

Children of Eden – Synopsis (compliments of MTI)

It's a story about the challenges that exist in the relationship between parents and children. It's also a story about... well, a WHOLE lot more.

ACT ONE

The story of Adam and Eve, Cain, and Abel.

The musical begins in darkness. As the chorus of Storytellers describes the beginning of the world when Father created the heavens, candles are lit around the stage. Father comes on and declares, "Let there be light." In the song, "Let There Be," Father builds the world based on his dream. At the end of the song, he creates Adam and Eve and gives them the Garden of Eden to live in. Eden is a perfect place.

Eve wants to know about the glowing tree on top of the hill. Father tells them it is the tree of knowledge, and they must never eat its fruit. Eve questions why Father put the tree there if it's not good. Father tells her to have faith in his reasons. To divert their attention away from the tree, Father asks Adam and Eve to help him name all the animals. With the help of the Storytellers pretending to be animals, Adam, Eve, and Father name the animals in the song, "The Naming." When that is done, Adam and Eve go to sleep as Father sings them a lullaby ("Grateful Children"). In the song, "Father's Day," Father reflects on how well his universe turned out. Meanwhile, in the night, Adam and Eve kiss and realize they are not brother and sister.

One day, Eve goes up to the tree of knowledge and it enchants her. When she tries to show the tree to Adam, he is not interested and goes back to naming his bugs. However, Eve remains curious about the world beyond and sings about her desire for new experiences in "The Spark of Creation." A Snake comes up to Eve and asks her questions. Eve does not know the answers, but she is intrigued. In the song, "In Pursuit of Excellence," the Snake convinces Eve to pursue knowledge and eat the fruit of the tree. Eve eats the fruit and tricks Adam into eating it by turning it into juice. When Adam realizes that they have eaten from the tree of knowledge, he and Eve hide from Father. Father calls to them, but Adam is ashamed. Unashamed, Eve tells Father that she understands her own potential. Father orders Eve to leave the garden and tells Adam that he will make him a better wife. Adam chooses to stay with Eve instead of staying in Eden in the song, "A World Without You." Father exiles Adam and Eve to the wilderness in the song, "The Expulsion."

Time passes in the song, "The Wasteland," as the Storytellers describe Adam and Eve's desolate new environment. Eve gives birth to two sons, Cain and Abel. Adam prays to Father to be let back into paradise. As the boys grow up, Cain becomes more curious about the world while Abel remains obedient to Adam. Eve worries that she has passed her hunger for knowledge onto Cain. In the song, "Lost in the Wilderness," Cain convinces Abel to leave their home to seek their own destinies out in the world. Father comes upon Cain and Abel and tells them that he has placed his hope in them. Cain declares he will find his own destiny without Father's help and storms off. Before he leaves, Father makes Abel promise that he won't tell Adam about the meeting and tells Abel that he is only hope for the future. When Adam learns that Cain is gone, he curses him but also remembers Cain and Abel playing childhood games in the song, "Close to Home."

Cain returns and describes what he has found, "A Ring Of Stones," which means that Adam's family are not the only people in the world. Adam thinks the other people are barbarians and orders Cain to never speak of them again. However, Cain, wanting to be a part of a larger family, tries to leave, but Adam blocks his way. Abel tries to restrain Cain, but Cain kills him with a rock. Shouting to Adam that he should be dead, Cain runs off as Abel dies in Eve's arms. As Cain is running, Father appears before him and asks where his brother is. Cain asks if he is his brother's keeper. Father marks Cain's forehead and curses him and all his children in the song, "The Mark of Cain."

Eve comes out. She is now an old woman. Adam has died. She introduces her third son, Seth, who is married with children. Father returns to Eve and tells her that Cain is alive. Eve tries to ask more questions, but Father disappears. Eve gathers the grandchildren together and tells them that this is her last harvest. In the song, "Children of Eden," Eve and the company dream of the day when they will return to their true home, Paradise.

