

# 'Wicked Divas' mix of catchy songs, audience fun

By **Bridgette Redman**  
For the Lansing State Journal

You can get a peek backstage at Broadway on Saturday at Cobb Great Hall during the Lansing Symphony Orchestra's Wicked Divas pop concert.

Featuring actresses who have played Elphaba and Glinda in Wicked on Broadway, the LSO pops concert is a night of symphonic and vocal music. Emily Rozek, who played Glinda, and Nicole Parker, who played Elphaba share stories of what it is like to perform on Broadway.

The Wicked Divas format featuring actresses who have played Elphaba and Glinda take place with symphonies around the country. It started when there was a cancellation of a pop concert that was Wicked-related — and they needed to put together a new show in 24 hours.

The organizers found two Wicked stars and put

together a night of diva numbers that culminated in songs from "Wicked." It ended up being such a fun concert that it went on the road with a collection of women who qualified for the parts. All of these women have their stories to tell.

"There are fun behind-the-scene performance stories that you have to come to the concert if you want to find out about them," Parker said.

Both women love the interaction with the audience throughout this concert, something that sets the show apart from a Broadway production.

"We go out and sign autographs after each concert," Rozek said, describing the experience of the concert. "This is so much fun and the music is phenomenal, and the symphony is always top-notch. We tell stories about our experiences, and it is very warm. It's an intimate experience even though you're with 2,000 people or more.



Emily Rozek

Every show is a little different as we're sharing our personalities with the audience. They like that and feel like they are in on something."

For Parker, this concert will be a homecoming as well. Her family is from Michigan, her mother went to Michigan State University and the day of the concert is also the day of her birthday.

"I'm very proud to return, and I get to spend my birthday there too," Parker said.

The evening will open with the Overture to "Gypsy" and then play selections from such



Nicole Parker

songs as "Carmen," "Chicago," "My Fair Lady," "Funny Girl," "Ragtime," "Phantom of the Opera," and a song from Kander and Ebb in the first half.

The second half features songs from "Thor- oughly Modern Millie," "Spamalot," "The Wizard of Oz" and three songs from "Wicked." There are also songs from pop divas such as Diana Ross.

Both of Parker's favorite songs come in the second half with the iconic "Defying Gravity" from "Wicked" and "Di- va's Lament" from "Spamalot."

"I do 'Defying Gravity'

## IF YOU GO

» **What:** Wicked Divas: Broadway & Beyond, Lansing Symphony Orchestra  
» **Where:** Cobb Great Hall, Wharton Center  
» **When:** 8 p.m. Saturday  
» **Cost:** \$20 to \$47  
» **Contact:** [www.lansing-symphony.org](http://www.lansing-symphony.org) or 517-487-5001.

a lot for benefits and podcasts, but Spamalot's 'Diva's Lament' is probably my favorite. It's very funny," Parker said.

For Rozek, her favorite comes from "Thor- oughly Modern Millie," a show she did on Broadway.

"Gimme Gimme' is my favorite song to perform," said Rozek. "I did it on Broadway and I love the story of Millie. I love the way the son asks the actor to wrestle with making a decision. Every action in its lyrics, she's really deciding something about her life and it is really fun to act that."

Parker and Rozek have been performing together as part of this concert which is how they met and became friends. While each had performed in Wicked, they were never in the same production of Wicked.

"There are quite a few Glindas and I didn't get to perform with her in Wicked," Parker said, "but I get to perform with her in this. We get along great. We have a nice chemistry. She's a very witty, funny, sharp person and a great singer and actress. We're divas that get along."

Rozek agreed. "We have done this concert many times together. We are good friends and we love doing this."

Parker was Elphaba in the Broadway production of Wicked and in the first national tour. Rozek joined the first national tour later and was Glinda in Los Angeles where she was part of the company for a couple of years.

"It was a fantastic experience," Rozek said.