

Children of Eden – Notes for Musicians and Music Directors

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Synths

Question:

Has anyone performed "Children of Eden" with the correct synthesizer settings and hardware? I'm looking to use the synthesizer and sounds that the show was written for. Can anyone help? THANKS!

Answer from Forum visitor:

Okay, so here's the "unofficial" response that you've been waiting for...I have a copy of the score from COE, and have looked through that asking myself the same questions. It's difficult because some patches are actual sounds, and some are explanations. Out of my 3 synthesizers, I've never found something called a "Simple Organ," so I assume that's a description. However, my Roland JV1010 DOES have "Pop Pad" and "Pulse Keys," along with many others. I'd strongly suggest Roland synthesizers for the show. I also happen to know that Stephen has a Roland in his studio. Then again, he has a Yamaha MIDI-enabled Grand in his living room ... so I'd go with either Roland or Yamaha. From experience, the first keyboard should stick to Acoustic and Electric pianos ... Sometimes the orchestration gets a little too thick ... Just a suggestion ...

Answer from Michael Cole:

I believe the orchestrations were written for two Roland JC-120s. Does that help? Michael

Answer from another visitor:

I recall Stephen once said they were for Roland JV-90s - and I am pretty sure that's right because we used the JV-90's successor in our production and as far as I recall all sounds were there - at least if you got the sound expansions for the JV-90... so all of them are actual sound names, and should be reproducible on anything that can use the old JV-90s expansions (we used the XP-80 for that) Hope that helps

COE Keyboard patch question....

Question:

Hi Stephen, Michael, and everyone else! My name is Sean and I will be directing a production of COE in the winter of 2007. I served as MD for the show several years back and I remember that the sound patches listed in all 3 keyboard books were very specific. My keyboard programmer will want to come as close to the original as possible, so I wanted to check and see if the Papermill production used Roland sound modules on their synths? I know this is a ridiculously specific question (and one that would probably be better directed to Brett Summers [sp?], the original programmer), but I figured this is a great place to start. Thanks so much for your time and I hope everyone is doing well! Yours, ~Sean

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Hi Sean: I'm not certain they were Roland modules, but I love Roland sounds and tend to ask for them, so if you went with Roland modules, I'm sure they would work well. Thanks for being so meticulous about your choices, and I wish you a great experience doing the show, which as you probably know, remains my favorite of my shows. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Children of Eden: Orchestrations for Small Space

Question:

As we begin to plan our production of Children of Eden, one problem that I foresee is that the configuration of our stage will not allow for a 13 piece orchestra as called for in the score. I will probably be able to fit 6 musicians in what passes for a pit. I am seeking any advice you might share on how to create the fullest sound possible with two keyboards, bass, drums, guitar, and woodwind doubler (oboe, sax, etc).

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

The 6-musician contingent you describe is exactly what I would recommend. My suggestion would be to assign horn and cello parts either to the second keyboard player on synth (you'll find most of them are already doubled on synth anyway). I'd then make choices of which of the woodwind parts you want your solo woodwind player to cover in each number, based on what you feel will be most effective with your staging. But it sounds as if you have the right idea and have the situation well in hand. I hope you have a great success with your production and a wonderful time doing it. Yours truly, Stephen Schwartz

Wrong notes?

Question:

Hi Stephen--I'm the musical director for a production of "Children of Eden" in Lakeland, Florida. In song #7, Perfect Part 2, measures 75 and 76, the notes written in the score for sopranos and altos are not what I heard on the original recording. I'm thinking the melody should be the same as when Eve sings "Beyond, beyond" in the very next song. Is this a misprint in the score or should I have the ladies sing it as written? Thanks, and good luck at the Tony's--Patrick Fleitz

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Mr. Fleitz: I checked my piano/conductor score, and it must be different from yours, because there are no vocals in those bars. But you are absolutely correct that the "Beyond" theme should be the same melodically as when it appears in the intro to "Spark of Creation". I couldn't find the mistake in my copy, but please adjust yours accordingly. And thanks for catching it. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Children of Eden: Instruments used by Storytellers

[Question missing]