ACT TWO

The story of Noah and the flood.

The act begins in light, a thousand years after Act One. The Storytellers come on and sing "Generations," which traces the line of Adam to Noah and his three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Father wants Noah to quickly finish building the ark, so he can flood the world and destroy the line of Cain.

Meanwhile, Noah has other worries. His youngest son, Japheth, is not married. When Japheth announces that he will present his bride at dinner, Noah and the family eagerly prepare for the feast in the song, "A Piece of Eight." At the dinner, Japheth announces that he wishes to marry Yonah, the servant girl who bears the mark of Cain. Noah declares that it will not be possible because Father would disapprove. Japheth storms off just as animals start appearing on their way to the ark. Noah and his family try to organize the animals, but more and more keep coming on during the dance, "The Return of the Animals." After everyone is onboard the ark, Noah sees Yonah standing alone and apologizes that he can not take her with him. Left alone, Yonah sings "Stranger To The Rain" as the rain starts to fall and she prepares to go her own way. Japheth finds Yonah, states that Father is wrong, and hides Yonah in the ark. They declare their love for each other in the song, "In Whatever Time We Have." As Japheth pulls Yonah into the ark, "The Flood" begins with Father sending down more rain.

The rain continues for forty days and forty nights. With food running out, Noah and his family begin having cabin fever as they anxiously wait for the rain to stop in the song, "What Is He Waiting For?" Yonah, worried that she is the reason the rains have not stopped, sends a dove to find land during the song, "Sailor Of The Skies." Shem and Ham find Yonah on the ark. Ham fetches Noah who is very displeased with the situation. Shem tries to throw Yonah overboard. Japheth runs on to stop him, but Noah blocks his way and pushes him away. A fight ensues. Japheth almost kills Ham, but Yonah stands in his way. Japheth backs off. Mama Noah speaks up, and the children leave her alone with Noah. Noah reveals to her that Father no longer speaks to him. Mama Noah tells him that he must be the Father now. Alone, Noah reflects on the difficulty of being a father to a son who makes his own choices in the song, "The Hardest Part of Love." During the song, Father realizes he has to let humanity choose its own destiny.

Noah marries Japheth to Yonah. The dove returns with an olive branch, and the stars come out. Mama Noah celebrates their new hope with the Storytellers in the song, "Ain't It Good." The sun shines, and the ark lands at Mount Ararat. The three sons decide to travel in different directions with different animals. Japheth announces that he will search for Eden. Noah says goodbye to his children. The musical ends with the song, "In The Beginning" in which Father promises not to destroy the earth again and to let humanity take responsibility for its own fate.

Children of Eden – Character Descriptions

TEVYE (Male, Baritone/Bass): Tevye is our center. Serving in the role of a narrator who guides the audience through the show, Tevye also exists as a prominent member of his community. The father of five daughters and- well, he is.... Ah, uhm... Yeah, sorry. It was a good show though, wasn't it? Okay. On to our legitimate work.

First off, if you would like more specific information on the characters' vocal ranges, I've provided a link I came across. Check on their vocal ranges at your leisure. I'm trusting the author of the content, so let me know if you discover inaccuracies.

FATHER (Male, Baritone): He's a steelworker from Pittsburg. He's seen good days and bad, and he holds his own at bowling. No, we know who Father is in the show. He is the wonderful entity that creates the universe and all that exists therein. Pretty solid resume piece, huh? You'll forgive me for being a bit tongue-in-cheek with much of this content. In truth, I hold incalculably vast volumes of respect for the content of the show that we'll be grappling to understand in the coming few months. As such, a few jokes are typically par for

the course, but they shouldn't be taken all that seriously. Okay, moving on again. Father is an interesting figure. He isn't perfect. That's one of the first things you must remember. He makes mistakes, and he becomes frustrated when he witnesses his children making many of the same mistakes. However, at the end of the day, he truly is a good-natured, positive fellow. His imperfections render him somewhat human, which makes him accessible and able for us to understand him. There's really very little chance for an actor not to develop this role as anything outside of an all-too-empathetic figure. The audience likes Father. Still, Father makes mistakes, and he must live with the mistakes he has made.

