

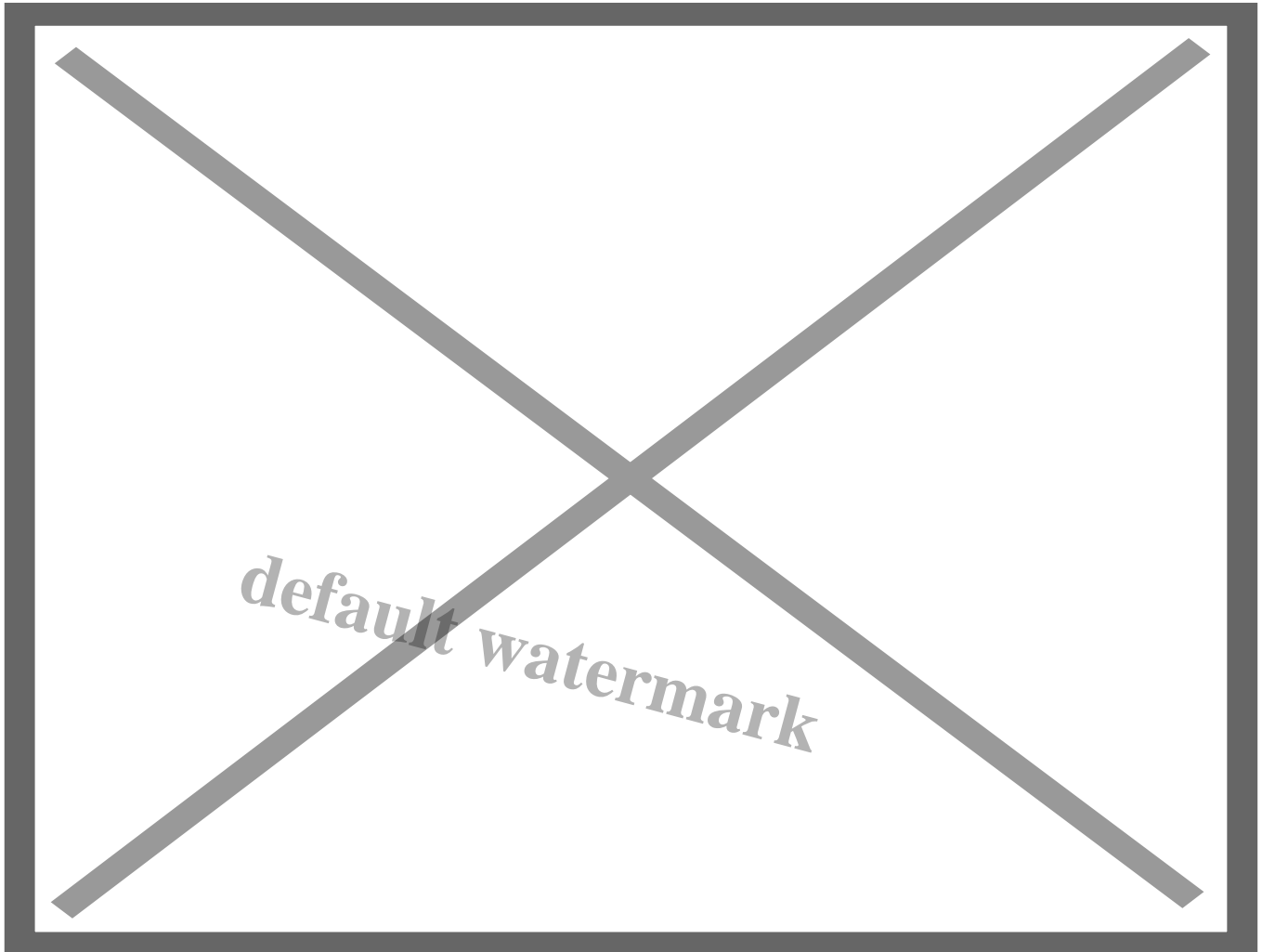


Wicked: Performance, Power, and the Manufacture of Truth

Description

Salt Lake City, UT • "Oh, it's good to see me, isn't it? No need to respond—that was rhetorical." So begins Glinda's sparkling entrance in *Wicked*, floating down in her bubble with practiced charm and theatrical poise. It's a quick laugh line—but also a quiet thesis. From its opening moments, *Wicked* foregrounds rhetoric not simply as speech, but as a mechanism of persuasion, perception, and power. The 2025 national tour, presented by Marc Platt, Universal Stage Productions, and David Stone, defies gravity as expected—but it also resists political complacency. Beneath the emerald spectacle lies a pointed allegory about narrative control, misinformation, and the ease with which public truth can be manufactured.

