

THE HAPPY PRINCE

Of all our musicals, 'The Happy Prince' is the one that has achieved the most recognition in a competitive and commercial environment and has won the highest acclaim. After publication of **Jan Stroud's** musical adaptation of *The Selfish Giant*, film and TV producers took an interest in her work. *The Happy Prince* was written and developed specifically for broadcast as part of a raft of musicals based on **Oscar Wilde's** magical stories. Jan worked with various film companies, met many music producers, artists, illustrators, animators and film makers. By the late 1990's, we had built a production team that was second to none; *The Happy Prince* won a place in the finals of *The International Musical of the Year* and the music was broadcast on radio.

It was this development of our Oscar Wilde projects for film and TV that enabled us to produce exceptional resources for children, costing many thousands of pounds and prepared by professional musicians, arrangers and producers in the best recording studios to broadcast standards. Celebrities and character actors sing the vocal tracks on The Happy Prince and we work with the same highly professional team to develop our musicals today

The Story

The prince lived a life of privilege in *Perfection City*, protected from life's harsh truths and oblivious to the suffering of his people. After his death, a beautiful golden statue was erected. He was known to all as the happy prince but, high above the city where he now stood, he could see many people suffering and he was no longer so happy.

Not far away, a group of swallows were preparing to migrate. One was targeted by a flirtatious canary, trapped in a cage and complaining of *Canary Blues*. By the time he discovered that she was just a shallow flirt, the other swallows were on their way to Egypt. Trying to catch up with his friends, the swallow finds a *Golden Bedroom* at the base of a crying statue where he can rest. The prince tells the swallow that he is powerless to help ease the suffering of the poor and begs the swallow to stay for one night and help him rescue them.

In a bedroom nearby a seamstress makes gowns for rich people to wear to *The Ball*. Her little boy is ill and she has no money for the food he needs. The prince asks the swallow to take the ruby from his sword hilt and give it to the seamstress, which, to the joy of the mother, he does.

Although the swallow wants to join his friends in Egypt, the prince always begs him to stay and help for one more day. Working together, they give away both of the prince's sapphire eyes: one to a ragged *Matchgirl* and the other to a starving poet. Now he is blind, the prince relies on the swallow to save his city, promising that one day the swallow will *Find the Sunshine*. The devoted swallow strips every bit of gold from the statue and scatters it amongst the street urchins, who tell the swallow they are delighted to have *A Friend Like You*.

Winter comes and the little swallow cannot survive. He flies to the prince for ***The Last Goodbye*** and when the prince realises that his friend has died, his leaden heart breaks in two.

The bombastic and self-important town councillors, full of ***Civic Pride***, are disgusted to discover the decrepit statue with his jewels missing, no longer covered with gold. They order that the statue must be pulled down and melted in a furnace. But the leaden heart will not melt and is thrown into a gutter, where a dead bird also lies.

God orders an angel to visit earth and bring back to heaven the two most precious things in the city. The angel returns with the broken heart and the dead bird. Our adaptation tries to make this idea universally acceptable to all cultures through the words of the final song, ***The Flame of Love*** and the script's ending:

And God in his heaven breathed new life into the prince and the swallow; for Love is Life; and those who live their life in love shall never die...

Full Production with script

The script adopts the premise that children are rehearsing for a performance of The Happy Prince in a large local theatre. The role of the Director is a very major one but the actor could carry a full script, so learning lines becomes less of a problem. This role is usually split between two or three children.

The way in which the Prince will be presented is one of the key decisions for a production. A projected image could be used; 'real' statues or effigies could be constructed; actors dressed or painted like mime artists are most effective; similarly, an outer costume made from gold fabric, which can be removed to reveal black clothes underneath is also a good solution.

A swooping spotlight sometimes represents the swallow in the text but the role could equally be played by a dancer. In Oscar Wilde's story, the Swallow is delayed in his migration by a flirtatious reed. Our script substitutes the reed for a Canary. This is a role for a good soprano with a high range – she has a sophisticated jazz song to perform.

