

Children of Eden **Watching and Reflecting Guide**

The following is a compilation of things to watch for and reflections on the process of the musical. This is certainly not exhaustive - we were too busy *doing* to stop and take notes, but we hope that your watching and reflecting experience can benefit from knowing more about what was going on for the students and directors as we prepared to produce *Children of Eden*.

The entries in regular font are from Talashia, unless otherwise noted, while the italicized entries are from cast members. As you may notice, we entered this conversation from multiple theological streams. We as directors were inspired by the respect the students showed each other, and the integrity with which they approached the biblical story. The following reflections are descriptive, and come from individual perspectives.

We offer these to you with humility and a degree of vulnerability, inviting you, our unseen partner, into our conversation. You see here a snapshot of each of us in a lifelong journey of discovering our Creator.

Opening Poem

The following poem was the affirmation of faith we spoke or embodied at the beginning of most rehearsals. If you watch carefully, you'll see our motions for the bold lines in the choreography of "In the Beginning," the final song of the show.

In the beginning,
before time,
before people,
before the world began,
God was.

Here and now,
among us, beside us,
clearer than air,
closer than breathing,
God is.

In all that is to come,
when we have turned to dust
and human knowledge has been completed,
God will be.

(From *A Wee Worship Book, 4th Incarnation*, by the Wild Goose Worship Group)

This musical is not the Bible

I let my kids watch Veggie Tales. They have never once thought that the biblical Moses was a cucumber. They don't actually believe that there's a sheriff in the Joseph story. Even as young children, they have an awareness that Veggie Tales is a riff on the Bible. Of course, I make sure Veggie Tales is not their only exposure to the biblical story. We read the Bible a lot. Not only do I not want them picturing the characters

of the Bible as vegetables, I also don't want them to think that the stories of the Bible can be watered down to moralistic character lessons. What I have learned is that watching Veggie Tales and reading Bible story books spark their imagination and help them pay closer attention when we read the Bible.

Approach this musical like Veggie Tales. Let it spark your imagination and drive you to your Bible. Let it prompt questions about God, humanity and creation. There are discrepancies between this show and the Bible. When we found those, we sat up and took notice. We asked, "What truth is the Bible trying to reveal to us?" Then we found the meeting place between what the musical was doing and what the Bible tells us, and that was our "sweet spot," the thing we tried most to portray on stage.

What do we do with our questions?

I (Talashia) approached this show as a pastor. When we actually open our Bibles and read them, we notice things that bring up questions. Some of these questions can actually be answered, but many of them are pathways of curiosity that lead us to deeper Bible reading and spiritual reflection. As the guide in our communal theological reflection, I tried to always bring us back to "God was, God is, God will be," our home base in exploration. For example, when we read the Noah story and saw different numbers of animals taken into the ark, we decided to say, "Hmm, interesting! I wonder why?" We realized that the Bible is so much more complicated than the Sunday school pictures and the Bible story books and this musical. And then we asked, "Does the number of animals taken on the ark affect my faith in God?" The answer to that was an easy "no."

I sought to scaffold the students' theological development, meeting them where they were and trying to draw each of them a step deeper into their faith but not overwhelm them. I watched as, through their curiosity, their perceptions of God got simultaneously bigger and more intimate. In our current climate, many people's perceptions of God are of a watered-down, benevolent being (look up Moralistic Therapeutic Deism). As a pastor, I see this as a crisis of faith. Bethany seeks to draw students beyond that small understanding of God, and my job in this show was to continue the work that many other teachers (and many other parents and pastors) have sought to begin.

So what do we do with our questions? We ask them freely, in a community that has our best interests at heart and wants our faith to get stronger. We ask them from a foundation of "God was, God is, God will be." We ask them with patience and humility and persistence.

Creating

Stephen Schwartz has repeatedly said, "You cannot underproduce this show." As in, please don't overproduce it. Don't use bells and whistles; use human creativity. We took that seriously! Our ensemble in particular had the job of being human props - like a tree, stones and a shanty. They became characters with opinions in these roles. I really love the altar they came up with - as it is a place of worship, they wanted to show the "right relationship" aspect, so the altar is 2 actors embracing.