Without going into tremendous detail, the show begs questions on a vast number of fronts. I've explored a lot of the questions that have arisen in my own mind quite extensively. However, I think I'm beginning to appreciate that certain aspects of the show must be set aside and not investigated. That's not to say that it isn't amazingly well-written. It just means that we have to accept certain things and just go with it. Why am I bringing all of this up now? Well, Father is a really interesting guy. He makes us very curious, and he opens up a whole set of questions. However, if we chase many of these questions down still more questions will arise. As such, it's sometimes best to just say, "Okay, that's that," and leave it be.

What else? Father is a father. He feels a tremendous responsibility for the well-being of his children. This responsibility is what gives him such utter anger in response to witnessing his children's poor choices and mistakes. And yet, as stated, he himself makes mistakes and is not perfect. We're not given any information about Father's father, and that's fine. Not everyone has an active father, and some people who fit this scenario even manage to become the president. The point is, Father is our starting place in this story. He's a creator, he's a caregiver, and he's fallible. But he seeks to progress and gain understanding, and he tries to do what's right. I think we can relate.

EVE (Female, Soprano): Why not begin with the better half of the couple? Eve is a wonderful character. Were it not for Eve, we wouldn't have a story. As such, she should be celebrated thoroughly. Eve's decision to consume the fruit (we do not really know what type of fruit it is) of the Tree of Knowledge is the starting point for our story. Now, in my mind, this is where the show's becomes wonderful. In her action, Eve makes the conscious decision to explore her world and to advance her knowledge. In doing so, she introduces shame, guilt, and sin, and she brings death and corruption into the world. However, had she not acted both she and Adam would have continued to exist in a state of perfection in paradise. Here's the rub, paradise isn't so perfect over time if nothing in the system can change. "... the sweet is never as sweet without the sour..." This point is bandied about in the wonderful song "Perfect."

Okay, so Eve gets our story rolling. She's a wonderful figure. She is the first to be tempted, but her actions should not be taken to be exclusively sinful and vain. She is a curious being, and the "Spark of Creation" that Father placed within her is a gift to be explored. I thoroughly love the Papermill Playhouse recording of the show, but I might mention that I don't particularly like Alexa Petronaci's interper of SOC. Just throwing that out there. Alright, the actor who seeks to secure the role of Eve must convey innocence but also display an irresistible sense of curiosity and a hunger for knowledge. As is the case with Father, the audience must empathize with this figure. It is also worth mentioning that Eve may change a bit as Act 1 progresses. She gives us the story that's worth telling. Give her her dues.

ADAM (Male, Tenor): He's a basically a really good guy. Perhaps he's a bit boring, but that doesn't mean we don't like him. He plays by the rules, generally. Well, there was that *one time* when... you know the rest. Anyway, I hate simplicity. Adam needn't be played simplistically. He needn't be the guy that audiences watch and think, "goody-two shoes, blah." We can color Adam with a little more depth. Perhaps we only see a glimpse of Adam's own propensity for curiosity/selfishness prior to his consumption of the fruit. However, we want to see him UTTERLY transformed once he commits to this course of action. Truthfully, I neglected to mention this staging note for Eve, but the same holds true. Adam does his best to do well by his father, who happens to be Father, and others. Still, he isn't perfect either. In fact, one of his kids goes on to commit second degree murder. It's like an episode for that tacky show *Family Secrets*. Okay, so he's all too human. He has an

estranged relationship with his father, one of his kids really gets messed up, and his wife caused him to be evicted from his home. It's a pretty fitting story for our times! Anyway, in audition, let's don't play Adam too simplistically. Make him basically innocent, genuinely likeable, and just a little more complex than he naturally reads.

