

Stephen Schwartz comments on Other Shows and Songs

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Mulan Jr.

Stephen Schwartz's "Written in Stone" is included on the Mulan Jr. musical available for licensing through Music Theatre International.

On Leaving Disney for DreamWorks

Question:

I had never really heard of you until your involvement with "Pocahontas" and "Hunchback of Notre Dame" but have admired your work since. Collaborating with Alan Menken must have been awesome and, although I applaud your decision to leave Disney's animation department to do "Prince of Egypt" with Dreamworks, do you ever harbor any hard feelings with Disney for not using any of the songs you started with on "Mulan"? Nothing against Zippel and Wilder, they did good work but I think your work may have given the movies music another dimension that I thought it lacked, that's just my opinion.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I'm often asked about my feelings about DreamWorks vs. Disney and about the MULAN situation in particular. I was of course extremely disappointed to be replaced as songwriter of MULAN, because I thought it was a wonderful story and was very happy with the songs I had written for the film thus far. But it was a political situation I had no control over. And certainly MULAN was a successful and well-received film without my involvement. Working for the two companies was different, naturally, but each had its pleasures and rewards and each had its challenges and frustrations.

Of course, I'm in the middle of two projects for Disney right now -- the stage adaptation of THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME and an original musical for television, GEPETTO, for Wonderful World of Disney. And while I don't currently have anything after PRINCE OF EGYPT I'm doing for DreamWorks, I am certainly open to working with them again on a future project if the right one comes along. It is my hope and belief that the early antagonism between the two companies, which I got caught in during the writing of MULAN, has faded considerably. In the meantime, I go on trying to do projects that interest me and that I feel I can bring something to, regardless of what company is producing them, and hope to stay out of the political maelstrom as much as possible. Thanks for asking. Best, Stephen Schwartz

Songs for Mulan

Question

I hadn't realized you had written songs for Mulan. How developed was the project by the time you left? Did the song "For Love of You" from the "All For Love" compilation CD in Hong Kong/Taiwan come from the original Mulan score? Had you written many songs for the film? Is there any chance they'll be released in any form (maybe as demos similar to the Ashman/Menken Disney box set)? - from Stephen Golden

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

The song "For Love of You", which has music by Alan Menken, was not from MULAN, but was written with Alan as a special project for the Asian album of Disney songs that included it. (David Zippel also

collaborated on a song with Alan for that album.) The two songs I had completed for MULAN were a song called "China Doll", which more or less corresponds to the scene in the film in which MULAN goes to the matchmaker (or is it a dressmaker in the film? I forget) and a song called "Written in Stone", during the course of which she gets into soldier's clothing and rides her horse off to join the army. I had begun work on two other songs, "Destiny", which would have been the opening number for the film, and "We'll Make a Man of You", to be sung when she is trying to learn to be a soldier, but neither of those was far enough along to have been demo-ed. I can't imagine that Disney would ever release the demos of the two completed songs, but I suppose stranger things have happened. As I've said on numerous occasions, I was very disappointed not to be able to finish work on the film, because I loved the story and was enjoying working with my collaborators on the film, but I'm glad that the movie was so successful, even without my contribution. Stephen Schwartz

Mulan

Question:

Researching Disney's "Mulan", I found some info that you originally signed on to do the songs. I heard that you submitted two or three songs, including an opening song called "Destiny". This is probably my main question: Did you work in the early version of "Mulan"? If yes, How much songs you submitted?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

In addition to "Destiny", which was to have been the opening number, I wrote two other songs for MULAN, both of which had been accepted by Disney before I was replaced on the film. One was called "Written in Stone", which essentially was replaced by "Mulan's Reflection" and was one of my favorite songs I have ever written an animated feature. The other was "China Doll", and was similar to the song now in the film in which Mulan is dressed and prettied in preparation for meeting her betrothed.

Personals: Schwartz's Involvement

Question:

After seeing Personals, I wondered - how did Stephen Schwartz get involved with this show? And should we expect to see him on an episode of Friends in the near future?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I supplied the music for three of the songs from PERSONALS because the show's original director, Paul Lazarus, is a friend of mine who had been instrumental in the resuscitation of WORKING (he directed the first post-B'way production and made good suggestions about cuts and revisions, and the success of that production began its comeback). So when Paul called and said they needed music for the opening of each act and the final number, I was happy to oblige. (Alan Menken supplied music for the other "bookend" -- the close of Act I.) I was also friendly with one of the lyricists, Seth Friedman, and had a great time working with him, as well as with Marta Kauffman and David Crane, who as you can imagine are very funny people. The London cast recording was the first full recording of the show, though individual songs had been recorded prior to its release. Thanks for your interest. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

Personals

Question:

I noticed among your works that it had something called "Personals". What's that? I don't recall hearing about that before.

