

***Children of Eden* – General Information and History, Themes and Meaning**

Children of Eden is an original musical conceived by Charles Lisanby, with music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz, and book by John Caird. It has not played on Broadway, but in 1998, RCA recorded the score from the final version of the show, performed by the cast of a Paper Mill Playhouse production. There is no DVD of the show. A schedule of local productions for North America can be found in the *Children of Eden* section of the licensing agency's site: www.mtishows.com

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SECTION 1 – Program Note and General introduction

Children of Eden program note

Stephen Schwartz wrote the following commentary as a general introduction to the show:

The book of Genesis has fascinated and inspired dramatists for centuries, from the medieval mystery plays to such modern American theatre writers as Arthur Miller and Richard Rodgers. Still, when John Caird and I began work on *Children of Eden*, it was with a certain amount of trepidation. After all, this was the Bible we were dealing with. Who were we to be putting our own interpretation on these sacred stories, or worse yet, adding characters and incidents? How would audiences react to a vision of Noah, Eve, Cain, and especially God Himself that did not exactly jibe with what they had heard in Sunday school?

It was while in the throes of these concerns that I came across, as part of my research for this project, a surprising discovery, contrary to my previous belief, I learned that the Book of Genesis was not a spontaneous account that first appeared complete and original in the Old Testament. It was rather a highly edited version of ancient Hebrew tribal beliefs and stories which had been handed down orally from generation to generation. Many elements were changed, omitted, or embroidered upon over time. Indeed, in the early chapters of the Old Testament itself, often two contrary versions are presented: Were Adam and Eve created simultaneously, as in Genesis 1:27, or Adam first, as in 11:22? Did the Flood last forty days, as in VII:12, or 150, as in VII:24?

I came across other sources, in a book of Hebrew myths compiled by Robert Graves, and even whole unfamiliar Books of the Bible, edited out of the Old Testament but collected as *The Forgotten Books of Eden*, translated from ancient Egyptian and published by World Bible Publishers. This version was so radical that it included twin sisters for Cain and Abel! Finally, I read (and highly recommend) a book called *Memories & Visions of Paradise* by Richard Heinberg, which examines the stories of the Lost

Eden and the Flood in many cultures and convincingly advances the argument, in highly scientific and rational language, that these events actually happened historically, though not precisely as described in Genesis.

After all these readings and more, many of which inspired and influenced our own interpretation, John and I feel more comfortable about playing slightly loose with these Bible tales. We hope our audiences come to our view of these wonderful stories with the same spirit of adventure, awe, and delight as we present them to you. Stephen Schwartz

Children of Eden – Where to find details?

The first I've ever heard of this musical is on this forum. It sounds incredibly intriguing and thought provoking. Is there any place to read/see more about it? Is it still being performed? I've read a lot about a UK version, but not much else. Details please? (FYI: Wicked is incredible, but there is a special soft spot in my heart for Godspell.) Kate

Answer from Forum visitor:

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

Musicalschwartz.com is a wonderful site with information on all of Mr. Schwartz's musicals.

Answer from another visitor:

CoE is a wonderful show, for the audience, but for the cast as well. It has so many levels of meaning, it touches a wide variety of people in many different places in their lives. I just finished directing a production, as well as playing the part of Father, at a local church-sponsored community theatre company. While we didn't have the standing room only like we did when we did Joseph and Fiddler, this show moved the audience in ways beyond mere entertainment. I would suggest getting your hands on a copy of the sound track from the New Jersey Paper Mill production, and you will get an excellent idea of the "feel" of the show.

SECTION 2 – Show history

Children of Eden Chronology

Question:

Stephen-I was wondering if you could clarify the origins of productions of Children of Eden... I was chatting with a friend who insisted that the London production with Ken Page as Father was 'The Original' - but I have been told of several productions before that time, even including one at a small college in Riverside California. What do you consider to be the 'Original' production?

Answer posted by Michael Cole from some written material:

Children of Eden began as a concept by Charles Lisanby, who had designed Christmas and Easter shows for Radio City and The Crystal Cathedral and was looking for an idea for a show to present in the summer. He hit upon the notion of The Book of Genesis, beginning with The Creation and ending after The Flood.

