

## **Wicked's Cast Album**

### **Stephen Schwartz Answers Questions About the Cast Album**

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#### **On hearing the cast album before or after seeing the show**

Question from Glenn:

Familiarizing myself with the music before attending a show always enhances my enjoyment of the musical. Several people who attend musicals don't realize the impact that makes on one's perception of the story. I loved 'full monty' music before seeing it on Broadway. Seeing it performed was amazing and funny like you would not believe. You don't always get that from the soundtrack and I couldn't believe that it was made into a musical to begin with. Just shows how important it is not to prejudge

'Phantom' was also amazing because i had heard the soundtrack several times before going. Even 'Capeman' which I saw in previews was terrific (although quite lengthy) because I listened to the soundtrack ahead of time.

I guess in the case of 'Wicked' the CD wasn't available until after the show opened. Stephen - who makes those decisions? And do you preview the music before attending a new show? Happy and safe new year everyone.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Glenn: I actually prefer to see a show without knowing the music (though I agree knowing it in advance oftentimes enhances one's enjoyment). I guess I just like the whole experience to wash over me knowing as little about it up front as possible (that's another reason I don't tend to read reviews). But I do appreciate scores more when I have heard them a few times, and I often like the score for a show better the second time I see the show (particularly if I've had a chance to become familiar with the cast album.)

In terms of the timing of recording a cast album: Because changes to a show are generally being made right up to the point it is "frozen" a few performances before the critics come, very few cast albums are recorded before the show opens. But then the recording is usually done as quickly after opening as possible, often on the first day off (though I think that can prove detrimental because the cast is usually so tired at that point). Fortunately, we were able to hold off recording the WICKED cast album until the second Monday off (and a few days subsequent) and still get it out in time for Christmas, as the record company needed. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

#### **Wicked Witch of the East**

Question:

Why is Wicked Witch of the East not on the cast album?

Answer from Michael Cole:

The reason this "song" is not included on the CD is because there was no way to include it without giving away plot surprises. It is also not a new or different song - it is mostly comprised of reprises of music we've already heard. Just to clarify.

### **Defying Gravity section**

Question:

I love Elphaba's "It's ME....." sung as she is rising up to the sky towards the end of the number. Since that whole "She's not the one you want, it's me..." isn't on my soundtrack CD (and my favorite part of the song) was just curious if it was something new?

Answer from Michael Cole:

No, the "It's MEEEE" section of the song was not included on the CD because Stephen decided not to include the dialogue from the scene leading up to the last verse of Defying Gravity. But it was always part of the song. Hope this answers your question (and I agree with you - it's one of my favorite moments in the show - it's MEEEEEEEE!")

### **Synopsis not in Cast Album**

Comment from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear WICKED listeners: Since the cast album has been released, I have received EMail from some who wish that a plot synopsis of some kind had been included as part of the CD package. I apologize to those who feel this way for any frustration the lack of one may cause. But I decided not to include a synopsis because there are so many plot twists and surprises in the show, I didn't want to give them away and spoil the fun (and the challenge to figure them out ahead of their revelations) before people saw the show. I tried to structure the CD so that one could follow the basic story and get an idea of the progress of the relationships, (even though that does ruin a couple of the surprises, but then I think that was going to be inevitable.) But, a la "Crying Game" or "Usual Suspects", there were some things I just didn't want to give away, because I've heard the pleasurable audience response to them. (And by the way, I want to take this opportunity to thank those who have seen the show for being nice about not giving things away on this Website or in other forums.) So again, my apologies to those who would have liked a traditional cast album synopsis, but I hope if and when you see the show, you appreciate why I omitted including one. All best to you all and thank you for your support and enthusiasm for WICKED, Stephen

### **Cast Album/Score Questions**

Question from Carol:

Hi Glenn and anybody who has the WICKED Cast Album:

I'm not a musician and would love to read more comments (without show spoilers) like the one Glenn posted on the other part of the message board:

[Glenn's quote] "...as a musician and composer I can appreciate the subtleties in his music on many different levels. It is quite a thrill to figure out Stephen's music by ear. although the structures are simple in 'Wicked', the inner voices and harmonies add beautiful moments to otherwise very common progressions. Try figuring out 'Popular', 'No one mourns the wicked,' or 'Loathing' etc... have fun. The vocal suspensions are one example of what I mean. In 'loathing' he builds part of the melody around dotted quarter notes across two measures creating a triplet syncopation feel with the repetition of only two notes a fourth apart. And how I love 'dancing through life.'"

