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Valerie Lynn Schrader

Penn State, Schuylkill, vls146@psu.edu

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GENERAL INTEREST ARTICLES

**Friends “For Good”
Wicked: A New Musical and the Idealization of Friendship**

Valerie Lynn Schrader

Assistant Professor
Communication Arts & Sciences
Penn State Schuylkill
Vls146@psu.edu

Abstract

This rhetorical analysis explores the relationship between the two main characters, Elphaba and G(a)linda, in the musical Wicked through the interpersonal communication lens of friendship. This article focuses on the role that friendship plays in the musical and suggests that friendship is a relationship that can be stronger than romantic relationships. Through the application of Rawlins’ work on friendship to the relationship between Elphaba and G(a)linda, this analysis suggests that friendship is the most prominent relationship in Wicked. Wicked offers an important message to theatre-goers: Friendship is something to be valued and cherished.

Introduction

In 2003, *Wicked: A New Musical* began its now ten-year Broadway run. While the musical received mixed reviews at the time, it soon grew to be one of today’s most popular musical theatre productions (Wolf, 2007). Based on Gregory Maguire’s hit novel *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*, the musical is both a prequel and a sequel to L. Frank Baum’s *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. *Wicked: A New Musical* tells the stories of Elphaba, an ambitious, intelligent, green-skinned girl who becomes the Wicked Witch of the West, and Galinda, a pretty, self-centered, popular girl who becomes Glinda the Good. The musical reinvents Baum’s Land of Oz as a hegemonic society where Animals (with a capital A), which are distinguished from animals (with a lower-case a) because of their ability to think and communicate, are an oppressed social class that is being silenced by the Wizard of Oz and his regime. While many messages in the musical concern power dynamics (Kruse & Prettyman, 2008; Schrader, 2010), the show also paints a picture of an idealized friendship between the two main characters.

This article suggests that the musical *Wicked* offers an example of the ideal friendship. Through a rhetorical analysis of the show’s script, lyrics, sheet music, and cast recording, I examine how *Wicked* communicates messages about the interpersonal relationship of friendship to its audience members. This analysis uses *Wicked* as an example of the intersection of theatre and interpersonal communication, relying heavily on communication research in the area of friendship. This article contends that friendship is an overarching theme throughout the musical, and that the relationship between Elphaba and G(a)linda is positioned in a way that suggests that

friendships can be equally as important as romantic relationships. Furthermore, it suggests that audience members may learn lessons about friendship from *Wicked*, which they may apply to their own real-life friendships.

While theatre has long been reported as an important medium for social commentary (Denning, 1996; Elliot, 1990; Langas, 2005; Papa, 1999), musical theatre as a rhetorical text has been studied less frequently. Among these scholars are Aiken (2005), Cook (2009), and Most (1998), who analyzed *Oklahoma!*, focusing on the racist and sexist meanings in the script and lyrics, albeit in different ways; Sebesta (2006) and Schrader (2009), who examined the musical *Rent*; and Pao (1992), who studied *Miss Saigon*, observing the roles that gender and race played in the casting of the show. Perhaps because of its popularity or because of its many messages, *Wicked* has been studied by scholars in a variety of disciplines. Performance scholar Stacy Wolf (2008) has argued that G(a)linda and Elphaba are an example of a queer couple. She compared the music, and in particular, the duets between Elphaba and G(a)linda in *Wicked* to the duets between male and female romantic leads in classic musicals like *Oklahoma!*, *Guys and Dolls*, and *Carousel*. In a separate article, Wolf (2007) also examined the connection young women feel to the characters of Elphaba and G(a)linda, as well as to the actresses playing these characters. In 2009, Lane applied Relational-Cultural Theory to the musical, suggesting that the relationship between G(a)linda and Elphaba is similar to the relationship between a counselor and client. Kruse and Prettyman (2008) observed women's leadership styles in *Wicked*, suggesting that Madame Morrible uses a "masculine" leadership style, G(a)linda uses a "feminine" leadership style, and that Elphaba represents women who reject both styles. In her dissertation, Burger (2009) also looked at *Wicked: A New Musical*, but in conjunction with the book version of *Wicked*, the film version of *The Wiz*, the 1929 film *The Wizard of Oz*, and L. Frank Baum's original novel. Focusing on the key issues of gender, race, home, and magic, which appear in all five works and all relate to American identity, Burger argued that myth, like performance and text, is fluid, not fixed. In 2010, Schrader examined the musical in terms of social movement leadership and hegemony, suggesting that Elphaba is a militant social movement leader, G(a)linda becomes a conservative social movement leader, and the Wizard of Oz uses hegemonic functions to oppress Ozian Animals, a type of social class in Oz. In 2011, Schrader studied *Wicked* in terms of women's humor stereotypes, suggesting that the characters break down these stereotypes. In 2012, Schweitzer examined the musical through an adolescent psychology lens, arguing that the musical serves as a "twenty-first century parable" (p. 499) for teenage girls. Indeed, *Wicked* is a rhetorical text with a variety of meanings for theatre-goers.