Since its 2003 Broadway debut, *Wicked* has become a global phenomenon—one of the highest-grossing productions in theatre history—but its endurance is not merely commercial. The musical persists because it continues to ask uncomfortable questions about how power operates, who controls stories, and what happens when dissent is branded as danger.



[Austen Danielle Bohmer](#), Photo Credit: Joan Marcus

“Gregory Maguire is an incredible novelist who created a very inspiring world! And even though we didn’t use all the little details of plot that Gregory had, we wanted people to feel like they were being told a real story—a story that takes you here and there, with high points, scary moments, and funny moments. To me, that’s novelistic.”

[WINNIE HOLZMAN, BOOK WRITER, p. 6](#)

Origins, Adaptation, and Cultural Power

Directed by [Joe Mantello](#), with music and lyrics by [Stephen Schwartz](#) and a book by [Winnie Holzman](#), *Wicked* is adapted from Gregory Maguire’s 1995 novel *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*, which reimagines *The Wizard of Oz* from the perspective of the witches. What remains largely subtextual in the novel—questions of charisma, authority, and moral legitimacy—becomes front-and-center social critique onstage. The musical form allows those tensions to surface with emotional immediacy, transforming interior conflict into public address.

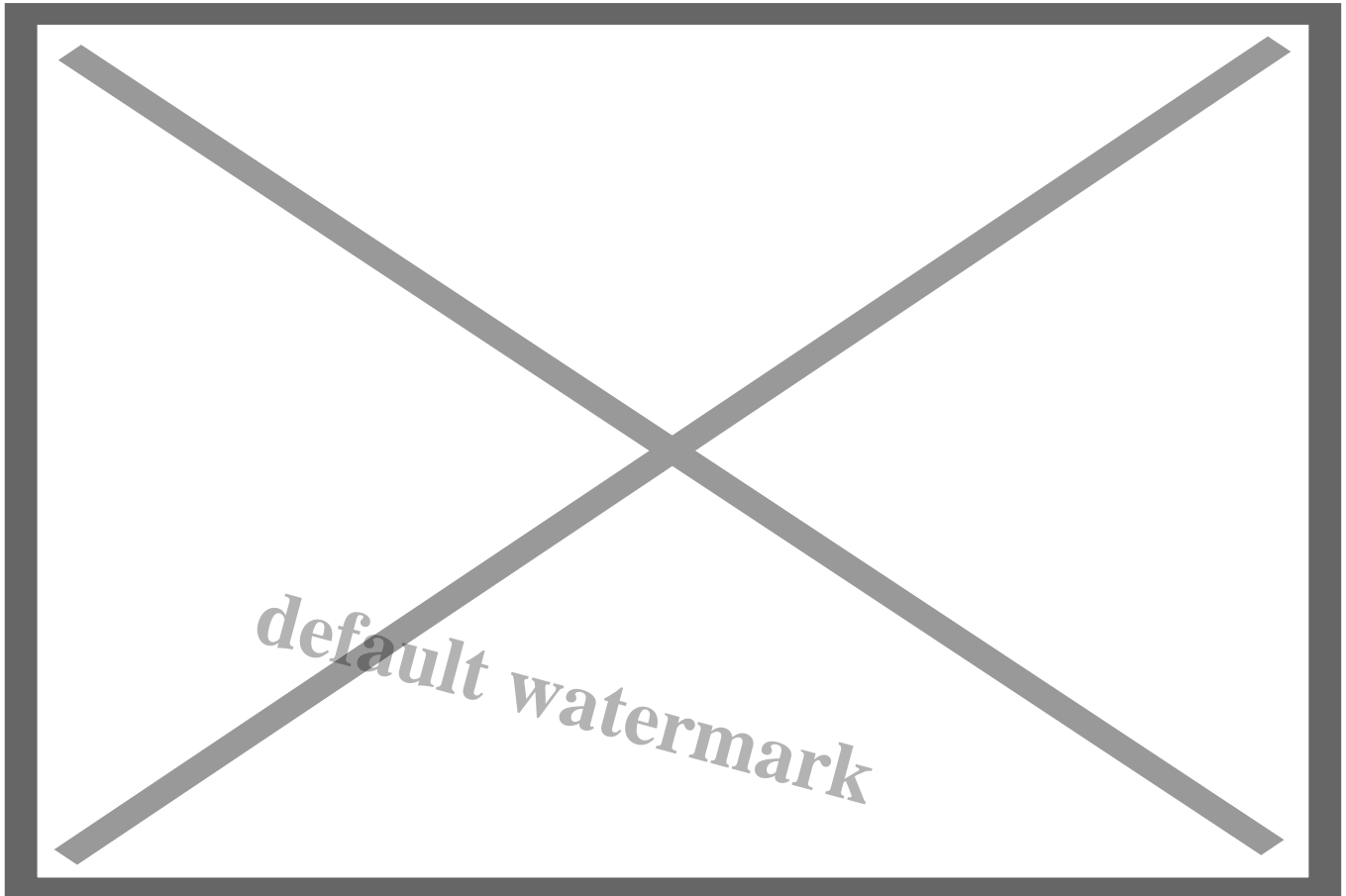
As producer [Marc Platt](#) has noted, “In a musical, a character can literally turn to the audience and sing about what he or she is feeling” (p. 6). That capacity for direct emotional articulation makes *Wicked* uniquely suited to interrogate how belief is shaped—not only through spectacle, but through language, repetition, and performance.