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

During "The Naming", some of the Storytellers (those who can) play little xylophones and percussion instruments known as Orff instruments (because they were invented for use by schoolchildren by Carl Orff, the composer of "Carmina Burana"). Also during "The Return" and, in some productions, "The Flood." In some productions, some of the Storytellers play guitars for "The Wasteland", and of course, percussion instruments for "Generations". And in all productions, they should reprise the sounds they make during the Cain/Abel fight when the same scene reoccurs with Japheth and Ham. -- Stephen Schwartz

Pit Percussion in Children of Eden

Question:

I've been booked to play Percussion (as opposed to Drums) for Children of Eden in June 2005. Does anyone have a list of instruments for the pit part and an idea of difficulty (I'm a bit rusty on my mallet instruments!)? Many thanks.

Answer from Forum visitor:

I have finally got round to compiling my thesis! here it is, I hope it helps some of you. Children of Eden Pit Percussion Requirements

The following is based on my own experience of a successful production earlier this year. The notes in parenthesis are mine.

General Note: The percussion instruments required take up a massive amount of room and may need to be forsaken or substituted on keyboard (see notes) for reasons of space, though this is not the best sonic solution. The part provided by Josef Weinberger/MTI is clear, but not always well expressed - MDs should be careful to mark up colla voce passages etc. I added many lyric cues as you are frequently, for example, tuning one Timp. while playing another, moving around the set-up and otherwise preoccupied! There are also indications in some of the wind parts for them to have hand held instruments like Shekere etc. so have some spares to hand out.

In The Naming there is a full score of on-stage Orff instruments. If you don't have these make sure you have cued the keyboard parts properly! The 'Drums' chart also has the odd ethnic thing like Djemba. Some of the 'pop' writing only works at certain tempi so you may need to adapt!

Instruments Required (in order of first appearance)

Xylophone (not used much and easily done on a small MIDI keyboard)

Tam-Tam/Mark

Tree Crotales (nice to have, but may be done on a small MIDI keyboard)

Vibraphone (I used a keyboard for space reasons, but it really needs the real thing)

Timpani (a standard pair is fine but you'll need quick feet and accurate ear)

Marimba (again, I used a keyboard and much of it is covered anyway. Most of the work is in Generations, where it is effective, but I improvised a Guiro riff here which seemed effective.

Sus.

Cym.

Glockenspiel

Woodblock

Cabasa

Temple Blocks (4)

Bean Pod Rattle (I had one of these, but Maraca is fine)

Maracas

Small Hand Drum (I used a small bongo)

Finger Cyms.

High Ethnic Drum (Small bongo again)

Tambourine

Bell

Tree Indian Bells or Sleigh Bells

Rain Stick/Shaker (for a lot of this I used a very small cabasa)

Egg Shaker (these are very quiet - use your own judgement)

Sandblox (helpful to have one mounted as there's not much time)

Bass Drum (I detuned the low timp. for this and it was fine) Hi & Lo Ethnic Drums with hands (I used a pair of Congas, needed any for next item)

Conga Slap (2 Congas needed later anyway)Shekere (I had one, but maracas suitable)Gourd Shaker (ditto)
Ratchet
African Drums (Tribal) (I used 2 bongos and 2 congas)
TriangleBells (USA for Glock.)
Guiro
High Shaker

I think that's about it! It's a really busy part but lots of fun to play once you get everything squeezed into the pit. There's hardly any dialogue either so you need to keep your wits about you. Good luck!
Eric Wilson, August 2005

Spark of Creation etc

Question:

I just completed conducting & playing keyboards for Children of Eden and am going through Schwartz-show withdrawal, so forgive me if I babble. For those of you who haven't heard it, you should. It's an amazing musical tapestry. If you are a pianist, you just haven't lived until you've played Mr. Schwartz' piano lines.

Was I mistaken if I thought the 3/4 section at the end of "The Spark of Creation" is a slightly modulated (in the bass) progression that appears in the last few bars "Defying Gravity"? I can't place it, but the similarity (to something from Wicked) was chill-inducing. Again, thanks for the music. Another show of yours that touched me while my orchestra played it every night. "Father's Day" could have been the most amazing music, both in its apparent simplicity yet harmonic depth, that I've ever heard. The orchestrators, Bruce Coughlin and Martin Erskine, are simply amazing. You would never know that you're only listening to 11 in the orchestra from the voicings that come out of it.

