

// Home » Blogs » Alicia Spates's blog Chit-Chat & Video with Aaron Thomann: Let there be spotlights for the production, 'Children of Eden'

Submitted by [Alicia Spates](#) on September 1, 2009 - 7:25pm

The stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel and Noah and his ark will be retold in a “non-religious” way by the Children’s Theatre of Elgin and the Fox Valley Theatre Company in the John Caird and Stephen Schwartz production of “Children of Eden.” The musical plays at Blizzard Theatre of Elgin Community College for two weeks in September. Director Aaron Thomann shares his experience with engaging the cast of children and teenagers with the start of a new school year on the horizon.



Director of "Children of Eden" Aaron Thomann works with his cast during rehearsal at Elgin Community College Wednesday, August 19, 2009. The play begins September 11th and runs the following weekend. STAFF PHOTO BY ERICA BENSON

Tell me about this musical.

The first thing I said to the cast is that this is not a religious story. It’s told as a family relationship. In the script, the part referred to as “God” is called father, and Cain and Abel are (referred to as) his grandchildren. It’s a story of relationships told through stories everyone knows. And the music by Stephen Schwartz is really great and a challenge.

What makes the music challenging?

There's a lot of harmony and deceptively simple songs. You hear the songs and they sound easy to sing, but they're not so simple. There's more to it than how it sounds. The cast has been up to the task.

You're directing a cast of more than 40 children and teenagers. Wouldn't that be a challenge in itself?

Oh yeah. [laugh] The hard part is trying to keep everyone engaged. I try to get them to look at the bigger picture, like "We're going some place and you'll want to come with us." Everyone right now is just learning this stuff. They don't know what the end product will look like ... and with school starting back up soon, I try to keep them motivated.

What do you think the cast is learning while working on this production?

The number one thing, I think, that anytime we do full productions is that they learn how to better the pieces and learn about the process. They're also learning to become comfortable with themselves -- in self-confidence and socially. And it helps them to become better public speakers, better musicians and movers. I refuse to treat them different because they're kids. When people come to the show, I want them to enjoy it ... not just because their kid is in the show. I want parents to say, "Wow, this really is a good show." I want (the students) to create a bar for themselves to reach.

What are you doing to make the show your own?

The easy answer to how I make it my own is, simply, I have never seen this show; so how it will look is a product of production team and my vision not based on anything else. That's the fun part of directing. My job is to tell the story as written by the writers and do so in a way that maintains the audiences' interest. I hope the audience expects to be excited about seeing a show they haven't seen, to be moved and engaged by the story, and to want more when it is over.

SEE THE PLAY

WHAT "Children of Eden"

WHERE Elgin Community College Blizzard Theatre, 1700 Spartan Dr., Elgin; (847) 622-0300;
www.cteelgin.com

WHEN 7:30 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, Sept. 11 & 12 and 18 & 19; 3 p.m. Sundays, Sept. 13 & 20; and 2 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 19

HOW MUCH \$10 for adults and \$8 for students and seniors