

Pippin Notes for Directors and Musicians

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Last Bow

Question: I was wondering how you would order the curtain call? There is a lot of debate about who should get the last bow, Pippin or the Leading Player and I would like some confirmation.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz: I've seen it done both ways. In the original production, the Leading Player introduced each of the actors by name and then took the last bow (the actor playing Pippin said the name of the actor playing the Leading Player after Pippin took his own bow.) I don't remember exactly how the bow worked in the revival, but I think both Pippin and the Leading Player came out together and then each bowed, but I don't remember in what order. I would think it might be nice for your production if you and the Leading Player did the above -- that is, come out together, each of you take a bow, and then bow together. That's how we do it in Wicked: Elphaba and Glinda come out together, and though Elphaba technically bows last, it doesn't feel that way, it feels as if both of them are essentially bowing together.

To be honest, I don't have a strong opinion about this, but I think the above suggestion might make everyone feel good, if your director will go for it.

Thanks for asking, I hope you have a great time doing the show, and I send my best wishes to you and the rest of the cast, Stephen Schwartz

Permission to "Adapt" Pippin for High School?

Question:

I am teaching high school drama and chorus now in Boca Raton, Florida. This is my first year at this school, and second year teaching. I only really know Pippin and Godspell... Are the Baker's Wife, Working, or Children of Eden accessible to the high school level? Also, is it permitted to adapt Pippin to make it more appropriate for the age level? I'm concerned about the language and Pippin's "exploits"... I absolutely love the show, and think it would be perfect for the students I'm working with. Finding out that you were 25 when that was on Broadway has motivated me into believing that I CAN direct a show!

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

PIPPIN, WORKING, and CHILDREN OF EDEN are very frequently performed in high schools (BAKER'S WIFE is a bit more difficult, because it needs a couple of really extraordinary performers, plus the subject matter is less immediately accessible to high school students.) All these shows are handled by MTI: www.mtishows.com. I know many high schools slightly bowdlerize the sexual content in PIPPIN with no loss to the basic content and message of the show, just as many high schools which present WORKING change some of the language to eliminate the profanity a couple of the characters use, again without any major loss of content. CHILDREN OF EDEN is usually performed exactly as is, the only difficulties being that some of the music is challenging and that it is a relatively big show. I'm delighted in your interest in my work, and I hope one or more of these shows will work for you. If you decide to do one, please let me know how it goes. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Pippin: Female Leading Player?

[Question missing]

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I have not actually seen one of the many productions (including major professional ones) in which the Leading Player was played by a woman, but I don't see any reason why it shouldn't work. The motivation of the Leading Player -- which to answer your question is absolutely vital and central to the show -- is to lead the character of Pippin to his destruction, and that seems essentially genderless to me. Of course the other players share his goal, but without the Leading Player to personify and focus it into one character -- and importantly, one the audience finds charismatic and likable -- the show would lose its power. It would be like OTHELLO without Iago -- sure, you could have Othello become jealous of Desdemona based on his own inner insecurities and from hearing nameless courtiers gossip, but would you really want to see that version of the play? Thanks for asking and best wishes with your production.
Stephen Schwartz

Headless Man in Pippin???

Question:

Hi. I'm directing Pippin. Opens Oct.16 '02. I would love to steal a few good ideas on how to stage the headless man scenes. Anyone want to toss me a few? Thanks. Geoffrey Howard Missouri Valley College

Answer from a director:

The last time I directed it, I had someone throw out a special head we made up in the scene where the body parts are tossed on stage. When the cleanup crew came out, they placed the head on a spike we had on top of a short castle tower that was part of the set. An actor in the tower then put his hand in the head and manipulated it like a puppet to speak to Pippin. The audience liked it."

Answer from another director about their "low tech" headless man:

For the first headless man scene, we had an actor crouching inside a box with just his head sticking out and an orange-y red material draped around (sort of looked like blood). Then, out of the side of the box, we had another actor lie down so that his head was not visible and so that he looked like he had been decapitated.

For the second scene, we rigged up a "headless man" costume involving a very large trench coat (our actor was fairly short), with fake "shoulders" attached above the actor's actual head underneath the coat. The coat was buttoned and the arms and hands were stuffed to look like they were holding the head, which stuck out of what looked like the "belly" of the costume. We stuck the same red material in the neck of the coat. The actor then walked onstage to say his lines and walked off...like I said, VERY low-tech, but it got a chuckle and served it's purpose.

...For the finale fire, we rigged up a fan, red strobe light, and flame-shaped piece of orange gossamer which looked AWESOME (when it worked).

PIPPIN: I Guess I'll Miss the Man

[Question/comment about the cutting of "I Guess I'll Miss the Man."

