

WILBUR and the WEB

We have always enjoyed working with classical stories that have a strong moral and emotional content. We were fortunate to obtain permission for our musical adaptation of E.B. White's greatly loved story, *Charlotte's Web*, from the author himself. Music for the first productions used classroom instruments and also featured the first electronic keyboards, giving the performances a credible, modern edge that really appealed to parents and children. We kept pace with technology by adding new songs and recording them in increasingly sophisticated studios. The present recording was made with a young producer and we created the funky tracks that are available in this packaged production.

Our musical adaptation has been performed by children all over the world. Always a popular choice, it became even more so in the UK when the text was recommended for Literacy. After release of the Hollywood film, *Charlotte's Web*, it was difficult to keep up with demand!

The Story

With the Spring, *New Life* arrives at the Arable's farm. The runt of a litter of pigs is brought to the farmhouse kitchen. Fern Arable is horrified to learn that her father plans to kill him. She promises to look after him and names him Wilbur. When Wilbur is five weeks old, he goes to live in Mr Zuckermann's barnyard, where he meets *Templeton the Rat*, and Charlotte, a spider who offers to be his friend. She describes her bloodthirsty ways in *Charlotte's Dance*. One day the garrulous goose announces that her babies have arrived and invites all the animals to take part in the *Dance of the Goslings*.

Wilbur enjoys life in the barnyard until the day he finds out that the farmer is fattening him up to kill him and make sausages. Charlotte promises to save his life. She makes a plan to fool humans into thinking that Wilbur is special. When he sees the words 'SOME PIG' woven into a spider's web Mr Zuckermann is convinced that the pig is 'solid as they come'. Soon everyone knows about *Charlotte's Web*. The Goose, Sheep and Templeton find new words, 'TERRIFIC' and 'RADIANT' that Charlotte also weaves into webs. Wilbur becomes so famous that Mr Zuckermann decides to show him off at the County Fair. Wilbur is so excited he can't sleep and Charlotte sings him a *Lullaby*.

There is a *Carnival* atmosphere at the County Fair. Wilbur's life will be saved if he can win a prize, so he is alarmed to hear about a giant pig called Uncle. Charlotte begs the greedy Templeton, interested only in gorging the remains of all the food at the fair, to find one last word to weave into her web. Templeton returns with the word 'HUMBLE' and, by the time Charlotte has finished making her web, she is too tired to sing Wilbur to sleep. She needs to work on something for herself and next morning shows them her egg sac, containing 514 eggs.

When everyone sees Wilbur in his pen with the word *Humble* spun into a web above him, he is awarded a special prize. Charlotte has saved his life but Wilbur is distraught to learn that her efforts have cost Charlotte her life. At first Wilbur won't leave Charlotte but then he realises he

can save her babies by taking the egg sac back to the barn. He persuades Templeton to get the egg sac and, broken-hearted, says a last goodbye to Charlotte. In the ***Stillness***, she dies. The musical ends back in the barnyard, where 514 baby spiders, all looking like their mother, create a ***Cavatica Spectacular***

Scenes

Scene 1: The Arable's Farm	Fern rescues a little runty pig
Scene 2: Zuckermann's barn	Wilbur meets Charlotte and Templeton
Scene 3: The Barnyard	The goslings are born - Wilbur learns his fate - Charlotte spins her web – Wilbur becomes famous
Scene 4: The County Fair	Charlotte spins her final Web – Wilbur wins a prize – Charlotte creates her egg sac and dies
Scene 5: Cavatica Spectacular	514 baby spiders are born!

Cast

Wilbur - a runty pig
Charlotte – a clever spider
Templeton – a dirty rat
Mr Zuckermann – a farmer
Goose – a proud and garrulous mother
Sheep – bearer of bad news for Wilbur
20 separate pieces of narration
Lurvey – a farmhand
Mr Arable – owner of farm where Wilbur was born
Mrs Arable – his wife
Fern – his daughter
Uncle – an enormous, prize-winning pig
Show Chairman – awards Wilbur a special prize
Horse – wise animal in barnyard
Groups of animals with their offspring
Farmers who show animals at the County Fair
Barnyard animals
Baby spiders (514) – replicas of their mother

The Music

Backing Tracks

We know that children respond brilliantly to our backing tracks. We feel that these tracks help you to present a very modern, credible production and motivate the children to perform in a way that exceeds expectations. The backing tracks for Wilbur and the Web feature music for dances – Templeton’s jazz dance, a line-dance for goslings, Charlotte’s really funky rap and also atmospheric music for a lullaby. You can listen to the music and songs on our website Audio Gallery and also on **SoundCloud** and **Facebook**.

