

Pippin - Notes for Performers

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Pippin Audition Advice

Dear Mr. Schwartz,

I am in need of some major advice. I have an audition for Pippin on September 8, and I could really use some of your wisdom about the show. I guess the easiest way is to list the questions:- What is the highest note Pippin sings in the original score?- What is the highest note the Leading Player sings in the original score?- Is the Original Cast Recording true to the music of the actual show? (I am assuming "yes," but sometimes cds are different.)- Does the part of Lewis sing in the show? I am a High Baritone who can belt a G as of now (7/26/2003) and if you could give me any advice of which part fits that, i would greatly appreciate it. Thank you for taking the time to read my post. Whitney Ackerman

Answer from Forum visitor:

I just music directed Pippin. Both the leading player and Pippin really need an Ab. A solid A is very helpful, esp. for the leading player. Louis doesn't specifically have any solo singing, although he is often given the "battles, barberous and bloody" line in Magic.

Pippin: Leading Player

Question:

Hi! I'm playing a female leading player...I was reading an essay written by someone on their own take on the play Pippin and different symbolism. In a high school production, we have had to tone down many of the scenes- being in a private preschool-high school environment. Do you think that this will take away a lot of the meaning from the play. (examples: basically no orgy, in using the provided script opposed to the original or movie versions, etc. etc) Also, do you think that the leading player should be portrayed as trying to almost "seduce" Pippin, or the same as if it were being played by a man. Do you think that this different angle would be positive or negative in the context of the show? Thank you so much!!!

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Pippin Fan: I gave your question a lot of thought. My immediate response was that it would change the story too much to have the Leading Player be personally seductive to Pippin, as opposed to having the idea of "complete fulfillment" being the seductive element. I was concerned the show would devolve too much into a conflict between two women (Catherine and the Leading Player) over a guy. But as I thought about it more, it seemed to me that the metaphor of the Leading Player and all she represents as the ultimate temptress could actually work quite well, and therefore her being seductive to Pippin physically is just more of the metaphor. So I would say go ahead. I'll be interested to hear how you think it worked. Thanks for asking and good luck with the show, Stephen Schwartz

Comment from a Forum visitor:

I absolutely have to respond. A few years ago, my sister and I started a summer youth theater program in our hometown, and our second summer in operation, we did Pippin. I'm a girl, and I played the Leading Player. We had to tone it down a lot, too, since we had some younger kids involved, and that made making the orgy scene a really funny cross dressing scene and various changes like that. It was probably the most fun I've ever had playing any role, but we didn't play up the seduction at all. It helped

that I'm a very tall girl, so any romantic inclination between the characters would have been humorous, but I don't think that matters. We basically played it the same way as it is traditionally, except the LP was a girl. We didn't make an issue out of it, nor did we play up a love triangle or anything. I was simply a female Leading Player. It worked perfectly, and our show was a huge hit in our community. It was also one of the most fun shows I've ever been a part of. I will add that from personal experience, the music is tricky and high for a girl to sing really well, unless transposed, of course. However, its worth it, b/c it's a great part, and you're going to have a blast whichever way you play it. Break a leg, and keep the Leading Players spirit alive! Katie

Corner of the Sky for Audition

Question:

I was wondering if it would be weird having a woman sing "Corner of the Sky?" I know people have done it and I just love the song. Would it not be good to do a guys song at an audition? Rebecca

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Rebecca: I have heard "Corner of the Sky" sung very effectively by women. In fact, one of my favorite recordings of it is by a British female singer named Rebecca Storm. I think I have heard women use it at auditions, and I see no reason why you shouldn't do so. Obviously, you will want to transpose it to a better key for the female voice. The only cautionary note I sound is that the song is so often used as an audition piece, but as you point out, usually by men. Good luck -- I hope it lands you lots of jobs. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Pippin's Brother...

Question:

I was reading thru the script for an audition and i was wondering if pippin's brother LEWIS was somewhat gay? There are many references to the subject...especially in his first scene when pippin says to Lewis "I'm only shocked to hear that you're interested in women now" and "oh yes, he [lewis] is a real straightstander." am i reading this wrong or am i right in thinking that he might have been gay in his past? i'm somewhat confused... and can help me in solving this matter, it will be greatly appreciated. THANKS! whitney

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Mr. Ackerman: I wouldn't say Lewis was "gay" in the contemporary sense of the word (though he is kind of portrayed as a "Chelsea boy", don't you think? -- body and clothes-obsessed, etc.) I think the line about "I'm only shocked you're interested in women now" is sort of a little dig rather than a specific reference to his sexuality (frankly, it's not a very good joke and represents a kind of thankfully out-dated humor.) And I've never taken the "straight-stander" line to be a pun on the word "straight", but just a sarcastic reference to Lewis' skill in superficial things. I think far more important in the characterization of Lewis than his sexual orientation is the fact that he is really dumb -- that's where the humor in the character comes from. Thanks for your interest and for asking a question I've never really thought about before. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Pippin - Character and Vocal choices

Question:

Hi, First of all I just wanted to say that I love all of your works (especially Children of Eden, Godspell, and of course Pippin. I have you many of the songs that you have composed for auditions (I usually get the role that I am going for when I use one of your songs. You are a musical genius!!!

