

TOP THREE

The three best things to do today

1. **MUSIC:** Show off at the Acoustic Plug-in Blues Jam at Oskar Blues in Lyons.
2. **MORE MUSIC:** You've heard about them, now go see them.
Fishbone plays Cervantes in Denver
3. **FILM:** See "Georgia Rule" at Landmark Crossroads on Pearl Street at 9:40 p.m.

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THE MIX

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YOUR TOWN



Victoria Matlock plays Elphaba, the Wicked Witch of the West, who in this scene is attending boarding school to look after her wheelchair-bound sister, played by Deedee Magno Hall, in *Wicked*. [PHOTO COURTESY JOAN MARCUS/DENVER PERFORMING ARTS COMPLEX]

Defying gravity

'WICKED' MAKES, REVISES HISTORY IN DENVER

By PAULA PANT
Colorado Daily Staff Writer

DENVER — "Wicked," now starting its second nearly sold-out appearance in the Mile-High City, is more than just a song-and-dance prequel to "The Wizard of Oz."

It's more than a revisionist tale of moral ambiguity, as it's often described.

It's edgy, sharp, and extremely political.

"Wicked," winner of three 2004 Tony Awards, details the friendship between Glinda, the "Good Witch of the North" and Elphaba, the "Wicked Witch of the West," when they roomed together at boarding school.

Glinda (played in Denver by Christina DeCicco), a bubbly blond

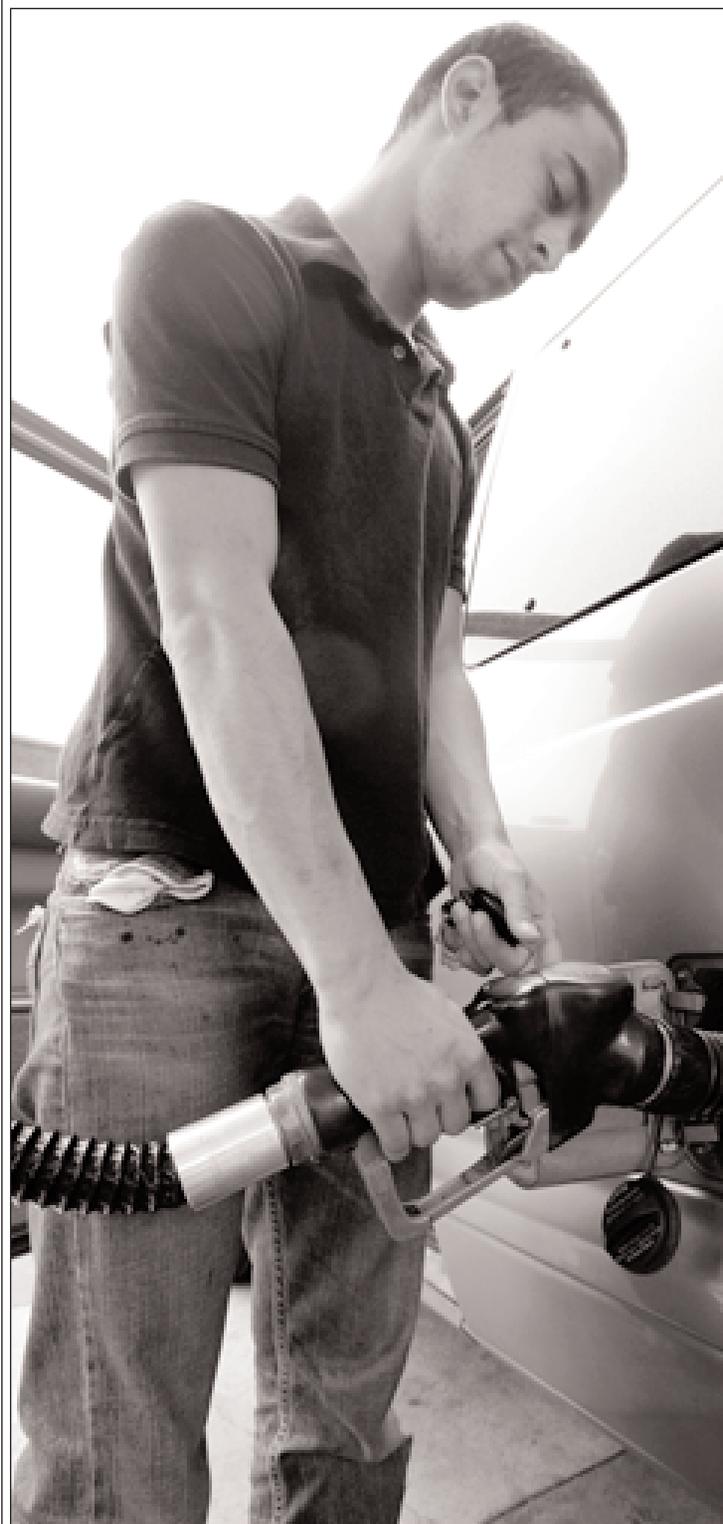
with an enormous collection of designer shoes, cares for little more than popularity, parties and boys. She falls for Fiyero (Clifton Hall), a "brainless" self-absorbed rich boy whose sole purpose is "dancing through life, skimming the surface." Glinda never hesitates to boost her social status by cracking race-based jokes against Elphaba (Victoria Matlock), who is outcast and ridiculed for being the only green-skinned student.

