

## ***Children of Eden* – Notes for Performers**

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### **SECTION 1 – Auditions and Sheet Music**

#### **Voice ranges for Children of Eden**

Question:

What are the voice ranges for this musical? I can sing both alto and soprano and would like to find a song that shows off both for my audition soon.

Answer from Michael Cole:

ABEL B to G

ADAM B to A

CAIN B to Ab

EVE G to G

FATHER G to A

Generations SOLIST C to C

JAPETH Bb to Ab

MAMA A to A

NOAH Ab to Gb

SNAKE A to G

YONAH G to Gb

#### **Spark of Creation as audition song**

Question:

My daughter identifies with and loves "Spark of Creation". She hopes to use it in college auditions next year. She will apply to many colleges since the odds of getting in are small. All the schools have different requirements. Some want 16 bars, some 32 and some the whole song. She isn't sure what measures would be best. Any advice on the most effective 16 and 32 bars to sing would be appreciated....

Answer from Michael Cole:

Since the song is so "showy" and impressive at the end, I would suggest counting back 16 bars or 32 bars from the end and see how that works.

#### **In Whatever Time We Have Duet**

Question:

Hi everyone! I am desperately searching for the duet version of In Whatever Time We Have, but have been told that it was turned into a solo in the vocal selections book. My boyfriend and I have to sing it at his sister's wedding in just over a week, so we REALLY NEED IT! If I am mistaken about the vocal selections being a solo, please let me know.

Answer from Michael Cole:

Email me: [office@stephenschwartz.com](mailto:office@stephenschwartz.com)

## **SECTION 2 - Storytellers**

### **Telling the Story: Children of Eden Storytellers**

Question:

From Peggy: Stephen (or anyone else who would care to comment), what kinds of sound effects do the storytellers provide. The only thing ours did last year was to pound on the wooden boxes on which they were sitting when Cain killed Abel. It seems to me I remember something in the archives about the cast playing instruments, and as I listened to COE for the zillionth time, I started wondering if it would be fun to give a bunch of instruments (like the kinds school children play) for the storytellers to use during some of the livelier songs. And for the first time today, as I listened to "The Return", I began to wonder if the animal noises that I hear on the CD could be made (some of them anyway) by storytellers with instruments. Last year we just kind of sat there and waited while the animals passed by on their way to the meadow; but there's got to be something more we can do to participate. So I'd love to hear comments on how storytellers can use sound effects, and if they could be used in "The Return" as well as elsewhere.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

You are right that the Storytellers are integral to the show. In addition to narrating much of the action, and of course watching it and reacting to it, they are often used to help make the Tree of Knowledge, the waterfall, the ring of stones, etc. Plus to provide sound effects. The point is that the story is being told to the audience by this entire group, all of whom share a sense of urgency and need to convey its lessons. Each production will make its own choices as to how specifically to use them. Thanks as always for your interest. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

### **Storytellers**

Question:

How much of the show are the storytellers involved in? Are there actually lines for these tellers, or basically chorus?

Answer from performer Peggy Kern:

The storytellers in CHILDREN OF EDEN are involved in pretty much the whole show. They're basically a chorus, but actually more than that, as they transform the set from garden to wilderness, and basically tell the story in song. In the productions of COE that I've been in as a storyteller, we were onstage for almost the entire show, responding to what was going on, either in song or actions. Hope this helps.