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[MARC PLATT, PRODUCER, p.6](#)

Premiering on Broadway in 2003, *Wicked* was an immediate sensation, propelled in part by the now-iconic performances of Kristin Chenoweth as Glinda and Idina Menzel as Elphaba. Since then, it has become one of the most successful musicals in Broadway history, ranking as the second-highest-grossing production of all time and one of the longest-running shows on record. Its cultural reach extends beyond the stage: the original cast recording won the 2005 Grammy Award for Best Musical Show Album and achieved Platinum certification, while songs like “Defying Gravity” and “Popular” have become enduring cultural touchstones across generations.

These milestones matter not simply as markers of popularity, but as evidence of *Wicked*’s sustained influence. Few musicals manage to balance spectacle with critique so effectively—or to remain politically legible decades after their debut. That durability is precisely what allows *Wicked* to continue functioning not just as entertainment, but as an argument

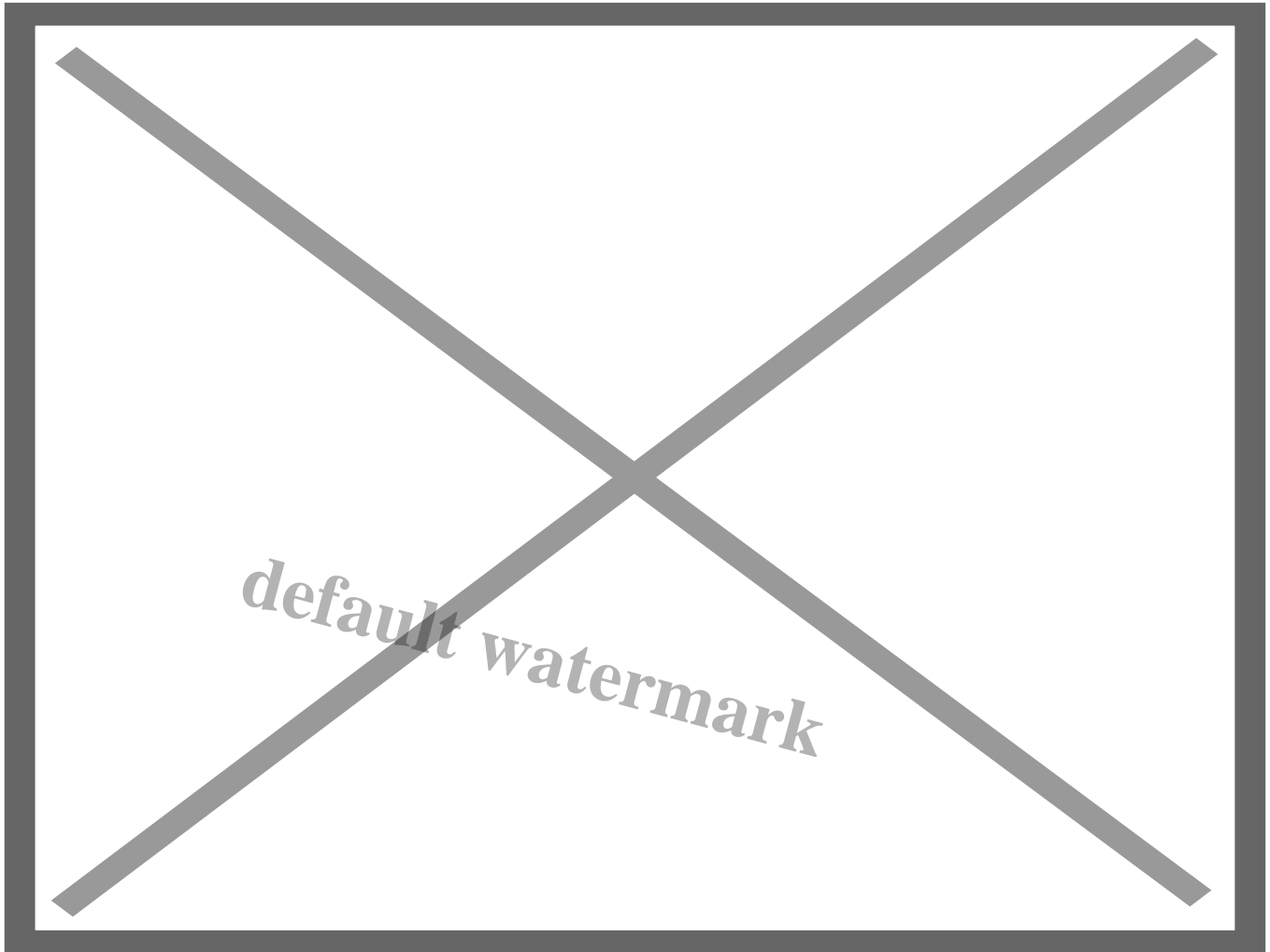


[Austen Danielle Bohmer](#) and [Lauren Samuels](#), Photo Credit: Joan Marcus

Performances: Voice, Vulnerability, and Moral Friction

The emotional immediacy of the current touring production rests squarely on its performances, which bring renewed urgency to the show's political undercurrents.

