

Wicked – Songs

Stephen Schwartz Answers Questions About Wicked's Score

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SECTION 1 – Wicked's Score in general

Wicked Score

Note: This question was posted before the cast album came out

Question:

Hi! I'm reading the novel of "Wicked" right now and I am so anxious to hear the score!! Are you willing to give any info? I have heard it compared to "Children of Eden" in style, would you agree? Also, what are the voice parts of the different characters? Particularly Galinda, Elphaba and Nessa Rose...are they belt roles, soprano? I can't wait to hear and see this show. Best of luck to you and all involved!

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thanks for your interest in WICKED. Yes, I think the score is somewhat comparable in style to CHILDREN OF EDEN, though obviously without the pastiche elements of the latter that show up in numbers such as "In Pursuit of Excellence", "Generations", or "Ain't It Good?" Vocal ranges I would describe as high belt for Elphaba, soprano and belt for Glinda, and belt for Nessarose (by "belt", I merely mean the vocal range, not that they're going to be socking out Mermanesque songs all night.) I hope when you see it, the show lives up to your expectations. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

WICKED's first notes

Question:

Dear Stephen, I know the moment you heard about the novel Wicked you knew you wanted to do it as a musical. My question(s): What was the very first music you heard in your head that you knew was for WICKED? Did this music that you heard in your head come immediately upon first seizing upon the concept of the book? Or did that come a little later? Was it one specific piece of music that you heard, or did all these different ideas start popping into your brain? How much of what you initially heard in your head ended up being used? Your devoted fan and fan of WICKED, Eric

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Eric: The very first thing written for WICKED was the verse to "No One Mourns the Wicked", albeit with slightly different lyrics. I wrote it fairly early in the process, and the basic tune and the feel of it came to me while I was reading the novel. At a very early stage I felt that the show should open with all of Oz celebrating the death of the witch, which led to the title "No One Mourns the Wicked", which led to the tune. Stephen Schwartz

Musical Elements in Wicked

Question:

What particular musical elements make this show unique?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I don't know that they are unique. I think the sort of motific writing I do (i.e. the use of musical themes such as "Unlimited" or the musical motif that opens the show, which then get repeated and developed throughout the show), and the combination of pop music sensibility with theatrical song structure I tend to write, are not new inventions. But it's true this sort of writing has been rarer of late, since musicals have been in the "I'm-too-smart-to-write-a-musical-so-I'll-make-fun-of-them-instead" phase.

Wicked music – hardest song to write

Question:

Dear Stephen Schwartz,

First off I love the music you did in 'Wicked'. Second I know that "I'm Not That Girl" was one of the easier songs that you wrote, but what/why was the hardest song for you to write? Thank You

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Probably the hardest song for me to write was "What is This Feeling?" I made four earlier tries at a song for that spot in the show, the first two entitled "Bad Situation" (as in, "I've got to make the best of a bad situation") and one called "Far Be It From Me", in which Glinda and Elphaba were viciously critical of one another while pretending to be polite. When Winnie finally came up with the clever idea of a "hate at first sight song", I wrote a version of "What is This Feeling?" that had different music, but when our director, Joe Mantello, said he felt the music needed to be more high-energy, and I came to feel he was right, I FINALLY came up with the final version of the song. The actual song itself I wrote in about a day, but all the false starts and thinking about it took three years! Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Favorite Wicked song

Question:

Stephen, Do you have a favorite song from WICKED? All of them are great, and it's hard for me to pick just one favorite, so I imagine it must be even harder for you! If so, does this change for you all the time, or has this always been your favorite song? You already know it, but all of your work is amazing! Thanks!

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I don't like to answer questions about my favorite song, be it from WICKED, other projects, or overall, because I feel it affects how people listen. I prefer for people to have their own responses, uncolored by what my personal opinions about my work may be. Sorry to duck this one. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Wicked Harmonies Live vs. Recorded

Question:

Is it tough during technical rehearsals to get the sound balanced perfectly for the group harmonies? I just got the CD and can't believe how exact the live harmonies are to the recorded ones. When you think that each chorus member has a personal mike it must have been a loooooong night getting that Schwartz sound down so perfectly. The moderators of our CYO theatre group treated the cast of the production of West Side Story we were doing way back when to a performance of Godspell at the

Promenade. I have been mesmerized by your harmony work ever since - they are a beautiful exclamation point for all of your work

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thank you. It is a little tricky to get the chorus sound balance right, but basically, you just hire a really good sound guy (Tony Meola is certainly one of the very best). He gets a basic level for each of the cast members, and then they balance themselves as they would unmiked. It takes a little time, but we don't stop in tech for it -- the sound designer and his board operator continue to tweak as the tech goes along. But yes, it's easier in a recording studio where you have less mikes, and the singers aren't doing choreography, and they can hear each other better. Thanks for your interest and enthusiasm for WICKED, sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Music of Oz

Question missing

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

To me, the Harburg/Arlen score for "The Wizard of Oz" movie is such a classic, both in terms of the specific songs and the overall tone, that in a way it defines what Oz sounds like. In writing "Wicked", I tried to be mindful of that, so that while I wanted to write my own score with my own sound, I didn't want completely to violate the Harburg/Arlen sensibility. Hence, the opening dark chords, which to me also suggest the minor key "Ding dong the witch is dead" opening of the film, and the homages to the Arlen score sprinkled throughout "Wicked" (which have been extensively discussed in chat rooms and postings on my Website) -- the quotation of the first seven notes of "Over the Rainbow" as "Wicked"'s "unlimited" theme, the orchestral reference to "You're Out of the Woods" in "One Short Day", and other homages to the Scarecrow's song and the cyclone music in underscoring.

That being said, my approach to the music was to try to create a sound that was accessible but not specifically "of our world". In my early work on the score, I even tried to invent a different scale or harmonization system to use, but that proved too limiting and aurally off-putting. So in the end, I tried to write in my style but stay away from pastiche-type references (that is, one couldn't say, "Oh that's a gospel number", "that sounds country-western", etc), except for the Wizard's "Wonderful", which is deliberately meant to evoke the music of old-time America. I admit that a hint of "bubble-gum" music crept into "Popular", in my attempt to give it a "teen"-type sound. But mostly, I tried to give the show a musical palette that could convincingly sound like Oz, and not a totally different Oz from Harburg and Arlen's.

Wicked Music Article

Robert Vieira's article on *Wicked's* Groundbreaking Score, originally posted here, has now been posted at <http://www.musicalwriters.com/musicals/s-z/wicked-1.htm>

In the article, Mr. Vieira analyses the source of the score's success. He maintains that "*Wicked's* score is groundbreaking because it represents a new level of melding pop idioms with sophisticated musical theater song construction." He evaluates each song and the show's interwoven motifs.

SECTION 2 – WICKED SONGS

NOTE: THIS SECTION INCLUDES SOME SLIGHT SPOILERS. IF YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THE SHOW, YOU MIGHT WANT TO SEE IT FIRST BEFORE READING THESE COMMENTS

Wicked Songs List

Question:

First I want to tell you what an amazing composer and lyricist you are. I recently performed in Children of Eden as Adam/Noah and that was such a moving and inspirational show. Now, I was wondering, I'm sure it has possibly been asked but I cannot find the answer anywhere - what is the official new song list of Wicked? Also, what was it while it was in LA? Thank you very much and I could only wish that you "spit out" so many brilliant shows yearly!

Answer from Carol:

You can find a song list for both the cast album and stage production by looking down that page at: <http://www.musicalschwartz.com/wicked-music.htm>

The Wizard and I

Question:

Mr. G: In "The Wizard and I", what is Elphaba referring to when she says "This weird quirk I've tried...". What is the quirk? (I know I sound stupid). Thanks!

Answer from Michael Cole:

Hi Mr. G: The quirk Elphaba is referring to is her magical powers. In the musical, Madame Morrible attempts to wheel Nessarose away from Elphaba, Elphaba gets upset - yells "Let Her Go" and uses her magical powers (This quirk I've tried to suppress or hide") to make the wheelchair spin and move back to Elphaba. Morrible sings about Elphaba's gift (Evidenced by this display) in the following passage. Hope this answers your question. Best, Michael

WIZARD AND ME?

Question:

Is there a reason it's not "The Wizard and Me," as it should be? I have heard rumor that "The Wizard and I" was a late addition to the show, the song was written to fit the vocal range of Idina Menzel. The story is that Idina did not like the vocal sound of the word "me" and felt the notes soared with the open sound of the word "I".

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thanks for your question. However, I don't understand why "the Wizard and I" is grammatically incorrect -- it seems to me just the opposite, since the phrase is always used as the subject of the sentence. For instance: "There we'll finally be, the Wizard and I" -- you wouldn't say "There me'll be", you'd always say "There I'll be". And so on. "The Wizard and me" would be correct if it were the OBJECT of the sentence, e.g. "All Oz loves the Wizard and me." But I don't believe I ever use it that way in the song. So unless I misunderstand the grammatical rule, I think the usage is actually correct. In any event, the rumor that Idina didn't like the sound of "The Wizard and Me" and so it was changed is a complete fiction. I can't imagine where you heard something like that. I never considered any other title, and if I am grammatically incorrect, the fault is entirely mine and Idina is guiltless. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Rhythm and Time Sig. Questions.

Question:

Happy Holidays to all those who use the board! Please, Stephen, if you can - could you clarify what, the compositional device, "Metric Modulation" is? Also, why in "The Wizard and I" for the part: "But I swear some day there'll be a" - you write in 3/4 and then 2/4. What is the difference between doing that compared to writing the whole phrase in a 5/4 bar? This has always been a matter I have had difficulty

getting my head round: The concept of 6/8 verses 3/4 and 12/8 etc. I know it has something to do with the aspect of what you "count it in..." Hope all is well! - Nick

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Hi Nick: In answer to your first question, I have no idea what a metric modulation is. I don't believe I've ever heard the term.

