

Working - Notes for Directors and Musicians

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SECTION 1 – DIRECTING WORKING

Working DVD

Question:

I might be directing a production of Working and I was wondering if the DVD of the production that Stephen directed is the same version that is licensed out

Answer from Michael Cole:

The current version is different from the DVD. The show was updated in the year 2000 to include such modernizations as email, internet and scanning codes at the grocery store.

Answer from Carol de Giere:

The DVD was created in 1981 in a documentary style. It wasn't meant to recreate the theatre experience. Still, it is valuable to watch it for a sense of the characters and songs. You might want also try checking pm the MTI site for upcoming shows to see if there are any in your area to see live.

http://www.mtishows.com/show_detail.asp?showid=000081 - see WORKING section "Upcoming"

For the DVD and other WORKING info see

<http://www.musicalschwartz.com/working.htm>

WORKING: Suggestion for directors & thoughts on opposition

Question:

Is there anything you could suggest I tell the cast that you may not have said in the production notes in the script or the linear notes for the CD? For instance, I have faced some opposition to the play, in that the thought is that students should not do something so centered around an obvious "adult world."

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Thanks, and I'm glad preparations are going well. I don't really have much to add to the production notes in the script. I can't imagine why anyone would be opposed to students doing a show that requires empathy for their fellow human beings and learning to look at things through someone else's point-of-view, but I suppose these days, there will be someone who feels the necessity to be opposed to anything you do (undoubtedly someone who could learn a thing or two about empathy themselves.).

Anyway, as I think I say in my production notes, it wouldn't be a bad idea, if you have time, to take your cast on a field trip to something like a local firehouse, or have someone come to talk to them about his or her job, just to see how people behave when they are talking about what they do (they DON'T over-

dramatize or feel sorry for themselves, they DO use humor and a kind of self-deprecation). This might help them in their performances. In any event, I hope you and your students have a great time doing the show. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Staging Working

Question missing

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

My experience has been that WORKING works best when it is done very simply, leaving the audience to supply a lot of the physical reality. Basically it is performed as a series of monologues to the audience, as if people are being interviewed on the job. There is certainly staging and choreography involved in numbers like "Lovin' Al", "Millwork" or "It's an Art" and in scenes like the fire or the supermarket. But simplicity and reality-based movement are the key. The last number is also best when kept simple, though I am very proud of the way I staged it in the Broadway production. In that, all the workers came out in white coveralls that turned out to be break-away costumes -- when they started to sing the "For me" section, one by one the coveralls would break away and reveal them in one of their color costumes from the show -- the red of the waitress's skirt or the green of the parking lot attendant's uniform, etc. By the end of the number, they were all in color. Best, Stephen

Director's Notes

A message from Michael Cole with notes from Stephen Schwartz:

We have recently discovered a note written by Stephen Schwartz when he was in pre-production for the original production of the musical WORKING. We have decided to post portions of it that may be helpful to directors and actors mounting their own production of the show. Of course this advice is somewhat specific to WORKING, but could also be applied to other shows/characters - especially shows that include monologues where characters are speaking directly to the audience:

Decide whom you're talking to at all times in each of your speeches. The reply to the audience is not adequate. The monologues must be personalized. Are you telling your story to a stranger? A group of strangers? A friend? A family member? A boss? A psychiatrist? What is your relationship to the person(s) you're talking to? How comfortable are you speaking to them? You must select someone specific to talk to at all time, and obviously, this choice changes from character to character and sometimes within speeches. Work on character. In the preface to the book, Studs talks about the telling gesture that illuminates character. See if you can find one or two for each of your people, a gesture or physical habit that grows out of their work or environment. Think about how they stand, how they sit, how they move, where their center of balance seems to be. Do they speak rapidly or haltingly? Are they shy or aggressive in speaking? How has their work affected them physically? Lastly, remember that when people speak about themselves they tend to be self-effacing and humorous. Often the more harrowing the tale, the lighter the attitude with which they tell it. To experience this, try asking someone to tell you about his or her job, or some other life experience, and see the way they use humor, off-handedness, and other conversational devices.

SECTION 2 – SONGS

Working: Orchestrations

Question:

Hi! I am directing "Working" in the beginning of March. Whatever happened to the orchestrations that were used in the OCR? They weren't real full, but I have lots of brass and wind players that would like to

play in the pit. MTI says they know nothing of them. Thanks!

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

The original orchestrations for WORKING were never released when MTI licensed the show, because by that time the show had changed somewhat and it was also felt that most productions would be happier with the smaller band. I used to have a copy of the original orchestrations sitting in my basement in a box, but I'm not sure I still do. I fear you will have to make do with the Bruce Coughlin five-man reduction -- perhaps you can figure out some brass and woodwind parts from them, since they are essentially a reduced version of the original orchestrations. Good luck! Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Working Orchestrations:

Question:

The piano and guitar parts are a bit difficult for our high schoolers, and we are confused about the missing horns and string parts. MTI says that there are not parts available for horns or strings, yet the piano conductor's score notes them, and has large rests for them. Any suggestions to simplify, etc. would be appreciated.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Unfortunately, the only parts that exist for WORKING are the reduced orchestration done by Bruce Coughlin, which is what MTI sends out. The parts for the original Kirk Nurock Broadway orchestration are lost in the mists of time, but in any event, they wouldn't work for much of the revised version that is being done these days. But your band shouldn't have any trouble sounding full with what exists -- many productions of the show have been done over the past twenty-plus years using these arrangements with no problem. And of course, if you like, you can always enhance them for your production, if your musical director or a local arranger wants to write parts for additional instruments (for which the vestigial score markings would be useful.) In any event, I hope you have a great time doing the show and that your production proves a smashing success. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Neat to be a Newsboy

Question:

I will be directing "Working" this fall and hope to get the rights to take it to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2003. The high school theatre group I direct was selected to represent "The Best of American High School Theatre" at the fringe and to me, no show is better suited to showcase the talent and heart of American young people than "Working".

