The premise of Wicked is that you have not been told the whole story about the land of Oz. It encourages you to look at things very differently by exploring the themes of friendship, trust and tolerance, the use of propaganda and the manipulation of public opinion. Was the Wicked Witch of the West really wicked? Was Glinda the Good really so good? Why was the Lion so cowardly? How did the Tin Man lose his heart and the Scarecrow his brain? And why did the Wicked Witch of the West want the jewelled shoes so much?

Wicked sets out to explore all of this and more. The musical is often described as a ‘prequel’ to the Wizard of Oz but in fact the story takes place before, simultaneously and after the familiar Oz tale. It has been described as creating ‘a parallel universe to that of the Wizard of Oz’ and a ‘re-imagining of the same world’ that looks at things very differently.

Prior learning / Preparation

A useful list of resources is provided in the Background & Lesson Plan section of wickedthemusicaleducation.com.au. A useful starting point is to clarify pupil knowledge of the Wizard of Oz story (either as a novel or a film) so that they can draw parallels and fully engage with the moral context of the Wicked story as it explores the differences between right and wrong, good and evil (or “wicked”).

Accompanying notes provide information about the background to the creation of the musical and the themes and messages contained within the story. Many of the suggested activities would be best left until after students have seen the performance. There are some activities designed to introduce students to the characters, themes and plot and others designed for students who have some understanding of the show.
Whisked away from Kansas by a swirling tornado, Dorothy’s house crushes the Wicked Witch of the East when it lands in the dazzling world of Oz. Glinda the Good Witch gives Dorothy the dead witch’s jewelled slippers and sends her off along the yellow brick road which leads to the Wizard’s Kingdom. Along the way she is joined by a scarecrow with no brain, a tin man without a heart and a lion that lacks courage, each of them believing that the Wizard can give them what they want most in life.

When they reach the Emerald City, the Wizard explains they must kill the Wicked Witch of the West before he will grant their wishes. They overcome many dangerous challenges and dispose of the witch (although quite by accident), and return only to find that the Wizard has no real powers. Disappointed, they set off again, this time to find the Good Witch who helps Dorothy return home, thanks to something she had all along – the jewelled slippers.

**SYNOPSIS OF WICKED**

*Wicked* begins with the death of the Wicked Witch of the West. Through flashback, we learn from Glinda* that the two witches, Glinda and the Wicked Witch of the West, whose real name is Elphaba, are old University friends who disliked each other intensely when they first met. Glinda is beautiful, spoilt and popular while Elphaba is inconveniently green-skinned.

Elphaba is never afraid to stand up for what she believes to be right and demonstrates strong values. On a visit to Oz, she and Glinda discover that the Wizard is corrupt. Despite this revelation, Glinda is tempted by the Wizard’s invitation to join his administration, but Elphaba refuses and vows to fight the Wizard’s injustice. Concerned that Elphaba might use her natural talent for sorcery against him, the Wizard uses propaganda to turn the people of Oz against her, denouncing her as the ‘Wicked Witch of the West’. A hunt begins and Elphaba is forced into hiding.

Glinda is left battling with her conscience, realising that Elphaba has had the strength to stand by what is right. When the people of Oz hear that a ‘female child’ has killed the Wicked Witch, Glinda announces that all is now well but secretly she mourns her lost friend and vows to do ‘good’.

* NB Galinda becomes “Glinda” in the first act of *Wicked* due to Doctor Dillamond’s inability to pronounce “Galinda”. You will see references to both throughout these materials.
LUCY DURACK on playing Galinda/Glinda:

“Galinda, later to become Glinda the Good, has led a sheltered and lovely life where she is the most special, pretty and popular person she knows, and I’m sure has been told this by all around her. She believes in good and people respond to her in a very strong way without her having to do much. I think it’s important to remember that she is always trying to do good, she just sometimes has a strange way of going about it.

She initially has a tendency to get carried away with the fun, frivolous, privileged and shallow lifestyle she is able to live and doesn’t yet understand true goodness. She arrives at Shiz having never had to think much about where her actions might leave her or those around her.

Glinda feels a strange sense of loathing toward Elphaba when she first meets her, I think partly due to jealousy of the attention Elphaba gets and also for the fact that Elphaba has real magical powers whilst, apart from important social powers, Glinda does not, I also think it’s perhaps a subconscious thing as it is a time of change in the consciousness of Glinda, she is beginning a journey of self discovery, responsibility and what it really means to be good.

Through her amazing friendship with Elphaba, she opens herself up to a lot more of what life has to offer, the good and the bad and she eventually harnesses her natural gift of popularity to take responsibility and really look after the citizens of Oz as best she can. Glinda is an extremely multi-faceted and well written character, making her a constant joy to play as there is always something new to learn about her and I’m always kept happily challenged.”