2nd question: This is more of a future reference question. Since I had triple duty, I had somewhat of a hard time playing from the conductor's score after marking as many of the parts from Keyboard 1 into it to stay on orchestration (and not all are in the conductor's score because of space concerns). On top of turning pages about every 8 measures, it was interestingly complex. Is there a way to produce a score for a triple duty conductor that has only the keyboard 1 part, the vocal line, necessary orchestra cues in it, and is printed in a larger book that requires less page turning? I thought about using Finale software to do something just like that, but was concerned about getting caught with a score that I had made myself to play the show with (I should just call Michael and ask him probably). I'm not a believer in asking forgiveness later is better than getting permission. If the question makes sense, what would you have done in my position?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

[A reply to the first question]

Now that you point it out, I realize that the repeating figure in the right hand that accompanies the choruses of "Spark of Creation" is essentially the same as the little answering figure in "Defying Gravity" that occurs after the statements of the low end main motif. In the key of D, for example, the figure is built on the notes C# D C# A low D. It's not an exact repetition in the two songs, but very close. I guess it's OK to steal from oneself, but I'll try to be sure not to repeat this again in future works, having now done it in two of them! Good catch on your part.

2nd question: I guess the problem is that this orchestration was not originally intended for a piano/conductor, so the conductor's book isn't set up that way. I don't know if MTI, who license the show and thus prepare the materials, would feel it wasn't cost effective to produce a piano/conductor version that could go out for productions where the first keyboardist is also the conductor, but I will look into it. Thanks for the suggestion (and the compliments). Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Children of Eden: Vocal Arrangements/Shout Chorus

Questions:

From Peggy: Hi, Stephen. The director of our production of COE had some questions that he wanted me to ask you. I hope I can remember them all. :) First, he was curious as to why, for "Generations", it says that people should sing the parts they're comfortable with. Our choral director has altos singing the soprano part, and other parts being switched around as well. I think only the basses sing what's written for their part. The director of the show wonders if the "sing what's comfortable" thing might be confusing for those who are trying to learn their part from reading the music, and wondered why it says to sing what's comfortable.

Also, he'd like to know why "Civilized Society" and "Shipshape" (I think those were the names) were cut from the show. He really likes those songs, and even called to ask if he could get the music and use them in our show, and was told no. He wonders who has the final say in what songs get cut from COE, and what the decision is based on. Also, as we discussed the amazing ranges in the four-part harmonies that make COE fun and challenging to sing, he wondered if you scored the music for the four parts yourself or (as he says is often done) if someone else did the scoring for them. Last but not least, he's interested in how the London version of the show was staged. He knows it was on three tiers, but hasn't been able to find any information on what parts of the show were on which tiers, or any pictures of how it was done. Can you provide any information to him about this? Hmmm, I think that's all the questions he had. That should keep you busy for awhile. :)

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Peggy; The vocal arrangements were all done by me, so blame me for their ranges. (The only exception is "In Pursuit of Excellence", since I'm not great at jazz vocal arrangements.) The reason for the instruction that people should sing what they're most comfortable with in "Generations" is two-fold: Most importantly, it's meant to have a "shout chorus" sound, like those African choruses in things like SARAFINA. Therefore, people should be on their "money notes" rather than adhere strictly to parts. The other reason is that the key is often changed depending on the ranges of the soloists, and this affects the "Shout" quality of the choral responses.

I am also responsible (along with my co-author John Caird) for all cuts and changes. I cut the two songs you mentioned from the show because, even though I liked them both as songs, they didn't work in the show -- they slowed the action, distracted from the main themes, and made the second act too long. I emphatically do not want them reinstated. in terms of the London set: I could describe it, but I didn't like it (it was WAY too big and overwhelming). I'm much happier when the show is done on a simpler more human scale. Please wish your director and all the rest of the company my best for a wonderful show. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Also see the other Children of Eden Songs section of this Forum archive.

Background information, cast album, sheet music

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

All About Children of Eden:

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

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

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

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