

CULTURE MONSTER

ALL THE ARTS, ALL THE TIME

[Stephen Schwartz's first opera to premiere in Santa Barbara](#)

2:45 PM, July 29, 2009



When Culture Monster last chatted with composer [Stephen Schwartz](#) ("Wicked," "Enchanted," "Pippin"), it was January, and [a new production of "Pippin" performed by Deaf West Theater was onstage at the Mark Taper Forum.](#)

Now, the Oscar and Grammy-winning Schwartz has something completely new to announce: his first opera, intriguingly titled "Seance on a Wet Afternoon," which will have its world premiere Sept. 26 at the [Granada](#) in Santa Barbara. The opera, which also will have two performances in October, is being produced by [Opera Santa Barbara](#) and executive-produced by [Michael Jackowitz.](#)

Schwartz wrote both the music and libretto for "Seance," a psychological thriller about a medium, her husband and the spirit of their deceased 11-year-old son. The production is to be directed by Schwartz's son, [Scott Schwartz.](#)

Although Stephen Schwartz contributed some incidental music to [Scott Schwartz's play "My Antonia."](#) which had its West Coast premiere at Ventura's Rubicon Theatre Company last year, the opera is the first major collaboration for father and son.

Executive producer Jackowitz said he and Schwartz began considering the idea of an opera in 2002 or 2003, wanting to combine the best of both the musical theater and opera worlds.

"Stephen and I used to go to the opera quite a bit together; Stephen would say to me: 'Everybody thinks of me as a pop composer, but I trained at Carnegie Mellon and Juilliard as a classical composer.... Wouldn't it be great if you could combine what the musical theater does with opera, to create a legitimate opera that also has *tunes*?' " Jackowitz said. "That animal didn't really exist."

For more details on the new opera, visit the [Seance opera website](#).

-- Diane Haithman

Photo: Stephen Schwartz performs on stage during the 40th Annual Songwriters Hall of Fame Ceremony at the New York Marriott Marquis on June 18, 2009, in New York City. Credit: Larry Busacca/Getty Images.