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I'm happy to say I personally have never seen a production where the song "I Guess I'll Miss the Man" is cut. What a bad idea. Any director who cuts the song does not understand the show. However, I suspect

the reason they do it is because in the MTI script, the lines in which the Leading Player tells Catherine: "You don't have a song here ... you better stop singing now" (as she continues to sing) are cut. I think those lines should be restored. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

PIPPIN: "With You" - Terminology Question

Question:

I wanted to know what the tempo marking 'Melted Butter' means in the song 'With You' from Pippin. Is there a roundabout metronome marking for that section? I've tried searching the entire site and didn't come up with anything. I figure it is a description of a kind of feel, but I didn't want to just assume that.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I have no idea what version(s) of "With You" have the tempo marking "Melted Butter", and it's certainly not a description that I suggested. I checked my copies of the music and they all simply say "Gently" -- whoever came up with "Melted Butter" was certainly creative, though. Anyway, my suggestion would be approximately quarter note = 68. Hope that helps and thanks for your interest, Stephen Schwartz

Copyright

Question from "Manfred"

Hi Stephen. I see that a lot of people write to you to ask your opinion about making changes to your shows. In MTI librettos it says "You are not permitted to make any changes to the music, lyrics or dialogue of the Play, including the interpolation of new material and/or the exclusion of existing material."

I am very concerned about this, and also very surprised that so many people seem to be publicizing the fact that they have apparently broken their licensing agreement. I would value your opinion on the matter, because the libretto clearly says the copyright belongs to the authors and that "Any changes shall constitute a wilful infringement of said copyright"...I interpret this to mean that if you don't mind, nobody minds.

Here are the changes I'm thinking about for Pippin:

- 1) The libretto and score disagree in several places, so you choose which to keep.
- 2) A full band isn't available, so you make a compromise on who plays what.
- 3) Some of the incidental music gets cut, because we can't do it justice.
- 4) I'd love to extend a short song by inserting a verse from the original printed vocal selection (later dropped). I'm thinking here of "I Guess I'll Miss The Man".
- 5) We'd like to keep the original ending, but hear the Leading Player sing "Join us" to Theo just before blackout.
- 6) Is adding an overture going too far?

Maybe you could give a few words of advice regarding where you see the line being drawn between acceptable artistic interpretation and unacceptable copyright infringement. Thanks.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thanks for your questions. I always appreciate when anyone doing one of my shows asks permission to make changes to the published script; as you point out, too few do.

In terms of your specific questions:

- 1) The libretto and score disagree in several places, so you choose which to keep. Answer: Yes
- 2) A full band isn't available, so you make a compromise on who plays what. Answer: Yes
- 3) Some of the incidental music gets cut, because we can't do it justice. Answer: Yes

- 4) I'd love to extend a short song by inserting a verse from the original printed vocal selection (later dropped). I'm thinking here of "I Guess I'll Miss The Man". Answer: I'm actually not aware that any of the verses of "I Guess I'll Miss the Man" have been cut. The form of the song should be verse, verse, bridge, last verse. It is OK with me (in fact I recommend it) if you interpolate, as many do, the Leading Player saying things to Catherine like: "You don't have a song here" and "I really don't think you should sing anymore" between the verses.
- 5) We'd like to keep the original ending, but hear the Leading Player sing "Join us" to Theo just before blackout. Answer: OK, but I'm not sure a combination of the two endings will work. But if you have a way to do it, by all means try it.
- 6) Is adding an overture going too far? Answer: OK

Thanks again, and I hope your production is both a big success for you and that you have a great time doing the show. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Reply from Manfred:

We're very grateful for your words of encouragement, thank you! Regarding "I Guess I'll Miss The Man", what we had in mind was this. It's a beautiful song, wonderfully touching, but ("events move so swiftly"...) Catherine can be done and off stage again before the audience realises what's happened. By making it linger a little, the audience has time to appreciate she really does have a broken heart.

The vocal selection book from 1972 has the middle verse go like this:

"He never smiled enough, But though his words were gruff, I liked his shy, sad glance. I never told him so, But then, I never got the chance."

We've added this as our new second verse, and the form of the song becomes verse, added verse, bridge, verse, bridge, last verse. Of course, the joke at the end of the bridge can't be repeated, so instead Catherine breaks off at "This man..." and recomposes herself before anyone sees the tear in her eye.

Finally, there's one more question I'm sure a lot of your fans out there need to know the answer to (even if it's not the answer we want to hear...) What's your position regarding amateurs videoing their productions of your shows? Thanks again.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

There are all sorts of versions of lyrics to PIPPIN songs floating around out there, which I guess shows how much rewriting I was doing. I had forgotten the verse you cited, but I do like it. I fear when you do the song in the form you suggest, it will outstay its welcome for the audience, but if it works for your production, so be it.