The production works with both large and small groups. Sections of the script are chanted by everyone and asterisks mark places where a speech can be split between groups or individuals. All the children will have a speaking part and there are opportunities for talented dancers and singers in the solo and duet numbers.

Large concert performances

This production has been used by Music Service providers and Hubs. With ten narrative songs that tell the story, it is perfect for organisations that want to work with different groups that later join to give concert performances in large theatres. Similarly, it works well as a joint project for secondary schools working with years 5 & 6 during secondary transfer from feeder primary schools. They can host concerts to demonstrate their resources and facilities to the new intake of children and their parents.

Cast

The Teacher(s) / Director(s)

Class of children (100 lines of script to be shared)

The prince

The swallow

Group of dancers – (i) getting ready for the ball (ii) dressed for the ball

Group of swallows

The Canary

Seamstress and her sick child

Poet

Group of cockney street children

Mayor

Group of town councillors

Scenes

Section 1 – The Director’s introduction

Section 2 – The swallows migrate

Section 3 – The swallow finds a golden bedroom

Section 4 – The Ball

Section 5 – The Matchgirl and Poet

Section 6 – Cockney Urchins

Section 7 – Swallow and Prince

Section 8 – Town Councillors

Section 9 – Director and Cast - Flame of Love

The Music

The musical content of The Happy Prince is of the highest quality, with a production standard that is rarely available to young people. The ten narrative songs, ranging in style from pop anthems and ballads to jazz, disco and a 1940's medley, pay tribute to each decade of the twentieth century. Together with the backing tracks they make **The Happy Prince** one of the most exciting and vibrant musicals available for children to perform.

Backing Tracks

We know that children respond brilliantly to our backing tracks. We feel that the broadcast quality of the recording helps you to present a very professional production and motivates the children to perform at the highest level. You can listen to all our music and songs on our website and also on **SoundCloud** and **Facebook**.

Piano/Vocal score

Our first priority was to give children the opportunity to perform with these exceptional backing tracks so we provided a lead sheet score (melody, lyrics and chord structure). However, since we created the band parts a fuller score for piano accompaniment can be derived from Keyboard 1. Both these scores are provided with a standard hire pack and useful for a live performance, or as a rehearsal or musical director's score. If you would like to see more pages from this score than are available on our website please contact: info@firesticksandsong.com or telephone +44 (0) 1803 813977

Band parts

The 7 band parts replicate the orchestration really well. This is done mainly through the use of 4 keyboards with simple drum, guitar and bass arrangements. It is possible to substitute real instruments for some of the keyboard parts, or to use just the Keyboard 1 part, maybe with some guitar and percussion. The band parts are an optional feature. Please contact us for further samples: info@firesticksandsong.com or telephone +44 (0) 1803 813977

Vocal guide tracks

The vocal tracks help children to 'pick up' the songs, however difficult, after listening only a few times. For these reasons, we used professional singers to demonstrate dramatic character, good singing technique and diction, which should make teaching the songs even easier. As CDs may not be copied, many groups choose to purchase the vocal tracks on CD for the cast and choir. Alternatively, a licence to copy can be purchased.

The Songs

The Happy Prince provides an opportunity to develop an able choir, so we recommend that a static, core choir is present at all times. If you want to provide opportunities for soloists, grouping for each song could be as follows:

PERFECTION CITY: Chorus + Prince solo

CANARY BLUES: Solo Canary

GOLDEN BEROOM: Chorus + Prince solo

THE BALL MEDLEY: Chorus + 2 dancers + mother of sick child

THE MATCHGIRL : Solo Matchgirl, solo Prince
FIND THE SUNSHINE: Solo swallow, solo prince
A FRIEND LIKE YOU: Chorus (in parts)
THE LAST GOODBYE: Solo prince, solo swallow
CIVIC PRIDE: Small group of town councillors with 2 soloists
THE FLAME OF LOVE: Chorus and Cast

You can listen to samples of all songs on our website – (audio gallery, button icon and again at the bottom of the page for each musical) - as well as on Facebook and SoundCloud.