As to your second question, asking why the phrase in WICKED "But I swear someday there'll be..." is written as a 3/4 bar followed by a 2/4 bar, rather than just a 5/4 bar: I generally try to indicate meter in the way that is easiest and fastest for someone to read, and I have found that some pianists stumble over 5/4 bars, whereas they can read 3/4 followed by 2/4 quite easily. Dividing the bar also indicates where the strong beats fall, whereas in a 5/4 bar, the stress is as likely to be on beats 1 and 3 as on beats 1 and 4. As to the difference between 3/4 and 6/8, that again has to do with stressed beats. In a 6/8 bar, the stress tends to be on 1 and 4, whereas in a 3/4 bar, it tends to be 1-2-3. Therefore a 6/8 bar followed by a 3/4 bar will tend to have eighth notes stressed thusly: DA da da DA da da/ DA da DA da DA Da.

This is the pattern in my song "Stranger to the Rain" (as well as in "America" from WEST SIDE STORY) -- it drives me crazy when I hear someone sing "Stranger to the Rain" as if all the bars are 3/4.

As for 12/8, that generally tends to sound to me like 4/4 with triplets. A lot of this also has to do with what will be easiest for the conductor. On occasion, I have changed a meter (from 6/4 to 3/2 for instance) when asked to do so by the conductor.

I hope some of these explanations prove helpful to you (and that I'm actually correct about them from a music theory standpoint.) Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

"What Is This Feeling Inspiration"

Question:

I have been listening to "What is this Feeling" and every time I listen to it, I can't help but think there is another extremely similar song (with Longing in place of Loathing). I was curious if any such song inspired "What is this feeling" or not.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Ryushikaze: If there is a similar song, I am not aware of it and would be interested to know what it is. Obviously, the lyrics to "What is this Feeling" are a satire of such "love-at-first-sight" songs as Rodgers-and-Hammerstein's "Ten Minutes Ago" from CINDERELLA, etc. The concept of the song was to do a "hate-at-first-sight" song instead. But I was not intending to be reminiscent of any one specific song. I suppose if there was a musical inspiration, now that I think about the song, it would be "Nobody's Side" from CHESS, which is one of my favorite theatre scores. Let me know if you figure out what song it is reminding you of. Thanks, Stephen Schwartz

Subtle Queen Reference!?! [What Is This Feeling]

Question:

Quick question to Mr Schwartz, if you are able to reply: Are the four chords after the line "I loathe it all" (about a minute and a half into "What is This Feeling") a reference to the Queen song "I want it all," given the line is pretty much the same as Queen's title. The chords sound like a speeded up version of the start of the chorus to "I want it all," even though your song is in a major key and Queens is minor. If

you have time to respond, thank you! I think Wicked, along with The Light In The Piazza, is the most innovative score to grace Broadway within the last 10 or 20 years.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thanks for the message and the compliments. The reference to the Queen song is completely inadvertent. Either Mr. Mercury (assuming he wrote it) and I just happened to be thinking the same way, or I was unconsciously aware of the song. But it's not a song I know well and I didn't intend to refer to it. Thanks again and best wishes, Stephen Schwartz

Something Bad

Question:

Firstly I'm from Ireland and I'm sure t will be many years (if ever) before Wicked ever comes here so I am insanely jealous of anyone who is able to see it. [The cast album] is truly wonderful from start to finish except for "Something Odd is Happening in Oz." I find this song a little disappointing. It never seems to get going and feels a little like a "filler!" I hope you don't feel insulted about this comment but was just wondering what your thoughts were. Is it the way you wanted it to be and if so perhaps you might shed a little light on that as it may help me understand the song better and hopefully appreciate it more!! Thanks.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Sometimes, in book shows like WICKED, there are musical numbers or sequences that are primarily meant to advance the plot, and don't really stand alone as songs. I think that's the case with "Something Bad". What is happening within that number is central to the story and Elphaba's motivation. I'm not sure you would still think of it as "filler" if you saw how the number works in the context of the show. True, it could have been omitted from the album, but I think people who got the CD after seeing the show might have been disappointed. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Comment by Carol de Giere:

Just to add my 2 cents, "Something Bad" helps with a transition and introduces conflicts that develop more fully later. The scene doesn't call for a big song and dance number or anything, but rather something more subtle. It will make much more sense when you can see it. Some of the emotion is carried by the acting - Elphaba starts to really care about Dr. Dillamond's cause, and that compassion is central to the story.

You'll find more information about the song and the whole talking Animal story on

<http://www.musicalschwartz.com/wicked-animals.htm>

Dancing Through Life!

Question:

Hi Stephen! I love the song Dancing Through Life! It's so uplifting and really cheers me up when i'm feeling down! Wicked is such a fantastic CD, I can't get enough of it, especially Dancing through Life, Defying Gravity and As Long As You're Mine. What sort of things inspire you to write such beautiful music? Is there anything in particular that gave you ideas for certain songs from the show? Just curious....Alex

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Alex: It's interesting you should ask about "Dancing Through Life". That was the last full song written for WICKED, since it replaced a song from the San Francisco production. I had a few ways I felt

the music could go, so I wound up (this is true) writing four separate musical versions of the song and letting my collaborators (the book writer, producer, director, and choreographer) help me decide which to use. It was Wayne Cilento, our choreographer, who was most (pardon the pun) instrumental in the decision to use this version of the music. Thanks, Stephen Schwartz

Dancing Through Life

Question:

What's the reason behind the beautiful silence during Elphaba's solo dance for Dancing Through Life? Do we take this scene in the ballroom to be that the music is diegetic, and that the band have stopped playing? Or - is there a further reason?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

The idea is simply what you say -- the band has stopped playing. Elphaba's gutsy decision to remain at the party and dance by herself, rather than flee in humiliation, is I think amplified by the fact that she is dancing without music. Both actually and symbolically, the music returns when Glinda joins her; one can assume that the power of Glinda to induce people to do what she wants is what makes the "band" start playing again, just as the other students eventually join the dance.

Question/Comment:

I must say, the music that follows is absolutely beautiful - the blending of the themes of "Dancing Through Life" and "Unlimited" really represent Elphaba's integration into the ball - hence social community - at the Ballroom.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thanks, most of the credit for that goes to our excellent dance arranger, Jim Abbott, as well as to arrangers Stephen Oremus and Alex Lacamoire, all of whom contributed to that moment. It was one that took a long time to work out, and our director, choreographer, and creative producer, Joe Mantello, Wayne Cilento, and Marc Platt, all made major contributions to its conception and execution.

Dancing Through Life/Advice Development of Show

Answer from Stephen Schwartz to questions that came in by email and were not posted:

"Dancing Through Life" was the last song written for the show. It replaced a song called "Which Way's the Party?" which was in the out-of-town tryout in San Francisco, and which was itself about my third or fourth try for a song for that spot. I played around with several musical styles for "Dancing Through Life", trying to find what would be best for the character of Fiyero and the actor playing him (Norbert Leo Butz.) I actually wrote four tunes for a verse of the lyric and ran them by my collaborators (Winnie Holzman, Joe Mantello, Wayne Cilento, and the producers). The four styles could be described as:

1. Kind of Frank Sinatra feel
2. Kind of Fred Astaire feel
3. Kind of Billy Joel feel and
4. Kind of Sting feel (this was my favorite and since the choreographer liked it best too, this was the one I went with.)

Then there was a lot of back and forth about the structure of the sequence, where to put the dialogue and in what order the little scenes contained within the number should occur, etc. Some of this was

worked out in rehearsal. And even after our Broadway opening, we still tinkered with the number, improving the choral ending and some of the choreography. So you see, a number like this isn't easy!

Billy Joel....?

Question:

Hi, Stephen. I read in the Grimmerie, that you wrote/wanted to write a Billy Joel style song for Wicked. To you - what makes a Billy Joel style? (The only sound I can come up with for him is that he likes to - if in G major, he likes to get to C major by using F major as a pivot chord...) - but that only happens in his early work. Can you tell us more about this song please? Best, Nick

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Nick: Here's the weird thing -- try as I might, I can't remember which Billy Joel song I was thinking about. What I do remember is that it was a matter of the beat and rhythm of the song rather than the harmonic structure. The situation was this: We had decided to replace the song "Which Way's the Party?", which wasn't working during our San Francisco tryout for several reasons, one of which was that it didn't seem to fit Norbert Leo Butz, our original Fiyero. In thinking about what sort of musical style might work for Norbert, I came up with four ideas -- a sort of Frank Sinatra style, an old-fashioned "The Way You Look Tonight" style, a Billy Joel-esque rhythm, and what I called the "Sting" style. I set the lyrics of the first verse of the new song, "Dancing Through Life", in all four ways, and played them for my collaborators. By that time, of course, I had formed my own preference (which was to the "Sting"-esque rhythm), so when our choreographer, Wayne Cilento, also expressed a preference for that version, we went with it. Now that "Dancing Through Life" exists as a song, I can't remember at all what the other choices sounded like -- it just seems to me as if the tune and rhythm were inevitable and that's simply "how the song goes". But of course, that isn't true. It's interesting how during the writing process, things are so fluid and plastic, but once a song comes into existence, then that's kind of "the song" and other possibilities don't seem, well, as possible anymore. Thanks for asking, Stephen Schwartz

Dancing through Life ending

Question:

Why is the ending of "Dancing Through Life" so abrupt and somewhat anti-climactic? Before you answer, let me notify you that I have yet to see the show! The song is almost eight minutes of fast-paced, high-energy music, with a bit of a breather in the middle. When I first listened to the song, I was expecting a big "ta-da" conclusion to the song, but when it ended, I said to myself, "Huh? That's it??" It just seems to have an ending that is too sudden; it sounds unfinished. Is this sense of abruptness intentional or did you feel that the ending was musically appropriate? Thank you! P.S. WICKED is genius... absolutely thrilling from the first note to the final chord. Excellent work!

