

WICKED

Music and Lyrics by Stephen Schwartz
Broadway Across America and Seven Venues
May 13-May 31, 2009
For tickets call 757-671-8100

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large.

Every cushion of the 2500 seats in Chrysler Hall was covered by a human body on the opening night of "Wicked." The occupants for the most part were on the "youngish" side. Using words like "great" and "awesome" a lot, they were ecstatic about being in Oz. They screamed and cheered after nearly every line and after each musical number by Stephen Schwartz. I found it hard to distinguish one song from another. The lyrics are totally lost thanks to a big decibel sound system that makes the Oceana Jets seem like mere whispers from the heavens.

There's no dancing, just musical walk-about's staged by Wayne Cilento. What you really remember above all else are Kenneth Posner's beyond spectacular lighting and Eugene Lee's magnificent machine-like settings that move and carry on amidst lots of smoke, bubbles and flying monkeys. Susan Hilferty's costumes are sparkly confections. There is huge dragon over the proscenium. It's like Tevye's third stair case that goes no where. It's just for show as best I can tell.

Winnie Holtzman's sometimes witty book is hard to follow, maybe because of the distorted sound. Simply put the plot is concerned with two girls in Oz who are room mates at an institution that is sort of like Harry Potter's Hogwarts College. One, Elphaba, born with green skin, becomes the Wicked Witch of the West. The other is Glinda who is the Good Witch. We also learn a lot about that old wonderful wizard of Oz along the way.

This is the second national tour of "Wicked" which is approaching a six year run on Broadway. This company is made up of first rate highly skilled performers. Marcie Dodd as Elphaba comes directly from playing this wicked witch in the New York production. She is vocally commanding with a vivid stage personality that shines through her verdant pigmentation. Good witch Helene Yorke has a multi-octave voice and well honed comedic skills. Her rendition of a tune called "Popular" was a high point of the evening for me. As Madame Morrible, Marilyn Caskey, the head mistress of

the college, is most entertaining. So is Tom McGowan as The Wonderful Wizard of Oz. His songs are the only ones where one can actually understand the lyrics. The remaining members of the large company are uniformly spirited and pleasing.

“Wicked” has by no means been a favorite of critics. Nonetheless devoted audiences have made it a major hit in the annals of Broadway long runs. As for me, I prefer my green witches to be terrifyingly wicked and my good ones to be undiluted by trite shallowness in their protection.

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I’ll see you at the next opening.