In terms of amateur videotaping of productions: This type of request is handled by the licensing company where you secured performance rights to the show. These tapes are technically illegal. That having been said - as long as the video tapes are not for sale under any circumstances - I have no problem with it, but of course, don't tell me about them. All best wishes with your production, Stephen Schwartz

On making changes

Question:

Okay, so I came in from seeing the closing night of Pippin in Providence. Hell of a show, especially in that production. But it was in a Facebook discussion afterwards that I got into a debate with a friend's mother. She insists that in '84/'85, she stage-managed a production "from the original text" in which, after Pippin sang the bit about not being a river or a giant bird, he killed himself.

Based on what I just saw and what I've always accepted as the reality about the show (including seeing the DVD with Ben Vereen and knowing about the production's new-ish ending that's been part of the show since the early 2000's), it doesn't make a whole hell of a lot of sense. To me, the whole point of the ending is that he chooses not to self-immolate, and the lyric, taken in context, is pretty much explicitly about that.

I believe her, don't get me wrong, Lord knows local productions change shit willy-nilly whether licensors (and authors) like it or not, but I really want to know if this was an isolated occurrence. Has Stephen, or anyone, seen or read a version of Pippin where he does go through with the suicide?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I certainly hope it was an isolated occurrence! Of course, as you point out, this would have been illegal, and if anyone had informed me or Roger Hirson or Music Theatre International (who license the show), we would have insisted they restore the ending as written or we would have shut down the production. So let me use this as a teachable moment, especially as a former president of the Dramatists Guild: When one licenses a show, it is explicitly part of the contract that NO changes in the text (book, lyrics, or music) may be made without the author's written (or emailed) permission. I am frequently approached by directors or producers doing productions of my shows with requests to change certain specific things, and more often than not, I actually say yes. (This would not have been one of those cases.) And if I say no, I explain my reasoning so it doesn't seem just arbitrary. The point is, if you want to change something, ask. This is not only contractually required, it's good manners.

I realize you yourself did not make this change and indeed seem as startled by it as I. But I always think it's good to take the opportunity to be clear about what's permissible and what isn't.

Thanks for asking about this and best regards, Stephen

Re: Clowns, mimes and magicians

Question:

My question about Pippin costuming, in particular, came from the fact that I've been having trouble helping my audience and fellow musical theatre people understand the symbolism in Pippin. I am a fairly well liked director of musicals in a community with a dominant religion that proclaims no other success can compensate for failure in the home and that family should be the highest priority. Since Pippin is the story of a person who ultimately finds the most fulfilling personal choice to be a life with a family even though such a life cannot be had without sacrifice of personal freedoms and desires, I would think that these people would see Pippin as I do – an important story that affirms my faith and lifestyle. But they tend to be confused and frightened by it. So much so, that I have not yet been successful in persuading the community theatre in which I am the artistic director to support me directing it. Certainly the orgy, flying body parts and sex jokes have a lot to do with their fear. However, even those who get past that tend to ask me, what were those clowns for? I realize the symbols always spoke clearly to me because I have the cultural literacy to know what commedia del arte was and I remember when, prior to the release of Poltergeist, the image of a painted face, though often sinister or scary, was an icon of the performing arts as a whole and perhaps life in a theatrical sense instead of a particular type of monster. For me, these characters are particularly poignant as most of the nonfamily

alternatives in my own Pippin-esque journey have been artistic. I seem to recall reading in one of those books in which you and Fosse are portrayed as disagreeing over everything that the original concept for staging Pippin was to have the setting be a countryside or some place on which the roving players the play and that Fosse set it in the theatre itself. How would you feel about a staging in which the players are portrayed as a commedia troupe from a particular time period instead of a contemporized or generalized version of such? Perhaps they visit a historical environment created on the stage or perhaps they behave as a traveling band who visit the theatre that is producing the play? And what if they found Pippin in the audience or sweeping the stage? Would this distract from the vision?

Thank you, Kevin McClellan

Answer from Michael Cole:

Dear Kevin:

What you propose sounds absolutely fine to me. The period costumes and the idea of this troupe visiting the theatre would seem to me exactly the right setting for PIPPIN. When Papermill did PIPPIN, they found the actor who was to play PIPPIN in the front row and hauled him onstage - so I know this works and is acceptable by Stephen. I have forwarded your question to Stephen, but he is (obviously) busy these days with the WICKED show. He may get to writing a response to you, but I just wanted to post my thoughts here. I'm fairly confident that what you are proposing will be acceptable by Stephen.

