



November 10, 2008



## *Bert is the Wizard*

Bert Newton has won the role of the Wizard in **WICKED**.

'I am overjoyed to be working with Bert again,' Producer John Frost said today. 'This will be the fourth musical we have done together. Bert has tremendous star quality of course, but he also brings so much happiness - on both sides of the footlights - to any show he appears in.'

And Bert Newton said: 'The Wizard is a complex challenging role. He's a charismatic, seductive man who says he just wants to make people happy. He may even believe it, but the truth is much darker.'

'I feel privileged to take this role, one Rob Guest memorably created for the Australian production of **WICKED**. Rob was a close mate, we played opposite each other in The Sound of Music, and we had a lot of fun together.'

'I'm looking forward to joining a terrific cast in the musical of the decade.'

*'The Wizard will see you now!'*

FOR INTERVIEWS AND FURTHER INFORMATION: SUZIE HOWIE,  
HOWIE & TAYLOR PUBLICITY PH: 0416 066 507 E: SUZIE@HOWIETAYLOR.COM.AU

[www.wickedthemusical.com.au](http://www.wickedthemusical.com.au)



Since television began in Australia, Bert Newton, with his twin talents as a natural comedian and compere, has been a favourite with the viewing public, visiting celebrities and critics alike. During a visit to Australia in 1983, Bob Hope said of Bert, "Personally, he is a fine man. Professionally, he is one of the best television performers I've ever seen."

His remarkable career has been recognised by the awarding of 18 Logies including 5 Gold Logies. In 2006 and 2007 Bert was again nominated for Gold Logies.

For his radio work, Bert received the Inaugural Grand Pater in 1982. At 3UZ he won the Pater for the Most Popular Radio Personality. In 1988 he was awarded the Pater for the Year's Best Radio Special, 3DB: The First 60 Years. This program also received a citation at the 1988 New York Radio Festival.

His dedicated professionalism was acknowledged with an MBE from Queen Elizabeth II in 1979, for services to the Performing Arts. In June 2006, Bert was awarded an AM, Member of the Order of Australia for service to the entertainment industry.

He made his radio debut at age 11 on 3XY. When he left school, St Joseph's Marist Brothers in North Fitzroy, Bert was given a full-time job with 3XY. Impressed by his talent and enthusiasm, the management put him on air as an announcer. He was 15 years of age!

Bert attracted the attention of the Seven Network prior to television arriving in Australia and was signed up for The Late Show. Bert's opposition was Graham Kennedy. In March 1959 they ceased being rivals and teamed up on Channel Nine. It was the start of an historic partnership that viewers were to love when the inimitable team were In Melbourne Tonight.

In 1975 Bert and Don Lane combined in the highest rating national tonight show in Australia's history The Don Lane Show.

Theatrically Bert has appeared in the title role of two productions of The Wizard of Oz, with Tamsin West, Nikki Webster, Nancye Hayes, Pamela Rabe and his wife Patti Newton.

In 1999/ 2000 he was Uncle Max in The Sound of Music with Lisa McCune, Rachael Beck, Anne Wood, John Waters and dear friend Rob Guest. In 2004/2005 Bert played Franz Liebkind in Mel Brooks' New Musical The Producers.

For 14 years he was the face of morning television on the Ten Network's Good Morning Australia with Bert Newton.

In 2006 Bert returned to the Nine Network after 20 years and hosts the top rating '20 to 1. Bert and Patti have been married for almost 35 years. Their son is the accomplished actor/director Matthew Newton and their television presenter daughter Lauren is married to champion Australian swimmer Matt Welsh. The newest member of the family is their baby son Sam Albert who is the apple of this Wizard's eye!

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**WICKED**, which had its Australian premiere at the Regent Theatre on July 12, is the biggest theatre hit of the decade. A breathtaking musical that manages to be comic, dramatic and moving, **WICKED** is the untold story of the witches of Oz.

Long before Dorothy drops in, two other girls meet in the land of Oz. One, born with emerald green skin, is smart, fiery and misunderstood. The other is beautiful, ambitious and very popular.

**WICKED** tells the story of their remarkable odyssey, how these two unlikely friends grow to become the Wicked Witch of the West and Glinda the Good Witch.

**WICKED**, with (music and lyrics) by Stephen Schwartz (Godspell, Pippin, Academy Award-winner for Pocahontas and The Prince of Egypt) and book by Winnie Holzman (My So Called Life, Once And Again and thirtysomething) is Produced by Marc Platt, Universal Pictures, The Araca Group, Jon B Platt and David Stone.

In Australia, John Frost, Co-Producer of the Australian production of **WICKED**, is joined by the U.S. creative team, Lisa Leguillo (Associate Director); Stephen Oremus (Musical Supervisor); Mark Myars (Dance Supervisor); and Corinne McFadden-Herrera (Dance Assistant).

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