Our costume team worked particularly hard. It would have been so much easier to rent a bunch of animal costumes and call it a day! But instead, we hardly bought a thing, instead transforming materials we found backstage. Our costumers made antelope legs out of stair rails and amazing giraffe heads out of sticks, scrap fabric, paper, and pipe cleaners. This same concept was true for our props team, who created all kinds of props out of found materials.

You may notice that all of the actors have something they put on during the opening creation number. One day, we read Genesis 1-2, then turned students loose with the fabric and props that were backstage. What a fun rehearsal. In creating, we draw near to our creator. We enjoyed the work of underproducing this show.

Character of God

This musical anthropomorphizes God. This isn't a new thing - we all do this, from assigning gender pronouns to God (see more about that below) to expecting God to respond to us as a human would. We do this because our understanding is limited. In the process of this show, we talked about those limitations. There are paradoxes in our understanding of God - God is Unknowable Mystery, yet we seek understanding. God is awesomely Other, yet intimate with humanity and creation. Clara, our actress playing Father, approached these paradoxes with maturity. Here are some words from Clara about her process:

As I talked about in my senior bio, one of the big things that has helped me in figuring out how to approach my character was the idea of humans being made in God's image. The prospect of literally "playing God" was overwhelming at first because I felt like I didn't even know where to start when it came to character development, but it was comforting to recognize that since I'm already made in God's image, just as everyone else is, I was already more connected to the character than I had thought. Anthropomorphizing God is also what helps us understand God better. While God is ultimately very different from humans, assigning human characteristics can help us feel more connected to God, and gives us new ideas of how and what God could be. I've really enjoyed the ways this show has made me think deeply about God as a being — one with relatable emotions, hopes, plans, and ideas – that is completely other and yet still similar to us in ways we don't always recognize. While I know that my understanding of God is incredibly limited, just like anyone else's, I feel like this show has helped me grow in my own understanding of my relationship to God, and how I foster that relationship. - Clara Lind

Clara needed to portray the character written by the composers with integrity, and she sought to balance that human-like depiction with her understanding of God's otherness. This comes across in lots of little ways - for example, our rule is that Father can only be seen and/or heard if Father wants to be seen and/or heard - and if humans are open to who Father is. So Father is always stepping into or observing the action, frequently unnoticed by the other characters. Another "otherness" quality is creating and destroying with a gesture or word.

We all have images of God. One fantastic book we used to explore this was *Images of God for Young Children*, by Marie-Helene Delval, which names some of the many biblical images of God. Malformation happens when we are limited in the images we access for God. For example, studies have been done with young children in which they are asked to draw God. Almost all children draw Santa Claus. Yikes!

This show sets forth yet one more image of God, and we hope it will be just one of many that our audience members experience. We do incorporate multiple metaphors into Clara's portrayal, including God as knitter and potter, but the Bible is rich with many more. Go exploring!

Gender of God

For the students, this was simply not a thing. To them, keeping the name "Father" and masculine pronouns while having a female play the role was a logical way to embody the "otherness" of God. As we read the Bible together, we talked about the nuances of language, including the fact that "ruah" (translated commonly as "spirit," "breath," or "wind" and used in Genesis 1:2) is a feminine word. During one of these conversations, one student asked, "Do you think anyone will be mad about our God being played by a girl?" I responded, "Oh yes, I'm sure I'll hear about it." But I hope that our audiences can look beyond the language-limited understandings they have been soaked in to realize that God as solely male is not well-supported in scripture. God created all of humankind in God's image, and we proclaim that in this musical.