All the best,

Michael

pippin--interpolated lyrics

Dear Mr. Schwartz,

I am currently directing a production of Pippin at the University of Alabama, where I am a grad student in directing. As a matter of fact we open tomorrow night (Nov. 4). This has been a wonderful experience for me. I fell in love with the script last spring when several of the students here recommended I consider doing it for this fall's season. I was familiar with Godspell and Children of Eden before this but had never heard or read Pippin. So I read the script. The themes rang very true to me--the false perception of fame as fulfillment and the crippling fear of "settling", particularly. It seemed to me that you and Mr. Hirson had prophesied the "slacker" generation. After reading the script, I immediately thought of Kurt Cobain's suicide note which he ended with the words (he borrowed from Neil Young?): "Remember, it's better to burn out than fade away." Combining this quote with the generally accepted view that artists/ entertainers (specifically the entertainer of the moment) are the ones who are informing our post-modern society as a whole, I decided to let our players in this show be a group of post-modern, trashy, flashy, pop-rock types. These are the voices in our heads. So, the stage is full of sensual, cynical MTV players manipulating Pippin.

This brings me to my dilemma. During rehearsal, I thought it'd be interesting to see the occasional "quote" of pop songs that is prevalent in post-modern art. So, keeping the same chord structure of the Pippin music, we added four quotes. They are as follows: After Berthe sings "by a man who calls me granny", the drums continue and she sings Britney Spears' one line "Hit me, baby, one more time." Then she counts off and we're back full-swing (and at the same rhythm) into "Just No Time at All." As the players enter into the orgy after "With You", they each sing various lines from overtly sexual pop songs. (i.e. If you want to be my lover, you gotta get with my friends, Let's get it on, etc.) In place of Fastrada's "doo-doo's) at the end of "Spread A Little Sunshine," she sings the line "Voulez-vous coucher avec moi, ce soir" twice.

Finally, when Pippin is "sewing" he sings under his breath "I want my, I want my MTV."

Well, I thought this was fun and a good way to comment on the post-modern aesthetic (and had asked some people about the legality of it), however it has since (today!) been brought to my attention that this is a serious violation, not only of the contract, but perhaps of the writers' intentions. So we are taking out these added lyrics, unless you think this would not compromise your intentions with the show.

Besides this, I think you would enjoy this production. We have a very talented cast--all of them triple-threats. The designers have done an amazing job as well, particularly considering the budget (\$1000 for production expenses, excluding rights and musicians). The show is also being preformed on a thrust stage, which demanded some creative problem-solving, but it really looks great on a smaller stage.

Thanks for writing such a wonderful show. It is really powerful and entertaining.
Sincerely, Steve Ray

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Mr. Ray: Actually, other than the interpolated line for Berthe which strikes me as a little out-of-character, the others seem fine to me. While I would normally be extremely averse to interpolations from other material into any show of mine, it seems obvious that here they are part of a clear over-all directorial concept, and are intended as satirical commentary and not meant to imply that they are part of my score. Probably, if this were a Broadway revival or even a national tour, I would find it objectionable, but for a college production where the references will be widely understood by the audience, I think it should be fine. So in other words, if you want to and it's not too late, put them back (except for Berthe's, for the above stated reason.) I hope your production is smashingly successful and that you and your cast have a great time doing the show. Best wishes, Stephen Schwartz

"Extraordinary" and "Marking Time"

Hi there, I directed a production of Pippin at Stanford about five years ago and we put Marking Time back in and took out Extraordinary. While I love Extraordinary, I felt Marking Time actually dealt with his feelings for Catherine versus his disillusionment with Everyday Life. I also made into a kind of duet, with the Leading Player coercing Pippin to make his decision to leave in the song. I think we may be the only production to have actually used the song in the show. Correct me if I'm wrong. Andrew

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

While I have always liked "Marking Time", there is of course a good reason it was replaced, which is that "Extraordinary" works much better thematically. The emotional message of "Marking Time" is well conveyed in the book, particularly in the scene where Pippin sits "at the head of the table" and the following scene with Catherine. More important to the story is not to forget the pull on him of his original quest within the long Catherine sequence, which is what "Extraordinary" deals with; otherwise, the final scene with the Players lacks some persuasiveness. Technically of course, it is important for you (and others) to know that it is actually illegal to replace songs or otherwise change a show you have licensed without obtaining the author's permission. I'm sure I would have granted it for this one production, which was after all at a college and therefore partially a learning experience. But in general, I would not be in favor of, nor permit, returning to "Marking Time" in place of "Extraordinary". Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

PIPPIN Question about Intermission

Question:

I love the new ending, and am thrilled that it has been added in so seamlessly to the show. I do not like the addition of the intermission. I think that it breaks up the momentum of the evening that is building towards the finale. I also do not like the fact that we hear the finale so early and also, that we lose the scene with the wandering body. I understand the need for an intermission that many theaters have, but... unlike the new ending which seems to me to have always existed, undiscovered, this intermission feels unnatural.