Also I wonder what anybody else finds attractive in the orchestrations. I love it all but especially like every time there's a harp gliss or unusual chimes or synth sounds. Have you noticed the violins' tremelo

at the beginning of "Defying Gravity" - making it feel a bit like Elphaba is shaking with the power of what she is singing about? And how would you describe the music for Dr. Dillamond's song - I can feel in the tune and orchestrations a sense of something going on behind the scenes in Oz but I don't know what it is about the music that makes me feel that. Is it the minor key? Can anybody describe other examples of the way the music is written so that it evokes what the words are talking about? Certainly "Dancing Through Life" has that breezy upbeat feel of a carefree college students.

Comments from Eric:

I don't know if this question should be limited to musicians, although I am one, for sure. I don't think you have to be a musician to know what it is the music makes you feel. Stephen Schwartz and his arrangers know what they're doing: If a song makes you feel something, chances are more than good it was intentional.

Just look at the kinds of songs that were written for the two leads. Glinda's songs are (mostly) up and bright and, like her, without much weight (thematically speaking). Whereas Elphaba's songs are all quite heavy and meaty and dark. I have zero doubt that that is precisely how these songs were initially approached, regardless of their final arrangements.

That is not to say that Glinda's songs are at all less challenging to the actress or in any way "lesser" songs. They just don't have the "heft" that Elphaba's songs do. As for the numerous shadings the arrangements give to each song, nothing is accidental. I'm sure it's possible for someone to analyze a moment or two and give it an interpretation not originally pre-conceived, but for the most part, the creators worked hard to make sure that each song did precisely what it was supposed to do, and have precisely the effects you feel.

I for one particularly love the end of "Defying Gravity." I love the whole thing, and the arrangement itself is brilliant. But at the end -- and I have yet to see the show and missed this number when it was on Letterman -- the arrangement for all the world makes me "see" her "defying gravity" and actually flying. It's in the music, pure and simple. It gives me goose bumps every time, and I'm playing the CD constantly these days, even as I write this.

Glenn

Hi Carol, Eric...I, too have yet to see the musical but am bursting inside to see it but once again as a musician and music lover I will give you some insight to my reflections of 'wicked.' from the opening strains about 'no one mourns the wicked.' for me the music provides a sense of hesitant revelry with the enormous brass chordal sequences and high strings and woodwinds holding the note a until the chords descend to the fast section (resolving in B major for a moment) introducing the quick percussion and augmented flute lines suggesting the flying monkeys with the brass in the background. when the music suddenly stops (grand pause) sound like a bubble by the flute trills, wind chimes B major 7/E in second inversion) with melodic cello melody 'unlimited' as Glinda comes forth. the fast string lines suggest the munchkins running out shouting 'good news...' (augmented chords) with fanfare brass chords leading up to the words 'it's Glinda.' etc.

Bob Manasco

Hey, guys. I just performed a solo cabaret here in Peoria, for which I transcribed "Defying Gravity." It really is a great song, but one part in particular gave me a chuckle. I was trying to reduce the full orchestra and all other voices into a single piano part, and realized that when Glinda sings "Can't I make

you understand..." its the same musical pattern as "Wonderful Wizard of Oz." I don't know if that was intentional or not, but when I heard it, I laughed out loud!

### **Feedback on album quality**

Question from John Peronne.