Personally I was very excited when I found out that God was going to be portrayed by a female actress. I grew up in a somewhat conservative church and the idea of God being anything more than a (white) man would certainly cause an uproar. My whole life I struggled to accept the idea of God being a man. Sure, in the Bible it describes a benevolent Father who cares for his children and is not afraid to punish those who go against him, but after thinking about it for a while and recognizing the time in which it was written I can understand why God would be portrayed as a man. I don't think that we have the authority to assign a gender to God. I believe the inconsistencies in the bible in using traditionally feminine words to describe God were the interpreter's way of slipping in some diversity. God is God and I don't think God would mind if we thought her as a man, woman or devoid of gender altogether. I have been experimenting with using female pronouns for God and I found that it just feels right. This is by no means to discredit people who choose to think of God as a Father or God as a genderless being. Personally I feel comfort in thinking of God as a beautiful black woman, but I don't know that's just me. - Peace Muhagachi

I think that even though people who are watching might not think that it was right to portray a God character as a woman in a show, but like you said I really think that it helps us remember that God is more than gender. I also think it will help push people who are watching, but also people who are in the musical, to look at their beliefs in a different way. I'm not saying that it's wrong to think that God should be a male figure, but I also think that a lot of what we think about religion today is still heavily influenced by what society was like when these religions were started. I just think that in our modern society we need to stop thinking the way our ancestors did, and acknowledge the inevitable, that God is above even what we think of as gender and that we need to start thinking more about how to be more inclusive. - Avery Rusel

Coming Home to God

We made some blocking choices for the ends of Act I and II that reflect our theology of God as our home. In Act I, when Eve dies, she "comes home" to the arms of Father. This is not a theological statement about how resurrection happens - that's a huge conversation for a different show. Rather, it's a statement that we rest in God, and that God never abandons us.

Tohu Wabohu

Genesis 2 describes the earth as *tohu wabohu*, often translated as "formless void," or poetically by Robert Alter in *The Hebrew Bible* as "welter and waste." Then Genesis 7 describes a reversal of creation orderliness, of the waters coming back over the earth. In a lovely collaboration between our props team, the actors, and the directors, we came up with our stage representation of *tohu wabohu*. The cloth around the playing space has been subdued by the time we can see it, but it comes back to cover the earth during the flood. Then watch closely to see Father removing it and "drawing back the waters" later in the act. There's also a little musical gift here - the phrase, "Without form...void...darkness" from "Let There Be" is repeated in "The Flood."

My parents have been really interested in the rehearsals and how the directors (especially Talashia) have been relating to and comparing the musical to the Bible. They thought it was so cool that you were creating a space for discussion and analysis of the musical and just really taking it to the next level with that. I've really enjoyed the "story times" because of the background/easter eggs that you tell us.

My dad asked me specifically about the formless void. I said yes, we are trying to represent that with formless beings (storytellers) on the stage before Father creates everything. (And then, of course, we sing without form, void, darkness.) I think my dad was just interested in how this specific concept was going to be portrayed.

So I've really been glad to have such a creative director and this musical has been really exciting. My grandparents have been raving about it ever since I told them it was anything to do with the Bible. - Caleb Mast

Human Perceptions of God

Children of Eden is often performed with Father absent from the stage for chunks of time. We decided to keep Father on the playing space at all times, because we believe that God is always present. This decision gave us a lot to play with. Watch the way that Father acts, even when humans assume his absence. Father is often nudging, responding, and communicating in ways the humans don't perceive. We talked about how all of us, at some point in life, feel abandoned by God. This is a human perception. But when we feel that way, God is right there. Check out one of our warm-up songs, "[Sometimes God Whispers](#)" (Mark Bishop, Forget the Sea).