He brought the idea to Stephen Schwartz, for whom he had designed sets for the television production of Working. Mr. Schwartz, however, saw more in the idea than a pageant of spectacular effects. He felt it could become a story about families, how the problems and conflicts of one generation are handed onto the next and how the cycle can finally be broken and redeemed. In the relationship between God (called, for obvious reasons, Father) and his children, Adam and Eve, he saw a metaphor for controlling

parents and the need for parents to give the children freedom to make their own mistakes. And finally, there was the obvious motif of second chances.

The show was first developed as a one-hour song cycle for a high school student program in 1985 in St. Louis called Youth Sing Praise[®] and entitled FAMILY TREE. When that met with an enthusiastic reception, Mr. Schwartz and Mr. Linsanby began developing the idea further. John Caird came on board, first as director and then as book writer when it became clear that a script was needed.

A London production in 1991 proved premature, and a combination of the flaws in that version of the show and it's coinciding with the outbreak of the Gulf War made for only a brief West End run. But Mr. Schwartz and Mr. Caird continued to rewrite and rework through several successful American regional productions in Roanoke, Virginia; Quincy, Massachusetts; Wichita, Kansas; Riverside, California; Lincoln, Nebraska and at the Papermill Playhouse in New Jersey. Children of Eden is now being performed in countless regional theatres around the country and the world.

Children of Eden: at the Guildhall School

Question:

Was Children of Eden workshopped at the Guildhall School?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Yes, CHILDREN OF EDEN was workshopped at the Guildhall School during its early development. It was a very useful process and the students we worked with were enormously talented and contributive.

Children of Eden: Changes from London Version

Question:

I am currently directing Children of Eden and love the show. I got my hands on a recording of the British version and found it very different thematically from the current version. Is this truly the case? If so, why were so many changes made? I really like it in its current form and look forward to our production.

Could you just tell me a little bit about the differences. Thanks, Doug

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thanks for your message and best wishes with your production of CHILDREN OF EDEN. I agree with you that the current version is vastly superior to the earlier one presented in London. I don't know that they are different thematically, so much as the new version is just so much better executed and thus clearer. This is simply the consequence of John Caird and myself learning about the show as we saw productions of it, and then rewriting and making changes to try to improve it. Both John and I are extremely happy with the final version of the show and we are glad you agree it is an improvement. Thanks again and all the best, Stephen Schwartz

Children of Eden origins

Question:

Stephen, Is it true that your musical Children of Eden was commissioned by the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, IL? I live near the shrine, and heard this from someone, and wanted to know if it was true. Every year there is a national religious retreat called Youth Sing Praise[®] that meets annually at the Shrine, and I believe that Children of Eden was the main musical they did a few years back. Just curious...

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Phil: That is correct. At the time, it was called FAMILY TREE. It was pre-John Caird, and didn't really have a book; it was basically an oratorio consisting of about eleven songs. But many of them remain in the show (usually in somewhat altered form), including "In the Beginning", "Ain't It Good", "Lost in the Wilderness", and "In Pursuit of Excellence". The year was 1986, I believe, or perhaps '85. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Biblical Play

Question:

Stephen, Between 20-25 years ago, I attended a North American Pastoral Musicians Conference in Indianapolis. While there, I attended a musical about Noah's arc performed by Youth Sing Praise. I don't remember the title, but I was told that the composer of Godspell wrote the score. I was wondering if that composer was you. It was a great play. I have looked to see if this is listed in a record of your works, but nothing like this has turned up. This has been puzzling me for many years. Rick

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Rick: You are absolutely correct. That musical was entitled "Family Tree", and it became the show that remains my personal favorite of all my work to this day, "Children of Eden". The CD recording of "Children of Eden" is available on RCA Records (or BMG, or whatever they call the record company these days) in both a single CD "highlights" version of the songs or a double CD of all the music. Most of the eleven songs that were in "Family Tree" when you saw it remain in the final version of "Children of Eden". To be honest, I no longer remember why we changed the title. Thanks for asking, Stephen Schwartz

John Caird

[Question missing]

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

....As for John Caird, I had seen NICHOLAS NICKLEBY, which John co-directed, and thought it was the best thing I had ever seen in the theatre (I still do). When it came time to look for a director of CHILDREN OF EDEN, John therefore was high on my list, and I was able to get hold of his number and call him to see if he was interested. He went on, of course, to become the book writer.