Lauren Samuels delivers a richly textured Elphaba, capturing the tension between idealism and alienation that defines the character. Her "Defying Gravity" is not only vocally thrilling but politically charged—less a triumphant anthem than a refusal to accept the terms of a system that marks curiosity and conscience as threats. Samuels's Elphaba is fierce without being hardened; her vulnerability remains visible even as she is pushed into exile.



[Alex Vinh](#) and Erica Ito, Photo Credit: Joan Marcus

Opposite her, Austen Danielle Bohmer’s Glinda balances precision, warmth, and unsettling charm. Her “Popular” lands with impeccable comedic timing, but it is in “For Good” that the role’s moral complexity comes fully into focus. Bohmer charts Glinda’s transformation with restraint, revealing how accommodation and silence can masquerade as kindness. The performance refuses to let Glinda off the hook, even as it preserves her humanity—an embodiment of how soft power operates most effectively when it feels benevolent.

Xavier McKinnon’s Fiyero provides an essential counterpoint, tracing a slower, riskier path toward moral clarity. Introduced as carefree and performatively detached, McKinnon resists playing Fiyero as mere charm or comic relief. His “Dancing Through Life” reads not as apathy, but as a learned survival strategy—an intentional refusal to look too closely at injustice. As Elphaba’s refusal to comply fractures that posture, McKinnon allows the awakening to register gradually. By the time Fiyero chooses resistance over comfort, the shift feels earned rather than romanticized, underscoring one of *Wicked*’s central claims: neutrality is itself a political position, and abandoning it carries real risk.