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thanks, Joshua. I don't disagree with you that the ending isn't as satisfactory as it might be (it's even more unsatisfactory in the show -- we actually lengthened it for the CD!) Some of this has to do with the number ending in dance and the music being somewhat subservient to the choreography. But I agree that there should have been a way to satisfy what Wayne Cilento wanted to do with the staging and still have the ending be more musical. We just couldn't find it. Glad you like the rest of the score though. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Dancing Through Life

Question:

Dear Stephen, The opening lyric: "The trouble with schools is they always try to teach the wrong lesson". Should this be "The trouble with schools ARE: they always try..."? Some friends of mine say it's correct, others say it is incorrect. I just wonder this, because it would be clever irony if Fiyero got his lyric grammatically incorrect, hence proving school never had an effect upon him. Come to think of it, as I am writing this - am I right in thinking, the time one would use "ARE" is when the troubles are plural "The troubles with schools are they always..." Have I answered my own question here? Please, let me know your opinion!

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

You have answered your own question. Your friends are incorrect. The verb "is" in this sentence relates to the singular subject "trouble" -- as in the simple statement: "The trouble is ..." The phrase "with schools" is modifying, and the verb does not relate to it. Think of it phrased this way: "When it comes to schools, the trouble is they always teach the wrong lesson". You wouldn't say: "When it comes to schools, the trouble ARE they always teach the wrong lesson", would you? Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Dancing Through Life

Question:

Hey Michael! Quick question...when Stephen writes a new song, does he ask you to sing it for him to "test it out"...For example, "Dancing through life"...did he come up to you and suggest you sing it for him to hear if it works out?

Answer from Michael Cole:

Thanks for asking. Since Stephen is a singer, he doesn't need me to do that for him. He also has an amazing gift for knowing what something will sound like especially when he's writing for a certain voice. Dancing Through Life is a perfect example. Also Forgiveness' Embrace, which he wrote for Cass Morgan. And of course Defying Gravity and The Wizard and I written for Idina Menzel. He and I did discuss the Fiyero song on the way to the airport in San Francisco. I was heading home to New York and he was heading to Colorado. Anyhow, he called me when he landed in Colorado a few hours later to tell me that he had written the whole song on his plane trip! So I like to think I had SOMETHING to do with Dancing Through Life. Michael

One Short Day and Wizomania

Question:

I noticed that on One Short Day, they seemed to change the lyrics for One Short "stay" and that on the Wizomania section the tempo was a little bit slower than the original recording. I was wondering first, is this changes are true or just a product of my imagination and second if the music director of the show, in this case the marvellous Kellie Dickerson, must consult with the musician prior to the changes.

Answer from Michael Cole:

I asked Stephen Oremus to answer this question and below is his reply:

We never changed any lyrics, even in the Wizomania section. I don't know what this is in reference to. The only thing different I can think of is the additional "EMERALD CITY" echo at the beginning of the song, but that doesn't involve new lyrics. So, this is in fact a product of the listener's imagination as he suggests!

The tempo may have been a tad bit slower than the CD, which is not surprising as in order to accommodate the musical staging we have always taken that tempo a bit slower live. This is the case for every production worldwide. Stephen Oremus

"Defying Gravity"

Question:

Dear Mr. Schwartz-I am a composer from Illinois. I am 13, and I am currently working on a show. I would like to ask you, where were you inspired for "Defying Gravity"? Thank you- Ryan

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I was wandering around my house and pacing on my patio in my bathing suit (it was summer.) I was trying to imagine I was Elphaba in the situation she is in at the end of the first act, and see what I felt like and come up with a title for the song. I had several, but I kept coming back to "Defying Gravity", because I liked the word "defying" (since she's in a defiant mood) and because the title had both a literal meaning (she was going to fly) and a metaphorical one. So finally I called Winnie and asked her if she liked it, and when she did, I was off and running (flying?) with the song.

How/When/Why the fabulous Defying Gravity?

Question:

I continue to get chills, as I first did in the theater, every time I replay Defying Gravity. It's currently my all-time favorite song from any musical ever. And that's saying something, as I've loved musicals all my life and devour scores for the ones I haven't seen or heard. I can't play piano worth beans, but I read music well and brought The Magic Show to life in my head long before I finally found the songs recorded. So my question is - at what point did Defying Gravity come into being? Was it one of the original songs, written from the start? Did it replace an earlier something? I've seen shows evolve and it's interesting how sometimes the best songs are last minute additions to the show. So I'd love to know the history of that one. It's just FANTASTIC. AMAZING. INSPIRING. Tell me all about it!

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear WICKED lover: Thanks for your message, and obviously, I'm delighted by your enthusiasm for the show. "Defying Gravity" was written fairly early in the writing process and has been in the show since the first reading we did of just the first act in the fall of 2000 (it was written in the summer of 2000.) It is the only song I wrote for the end of the first act (unlike other spots in the show for which I wrote several numbers). The hardest thing about the writing process was arriving at the title, but once I did, the song flowed pretty quickly and easily, and the basic song itself hasn't ever really changed; the lyrics in the final show are the originals, as is the tune and accompaniment. But the surrounding material ("I hope you're happy") evolved over time, and during our readings, Glinda became more involved, as in the chorus where the girls sing in harmony or her line "if we work in tandem", which used to be Elphaba's. (This may be more detail than you wanted, but I thought I would answer fully.) Thanks again for taking the time to write, Stephen Schwartz

"So if you care to find me"

Question:

Mr. Cole, I know that Stephen Schwartz is away right now, but I have a question that you may be able to answer. In Defying Gravity, at "So if you care to find me", is it true that it was actually sung down low during early workshops, then Idina Menzel sang it high one day, and Stephen liked it so he changed it? I read it somewhere, I think, but I can't find where I read it. Thanks, Ryan Parker

Answer from Michael Cole:

Dear Ryan: I'm not sure if it was that exact lyric, but I believe so. I was actually in the room when that happened. It is absolutely true that Idina said, "can I try this up" and Stephen and I were of course blown

away when she did it! I'm pretty sure it was that point in the song. Stephen is very good about letting things influence him when he's writing. He's joked about the flypaper theory - throw enough stuff at it and something is bound to stick. This happened with the title We Deserve Each Other. Stephen and I were riding home together one evening and two names came up - these names are always attached to one another and I innocently asked if they were a couple. Stephen said, "no, but they deserve each other" to which I said, "that sounds like a song title" - and of course that gave him the idea to write that song. The song ultimately got replaced, but that phrase still shows up in the show. Thanks for asking. Michael

Thank Goodness

Dear Stephen, I am a student at the Royal Academy of Music in London and am currently learning 'I couldn't be happier.' I haven't been able to see the show yet and would be grateful if you could give me a little background on the song to help me sing it. Thanks, Nicky

Answer from Michael Cole

Hi Nicky: I know you addressed this to Stephen, but he's too busy right now to respond, so I'll give it a shot. This song is (in my opinion) was some of Kristin Chenoweth's finest acting in WICKED. It is such a complex situation and requires so many different levels. It is supposed to be a very happy occasion for Glinda (her surprise engagement to Fiyero). Morrible begins telling lies about Elphaba and "spinning" the story. Fiyero can't stand there pretending to go along with these lies and encourages Glinda to run off with him. She decides she needs to stay with the crowd to "raise their spirits", but the truth is, she won't go because she can't resist the adulation of the crowd. Glinda realizes Fiyero wants to go and find Elphaba and she tells him that Elphaba doesn't want to be found. Fiyero realizes she is right and agrees to marry Glinda ("if it will make you happy, of course I'll marry you") and then he exits. (He didn't exactly say he was happy to be marrying her.) She then sings the verse that includes "IT IS I ADMIT/THE TINIEST BIT/UNLIKE I ANTICIPATED". Toward the end of the verse she is addressing the crowd again all the while thinking about what has transpired between them. Often in this song, the subtext is actually the opposite of the superficial meaning: example the line "I couldn't be happier" after Fiyero rushes off. So think about the subtext and playing these oppositions. Should be a fun challenge for you. I hope this has been somewhat helpful!? Anyone have anything to add? Michael

Comment from visitor "Sydney"

My favorite thing about this song, as you mention, Michael, is that here is Galinda, getting all she ever wanted, and starting to realize that maybe that's not enough. She's a character who has always thought she knew exactly what her goals were, and like you mention, it's not what she anticipated it would be. It kind of echoes the moment in Act One at the end of "Dancing through Life" when she's finally got the boy and is at the dance with him, and sees everyone making fun of Elphaba and realizes that even though she has what she wants, she feels terrible at having played a part in setting up Elphaba to be laughed at, especially after learning that Elphaba made Morrible include Galinda in her Sorcery Seminar. Thanks to moments like this, Glinda really has such an amazing arc through the story-- eventually learning what it means to be "good". At the end of "I couldn't be happier", she forces a smile and you can hear her fighting to maintain her poise during the "We love you Glinda if we may be so frank..." section. She's just told you, the audience, how much pain she's feeling, even in the presence of her adoring crowd which she has sought for so long.

As Long As You're Mine

Question:

Please help me understand why Elphaba says to Fiyero at the end of "As Long As Your Mine" ... "it's just for the first time I feel wicked". Does Elphaba feel she has betrayed her friendship to Glinda by becoming involved with Fiyero? Or do her sexual feelings towards Fiyero make her feel wicked? Or is it something else? It seems like such an important statement by Elphaba yet I cannot figure out precisely what it is that makes her feel wicked at that moment.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I think the reason the line gets such a strong response from the audience is precisely the ambiguity you cite, that it has a double (or perhaps triple) meaning. I think primarily she is feeling guilty about betraying her friendship with Glinda -- and she is also feeling guilty about the fact that she doesn't feel as bad as a "non-wicked" person should about it. I also think there is the implication of the "fun" connotation of the word "wicked", related to sexuality -- the way she says the line in the show is joyous and exhilarated, not gloomy. I think it is that mix that makes the audience laugh and earns us such a big hand on the song. Thanks for the interesting question, Stephen Schwartz

No Good Deed

Question:

Why was the "Unlimited... the damage is unlimited..." part cut out from No Good Deed later on in the production?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

The song seemed too long in context; it was actually considerably longer in its original form. Plus, we added the (far better and more effective, I think) "I'm limited" intro to "For Good", which made the additional "unlimited" reprise in "No Good Deed" feel like a bit of overkill with that theme (it would then have been sung four times as opposed to the current three.) Thanks for your question and interest, Stephen Schwartz

Similarity between No Good Deed and On the Willows?