From a Choirmaster

"I have a Choir of 110 children. They all love singing your amazing songs. Self esteem and confidence shine through when they perform on stage to their parents. They are always so proud of what they do. So am I! The quality songs and thought provoking scripts captivate the children and they perform with such enthusiasm – it's quite emotional at times!"

Script Samples

In the following script, the symbol * indicates a possible solo speech, to be assigned to an individual actor as seems appropriate

Well, that took far too long! That's five minutes of our rehearsal gone already!

But miss, why are we out in the corridor this lesson?

There's far more room in the hall, miss!

I'm sorry, but there's an exam on in the hall – and anyway, we need to get used to acting in a smaller space. This is the kind of space we'll get for real when we perform in [*...insert name of local theatre or venue...*]

But, miss, I thought [*..insert name of theatre..*] had a huge stage

That's right. But don't forget that most of the stage will be taken up by three hundred singers!

Three hundred! [*General astonishment*]

Not to mention the thousand people who'll be sitting there to watch you!

A thousand! [*Even more consternation*]

So we'd better make the most of our rehearsal time, hadn't we! Now we haven't got time today to go through everything, so I'll be skipping the bits you're already good at. Dancers: Miss [*..insert name of teacher/ choreographer at your school..*] tells me you all know what you're doing. Singers: I know you're all brilliant, so I'll just bring you in when you're needed.

Right then, chorus: 'The Happy Prince', Section One. Nice, clear, strong voices, please!

[The Director sets a four-beat finger-click, with which the children join. She counts four, then the clicking stops and the speech begins.]

[VERSE ONE]

All Once, long ago, was a city:
 *With walls * halls
 *Squares * stairs;
All Once, long ago, was a city:
 *With streets * seats
 * Towers * flowers;
All Once, long ago, was a city:
 * With meals * wheels
 *Grass * glass;
All Once, long ago, was a city:
 * With roofs * hoofs
 *Doors * floors;
All Once, long ago, was a city:
Director And they called the city? –
All Perfection!
Director But that was a fiction;
 Perfection City
 Was more a cause for? –
All Pity!

Well done. Now we're going to skip the next bit, so let's just quickly remind ourselves. Who was the Happy Prince?

Miss, miss, he was a statue, miss!

He stood right in the middle of the city!

On top of a high pillar!

A bit like ... *[insert a local example e.g. Nelson's Column]*

Or *[insert another local example e.g. Queen Victoria outside Buckingham Palace]*

Very good. So what was so special about this prince that they made a statue of him?

Well, he was a kind of model of what everybody wanted to be, miss...

He was rich -

He was handsome -

He was clever -

He was popular -

And that's why everybody called him the Happy Prince, miss.

But it wasn't just an ordinary statue they made for him, was it?

It was covered with gold, miss!

And it had jewels for its eyes!

Yes, beautiful blue sapphires; and what was on the handle of his carved stone sword?

It was a ruby, miss!

That's right: a rich red ruby. On to the next bit, then. Let's ask the statue of the Happy Prince if he's really as happy as people think. Ready? One – two – three – four...

[VERSE TWO - The Happy Prince is spotlit.]

Director O Prince, solemn on your column,

Say, are you happy?

All Happy? Happy?

*As a prince in a palace

I was fond – none fonder –

Of pleasure * and leisure;

* I had power * I had treasure;

* But I didn't see far.

* And now I am dead.

*I'm a statue of stone

High up and alone

I look down like a star

And see yonder –

All Yonder....

Director O Prince, solemn on your column,
What do you see there?

All I see Suffering –
* Misery * sickness * hunger –

All I see Suffering –
* Pain * cruelty * anger –

All I see Suffering.

Director O Prince, solemn on your column,
Say, are you happy?

All Happy? Happy?

* As a prince in a palace
I had life on a plate:
* Pleasure * leisure;
* Power * treasure;
* But I helped not a one.
* And now I am dead.
* I'm a statue of stone
High up and alone.
* My chance to help's gone.
It's too late –

All Too late!