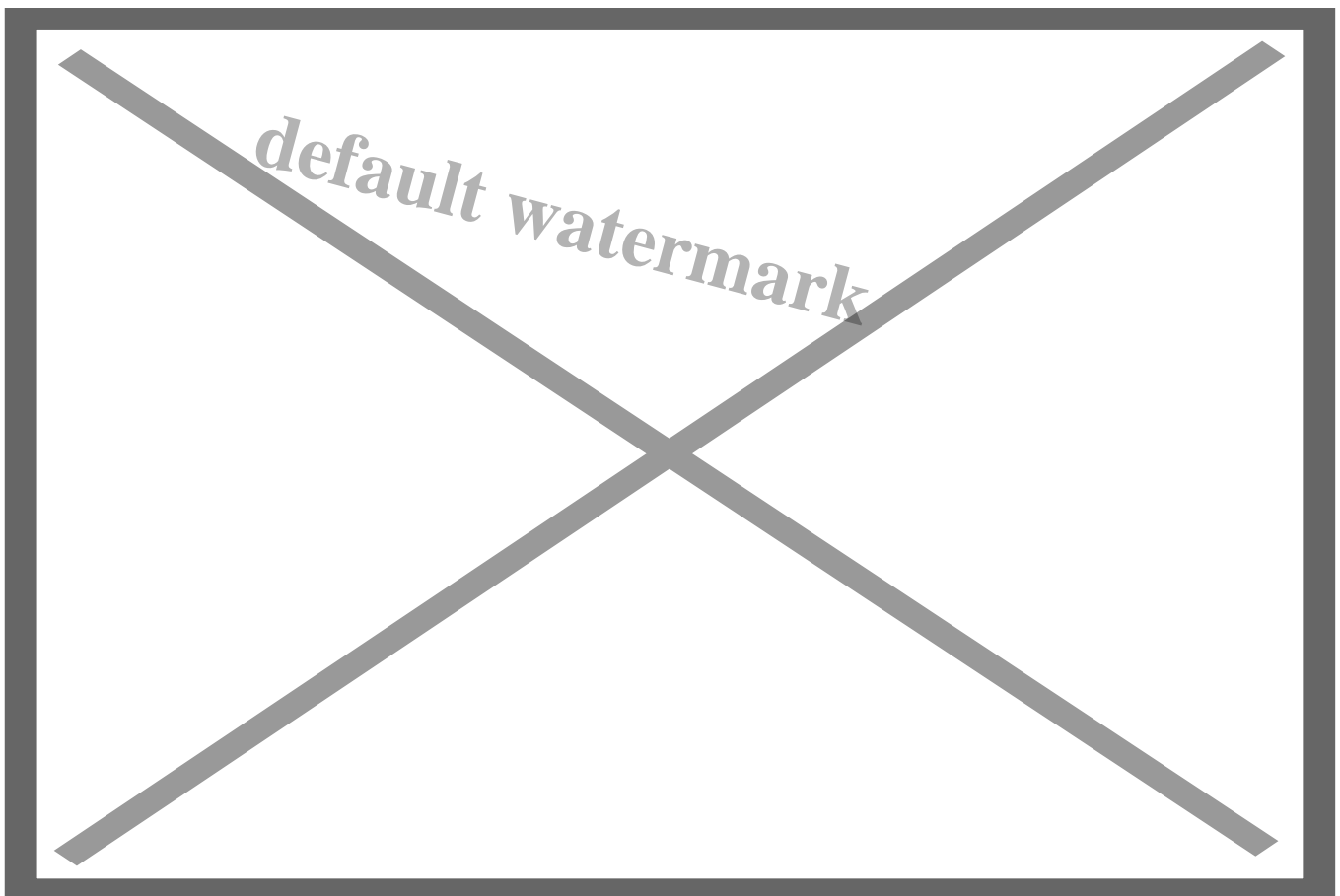


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Xavier McKinnon, Photo Credit: Joan Marcus

Erica Ito's Nessarose offers a quietly devastating study in how proximity to power corrodes good intentions. What begins as wounded dependency hardens into entitlement and cruelty, revealing how harm is often perpetuated not by grand villainy but by small, self-protective choices. Ito's performance underscores the production's insistence that oppression is sustained as much by beneficiaries as by architects.

Blake Hammond's Wizard completes this moral spectrum. Rather than leaning into overt menace, Hammond portrays a figure buoyed by charm, confidence, and an unshakable belief in his own benevolence. He does not see himself as a villain—and that self-certainty, untethered from truth or accountability, renders him far more dangerous than caricatured evil ever could.