This analysis attempts to bridge the areas of rhetoric and theatre with an important interpersonal communication concept: Friendship. Through the application of theoretical constructs concerning friendship to the relationship between Elphaba and G(a)linda in *Wicked*, this analysis suggests that friendship is the most prominent relationship in *Wicked*. By doing so, this article suggests that *Wicked* delivers an important message to theatre-goers: Friendship is something to be valued and cherished.

From Loathing to Liking: A Friendship is Born

In the musical, Elphaba and Galinda first meet when they arrive at their chosen college, Shiz University. The two young women are as different as one might imagine: Galinda is pretty, popular, and flighty, while Elphaba is unattractive, down-to-earth, and talented. While neither character likes the other initially, it is not until they are paired as roommates that they truly realize to what extent they dislike one another. While writing letters to their parents, they declare

their hatred for each other in song. Both girls notice their “faces flushing” and their “heads reeling,” causing them to question the feeling that brings on these symptoms. They both arrive at the same answer:

Both: Loathing! Unadulterated loathing...

Galinda: For your face...

Elphaba: Your voice...

Galinda: Your clothing...

Both: Let’s just say: I loathe it all! Every little trait, however small, makes my very flesh begin to crawl with simple, utter loathing!

It seems unlikely that Galinda and Elphaba will become friends. They bicker in class, tease each other, and say unkind things behind each other’s backs. They are, to use Coates’ (1999) terms, “behaving badly” (p. 66). Coates, basing her work on Goffman’s (1959) concepts of “frontstage” and “backstage,” noted that women were more likely to “behave badly,” or rather in a way that does not adhere to societal expectations of how women “should” act, in “backstage” situations. Galinda and Elphaba express feelings and say certain things “backstage” when they speak privately to friends or family members; they say things that they would not say “frontstage.” Yet a strange turn of events causes the two to become friends.

When Fiyero, a popular, attractive prince from Oz’s western province, arrives at Shiz, he and Galinda are instantly attracted to one another. Galinda wants to go to the school dance with Fiyero, but first she must rid herself of an unwanted suitor, a Munchkin named Boq. She convinces Boq to do her a favor by asking Elphaba’s sister, the beautiful and disabled Nessarose, to the dance, which frees Galinda to go with Fiyero. Nessarose, thrilled that she has been asked to the dance, tells Elphaba of Galinda’s “selfless” act. Elphaba, who loves her sister dearly, decides to return the favor to Galinda by convincing the headmistress, Madame Morrible, to include Galinda in their private sorcery seminar, which is something in which Galinda desperately wanted to participate. Meanwhile, Galinda, who is unaware of Elphaba’s kind deed, plays a trick on her roommate by giving her an ugly hat, which she insists is “smart” and “sharp,” to wear to the dance.

At the dance, Madame Morrible stops by to give Galinda a wand for the sorcery seminar and informs her that her inclusion in the seminar was due solely to Elphaba’s insistence. Suddenly, Galinda feels guilty about what she has done. When Elphaba arrives, wearing the ugly pointed black hat, she is ridiculed, and glares at Galinda, knowing that she has been tricked. Defiantly, Elphaba begins to dance by herself, looking rather silly and uncoordinated. Galinda, knowing what she must do, joins Elphaba in her silly dance and risks her own popularity in doing so. Gradually, the other students join in, symbolically representing Elphaba’s acceptance by her peers. Most importantly, this odd twist of events positions the two young women as friends.

Unlikely friendships often arise from unlikely circumstances. Rawlins (2009) examined Toni Morrison’s short story, “Recitatif,” which tells the story of two girls (later women), one Caucasian and one African-American, who become friends when they are placed at an orphanage. These two girls, Roberta and Twyla, who come from very different backgrounds (for example, one had a mother who neglected her while the other had a mother who cared for her very much), become friends because they are placed in a social situation that allows this friendship to emerge. While Galinda and Elphaba, too, were placed in a situation where friendship could blossom (they were roommates), they did not become friends until they became open to accepting one another. They were not engaging in dialogue until the moment at the dance. As Rawlins (2009) noted, “participating in the genuine spirit of dialogue mandates simultaneous self-respect

and respect for others” (p. 57). It is not until the events at the dance cause Elphaba and Galinda to have respect for each other that they can truly engage in dialogue and become friends. Theatre-goers may identify with Elphaba and Galinda in this respect, perhaps noting and reflecting upon their own unlikely friendships.