I really like this idea, it definitely gives Clara more to do and gives the audience more to uncover/focus on. We see more of God's opinion of each situation, which not only furthers the storyline but delves deeper into the character. I love that the idea of God always being there is visual rather than an assumption, and I believe the audience will too (or at least think about it more). - Aliah Campbell

The Human perception of God is something I've thought about since the beginning of this show. I at first didn't understand why Father was on stage at all times, and even now it can be confusing at all times. I've had to tell myself several times that I can't see her or hear her. My main concern with this is that the audience won't understand what is happening and because of that won't be able to take as much out. Especially in scenes like in the garden of eden where Father can see adam and eve eating the apple, and Father reacts, which leads me into questioning how much God can see, how much God controls (and how much does he chooses to or not to control) and why doesn't God interfere. Especially when we talked about God accepting that he created something that wasn't perfect, I just find myself questions why God would create something accidentally or not imperfect with the goal of something perfect; and why continuously allow it to be imperfect? - Jack Hager

The Characters of Genesis 1-9

The first eleven chapters of Genesis don't really flesh out characters other than God. In fact, human emotions are only discussed twice - when the man and woman were not ashamed (Gen. 2:25), and when Cain was very angry (Gen. 4:5). God's feelings are discussed in much more depth. This musical takes archetypal characters and imagines what they might have thought and felt. It's an intriguing concept, and we enjoyed the exploration. We also recognized that this was another way that the musical deviated from what we are given in the Bible.

Family Systems

The creators of *Children of Eden* wanted to explore the cycles that happen in families, so you will notice as you watch the show that there are repeated themes. Often dialogue, music and blocking are all mirrored from one generation to the next. For example, Adam, Abel and Noah each make a difficult choice using the same music ("Oh Father, please don't make me choose") at the same place on stage (downstage center). These cycles continue until they are intentionally broken.

This theme matches with Family Systems Theory, developed by a psychiatrist named Dr. Murray Bowen and widely utilized in multiple disciplines. Ron Kennel, a local retired pastor, sums the theory up this way: "Every family is a social system, i.e., a complex network of relationships in which the behaviors of each member affect other members as well as the entire family, not only of one generation but of future generations."

The family system has a life of its own characterized by powerful patterns (relational styles, emotional atmospheres, expectations, values, etc.) that become scripts which individual members can act out unconsciously. Becoming aware of these powerful patterns is one of the first steps to transcend automatic responses to them so that behaviors can be chosen freely.”

The scripts for the families of Adam and Eve and Noah and Mama Noah are literal scripts. And it’s only through the (God-inspired) interference of someone outside the family that the cycle of violence is broken and the family can choose freely the way they will interact.

Letting Go

I choreographed this show for another theater when I was pregnant with my first child. I heard “The Hardest Part of Love” differently then than I had before. And when Malachi was born, I thought, “Thus begins the long, slow process of letting go.” We hold our little ones closely and help them become strong, and then we must let go. They have agency, and some of their decisions as they sprout wings will not be what we would choose for them. As Father sings, “Just when they start to find themselves is when you fear they’re lost.” Noah realizes that he can’t control Japheth. He also realizes his own agency as a child of God. God is not the divine puppeteer. God plants a spark in us so that we can act in this world, animated by the Holy Spirit. There is freedom in being created in God’s image.

This show’s look at God as divine parent has its squirmy bits, but I am drawn to the idea that as I stumble my way through the long, slow release of my children, God has empathy.

Does God curse humans?

Biblically speaking, no. In Genesis 3, God curses the serpent and the ground, but humans instead simply suffer the consequences of disobedience. There is grace in the banishment from Eden - if they eat of the Tree of Life, they will live a difficult life with no relief of death. This is portrayed in the musical fairly accurately - Father’s words to Adam and Eve are descriptive rather than prescriptive.

Deviation from the biblical story comes with the mark of Cain. Biblically, the mark was given to Cain to protect him from other humans. In the musical, it is scripted more as a mark of shame, one which follows future generations. And here we come back to family systems theory. Cain begins a cycle of violence by killing his brother, and this cycle has continued and spread, so that Noah is the only person living in right relationships. That this mark will follow “even to the seventh generation” is again descriptive. Until Yonah breaks the cycle of violence (now rising up in her distant cousins), the violence continues. Father describes the generations of Cain as lost, but Yonah acts differently. Our “sweet spot” in this story comes in repeated cycles of violence and the need for a conscious decision to make them stop.