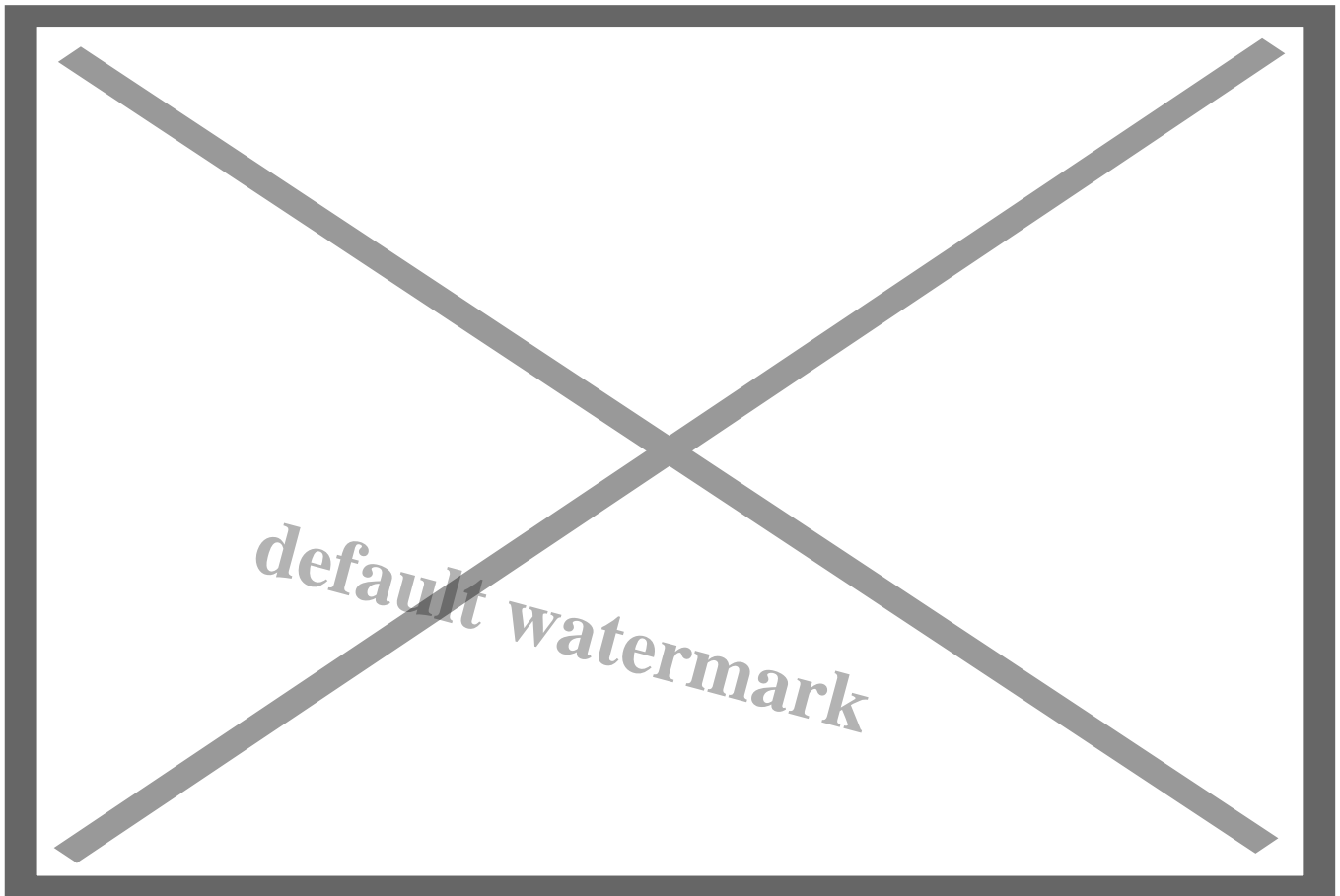


[Aymee Garcia](#), Photo Credit: Joan Marcus

The ensemble—including Alex Vinh (Boq), Aymee Garcia (Madame Morrible), Kingsley Leggs (Doctor Dillamond), Jennifer Mariela Bermeo, and Matt Densky—provides a kinetic pulse throughout the production. Wayne Cilento's choreography, particularly in "Dancing Through Life" and "One Short Day," amplifies Oz's contradictions: a society that moves beautifully while thinking very little.

Most devastating, however, is the silencing of the Animals. As their voices are stripped away, they are removed not only from citizenship but from public discourse itself. The loss is both literal and symbolic—without language, there can be no resistance. Doctor Dillamond's fate stands as a

warning about what happens when knowledge is framed as subversive and empathy as threat.