After the dance, Galinda and Elphaba solidify their friendship by telling secrets and participating in makeovers. Galinda tells Elphaba a secret – that she and Fiyero are going to be married (even though she hasn’t told Fiyero this yet). She prods Elphaba until Elphaba finally agrees to tell a secret of her own: That her father hates her because she is responsible for her mother’s death. Elphaba explains that because she was born with green skin, her father forced her mother to chew milk flowers while she was pregnant with Nessarose; this resulted in Nessarose’s disability and their mother’s death. Galinda compassionately insists that Elphaba’s secret isn’t true, noting that it was the milk flowers that killed her mother, not Elphaba.

Narratives, like the secrets Elphaba and Galinda told one another, are an important part of friendship. Cheshire (2000) noted that adolescent girls, who are but a few years younger than Elphaba and Galinda at this point in the musical, construct their selves through their stories. In Galinda’s story, she is able to construct herself as Fiyero’s fiancée. By telling Elphaba, she is attempting to make her story real. Rawlins (2009) explained that “telling stories together explores the points of view and particularities of each friend’s individuated life” (p. 47). Through Galinda’s story, Elphaba is able to see that her friend values romantic love. Through Elphaba’s story, Galinda is able to understand Elphaba’s self-blame and guilt. Rawlins also noted that “telling stories is an embodied effort that involves the simultaneous and consequential activities of speaking and listening” (p. 48). In their dialogic exchange, Galinda and Elphaba take turns speaking and listening. Even Galinda, who is so fond of being the center of attention, makes an effort to listen to her new friend. Through this scene, *Wicked* offers theatre-goers a lesson about the importance of engaging in dialogue and listening to friends.

In the following scene, an interesting twist occurs when Elphaba and Fiyero appear to be attracted to one another while participating in an act of rebellion in order to free a caged Lion cub. After Fiyero leaves, Elphaba sings a lonely ballad in the rain: “Don’t wish, don’t start. Wishing only wounds the heart. I wasn’t born for the rose and pearl. There’s a girl I know...he loves her so. I’m not that girl.”

Elphaba is in love with Fiyero, but she chooses not to pursue him because it would violate her friendship with Galinda, his girlfriend. Rawlins and Holl (1987) observed that adolescents, who, again, are only a few years younger than Elphaba and Galinda are in the musical, were particularly concerned with trust. Trust involved “relying on someone else not to speak in a way or relate information that might undermine or dislodge how an individual sees him/herself and/or perceives others as seeing him/her in the present social order” (pp. 359-360). Elphaba knows that Galinda trusts her, and exploring a relationship with Fiyero would destroy how Galinda sees herself: As the perfect girl with the perfect boyfriend. Because Elphaba cares for her friend, she chooses Galinda’s happiness over her own.

As Elphaba sings, Madame Morrible arrives with a letter: The Wizard of Oz wishes to see Elphaba. Ecstatic, Elphaba goes to the train station where Galinda, Boq, and Nessarose have gathered to wish her goodbye and good luck. Boq and Nessarose begin to quarrel, leaving Galinda alone with Elphaba to tell her friend that she feels her relationship with Fiyero is in danger. Fiyero arrives with flowers for Elphaba and wishes her good luck, but barely notices Galinda, who even changed her name to Glinda in order to find common ground with Fiyero, who, like

Elphaba, is deeply concerned about Animal Rights. When Fiyero leaves, Glinda begins to cry. Elphaba tries to comfort her friend:

Elphaba: Don't cry, Galinda...

Glinda: It's Glinda now. Stupid idea, I don't even know what made me say it.

Elphaba: Oh, it doesn't matter what your name is – everyone loves you!

Elphaba again is engaging in helping Glinda assign meaning to her life through her story. Stories, as Rawlins (2009) explained, are “fundamentally concerned with the meanings that we assign to our experiences and lives” (p. 47). Glinda, devastated that Fiyero may no longer love her, needs a friend to help her find meaning in her life. Elphaba does this by reminding Glinda of her popularity, something that Glinda values highly. When this attempt at consoling her friend ultimately fails, Elphaba sighs, hugs her friend, and invites Glinda to come with her on her trip to the Emerald City.