Yonah

Question:

My daughter asked me why you skipped the part when Yonah gets thrown overboard and is swallowed by a big fish. I explained that the Yonah in Children of Eden is not the Yonah who runs away on a ship and ends up in the belly of the fish. Did you know when you wrote the show that you gave the character of Yonah the Hebrew name of the prophet Jonah (as well as a name which means dove)?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Yes. John Caird, in seeking a name for the character, came across the fact the "Yonah" means "dove", and liked that as a name for the character who ultimately saves the ark, as well as liking that it called up associations with "Jonah", another character who is cast overboard because he is considered bad luck on a ship. We didn't mean it to be confusing, thinking that because the Biblical Jonah was male, audiences wouldn't think they were the same person.

CHILDREN OF EDEN - Study Guide responses

Question:

I have been asked to write the study guide for a production of CHILDREN OF EDEN. If you have a moment, I would appreciate a brief response to one or more of the questions below. Thank you for your time and attention. I have admired your work for as long as I've been interested in musical theatre.

1) Why do you think there are so many musicals (CHILDREN OF EDEN, GODSPELL, KING DAVID, THE APPLE TREE, TWO BY TWO, etc.) that have been inspired by Bible stories?

2) Why did you add the character of "Yonah" to this retelling of a familiar story?

3) How do you think American musical theatre will evolve in the next fifty years?

Answers from Stephen Schwartz: I wouldn't begin to speculate on your third question (how the musical theatre will evolve over the next several years), since I couldn't tell you how it will evolve over the next several months. But I am happy to answer your other questions for your study guide, as follows:

1. I think the reason Bible stories have been so frequently used as the basis for musicals is that these stories provide a lot of the ingredients needed for successful musical theatre: They tend to have strong leading characters with big goals and big obstacles before them, they deal with important themes, and they have colorful and exotic settings. Also, because the stories are already familiar to audiences, they allow the authors to put their own spin on them to express their particular points-of-view. This is certainly true in the case of CHILDREN OF EDEN, where the well-known stories from the Book of Genesis have been adapted by John Caird and myself to deal with the themes of the relationship between parents and children, the conflict between authority and self-expression, personal responsibility, etc. These same stories can be used (and have been used) by other authors to deal with completely different ideas and themes, and I'm sure they will continue to be in future musicals.

2. John and I created the character of Yonah in the second act of CHILDREN OF EDEN because we needed a focal point for the conflict between Japheth and his father, Noah. In the first act, the points of conflict between Adam and Eve and Father (the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge), and then later between Cain and Adam (Cain's desire to go beyond the boundaries Adam has laid out) were clearly contained within the original stories. But what could the conflict between Japheth and Noah be? John and I decided it would be good if it could be some kind of love story. But then what would Noah's objection be? As we explored the idea, we realized that if Yonah were a daughter of the race of Cain, all the conflicts of the story could come together, and that Yonah's actions could transform all of the major characters (Japheth, Noah, and most importantly, Father.) And so the character was born. Two interesting side notes: The name Yonah means "dove" in Hebrew, and also, serendipitously, sounds like "Jonah", who in another Bible story is cast from a boat because he is bad luck. Also, I have often spoken with audience members who are positive they remember the story of Yonah from Sunday school or other Bible-study classes, etc. This indicates to me that there is something so elemental about the story, it's almost as if John and I didn't create it but simply found it waiting somewhere in the ether!

Hope these responses are useful to you; let me know if I can be helpful in any further way. Sincerely,
Stephen Schwartz

SECTION 3 – Various Questions

Children of Eden: Objections from Religious Groups

Question:

I was wondering how much, if any, "flack" you have received from organized religious groups or from the general populace. Were you apprehensive at all about writing for a show that strayed so far from the written Biblical history? It seems like any show with a Biblical origin is a very sensitive issue with people and they tend to attract more attention than other shows, whether they are completely Biblically accurate (GODSPELL) or stray a little (...SUPERSTAR). Is the way you write for a show affected by the general sensitivity of the subject matter?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Good question. I must tell you that I anticipated some flack from religious groups about CHILDREN OF EDEN, because not only does it "stray", as you put it, from Biblical texts but invents whole characters and incidents. And it has the character of God (Father) changing and growing as the action proceeds! To my astonishment (and delight), precisely the opposite has happened, and the show has been embraced and enthusiastically received even in the most fundamentalist Bible-belt areas. One woman in Virginia came up to me after a performance and said: "I'm usually offended by musicals based on the Bible, including GODSPELL, but this is the first one that I can recommend to everybody." It does seem paradoxical that the show that departs the most from liturgy should engender this response. I can only speculate that it is precisely because the character of Father is depicted as so real that he comes to life for audience members for whom God is a living entity in their daily lives, and that the issues dealt with in the show are clearly presented thoughtfully and with emotional honesty. In any event, although as I say I mistakenly anticipated some flack, I did not worry about it in the writing. I just tried to write about the characters and ideas as honestly and personally as I could, and that seems to have worked. Thanks for writing. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Children of Eden: The Book

Question:

Hi, all. I've heard a lot about this book by John Caird that, along with the music by Stephen Schwartz was used to write Children of Eden; but I've never been able to find such a book, either in bookstores or by doing a web search. Can anyone tell me more about the book and where/how it can be obtained? I think it might be fun to see what it's like.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I think it's just become the custom to call the dialogue portion of a musical the "book", to separate it from the lyrics, which often are written by a different person. In opera terms, it used to be called the libretto, but that was when all the text was written by one person or writing team. I don't of course know this for a fact, but that's my surmise, for whatever it's worth. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Children of Eden: Yonah in the bible?

[Question missing]

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Your students have good reason for not remembering where they encountered Yonah in the Bible. She's not there. John Caird (the co-author of CHILDREN OF EDEN) and I made her up. This fact alone should clue your students into the fact that CHILDREN OF EDEN is not a literal re-telling of the Bible story.

Since CHILDREN OF EDEN is about generational conflict, it was important for the authors to find a significant source of conflict between Noah's son Japheth and his father (and by extension, Father as well.) It had to be something that was as strong as the two conflicts in the first act -- Adam's choosing to eat the apple and Cain's desire for freedom. We decided to make the second act conflict a love story -- always a compelling theatrical device. From there, it was a logical step to invent a character who was forbidden on the ark by Father and Noah but whom Japheth took on board anyway out of love for her. This led to our discoveries that she would be the one to send out the dove, and that she would be the intervening factor that prevents the second murder from happening and thus breaks the cycle of violence that has been begun in the first act. So the name Yonah is doubly significant. First of all, it is the Hebrew word for "dove".

Secondly, it is reminiscent of "Jonah", the Biblical character who is cast overboard when others on the boat believe he is bad luck. Thanks for the question; I hope your production goes well and that you all have a wonderful time doing CHILDREN OF EDEN. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

A "Religious" play

Question:

You may recall my recent email regarding [name removed for privacy] production of "Children of Eden". The cast, crew, and pit are still hearing rave reviews. However, one disgruntled parent has challenged a public school producing what she considers a "religious" play. After voicing her opposition to the principal and the superintendent, she has gone a step further and contacted the state's Department of Public Instruction. A lawyer is now reviewing her issue which contends that there has been a violation in separation of church and state. Are you aware of any similar situations? If so, could you please provide any information that might help with this accusation?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Geez, people are SO touchy these days! It seems as if there's nothing you can do that doesn't offend somebody, and I guess people have way too much time on their hands, but surely there are more important things this woman could be worrying about than a high school play. As someone who even has sympathy for the opposition to using the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance, I think her objections are ridiculous. What's more, she clearly didn't understand the show.

That being said, for whatever use it is to you: Both John Caird and I are on public record as saying that it was not our intention to write a "religious" play in CHILDREN OF EDEN. It is a show about families, the relationships between parents and children, and generational conflicts, which uses a very familiar cultural story to make its points. Many plays and musicals, novels and poems have done so without being "religious" in nature (as, for instance, the new movie "The Passion" is religious in nature.) I don't even consider GODSPELL "religious" in nature, but that certainly could be considered more so than CHILDREN OF EDEN, and it has been done in public high schools for thirty years and counting.