Now, please don't mistake me, I respect your vision as an artist and will do my best to put forth what you feel is the best incarnation of the show, but is there an option available for those of us who want to risk the damage to our seats and keep it a one act musical. Thank you again for your generosity with your time and for even considering my request.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

The recent production currently running at the Mark Taper in Los Angeles is performed without an intermission, and is a version I really like. It runs just under two hours, which is long for an audience to sit intermissionless these days, but audiences don't seem to be objecting (they are warned by the front-of-house staff as they enter and also by posted signs). The production includes a new song (entitled "Back in the Bosom" -- as in "the bosom of the family" -- in the first scene where Pippin returns home, in place of "Welcome Home", which I never felt worked very well). In order to get the running time down to this relatively manageable length, many small cuts were made, and I think they are for the better. The only one I cut I would question for a production not specifically designed for Deaf West is the elimination of "Extraordinary" -- I would recommend restoring that song for others wishing to follow the script of this production, which I am hoping to be able to make available. So yes, it is possible to do a version without intermission if desired. Thanks, Stephen Schwartz

Pippin: New Ending/Casting Theo

[Question about casting THEO when using the alternate/new ending of PIPPIN]

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Theo is fifteen or so throughout, so that as an adolescent, he is just coming to the place where he is ready to begin the journey that Pippin has just taken (and all of us take as we come into adulthood.) If he's too young, it's not believable when he sings "Corner of the Sky" at the end -- an eight-year-old isn't thinking that way.

Does it change the outlook of the show? Not at all. If anything, it underlines the universality of the experience in (I think) a clever and theatrical way. Thanks for your interest. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Another comment from Stephen Schwartz about the Theo ending:

It's difficult to imagine (it was certainly difficult for me before I saw it), but every line of Theo's dialogue works with him as a sort of sullen teenager. In fact, it's funnier ("the small lovable boy" line of the Leading Player's becomes ironic and gets a nice laugh.) And his attachment to his pet duck is actually quite believable and surprisingly touching. Then when he lapses into Goth-like despair, it's more believable when he's played by a teenager than when he's a smaller child. And finally, his attachment to Pippin and his gift of the flute at the scene before Pippin leaves has more heart to it, because it has been so hard won. As I say, this was all surprising to me when I saw it for the first time, but so far my EMail about it from various productions who have tried it has been unanimously positive.

PIPPIN new ending

Question:

Dear Mr. Schwartz and Michael,

Some months ago you provided me the materials to include the tweaked ending of PIPPIN into a production that I directed. WOW. It SOOOOO worked. I cast a 15 y/o as Theo and gave him a "rebel/smartass" persona which enhanced his "Corner" rep. at the end a lot. Chilling. Also, I took a few artistic liberties (which you may not like) that updated Pippin's journey a bit. For example, instead of the Quince Flambe Pudding/head of the table bit, I had Catherine and Theo surprise Pippin with a recliner (a long standing symbol of midwest small-town) which happened to belong to Cath's dead husband. It clearly defined her expectations and freaked Pippin out.

Also, I reconceived the With You sequence from 'melted butter' on. I decided to make it "Pippin's Love Life: A History Lesson". The lesson included JR HIGH PIPPIN, PIPPIN IN HIGH SCHOOL, SELF-GRATIFICATION PIPPIN, CYBER PIPPIN, SILVER BULLET PIPPIN (a strip club tribute), and finally, HiNRG PIPPIN (which was at a rave... a friend of mine remixed the Jackson5 version of CORNER into a whip-ass techno jam). The rave sequence involved episodes of Pippin trying Crystal Meth with his "girlfriend of the moment" and not getting the rush. As rave concludes Pippin's girlfriend passes-out with blood running out of her nose, and a player screaming violently, then Pippin saying, "enough enough".

Also, since the producing organization was nervous about the use of fire, I had the "fire guy" enter both times with a can of gas in his hand. After the second "Now?", the Leading Player doused him with "gas" and sent him to a cube which had a projection of flames above it. As he jumped in, a flashpot went off, and the "fire dude" came out to complete the bit. When it was Pippin's turn, the leading player doused Pippin with gas as well. I know it sounds cheesy, but the addition of "gas" clearly defined the trick with minimal fire usage. The emotional thrust of Pippin deciding to be a father and spouse was crystal clear. I don't know if you would have approved of these changes, and I apologize if you don't, but I felt it was important for Pippin to face challenges that young adults in search of the too-hyped American Dream face TODAY. The response was very positive.

Maybe I'm the next Bob Fosse, then again...maybe not. Thanks for PIPPIN. Is there any other show that speaks to "everyperson" such as PIPPIN? Not in my opinion. Corse, it will always be a part of me, anytime I want it. Why..... it's right inside my head.
Best, Corky Sinclare wannabe

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Corky: Well, you might be the next Bob Fosse after all. I for one really like all your ideas, at least as you describe them, and I'm glad they came off so well. Good for you, and thanks for letting me know. It's true that sometimes I get approached about changes and I really don't like them, because I think they distort or alter the underlying content of the show. What's good about all the things you did is that they were original and contemporary but completely supported the authors' original intention (for instance, Catherine bringing Pippin a recliner chair, an obvious symbol of "settling down" in suburbia.) It's different in the specific, but entirely consistent with what the material is trying to say. I never object to creative changes (indeed I welcome them) when they are an attempt to realize the authors' goals, as opposed to trying to rewrite the show.