Elphaba pretends to not care what others think of her, focusing instead on caring for her wheelchair-bound younger sister, Nessarose (Deedee Magno Hall). When Glinda accidentally does Nessarose a favor, Elphaba goes out of her way to thank the syrupy

princess, beginning what becomes a lifelong friendship.

The subtext in the story — an elaborate plot to turn animals into second-class citizens by caging them and removing their power of speech — is reminiscent of the Holocaust. (The allegory is more thoroughly developed in the book by Gregory Maguire, on which the stage production is based.) Elphaba is outraged by the suppression of the animals — particularly after her teacher, a goat, is fired. Refusing to sit in silence as injustice unfolds around her, she travels to the Emerald City to appeal to the Wizard. Glinda makes a token, symbolic gesture of solidarity with the animals as

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Mike Gibson pumps gas into his van with high gas prices at a Shell gas station in San Francisco, Thursday. [PAUL SAKUMA / ASSOCIATED PRESS]

Your 'gas buddy'

A PLACE TO FIND
THE CHEAPEST GAS AROUND

By TIM BLANGGER
(MCT)

Last summer, when a gallon of gas was floating around the \$3 mark, I stumbled across a site that listed the lowest prices for gas in the area. If there was a station that I didn't have to burn gas to get to, I could save a little money.

The site listed the lowest prices for regular, mid-grade, premium and diesel. It also listed addresses of the stations and date and time the price was recorded on the site. On the day I last checked the site, a Tuesday, most of the pricing reports were filed that day.

The individual listings offer a click-through link to Google's mapping service, in case you didn't know how to get to the station.

You can also view the low gas prices as points on a map of the region, which shows the station's geographic positions. This seems helpful

if you don't need gas at the moment but might need it later in the day, when you're traveling.

The site also offers wireless options for mobile phones and personal digital assistants, sending free text messages or Web updates to the devices.

As a service, it also listed the highest gas prices in the region. All the prices are dutifully reported by a series of unnamed sources with screen names such as Saharamartini and JeepJoe.

It turns out the site is part of a national network of 180 regional and statewide Web sites, all with data on the lowest and highest prices for the different motor fuels. Each of the sites has a discussion board, localized classified ads and even some links to a U.S. Energy Department Web site listing mileage rates for new cars, in case

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LOCAL SCENE

YOUR TOWN: Broadway show

[YOUR TOWN, from page 13]

a matter of good politics, but accompanies her friend to the Emerald City because she's always wanted to see the bright lights of a major metropolis.