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

PERSONALS was a topical revue done off-Broadway in the 80's; from the title, you can probably glean that it was about dating and relationships, using the idea of personal ads as a jumping-off place. The sketches and lyrics are by Marta Kauffman and David Crane (who went on to TV fame and fortune with "Friends" and other shows) and my talented and funny friend, Seth Friedman. Several composers contributed music, including myself and Alan Menken, so technically it is the first time Alan and I worked together, albeit on different songs. I wrote music for the opening number ("Nothing to Do with Love"), the opening of the second act ("Moving in with Linda") and the closing number ("Some Things Don't End"). For the record, Alan wrote the music for the end of Act One, so between us we sort of bookended the show. There is now a CD of the show which was recorded in London with a London cast -- I have to admit I haven't heard it, so I can't vouch for its quality.

Becoming Involved in Personals

Question:

How did you become involved with the show "Personals"?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

I became involved with PERSONALS because a friend of mine, Paul Lazarus, was directing the original off-Broadway production. He and the lyricists -- Marta Kauffman, David Crane, and Seth Friedman -- felt they needed some help in opening and closing each of the acts. So I wound up writing the music for the opening of the first act ("Nothing to Do with Love") the opening of the second act ("Moving in with Linda") and the end of the show ("Some Things Don't End"). Incidentally and coincidentally, the music for the end of the first act was written by Alan Menken. So in a sense it was Alan's and my first collaboration, even though we didn't actually write together. Thanks for asking. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

What's next [My Fairy Tale]

Question:

What's next?

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Next year is the bicentennial of the birth of Hans Christian Andersen, and his native Denmark is going all out to celebrate it. Among the ways is the commissioning of a musical theatre piece about Andersen, which will be presented in one of the major theatres in Copenhagen. It turns out that a friend of mine, Philip LaZebnik, who was one of the writers of POCAHONTAS and PRINCE OF EGYPT, now lives in Denmark, and he will be writing the book for this musical. Through Philip, I have been invited to contribute some songs to the show, and I expect to write four or five. Stephen Schwartz

FROM STEPHEN SCHWARTZ, written 5/6/05

Thanks to those who have expressed an interest in the upcoming MY FAIRY TALE, or, as it will be called in Denmark, MIT EVENTYR. It is an original musical about Hans Christian Andersen, commissioned as part of this year's celebration of the bicentennial of Andersen's birth.

It is a little hard to summarize, but basically it deals with Andersen's choice to write fairy tales rather than the "adult" plays that he hoped would gain him the acceptance of the Danish intelligentsia and upper class of his day. It is told as he takes a journey through his own fairy tale world (I won't try to explain here how he gets there in the first place), and includes characters from many of his stories, including "The Nightingale", "The Shadow", "The Ugly Duckling", "The Princess and the Pea", "The Little Match Girl", "The Travelling Companion", "The Little Mermaid", and "The Snow Queen", among others.

It also includes characters from his real life, including Swedish soprano Jenny Lind, Jonas Collin (one of the directors of the Royal Copenhagen Theatre and a benefactor of Andersen's), and Johan and Luise Heiberg (celebrated playwright and actress of the day).

I am contributing five or six songs to the show (plus reprises); there will be also songs by other writers, along with some traditional Danish folk songs and pieces by Andersen himself. The show will be presented in Danish at the Gladsaxe Teater just outside Copenhagen, beginning in October. There are thus far no planned performances in English.

So far, I have been having an enjoyable and interesting time working on something which, obviously, is very different for me. Thanks again for your interest. Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

"We Are Lights"...Your holiday songs - Olivor's CD

Question:

Dear Stephen: You have a new hit song in the ratings at the de Giere household – “We Are Lights” from Jane Olivor's SONGS OF THE SEASON. I find it mesmerizing and very expressively appropriate to the lyrics about people gathered to share both candle light and the light of their hearts... If you care to mention anything about working with her or lyricist Steve Young on "The Chanukah Song - (We Are Lights)" I'd be interested. With appreciation, Carol de Giere

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

"We Are Lights" was originally commissioned by Judith Clurman, the choir director for the Juilliard Choir, who wanted a Chanukah song for the choir to perform at the Lincoln Center tree lighting ceremony. She found Steve Young (who is a writer for David Letterman's show) and he came up with the lyrics, which Judith then got to me.