Question:

Did you have the same influences for WICKED's No good deed as you did for GODSPELL's On the willows as they are quite similar? Or is it purely coincidence?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thanks for the question. For me, there isn't that much similarity in the two songs, except for the use of an arpeggiated accompaniment; the emotional intention of each was very different for me.

The inspiration for "On the Willows" was the suggestion of the original director, John-Michael Tebelak, that the feel be "oceanic" (I didn't exactly know what he meant, but the music shows how I interpreted it); if there was any model I was thinking of, it was an old Judy Collins recording of "Golden Apples of the Sun".

"No Good Deed" is meant to be much more anxious and intense in feel, and is more classically influenced (Rachmaninoff came to mind when I was discussing the orchestrations with Bill Brohn). Harmonically, it seems to me that "No Good Deed" is much more complex and uses more dissonance; "On the Willows" is simpler and more "placid" in its harmonies. If there is a similarity, it's probably just the fact that I wrote both to my own taste, and perhaps the limitations of my stylistic range. Thanks again for your interest and attention to my work, Stephen Schwartz

Quick "No Good Deed" question

Hi Stephen, I just have one small question that I've been wondering about ever since I first heard this song. Throughout the underscoring of "No Good Deed," I can definitely hear some traces of "Hellfire." I did a search on the forums and someone did ask you about another NGD/Hellfire similarity a couple years ago, though I don't think it was the same one I noticed--namely, the bit that's heard during the transition from "generous supply..." to the first "...no good deed," a theme which sounds a lot like the chorus of "Hellfire" and which appears several more times throughout the song. Even though you didn't actually write the music for the latter song, was this reference intentional? They seem to be slightly similar pieces. Thanks, Alex

Hi Alex: As they say at the front of fiction books, "all resemblances are strictly unintentional." I think it may be a factor of the orchestration, which emphasizes the three quarter notes on the second, third, and fourth beats of several of the bars, a similar rhythmic pattern to the chorus of "Hellfire". When I wrote "No Good Deed" at the piano, the accompaniment was almost exclusively a running 16th-note figure, and I think when one listens to it in that way, there is less similarity. Harmonically, the chords are of course different, other than the fact that both songs are in a minor key -- or at least the chorus of "Hellfire" is in a minor key. All this being said, I don't mind the comparison, since "Hellfire" is one of my favorite songs that Alan and I have written. But I didn't intend for there to be any similarity. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Anger and Profanity in Your Work – No Good Deed, March of the Witch Hunters...

Question:

Mr. Schwartz, I've noticed that by and large your work has no anger in it. Or at least there's no song of yours that I know of dedicated to one character singing about anything hateful or angry. The only songs I can think of right now that are angry are "March Of The Witch Hunters" and "Savages," but both of those are angry mob songs, not one character alone being upset. Is writing angry, angst-filled songs hard to do? Also, from what I have heard you never use any profanity. There are a handful of shows out there that use it so I just wondered why none of yours do. Not that I am encouraging you to do so! Thanks and Happy New Year, Jack

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

That's interesting, Jack. Because actually I find "angry" songs among the easiest to write, and I have long felt they are among the sorts of songs I do best. It's love songs that I find particularly difficult, as I always feel I have nothing new to say or no particularly fresh way to say it. Just shows how different our own perceptions of ourselves are from others'. Among the "angry" songs of mine I feel are the strongest are "Lost in the Wilderness" from CHILDREN OF EDEN, "No Good Deed" from WICKED, the title song from RAGS, "West End Avenue" from MAGIC SHOW, and "Alas for You" from GODSPELL.

It's true I don't tend to use "profanity" in songs, but that often has to do with the character singing and it not seeming appropriate to that character. I certainly have no problem with it in other songs, if it seems true to the character and spirit of the song. My good friend, the wonderful writer John Bucchino, is another who almost never uses profanity in his songs, with the notable exception of his excellent song "Not A Cloud in the Sky", in which an uptight character who is struggling not to feel grief and anger finally ends the song with the line "not a single [censored] cloud in the sky today", probably the most perfect use of profanity in a song I can think of. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Did you have difficulty writing "No Good Deed"?

Question:

Dear Stephen, Did you have difficulty writing "No Good Deed"? I am trying to write a number like that for my musical where a male character expresses his anger as regards who just broke his heart - in a song called "Consequences". I have tried on numerous occasions to write this song, but I never get beyond a few bars. May I ask what music you listened to, to influence you for No Good Deed? I hear bits of Rachmaninoff within the song, but are there any other more composers I could listen to? I have also listened to Hell Fire for influence, as I think that's a good direction too. Any more advice you could offer? Many thanks - Nick

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Hi Nick: Actually, "No Good Deed" was one of the easiest songs in WICKED for me to write. It was originally about twice as long, and I cut it down because of pacing needs in the show. I think all writers have emotional areas that are more readily accessible than others. For whatever reason, I have always found "angry" songs the easiest to write. Maybe there's just a huge well of anger in me that's easy for me to tap into, but songs like "No Good Deed", "Rags", "West End Avenue" or "Lost in the Wilderness" just come very quickly for me. What I find almost impossibly difficult are love songs (which other writers like my friend John Bucchino say are the easiest for them.) I think if I have advice it's simply that you need to find a way to tap into the reservoir within you of the appropriate emotion. See how it expresses itself musically. And do some stream-of-consciousness preparation for the lyrics -- just writing down whatever thoughts or phrases come into your head, many of which you may be able to organize later into the song. Hope this is helpful, and good luck with your song. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Reply from a Forum Visitor:

Ooh, that's excruciating, knowing that my favourite song was originally much longer! Were there any new ideas, or did the extra length derive from the existing semi-quaver themes? The cunning shifting of time signatures keeps the MD on his toes!

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

The additional material, which was set to the same kind of rapidly moving accompaniment, was more generally illustrative of the concept of "No good deed goes unpunished", including observations based on ideas like "Lend money to a friend and you will lose them both" or "Try to settle a quarrel between two people and you'll end up with both of them angry at you". And so on. Fun (and truthful) as it was to philosophize on this topic, it ultimately didn't serve the show well enough, so as I said I eventually cut all material that wasn't highly personal to Elphaba. Stephen Schwartz

Line in No Good Deed

Question:

Dear Mr. Schwartz, A friend of mine and I have been arguing about a line in the song "No Good Deed" and since you wrote it, I thought you would know the answer. At the very beginning of the song does she yell "Fiyeeeeeeeeero!" or "Fiyeroooooo!" In other words, does she hold the "E" or the "O?" Sometimes it soundes like she says "Fiyeeeeeeeeeo!" with no "R." I'd really appreciate it. Thanks

Answer from Michael Cole:

The song is in 4/4 time and it goes like this: The "Fi" is a quarter note, the "ye" is a dotted half note and an eighth note. The "ro" is then an 8th note and three whole notes. So the "E" is held, but the "O" is held much longer. Counting is not my strong point, but I think I have this right. If anyone out there can verify this (who knows how to read music better than I), please do!

For Good

Question:

Mr. Schwartz, I recently saw Wicked and was absolutely overwhelmed! I purchased the cd beforehand and fell in love with the music before seeing the musical. It was my son's first musical - he is 10 - and just the reaction on his face...well, needless to say he is hooked forever! My favorite songs change daily (I listen to the cd in my car going to my job as a public school music teacher) and was wondering what your inspiration was for the song For Good? I can't wait until the songbook comes out so I can learn to play all of these great songs and share them with my vocal students...

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Eileen: Thank you. The song "For Good" was, of course, written for the show to try to express the leading characters' feelings as they are seeing each other for the last time. The title came out of a brainstorming conversation I had with Winnie Holzman (the book writer) -- basically at one point she said it should be about how the two of them had changed each other "for good", at which point, hearing the amazing possibilities in that phrase, I knew I had found the title for the song. To get some of the content, I had a long conversation with my daughter, in which I asked her what she would say to her best friend (someone she has known pretty much all her life), if she knew she was never going to see her again. A lot of what Jessie said got transformed into the first verse of the song. Other than that, it was simply trying to put myself into the hearts and minds of the characters and see what they said.

Thanks again and best wishes, Stephen Schwartz

For Good Harmonies

Question from Jeni:

I would like to say the harmonies between Idina and Kristin in Wicked are some of the most beautiful sounds I have ever heard! Their voices blend soooo nicely and they even sound great when singing together on the same part. They are both so talented with beautiful voices! My sister and I were able to pick out all the different harmonies of each of the girls to sing along with a part but there was one part which has had us both stumped. We can't seem to figure out who sings the higher harmony and who sings the lower in "For Good". It's the part at the end of the song when they sing "Who can say if I've been changed for the better. I do believe I have been changed for the better". It's been driving us crazy and we would really like to know who sings which one. Everytime I think it's Idina, the next time I listen it sounds like Kristin and vice versa. HELP PLEASE!