CAIN (Male, Tenor): Nicknamed "Candy" by his buddies, Cain is a pretty interesting guy. Get it? Candy Cain... Yeah, they can't all be winners. I just try to swing above .179, and that's a fair goal for averages. Let's be clear. First and foremost, he isn't an evil guy. He makes a COLLOSAL mistake, and it *is* important to take into account that this dreadful event of which I speak occurs in the heat of emotion. Regardless, he does hold a lot of anger. We know people like this, don't we? This trait doesn't make them bad people, it just means that's where they've come to be. It's sad more than anything else. What's important is that we look to understand the seeds of this condition. Cain is born into a family that lives a pretty modest life. Their house is a shack, their neighborhood doesn't have any neighbors (no kids with whom the brothers can play, no barbecues [they're vegetarians anyway]), and their dad sets all kinds of boundaries, literally. Under these conditions, many of us might grow up a bit pissy; pardon the language. Anyway, here are some general things to consider for the actor who seeks this role. Don't play him one-dimensionally in audition. You can't just play him as a brooding, moody dude. No one is that simple. Also, show me his relationship with mom, dad, and brother. How are the relationships that he has with each of these figures similar, and how are they different. We'll add in the relationship he has with grandpa later.

ABEL (Male, Tenor): He isn't able too far into the show, is he? Sorry, that was really bad. Here again, I'll reference the Papermill Playhouse recording. Abel is voiced as a being as pure as The Beaver. Thought I'd completely tired of those, didn't you? Had to include it. Most of you probably wouldn't get the reference otherwise. Anyway, he is the pure, nice, utterly good-natured half of the two brothers. These traits can't help but come across through the dialogue, lyrics, etc. Why do I point this out? You know why! Abel can get pissed off, jealous, and greedy, just like everyone else. He just doesn't tend toward these passions with anywhere near the frequency of his brother. Just don't play him as a one-liner. Yeah, I keep saying this. I just like a little more depth in performances. We could play all of the characters as clichés, and this approach might be a very appropriate overall staging and design concept. However, it's not the direction we're taking. That's that.

