that the music and story would change from a politically radical story to a more of a fairytale?
2. What concerns did the author of the book, Gregory Maguire, have about the music?
3. Do you think the play would not have been as popular and successful if it had kept to its literary roots and stayed a politically motivated piece?
4. As a composer, do you feel the transition was a positive or negative turn for Maguire's story?
5. How close did you work with Gregory Maguire and Winnie Holzman and did their opinions affect some of the songs? If so, could you provide me with an example?
6. Which do you think presents a more powerful story: the book or play?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thank you for your interest in WICKED. I will try to respond to your questions in a way that may be helpful to you, but I must tell you from the outset, I disagree with your premise that the show has changed from "a politically radical story to more of a fairytale." I think that is demonstrably untrue.

Certain specifics have been changed from the book, but I would argue that the show is still basically political in its content.

Among the specifics that changed: Oz in the book is essentially a totalitarian state, and the Wizard rules by fear, aided by his secret police force. In the show, the Wizard is more manipulative, pretending to be doing things for the good of Oz and to be subjugating the Animals for the greater good, but it becomes clear through the course of the evening that he is doing these things only to remain in power, and that his scapegoating of the Animals (pun intended) is because "one sure way to bring people together is to give them a really good enemy". In fact, it may be argued that the Wizard in Gregory's book is somewhat like Hitler, whereas the Wizard in the show has resemblances to George W. Bush and other American politicians. This doesn't make the show less political; it merely makes it different in its political targets.

What social and racial issues have been lost? Oz in the show is still a place where one "race", the Animals, is being systematically deprived of its rights; the Animal story in the show still has strong elements of Jews in Nazi Germany or minority races in the United States. Consider the lyrics to the song "Wonderful", which contains sections like "A man's called a traitor, or liberator; a rich man's a thief or philanthopist; is one a crusader or ruthless invader? It's all in which label is able to persist. There are precious few at ease with moral ambiguities, so we act as though they don't exist." If that's not socio-political content, I'm not sure what is.

Also, the central character of Elphaba clearly has her political conscience and consciousness raised in the show -- as she becomes aware of the plight of the Animals, fighting the injustice being done to this "race" becomes her central cause, so much so that when she finds out the Wizard is behind the injustice, she sacrifices her own personal goals to become his implacable enemy. In effect, as in the book, she becomes a revolutionary. Whereupon her behavior is "spun" by the Wizard's press representative to convince the populace that she is an enemy of the state. Again, that seems like political content to me.

Yes, specific story changes were made -- the show concentrates more on the personal relationship between Elphaba and Glinda and how they influence one another, and the fun of learning where all the familiar Wizard of Oz icons come from (the ruby slippers, winged monkeys, etc.) is more prevalent in the show than in Gregory's book. These were emphasized partly because of the difference in story-telling demands between a full-length novel and a two-and-a-half hour musical (the show has to be more focused in its story-telling) and partly because of the personal taste of Winnie and myself. But it was absolutely never our intention to minimize the social and political content of the story nor to turn it into more of a fairy-tale, and if that is how it comes off to you, than we have failed as writers (fortunately, there are many other people who do see political content in the show.)

In answer to a couple of your other specific questions: Gregory did not have much to do with the writing of the show, so he did not express any concerns to me about any of the music or lyrics. He attended an early reading of the show and had some story suggestions, many of which Winnie and I took. When I expressed my concern that he might be disturbed by some of the story changes we had made, he said no, that he felt the show was true to the underlying spirit and content of his book and that many of the specific choices we had made were ones he felt were implied in the book anyway. He did attend several out-of-town performances, but did not to my knowledge express any concerns about the book, music, or lyrics at that time.

Winnie did have a great deal of influence on the songs (as I did on the script), since she and I worked very closely together. Two specific examples of that would be that the title of the song "For Good" was something Winnie came up with during a brainstorming conversation we had, and the concept for the song "What is This Feeling?" (a hate-at-first-sight song) was Winnie's.

I hope these responses will be of some use to you for your paper, despite the fact that I take issue with its central premise. In any event, I wish you the best with it.

Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

### **Political Undertones in Wicked**

Question:

I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about the political aspect of Wicked. I've heard everything from a criticism of the Bush administration to the Vietnam War. Also, how much of the politics came from Gregory Maguire, how much you, how much from Winnie Holzman and how much from Joe Mantello.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz 5/5/05

As pointed out in my previous response [see answers under **WICKED from book to musical**], we were all very conscious of the political aspect of WICKED. Certainly the original impetus for this came from Gregory Maguire and his book, and the story about the gradual depriving of the Animals of their rights is straight from Gregory. It is clear that this is based on the scapegoating of minority groups as societies descend into totalitarianism in order to bolster those in power. While Gregory's book most clearly evokes Jews in the Germany of the 30's, one might argue that the current scapegoating of gay people by members of America's ruling party falls into the same category. The political tone of Gregory's book is, I think, most clearly captured in the scene with the lion cub in which Dillamond loses his teaching position.

As to Winnie's and my contributions, she and I share similar a similar political and social philosophy, and thus the way the Wizard is written in the show comes more or less equally from us. Joe Mantello had little to do with the political point of view of the show, not because he doesn't have strong convictions but because that wasn't really his job. However, certain design elements (the distracting glitter of Emerald City, the handsome militaristic uniforms of the Ozian guards, the false showmanship of the Wizard's chamber which conceals the giant cage) have strong political overtones, and those certainly came from Joe in collaboration with Eugene Lee and Susan Hilferty.

As in all musicals, the final show is a collaboration and everyone contributed to every aspect, including the political content. I hope this answer addresses your question, and thanks for your interest.

Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

### **Fiyeerrooo!**

Question:

Hi Stephen, Been a long time Wicked (the book) fan. When my friend introduced me to it and I subsequently devoured it we spent many hours discussing the book, wondering for instance just how significant the Clock of the Time Dragon was, how, when speaking aloud did one distinguish between Animals and animals...As well as we discussed how interesting a project it would be to make it into a musical. So when we heard it was happening we were thrilled and filled with trepedation...so many ways to screw up...we were terrified for the results. Please be good! PLEASE be GOOD. And I have to say the music has definitely grown on me.

I wasn't sure WHAT to think until I found a plot synopsis online which helped immensely...and for the most part I love the choices made. Now it's pretty much playing nonstop and I've GOT to get myself to New York at some point to see it live with Kristin and Idina. I've heard so much about Defying Gravity I've got to see it just for THAT.

I do have a question about Fiyero or rather a request for an explanation. I'm curious what sort of evolution Fiyero went through when you were developing the musical. In the book he is a quiet shy prince from the Vinkus...a touch of the foreign upon him with his blue diamond tattoos...(one of my favorite lines from the book was describing Fiyero and Elphaba together...`blue diamonds on fields of green.')

Initially Fiyero seems just as quiet and baffled and out of phase with the world as Elphaba while at University together. He's never once in Galinda's radar. And later, he is more at ease with himself, more comfortable with his role of prince of the Vinkus and definitely curious when he comes across Elphie in the Emerald City. They are a most unlikely pair...she a revolutionary and he a married prince diplomat.

I'm wondering how you took him from this shy prince and later Elphie's fated lover to this ...frat boy. The way he speaks and sings, he sounds cocky, smug, arrogant and a bit dim...which is what I guess you were going for. I'm wondering just WHAT Elphaba would see in him. His personality seems much more akin to Averick in the book. And while I haven't seen the musical...which I'm sure explains MUCH...again, I'm really curious as to the decisions to so change his character?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear "jatg": You are correct that the Fiyero character in the musical WICKED is more of a combination of Averick and Fiyero (and probably mostly Winnie Holzman's and my creation) than true to the Fiyero character in Gregory Maguire's book. There were many reasons we made this choice -- the importance of Fiyero to Glinda, for instance, which is vital to the plot of the show and, as you point out, doesn't occur in the book at all. Also, Fiyero ends up differently in the show than in the book, so the arc of his character growth necessitated starting him out differently. I'm pleased to say that Gregory Maguire has been very supportive of these changes, as he has throughout our adaptation process. (We did try those blue diamonds on Fiyero's face in San Francisco, but from the back of the house, it just looked as if his face was dirty, so we abandoned them.) Thanks for your interest. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

### **Yackle**

Question:

... Why didn't you put Yackle into the Wicked musical?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

...There are many characters and incidents in Gregory's novel that Winnie and I chose to omit from the musical. The character of Yackle didn't seem germane to our plot and structure, which as you know, is quite different from Gregory's.