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Jeni: Thank you for your message. And your question indicates you and your sister have very good ears. Virtually every time Idina and Kristin are singing harmony in the show, Kristin takes the higher part. However, in the one section of "For Good" which you ask about, it is the opposite! On those two lines, Kristin is on the lower part. This is because it was something we improvised in rehearsal, and then the two girls liked singing those parts, so we kept it that way. I hope this will no longer "drive you crazy" and you both can now be smug about your excellent ears for music. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

SECTION 3 – LYRICS

Lyrics input and inspiration

Question:

Mr. Schwartz: My business trips take me to NYC several times a month and my Wicked attendance odometer now reads "6". Each performance reinforces the cleverness of your lyrics which permeate the entire musical. On average, how many drafts do you develop before a song is finished? Do you use a thesaurus that contains only multi-syllabic words? I have always remembered and applauded your

creative audacity in Pippin when you utilized "charlatan" and "Charlemagne" - in the same line, no less!
(the prize in Wicked!, by the way, goes to "frank analysis/personality dialysis" Larry Klock

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Mr. Klock: Thanks for the message. Generally, the way I write lyrics is non-linear, so that before there is even a first draft of a song, I have accumulated lots of little thoughts and phrases and lists of words and possible rhymes for the title, etc. on a couple of pads of paper. As I do that, the song begins to come into focus for me, and this process leaves me free to just toss out ideas to myself, most of which are ultimately rejected. But that's where the inspiration for a rhyme like "frank analysis/personality dialysis/become a pal, a sister..." will come from. It leaves one as a writer open to those little bursts of inspiration, those happy accidents and discoveries that I find rarer if I am proceeding in a more linear fashion. Then my instinct will tell me when I am ready to begin "assembling" the song. Thereafter it will go through a polishing and honing process, and occasionally discoveries occur there too, but the bulk of the work has been done in this more freely associative way. That's probably more than you wanted to know, but since you asked, there it is. Thanks again for the complimentary words, Stephen Schwartz

A comment from Jade to the first post:

absurd degree....verdigris' is fantastic also! How on earth that came about is incredible. I had to look it up in a dictionary and was of course delighted with the definition! So clever!

A comment from Glenn:

The show is full of wonderful and witty wordplay. Some of my favorites are:

Those who don't try never look foolish...
frank analysis...personality dialysis...become a pal, a sis
-terand adviser There's nobody wiser...
not about aptitude... the way you're viewed...it's very shrewd
So...what's the most swankified place in town?
..... [and all of For Good]

Lyrics in "Popular" from Wicked

Question:

Hello, and first and most importantly, Wicked is an AMAZING musical and so much fun to listen to - easily my favorite one and the best I've heard in a long time. In "Popular", Galinda sings: "I remind them on their own behalf To think of/Celebrated heads of state or 'Specially great communicators/Did they have brains or knowledge?/Don't make me laugh!"

So I'm wondering, is that 'great communicator' put in there as a sly little joke referencing Ronald Reagan? It fits so well that I thought for sure that it was, since he even made fun of himself for being more popular than brilliant, but my friend is convinced that it's way too farfetched to be so. Anyway, thank you again for such a great musical!--Liz

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Liz: I hope you made a bet with your friend, because you win. The phrase "the Great Communicator" is famous as a flattering description of Ronald Reagan, and it's not at all an accident that it wound up in a song called "Popular". Thanks for catching it. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

The genius lyricist strikes again! Popular lyrics

Question:

Oh boy! I just finished listening to the Wicked soundtrack for about the fifth time - it arrived a couple of days ago - and I'm kicking myself that I live on the other side of such a large planet -- I really want to see this show! While getting to know the songs, I once again found myself shaking my head, smiling and chuckling in absolute awe of how CLEVER Stephen's lyrics are. I don't believe there is a lyricist alive or dead who produces such ingenious rhymes, and as a fellow songwriter it both infuriates and fascinates me that he has this uncanny talent. What a gift! Best example in point: "And with an assist from me/To be who you'll be/Instead of dreary who-you-were... ARE...There's nothing that can stop you/From becoming popu-Ler... LAR!" I was rolling on the floor when I first heard that line. So, so clever. Thank you once again for sharing your unbelievable talent, Mr. Schwartz.

And I was wondering, with a passage of lyrics like the one just mentioned - does the rhyme just pop into your head while brainstorming ideas, or does it take a long time to find a suitable rhyme? While clever, many of your rhymes seem so effortless; yet they never seem out-of-place or "desperate" rhymes. Fingers crossed Wicked will come to Australia. I'd be sure to try out for the part of Fiyero. I'm waiting for Hunchback to go international so that I can audition for Quasimodo! I continue to practice "Made of Stone" in the hope that it will happen someday...Thanks again, Stephen. You're a living legend!

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thanks! Coming up with the "ler ... lar" lyric was one of those lucky inspirations that just happen, like "You'll learn things you never knew you never knew" from "Colors of the Wind". As best I remember, I had gotten Glinda's line "instead of dreary who you were" that would rhyme with "popular", pronounced the common way with the "er" sound at the end. Then I thought it would be amusingly in character for Glinda to correct the "were" and say "are", and suddenly realized that "are" would rhyme with "popular" mispronounced the way it is spelled. It was just staring me in the face. As I say, lucky. As to an Australian production: I certainly hope there's one relatively soon. I'm dying to get to Australia, and this would be a perfect opportunity! Thanks again for the compliments, Stephen Schwartz

Wondering about "Popular"

Question:

I was discussing "Popular" with my dad, and he thinks that there is a more intricate play on the word "popular" than the obvious attempt to rhyme with the word "are." Since Galinda sings "po-pu-LER" the whole song, is there a realization at that point in the song to rhyme with "are", that it should have been "po-pu-LAR" the whole time? Or...is this just reading in too much?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I'm afraid I'm not quite as clever as you give me credit for. In writing the song, I came up with the line "Instead of dreary who you were ... are" and then realized that the words "were" and "are", incredibly fortuitously, rhymed with "populER" and "popuLAR", and thus a joke was born, exploiting the fact that the word "popular" is not pronounced exactly as it's spelled. I didn't have any master plan beyond that specific line. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Popular

Question:

Hi Stephen, WOW what an awesome song!!! How did you come up with the words for it? The first time I heard the song my friend Adam mimed it and it was hilarious because he's the most manliest man you could possibly imagine. Well Good Luck in the Future. Kitty

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thanks, Kitty. That sounds funny -- thank your friend Adam for me. To come up with the words, I just tried to imagine the popular cheerleader girls I went to high school with and what advice they would give to someone like Elphaba. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Popular - "like me" ending

Question:

Why is it that "Popular" (from Wicked) and "Extraordinary" (from Pippin) have the same ending?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I assume you're referring to the lyrics "like me", since the melody and harmonies are different in each song. Probably it's because the word "me" is a very effective last word to sing. I wasn't consciously aware of the lyric ending being the same when I wrote "Popular", but now that you point it out, I think the same impulse that led me to end "Extraordinary" in that way (a combination of knowing it was a good ending to get a slight laugh and a big hand and also that it would be good for the singer) led me to those same two words for the end of "Popular". I hope the fact that the other elements of the songs are so different helps to keep it from seeming as if I'm repeating myself. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Dancing Through Life

Question:

The lyrics to "Dancing Through Life" do seem to me superior to the old "Which way's the party?" but I was wondering what prompted the change. Were you never really satisfied with "Which way's the party?" to begin with, or did something in particular inspire you to rewrite the song?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I began to feel that the song needed to be more clearly a statement of Fiyero's philosophy of life. "Which Way's the Party?" seemed to be functioning simply as an "up number", without really defining the character as much as I hoped it would. So I made the subtext of "Which Way's the Party" the text of "Dancing Through Life". I also tried to write a number that would fit better on the actor playing Fiyero, Norbert Leo Butz, both in its musical style and its lyric content.

Dancing Through Life

Question:

I'm kind of a song lyric obsessive and I absolutely LOVE "Dancing Through Life". However, there is one line that gets me. In the part where it goes, "Nothing matters / But knowing nothing matters / It's just life" etc. etc. I'm curious as to whether you meant knowing nothing matters in the sense that a lack of knowledge matters or the sense that since you already know that nothing matters, keep dancing through life. I know it's random but it really bugs me. Thanks bunches! Angela

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Angela: My intended meaning was that the only important thing in life is to know that there is nothing really important, so one should just have fun. Of course, this is not my personal belief, but Fiyero's professed belief at the time he sings the song. I regret if the meaning isn't as clear as I had thought. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

One Short Day - Hoi Polloi?

Question:

In the song One Short Day Elphaba and Glinda say "I wanna be in this hoi polloi". What does that mean?

Answer from Anonymous:

I am pretty sure it is Greek for "the people" it is used a lot in English to mean the vast crowd of ordinary folks.....

Answer from Michael Cole:

hoi polloi \hoi-puh-LOI\, noun: The common people generally; the masses.

Lyric Change on Thank Goodness, etc.

Question:

Mr. Schwartz, First off, welcome back! You've been gone for quite a while. Hope everything went OK! Anyway, I was just looking over some San Francisco; New York lyric changes for WICKED and I noticed that a LOT of things were changed. Some I understood, and I realize that things needed to be cut/changed and that's why you had the San Francisco try-outs, but there was one lyric change I couldn't understand. In "Defying Gravity", I noticed that Glinda used to sing "I hope you're happy / I hope you're happy there / I hope you find somewhere they understand you as I grew to / I hope you find it..." I just have to say that these are really great lyrics and I think it's terrible that they had to be cut. Do you think there's any chance that maybe they could show up later in the show? Maybe on the tour or in the Chicago production? Did you have any say in the deletion of these lines or was it someone else who cut it? I happen to think these are great lyrics and really hope that somehow they're able to work their way back into the show!

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thanks for your enthusiasm for WICKED and your interesting question. First of all, it should please you to know that there can never be cuts or changes made in a show covered by the Dramatists Guild (as WICKED is) without the express permission of the author. This is one of the reasons it is important for all playwrights, composers and lyricists who wish to write for the theatre to join the Dramatists Guild. (I know that's not what you asked, but I thought this was a good opportunity for me to promote an organization I feel very strongly about.)