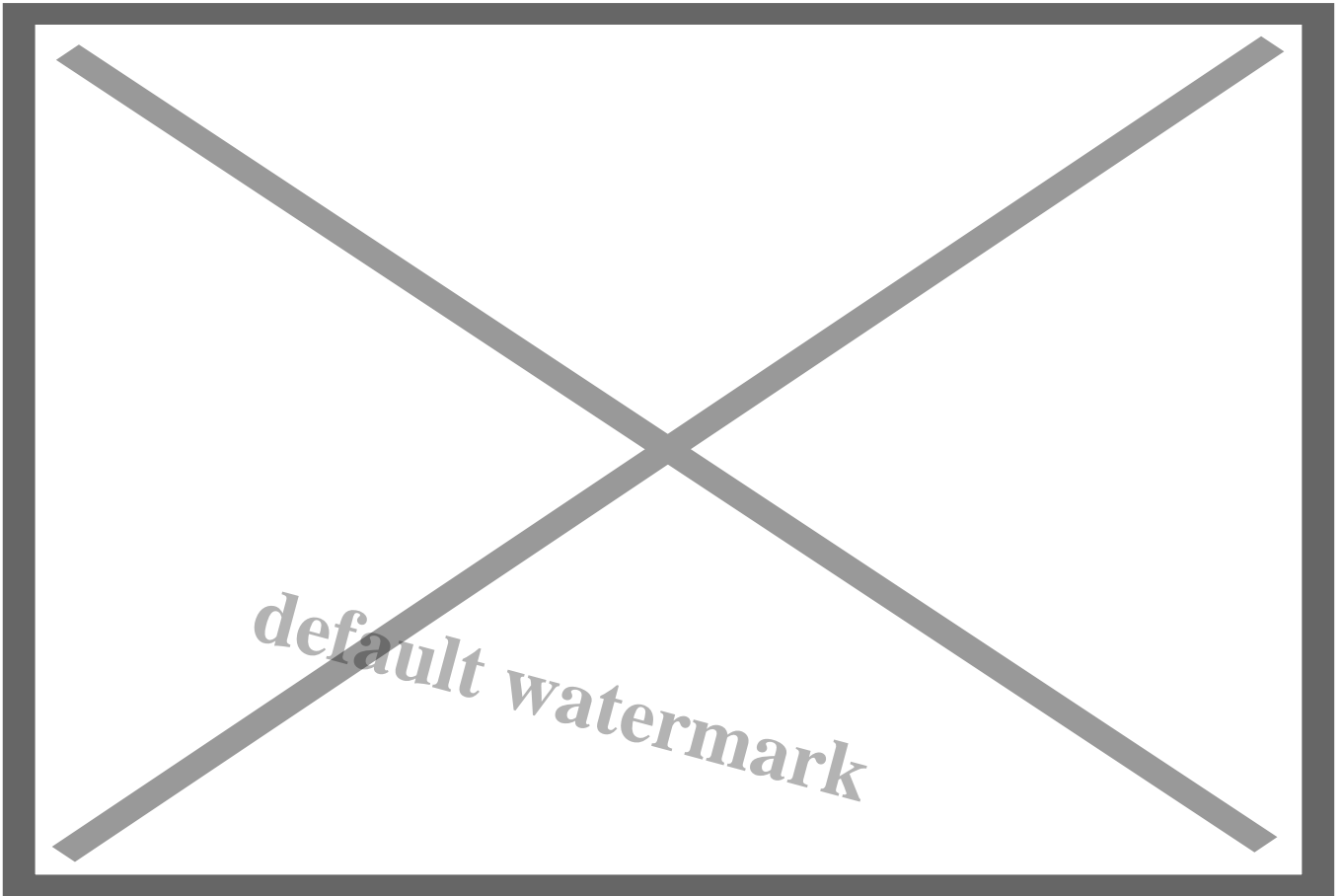


[Kingsley Leggs](#), Photo Credit: Joan Marcus

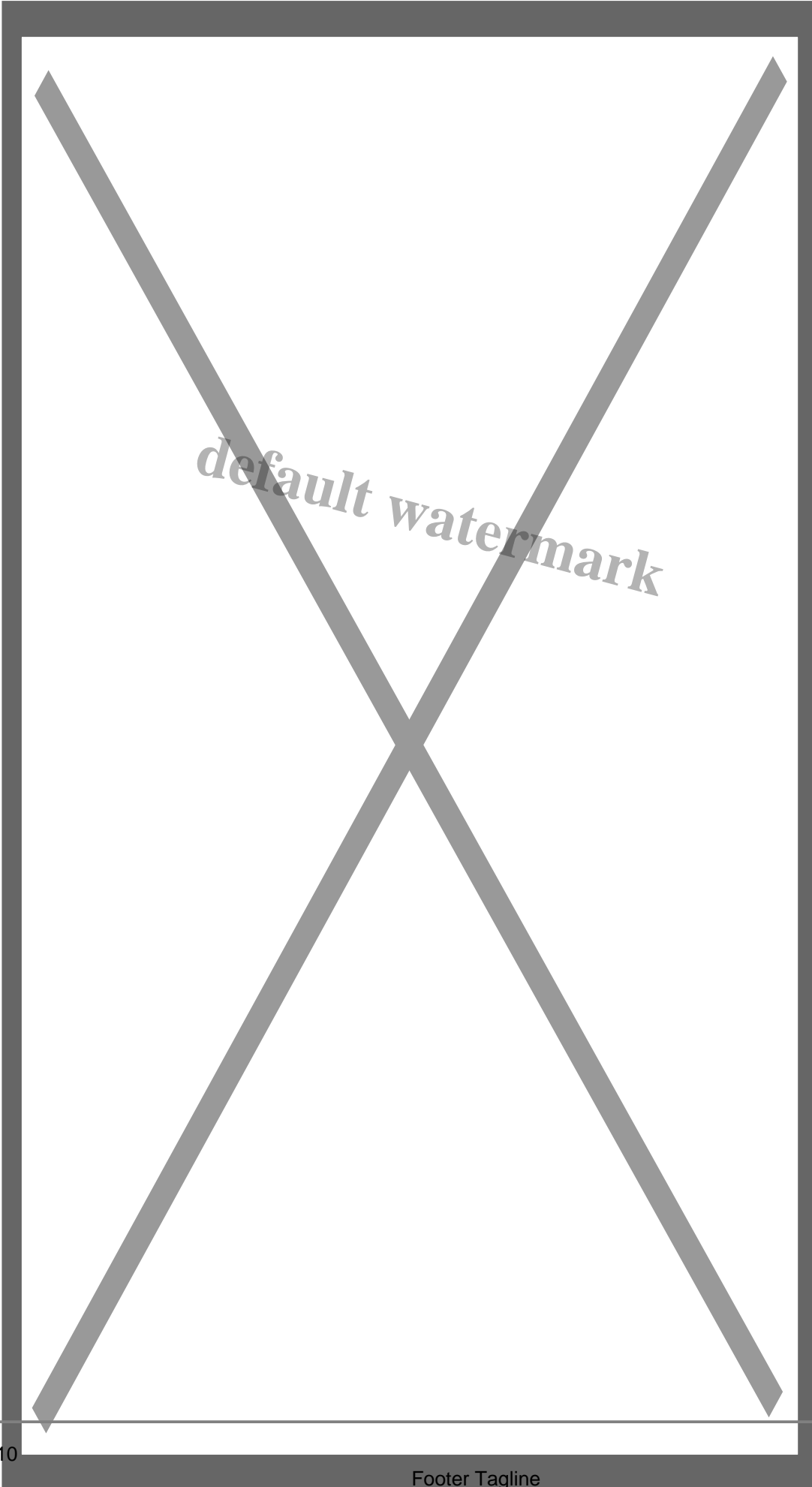
Final Reflections: Who Tells the Story?

What lingers after *Wicked* is not just the songs, but its insistence that audiences recognize their place within the politics of storytelling. The Wizard is no longer merely a man behind a curtain—he is any system that governs through performance, confusion, and consent.

Wicked endures because it refuses the comfort of a single narrative. Instead, it exposes how easily stories are weaponized, how readily truth becomes consensus, and how power depends on who is allowed to speak. In doing so, it asks its most urgent question not of Oz, but of us: when rhetoric shapes reality, who do we choose to believe—and why?



Blame Hammond, Photo Credit: Joan Marcus



VENUE

George S. and Dolores DorÃ© Eccles Theater
131 Main Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84101

PERFORMANCE DATES

April 16 â?? May 25, 2025
Presented by Broadway Across America

TICKETS

Broadway-at-the-Eccles.com
Phone: 801-355-2787 (ARTS)
In person: Eccles Theater Box Office

Group orders (10+):
317-632-5183

Student Rush tickets available. curtain with valid student I.D., 2 per student, while supplies last, quantities limited.

Study guide [here](#)

For more information about WICKED, please visit www.WickedTheMusical.com.
Follow WICKED on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [TikTok](#).R

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