When they arrive, the two young women are amazed by the city. With excitement, they explore the sights while singing the upbeat song “One Short Day.” They conclude their song by expressing their commitment to their friendship:

Both: We're just two friends...

Elphaba: Two good friends...

Glinda: Two *best* friends... (emphasis New York Performance Script's)

It is interesting that Glinda, the popular one, is the one who declares that Elphaba is her best friend. Elphaba, who has so few friends, calls Glinda her good friend, but Glinda, who has so many friends, refers to Elphaba as her best friend. This labeling further solidifies their commitment to one another...a commitment that is challenged once they meet the Wizard of Oz.

Judging and Accepting a Friend's Decision

Elphaba and Glinda meet the Wizard together, frightened and holding hands like two children. The Wizard offers both of them positions of power, as long as Elphaba can cast what she is told is a levitation spell on the Wizard's Monkey Servant, Chistery. Madame Morrible, the Wizard's new press secretary, hands Elphaba an ancient book of spells called the Grimmerie. Elphaba successfully casts the spell, but the two young women are terrified when the Monkey screams in pain and sprouts wings. When the Wizard informs them that Chistery, and others like him, will be used as spies to report “subversive Animal behavior,” Elphaba grabs the Grimmerie and runs off, leaving Glinda to apologize for her and to run after her.

Elphaba runs to a tiny, barren room in the uppermost turret of the palace, where Glinda joins her. The two young women quarrel over their differing behaviors:

Glinda: Why couldn't you have stayed calm for once, instead of flying off the handle?! I hope you're happy how you hurt your cause forever! I hope you think you're clever!

Elphaba: I hope you're happy, too! I hope you're proud how you would grovel in submission to feed your own ambition!

This argument reveals Elphaba's and Glinda's differing values, but it also shows that they care enough about each other to confront one another when they disagree. Wright (1982) noted that women, more than men, tend to confront sources of disagreement in their friendships, and Elphaba and Glinda do exactly that. They are not afraid to tell each other how they feel. As Rawlins (2009) observed, all friendships include a dialectical tension referred to as “the dialectic of judgment and acceptance” (p. 107). Here, Glinda and Elphaba are nearing the judgment end of this dialectic; each is judging the other's actions, but only because they care about each other.

The quarrel is interrupted by Madame Morrible's voice on a loudspeaker, announcing that Elphaba is an evil enemy who must be stopped. Glinda whispers "Oh, no..." and assures Elphaba that everything will be okay if she just apologizes to the Wizard. Glinda expresses care for her friend by recognizing Elphaba's own values (that she longs to work with the Wizard) and by suggesting a way that her friend could still make her dreams come true. Elphaba, however, is not interested in reversing her actions; she has decided to take a stand against the oppression she has witnessed regarding the Animals.

Before the guards break down the door, Elphaba casts a levitation spell that enables a broom to fly, and asks Glinda to join her on her journey to help the Animals and fight the Wizard. Through song, the girls imagine what it would be like to work together:

Elphaba: Unlimited...together, we're unlimited. Together, we'll be the greatest team there's ever been, Glinda! Dreams, the way we planned 'em...

Glinda: If we work in tandem...

Both: There's no fight we cannot win! Just you and I, defying gravity!

Glinda and Elphaba are exploring one possible future; one that would involve an adventure in which the two friends can participate together. Rawlins (1982) explained that young adulthood is "a time for investigating with others various career and lifestyle alternatives in conjunction with one's personal relationships, values, and preferred modes of relaxation" (p. 104). Through this portion of the song "Defying Gravity," Glinda and Elphaba consider one possible lifestyle option.

However, while Glinda may happily imagine travelling the country on a broom with her best friend, she is not yet ready to give up her "perfect" life for this adventure. When Elphaba asks if she's coming, she quietly wraps a black blanket around Elphaba's shoulders and sings, "I hope you're happy, now that you're choosing this." Elphaba replies in song, "You, too. I hope it brings you bliss." Together, they join in song: "I really hope you get it, and you don't live to regret it. I hope you're happy in the end. I hope you're happy, my friend."