If CHILDREN OF EDEN were trying to be faithful to the Bible, we wouldn't have created an entirely new character (Yonah), nor would we have made the traditional "bad guys" (Cain and Eve) the heroes of the first act, etc. Most critics who have reviewed the show and the thousands upon thousands of audience members who have seen it recognize that. Given this woman's argument, many of the great works of literature would be forbidden to be taught in high school -- does she object to reading "The Divine Comedy", for instance? What about ancient Greek plays -- are those all right because their gods and goddesses represent a different religion that's no longer practiced? And so on. It's not as if CHILDREN OF EDEN proselytizes a specific religious doctrine.

I'm sorry you have to deal with this exasperating situation, but I guess it's just the tenor of the times.
Best wishes, Stephen Schwartz

Children of Eden: Storytellers/Greek Chorus

Question:

Would it be wrong to consider the Storytellers in CHILDREN OF EDEN as a Greek Chorus in the classical sense?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

It would be entirely accurate to consider the Storytellers in CHILDREN OF EDEN the equivalent of a Greek chorus. You are 100% correct. Like the classic Greek chorus, they tell the parts of the story that are not dramatized onstage and react to the events that are shown. They are ever-present and an integral part of the play. The reason John Caird and I didn't refer to them as Chorus in the script is that the word "chorus" has come to mean something different in contemporary musical theatre parlance, and we felt they were more important and omnipresent than that word now implies. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Children of Eden for Broadway?

Question:

Stephen, you have said in a previous post that CHILDREN OF EDEN is a particular favorite of yours. My question is, what is your position on an eventual Broadway production? Certainly you have a great many connections among producers, including Universal with WICKED and Disney Theatrical. Are you looking for it to ever get a Broadway production or are you content with its numerous stock, college, community theatre, high school, etc. productions. It may well be that it is or will become the number one universally performed musical without a Broadway (or off-Broadway) production. Since getting to Broadway is always assumed to be similar to getting to the Big Leagues in sports, is it your goal to one day see COE on Broadway?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I would love to see a Broadway production of CHILDREN OF EDEN. But because of the cast size requirements (a choir of Storytellers, a chorus of children to be the Animals, etc.), it would be necessary to obtain concessions from Equity and perhaps other unions to make it economically feasible. This would, obviously, be difficult, and thus far no producer has emerged who is willing to try to accomplish the negotiations. I have been asked from time to time about the possibility of doing a cut-down version on Broadway, but it seems silly to me to do a Broadway production that would be inferior to the one done at the Paper Mill Playhouse, some fifty or so miles away in Millburn, NJ. So if a Broadway production never happens, that's how it goes. I am delighted that the show is having so many productions everywhere else. Thanks for your interest, Stephen Schwartz

SECTION 4 – Children of Eden – Themes and Meaning

Children of Eden ending

What does the ending of the show mean (In the beginning. Does it mean that now Father is no longer a part of humans lives?)

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I think the ending of CHILDREN OF EDEN, beginning with Father's soliloquy "Fare thee well, my precious children ...", through Noah's last speech to Father, and the content of the final number, "In the Beginning", including Father's solo ("There is no journey gone so far ...") speaks for itself. But I would never impose a single interpretation on it, as I wouldn't with any of my work. Each audience member, including yourself, should take from it what he or she gets and chooses.

Q and A – Most proud of...

Question:

What work are you most proud of? Please feel free to elaborate and be specific (song, play, lyric, note-- your favorite anythings.)

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I think the work of which I am most proud is CHILDREN OF EDEN, for several reasons. To begin with, I think it's my best score musically. It also contains the song that is maybe my personal favorite of my songs from a purely visceral point of view, Stranger to the Rain, a song that embodies how I feel about parenting (which is very important to me), The Hardest Part of Love, and above all, the song that most espouses my philosophy of life and which, if I had one song to be remembered by, is the one I would choose: In the Beginning. There are more of the themes that I return to over and over-- personal responsibility, rebellion, intellectual independence, as well as overcoming family dysfunctions -- in this work than in any of my other shows. And I am proud of the fact that I kept working on the show after its initial failure in its London premiere, so that it has become a viable and often performed piece that I know will live on after I'm gone.

