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Valley native gets 'Wicked'

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[Submitted]

Posted: Sunday, August 16, 2015 8:00 am

By Jacob Goldstein Special to GetOut

The Land of Oz is returning to ASU Gammage with the beloved musical *Wicked*. Stepping onto the Yellow Brick Road as part of the ensemble and as the understudy for Glinda and Nessarose is East Valley native, Beka Burnham.

After starring in productions at [Mesa Community College](#) and [Greasepaint Youththeatre](#), the aspiring actress moved to Boston to study musical theater at The Boston Conservatory at the age of 17.

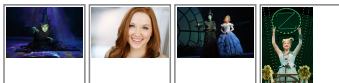
From there, she moved to New York and spent time grinding through auditions until she finally found her place as part of the touring *Wicked* cast.

"My agent called me in New York and said, 'they want to offer you the job,'" Burnham said. "I fell to the floor and started crying and it was really stupid and dramatic."

She has now been with the tour for 11 months and has been all over the country from Atlanta to Denver and now her home state in Arizona. Burnham said she has become accustomed to this traveling lifestyle.

"It's actually a lot of fun once you kind of adjust to it," she said. "You get used to the packing and unpacking and that just becomes part of life."

'Wicked'



If You Go

What: *Wicked*

When: Aug. 26-Oct 4

Where: ASU Gammage, 1200 S. Forest Ave., Tempe

Cost: \$35 and up

Information: 480-965-3434, asugammage.com

The thrill of being on the road and playing to new audiences every night is a highlight of Burnham's touring experience.

"You get to see all these new cities and explore and you get to see theaters, too," she said. "It's fun seeing new people in every city see the show for the first time and how they react to it and the differences between the cities."

Burnham added that the cast and crew of *Wicked* have formed a special bond with each other that feels like a second family.

"On the road, you don't really have anyone else, you basically just have each other," she said. "Everyone takes care of each other and is really involved in each other's lives. It's like a little family. We call it our family."

However, Burnham said it can be hard to be away from her real family for such a long period of time and is excited to have a tour spot where they live in Arizona.

"Sometimes I fly home in between cities, but it's not very often because if we're on the East Coast, it just doesn't make sense to do it," she said. "I kind of just don't go home anymore so it'll be really nice to be in Tempe for six weeks."

When comparing her experiences at local theaters in Arizona to the professional work she is doing now with *Wicked*, Burnham said it has been a surreal experience.

"I think the reason it's so surreal is because I've watched people up on that stage for so long," she said. "In another sense, now it's my job and I take it much more seriously."

Burnham eventually wants to move back to New York, but for now, she wants to continue improving her performances in *Wicked* and has no plans of leaving the tour anytime soon.

"Right now, I feel like with understudying two roles in the show, I have a lot to work on," she said. "It keeps me busy and I feel completely challenged and artistically fulfilled just working on the show and doing my job."

Wicked opens Aug. 26 and goes through Oct. 4 at ASU Gammage, 1200 S. Forest Ave., Tempe. Tickets start at \$35. For more information, call the box office at 480-965-3434 or visit asugammage.com.

• *Jacob Goldstein, a senior at ASU's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism, is an intern for GetOut. Contact him at (480) 898-6514 or tribintern@evtrib.com.*

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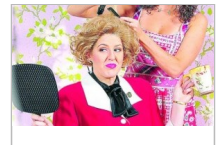
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