The two young women are parting ways, but as they do, the pendulum of judgment and acceptance swings towards the acceptance opposition. The melody echoes the confrontation earlier in the scene, but the lyrics, dynamics of the music, and nonverbal actions of the actresses indicate that this is truly a moment of acceptance for Elphaba and Glinda's friendship. They are sad to part ways, but happy for each other because each is following her dream. The two characters are performing "conjunctive freedoms," which allow "for both the edifying individuation and participation of friendship" (Rawlins, 2009, p. 179).

When the guards rush in, they grab Glinda, who protests, but Elphaba, flying on the broom, diverts the guards' attention by screaming, "It's not her! She has nothing to do with it! I'm the one you want! It's me!" Here, she clears Glinda's name, allowing her friend to pursue her own dream. Glinda also has one last wish for her friend. As Elphaba declares her triumph while the citizens of Oz point and call her "wicked," Glinda sings "I hope you're happy!" one last time, in order to wish her friend well.

Testing Friendship: A Double Betrayal

At the beginning of Act II, Glinda has become an adored public figure, and Elphaba has become Oz's scapegoat. Fiyero, who is engaged to Glinda only because she wishes it, has become Captain of the Guard in order to find Elphaba, his true love. Glinda recognizes that her "perfect" life is not perfect without her best friend, but engages in the process of face-saving (Goffman, 1959) and insists through song that she "couldn't be happier."

Elphaba, though a wanted criminal now, sneaks into the palace in order to free some of the winged Monkeys from their cages. The Wizard tries to strike a deal with her, and she begins to accept, but then finds a silent and incoherent Doctor Dillamond, her former Goat-professor who has been stripped of his title and taken away, and declares war on the Wizard once again. When the Wizard calls for the guards, Fiyero arrives, and is shocked to find Elphaba. Much to the other characters' surprise, he pulls his gun on the Wizard, not Elphaba, and tells Elphaba to leave.

Suddenly, Glinda appears in the doorway, and is thrilled to see her friend. "Elphie!" she cries. "Thank Oz you're alive!" She continues in her own well-meaning and uneducated way, "Only, you shouldn't have come. If anyone discovers you..." She then notices Fiyero holding his gun on the Wizard, and fears for both Fiyero's and Elphaba's lives. In an attempt to use her good reputation with the Wizard to save her friend and her fiancé, she pleads to the Wizard: "Your Ozness, he means no disrespectation! Please understand; we all went to school together."

Fiyero, though, does not wish to be saved. He announces that he's going with Elphaba, and both women stare at him in shock. Suddenly, Glinda has a realization. "What are you saying?" she asks, struggling to find the words. "That, all this time...the two of you...behind my back..." Elphaba insists that "it wasn't like that," but then runs off with Fiyero.

"Fine! Go!" Glinda bitterly cries. "You deserve each other!" Glinda feels betrayed by both her fiancé and her best friend. Johnson, Wittenberg, Haigh, Wigley, Becker, Brown and Craig (2004) noted that two of the turning points in deteriorating friendships are conflict and one friend finding a romantic partner. Specifically, they observe that women were more likely than men to list conflict as a negative turning point. Elphaba's act of finding a lover causes particular unhappiness for Glinda, not because Glinda wants Elphaba to herself, but because Glinda is in love with the man who loves her friend. Furthermore, conflict, or a betrayal in this case, causes deterioration in Glinda and Elphaba's friendship. This betrayal, to use May's (1967) terms, is a "sin against the friend."

Glinda is shaken and sobbing when Madame Morrible arrives. The Wizard and Morrible discuss the situation and begin to think of a plan to capture Elphaba. Glinda, angry at Elphaba and Fiyero, suggests in a moment of weakness that the Wizard and Morrible spread a rumor that Elphaba's sister, Nessarose, is in trouble. If they do this, Glinda says, Elphaba will fly to her sister's side and they can capture her. Thinking that she has created an eye-for-eye situation, Glinda retires, reprising the song "I'm Not That Girl," which Elphaba sang in Act I when referring to Fiyero's relationship with Glinda.

Elphaba and Fiyero escape to a forest, where they sing a love song together. When Elphaba begins to look troubled, Fiyero assures her, "You and Glinda will make up, and someday..." Fiyero recognizes the importance of this friendship to his lover. As Rawlins (2009) stated, we have a "deep regard for our friends' irreplaceable presence in our lives" (p. 56). This is indeed true for the friendship between Elphaba and Glinda, and Fiyero recognizes this "sacredness" (p. 56) of friendship. In this recognition, he assures Elphaba that her friendship with Glinda is not over.

