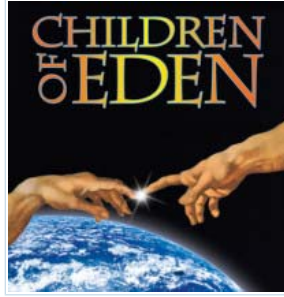


## Stephen Schwartz's Musical *Children of Eden* at Simi Valley Cultural Arts Center

Simi Valley Cultural Arts Center (Simi Valley, CA)

Rated 3.3 by 9 members who went.



FULL PRICE:

**\$20.00**

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**\$10.00\***

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**C**hildren of Eden, a musical based on the Book of Genesis, comes to the Simi Valley Cultural Arts Center. With music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz (*Wicked*), the show touches on themes of family conflicts and faith as it recounts the story of Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel in the first act and Noah in the second.

Event summary prepared by the Goldstar [Editorial Team](#).

\* Additional fees apply.

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### 8 Member Reviews



**GRoberts**  
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Rated 4.0

Written on Nov 08 2009

I had heard about this show through a family friend of mine who had given me a glowing review of it. What surprised me is he was not really into musical theater, but was often "dragged" to see it by his wonderful wife. He had given me few details so I brought my wife and 10 year old daughter along, and now I have to explain my experience to anyone who will listen.

I had never heard of "Children of Eden", I didn't know what to expect. But it is essentially a musical take on The Book of Genesis. So of course there is going to be some artistic liberties with the Old Testament, but don't let that sway you. It begins with the story of Adam and Eve, and ends with the story of Noah and his family, and it is seamlessly threaded together through

song and dance.

The show started a little late, but no big deal. Then the opening number began, and I was hooked. Lights! A small stage of maybe 25 people were giving us a light show. It almost seemed like they were telling the audience to sit back and enjoy, you might not be able to help yourself. It was a dance, it was a song, it was music all played to a beautiful perfection of an opening number. I, indeed, was very interested. Planets and comets zooming across the sky. Just marvelous.

The first number had just concluded, now onto the second number. A beautiful dance which included, I am not sure what they would be called, but animal cut outs and back lighting that just looked marvelous. I looked over at my daughter and she was just so involved with it. The three leads doing their best to name all the animals, it was very cute and very well executed. If you didn't smile, then you must have had a really bad day.

But lets talk about the performances, I brought my program home simply for this purpose. Darrienne Gross was an amazing Eve and Moma Noah. She brought songs to life starting with "The Spark of Creation". She brought the place to tears with "Children of Eden" a rather powerful song that overpowers your emotions and forces a tear. In "Ain't it Good" she makes us feel, well GOOD! It's an amazing number with a wonderful dance and a soul vibe to it.

Jonathon Bluth has several amazing songs that grab at your heart and make you wonder, "What would I do?". He has an incredible voice with power and range. In "A World Without You" you can truly feel the struggle Adam is going through. So challenged, so conflicted.

John Bowers, was steadfast, and powerful as Father. I have seen him in other shows here, and he did not disappoint. His power and internal struggle with what Adam and Eve had done was wonderful to watch. He had a presence that seemed omnipresent throughout the show. As a father myself, the hardest part of love is letting go. As a father myself the song "The Hardest Part of Love" really rang true. It was a beautiful and heart felt song sung with Noah.

William James Jr. just about blows the roof off the theater in "Lost in the Wilderness" a song that gets your heart pumping. it gives you a feeling that you want to go and run a few laps because the adrenaline is rushing. He plays the determined Cain and Japheth with a lot of conviction and drive.

Alex Fragoso, her voice is both powerful and steady. "Stranger to the Rain" was beautiful and touching as her struggle begins.

What more can you ask for? THEN the show has what they call "Storytellers" who transition the show along. They had some amazing singers and dancers among this group of people, too many to name. Some of the highlights include what they call the "Wasteland Soloists". Tyler Burke, Brittany Wheeler, and Jillian Lawson, such beautiful voices in the middle of an increasingly intense transition. Paul Bartlett in a very tender, albeit short, solo as "The Death of Able Soloist". Then the opening of Act II begins with "Generations Soloists", which had a nice mix of Jillian Lawson's calm cool voice, and DiAngelo Justice's Jamaican inspired exuberance. If you have kids, "The Return of the Animals" is almost too precious, it was my daughters favorite. And my favorite, the Snake! Five such talented singers in a song that almost seems like it doesn't belong in the show. Yet it is perfectly done, and really entices you with it's splendor. Mike Spee, Tyler Burke, Sharon Gibson, Julie Farrell, and Molly Siskin slither their way into the heart and mind of Eve, and the audience. It was simply delicious, I would take a bite from the apple as well!

The cast is rounded out by gripping performances by Kyle Caldwell, who plays the innocent and doomed Abel. He brings a great deal of innocent joy to his character, the 'good' child. Jordan Lippert and Erin Hollander as wives of Noah's family. One is a rather good screamer, the other a very good crier, both handle their parts with extreme believability. Tori Cusak and Natalie Esposito have very memorable parts as interpretive dancers to various scenes. And the show also adds an 8 person childrens choir to some of the bigger numbers I had noticed.

I could go on and on. The choreography of the dancing was amazing. I am not sure how you get that many people on a stage like that, but somehow it works. The story gets a little slow in the second act, but stick with it, by the end you will barely remember it. The stage is very simple, but it really works for all they give us. The director must have had a heck of a time making this all work, because they all did a beautiful job. The closing number seals the deal. It is emotional and motivational. The power of the entire cast singing and penetrating the audience was breathtaking. I can't recommend this highly enough. The theater was only about half filled when we were there, it's really something everyone, both young and old, should see.

If there is any drawback, it's that the orchestra seemed to overpower the singing on just a few occasions, and every now and then some of the dialogue is missed as a result. But the music sounded great, and there doesn't seem to be much that can be done about that. There also seemed to be a lack of lighting in certain scenes. One tip, we sat in the third row. I almost wished we sat further back to get a better overall view of some of the bigger/grander scenes.

Final words. This is worth the time, it was an incredible show. I love it when something you know nothing about going into it leaves you feeling so good as you exit it. Bravo.

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### Top Useful Tips

Tips are provided by Goldstar members and Actors' Repertory Theatre of Simi. Goldstar is not responsible for their content or accuracy.

#### DRESS

Comfortable is fine.

#### FOOD AND DRINKS

No tips yet, check back later

#### PARKING AND TRANSPORTATION

Easy.

#### OTHER

No tips yet, check back later

### More Details About *Children of Eden*

#### More Information

**Website:** <http://www.simi-arts.org/EventDetail.aspx?m=cs&eid=103>

From Stephen Schwartz (*Godspell*, *Pippin*, and *Wicked*) and John Caird of *Les Misérables* comes a joyous and inspirational musical about parents, children and faith... not to mention centuries of unresolved family business!

Freely based on the story of Genesis, "Children Of Eden" is a frank, heartfelt and often humorous examination of the age-old conflict between parents and children. Adam, Eve, Noah and the "Father" who created them deal with the headstrong, cataclysmic actions of their respective children. The show ultimately delivers a bittersweet but inspiring message: that "the hardest part of love... is letting go."



**Simi Valley Cultural Arts Center**

This Gothic structure has served the Simi Valley community since the mid 1920's when it was constructed as the Simi Community Methodist Episcopal Church. Since then it has also served as a mortuary, Jewish temple, a residence and even a temporary high school. It was the anchor building for an area that came to be known as "community center". In 1991, the City of Simi Valley acquired the pr

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