“Perfect”

I’m going to admit here that this word was the hardest thing for me to swallow in this production! No Hebrew word translates as “perfect” in Genesis 1-9, and yet it is a recurring theme in the show. God made everything **good**. We had conversations about the superficial nuances of the word “perfect,” as opposed to the deeper meaning of goodness.

My favorite moment of looking at this difference was in the character of Noah. Noah is described as “righteous and blameless” in Genesis 6:9. I asked the actors, “What do you think righteous and blameless means?” They responded, “Perfect.” But the Hebrew words are so much more nuanced! “Righteous” applies to relationships with other humans and creation, and the Hebrew translated as “blameless” is used to speak of

worship. It's about relationship with God. In other words, Noah has right vertical and horizontal relationships. God isn't looking for perfection, God is looking for those who strive for right relationships.

Spark of Creation

One question we asked multiple times was, "Is the spark Eve senses within herself from God? We decided that yes, as a creation of Father, Eve's curiosity is from God. The spark is a good thing, a gift from God. But, as with any good gift, it can be misused. Eve doesn't mean to be disobedient - she's an adolescent who is driven by something other than wisdom. But that spark of creation concept comes back at different points in the show, sometimes in dread (when Eve recognizes a piece of herself in Cain), sometimes in a little music motif played under another melody, and then at the end when Mama Noah encourages Noah to recognize the agency Father has given him.

When I hear this song, I think of the wonder I experienced when a little human was growing inside of me. I think we each have moments we can point to when we realized the spark of creation planted within us.

Annihilation

How many of us are bothered by the notion of God deciding to destroy the earth because it's so wicked? I've always wondered why in the world we paint nurseries with Noah's ark. It's a story of destruction and violence! We got pretty squirmy when we got to this part of the show and read this part of the Bible. But looking deeper at the text (and again, the nuances of language) proved helpful. The word we translate as "corrupt" means "annihilated." In other words, humans have so deeply destroyed the earth that it is essentially annihilated already.

Then when the flood is over, God has a little chat with God's self. In Genesis 8:21-22, God basically says that people are going to keep being sinful, but God isn't ever going to punish the soil for human sinfulness again. God then speaks in a covenant with Noah (and humanity), setting the rainbow in the sky not just as a sign of a promise to humans but as a reminder to God's self! "When I bring clouds, and then a rainbow appears, I'll remember my covenant."

In our show, the rainbow is a sign of reconciliation between humans with each other, as well as with the earth, Father, and future generations. Our show ends with humanity literally wrapped in God's promise, looking toward home.

Sin

The word "sin" is first introduced in Genesis 4:7, in God's speech to Cain. "Sin is lurking at the door...you must master it." Note that this comes long after Eve and Adam eat the forbidden fruit (the story often told as the "original sin"). The Hebrew word *hatta* translated here for "sin" means quite literally "to miss the mark." Of the fifty words translated as "sin" in English, *hatta* is the most common. We had lengthy conversations about the nuances of language and the nature of sin. We noted the ways "missing the mark" had long-term effects on the characters of the show and their families. We observed the broken relationships, not just with humans and God but also with creation, that came as a result.

Rules or Buoys?

One of my seminary professors shared something during class one day that some of the actors found very helpful in character development. She introduced the concept of doctrine (or rules) as buoys. Some of us look at a buoy and read it as, "Danger ahead. Do not, under any circumstances, go past this point." Some of us look at a buoy and read, "Adventure ahead!" Occasionally, those who go past the buoys discover something

that deepens understanding for the rest of us. But venturing beyond those buoys is a risky undertaking, one that shouldn't be taken without discernment and maturity.

Adam and Abel love the safety within the buoys. Eve and Cain are driven to know what is beyond. Eve and Cain impulsively venture forth. This story demonstrates that there are consequences to going beyond - and that God is still there.

