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Making the most of your life

Magic of 'Wicked' is not to be missed

By JON W. SPARKS
Special to The Commercial Appeal

"Wicked" is an astonishing triumph, certainly one of the best productions ever to work its magic on the Orpheum stage.

The story of Oz before the disruptive arrival of Dorothy and Toto (mere pawns in a conspiracy!) brilliantly plays off our childhood love of the enduring "Wizard of Oz" film.

You immersed yourself in the cinematic adventures in and around the Emerald City; likewise, you will soak up the stage musical that is deliciously cinematic in its

own way. The clever tale shaped by composer Stephen Schwartz (and a winner of three Tony Awards) begins after Dorothy's fateful visit. Glinda the Good explains how Elphaba Thropp — better known as the Wicked Witch of the West — came to have such a poor reputation and met her liquid end.

The sheer energy of the show starts at the get-go, with Glinda descending among bubbles. Heléne Yorke is the frothy sorceress, a blend of Britney and "Clueless" who has a gorgeous voice and terrific comic timing.

As the eternally popular one at

school, she becomes roomies with Elphaba, who is green skinned, studious and gifted with magical abilities, and who repulses all who see her, even Munchkins. Marcie Dodd pulls off this role with an exquisite voice and compelling presence. You will not soon forget her ascension in "Defying Gravity" at the end of the first act, rising on the stage and stunningly lit.

That lighting effect is merely one example of the brilliant design of the production that is meticulously arranged to not only wow the audience, but also lure us

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THEATER REVIEW

"WICKED"

The show continues through July 12 at the Orpheum, 203 S. Main. Shows are 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays-Thursdays, 8 p.m. Fridays, 2 and 8 p.m. Saturdays and 1:30 and 7 p.m. Sundays. Tickets are \$38-\$138. Call 525-3000.

A day-of-performance lottery for a limited number of orchestra seats will be held daily, about 2½ hours prior to show for people present at the box office. Names will be drawn for a limited number of orchestra seats at \$25 each, cash only, with a limit of two tickets per person.

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further into the story.

The sets are storybook Victorian expressions of a culture not so foreign to us. The lighting transports us, whether to places of darkness or to the Emerald City. Costumes look like they came from a Bizarro Christmas Carol, vivid and melding into the

vehicles that frequently appear.

Everywhere you look or listen, there are more delights. Note the nods throughout to Harry Potter, "Beauty and the Beast," "Evita," "High School Musical" and "Chicago," which just add to the fun.

Orpheum president Pat Halloran announced before the show that 55,000 tickets had been sold out of 57,000 available.