

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I.1. BACKGROUND

Since the emergence of the term globalization, people have always had their opinion about the issue – either supporting or opposing to the idea of a converging world. Regardless of how people feel about globalization, one thing that people can agree upon is that globalization is an inevitable process. Anthony Giddens, a British sociologist defines globalization as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.¹ Globalization comes in multi-layered dimensions: economic, political, ecological, and cultural. In the economic, political, and ecological dimensions, globalization usually happens in the state-to-state level, requiring interactions between governments to establish a mutual agreement or joint cooperation. On the other hand, cultural globalization goes around the traditional governmental interactions by directly involving individual citizens. It affects an individual on the first-hand; influences a person's view towards a symbolic construction, – which is the foundation of language, music and image – articulation, and dissemination of meaning.²

¹ Anthony Giddens. *The Consequences of Modernity*. 1990:64.

² Manfred B. Steger. *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2003:71.

Cultural globalization transfers local artworks through which artists often address current social and political issues. As these issues rise, people often realize that there are some common values that tie people together, despite the visible and tangible differences among them. The longing for freedom, justice, peace, and preservation of the Earth are often expressed in an artwork. With the help of globalization, an artwork that addresses one of these issues is basically a flowing idea, traveling fast throughout the world and affecting the way people feel and think about the issue.

Artists have their way to package their concerns toward an issue in an intricate way so that their work conveys the meaning they want to deliver to the spectators as closely as it can get. One of the many ways is to combine different elements of art together. That way, they can express the story in a fuller force, speaking through each different element. One form of artwork that combines most of every element of art is the musical theatre. Musical theatre is a work of art that consists of intricate intermingled elements of literature, – in the form of script, song lyrics, or books – drama, music, dance, and various components of designs: stage or set design, scenic design, properties design, lighting design, sound design, costume design, and make-up design. This is pretty much every element of arts being put together to form one masterpiece.

The most popular center of musical theatre shows is the United States' Broadway. Through the years, the creation of Broadway shows often address current social or even political issues that were / are happening in the United

States at the time. Most shows promote tolerance towards minorities, racial harmony, embracing the differences that make us one large community of the human race.

One of the most successful shows which promote these values is the blockbuster *Wicked the Musical: The Untold Story of The Witches of Oz*, which first opened on October 30th 2003 in the Gershwin Theatre. The musical is created by Stephen Schwartz, who developed the musical based on *Wicked: The Life and Time of the Wicked Witch of The West*, a 1995 novel written by Gregory Maguire, which takes on the story of L. Frank Baum's 1900 novel and 1939 movie *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* in a different perspective, which is the Wicked Witch of The West's. Schwartz developed the story with Winnie Holzman, who wrote the book for the musical, alongside with co-producers Marc Platt, Jon B. Platt, and David Stone, director Joe Mantello, and music director Stephen Oremus. The musical is originated by Idina Menzel as Elphaba Thropp, the Wicked Witch of the West, and Kristin Chenoweth as Glinda the Good Witch of the North.

The production was nominated for ten Tony Awards in 2004, including Best Musical, Book, Orchestrations, Original Score, Choreography, Costume Design, Lighting Design, Scenic Design, alongside with two nominations for Best Actress for Menzel and Chenoweth. The production won the Best Scenic Design and Costume design, and Menzel won the Best Actress award. The show won six Drama Desk award out of eleven nominations in the same year, and its original

cast album received a Grammy Award in 2005. Variety Magazine applauded the show as being “a cultural phenomenon.”

There are many components that make this show into one of Broadway’s biggest hits. Aside from the aesthetics that are pleasing to the senses, it all comes down to the story of friendship between a pretty, popular, a have-it-all kind of girl and an outcast, green skinned bookworm who uses her voice to fight for good causes, only to have the whole city turn against her. The values it brings are important to the world’s society, addressing prejudice, alienation, and discrimination of the minority; a minority who has a voice to bring a better change for the world being turned down by the majority who misuse their powers and positions; and even political conflicts of interest which lead to the destruction of many things – people’s morality and friendship, to name a few.

This show has personally touched its audience members from around the world in a way that these audience members can relate to the characters; mostly Elphaba, the not-so-Wicked Witch. It is probably the fact that *Wicked* the Musical exposes the reality that there is always more than just one side to every story; reminding us not to judge so quickly and to take on different perspectives in perceiving the situations or people around us. It is also probably the fact that everyone has ever felt misunderstood at some point in life, that their voices are not heard enough, and their position does not give them a chance to have some kind of power to overturn the ones who hold the authority. This kind of feeling does not have any border to only a certain extent. Every person that walks on this

earth is capable of experiencing this feeling, regardless of the places they live in, their races, religious and political beliefs, or any other boundaries that differentiate us as human beings. It all comes down to being human – a social being – who would feel better at the prospect of not being alone in this world; the prospect of being able to relate to someone else’s story; the prospect of being represented. Also, given the political situation the world is in today, Maguire’s version of *Wicked* is “More relatable than ever,” quoting from Donna Vivino who had been in the company on and off playing Elphaba for six years since 2006 until 2013, talking about reading *Wicked* in the era of Trump presidency.