Humans tend to look at boundaries as something that should be crossed, in order to learn more about the world and ourselves. The history of human advancement is landmarked by different boundaries that people were likely warned about, and then chose to disregard. Think about the first humans that crossed the Atlantic, or considered traveling into space, they all chose to question assumptions about the world around them which caused humans to learn more about their surroundings and existence. This natural inclination towards exploration and adventure is real, and extremely human, which is so important to consider while reading the Genesis story. Eve from the Bible was simply the first to look at a rule, and question it. I don't believe this is inherently bad, Eve did not have malicious intent when she chose to eat the apple. She followed her God-Given natural instinct, something that is so challenging about this story. Did God want humans to break his rules, did he expect them to? - Naomi Klassen

Toledot - Generations

The students can't remember this Hebrew word for the life of them, but they do remember the purpose of it! In the Bible, *toledot* ends one thing and begins another, while simultaneously showing us how the two are connected. Toledot includes "begats" or births as well as death. It's a connecting cycle. I LOVE that this musical uses this tradition to connect the stories of the Act I family and the Act II family.

The Elements

Karsten Hess, a 2010 Bethany graduate, led a workshop for the cast using LeCoq's element-inspired movement. This elemental work became important in the movement of this musical. Each character decided which element they were - for example, Eve is Fire and Adam is Earth (hardly surprising, since *adamah* is Hebrew for earth).

I feel like this workshop was essential for the foundation of this show, as the majority of the movements we use are influenced by the work we did in that workshop. Me personally, whenever I have to think of movements, for both my animal and "nature" characters, I find myself thinking back to what we did in the workshop; how I moved, the different ways the thing I was embodying could move, etc. I feel like, without the workshop, the actors would be a lot more stiff and have a harder time becoming the things they're trying to be. - Erika Lopez

Cycles and Motifs

Musically, Stephen Schwartz is a masterful craftsman of choosing melodies to create meaning within the context of the narrative. In music, these are called "motifs" (short musical ideas that represent a specific concept) or "leitmotifs" (short musical ideas that represent a specific character). If you listen carefully, every song either serves the function of introducing a melody that is going to be used later, or uses an older motif in a new context to give it deeper meaning. No musical time is wasted. Any time that characters are involved in *creation, discovery, choice, wrath, travel, love, or prayer*--among others--, there's a concrete musical idea that gives deeper artistic nuance to the drama unfolding on stage. - Brody Thomas

I absolutely love the cyclical nature of this show. I love shows where you can connect one thing to the next, where certain elements are repeated and transformed based on the context. I love being able to watch a show

or movie that has meaning in the tiniest details. Stephen Schwartz puts meaning into every single song, and most of his themes recur throughout the show so it's really fun for me to listen to the music and pick out the meaning of the song based on the motifs and where they've been heard in the past. I think the cyclical nature of the show also shows humanity. "History repeats itself" is a common saying, and it is evident in this show. Humans are curious, changeable creatures and yet we still follow habitual routines. - Ana Yoder

The following are some of these repeated patterns, as well as repeated blocking and character motifs.

"Let There Be" - Father first sings these words in the opening number, at center stage. You'll notice Eve in the same place as she sings this same theme and recognizes the "spark of creation" Father has placed within her. And again, you'll hear it in "Childhood's End," but this time with other words, as an adolescent Eve proclaims her newfound "wisdom."

Mountains and Plains - You'll see the same blocking in "Let There Be" and in "Generations" as the actors sing about these parts of creation.

"Beyond" spot - Characters tend to go to a spot downstage right when they wonder what is beyond the world they know. You may notice that this is also the place for Father at the end of each act.

Curious Children - Eve and Young Cain ask similar questions about what is beyond the garden/the waterfall, and have almost verbatim conversations with their parents.

"No more questions, Daughter Eve." - Look for this repeated conversation on Eve's first and last days.

Release Spot - Eve, Cain, Yonah, and Father all utilize the downstage center spot to release and welcome what will come - a few of those times also using the same music motif.