### **Children of Eden Storytellers all-knowing?**

Question:

Dear Stephen, I have just graduated theatrical college in London where our final show was Children of Eden and throughout my whole three years of training I have enjoyed performing in this particular show more than any other which I feel sure is due to the enjoyment I get from singing your stunningly

beautiful score. I was cast as one of four storytellers in our version performed at St. Pauls in Covent Garden and therefore would like to thank you for writing 'Wasteland'- fantastic song to sing! (Although I wouldn't have minded singing 'Spark' or 'Stranger' either but hey- you cant have everything!) Unfortunately, now we have to write up and actor's notebook in order to obtain our degree which I get, it has to be said, slightly less enjoyment from. Anyway, I wondered if you could enlighten me as to whether you and John Caird intended the Storytellers to be omniscient entities throughout the show or whether they are discovering the events of the action as they tell them, along with the characters and the audience? Many thanks, Ellie Chidgzy

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Ellie: That's a good question. I've never actually discussed it with John, so I'll just give you my interpretation. I think that the "event" of CHILDREN OF EDEN is a passing-along of the story from the Story-tellers to the audience. Therefore, they are "omniscient" in terms of knowing how this particular story turns out. But they are in the same boat (pardon the pun) as the audience in terms of not knowing what our collective future will be (as sung about in "In the Beginning" and the final "Children of Eden" reprise.) Throughout the evening, of course, there are times when the Story-tellers act and react in the present for, in fact, story-telling purposes, just as anyone telling a story would try to keep the drama fresh and immediate. But I would say the concept is definitely that they are telling the story of CHILDREN OF EDEN in the past tense. Thanks for raising an interesting question, Stephen Schwartz

### **Storyteller**

Question:

hey guys! i just tried out for CoE and i think i may be cast as a storyteller. i was wondering if this was just what the chorus was called or if they are a separate group that does special stuff or something lol. id appreciate any answers bc ive never seen the show and i only have the highlights cd. Thanks!!~fal

Answer from performer Peggy Kern:

I've been a storyteller in COE three times, and for me, it's more than just being in a chorus. You're actually helping to tell the story, not only by the songs, but by moving props, tearing down the garden and constructing a wilderness scene, etc. In our production, we storytellers were onstage for almost the whole show, except for maybe five or ten minutes. So even if we weren't actually singing a song, we were expected to be reacting to what was happening with the characters in the show: delight at all the animals Father had created and at Adam and Eve's names for them; anxiety as Eve interacted with the snake; horror at the family fight at the ring of stones. And we became Eve's descendants, gathered around her during her monologue and song at the end of the first act, grieving for the loss of our "mother" and what had happened to us. In the second act, we were shocked when Japheth chose Yonah to be his wife, and worried about what Noah would decide to do with her when she was discovered on the ark. We agonized with him as he wrestled with his decision during "The Hardest Part of Love", and we rejoiced when the flood was over and we could sing "Ain't It Good". Then we accepted responsibility for our choices and our free will (which hopefully continued after we took off our costumes and makeup) during the finale. If you can get beyond the normal "chorus" mindset while doing the show (i.e. "okay, here's my song" "now that's done and I'm free until the next one"), and really get into the story and what the message of free will and personal responsibility means to you personally, you'll discover that being a storyteller in COE is really a lot more profound than "singing in the chorus". I hope you enjoy the COE experience as much as I did, and find it a powerful experience, both for yourself and for those who come to see it. Oh, and it's well worth the money to get the complete COE CD.

## SECTION 3 – SPECIFIC CHARACTERS

### FATHER - On "Improving" Casting of Children of Eden

Question:

I've just been casted as Father in COE, and have absolutely fell in love with the show. I just wanted everyone's opinion on a few things. Well, first, my director chose to split the parts of Eve/Mama Noah, and Adam/Noah, and chose to make Cain/(ham or shem i always forget) and Abel/Japheth, casting changes that I artistically don't agree with, but will have to live with. Now, are there any guidelines we can now take so as to not destroy the corrolations between acts one and two- will parallel blocking/music, and book corrolations bring out the similarities of the story as a whole? What did you do if you were in this situation? Hmmm.... what have been your set ideas? What kind of materials did you use for the animals - I would really love to have great animals in the show, we've tried things from the panels of venetian blinds to oversized plus animals to paper mache, but what did YOU do? I'm just wondering, and would love a reply. Thanks, Dan

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Dan -- My only suggestion to you is to play the role of Father relating to Adam and Noah as if they are played by the same actor, etc. I don't know what to tell you about the distressing decision to have the actor who plays Cain play Ham or Shem rather than Japheth.

Perhaps your director is trying to "spread the wealth" around among the actors to attract a better quality of cast or keep a repertory company happy or something, but I can't help but be irritated when people change what I feel are elements vital to make a work function. Perhaps the title page for your production should say: "By John Caird and Stephen Schwartz, as improved by your director." Okay, there, I've expressed my annoyance. Now -- hope your production goes well and you have a good time doing it. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

### The Character of "Father"

Question:

Hi Stephen. I'm just in rehearsal (playing Father) in a UK production of "Children of Eden". We are performing it in a Church in a few weeks time .I'm having a bit of trouble with interpretation and wondered if you could throw some of your original thoughts at me? In particular I'm finding Father's realisation in "The Hardest Part of Love" to be difficult to portray as it appears to be too sudden a change from his withdrawn approach. Do you think its ok to have such an instant change of mood? Its almost a mirror of the opening of the show - as if someone has turned on the light again! We both know that acting and characterisation is primarily in the eyes and I wonder if a more thoughtful approach to "The Hardest Part of Love" would be better and a continuing gradual realisation of his mistakes throughout the remainder of the show, culminating with a full realisation in "In The Begining" would be more subtle. Any thoughts you have would be warmly welcomed. Kindest regards, Andrew Taylor

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Mr. Taylor: Thanks for your Email and your thoughtful question; I hope rehearsals for the production are going well. Father's realization in "The Hardest Part of Love" is actually meant to be the culmination of a progression that begins at his lowest point, after "The Flood" ("I have destroyed the thing I love, and now I feel so old.") Thereafter, he is silent, but HE OBSERVES WHAT IS HAPPENING BELOW. (The reason I have put this in capital letters is that it is very important; there is a stage direction to that effect so that the director makes sure this is possible in the staging.) From his low point of depression and its concurrent apathy, his attention is first piqued by Yonah, when she sends out the

dove. Thereafter, he sees how Japheth refuses to re-enact the murder of his brother, and thus breaks the cycle of violence. He sees Noah struggling with his conscience. As he watches these events with growing interest, his mind and heart are slowly changed, so that by the time he sings in the middle of "Hardest Part of Love", it is the culmination of a process. I hope this will prove helpful to you, and I wish you and the rest of your company all the best with the show. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

### **Stephen Schwartz on the role of "Father" in Children of Eden:**

Question missing

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

My best suggestion about the role is to take the character's name literally: that is, play him as a Father, a human father, with all the emotional contradictions and conflicts, and forget that he happens to be God. The times I've seen actors fail in this role, it is generally because they get hung up about playing God and being infallible, etc. The whole point of the role (and the show) is that he learns about how to deal with his children (and their progeny); along the way, he does a lot of "wrong" things -- tries to over-control them, loses his temper beyond all reason, takes their maturing as a betrayal and as meaning that they love him less, tries to bribe his grandchildren and induce them to keep guilty secrets, etc. Of course, all of this comes out of love, which is why he is a character we care about. But the more he can feel like a flesh-and-blood father (who just happens to be omnipotent), the better. Anyway, that's the most useful suggestion I can think of.

### **Children of Eden: The Hardest Part of ... Father**

Question:

I am involved with a production of Children of Eden, cast in the role of father. I was wondering if anyone had advice on the portrayal of the role. I welcome any insight from anyone involved with any production of COE in the past. Thanks.

Answer from Michael Cole: I asked my friend Jim Smith to send his insights on performing the role of Father. His performance was stellar. I think he gives very good advice. Hope this is helpful. Best, Michael Cole (see below)

Answer from Jim Smith:

I, too, had difficulty at first getting a handle on the character of Father. Then I read somewhere in the notes of Stephen Schwartz where he warned of playing Father as "too likeable"; that it is a story of relationships, not biblical stories. It made all the difference in the world. As a result, I treated Father as a controlling earthly father with muscle and heart. It hurt to do all the hard things that he had to do, but nonetheless, he did them. For example, at the top of the show leading to the Expulsion, the hurt that Father feels is almost tangible. When he says to Eve in response to her eating the apple, "I told you not to touch it" he is sorry for what is about to happen. A course of events is beginning that he knows he can't change. He mustn't be omnipotent here, however. He needs to be surprised and cut to the heart when Adam eats the apple. Then what follows is a parent's heartbreaking response to children making a wrong choice: strong, harsh punishment inflicted by a parent who is intent on punishment, no matter if all suffer, including the parent. I made Father that unyielding parent who finally, finally has his eyes opened during "The hardest part of love", which is easily the most meaningful and revealing lyric I have ever had the pleasure to utter. Make Father a human father is my best advice. All of the mystical, magical stuff takes care of itself. If you don't know about Process Theology, as I didn't before EDEN, you might look it up on the Internet. I talked with a Sister of Mercy, whose niece played the dove in our show, about Process. I asked her what it is and she said, "What you just portrayed as Father is the

essence of Process": God changes with us. What a burden lifted off my shoulders to think that something like that is possible. I have said many times that John Caird and Stephen Schwartz were inspired by God to write this masterpiece and give the world a new voice to answer some questions and help us live in this day and age. For me, Father was a once in a lifetime role. It perfectly suited my voice as a lyric baritone and gave me chance to use my operatic training. Its message has changed my life. Good luck.

### **Eve in Children of Eden**

Question:

I am about to audition for the part of Eve in an amateur production. We have been given Eve's last scene (monologue) and then the song 'Children of Eden'. Although I know the show well, having played Mama Noah before, I wanted to ask if you had any tips on the emotions in that section (ie how internal or external she should show what she's feeling).

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

More than anything, I think it's important to remember that Eve is a very old woman at this point in the play. I recently saw a production in which the actress playing Eve didn't "age" at all for the end of the first act, and I felt it totally didn't work. She has the wisdom of experience, and the knowledge that comes from having lived a long and difficult life. Her emotions, therefore, are mostly contained, though occasionally, and particularly when dealing with her long-silent Father, they burst out, as when she says "I know you can hear me, I know it" and "I've missed you." In the song "Children of Eden" itself, however, I think she is feeling a kind of serenity, now that Father has spoken to her again, and she is lovingly but realistically transmitting her legacy to her progeny. I hope these thoughts prove helpful to you. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

### **Yonah in Children of Eden**

Question:

I just got cast as Yonah in the production Children of Eden. Rehearsals haven't started yet, but I was wondering if anyone knew of where I could find a more detailed character analysis? All of the websites I have browsed are extremely vague in their character descriptions! Thank you.

Answer from Carol:

Hi- It seems, in a way, like she gives her own character description in her solo "Stranger to the Rain." If you really grasp that song and understand where she enters the story, and what role she plays, that's what you need. She is sort of an archetypal outcast.

Answer from a Forum visitor:

She is the tragic hero of the story even though she is made up (although there were many women in the Bible like her). She is willing to drown herself in the flood so that the family does what Father wants of them. She also sings about praying that Father will send him another love so that he will not be alone. She has true selfless love. Ultimately she helps bring the family together through her love for Japeth but most importantly her faith and love for God. See, she is one of the cursed and yet she still believes, loves, honors and hopes in God. There is a beautiful innocence about her with a gorgeous strength that is seen throughout especially toward the end. Yonah can be played and liked or she can gain the audience heart. She is my favorite and I love singing her songs especially her harmony with Japeth. Although Mama's Ain't it Good is my favorite to bust out the gospel singing! Good luck and I hope this helps and congrats!