I have a fantasy that "We Are Lights" will eventually become a Chanukah standard, even a holiday standard, and that people will sing it when they have their holiday carol sings, etc. So I'm glad it is at least popular in one household already! I appreciate your letting me know. Best, Stephen

My Antonia

Comment from Michael Cole:

Hey Gang - thought you might be interested in knowing about the upcoming Schwartz/Schwartz collaboration. Best, Michael

Willa Cather's MY ANTONIA adapted and directed by Scott Schwartz with incidental music by Stephen Schwartz. "One of America's greatest novels comes to life in this boldly theatrical portrait of an immigrant girl whose passion and resilience define the pioneer spirit."

Johnny and the Sprites

Question:

Dear Mr. Schwartz, I read that you wrote the opening theme song to "Johnny and the Sprites." What are your general feelings about this piece of work and what attracted you to contribute to this series? Was it a challenging piece to write? Did you have to work with John Tartaglia at all? Thanks for your time. Jack

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Hi Jack: John Tartaglia is a good friend of mine, and he had shared with me his dream of creating this series since before it became a reality. Therefore, I was very happy to be able to write the theme song

for it, as well as a song called "Brightly Shining" for their holiday episode (and another song, "Waiting for the Stars" that aired this past year when they were doing some interstitial trial episodes on the Disney Channel to test the reception to the show.) Aside from being a great guy, John is extremely talented in my opinion, and he and his collaborators on JOHNNY AND THE SPRITES were so clear about what they wanted the songs to accomplish that I didn't find them difficult to write. What I have seen of the show is very charming and I hope it will be very popular with its audience. Thanks for your interest, Stephen Schwartz

Cry Without a Reason...

Question:

First of all, Mr. Schwartz, I just want to say that you are my favorite composer. I am in love with Wicked! I take classes at a theatre conservatory, and this semester we are studying all Stephen Schwartz music. That makes me so happy! :-) Now on to my question. I have been looking for the lyrics to "Cry Without a Reason" as well as the sheet music. I can't seem to find either of these anywhere. Is there any way I can get these? Also, what did you write that (very beautiful) song for? Was it originally for a show or for a particular singer? Thanks so much!- Sarah

[Michael Cole responded about the sheet music and lyrics]

Answer from Stephen Schwartz:

Dear Sarah: Thanks for your message. I probably should have put "Cry Without a Reason" into the Stephen Schwartz songbook. If there is a second songbook, I definitely will include it then. The song was not written for any particular singer, but was one of a few songs I wrote with my friend, lyricist Dean Pitchford ("Fame", "Footloose", etc.) At the time, I was also working a lot with the wonderful singer Jane Olivora, so I probably did have her voice a little in mind. She did perform the song (beautifully) on a couple of occasions, though I don't think she ever recorded it. Anyway, I appreciate your enthusiasm for it, and I will try to put it on my list of things to do before '05 is over to get more complete music than just a lead sheet done for it! Sincerely, Stephen Schwartz

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Mulan Jr.

Disney's Mulan Jr. Licensing <http://www.broadwayjr.com/store/showkitproduct.asp?oid=19>

See the *Mulan* and *The Prince of Egypt* chapter for the full story of Mulan to Prince of Egypt shift in "Defying Gravity: The Creative Career of Stephen Schwartz, from Godspell to Wicked"
<http://www.DefyingGravityTheBook.com>

Personals and My Fairy Tale

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

My Antonia

A link from Playbill.com to a My Antonia article

<http://www.playbill.com/news/article/117520-Scott-Schwartzs-My-Antonia-with-Stephen-Schwartz-Underscore-Begins-CA-Run-May-8>

Snapshots

<http://www.musicalschwartz.com/snapshots.htm> Compilation of material from several Snapshot productions

<http://www.talkinbroadway.com/regional/seattle/se276.html> - Interview with Stephen Schwartz

We Are Lights and Jane Olivor

Jane Olivor sings several Stephen Schwartz songs on her albums

<http://www.musicalschwartz.com/recordings/olivor.htm>

Cry Without A Reason

Scott Coulter sings it beautifully on his album called Scott Couter, with Stephen Schwartz at the piano

<http://www.musicalschwartz.com/recordings/scottcoulter.htm>

And John Barr sings it on A Different Corner

<http://www.musicalschwartz.com/recordings/johnbarr.htm>