Worship spot - Father's children do ritual prayers from center stage. The musical motif is the same each time, and Father always sits on the front step and spreads her galaxy scarf out on the platform to receive their offering of worship. Notice that the first time this happens, it is simply two children telling their parent thank you and goodnight. The final time is Noah, presenting an offering after the flood has subsided. Father responds to this final offering with a rainbow - and sings his own blessing to this same tune.

Family Motif - There's a beautiful musical motif that is first heard when Adam and Eve wake to each other in the beginning of the show. We hear it again in "Close to Home," "A Piece of Eight," and "In Whatever Time We Have." This song is always one of commitment to each other - of choosing to be family. Father always has some kind of response to it.

We can also think of this as symbolizing love in the abstract:

"Of all this perfect garden's perfect sights" = Romantic love

"Come sit beside me in the dying light" = Mature love that has endured hardship

"Once more we gather in the dying light" = Familial love and reaching to God

"From this day forward nights won't seem so black" = Back to romantic love

"As we well know, our end is very near" = Familial commitment and uncertainty about God's presence

Choice Triangle - This triangle first appears when Adam is forced to choose between eating the fruit and remaining in the garden. The musical motif and blocking come back for Abel later in Act I, and again for Noah in Act II.

Combat Choreography - Watch the combat scenes carefully (between Cain, Abel and Adam in Act I, then between Japheth, Ham and Noah in Act II). The choreography is identical and the lines are almost identical - but there is one key difference. The cycle that was begun in Act I with the act of violence is broken when Yonah throws herself in harm's way.

Animal Carousels - We went for the look of carousels in each of our three animal scenes. Watch for concentric circles, a parade of animals.

Animals Worship Father - In "The Naming," the animals and humans all turn and bow to Father toward the end of the song. Then in "Return of the Animals," while the "Children of Eden" motif plays, they repeat this choreography - but this time, the humans can't see Father and stare in wonder at the animals.

I really appreciate and find it interesting that often times the animals are more aware of Father in the show than the humans. The animals are always able to sense Father and I feel like they understand what Father is trying to do more than the humans, kind of resembling that maybe the humans are more juvenile, especially in the early stages of the show. For example, in the naming, Talashia said that the animals know why they are bowing to Father and Adam and Eve might not know as well. This shows that perhaps God might've not been ready for Adam and Eve to understand God's self as much as God might've allowed the animals to understand ideas. - Norah Schloneger

What it Means to Be a Father - Characters are searching for elusive parenthood throughout the story. Father articulates every idealistic new parent's experience in "Father's Day," then the theme comes back sarcastically with Cain, then again in Father's sadness during the Flood.

Wasteland Motif - Anytime characters are traveling after picking up the pieces of what happened before, this theme appears in narration by the Storytellers.

Parent in Pain - The music motif most recognizable as "The Hardest Part of Love" first appears with Father in "The Expulsion." Grief of parents is cyclical!

Destruction - The destruction of Eden and the Flood have the same music motif, and Father does the same blocking for both.

"Children of Eden" - This theme is most recognized in the final song of Act I, but you'll hear it first introduced by Father, and if you listen closely, it pops up several other times, including by Noah and Yonah.

"Spark of Creation" - See above for a fuller discussion on this theme. It usually pops up when someone is discovering something. For example, Cain sings it in "Ring of Stones."

Father-Son conversations - Fathers usually take their sons downstage left for a serious chat, although occasionally it happens downstage right.

Dance with the elements - Yonah's dance in "Stranger to the Rain" echoes Father's in "Let There Be." This was purely accidental, and we love it.

"You're not going to tell me, are you" - Yonah echoes the question Eve asks of Father. Father does answer each of them...but in his own time.

"Eden" - Yonah is the first to say this word in the opening scene of the show, and she says it again at the end. The blocking and lights echo, but you'll have to watch closely to catch this one!