In this specific instance, I must plead guilty. The cut came from me, and falls under the heading of what I would call a "murdered darling". The reason for the cut is that it felt to me during the San Francisco tryout that that section of the scene was taking too long and that we wanted to get back to "Defying Gravity" faster. So, much as I also liked that lyric (plus the rhyme of "grew to" and Elphaba's answering "You too"), I devised a way of combining two verses of the "I Hope You're Happy" section into one. Since I think the whole "Defying Gravity" sequence is working very well now, I don't regret the cut, which I still believe was for the good of the show, even though I miss the specific lyrics. There are several other cuts like that in WICKED, as in all shows on their way to a final version, but that's part of the process of shaping a musical. Thanks again for your message -- and for providing me with an opportunity to proselytize about the Dramatists Guild -- and best wishes, Stephen Schwartz

Thank Goodness

Question:

Dear Stephen, I was having a discussion the other day with my friend Herb about your fabulous score for WICKED. Herb too loves the score but seems to have an issue with the song "Thank Goodness" (aka "I Couldn't Be Happier".) Specifically, he thinks (insists!), that throughout the song, the accent doesn't fall in the correct place on the word happ-i-er. He describes this as "problematic prosody." Herb's a

songwriter and rather finicky about these sorts of details. In any discussion I've had about the score with other fans (including some songwriters) this has never once been expressed as an issue. I should mention that it's one of my favorite songs in the show so I'm keen to put Herbie boy in his place (well, in a nice sort of way). Any kind of ammunition would be very much welcome.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Paul: First of all, let me say that I actually share your friend Herb's finickiness about prosody. For instance, it always bothers me when people rhyme "me" with "tenderLY", putting the accent incorrectly on the last syllable. I know this is very common songwriting practice, but it continues to bug me; it is the one complaint I had with the otherwise brilliant lyrics of Howard Ashman, for instance (e.g. rhyming "be" with "unexpectedLY" in "Beauty and the Beast".) So I try to be pretty scrupulous about not putting the emPHAsis on the wrong sylLable. I submit that Herb is mistaken about "I Couldn't be Happier", and I will explain why. I suspect his problem stems from the fact that the last syllable is held out, and it makes him think that is where the stress is. But that is not the case. The rhythm of the setting puts the stress on the first and fourth syllables -- "COULD-n't be HAP-pier"; it's the same rhythm as "MER-rily MER-rily" in "Row, Row, Row your Boat". If you imagine singing the latter and holding the last syllable of "merrily" a beat or two, it still doesn't change the stress on the first syllable of the word. Try it. In addition, the tune of "I Couldn't be Happier", by hitting its highest note on the "HAP" of "happier", reinforces this. To demonstrate that this is true, try singing a phrase that SHOULD have the emphasis on the last beat (where I suspect Herb is contending that it is) to the tune of "I Couldn't be Happier" -- e.g. "The girl's going to the STORE" or "I'm reading a Le Car-REÂ". You'll find that the stress falls on the wrong word ("The girl's going TO the store" or "I'm reading a LE Carre".) I hope this will give you the ammunition you seek to counter Herb's argument, though I hate to have to disagree with anybody who's a stickler for correct prosody. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

WONDERFUL changes

Question:

I would also like to look at the new lyrics for "Wonderful" if possible. Changes made to a play because of changes in performers seem particularly relevant to my topic.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

The changes made in "Wonderful" are as follows:

1. I put back a couplet which had been cut as we were structuring the song for Joel Grey and which I decided was thematically important and that I missed:

"The truth is not a thing of fact or reason /The truth is just what everyone agrees on".

2. Instead of a choreographed "button" -- that is, ending the number on a choreographic step -- I put in the following few lines:

WIZARD AND ELPHABA: "Won't it be wonderful? We'll BOTH be wonderful!"

WIZARD: "Once you TOO are the wonderful ONE"! This now gets a bigger hand for George Hearn as the Wizard, since he gets to display his great voice and is not really a dancer the way Joel Grey was. So we now have two endings, one for a Wizard whose strength is movement and one for a Wizard whose strength is singing, and I'm sure we will go back and forth, depending on who's playing the role throughout our run. The replaced couplet, however, is staying for good, no matter who plays the role. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Alternate Lyrics in Wicked - As Long As You're Mine

Question:

Hi, Mr. Schwartz. I was listening to As Long As You're Mine the other day and for some reason, another set of lyrics for Fiyero's first verse in that song came to my mind. I don't know where I heard or read them or anything, and I don't know when they were used. "What am I doing? /What's this I feel? /The boy who was certain/Love was unreal.../Somehow I've fallen /Under your spell/And somehow I'm feeling/ It's up that I fell. " If these lyrics were used in the show at some point, which cast was it? Also, why were they changed? I love these! :-) Thanks, Sarah.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Sarah: Those are Fiyero's lyrics from an earlier version of the song. They may even have been the first version, in which case they would have been sung by Raul Esparza (who was the first person to sing the song, along with Stephanie Block, in a presentation for Universal.) At the early readings, they would have been sung by David Burnham, who played Fiyero for us at several of the early readings (and I hope will again at some point.) They may even still have been in the show during the San Francisco tryout (in which case Norbert Leo Butz would have sung them), but by the time we got to NY, the lyrics had been rewritten, because I felt they were not specific enough for the character or the situation, though I still like them as "pop" lyrics. That's probably more information than you wanted, but there it is. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Spells

Question:

In the end of the first act and second act, Nessa and Elphaba use a few spells. Does anyone know what the lyrics of the spells are? I had a fight with a friend of mine over this. Do they keep using "Eleka Nahmen Nahmen Ah Tum Ah Tum Eleka Nahmen" and what they say after it makes the spell, or are there different spells? If I am correct, Nessa says "Ah Tum", but I dunno. Thanks!

Answer from Michael Cole:

I'm not exactly sure what you're asking. I believe Stephen made up the spells by altering words from various languages - words that have something to do with the spells they are trying to cast. So I believe each one of them is different. Does that answer your question? They aren't literal, but there may be clues in them if you're good with language. I believe Idina said it reminded her of her Bat Mitzvah, so it came very easy for her.

Spell in No Good Deed

Question:

What does the "spell" that Elphaba is chanting at the beginning of No Good Deed mean? Thanks, Angel

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Unlike many of the spells in WICKED, which use words adapted from several languages (Latin, Greek, Italian, and German), the "eleka nahmen" spell at the beginning of "No Good Deed" is one I simply made up out of sounds that I liked and felt "magical" to me. It is supposed to be the spell she finds in the Grimmerie that she uses to try to save Fiyero. Thanks for your interest, Stephen Schwartz

Lyrics in counter melody

Question:

I recently saw Wicked in London with the wonderful Idina Menzel playing Elphaba. I was curious though, in the second half the song that Nessarose is singing, Wicked Witch of the East, Idina was singing a lovely counter melody..would it be, for Boq. I was wondering Mr Schwartz what are the lyrics

that the Elphaba is singing as I found it haunting and very beautiful. Your score for Wicked Mr Schwartz is something that each time I hear it I hear something different, a new layer to a lyric or the music.

Thank you. Kindest Regards

Best Wishes, Emerald_Isle_Fan (who travelled from the Emerald Isle to the Emerald City.)

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Emerald Isle Fan: The chant Elphaba sings while Nessarose is singing is indeed a spell involving Boq. At this point, let me announce a SPOILER ALERT, so that anyone who hasn't seen the show STOPS READING NOW, since the rest of this will give away a plot surprise. Okay, I'm assuming anyone who is still reading knows what the spell Elphaba puts on Boq involves and why she does it. The words of the chant (which of course I invented, using bits of Latin, Italian, Greek, etc.) are: Meno non cordoMeno non cordoCordahlos, vivahlos, vivahlosMeno non cordoVivahlos, vivahlos Meno non cordo

For those who know the above languages at all, the word roots of "non cordo" and "vivahlos" should pretty clearly suggest living without a heart. Thanks for the question and your appreciation of that music, which if I do say so myself, I also like a lot. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Some Fuzzy Lyrics

Question:

Hello! This is my first post... Wow.

M'kay, so I LOVE Wicked and all, but there are two big questions I've been meaning to ask. I promise that I've searched the forums, but they're not there.

Here goes:

One - In the ancient San Francisco Previews, I loved the old Version of No Good Deed. However, I couldn't understand some of the words in the (now-deleted) "unlimited" verse. Here's what I remember:

"Unlimited...
The damage is
Unlimited
To everyone I have tried to help
Or tried to love...
((Something)) Fiyero,
You're the latest victim of
My greatest achievement
In a long career of distress...
Everytime I could,
I tried making good,
and what I made was a mess!
((Something something something))
Yes!
You could call (it/them?) limitless..."

Could you help me fill in the "something"s and decide between "it" or "them"? Since they aren't in the show anymore, I don't have a reference and didn't think that it would be against the law to ask you guys.

And two - I love listening to the way your spells for Elphaba just flow out of the actresses' mouths.

However, I can only catch bits and pieces of them when I see the show (besides "Eleka nahmen...etc.")
When Elphaba enchants the monkey to fly and the broom to levitate, what is she saying? What incantation does she use to bewitch Nessa's shoes? What does she say in order to (DELETED SPOILER)?
Actually, I think that's all of the chants... Gosh, so many questions; I hope I didn't ask too much of you. Don't feel obliged to give away anything you would be legally uncomfortable sharing!

Answer from Michael Cole:

Below is the original lyric followed by the chants. The words in the chants don't necessarily mean anything, but if you know anything about etymology, you may be able to figure out how Stephen arrived at some of these "words". Best, Michael

Unlimited
The damage is Unlimited
To ev'ryone I have tried to help
Or tried to love...
And lucky Fiyero –
You're the latest victim of
My long long list of harm
My parade of distress...
When I tried making good
All I made was a mess
Destructiveness
To excess
All right, yes –
you could call it limitless...

Chants before Defying Gravity - Levitation Spell: AHBEN TAHKAY, AHBEN TAHKAY, AHBEN AHTUMAHBEN
TAHKAYAHENTAYAH TINFENTAHAHBEN TAHKAY

Chant in Wicked Witch of the East: MENO NON CORDOMENO NON CORDOCORDAHLOS, VIVAHLOS,
VIVAHLOSMENO NON CORDOVIVAHLOS, VIVAHLOSMENO NON CORDO...

These were the original chants for No Good Deed: AD NAY PRAE TUM ISTERFAH TUM AN TAY
DAYCULUMAD NAY PRAE TUM ISTERFAH TUM AN TAY DAYCULUM...ELEKA NAHMEN NAHMENAH TUM
AH TUM ELEKAH NAHMENELEKA NAHMEN NAHMENAT TUM AH TUM ELEKA... ELEKA...