Mr Schwartz....I am just one of many totally taken by the music (and lyrics) for "Wicked". Breathtaking, intelligent, thoughtful, provocative....I could go on and on. I am very disappointed about 2 things however. I feel that the mastering or recording of the OBCR was flawed soundwise and really does not do justice to the artists, instrumentalists or your music. Secondly...as with "Dreamgirls", it's very sad that so much incidental music (and even important music) was left off the cast recording...music that is quite beautiful. Will there ever be a complete recording of the music from "Wicked"? And have you thought of doing your own recording of "Wicked" with just you and your piano.Thank you so much for all your wonderful works over the years....and particularly....for "Wicked". It still excited me to hear the music from it. John

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear John: I'm a little puzzled by your comment, and obviously, a little disturbed. As the producer of the original cast album, I worked very hard with my engineer, Frank Filipetti, to record and master the best quality recording. I have heard the CD played on all sorts of systems, and I have always been happy with the sound of it, particularly in regard to how good I think the vocalists sound. Yours is the first complaint I have heard about it. I wonder if somehow you got a defective CD? Or maybe it is just a question of taste. In any event, please know I put in a great many hours and days and did my absolute best to achieve the highest quality recording I could, and I regret your disappointment with the final product.

In terms of a complete recording of the score: I suppose that is possible someday, particularly with the continuing popularity of the show and the sales success of the original cast album. But I do feel that the score is very well represented on the cast album, since it includes most of the extended musical sequences and even some of the dance music.

For the record (pardon the pun), most of the WICKED music is on the CD, with the exception of a couple of choreographed sequences and some scene change music and underscoring (which I admit, I like a lot musically -- plus three of the hidden references to the WIZARD OF OZ score are in the underscoring.) There were also a small number of things I left off the album deliberately because they would give away some of the plot surprises. Anyway, we'll see about the complete recording, but I would think that if it happens, it is still some years away. Thanks for your message and enthusiasm for WICKED, and again, my regrets if the sonic quality of the album disappoints you. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Comment from H.

Mr. Schwartz and Mr. Perrone,

I think that the point Mr. Perrone was trying to make is that the final mixdown on CD sounds more like the production used on a pop album rather than a cast album. There is little or no sense of being in a theatre. It sounds more like the performance was taking place in a small living room or confined acoustic and that takes away some of the magic of this truly wonderful score, especially to one who has seen the show live. Unfortunately, these production values are the norm in the recording industry which (incorrectly) subscribes to the notion that "louder is better", thereby some of the subtlety (magic) is lost.

### **Question about Wonderful**

Dear Mr. Schwartz, I want to thank you for the time you take to answer questions via this forum. My question is a bit obscure but hopefully you'll have an answer for it. One of my favorite songs in Wicked is "Wonderful." Joel Grey sings the word "hick" during the phrase "Hey, look who's wonderful, this cornfed hick" on the cast album as a whole note over the ascending C minor arpeggiation that occurs right after the lyric. In the score, "hick" is written to be sung as a quarter note. When I've seen the show live or sung on B roll press footage, it is sung as written. Even Grey sang it as a quarter note during actual performances. Why was the word sung as a whole note on the cast album? I think it sounds best as written. The quarter note gives the right amount of punchiness that a raggy song like "Wonderful" requires. Either way, the song as a whole is great! Congratulations on the continued success of "Wicked." Most appreciatively, Clark Stallings

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thank you, Clark. The reason for the discrepancy is that in the live stage performance, there is choreography that fills the bar after the short "hick". On the CD, where obviously there are no visuals, Joel instinctively felt (and I agreed) that it was better to hold the note and make the whole thought more continuous ("Hey, look who's wonderful -- this cornfed hick who said it might be keen ..." etc.) Maybe that wasn't as good a choice as the way it's performed in the show, but that was the thinking behind it anyway. Thanks for your attentive listening and for taking the time to write, sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

#### **Posted on Grammy Awards night**

From Grammy.com pre-telecast award winner's list: Category 78: Best Musical Show Album (Award to the Album Producer(s), and to the Lyricist(s) & Composer(s) of 51% or more of a new score.