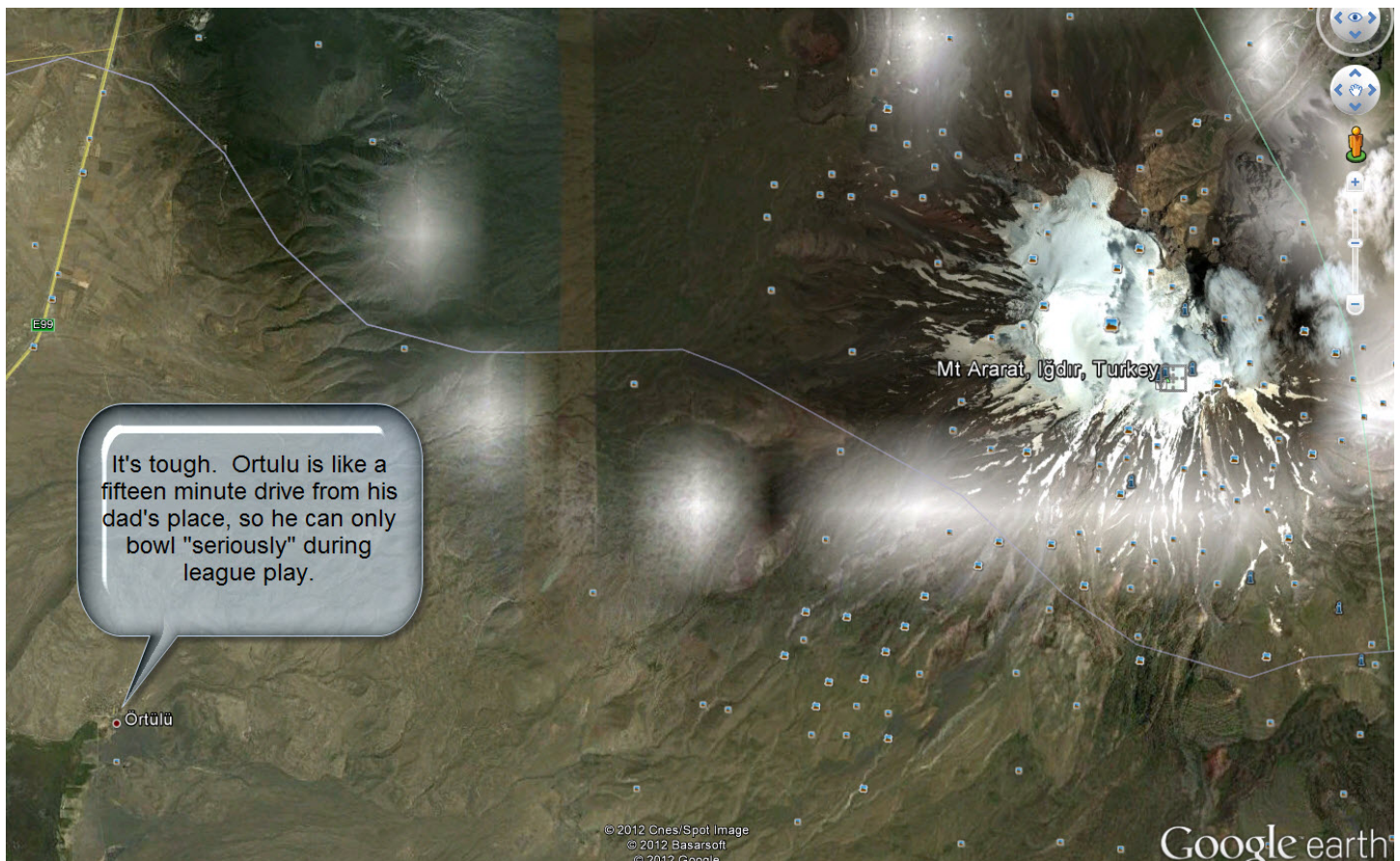
YOUNG CAIN & ABEL (Males, Children's Voices): Yes, we'll be making use of a small children's chorus once again. They're vital to this production. The little people help to give us believable families, and it's highly preferable to cast Young Cain and Young Abel with children. Their notes essentially mirror those of their older selves listed above, albeit earlier in their development.

NOAH (Male, Tenor): Now, the show was written to have many of the roles double-cast. We'll not be taking this approach. The reasons should be obvious. Having said that, Noah certainly carries many of the characteristics of his great, great, great, great, great, great, great grandfather Adam. They're very similar in attitude and temperament. They need not be played as twins, however. Noah maintains a pretty solid relationship with his great, great... (add one more than before, and you get it) grandfather, which is nice. We know that he has a penchant for shipbuilding, although we could point out that the Ark wasn't really a boat at all. Anyway, he's good with a hammer, and his procurement of gopher wood is second to none! The actor who seeks to fill his shoes must portray the man as humble, gracious, patient, but not passive. Noah dares question the will of Father, but his approach in doing so is quite skillfully played. Show me.

"BABY" MAMA (Female, "gutsy mezzo belter"): Not a fair label, to be sure. I guess it's implied that she and Noah tied the knot. Anyway, she's really a kick-in-the-butt character. She sings one of the absolute showstopper numbers "Ain't It Good?" I didn't care for this song at first. Ask Mrs. K. Still, it's grown on me over time. It's such a wonderfully "gutsy" and glowing piece of music. This song carries our fine family from the depths of lowest desperation to utter salvation. It builds with such passionate intensity that audiences can't help but move their feet with the beat. Okay, back to Mama herself. She is a wonderfully-matched wife for

Noah. When his source of direction is lost, she steps in to show him north. A man cannot ask for a better wife. She is a wonderful caregiver to her family. We don't see much, but what we are shown speaks volumes. And, again, she ushers in the hope for a future towards the close of the masterwork. Having said that, I almost want to tease the audience a bit. I don't want Mama to play her cards until this wonderful number. In other words, let's play her a bit conservatively in passion, demeanor, etc. Then, when her time comes, she'll erupt with energy and passion. It's a rare talent that can appropriately nail this number, ladies. Skillfully prepare and show us something with the piece you are assigned to sing in audition if you're pursuing this role.