I don't mean to be a pest, but what were the words to the chant Elphaba recites to enchant Nessarose's shoes?

Answer from Michael Cole

Stephen Schwartz confirmed that this is the correct chant: Ambulahn dahre pahto pahpootAmbulahn
dasca caldapessLaufenahto laufenahatumPede pede caldapessAmbulahn dahre pahto pahpootAmbulahn
dasca caldapessLaufenahto laufenahatumPede pede caldapess

WICKED Vocabulary Questions

Question:

My daughter asked me what "disinterest" meant at the end of "Popular" I explained that to be disinterested means to be unbiased or impartial the way a judge shouldn't favor one side over another. But, of course, this definition does not work in the context of the show. Is the point in the song that Galinda tries to use vocabulary that she doesn't really understand in that she uses "disinterest" when she means "lack of interest"?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

According to my dictionary, the first definition of "disinterest" is "absence of interest; indifference", and it is in this sense that the word is used. Elphaba is pretending to be "disinterested" -- i.e., that she is indifferent to the effects of Galinda's makeover efforts, whereas in reality they mean a great deal to her.

SECTION 4 - CUT SONGS

Fall 2003 - Stephen Schwartz's first comments on changes since San Francisco, and Q and A.

Question:

Would it be possible for someone to share with us tales about the recording session and tell us what changes were made to the score since it left San Francisco? Are there any plans to actually videotape the sessions like was done for "The Producers"? This is the first time in a great while that I'm eagerly awaiting a cast recording!

Answer from Michael Cole in the late summer of 2003, with comments from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Ron: We don't have any details about the recording session yet. They have other priorities at the moment as at this point they have one week of rehearsals left before they begin a very complicated technical rehearsal. I'm sure we'll get more details as soon as the show opens and perhaps even during previews. I'll share them as I get them. Here is what we know about changes to the score:

(Quote from Stephen Schwartz) "At this point, there is only one brand new song, a replacement for Fiyero's first number, "Which Way's the Party", which is called "Dancing Through Life". I have done much trimming and reshaping on other existing songs, and there are several new intro verses to songs which involve reprise material -- this is one of my favorite techniques and makes the score feel more through-composed, and it was something I couldn't do too much of until I knew what the final songs were going to be." Best, Michael

Regrets?

Question:

Were there any songs that were cut from Wicked that you wish could have been left in?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

There were a couple of songs that I liked that I replaced, particularly Elphaba's first song, "Making Good", which was replaced by "The Wizard and I." But in all cases, I felt the replacement songs were improvements, particularly in terms of story-telling.

Cut Songs

Question:

Hello Mr. Schwartz, I heard about these cut songs from Wicked. What were the contexts of each song, and who sang them? They sound very interesting. Also, why didn't you base any of the spells Elphaba sings off Hebrew words? That would have sounded very beautiful. Thanks!

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

There were several of them, as is often the case with musicals as they are developed. Many were earlier tries at songs which wound up in the show. For instance, there were two versions of songs called "Making Good" for the moment that ultimately became "The Wizard and I" and four previous attempts at the first Galinda/Elphaba number that ultimately became "What Is This Feeling?" (Two of them were entitled "Bad Situation", another "Far Be it From Me", and there was another version of "What Is This Feeling?" with similar lyrics to the final version but totally different music.)

Many people know that a number called "Which Way's the Party?" for Fiyero was replaced by "Dancing Through Life"; prior to that, I had made other attempts at first numbers for Fiyero with Galinda, including three entitled "Who Could Say No To You?", "Easy as Winkie Wine", and "We Deserve Each Other".

I tried for some time to come up with a number for Nessarose when she first walks in Act Two, including the one you mentioned, "Step by Step", but all of them seemed to take too much time away from the central story. And so on ...

Regarding your question: "why didn't you base any of the spells Elphaba sings off Hebrew words? That would have sounded very beautiful."

That's probably the case, but I am not as familiar with Hebrew as with the languages I used. I've just finished doing some chanted spells for the soundtrack of the upcoming Disney movie ENCHANTED, and again I used a combination of languages I know a bit (Latin, Greek, German, Danish, and French); I wish I'd had your suggestion of Hebrew before I wrote them, as I might have been able to incorporate it. Well, at least I used the Hebrew for the "ashira" section of "When You Believe" in PRINCE OF EGYPT. Thanks for the questions and your interest, Stephen Schwartz

As if By Magic

Question:

... Can you tell me more information about As if By Magic, maybe the history of it? Also, if you have a recording of you playing it or someone singing it, would you be willing to send it to me? Thank you so much, Ricky

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

The song was from a very early version of WICKED, when Doctor Dillamond was closer to the character in Gregory Maguire's novel, a biology teacher trying to distill an "essence of consciousness" to prove that Animals and humans are equal. In this song, somewhat inspired by "The Rain in Spain", Dillamond, Elphaba, and Fiyero celebrate the success of this experiment, and in dancing and celebrating together, Fiyero and Elphaba realize their mutual attraction to one another. Ultimately, Winnie Holzman and I decided it was too hard to explain the whole "essence of consciousness" idea, so we began to devise the alternative concept of Dillamond being a history teacher and the Animals being intimidated into losing the power of speech.

The song was performed by our current Broadway Doctor Dillamond, Steven Skybell, in an early reading of the show. However, to my knowledge, there is no recording of it, either from that reading or in any demo version by me. Sorry. But thanks for your interest. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Cut Music from Wicked

Question:

Does anyone know where I can find copies of some music that was cut from the show before it was on Broadway? I am talking about songs that never made it like, "Happy Healing Day," and "The Chance to Fly" which is an alternative to Defying Gravity which was never used. I really want it so I can hear it and see what some of the different music sounded like.

Reply from Carol de Giere:

You must have seen a list of songs from a very early reading, like 2001. "Happy Healing Day" was an earlier take on "Thank Goodness" and filled the same role in the musical of opening Act II. The citizens were healing from the stress of always having to be on the lookout for the Wicked Witch. One of the reasons musical composers don't record earlier versions of their work is that it often evolves into something richer. "Thank Goodness" is one of the most rich and complex songs in WICKED.

"A Chance to Fly" was a very short piece along the lines of what you hear in the present score when the Wizard sings "Everyone deserves a chance to fly." It wasn't ever, as I recall from the reading I saw, an alternative to "Defying Gravity," but rather an earlier version of "Sentimental Man."

There are no public sources for hearing those particular song fragments, unless Stephen decides to release them.

Which Way's the Party

Question:

I am teaching a unit on musical theatre to my 5th Grade. As part of the unit, I am showing the section from the PBS video "Wicked: Journey to Broadway." In that video section it mentions that "Which Way to the Party" was replaced by Dancing through life. Would it be possible to find out more details? For instance, what caused the change? Was "Dancing Though Life" already written? If not, how long did it take to write it? was it previewed in san Francisco? Etc. Thanks for your time

Answer Stephen Schwartz pasted in from another post:

I began to feel that the song needed to be more clearly a statement of Fiyero's philosophy of life. "Which Way's the Party?" seemed to be functioning simply as an "up number", without really defining the character as much as I hoped it would. So I made the subtext of "Which Way's the Party" the text of "Dancing Through Life". I also tried to write a number that would fit better on the actor playing Fiyero, Norbert Leo Butz, both in its musical style and its lyric content.

SECTION 4 – WICKED SHEET MUSIC

Wicked Sheet Music

Question:

Question/comment from "Musical Dreamer" from before the sheet music was available:

Dear Mr. Schwartz, I have to say you are an amazing composer and musical person. The fact that you had the amazing story of "Wicked" transformed into a musical has touched me so much. Since I was little I've always loved the movie Wizard of Oz and cherished it, especially for it's music. Now, thanks to you, I have a new favorite musical. ^^ The CD has been running endlessly in my cd player and the music NEVER leaves my head! I'll be somewhere and all of a sudden I'll begin to hum "Defying Gravity" or any other song from the show. Words cannot express how much I love this musical and everything about it. I just wanted to thank you SOO incredibly much for this gift. I've seen it once and I'm going again on January 28th and I'm as ecstatic as ever!! I'm also itching for when the music book comes out. I've been playing piano and flute for several years and I have figured out most of it by ear, but I don't want to miss a beat!! I have one question for you. Of course this has been an EXTREME amount of hard work for you,

creating all of this beautiful music and putting together such a wonderful musical, it must have become stressful at one point. I just want to know how your feelings are about the final product? The exhilaration of doing all this work and finally being able to see this breathtaking masterpiece you have created. How does it feel?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Musical Dreamer: Thank you for your message and for all the compliments about WICKED. Needless to say, I am delighted (and not a little relieved) that the show is doing so well and that so many people seem to be liking both the show and the CD. I am currently working on trying to get the vocal selections ready for publication as soon as possible. As you suggested, the last few months of putting on a new Broadway musical are extremely stressful -- there is so much pressure, what with so much at stake financially for so many people, so many reputations on the line, and the relatively hostile environment that is Broadway these days. And this is of course coupled with the reality that a production of a show, no matter how well achieved, can never really be what the authors had in their heads, so there are all sorts of emotional adjustments to be made. That being said, at least on WICKED my co-author Winnie Holzman and I were blessed with wonderful producers and a cast as congenial as they are talented, so that some of the stress could be minimized. And now, receiving Emails such as yours helps to make it all seem as if it was worth it. Thanks again, Stephen Schwartz

Wicked Music

Question from before the sheet music was available:

Do you know if the sheet music (either book) will be written in the original Broadway key? Or if the music will be written in a key easier for the publisher to print? If it turns out to be different from the Broadway score, how much of a key change will it be? Georgia

Dear Georgia: In all cases except one, the piano vocal selections are in the show keys. The only change I recall is "For Good", which I transposed down a step from Db to C. I did this because, since it is a song that's becoming so popular, I thought it would be easier for many people to play in C than Db and I thought the half-step would not make a huge difference. Most of the other songs are in relatively easy keys to play, and the ones which are not, such as "One Short Day", I left in the original key because of modulations within them that then would have wound up in difficult keys, or in the case of "Defying Gravity", because I think the accompaniment sounds considerably better on the piano in the original Db than in C or D (which would also get too high vocally.) Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