### **Wicked and Wheelchair**

Question"

Was there some significance to bringing a wheelchair into Wicked? (besides just being a good story) As a wheelchair family, I was very pleased to see it was incorporated into their community. I was at the Danny Kaye playhouse tonight and loved hearing you talk and perform. Thank you

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

In Gregory Maguire's novel, Nessarose (Elphaba's sister) cannot walk. In the novel, she is born without arms, which impedes her balance. Winnie and I decided not to make her armless, but to make it still an important plot point that she is born unable to walk. Because Elphaba has always blamed herself for her sister's affliction, it fuels Elphaba's guilt, sense of obligation to Nessarose, and her sense of herself as a wicked person. It's very important psychologically. Plus (and I'm going to be careful here, because I don't want to spoil any plot surprises) it helps to explain the significance of the ruby slippers. Also, Winnie and I decided that the first magic we see Elphaba do should come from a strong emotional place for Elphaba -- so it should have to do with her sister, and thus we came up with the idea of using the wheelchair moment in the first Shiz University scene. I'm delighted to learn that the use of the wheelchair was of positive significance to you and your family. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

### **Staging Fantasy**

Question:

Dear Mr. Schwartz, Just wondered after your success of 'Wicked' what your views are on staging fantasy! In the entertainment industry in general at the moment: witches/wizards/magic/different worlds are really selling in all forms. It's what people generally seem to be really into. Looking at novels; Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings, the 'Discworld' series are really selling at the moment" and the translation into the film medium has increased the popularity of magic and indeed all other kinds of fantasy.

When you first began to think about adapting Wicked for the stage were you aware of this, and were you specifically looking for a fantasy/science fiction style book, or was the fact it was a fantasy novel a coincidence and it was more the plot/characters which appealed?

Also, I certainly find it curious that no-one else seems to have looked into adapting or writing more magical/fantastical works for the stage when it has seemed to be really quite popular with the public for the last decade. Obviously, it is crucial for the plot to be right for a book to be made into a musical and for the characters to translate well to the stage so finding the right novel/idea is critical-- and others that are suitable in the genre may be hard to find.

Does it surprise you that not many other composers have looked from this angle to find something that correlates to other forms of entertainment and has a similar feel to what the public are enjoying at the moment? As generating/adapting something with an element of magic/set in a fascinating/different world could potentially have a headstart in accessibility and appeal. I guess 'Wicked' had the added advantage that the book was well known, and perhaps of many other known fantasy works that interest the public, their scope for translation to the stage could be limited.

Would really be interested to know your thoughts on the above and whether you think fantasy is a relatively unexplored direction inhibited by technology in the past that it would be good to see other composers investigate. It's certainly clear from more recent shows that the technology is there now to support more ambitious settings and imaginations 20 fold more than even a decade ago. Do you think the risk of taking on shows that require a large budget & spectacle (and the possibility of this distracting from what actually matters to the audience in a musical) puts people off and so they pursue creating shows based in safer settings? Many thanks for your time! Alexo

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Alexo: You raise several interesting questions. I feel you were correct in observing "it is crucial for the plot to be right for a book to be made into a musical and for the characters to translate well to the stage so finding the right novel/idea is critical." I think one of the aspects that made WICKED work is that Gregory Maguire imagined a wonderful character in Elphaba and a great relationship in the friendship/rivalry between her and Glinda. Many fantasy novels lack these characteristics and are more picaresque "hero's journeys" in the Joseph Campbell mode. Stories like this are more suitable for movies than the musical stage, I feel. This is one reason it was so difficult for a successful musical to be made of "Lord of the Rings", as was recently tried in Canada, where despite an enormous special effects budget, the story itself was difficult to translate.

I'd also like to point out that in an odd way setting a musical in Oz is not such a fantasy, because Americans are so familiar with the movie "The Wizard of Oz", it seems a world we already know. Part of the fun of WICKED is trading on audiences' knowledge of the Wizard of Oz story, and it will be interesting to see if the show works in other countries where the original book and movie are less well-known. Our hope of course is that, as you say, the story and relationships in WICKED are compelling enough that the context is not overly significant, and I think that necessity applies to other potential "fantasy" musicals as well. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

#### **SECTION 4 – AFTER THE NY OPENING AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE SHOW**

##### **Changes after NY Opening**

Question: I was wondering if the final dance between Elphaba and the wizard at the end of 'Wonderful' was cut. Many people claim it was cut after the changes for London were made. Others claim it's still in the tour, other say it's only for "dancing" wizards (i.e. Joel Grey, Ben Vereen, David Garrison). If it was cut, why and what other changes have been made to the show. Thanks...