I am playing Pippin in a community theatre teen version of the show and I have a few questions to ask you:

1) In your opinion, is Pippin another one of the players and he "knows" the ending, basically is he just a performer. Or, is Pippin a "real" person who is being absorbed in the power and the glory of the theatre group?

2) Since my voice is still changing and I since I have a very high tenor voice, it's hard to sing the high falsetto C at the end of "Corner of the Sky". That note is right at my breaking point so when I try to use falsetto or a "non-pushing" full voice I usually crack. However, I can belt the note, but then it loses it's sweetness. Do you have any suggestions? Is the note necessary? If yes are there any other notes that could work, like going up to an E or G to keep in the C major key and chord at the end? Please give me any suggestions that you can think of!!!

3) I have been reading many of the posts on Pippin and his character, and I think that I understand what the character is about. However, I am a typical theatre student who is always acting, even in real life. And, as my director puts it, I am always "on", and Pippin is "off" he enjoys life and doesn't care about being on and caring about what other people think of him. I am also someone who know's where I want to go, which is the exact opposite of Pippin. So, basically my question is do you have any suggestions on how to take someone like me (a constant performer, mature, and knows where his life is headed) can play the naive and vulnerable part of Pippin?

4) If you have any other ideas, comments, or suggestions, whatever, on Pippin and how to portray, sing, and dance him PLEASE do so!!!

Finally, I just want to reiterate and say that I love your work and that I admire you for your passion of music. From an extremely loyal fan, PRFRMR20

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear PRFRMR20:

1. Is Pippin a "real" person who is being absorbed in the power and the glory of the theatre group? Yes. He's the only one who doesn't know the ending the group has planned for him. Their purpose all evening is to bring him to the psychological point when he's ready to do it. I have seen productions where the actor playing Pippin is apparently selected that evening from out of the audience -- in other words, he is completely not part of the rest of the troupe.

2. I think it's important that the last note be high and falsetto, as if reaching for the sky -- get it? But if you need to pick a higher note that is stronger for your falsetto, by all means do so. An E or, if you can get all the way up there, a G is fine. By the way, if your musical director is willing to transpose your solos up, be my guest.

3. The fact that you are determined and driven and so is Pippin should work in your favor. The difference is that you know specifically what you want, whereas Pippin keeps changing his mind. But when he begins each quest, he does it with all the enthusiasm and energy that you are bringing to yours. What won't work in your favor is any kind of "slickness" as a performer. I have seen productions ruined when the actor playing Pippin was too close in style to the Leading Player. So that you'll have to be aware of. But as with any acting role, find the part of you that is a little awkward and perhaps over-enthusiastic, and draw on that.

I think I already answered 4 above. Thanks for asking, I hope the show goes well for you, and that you have a great time doing it. Oh, and I hope your director is doing the new ending (available from MTI when you license the show). Best wishes, Stephen Schwartz

Corner of the Sky

Question:

I am in desperate want of this song, I couldn't find it on I-tunes and I cant afford the CD, I need it for an audition i have tonight

Answer from Carol:

Hi – See www.musicalschwartz.com/pippin-corner-of-the-sky.htm for legal download info, lyrics, and sheet music sources

Just landed Pippin

Question:

I don't have much experience with musical theater, and even less as a singer, but on the suggestion of a coworker, I auditioned for Pippin. I was asked to come back, sing some more, and was offered the part. The director told me right off the bat, I'm not your typical Pippin. Honestly, my knowledge of Pippin comes from the explanation the director gave during the audition. She said she wants to explore the deep, dark, and sensitive side of this musical... something, I'm told, which isn't often done. My question is this. What can I do to best do this part justice? What should I research? Tomorrow we meet at the theater to figure out schedules. I understand it's a pretty heavy time commitment... which I'm totally up for. So there will be tons of rehearsals.

But should I try to mimic the album... should I only rely on the script and directors direction? Should I hunt down recorded performances and watch them? I apologize if my questions are stupid. As I said, my experience is embarrassing. I really got the bug and I want to do this right... and what better way, then to ask the advice of the man who wrote it? Actually I'm open to anyones advice. Thanks in advanced.

Answer from a Forum visitor:

I think it's very important NOT to mimic the original on the album, if you like some of the stuff he does on the album then fine, if it makes sense to you. But part of the excitement of doing a show is the character analysis you have to put into it and figuring out who they are to you. And how much of YOU can you still put into the character so it's as real as possible. Yeah, you should research and watch tapings of other people doing the role, but don't copy someone's work. It will just give you more insight into the character to watch it being done a few times. Research the time the show is set in, what major worldly events happened at the time that might have affected the character in some way (a war, rations etc) find out if the character is rich, poor, clues in the scripts that give as much history to the character as possible. When things are undecided in the script, or you don't know something about the character that you think would help portray the character better, make it up so every movement you make in that show makes sense and has a reason for it. Sorry this is so long.....Once again, congrats on the role. Enjoy it!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE FOR PIPPIN

Notes from other productions, etc. – The Pippin section of MTI Showspace
<http://www.mtishowspace.com/mod/shows/mtishow.php?showid=000060>