Piano/Vocal score

This is available for a live performance, rehearsal or conductor’s score. If you would like to see more pages from this score than are available on our website please contact:

info@firestickandsong.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. Some organisations may prefer a ‘live’ performance so we also include a full vocal / piano score with a fairly easy accompaniment. 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

You can listen to samples of all the 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.

New Life

Templeton the Rat – jazz dance

Charlotte’s Dance – a rap

Dance of the Goslings – a line dance

Charlotte’s Web

Lullaby – possible solo

Carnival

Stillness

Cavatica Spectacular

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

NARRATOR: It was springtime. The whole world was awakening and on the Arable's farm, new families of animals were exploring the world for the first time.

[Enter collection of baby animals with their parents]

SONG: NEW LIFE

MR ARABLE: That pig of ours has produced a fine litter ... six healthy piglets that will make me a fine profit ... but one is a little runty thing. Pass over my axe and I'll go and make an end to him quickly.

FERN: Make an end to him! You mean KILL him! How could you? What harm has he done to you? This is the worst case of injustice I've ever heard! I'll never forgive you! Mum, don't let him do it! [Continue protests *ad lib*]

MRS ARABLE: Well John, it does seem a bit hasty. Couldn't you see how he gets on ... just for a day or so.

FERN: Yes Daddy ... please let him live.

MR ARABLE: Now you know that a runt means nothing but trouble ... all hard work and no returns.

FERN: I'll look after him ... I'll feed him and keep him clean and talk to him and ... I'll really love him Daddy.

MR ARABLE: Oh all right Fern. But it won't be easy. He'll have to be fed from a bottle ... every two hours ... and at night ... and the smell!!! You'll soon see what a load of trouble a little runty pig can be!

NARRATOR: But far from being a trouble, the pig proved to be the most beautiful thing Fern had ever known. She called him Wilbur and spent her time giving him all the food and love that a young pig needs.

SONG: DOWN THE LINE (Line Dance by all the animals and farmers)

NARRATOR: When Wilbur was five weeks old, Mr Arable decided that the pig must be sold. Fern was heartbroken but her father remained firm. The situation was saved again by Mrs Arable whose brother – Homer Zuckerman – sometimes raised a pig. She made all the arrangements and Wilbur was taken to his new home – a manure pile in the cellar of Zuckerman’s barn.

NARRATOR: Wilbur enjoyed his new home at first, as Fern visited him every day and he had the exciting task of getting to know the other inhabitants of the barnyard. But he soon got bored. Although he had regular mealtimes, he wanted love - he wanted a friend who would play with him.

WILBUR: Will you come over and play with me?

GOOSE: Sorry-orry-orry. I’m sitting-itting on my eggs. Eight of them. Got to keep them toasty-oasty warm. I have to sit right here. I’m no flibberty-ibberty-gibbet. I do not play when there are eggs to hatch. I’m expecting goslings.

WILBUR: Well I didn’t think you were expecting woodpeckers!

[Sighs and groans from other animals]

[Templeton enters]

WILBUR: Hey – Templeton – will you play with me?

TEMPLETON: Me? Play? I hardly know the meaning of the word. My time is spent eating, gnawing, spying and hiding. My playing is limited to one thing only.

[Produces trumpet or saxophone] **SONG: TEMPLETON THE RAT**

Second script sample

NARRATOR: Word travelled about the miracle and before long everyone knew that the Zuckerman’s had a wondrous pig. Fern was happy for she felt that Charlotte’s trick was working and she felt that Wilbur’s life would be saved. Charlotte called a meeting of all the animals in the barn cellar.

CHARLOTTE: Now, you've all noticed that the Zuckerman's have fallen for the trick. They think that Wilbur is an unusual pig so they won't kill him and eat him. But I must have some new ideas for the web. People are already getting tired of reading 'some pig'.

SHEEP: What about 'Pig Supreme'?

CHARLOTTE: That sounds edible – no good at all.

GOOSE: What about terrific-terrific-terrific?

CHARLOTTE: Cut that down to one 'terrific' and it might do very well. How do you spell it?

GOOSE: I think it's tee double ee double rr double rr double eye double eff double eye double see see see see.