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

The dance for Elphaba and the Wizard was cut for the London production. But then, upon consideration, it seemed to all the collaborators that Elphaba probably was not gullible enough to get drawn into a dance with the Wizard, and so the London cut got put into all the productions.

Other changes made to the show since it opened in NY include:

1. An improved scene introducing Fiyero and Boq and leading into "Dancing Through Life".
2. An improved vocal and orchestrational ending to "Dancing Through Life".
3. An improved vocal intro to "One Short Day".
4. A better ending to Act Two, Scene Two (the Nessarose/Elphaba scene)
5. A better transition into Act Two, Scene Three which involves Elphaba seeing Fiyero and Glinda at the engagement ball and almost interrupting them.
6. A much improved scene between the Wizard and Elphaba leading into "Wonderful" and a better routing of "Wonderful" It just shows that one of the good things about theatre is that it's never frozen, one can always improve it (of course, one can always "disimprove" it too, which is one of the bad things.)

## **Wicked influence**

Question:

What, in your opinion, is the strongest influence Wicked has had upon the positive growth of the Broadway Musical as a whole?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I'm not sure I would make that sweeping a claim for the show, but I think the fact that this kind of show is a hit -- that is, a book musical which is not making fun of musicals in a "post-modern" way but simply trying to tell a compelling story about three-dimensional characters through the use of dialogue and songs -- may be encouraging to other writers who care about working in the form.

## **WICKED: Effect on Young People**

Question:

As much as adults love the musical Wicked, did you ever envision that it would have such a powerful effect on young people? That it would become such an integral part of youth culture?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

The short answer is no. I knew of course that I felt a powerful sense of identification with the character of Elphaba and that her struggle to reconcile remaining true to herself with her longing to fit into society resonated deeply with me. And in seeking out Winnie Holzman to collaborate with me, I knew she was someone whose work had shown a great understanding of the inner life of young people, particularly young women, such as in "My So-Called Life", the television show she created. But then both Winnie and I concentrated on trying to create the best show we could and tell the story that was most meaningful to us. We never thought about the impact it might have on an audience, or a segment of the audience such as young people. In retrospect, it's clear that because the leading characters are young, essentially school-aged girls and boys, and because the issues they're dealing with -- popularity, trying to fit in, personal integrity, pleasing one's parents, etc. -- are ones that young people face daily, it speaks very directly to them. But it wasn't something we were conscious of when writing the show.

## **WICKED: Theater Hall of Fame Induction - David Stone's "most prized possession"**

POSTED BY — Harry Haun (Playbill) January 2010

Thought you might find this story interesting. David Stone's introduction of Stephen Schwartz at the Theater Hall of Fame Induction:

... the only tunesmith to have three Broadway shows run longer than 1,900 performances was very much in attendance in the theatre's rotunda: Stephen Schwartz, author of The Magic Show, Pippin and the Gershwin's current tenant (which is nearing close to its 2,600th performance), Wicked. (Lloyd Webber and Rodgers & Hammerstein placed second to Schwartz's singular distinction, with two mighty shows a piece that ran well over 1,900 performances.)

Two very contented Wicked producers, Marc Platt and David Stone, presented Schwartz to the assemblage. Stone even shared with the audience his "most prized possession" which still adorns the wall of his office, properly framed.

"It's a note left on my desk, hand-written by Stephen after a particularly bloody day of pre-production,"

he declared. "It says: 'David, I don't want to do this show. I quit. You can use my score, but take my name off it, please. Do not call me. Speak from now on to Nancy Rose only. Goodbye, Stephen Schwartz.'" Then, turning to the honoree, he added with delight: "Stephen, thanks for waiting the whole five minutes before walking back into my office. Tens of millions of people are so glad you did."...

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

The book "Defying Gravity: The Creative Career of Stephen Schwartz, from Godspell to Wicked" includes 150 pages on the making of Wicked, and is based on interviews with Stephen Schwartz during and after the show's development, as well as interviews with Joe Mantello, Winnie Holzman, Gregory Maguire, the producers, and others. The appendix to the book includes a copy of Schwartz's original outline for the musical from 1998. <http://www.DefyingGravityTheBook.com>

See also

<http://www.musicalschwartz.com/wicked-history.htm>

DVDs: The documentary ShowBusiness and also PBS Broadway the American Musical both include sections on the making of Wicked.