Meanwhile, though Glinda may have thought that the Wizard's regime would spread a rumor that would result in Elphaba's incarceration, the Wizard and Morrible have other plans. Morrible uses her sorcery powers to create a tornado that causes a house to fall from the sky, killing Nessarose. Glinda, arriving first, quietly picks a flower and sinks to her knees in grief. When Elphaba arrives, the two women begin to quarrel:

Elphaba: (sarcastically) What a touching display of grief.

Glinda: (indignantly) I don't believe we have anything further to say to one another.

Elphaba: I wanted something to remember her by. All that was left of her were those shoes...and now that wretched little farm girl has walked off with them! So I would appreciate some time alone to say goodbye to my sister! (Then quietly) Nessa...oh, Nessa, forgive me.

The two women engage in conflict in this scene. Both of their comments, especially Glinda's remark, suggest what Buber (1970) referred to as an I-It relationship; they are disconfirming each other as people. Rather than engaging in dialogue, they choose rejection due to their anger. Glinda, though, attempts to change this when she sees how upset Elphaba is about her sister. She responds compassionately: "Elphie, don't blame yourself. It's dreadful...to have a house fall on you. But, accidents will happen."

Though well-meant, this comment infuriates Elphaba. She responds with "You call this an accident?!" An angry conversation follows:

Glinda: Yes! Well, maybe not an accident, but...

Elphaba: Well then, what would you call it?

Glinda: Well...a regime change. Caused by a bizarre and unexpected...twister of fate.

Elphaba: So you think cyclones just appear? Out of the blue?

Glinda: I don't know, I never really...

Elphaba: No, of course you never...you're too busy telling everyone how wonderful everything is!

Glinda: Well, I'm a public figure now! People expect me to...

Elphaba: Lie?

Glinda: Be encouraging!

Here, the dialectic of judgment and acceptance has swung to the judgment side of the continuum. The two women continue to criticize each other until the true nature of the conflict arises. Glinda snaps, "Well, a lot of us are taking things that don't belong to us, aren't we?" This statement indicates Glinda's emotions about being betrayed by her friend. However, Elphaba, who never pursued Fiyero until he made it clear which witch he truly loved, defends herself:

Now wait just a clock-tick. I know it's difficult for that blissful blond brain of yours to comprehend that someone like him could actually choose someone like me! But it's happened; it's real! And you can wave that ridiculous wand all you want; you can't change it! He never belonged to you, he doesn't love you, and he never did! He loves me!

This monologue results in Glinda slapping Elphaba, and the two women attempt to attack each other with their chosen weapons: A magic wand and a broomstick. By the time the guards arrive to capture Elphaba, the women have gotten into a fistfight. This time, Elphaba feels betrayed. She says to Glinda, "I can't believe you would sink this low: To use my sister's death as a trap to capture me!" Glinda replies, "What?! No! I only meant..." Before she can finish her statement, Fiyero arrives to save Elphaba, at the expense of his own freedom.

Interestingly, it appears that Glinda and Elphaba may have been able to engage in dialogue that may have resulted in the mending of their friendship in this scene, but circumstances do not permit it. However, some of Elphaba's comments cause Glinda think about her own life choices, as well as her friend's. She returns to the Wizard's palace, where a group of witch hunters has gathered to search for and kill Elphaba. Glinda protests against the rumors she hears, and

confronts Madame Morrible about the cyclone that killed Nessarose. When Morrible tells her to "shut up," Glinda forces herself to smile and wave, but then runs off Kiamo Ko Castle to warn Elphaba that the witch hunters are coming for her. Despite her feelings of betrayal, she is ready to engage in dialogue with her friend.

Saying Goodbye to a Dear Friend

When Glinda arrives at the castle, Elphaba has locked up Dorothy and is trying to get her to remove Nessarose's shoes. She is also trying to get Chistery, a Flying Monkey, to speak. Elphaba tells Glinda twice to go away, but Glinda is persistent:

Let the little girl go. And that poor little dog – Dodo. Elphaba, I know you don't want to hear this, but somebody has to say it: You are out of control! I mean, come on. They're just shoes! Let it go. Elphie, please. You can't go on like this.

Here, Glinda demonstrates caring for her friend. She realizes that Elphaba is at a point of desperation, even though Elphaba may not yet realize it herself. In extending Aristotle's discussion of friendship, Rawlins (2009) suggested that "friendship involves mutual concern for the other's well-being for that person's own sake" (p. 177). Here, Glinda shows concern for Elphaba's well-being. She is not trying to persuade Elphaba to be like her; she accepts Elphaba's own uniqueness and tries to persuade her to do what is best for her.