It is there that (spoiler alert) the duo discover the "wonderful wizard" is actually quite awful: he, like Hitler, wants to unite a fragmented nation by giving its citizens a common enemy, the animals. He asks both women to use their sorcery powers to help his quest. While both disagree with his mission, only Elphaba is willing to become a fugitive, going underground to free the animals. A public-relations campaign by the Wizard's communications director paints this freedom fighter as a "wicked witch." Glinda, who also knows the truth, secretly sides with Elphaba but won't fall from social grace by publicly defending her friend.

It's fitting that the prequel to the Wizard of Oz is styled as political allegory: the original novel by L. Frank Baum (whose name is the basis for "Elphaba") is interpreted to be an allegory for the economic

FYI

"Wicked" is playing at the Buell Theatre in the Denver Performing Arts Complex from May 9 to June 3. Seating is extremely limited. Call (303) 893-4100 or 1-800-641-1222 for ticket information, or visit www.denvercenter.org.

and social landscape of the 1890's. The "heartless" tinman is thought to be metaphor for the exploited industrial worker, the "brainless" scarecrow an undereducated farmer, and "oz" an abbreviation of "ounce" and a reference to a debate over whether to keep rapidly-deflating U.S. currency pegged to the gold standard.

The lighting and costuming in the Denver stage production is brilliantly executed, and Matlock – muscular, lanky, expressive – is perfectly cast for Elphaba's role.

Those who have read the book should be ready for a few sudden twists at the end of Act Two – the book and stage stories do not end in the same way.

But rather than betraying the book, the changes in the stage production only makes the tale more



Victoria Matlock as Elphaba in Wicked. [PHOTO COURTESY JOAN MARCUS/DENVER PERFORMING ARTS COMPLEX]

compelling – humorous and critical in a different manner. "Wicked"’s ultimate lesson: history revises itself each time it is written or performed, and even this story is no exception.

Contact Paula Pant about this story at pant@coloradodaily.com or at (303) 531-4951.

GAS: Good ideas

[GAS, from page 13]

exasperated motorists are looking for something other than a gas-guzzling motor vehicle.

Netizen talks with Jason Toews, a co-founder of <http://www.gas-buddy.com>.

Q: How long have the low gas price sites been around?

A: Our first Web sites (for the Minneapolis-St. Paul region) went up in 2000, about seven years ago.

Q: Why did you start the sites?

A: At the time, gas prices weren't all that high back then, compared to now. But one day, I was driving down the street and my fuel gauge was on empty. So, I pulled off at a gas station and filled my tank. I went not even two blocks down the road and I saw a station selling gas for 10 cents a gallon cheaper. This really upset me, but it got me to thinking. How would I know

that gas was 10 cents cheaper just two blocks away from where I bought my gas? That's how I came up with the idea. I thought of a forum, a Web site, where someone driving past a station with low gas prices could post that information. You wouldn't need to drive around, wasting gas, to find the cheapest price.

Q: Do visitors have to register and log into the site to use it?

A: No, you don't need to register, but if you do register you get award points and prizes. And you need to register to participate in our forums. You can even do some light reporting on our site. You register it as a visitor. But if you report a lot, we ask that you register. Most people who report (gas prices) regularly register because of the prizes. Members of the site do get some advanced tools for searching their own set of stations. But everything on the site is free, and you don't

need to register.

Q: How does the reporting on gas prices work?

A: About 98 percent of all our posts are by members, who keep coming back to the Web site. We try to ensure the accuracy of the prices they post. If a price seems really low, we make sure it's not a radio station promotion that's only good for a limited time. We do monitor prices and our software automatically checks the price and compares it to prices in the metropolitan area. Prices tend to be fairly close in local pockets of competition. But mostly, the people who post the prices are the same people every day and we get to know who they are. The posters get a member rating, which is only visible behind the scenes. If a price seems really low but it's by a senior member who has been with us for six years and has a perfect record, we usually take him at his word.

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