[*Echo*] Too late! Too late! Too late!

SONG ONE: PERFECTION CITY. [*During the 8 bar intro the Director flurries around.*]

Right, chorus, ready? Quick, dancers, stand: it's time for your first number!

[Chorus sit immobile during Song 1. Dancers do rhythmic hand and torso movements during 'City' sections, and raise hands towards the spotlight Prince during 'Pity the girl' section.]

We'd like to welcome you into our town
We'd like to be the ones to show you around
Music and laughter fills the air
It's the sound of happy people everywhere
Fun days, bright nights
Heading for those city lights
Where's the only place we want to be
Perfection city, perfection city
Perfection city for me.

Above the city a statue stands tall
And it's the thing that makes us proudest of all
The Happy Prince a golden dream
The most beautiful statue you've ever seen
I tell no lies two bright sapphires for his eyes
And a ruby on his sword hilt shines
Perfection city perfection city
Perfection city's divine

Pity the girl who has rings on her fingers
And music where she goes
Life is perfection
Love and affection are all that she knows
Pity the man who has lived life
Protected from truth that was too harsh to see
Never to know that his spirit could grow
Strong and free
That man was me

Fun days bright nights
Heading for those city lights
Where's the only place we want to be
Perfection city perfection city
Perfection city for me

Second script sample

Director | So why was the prince so pleased to meet the little swallow?

* | The swallow could fly around, miss! -

* | Do things for him -

* | Take messages -

* | Deliver gifts.

Director | That's right. We mustn't forget that the prince was made of stone. He could see and he could feel, but he couldn't actually *do* anything until the swallow came to help him. O.K. Let's set up the next scene. Dancers, form a line along the back here. Chorus, kneel along here at the front. Now, chorus, you'll remember that in this bit you're meant to be the poor people of the city, working far too hard so that a few rich people can take it easy. Show me the sorts of work you're doing.

[Director goes along the line, touching each in turn on the shoulder. As each announces the activity, they begin miming it, and continue until the whole line is active.]

* | Digging!

* | Dragging!

* | Lifting!

* | Shovelling!

* | Pressing!

* | Stirring!

* | Hammering!

* | Sawing!

* | Chopping!

* | Washing!

* | Pulling! ***[vertically, as on a bell-rope]***

* | Crawling!

* | Packing!

* Bowing!
* Praying!
Director Right, freeze! [*Chorus stop mime.*] Well done, chorus. Now dancers, you'll remember that you're the posh people of the city. You're all dressed up and ready for the Royal Ball. You don't give a thought to the poor people, do you? There's only one thing on your mind tonight, which is? -

Third Script Sample

[*Chorus burst onto stage in role as Cockney street children.*]

VERSE ONE

All 'Ow yer keepin', mite, tonight?
Frost is creepin' white tonight.
Where yer sleepin', mite, tonight?
Where's yer bed?
Oi'll be sleepin' tight tonight,
Though frost's creepin' white tonight.
Got a good crib, mite, tonight
For me 'ed –
* In a dried-up drain
* A dark back lane
* A deep shop door
* A coalhouse floor
* A cardboard box
* A crate down the docks
* Arches of bridges
* Chimneys with pigeons
* A burnt out flat
* A roll of mat

* A miner's cave

* A table grave

All Yes, oi'm sleepin' tight tonight,
Though frost's creepin' white tonight;
And at peep of mornin' light
Oi'll be – DEAD!

[They hoot and jeer ironically at each other. Enter Director, applauding]

Well done, chorus! Your little break obviously did you good. So how can the Happy Prince help these homeless children? He's blind now, remember, and all his jewels have gone.

Please, miss, he's still got that gold he's covered with!

Good. Let's do that bit, then.

[Gold spot on prince. Director reads from script]

Swallow, I feel you shake with cold,
But my heart still aches for this city's pain.
I have lived too long on the shelf.
It is time to strip off my skin of gold
And scatter it down in a golden rain.
What else can I give but myself?

Take up your positions, then, children of the streets. Prepare to be showered with gold!

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