It takes Elphaba a bit longer to express her own concern for Glinda, but after receiving some bad news regarding Fiyero, she does indeed express her own concern for Glinda. Realizing that she must surrender, she tells Glinda, "You can't be found here. You must go." Elphaba is concerned about Glinda's own future as a leader of Oz; she knows that if Glinda is found with the so-called Wicked Witch of the West, she will lose all credibility with her followers. In order to protect her friend, she insists that Glinda not try to clear her name. As Rawlins (2009) observed, "in expressing thoughts and feelings to friends, we embrace the responsibility to protect our friends' and our own privacy, areas of vulnerability, and threats to dignity" (p. 58). Elphaba, who recognizes that Glinda clearing her name would result in Glinda's own vulnerability and loss of credibility in the public sphere, makes Glinda promise not to do such an action. Reluctantly, Glinda agrees. Elphaba hands her the Grimmerie and tells her, "Now it's up to you."

A touching moment occurs when Elphaba confesses that Glinda is the only friend she has ever had. Perhaps this unique position of singularity that Glinda has held in Elphaba's life has caused Elphaba to be more in tune with her friend's needs, even when Glinda does not recognize her own needs. Glinda replies comically, "And I've had so many friends. But only one that mattered." Glinda notes that she comes from a very different perspective, but echoes Elphaba's sentiments when she tells her that she is the only friend that really mattered to her. This sentiment is further indicated by Glinda as she begins singing the duet "For Good.:"

I've heard it said, that people come into our lives for a reason, bringing something we must learn. And we are led to those who help us most to grow, if we let them, and we help them in return. Well, I don't know if I believe that's true, but I know I'm who I am today because I knew you. Like a comet pulled from orbit as it passes a sun, like a stream that meets a boulder halfway through the wood. Who can say if I've been changed for the better? But because I knew you, I have been changed for good.

Glinda confesses that Elphaba has made a profound impact on her life, and implies that she is thankful for it. Furthermore, her solo here suggests that she recognizes that she must say goodbye to her friend. She does not say "because I know you;" she says "because I knew you" –

in the past tense. Glinda knows that this will be the last time she will engage in dialogue with her friend, and because of this finality, she intends to express her sentiments towards Elphaba.

Elphaba echoes these same sentiments in her solo lines:

It well may be that we will never meet again in this lifetime, so let me say before we part: So much of me is made of what I learned from you. You'll be with me, like a handprint on my heart. And now whatever way our stories end, I know you have re-written mine, by being my friend.

Elphaba also recognizes that this is likely the last time she will participate in dialogue with her friend, and she expresses her own feelings towards Glinda. She also notes that her friend has permanently changed her: "You'll be with me, like a handprint on my heart." This dialogical encounter enables both friends to seek forgiveness from one another:

Elphaba: And just to clear the air, I ask forgiveness for the things I've done you blame me for.

Glinda: But then, I guess, we know there's blame to share.

Both: And none of it seems to matter anymore.

Elphaba and Glinda are participating in what Kelley (1998) referred to as direct forgiveness. This type of forgiveness occurs when people bluntly tell others that they are forgiven. Direct forgiveness, for Kelley, exists in contrast to indirect forgiveness, in which forgiveness is "just understood" (p. 264) and conditional forgiveness, which attaches stipulations to forgiveness. Using Kelley's three forms of forgiveness, Merolla (2008) suggested that "transgressions of increasing severity and blameworthiness tend to be forgiven indirectly or conditionally" (p. 114). Interestingly, Elphaba and Glinda challenge this finding. Their transgressions indeed were severe: Elphaba "stole" Glinda's fiancé, albeit unwittingly, and Glinda played a role, although also unwittingly, in the murder of Elphaba's sister. Perhaps it is the understanding between these two friends that neither *intentionally* performed the transgression that causes them to directly forgive one another. The forgiveness illustrated through *Wicked* may provide audience members with an ideal to strive for in their own friendships.

The two women switch voice parts at this point in the song: Glinda, the soprano, sings the alto melody, while Elphaba, the mezzo-soprano, sings the soprano descant. In her dissertation, Schrader (2010) argued that this switch symbolizes the passing of the torch of leadership, but the interweaving of the two voices also suggests that the two women have entangled their lives in a way that each will be forever influenced by her friend. They finish the song with a hug, and Elphaba ushers Glinda to a hiding place. A curtain is pulled and a silhouette of Elphaba is apparent, followed by a shadow of a young girl and a bucket of water. Elphaba lets out a heart-stopping cry, and is "melted."