Thanks again for getting in touch and congratulations on your cleverness and the success of your production. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

PIPPIN: Permission to make a change?

Question:

My request is to have permission to add the verse, "So many men seem destined, to settle for something small..." before the chorus "Rivers belong..." in the new version of the Finale. It is my belief that this would more closely tie Pippin's ending to Theo's beginning by having Theo very directly comment on the final fate of Pippin's journey. I also feel that this will express the arrogance of youth, in the fact that Theo has just seen exactly what happened from following such thinking, and yet for whatever reason seems assured that his ending will be different.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thanks for your question. Having just seen the excellent production currently playing at the Taper, I can confidently answer that it isn't necessary to add that verse for Theo; the minute he starts "Rivers belong where they can ramble", we get it. I also think that it is too late in the show to add a verse, but that's really secondary to the fact that the audience gets it without the verse. I appreciate your asking and hope your production turns out smashing. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

New Ending Options

Question:

I recently acquired the rights for Pippin and it would seem that there is currently no option on which ending you can use. You must use the ending with Theo's Corner and use the intermission. I am extremely upset that the option has been removed since I would prefer to use the original ending since I like the message it portrays. It even misses the "trapped, but happy" (etc) line. I wish MTI would issue both options, but apparently they no longer license both versions? Seems kind of weird to me. Does anybody license the original ending/one act version?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

You don't have to use the intermission, though I strongly recommend it, especially given the attention span of today's audiences. Sorry, however, I have no interest in licensing a production with the old ending. I have to say my feeling is pretty much if someone doesn't want to do the new ending, they shouldn't produce the show. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

PIPPIN New Ending/Intermission

Comments posted by Michael Cole:

Here is all the information you should need to include the new ending and an intermission in your production. No special permission is necessary to incorporate these into your production:

This new ending requires Theo to be old enough to be beginning to make his own choices. I recommend that Theo be played by a boy of about fifteen and that he participate as a member of the "troupe" in the rest of the show. The Leading Player's description of him, therefore, as a "small lovable boy" becomes ironic. But he can still play his affection for his duck and growing affection for Pippin as written.

The show proceeds as written to the point where Pippin, Catherine, and Theo are standing alone in the work light, having been stripped of their costumes and all the scenery and fancy lighting. The troupe has exited and the orchestra has stopped playing. As in the current version, Pippin sings, a cappella: "I wanted magic shows and miracles/mirages to touch/I wanted such a little thing from life/I wanted so much ..." But there is no further dialogue. Instead he sings: "I never came close, my love/we nearly came near/it never was there/I think it was here." He kisses Catherine, and hand in hand they start to walk off the stage, not noticing that Theo has remained behind center stage. Very softly at first, and then with growing confidence, Theo begins to sing a cappella: "Rivers belong where they can ramble/eagles belong

where they can fly ..."Pippin and Catherine turn and look at Theo with surprise, as Theo continues: "I've got to be/ where my spirit can run free ..."And from the corners of the stage, the Leading Player and the troupe begin to creep on, all focussing at Theo. It is clear they sense their next victim. Theo finishes: "Gotta find my corner of the sky"as the light begins to grow brighter on him. The Leading Player holds out his hand to Theo as the troupe sings the "Oooh ooh ooh ooh's"that start the show, the orchestra comes back in, and the lights grow brighter and brighter and then suddenly black out. And that's it. I hope this description is clear. I think you can see how chilling it can be and how well it rounds off the show by bringing it full circle. It requires a little bit of work from your musical director to work out the way the orchestra comes in and how to end the show musically, but it's pretty self-explanatory and only a few bars long.

PIPPIN -- End of Act One

(After CHARLES comes back to life and gives PIPPIN back the knife ...)

CHARLES

Oh, that's all right, son. But don't let it happen again.

PIPPIN

(To LEADING PLAYER)

Well, dammit! Nothing turns out the way I thought it would. I'm getting old .. very old. And I still haven't done anything with my life.

LEADING PLAYER

Well then, maybe it's time.

PIPPIN

Time?

LEADING PLAYER

For the Finale. I promised you an extraordinary life and an extraordinary climax, remember? A climax never before seen on a public stage.

(He snaps his fingers and the music for "Think About Your Life"begins.

The CAST start to sing "Aahs"to the music as the PLAYER WITH TORCH appears.)

PIPPIN

What's going on? What is this?

ALL

THINK ABOUT YOUR LIFE, PIPPIN ...