Other "Easter eggs" to watch for

- Father puts on an apron to get to work a couple times.
- God as divine potter (in "Let There Be")
- God as divine knitter (in "Wasteland")
- "Yonah" means "dove" in Hebrew
- "The Naming" was written entirely with Orff instruments.
- We named each movement in "Generations" for things having to do with apples. If you look closely, you may be able to tell with some of them! And for "Ain't It Good," movement was inspired by the ark ("Push the Roof Off" and "Shake Off the Water," to name a few).

Children of Eden Warm-up Songs

This is a list of most of the songs we used for warm-ups. Many of them also are played before and after the musical and during intermission.

There's a Higher Power (Buddy Miller)

When I Look at Your Heavens -Psalm 8:3-4 (Seeds Family Worship)

Whenever God Shines His Light (Van Morrison)

The Great Storm is Over (John McCutcheon)

Firewalker (Angela Parrish)

Take Good Care (Bryan Moyer Suderman)

World in Union (Ladysmith Black Mambazo)

Rain Rain Beautiful Rain (Ladysmith Black Mambazo)

Psalm 90, feat. Sarah Gregory (Bilfrost Arts)

Sometimes God Whispers (Mark Bishop, Forget the Sea)

When God Created You (African Children's Choir)

Psalm 104 (Amy Grant)

The Shape of Water (Alexandre Desplat)

Storm (Fusione Elevata)

Earth Walker (Radikal Guru)

Wade in the Water (The Staple Singers)

So Glad I'm Here (Elizabeth Mitchell)

Raining Like Magic (Raffi)

Knocking on Heaven's Door (Ladysmith Black Mambazo)

Rain (Rusted Root)

Back to the Earth (Rusted Root)

I Dreamed of Rain (Jan Garrett, JD Martin)
The Garden of God (Bryan Moyer Suderman)
The Rain Keeps Falling (Andrew Peterson)

Directors' Notes

God was. God is. God will be. We began most rehearsals with these words, part of a longer affirmation of faith we spoke and enacted throughout the course of the process. God of our past, present and future, bigger than we can imagine yet intimate, this God became close and real to us in the process of this show. We embody God and creation in this show, yet we hold this lightly, aware that we understand only in part.

Children of Eden is a big show. It's epic in story, difficult musically, and emotionally intense. As directors, it took discipline to pause work on the technicalities of the show and devote time to reading the Bible and doing theology in community. But we did it, and oh, was it worthwhile. Those conversations made a real difference in what we do on stage, and I am confident that they will also have lasting effects on the faith formation of these students.

This musical is written to be an exploration of the parent-child relationships, and it uses the Genesis 1-9 story as a narrative framework. So as you will see, it does not exactly match the biblical story. Read the Bible while this musical is fresh in your mind, and find those differences - they are intriguing choices! We pulled those differences out, talked about them, and then asked, "What's the sweet spot?" What's the meeting place between what the script is trying to portray and what the Bible is trying to tell us? That sweet spot, that meeting place, became what we tried to bring out in our interpretation of the script. The things we learned from the Bible greatly impacted the choices we made, and if you want to know more about this, go to [\(link\)](#) to read more about it.

This is a story about creation that is good and humans who are created in God's image. It's a story of destructive choices, reconciliation, broadening understanding of God's love, and human agency. And ultimately, it's a story of the home we find in God. Thank you for joining us in this exploration of God, humans, and creation.

-Talashia Keim Yoder

There's something magical about musical theater. The way voices and life experiences mingle in a great mosaic to create something more beautiful than the individual could alone. That moment when the music stops and a holy silence lays low over the space. What a gift to collaborate in community and share this experience! *Children of Eden* has inspired and challenged us. On a technical level, it's a demanding show--the music is difficult! Many hours have been spent in preparation, invisible and unseen by our audience. However, Stephen Schwartz created a vibrant, cohesive, and fun score. Listen for themes--motifs--of big concepts throughout: creation, parenthood, going beyond, choice, the wilderness, generational consequence (and more!).

May we always live in the hope of our final song:

Our hands may choose to drop the knife.

Our hearts can choose to stop the hating.

For every moment of our life

is the beginning.

-Aaron Johnson & Brody Thomas, Music Directors