\* Wicked

Stephen Schwartz, producer; Stephen Schwartz, composer/lyricist (Original Broadway Cast Recording With Kristin Chenoweth & Idina Menzel) [Decca Broadway]

#### **Gold and Platinum**

Wicked's Original Cast Album Goes Gold

Press release

Decca Broadway's Original Cast Recording Of The Smash Hit Broadway Musical WICKED Certified Gold By The RIAA October 11, 2005 - (New York, NY) - The Decca Broadway Original Cast Recording of Wicked is now officially certified GOLD (500,000 units) according to the RIAA. The cast album, which won a Grammy Award this year, is the best-selling CD in the genre since "Mamma Mia!" and the fastest-selling original cast album since "Rent." Wicked, produced for Decca Broadway by composer/lyricist Stephen Schwartz, has struck a chord with audiences of all ages. With the first U.S. national touring company under way and a new second home at Chicago's Ford Center for the Performing Arts, Oriental Theatre, Wicked is poised to entrance audiences nationwide with no end in sight."Decca Broadway is proud to be a part of the Wicked phenomenon. The music and lyrics of Stephen Schwartz have created a legion of loyal fans for the cast album, which has taken on an exciting life of its own." says Christopher Roberts, Chairman of Universal Classics Group. The album continually receives rave reviews from around the country. Elysa Gardner of USA Today stated that Stephen Schwartz "blends folk, pop and musical-theater influences with grace and vitality." Entertainment Weekly called the album "lushly produced," while Robert Hurwitt of the San Francisco Chronicle rated the album 'excellent,' adding that the orchestrations and voices are "dynamic." Lawson Taitte of the Dallas Morning News says, "Judgment doesn't really begin on a new musical-theater piece until the cast album comes out. The stock of Wicked

went through the roof when the cast album appeared."Wicked's original cast recording's stellar cast includes Tony Award Winner Kristin Chenoweth (You're A Good Man Charlie Brown) as Glinda, Idina Menzel (Rent) as Elphaba, Oscar & Tony Award Winner Joel Grey (Cabaret) as The Wizard, Carole Shelley (The Elephant Man) as Madame Morrible and Norbert Leo Butz (Thou Shall Not, The Last Five Years) as the love interest Fiyero.

Wicked went Platinum several years later.

### **Chicago CD**

Question:

Of course first I must tell you how much I enjoyed your show. I saw it in Chicago and have not been that moved by entertainment in years. I am a 45 year old white middle class female. I have attended many musicals, but the other women who attended with me may not have been to any and they enjoyed it equally. We are now planning a bus trip of 50 from Michigan to attend in Chicago this winter. I hope that tells you how much we all enjoyed it. We want everyone we know to experience the fantastic "Wicked". Here is my question. We felt the contrast between the witches' voices in Chicago better served the music than the recorded New York version. Have you considered recording the Chicago cast? (can't imagine a DVD doing it justice. but would love to see it in film if you can get the absolute best to produce it)

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thanks for your message, and I'm so glad you and your friends enjoyed the show. I am very happy with the Chicago company. However, it is not my decision as to whether or not to release a CD of the Chicago cast; that is a business decision to be made by Decca Universal Records. To be frank, I would be surprised if they felt they could sell enough copies to make it worth their while, but I wouldn't oppose it if they wanted to do it. Thanks for the suggestion and best wishes for the new year, sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

### **Cast albums Q and A**

Question:

I know that you have said that there wasn't a plan to record a wicked tour CD, but I was wondering why not? IT would be huge success and I know plenty of people would like one.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

This is a decision which would be made by the record company -- Decca/Universal. I would speculate that they have some reasons not to do so, however. For instance, the cast in the tour changes from time to time; which cast would one record? And to be honest, although each performer brings his or her own special qualities to the roles, the overall recording would not be that different from the original cast CD. Having said this, I should reiterate that this is my speculation, and that in the end it's up to Decca.

Question:

When a Broadway show opens in the West End there is often an original London cast recording. Is this likely to happen for Wicked? Over time details of the plot have become more widely known even to those who have not seen the show. Does this mean that some of the missing passages (previously considered "spoliers") might appear on any new recording?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

... I suspect there will be a London cast recording, if the show proves successful in England. However, I have to say that I would still resist including passages that reveal plot surprises. You are correct that over time some of the plot twists have become more widely known, but I still hear gasps during certain revelations at every performance I attend, and I would hate to spoil that experience for even one person. And may I use this opportunity to ask once again those of you who know the plot not to reveal it if it can be avoided. Thanks for your interest and enthusiasm, Stephen Schwartz