SHEM (Male, Tenor): Shem "The Gem" as his bowling league buddies affectionately refer to him, is also a decent guy. He's "always the practical man," and he seeks to care for his wife and extended family always and everywhere. He enjoys swinging his axe at animals, and bowls around 180. He'd be even better, but the closest lanes are a hike (see below). Again, I don't have a ton for Shem. Show me some choices in audition, guys. Again, some research online might yield a few insights into the guy.



AYSHA (Female, Alto or Soprano): Aysha is a decent enough gal. she too gets annoyed with long cruises, so don't book her on a Carnival vacation any time soon. Doubtless Carnival's draw will be impacted a bit in the coming months anyway. It's truly a tragic event. Sincerely, it's very sad. Terrible way to learn it, but if the evidence bears it out, what a lesson in pride. Okay, she's Shem's wife. Again, I have little to go on with Aysha. I will say this, ladies (and gentlemen for that matter) if you are cast in one of these roles, BE THANKFUL. If we're being honest, this is a chorus show. Last year a lot of students had wonderful opportunities. Not the case this time around. Significantly fewer opportunities for individual roles. If you are assigned an individual role or solo, BE THANKFUL. Conversely, even if you are not given an individual role or solo, you are going to have a blast working on this show. I guarantee it.*

HAM ON RYE (Male, Tenor): He's a little less ax-blasting prone than this brother. He enjoys playing cards, though they won't be invented for several more millennia. Again, I don't have much for him. Show me something in audition. Same song, I know. It's truthful though.

APHRA (Female, Alto or Soprano): She's the good wife of Ham, who doesn't eat pork. Ironic. Anyway, she cares about her husband and shows great concern for their unborn child. She doesn't like starving to death on leaky, rotting quasi-nautical structures, but who does? I don't have a lot for her right now. Show me something interesting in audition, ladies. Wanna be really resourceful? I bet you can dig up some descriptors on her online.

YONAH (Female, Alto): Yonah, Yonah, Yonah. I love Yonah. I haven't been as in love with a character since we staged *Les Miserables*. She's very reminiscent of, though not identical to, Eponine. I suppose I'm mainly focusing on their two amazing and similar songs ("On My Own" and "Stranger to the Rain") for the comparison. Still, the parallels do exist, I think. I guess it might be easy to call Yonah emo, but that's not being fair. She doesn't really broadcast this persona publically; it's important to point out she sings STTR alone onstage. Besides, if she was genuinely a Debbie Downer, Japheth probably wouldn't have the hots for her in the same way. Anyway, she's a wonderfully complex character. She's soft and hard. She's good, but she hasn't had an easy life. It's not by chance that she gains the favor of Father and tilts the world positive again. She's a metaphor for the potential that exists within all human beings, each and every one of us. No matter our struggles, challenges, limitations, and desperate circumstances, something good and positive can emerge. What's more, she's such an utterly *amazing* human being that she's willing to sacrifice her very life for the well-being and positive future for the man she loves. She's even willing to concede that he would do best to find a more acceptable choice for a bride. Who *CAN'T* help but love this girl?

I guess that I can and should offer some character notes here, no? Okay, let's play her as she is. She should have a smooth exterior demeanor but evidence a little grit under the surface. "Uhm, okaaaay. How do I indicate that in audition, Mr. Greene?" I don't know. I just type this stuff. Seriously, I DON'T KNOW! That's your job to figure out on your own. "On my own..." We'll collaborate to explore how Yonah should be put together once we're in rehearsal. In audition, you're left to your own interpretations. Play her loving. Play her modest. Play her weathered. Play her selfless. Play well her part.