Father/Son relationships in Children of Eden

Question:

I am having trouble justifying the relationship between Adam and Cain. The first time we see Adam and (older) Cain together is the same scene in which Adam hits him. Is there a father son rivalry that I am missing? Also, What is it that brings about such rage in Adam and Noah which causes them to send a violent blow to their children? It seems to come out of nowhere. As director, it would help me greatly if I understand how to justify these actions because they seem rather abrupt and I fear that if not played correctly, they may come across as slightly comical and I am certain that is NOT the intent.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thank you for your intelligent question about CHILDREN OF EDEN and the father/son relationships between Adam and Cain and Noah and Japheth.

I think you are slightly misunderstanding those relationships. It is not that there is any kind of father-son rivalry that you are missing, but that in both cases, the fathers are behaving as they think they should when confronted with disobedience.

It's a pretty well-established fact that children tend to imitate their parents when they become parents themselves. Thus there is a continuing cycle of dysfunction. It takes strength and self-awareness to break this cycle. To take the Adam/Cain relationship first: Adam has grown up with his own Father's behavior. He has learned from experience that a single act of rebellion is punished in an extreme way -- expulsion from his home and banishment forever from the presence of his Father. As he has grown into a man, he has internalized his Father's behavior. He is desperately trying to keep his family together in the hopes that years and years of constant obedience will finally earn him his Father's forgiveness (a vain hope as it turns out.) When Cain rebels, and rebels in a way in which this very obedience is threatened, that pushes Adam to the breaking point. It is out of this that the violence grows. And years

of bottled up frustration and rage break out then in Cain, leading him to commit his murderous act, which in the show is directed not at his brother but at his father, though it is his brother who suffers the consequences.

The implication in CHILDREN OF EDEN is that there is a cycle of violence passed down from generation to generation, and that one generation's behavior is pre-determined by that of its ancestors. In the Noah/Japheth story this cycle is finally broken. Noah, like Adam and presumably all the fathers in the intervening generations, is carrying on the tradition of autocratic paternal rule and complete inflexibility when confronted by disobedience or rebellion. But he is a different sort of man than Adam, one living under less desperate circumstances and one who has not been trying his entire life to atone for one rebellious act. Nevertheless, Noah and Japheth ultimately find themselves, under extremely high-stake circumstances, pushed to the same breaking point as Adam and Cain. But in this instance, an intervention occurs. Yonah, the woman Japheth loves, rushes into the middle of the situation and puts herself between the enraged Japheth and his about-to-be victim. Japheth stops, realizes what he is about to do, and refuses to participate in the cycle of violence. The pattern of dysfunction is broken. And Noah, wrestling in his own heart with centuries of tradition, comes to the conclusion that he too must break the cycle and finally allow his children freedom. And ultimately, observing these events, the first Father, the one who began the whole cycle, comes to change his behavior too. The entire generations-long pattern is finally changed.

I don't think you need fear unintentional laughter from the audience in the scenes of violence and confrontation between father and son. I have seen many productions of CHILDREN OF EDEN, and that has never been an issue. But I can see how, looking at the relationships out-of-context, you might wonder how matters can have escalated to such an extreme between the specific characters. The point of the show is that no parent/child relationship IS out-of-context -- and thus it is very difficult to change pre-existing family patterns of behavior. It takes willingness to think for oneself and behave according to one's own heart and mind, and not to be ruled by the dysfunctional traditions one has been taught. Any cursory look at our own current society, generations after the events depicted in CHILDREN OF EDEN, makes it clear what a difficult thing that is to do.

Thanks for your question, and I hope this response has proven helpful. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

SECTION 5 - PRAISE FOR CHILDREN OF EDEN

Children of Eden Harmonies

Comment:

I hardly ever post here, but I had to say this. I was in COE a while back, and was moved to tears every night by the closing song, In The Beginning. The harmonies are so close-knit and for some reason EVERY night when we sang them as a group, I cried. Your harmonies are what makes your music SOAR above most composers. One of the other composers that does this very well is Jason Robert Brown. Such a GIFT you have creating harmonies for groups and not making them too elaborate to where you don't know WHAT to listen to, yet not simple at ALL to sing. Again, you did a WONDERFUL job with Wicked. Noone Mourns The Wicked and What Is This Feeling are two great examples. The harmonies are just SO beautiful. Please keep up the great work! A Loyal Fan...-Zach

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thank you, Zach. Vocal harmonies are among my favorite things to write, so I especially appreciated your enthusiasm for my work in that area. Thanks for taking the time to let me know. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Praise for CHILDREN OF EDEN