When Glinda emerges from her hiding place and pulls back the curtain, only the ugly black hat and a green bottle remain of Elphaba. Glinda sadly picks up the hat and hugs it, as Chistery finally begins to speak and hands her the bottle. Heartbroken by the loss of her friend and empowered by Elphaba's desire for Glinda to continue her work on behalf of Animal Rights, Glinda enters the Wizard's palace, exiles the Wizard, imprisons Madame Morrible, and takes over as the new leader of Oz. Chistery hands the Grimmerie to Glinda, who steps into her mechanical bubble to address the citizens of Oz regarding Elphaba's apparent death. She hugs the book in memory of Elphaba, mourning the loss of her best friend.

Meanwhile, a scarecrow stands on the other side of the stage, and a trap door in the floor of the stage opens, revealing Elphaba. Elphaba has faked her own death and has turned Fiyero into a scarecrow in order to save both of their lives. Fiyero urges Elphaba to leave Oz with him,

but she pauses a minute, and softly says, "I only wish Glinda could know that we're alive." Elphaba, though thankful that her plan has worked, is also mourning the loss of her friend. Above all, she wishes she could tell her best friend that she and Fiyero are alive and well, but Fiyero reminds her that it cannot be if they want to be safe. In the final moment of the musical, Elphaba and Fiyero, with mixed emotions, leave Oz, while Glinda retires to her palace chamber, hugging the Grimmerie and crying in remembrance of her lost friend.

Discussion

By analyzing the script, lyrics, sheet music and the cast recording of *Wicked* through the communicative lens of friendship, I have attempted to reveal how the relationship between Elphaba and Glinda is an ideal friendship. Elphaba and Glinda participate in what Rawlins (2009) referred to as the dialectic of judgment and acceptance, and, although they (unintentionally) betray each other, they seek forgiveness from one another and offer forgiveness to one another directly and unconditionally. Although this is a fictional idealized friendship, it provides its audience members with an ideal to strive for in their own real-life friendships.

Audience members may find that they have friendships that parallel Elphaba and G(a)linda's relationship. Some theatre-goers may relate to one or both of the characters and/or compare their friends to one of both of the characters. Some theatre-goers may learn lessons from the characters, such as the value of forgiveness, the importance of trust, or the roles that storytelling, dialogue, and listening play in friendships. Through *Wicked*, audience members may be encouraged to give unlikely friendships a chance.

Additionally, *Wicked* suggests that, in some cases, friendship, rather than a romantic relationship, can be the most important relationship in one's life. In *Wicked*, the most prominent relationship is between two friends, Elphaba and G(a)linda. Wolf (2008) observed that the arrangement of songs in *Wicked* echoes the same pattern that, in 1950s and 1960s musicals, places the two leading characters in a romantic relationship. This pattern serves to highlight the most important relationship in a musical. For example, in *Oklahoma!*, the key relationship is a romance between Curly and Laurey, and in *Guys and Dolls*, it is a romantic relationship between Sarah and Sky. However, *Wicked's* key relationship is not a romance; it is a friendship. The song arrangement that Wolf noted highlights the importance of friendship in *Wicked*.

Furthermore, this analysis suggests that the role of Fiyero serves to bring attention to the friendship between Elphaba and G(a)linda. Fiyero serves as a cause of tension in the friendship between Elphaba and Glinda. His role enables the first betrayal, of which Glinda must find it in her heart to forgive her dear friend for "stealing" her fiancé. Wolf (2008) noted that Fiyero "fails to register as a significant force in *Wicked*" (p. 18). Indeed, she is correct: Fiyero cannot be as strong a character as Glinda or Elphaba because he is not part of the primary relationship in the musical: The close friendship between the two women. Instead, Fiyero serves to place the women in situations that allow their friendship to both deteriorate and grow stronger.

By creating an ideal friendship between G(a)linda and Elphaba, and by placing it in the forefront of the musical, *Wicked* suggests that friendships can be just as important, if not more valuable, than romantic relationships. Future research may explore this concept in real-life settings, as well as in other fictional texts in which strong friendships are observed. As Rawlins and others acknowledge, friendship is an integral part of life. Friendship need not play second fiddle to romance. Indeed, *Wicked* creates a relationship between its two main characters that shows the value of friendship, while not framing friendship as inferior or secondary to romantic relation-

ships. Elphaba and G(a)linda, like so many real-life friends, find their friendship fulfilling in itself, so much so that they change each other “for good.”

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