JAPHETH (Male, Tenor): I don't know. He's a decent guy. He's certainly willing to go his own direction. He breaks all the rules and marries a bad girl. Of course, *we* know she isn't bad, but that's not how dad sees it. She's got that weird mark on her face, and she's a slave. What in Father's name is Japheth thinking? Japheth should be played as being a bridge between the temperaments of Adam and Eve. I think he wants to do what's right, but he must also follow the most powerful force that commands his will- his love for another human being. He can't imagine leaving this girl to her fate. He would just as soon die at her side than board the gopher wood, animal feces-stinking craft and see her and all her kind banished to their demise. He's almost Father's conscience, which is an interesting consideration.

Okay, in audition play Japheth as willful but not arrogant. He's defiant for an ideal, and that ideal has merit that must ring clearly. I'd offer additional insights, but I have a few more characters to describe, and I'd like to make an upcoming showing for *Red Tails*.

THE ANIMALS (Male and Female): We're going to spend quite a bit of time in rehearsal truly considering how these creatures must be portrayed. Their movements will be a bit true-to-life but also graceful. Their time on stage should leave the audience with a greater appreciation for the natural world and our neighbors who populate it. I'm going to horribly paraphrase something, and I wish I had the source material at my disposal, but it is lost to time. The narrator of a nature documentary made the point that the animal kingdom is magnificent, precious, and in a precarious and dire situation. He went on to say that once they're gone "we'll miss them." So true. I adore the show's treatment of animals. I'm no vegan, and I don't tout battle cries for PETA. Still, I appreciate the need for greater respect of the animals with whom (no, Word, I'll go with "whom" and *not* "which" here) we share this precious piece of rock. Altruistic arguments of rights and wrongs aside, the natural world requires balance, and we've tipped the scales horribly in just a few short centuries. Okay, enough said for now.

THE SNAKE (Males and Females, Various Vocal Ranges): The Snake is made up of a couple different groups. The Snake itself will be peopled with five to fifteen actors who must be able to harmonize and who will be responsible for actually animating/holding the Snake itself. Additionally, we'll have a chorus of about five to ten snake dancers in the number. They will not sing, but they'll have some wonderfully complex choreography. I don't have many notes for the dancers, but my vision for the Snake handlers themselves is quite clear. They must be smoothly sultry, delicately deceptive, and irresistibly insistent. They embody the motivation behind Eve's gamble to go further and to approach Father's perspective. Ooooooh, tabooooo.

CORE STORYTELLERS (Male and Female, Various Vocal Ranges): We're going to have a full chorus of "Storytellers" during a few portions of the show. However, for the most part, the Storytellers will be comprised of a core group. Hence, the "Core Storytellers." As originally conceived by the creators of the show, the Storytellers are just that, those who serve to tell the story to the audience. Schwartz has a penchant for breaking the rules where traditional theatrical devices are concerned. He enjoys stripping the imaginary world of the stage, which was wonderfully evidenced during the "Finale" in *Pippin*. Wonderful show, and that particular number has a tie-in ("Eagles belong where they can fly.") to "Lost in the Wilderness" ("Don't you ever watch the eagle fly to the sun?"). Anyway, the Storytellers are used to build the world and each of its specific locations throughout the show. I'm using them the same way. However, I'm treating them as the manifestation of Father's will on the physical world. You'll understand this a bit more as we progress in rehearsal. If you are cast as a Core Storyteller you'll have a TON of stage time. You'll also have a lot of work.

GENERAL CHORUS (Male and Female, Various Vocal Ranges): No worries, folks. You're going to have a lot to do in this show! It's a chorus show, so buck up! Seriously, you'll play Storytellers, villagers, animals, and possibly even pagans. You're gonna *love* being a member of this show's chorus. You will have tons of stage time, wonderful choreography, amazing vocals, interesting blocking, and just loads to do and enjoy in general.

*Get ready to have
some fun, folks.*