Regarding how relatable this story is to so many people around the world, not to mention the extravagant set, costumes, sound, lighting designs, make-ups, choreographies, musical numbers, and the whole aesthetic aspects of the show that make our senses feel alive, it is almost no wonder that since its opening in 2003 at the Gershwin Theatre, *Wicked* has been performed in over 100 cities in 18 countries around the world (United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, Japan, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, The Philippines, Mexico, Turkey, China, and Brazil) and has thus far been translated into six languages: Japanese, German, Dutch, Spanish, Korean and Portuguese. The musical has amassed more than \$4.5 billion in global sales and has been seen by more than 53 million people worldwide. As of its evening performance on August 16, 2017, the show played

its 5,759th show, marking its position as the 8th longest-running production in Broadway history, surpassing *Mamma Mia*.³

In this thesis, the author would dissect more into the universal values and the flow of ideas of the production that, in the words of Laura MacDonald and Myrte Halman in their journal *Green Grenzen Meer: An American Musical's Unlimited Border Crossing* has become a transnational commodity, holding a powerful position in constructing identities that may no longer be bound by borders.⁴

I.2. PROBLEM

While *Wicked* is an American production, global spectators easily identify with the story, finding the story relevant and represents them as a person in one way or another. The author would like to explore more into this phenomenon of a local musical production becoming an international hit, trying to find an explanation of how could a fictional story be appropriated by people around the world on an individual level, and how globalization plays a significant part in it.

³ BroadwayWorld. "Wicked Surpasses Mamma Mia as 8th Longest Running Show in Broadway History," *BroadwayWorld.com*. Available from <https://www.broadwayworld.com/article/WICKED-Surpasses-MAMMA-MIA-as-8th-Longest-Running-Show-in-Broadway-History-20170814>. Accessed on August 17, 2017.

⁴ Laura Macdonald and Myrte Halman. "Geen Grenzen Meer: An American Musical's Unlimited Border Crossing," *Theatre Research International*. Vol. 39 No. 03, 2014:198. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0307883314000479>. Accessed on June 4, 2017.

I.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Wicked has graced many countries with its presence, telling a beautiful story for people around the world to reflect on. The author would like to look deeper into how the musical becomes a transnational commodity with impressive global reception by answering these questions:

1. What are the major themes in the story of *Wicked* that appeal to global spectators?
2. In what ways does globalization disseminate and influence the global reception of *Wicked*?

I.4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objective of this research is to describe the way *Wicked* the Musical presents elements of universal values in its story for its global spectators to adopt, and to explain the role of globalization in disseminating the ideas of the story throughout the world which results in global reception toward *Wicked*.

I.5. STRUCTURE OF WRITING

Chapter II contains a theoretical framework to set a context for the discussions in this thesis. The first part of Chapter II consists of literature reviews of the previous research studies related to capitalist globalization, constructivism and globalization, universal values, musical diplomacy and constructivism, and the global reception of *Wicked* the Musical. The second part of Chapter II builds a framework that explains the theories of constructivism, globalization, cultural globalization, and glocalization in the context of International Relations. The third chapter of this research elaborates the research analysis method, in which this thesis uses the qualitative method with discourse analysis content technique.

Chapter IV consists of the discussion and analysis of the research result. The classification method is based on the research questions. Chapter IV.1. discusses the research results and analysis for the first research question. The first section of Chapter IV provides the analysis of the aspects of *Wicked's* story that are appealing to its global spectators by pointing out the content of the original script and score that relates to the universal values in the United Nation's Millennium Declaration. Chapter IV.2. discusses the research results and analysis for the second research question. The subchapter provides analysis of the role of globalization in disseminating the ideas of the story which results in its global reception.

Chapter V consists of the conclusion of the findings, summarizing the answers to the research questions in the previous chapter. This chapter highlights

the universal themes of the story that are in line with United Nation's Millennium Declaration, covering the values of freedom and acceptance, which include equality, solidarity, and tolerance. To summarize the result analysis for the second research question, this part of Chapter V first highlights the role of globalization in enabling easier access for international Broadway enthusiast to listen to the show's Original Broadway Cast Recording. The chapter also highlights international relations between countries that enable international touring company and productions to perform *Wicked* around the world. Finally, the chapter highlights the role of Internet in enabling the publication of the show's activities which include the active contribution in speaking out against discrimination; to engage the fans and performers, and finally to bond the online fan community.