STEPHEN SCHWARTZ EXPLAINS DETAILS ABOUT THE WICKED SONGBOOKS

Dear friends: I'm delighted to report that the songbooks for WICKED have finally been released. However, they have been released in two different piano formats, and I'm not so delighted to report that it's very difficult to tell them apart from the covers or a cursory glance through them. I have asked the publisher, Hal Leonard, to append a sticker or something that makes the distinction clear, but until that occurs, I thought I would try to clarify it for you: The book labeled Vocal Selections has the accompaniment as played by me or the show orchestra -- that is, it DOES NOT contain a piano part that has been adjusted to include the melody in the right hand. This is the book that was carefully prepared by me. The book labeled Piano/vocal selections DOES have a piano part that has been adjusted to include the melody; this is also, purportedly, slightly easier to play. (It is also longer, because the adjusted piano parts require more room on the page. It DOES NOT contain any additional material.) Both seem to cost the same. I greatly regret any confusion, and as I say, I am trying to get Hal Leonard to do something about it as quickly as possible. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Wicked Choral Arrangements

Just wondering if there were any choral arrangements of the Wicked music in the works. My junior high choir just performed (and thoroughly enjoyed) Audrey Snyder's arrangement of "When You Believe" from the Prince of Egypt, and I would love to let my groups tackle some of the music from Stephen's newest show. I'm picturing "For Good" as a graduation-style anthem or "Dancing through Life" for swing choir... Maybe a published medley... tons of possibilities with such great music! and I was just wondering if anything was planned for a fall '04 release. thanks!

Answer from Carol de Giere:

Find Choral Highlights info at

<http://www.musicalschwartz.com/choral-music.htm>

Praise for Songbook

Dear Stephen (whom I know won't read this until after his deserved vacation): I recently received my Wicked sheet music (Piano Vocal version). Please indulge my lengthy tribute to what you've done here. I'm a 49 year old amateur piano player who has been collecting and playing sheet music for about 35 years. (Your scores for Godspell and Pippin are two of the oldest and best loved ones in the collection.) Given my love of the CD and the show (which I got to see in N.Y.), the arrival of the sheet music was a much anticipated event. I do not sing, so I am always caught wanting sheet music to be accurate, but not to the point where I can't interpolate the melody. Your version of Wicked is simply the finest adaptation of a show to a book of sheet music I have ever encountered. You took the time to edit songs to fit this format, kept as much of the full sound as you could, but always making it playable, as you say in the Introduction, by one person, two hands. Some songs are revelations. No One Mourns The Wicked, for example, sound almost angry in the show (appropriately so), but becomes a mournful lament when one plays the lovely opening arpeggios. You (and those you worked with), obviously put great care and love in this book. I know you don't win awards for good sheet music, and I doubt its a big part of the financial picture. You did it because you care about the integrity of the product. I wanted you to know that at least one person appreciates every note of it. Jonah

P.S. I have the other version on order, as I want to compare the two books.

Reply from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Jonah: Thank you for your message, and I am glad you are enjoying the book. I have to give the credit for adapting my piano accompaniment, so that it contains the melody without losing the feel of the original, to Mark Carlstein and his excellent staff at Hal Leonard Publishing. I will be sure your email gets forwarded to them, and I appreciate your taking the time to write. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Defying Gravity Piano Vocal

Question: This might be a repeated question...so, If Stephen, Michael or Carol could answer, I would be grateful. Here goes...

In the Vocal/Piano Book, Defying Gravity appears to go into a part from the Wizard and I. Right after "Unlimited....My Future is and I've had a vision..." from page 73. First question: Why? Secondly: I have heard Idina perform Defying as a solo, with just a piano. Where do I get that version. Its school performance thing and my daughter wants that exact piece?? Help...anyone.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz: ‘

The song book version is intended to serve as the best possible version for someone performing the song solo and out-of-context. That's why the lyrics to the "unlimited" section are adjusted, so that they

aren't being sung to Glinda (as that section is in the show.) This is the version sung in concert by people like Debbie Gravitte, etc., and I believe it is the version Idina uses when she is singing the song out-of-context. There have been other edited versions that Idina has performed, as when she and the ensemble appeared on the Letterman show and Kristin and she and the cast appeared on the Tony telecast, but those versions all require the presence of other cast members. I recommend using the songbook version for solo performances. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Piano/Vocal book question

Question:

Dear Mr. Schwartz, When the time came for the Wicked piano/vocal books published by Hal Leonard to be created, who came up with the idea to create two versions (accompaniment and melody in right hand) of the book? From an economic stand point, it doesn't seem to make much sense, though I'm very much appreciative of both version. I'm basically trying to determine, with my question, whether or not this is something the major music publisher is going to continue doing, or if this was just an experiment to see if there was a big enough market for such publications. As a musician, I really appreciate seeing this done with a new show. I've learned a lot with regards to writing genuine accompaniment from being able to see it written out. It isn't so much of a concern with older shows because their actual piano/conductor/vocal scores tend to be commercially available. I'm hoping the trend continues! What are your thoughts? all the best, Clark Stallings

Answer from Michael Cole:

Dear Clark: I asked someone at Hal Leonard to respond to this question and the response is below

From Hal Leonard contact person: For some Broadway shows, there are two markets for the songbook. One market is for piano players who want to play the song, including the melody in the right hand, on piano. The other market is for singers who prefer that the piano part is arranged for accompaniment only, without the melody. We have produced two editions--Piano/Vocal and Vocal/Piano--for many shows, including The Producers, Avenue Q, Aida, and others.

Original Arrangements Sheet music

Question:

This may have already been discussed, but I'm not sure where so if you could answer it (or reanswer it) that would be fabulous! I went to see Wicked in early August, and while I was there I bought the music book. I really like the arrangements for solos and it's a really great book, so thank you for putting that together for the public. However, I would like to know if it would be possible to get some form of a book with the original arrangements and accompaniment for all the songs. If you could please let me know if this is a possibility, and if so, where could I get it from, and how much would it cost me, I would greatly appreciate it. Thank you for your time, and thanks for writing such a wonderful and inspiring musical.~ Heather

Answer from Michael Cole:

Dear Heather:

From the "Composer's Note" at the beginning of the songbook: " (In special circumstances, when someone needs a song in the original show format, that can be obtained by emailing me at schwartz@stephenschwartz.com But it seemed to me that for most people and purposes, these changes would be preferable.)"

At this point in time, I don't know of any plans to make a complete version of the songs in the show available. But I will be happy to send you a few songs if this is for a special circumstance as above. You can send your request to MichaelCole@stephenschwartz.com

The opening chords

Question:

I really love the chords that open the show in no one mourns the wicked. I have both the wicked piano/vocal book and the grimmerie and those chords are not in there. Could someone maybe get me just the first 8 or so for the piano?

Answer from Forum visitor:

The show opens in A minor and the chords follow the same harmonic progression as the opening of As Long As You're Mine. If you transpose that pattern down a minor 3rd, play it in a higher octave, add a crunching pair of low As, and double up the chords in both hands, you'll have the opening to Wicked. It might take a bit of working out to get the 3rd phrase, which takes the section with the monkeys into B major. Hope this helps!

Answer from Michael Cole:

Or you could email me and I can send it to you. office@stephenschwartz.com

High School Band/Choir Arrangements

Question:

Hi! My school band is doing the medley of songs from Wicked (specifically the version for Senior High School Band, arr. by Jay Bocook). My dad is a high school vocal teacher, and he is ordering the choir medley arrangement as well. So far I've enjoyed playing the music, it's a challenge but it will be worth it in the end. Mr. Schwartz, I was wondering how close to the original orchestrations they are. These arrangements don't get into the depth of the synthesizers and similarly more complex instruments, but in terms of rhythms and such I was wondering how you felt about the "accuracy". Thanks, and congrats on Wicked's success! Thanks, Chris

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Hello Chris and sorry it has taken me a while to reply. I was busy with the holidays and then writing deadlines. Anyway, in answer to your question, the band and choir arrangements are not done by the original orchestrator or arrangers of the Broadway show, but they are based on the originals. The ones from Hal Leonard Publishing are all sent to me for my approval before being released. I think the arrangers the Hal Leonard company hires are very good, and they have always made all changes and adjustments I have asked for. I hope this answers your question, and I hope your band and your dad's choirs enjoy performing the medleys. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

WICKED: Vocal Selections, Piano/Vocal Selections

Question:

I got the vocal book of Wicked (which most stores have just vocals for some reason), anyways, I was wondering if the accompaniment (without the vocal part in it) is only online, because I can't find it in any stores (they only have the other version which keeps showing up at every store I go to (aaaaaaaah!) that sells that kind of stuff). So my question is, is it only available online?

Answer from Michael Cole:

Both WICKED books (the Piano/Vocal selections - which includes the melody in the right hand - and the Vocal Selections - which does NOT include the melody) should be available in stores, but you can definitely order them online. The book you want is called simply "Vocal selections" - if it has "Piano" in it, it's the wrong book. Best, Michael

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Chapter 20 of the authorized biography "Defying Gravity: The Creative Career of Stephen Schwartz, from Godspell to Wicked" focuses on Stephen Schwartz's experience writing the Wicked score. Additional chapters include origins of specific songs and what happened as the show developed. To read the stories and view copies of Stephen Schwartz's handwritten notes for several of Wicked's songs see this book. Info on <http://www.DefyingGravityTheBook.com>

For a rehearsal of "For Good" with Idina Menzel and Kristin Chenoweth see the special features section of disk three from the PBS DVD Broadway: the American Musical. Also see the Wicked special feature.

Wicked 5th Anniversary Cast Album: Includes "Making Good" sung by Stephanie J. Block.

PBS Broadway: the American Musical – third DVD special feature "Wicked: the Road to Broadway," includes "Which Way's the Party" rehearsal.