JEMMA RIX on playing Elphaba:

“Elphaba was born with green skin and because of this she is unfairly treated and judged, even by her own father. This causes her to be very sensitive about her skin colour. She is super intelligent, has a dry sense of humour and has so much care and compassion for everything and everyone in the land of Oz.

When Elphaba discovers that what she thought was a quirk is actually a magical talent, she has the opportunity to meet The Wonderful Wizard Of Oz. However, she soon finds out he is creating segregation in the land and she does not want to be a part of it. She is then cast out of society and labelled “The Wicked Witch Of The West”. Even though she was standing up for what is right, the details are twisted so that the Ozians believe she is truly “Wicked”.

Glinda is the only friend she ever had and through this friendship they both learn from each other and change for the better. Playing this role is a dream come true. With such a beautiful story and stunning music, I feel very lucky to be part of this amazing show.”
BERT NEWTON on playing The Wizard (2008-2012):

“This is the third time I have played the Wizard – I played it twice in Wizard of Oz. WICKED is a different show with more light and shade, and because of this, the character itself has many colours. He is a lovable wizard but there’s more to him than we’ve ever seen before. In WICKED, the Wizard has much more bi-play with Glinda and Elphaba, and that helps to define the character of the Wizard much more than how he has been seen in previous productions.”

MAGGIE KIRKPATRICK on playing Madame Morrible:

“Playing Madame Morrible is probably one of the more complex roles in musical theatre where roles/characters tend to be one dimensional. Morrible is not all that she seems; we first see her as a fairly pleasant, bossy Headmistress, Head of Sorcery, at Shiz University. She herself has limited powers but is desperate to find other people with powers that she can manipulate, so in that regard, she is a manipulative person, highly ambitious and seeking great power for herself and for The Wizard. So when Elphaba comes along with her extraordinary power, she is determined to harness it to use it for her own good or evil. Morrible is terribly limited in her own magical powers; she can control the weather but that’s about it and perhaps a few spells in the Grimmerie. She changes from being a relatively pleasant person in the beginning to becoming quieter, stronger and not so much evil as highly manipulative of Glinda in the Second Act, leading to her downfall.”

STEVE DANIELSEN on playing Fiyero:

“Fiyero is a young Prince from Winkie Country. He is a party boy who tries to convince everyone not to take life too seriously, or to ‘Dance Through Life’. The song line ‘Those who don’t try never look foolish’ epitomises his state of mind. What I love about Fiyero is the change he goes through – a change most people can relate to – developing more maturity and realising what is more important in life. We see him grow and stand up for what he believes in, making sacrifices along the way for other people and for his relationship with Elphaba. What’s great is that there is more to Fiyero than he even realises.”
CHARACTER PROFILES

EMILY CASCARINO on playing Nessarose:
“Nessarose is the wheel-chair bound, younger sister of Elphaba Thropp. Sheltered by her father, and with her protective older sister as her only company, Nessa’s initial motive and drive is to impress and make friends at Shiz. This is quite often interrupted by Elphaba’s antics and outrageous behaviour, embarrassing Nessa and shaming her reputation.

Whilst at Shiz, Nessa falls in love with Munchkinlander Boq, who leads her to believe he loves her in return. Unfortunately, in time, Nessa discovers that Boq is feigning love out of loyalty to Galinda and his promise of love to her. Nessa’s outrage and hopeless jealousy destroys her, and pushes away all those whom she loves. She is left scared, desperate and very much alone.”

EDWARD GREY on playing Boq:
“Like many characters in this wonderful show, we first meet the bright-eyed and optimistic Munchkin Boq as a student at Shiz University where he falls instantly for Galinda. Unfortunately for him, his love for her is never reciprocated. In order to stave off his affections, and so that she isn’t distracted in her pursuit of Fiyero, Galinda sets Boq up with Nessarose. In the second act, Boq works reluctantly in the service of Nessarose in her capacity as Governor of Munchkinland. We learn that she has been misusing her authority, which has lead to Boq’s disdain for her. His transformation from a naïve student to a heartbroken man is a sad one but enjoyable for me as an actor to play.”

GLEN HOGSTROM on playing Doctor Dillamond:
“After many years of sharing his passion for history and learning with generations of Ozian students, Doctor Dillamond becomes one of the last in a long tradition of Animal professionals who hold positions of power and trust throughout the land. Elphaba watches as modern powers subjugate and strip the last remaining Animals of their standing, driving her to champion their cause, starting her own major journey through life. Doctor Dillamond represents honesty, truth and beloved folklore, and his plight mirrors that of any oppressed race in times throughout history and the modern day.”