Comment:

Thank you so much for the show: CHILDREN OF EDEN. It has really lifted me out of some hard times in my life that I have gone through. Whenever I felt I couldn't go on anymore, I listened to the soundtrack and was inspired to go on. I would just like to thank you. -Matt

Reply from Stephen Schwartz:

And thank you for your message, Matt. It was a very nice way to start my day, particularly when I am in the midst of tech rehearsals and other struggles on a new show. I appreciate your taking the time to write. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Thank you for writing Children of Eden:

Comment 1 from Jim:

Stephen, I'm in the midst of rehearsals for the Nutley (NJ) production of "Children of Eden", and felt compelled to find a way to communicate my thanks for writing such a breathtaking show. It's an absolute joy to sing, and the SATB that ends each act is killer. I don't want to give the book back to MTI. Again, thanks. Jim RPS - I'm playing Father. The Ab's are killing me, man!

Reply from Stephen Schwartz:

Thanks, Jim (sorry about those A-flats.) As most people know, CHILDREN OF EDEN remains my favorite of my shows. Hope your production goes well and you all have a great time doing it. Best, Stephen Schwartz

Comment 2 from Jim:

Well, we did it. Our short run (three performances) of "Children of Eden" is done. Stephen, thank you very much for the good wishes in your reply. I read it to the cast before the first show, emphasizing the suggestion to "have a great time". We were a bit nervous, having had a, shall we say, less than stellar final dress. But, once we got going, everything went far better than any of us had dared to hope. I have to say that I was unprepared for the emotional power that is unleashed by this show, even after having read about it from descriptions of other performances. Everyone in the audience and on the stage felt it. It was something I've never seen in thirty years of amateur theatre. Stagehands were singing. Local politicians were crying. I almost lost it myself when the time came to release the dove. I had heard that "Children of Eden" was one of MTI's most-licensed shows, almost entirely by word-of-mouth. Now I know why. To everyone reading this, perhaps here due to "Wicked"'s success, or because you love "Godspell" or "Pippin" -- get your local theatre interested in mounting a production of "Children of Eden". You won't be sorry. And to Stephen -- I cannot express my gratitude. (And by the way, I hit the A-flats.) Jim R

Children of Eden at the Rep in LR

COMMENT: The company did a GREAT JOB. I've never seen the show. It was REALLY GREAT! The procession of animals to the ark was amazing and had a few "Lion King-ish" elements in it, such as processing down the aisles, puppets, and very creative costumes. I've never heard any of the songs from it, so I was pleasantly surprised. My favorite line was "the hardest part of love is letting go." AHHH!!! How true. Thanks, Steven, for such a great talent. What I find amazing, is that YOU have been given a

gift, yet you give it back to your audiences with every performance at every one of your shows. Thanks, again.

No Matter What Happened in the Past: I Can Get By

Comment from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Vicky: Thank you for your wonderful EMail. I hope you won't mind that I am going to post it on the forum. How could I resist? All the best to you and your family, Stephen Schwartz

Mr. Schwartz- Recently I was in a production of Children of Eden at Lake Performing Arts in Wickliffe, Ohio. Being a storyteller in this show made such a large impact on my life. The themes and lessons from this show have taught so much. Being a teenager right now is very difficult and from this show I learned that all the times I have been mad at my parents, they have had it just as hard. Everytime I hear the music I feel new hope and a sense that no matter what happened in the past I can get by. Thank you so much for this show and all it has given to me. This show has been a miracle in the life my family and me and I would like to thank everyone who has seen or been involved with the show. On behalf of all these people I want you to know that you have made a positive impact on the world. Sincerely, Vicky Tkacz, Age 15 Mayfield, Ohio

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more about the show's meaning, see also the notes about the meaning of the roles of Father, Japeth, etc. in the NOTES TO PERFORMERS section of this Forum archive.

Also see the CHILDREN OF EDEN songs section of this Forum archive.

Background information, cast album, sheet music, etc.

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

Complete history and meaning

“Defying Gravity: The Creative Career of Stephen Schwartz, from Godspell to Wicked.”

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* chapters include quotations drawn from interviews with Lisanby, Schwartz, bookwriter John Caird, and others that explore the philosophy behind the musical.