PIPPIN

Yes, that's what I need to do. I need to think ... I need to be alone for a while.

(He starts off.)

LEADING PLAYER

(Grabs him)

No .. Where are you going, Pippin? The Finale ...

PIPPIN

(Pulling away)

I have to have time to think!

(He runs off.)

(The cast looks after him, bewildered. The LEADING
PLAYER is momentarily nonplussed.)

PLAYER WITH TORCH

(To LEADING PLAYER)

Now?

LEADING PLAYER

(Snaps at him.)

Of course not now, you idiot!

(Recovers himself, turns to the audience, smiles)

It's all right, we're just going to need a little more time that's all.

(To CATHERINE)

You -- Catherine. You'd better get ready. We're going to be needing you.

(He turns back to audience, more relaxed now.

A big smile.)

Don't worry. We won't disappoint you. We never disappoint. You'll have the
climax we promised you.

ALL BUT LEADING PLAYER

WE'VE GOT MAGIC TO DO

JUST FOR YOU

WE'VE GOT MIRACLE PLAYS TO PLAY ...

LEADING PLAYER

(To audience)

Trust me!

ALL

AS WE GO ALONG OUR WAY!

END ACT ONE

PIPPIN -- Opening of ACT II

(PIPPIN is discovered alone on stage, pacing

and singing agitatedly to himself)

PIPPIN

(a capella, very determined)

RIVERS BELONG WHERE THEY CAN RAMBLE

EAGLES BELONG WHERE THEY CAN FLY

I'VE GOT TO BE ...

SPIRIT CAN RUN FREE ...

GOTTA FIND MY CORNER ...

GOTTA FIND ...

GOTTA FIND MY CORNER ...

(The LEADING PLAYER runs on. When he sees PIPPIN he stops, watches for a moment. Then, elaborately calm, he calls to PIPPIN.)

LEADING PLAYER

There you are. Anything you need? Whatever you like ...

PIPPIN

I'd like a little peace and quiet, if you don't mind.

LEADING PLAYER

Look, Pippin. You may not believe this, but things are going according to plan.

PIPPIN

They are?

LEADING PLAYER

Of course they are. Take it easy ...

(sings:)

YOU LOOK FRENZIED, YOU LOOK FRAZZLED ...

(Etc.)

PIPPIN -- End of Act II

LEADING PLAYER

You try singing without music, sweetheart!

(The LEADING PLAYER goes. The stage is dark except for the work light. PIPPIN, CATHERINE and THEO are alone on stage. PIPPIN sings a cappella)

PIPPIN

I WANTED MAGICSHOWS AND MIRACLES

MIRAGES TO TOUCH

I WANTED SUCH A LITTLE THING FROM LIFE

I WANTED SO MUCH
I NEVER CAME CLOSE, MY LOVE
I NEVER CAME NEAR
IT NEVER WAS THERE
IT ALWAYS WAS HERE ...

(He kisses her and, hand in hand, they begin to leave the stage. THEO remains behind, standing center stage. Very softly at first, he begins to sing, a capella)

THEO
RIVERS BELONG WHERE THEY CAN RAMBLE
EAGLES BELONG WHERE THEY CAN FLY ...

(PIPPIN AND CATHERINE turn to look at THEO, who begins to sing more strongly now)

THEO
I'VE GOT TO BE
WHERE MY SPIRIT CAN RUN FREE ...

(And suddenly, on the fringes of the stage, the PLAYERS begin to creep in again, all focussing on THEO, smiling at him, reaching out to him. A light starts to get brighter on THEO as the orchestra begins to accompany him)

THEO
GOTTA FIND MY CORNER
OF THE SKY ...

(The LEADING PLAYER comes a bit more onstage and reaches out his hand to THEO. THEO turns to look at the LEADING PLAYER as PIPPIN and CATHERINE look on helplessly. The PLAYERS begin the opening seductive chords of "Magic to Do")

PLAYERS
OOH OOH OOH OOH
OHH OOH OOH OOH ...

(The light on THEO gets brighter and brighter as the orchestra swells ...)

BLACKOUT

New Ending – Feedback

Question:

I did Pippin in High School and was so happy to hear that my daughter would be doing it next year. Then she told me about the new ending. How could you do that? It was such an uplifting story, showing that happiness and fulfillment could come by having someone to love and who would love you. Now the players prey on Theo and start convincing a small boy to commit suicide. That is horrible. I can't stop crying. Young children can't see the show anymore. I will support my daughter but I will leave the show before that part starts and you have ruined what was a wonderful memory for me.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thank you for your email. But I must respectfully disagree with you. In my opinion (and from much experience with both), the new ending is considerably better, and in fact feels more uplifting.

May I ask you, have you actually seen it, or just heard about it? I think if you go to see your daughter's production and manage not to flee before the finale, you may come to feel otherwise.