### **Thoughts on Japeth**

Dear Mr. Schwartz, I have read through the archives and other past posts and have noted that in order for "CoE" to work well the double casting should be done as stated in the book. (i.e. adam/noah, eve/mama noah) I was recently cast for my high school's performance as Seth and Japeth, instead of the Cain/Japeth as stated in the book. In our production Abel is still Ham, but Cain is now Shem. Would this take away from the show just as much as throwing entirely new actors into the roles of the "Noah Family?" Also, since I wouldn't have the same connection with the audience or story because I wasn't Cain, is there a different way I should approach this role? Thank you for taking the time to let-alone read this, I'm really interested in the performing arts and willing to learn as much as possible, having the opinions as someone as talented as you are would greatly help my future and possible career as an actor. Once again, thank you very much, and have a great day. Cordially-Zach Brown

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Zach: I don't want to throw your high school show into turmoil, and therefore am absolutely not suggesting changing the casting. Obviously, in a school, part of the purpose of doing a show is to spread the best roles around so that more students get a chance (and thus you get to play the more central role in the second act). However, the truth is that ideally Cain and Japheth should be played by the same actor, since in the first act, Cain commits the murder and in the second act Japheth starts the chain of redemption by refusing to commit another murder. So yes, it will take away from the show. However, as I say, there are other reasons for doing shows in school that need to be honored.

Your director will no doubt have thoughts on how you should approach this alternative double-casting. My best suggestion would be for you and the student playing Cain to rehearse the murder scenes together often enough that they can look and feel absolutely identical, right up till the moment when Yonah screams "No!" Hope the show goes well for all of you. Thanks, Stephen Schwartz

### **SECTION 4 – Other Q and As**

#### **Children of Eden: Singing While Wearing Masks**

Question:

Our local community theater group is presenting COE in March. Our director intends for us to sing AIN'T IT GOOD wearing our animal masks. Is this vocally possible? Even with eye and mouth openings in the masks, will enough sound project? Depending on the blocking, will we even be able to see the orchestra conductor for cues? Our singers are mostly not 'musicians'. They are struggling to learn the harmonies and rhythms in this number. The director's argument is: the animals are celebrating the end of the rain also. I buy that argument, but wonder if the audience will. It is a GREAT number-so lively, so fun to sing. Shouldn't the audience see the joy on our faces-not a painted on, non-changing expression on a mask? Opinion?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I have seen "Ain't It Good" done with the animals transforming back into Storytellers or remaining animals throughout. It works both ways, though I have to admit I have a little problem with animals singing, since they don't sing anywhere else in the show. But I have seen it work. I think a lot has to do with how literal the animal costumes are. I do think if you're having trouble singing or seeing the conductor, an adjustment in either the costume or the concept should be made, but why don't you practice it the way the director wants a few times and see if it gets easier. I have found often that things which seem impossible for actors to do at first become second-nature with practice. Thanks for the interesting question. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Background information, cast album, sheet music, photos from various productions

<http://www.musicalschwartz.com/children-of-eden.htm>

Licensing

[http://www.mtishows.com/show\\_detail.asp?showid=000175](http://www.mtishows.com/show_detail.asp?showid=000175)

Complete history with photos from the London production and Paper Mill Playhouse can be found in “Defying Gravity: The Creative Career of Stephen Schwartz, from Godspell to Wicked.”

[www.DefyingGravityTheBook.com](http://www.DefyingGravityTheBook.com). The book explores the genesis of *Children of Eden*, from Charles Lisanby's conception and the early oratorio version by Schwartz, through the London production (including photographs), and revisions worked out in America. The *Children of Eden* chapter includes quotations drawn from interviews with Lisanby, Schwartz, bookwriter John Caird, and others that explore the philosophy behind the musical.

Notes from other productions, etc. – Children of Eden section of MTI show space

<http://www.mtishowspace.com/mod/shows/mtishow.php?showid=000175>