However, after receiving the score from MTI I was so sad to see the Newsboy song eliminated from the score. To me, it is a terrific way to temporarily lighten the tone, and it gives a very young performer a chance to shine. Is it possible to get the music to this neat piece and the rights to perform it with the updated production? Any assistance you could give me would be a thrill and an honor.

Answer from Michael Cole:

Dear Rebecca:

Stephen says he has no problem with you putting Neat to be a Newsboy back into your production. It should go after the "businessman" and before the "teacher." You should be able to get the music from Music Theatre International. If you have any troubles getting the music, email me and let me know.

Working with Kids – Neat to be a Newsboy

Question:

Hi! I am preparing to do the musical "Working" in the school where I teach. I had planned to use some middle school children, and looked forward to the song "Neat To Be a Newsboy". I was then shocked to find that it is not in the libretto. Can we add it? I have a copy of the song from the library, and it is so cute. Thanks for the forum and the great music that you continue to treat us to. Thanks, Wendy

Answer from Michael Cole:

Dear Wendy, You may absolutely add "Neat to be a Newsboy" back into your production of Working. You need to contact Music Theatre International and ask for the Newsboy Songpak. The song should be placed between the Businessman and the Teacher. Have a wonderful production. Best, Michael

Millwork

Question:

The piano/conductor score for Working shows no real piano accomp. for "millwork" only chords and a few bits of interlude to be played by guitar. However, on the L.A. Theaterworks recording, piano is the primary source of accomp. Is there any way to get this piano accomp, or was it essentially devised by the keyboardist? I would assume the vocal selections would have some for mof piano accomp, but those are usually edited to take up less paper and are thus incomplete and usually in different keys than the original.

Answer from a Forum visitor:

The vocal selections book for Working has an arrangement in the same key as the score with a little more guidance for a piano player. The selections book is available through most music stores or online at Amazon.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Donald: I checked the vocal selection book, and it might be useful. I would recommend not taking the piano part literally, as much of it does consist of playing the melody along with the singer, and you probably don't want to do that. But the fills and intro sections are good, and you could treat the sections which are being sung as essentially a lead sheet and just play the chords as shown. I don't know what's in the piano/conductor score and how different the vocal selections are, but I do think you could use them if you treat them as I suggested. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Working Karaoke/Accompaniment CD

Question:

Does anyone know where I could find a Karaoke/Accompaniment CD or downloadable music for Working? My school plans to perform a One Act of the show and after we buy the rights, we will be unable to have a band play as we perform. Anyone have any insight?

Answer from Michael Cole:

In answer to your question, I've posted MTI's response. I know this isn't the response you were looking for, but it is very important for everyone to know what is allowed and what isn't. Best, Michael Cole0

5 April 2004

Greetings:

All licenses issued by MTI specifically prohibit performance to pre-recorded so-called 'canned' music. This prohibition is not put in place by only MTI; it is applicable to 99% of musical theater.

The exceptions: our Broadway Jr. Collection. With the Jr. Collection titles you have the choice of performing with an accompaniment CD or with piano. Jr. titles are abridged versions of some of our more popular full length titles. These titles were developed specifically for middle/elementary children to perform; MTI has received special permission from the authors to create the performance CD. For more information on The Broadway Junior Collection, which is a division here at MTI, follow this link: <http://www.broadwayjr.com/>

In general, some children's shows (non-Jr.) have an accompaniment CD or tape. These are usually provided to encourage production of the title. Generally, these shows have never appeared on Broadway. Thus the author(s) have not sold the recording rights to one of the major record labels - a cast recording has never been made - and instead the author gives permission for an accompaniment track to be created. Once an author has sold the rights to a record label for a cast recording, it is illegal for any other party to record the music - whether as a 'cast recording' or as an accompaniment resource for performance - since the owner retains rights for "audio" which can be with or without vocals.

The one and only other exception, to my knowledge, is the MTI title "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers." I don't know the history behind it, but we have a performance CD available for this (and only this) full length title.

In the Spring of 2002, MTI introduced a new resource called "OrchExtra" which has been called a virtual orchestra or band in a box. ... Another resource offered exclusively by MTI is called the RehearScore. This is a midi-type software program which is loaded onto computers. It features the entire piano score, with and without the instrumental vocal lines, to either supplement or replace the rehearsal pianist. The RehearScore resource must be used for REHEARSALS only. Should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Regards, Michael McDonough, Music Theatre International

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

See also the other WORKING sections of this Forum archive.

Licensing http://www.mtishows.com/show_detail.asp?showid=000081

Consider viewing the DVD and listening to the recording. There's also a teaching guide to the book Working that may be of interest called "Studs Terkel's Working: A Teaching Guide." Info on <http://www.musicalschwartz.com/working.htm>

To compare Terkel's Working with the musical <http://www.musicalschwartz.com/working-musical.htm>

Learn about the original intentions of the show's creators in Chapter 10 of "Defying Gravity: The Creative Career of Stephen Schwartz, from Godspell to Wicked." It includes interview quotes from Stephen Schwartz, Nina Faso, producer Irwin Meyer, Music Director Stephen Reinhardt, and several cast members <http://www.defyinggravitythebook.com/>

Notes from other productions, etc. – The Working Section of MTI showspace <http://www.mtishowspace.com/mod/shows/mtishow.php?showid=000081>