Let's look at what was there before: Catherine asks Pippin how he feels, and his response is: "Trapped." (Which gets a sardonic laugh from the audience.) In some productions, he then said, "But happy." And then the last line is: "Which isn't too bad for the end of a musical comedy. Ta da." Aside from being clumsy, that ending is hardly a ringing endorsement for commitment or shows that "happiness and fulfillment can come by having someone to love and who would love you." The truth is that all of us involved with the original Broadway production were always dissatisfied with the ending, but we just could never think of anything better.

Finally, I saw what has become what we refer to as "the Theo ending" in a fringe production in London, and I immediately knew that this was the right ending. So let's look at what happens in this new version: Pippin indeed chooses the happiness and fulfillment of having someone to love who loves him, and he chooses it unequivocally. But Theo has his own journey to go on. (By the way, Theo is no longer a "small boy" of eight or so, but a boy on the verge of adolescence, since the new ending makes no sense if he's too young; I don't know how old he will be in the production at your daughter's school, but if he is in high school, that would suffice.) He longs to find his own "corner of the sky". And yes, the inner voices that can lead to self-destruction (i.e. the Players) come to try to entice him. But will he succumb? Who knows? That's his story, which we're not telling. But those inner voices are the same ones that lived in Pippin, that live in me, that live in all of us, even (I'm sorry to have to tell you) your daughter. As they do in my children. Perhaps you are one of the rare individuals in this world who have never been tempted by dissatisfaction, over-romantic

expectations and self-destructive urges, but I assure you, the vast majority of people have. Some succumb and some do not. But that's the reality of life, and in continuing the cycle in Pippin by showing that Theo, as a boy starting to come into the cycle in Pippin by showing that Theo, as a boy starting to come into manhood, will have to deal with the same inner turmoil as Pippin did, the show takes on a universality the ending lacked before.

Of course you are entitled to your opinion, and I regret it if you feel this new ending somehow spoils the show for you. But I must tell you that to me, and to my collaborators on the show, it is vastly superior to the original, solves a problem we have all always had with the original, and sends most of the audience out feeling very happy and high on life.

Respectfully, Stephen Schwartz

Age of Players and Theo

Question:

I have one question about a small amendment I was thinking could be kind of interesting right at the beginning of the show... I'll admit I am worried this scene would be seen as hokey but I wanted to run it by the powers at be to see what you thought:

My issue is I have an acting troupe of actors who are all roughly the same age with the exception of Theo. I think that roles like Berthe and Fastrada can be played by actors much younger than their on-stage ages but the core problem I see is having Pippin and Charles being two men roughly the same age. I had a thought that if I treated the frame narrative of the show as an acting troupe (as I understand the original Fosse version did) and right at the beginning of the play I brought a large board that showed all of the actors faces next to the roles they are going to play, as if they have just been cast, then I could make a silent confrontation between the actors who had been cast as Pippin and Charles as if the actor cast as Charles expected to be Pippin because they are basically the same age and both eligible for the role.

This change would require no change of dialogue or music, just a small addition to the front end of the show. I am a little worried this could be a little too on the nose and maybe serve as an extraneous moment for the audience that they really do not care about, however, I do think that this would illustrate the idea that we are an acting troupe putting on Pippin and hopefully cue the audience into the play between the two realities of the story.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thank you for your email, and I am delighted you will be presenting Pippin. I understand your dilemma in terms of the actors' ages, and you are correct that

in the show, all but Pippin are Players and therefore the ages can be fudged a little.

But I don't think you can suggest that the Players have only "just been cast". The idea of the show is that these Players have been doing this show a long time and they keep finding new Pippins and destroying them, so that when this particular Pippin ultimately resists, it is a change from what they're accustomed to. This story becomes clear in the later scenes with Catherine ("They don't usually do that", etc.) and in the Leading Player's and Troupe's reaction to Pippin's refusal to throw himself into the flames. So while I think you can make it clear these are Players and, if it's useful to you, suggest some subtextual issues between Charles and Pippin, etc., I think you undercut the story if you explicitly make it a new troupe of Players who, other than Pippin, are doing the show for the first time.

Incidentally, there is more of an emotional pull if we feel Charles is both a Player and somehow Pippin's father, Berthe his grandmother, etc. I recognize that the age of your actors may make that impossible, but I urge you to try at least in terms of the types you cast.

Lastly, let me caution you about making Theo too young. Remember that at the very end, he becomes the "next" Pippin and the Troupe comes to try to seduce him, so he has to be old enough that it makes sense that he is starting to have adolescent longings and aspirations. A 12-or-14-year-old yes, an 8-year-old no. I hope this response has been helpful and illuminating, rather than discouraging, which I don't mean to be. I wish you all the best with your production and hope you and your company have a great time doing the show. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz