

Review: Wicked the Musical



I suspect most of the audience at the Edinburgh Playhouse last night to see *Wicked – The Untold Story of the Witches of Oz* – had watched the classic film *The Wizard of Oz*, which made a star of Judy Garland in 1939. I'm one of the few people who hasn't seen that film, but it mattered not as the musical is akin to a prequel to the original story and is based on the 1995 Gregory Maguire novel, '*Wicked: The Life and times of the Wicked Witch of the West*'.

The musical tells the story of Glinda – the goodie – and Elphaba, the 'baddie' and how this unlikely pairing become friends.

The two main characters are, naturally, the stars of the show. Helen Woolf gives a fine performance as Glinda but the absolute star of the show, for me, was Amy Ross who plays Elphaba. Ross, star of stage shows such as *Kinky Boots* and *Mamma Mia!* and television shows such as *Hope and Glory* has a real presence about her as well as a powerful voice which entranced the near sell-out crowd at the Edinburgh Playhouse.

One of the many interesting aspects about this show is that

while Elphaba is the witch you would usually cast as the villain, she is portrayed here as something of a heroine as she frees flying monkeys and tries to help Doctor Dillamond, the history teacher who is really a goat but who is ousted from his job and cast into the wilderness in his natural habitat.

Dillamond is played by Steven Pinder, perhaps best known as Max Farnham in the Channel 4 soap opera *Brookside*. Pinder also plays the part of The Wonderful Wizard of Oz.

There's a kindness about Elphaba that draws you to her character and you feel for her throughout the show.

The songs are hugely impressive. *No One Mourns the Wicked*, *Defying Gravity* and *As Long as You Are Mine* are showstoppers

If you like your musicals to be emotional then *Wicked* won't disappoint you. It plays on the heartstrings from an early stage with touching scenes which will bring a tear to your eye but also laced with lots of humour and some 'laugh out loud' moments.

As impressive as Amy Ross, Helen Woolf and Steven Pinder are, the production of the show is what particularly impressed me. The costumes, lighting, direction and special effects are quite stunning and does the production team huge credit. It's not difficult to see why the show has been such a nationwide success and the standing ovation given by the hugely appreciative audience at the Playhouse on Wednesday evening said it all. My only note of contention was that, at 90 minutes, perhaps Act 1 was a tad too long with Act 2 just an hour. But that's just a minor gripe.

The best way I can describe *Wicked* is it is outstanding entertainment. Get a ticket if you can – you'll be glad you did.

Wicked is on at the Edinburgh Playhouse until Saturday 9th

June 2018. Tickets [here.](#)

Edinburgh Reporter rating: ****