CHARLOTTE: What kind of acrobat do you think I am? My legs will end up in fourteen granny knots if I try to weave that in to my web. You'll have to think of something else.

[Templeton enters]

Oh Templeton. Thank you for coming.

TEMPLETON: What's up? Mother's meeting?

SHEEP: Look; Charlotte needs words to weave in to her web to save Wilbur's life. Next time you go to the dump, we want you to find some words for the web.

TEMPLETON: Why should I worry about what happens to Wilbur? Nobody worries about what happens to me?

SHEEP: You'll worry next winter when Wilbur is dead and no one brings any nice warm slops. Wilbur's leftovers are your main source of food. If Wilbur's killed and his trough stands empty, you'll get so thin that we'll be able to look right through your stomach and see things on the other side.

TEMPLETON: Maybe you're right. I'll see if I can find a magazine cutting or something – tomorrow – or the next day.

SHEEP: Why wait? You could do it now.

TEMPLETON: Oh all right. Don't go on – I've got the message.

SHEEP and GOOSE: Miserable rat! Only thinks of his stomach! Well at least he's gone. What do you think he'll find ... ? Here he comes.

TEMPLETON: How about this? It says 'CRUNCHY' – that would look good in your web.

CHARLOTTE: Just the wrong idea! Couldn't be worse. We don't want Zuckerman thinking that Wilbur is 'crunchy'. He might start thinking of crispy bacon and crunchy crackling. We must advertise Wilbur's noble qualities not his tastiness. Go and get another word please Templeton.

NARRATOR: Templeton made several more trips to the dump, bringing back a cotton label saying 'PRE-SHRUNK' which was rejected, various advertisements of doubtful value and, eventually, part of a washing powder packet reading 'WITH RADIANT ACTION'. 'RADIANT' was just the right word and while Charlotte worked on her web, Wilbur practiced being radiant. The Zuckerman's excitement grew and reached a frenzy after Templeton found a sale notice offering 'terrific savings'.

MR ZUCKERMAN: Edith. Lurvey. We have 'some pig'. [Cheers] He is 'radiant' and 'terrific'. ['He certainly is ... etc] We will take him to the County Fair

Third script sample

NARRATOR: This left Wilbur just as before, friendless and dejected. He couldn't even manage to eat.

LURVEY: (Enters with bucket of slops) Here pig! Here pig! Hey boss, I think your pig is off his food.

MR ZUCKERMAN: What? Here, let me have a look. Ummmm! Errrrr! Try him with a couple of spoonfuls of sulphur and a little molasses.

LURVEY: Yes sir, Mr Zuckerman sir!

NARRATOR: Wilbur couldn't believe what was happening to him. It was the worst day of his life. He didn't know whether he could endure the awful loneliness anymore. Night came down and covered his misery in darkness.

VOICE OF CHARLOTTE: Do you want a friend Wilbur? I'll be a friend to you. I've watched you all day and I like you.

WILBUR: But I can't see you! Who are you? And where are you?

VOICE OF CHARLOTTE: I'm right up here. Go to sleep and you'll see me in the morning.

NARRATOR: The night seemed endless to Wilbur. A dozen times he woke, until finally the new day dawned fair and bright.

WILBUR: Oh beautiful day! It is here at last. Today I shall find my friend. Attention please! Will the person who addressed me last night kindly speak up! Please tell me where you are and if you will be my friend.

SHEEP: Stop your nonsense Wilbur! If you have a new friend here you're probably disturbing his rest - and the quickest way of spoiling a friendship is to wake somebody up in the morning before he is ready!

CHARLOTTE: My name is Charlotte A. Cavatica ... but just call me Charlotte.

SONG: CHARLOTTE'S DANCE (RAP)

NARRATOR: Charlotte's diet and bloodthirsty habits worried Wilbur at first, but he was only suffering the doubts and fears that go with finding a new friend. Underneath her rather bold and cruel exterior, Charlotte had a kind heart and she was to prove loyal and true to the very end.

NARRATOR: The year moved on into summer. School had finished so Fern had more time to spend with Wilbur and the other animals. One fine morning, the goose eggs hatched.

CHARLOTTE: I am sure that everyone of us here will be gratified to learn that after four weeks of unremitting effort and patience on the part of our friend the goose, she now has something to show for it. The goslings have arrived. May I offer my sincere congratulations.

SONG and DANCE OF THE GOSLINGS

GOOSE: Come on little goslings. I'll show you how real geese dance.

[The goose and goslings dance to Line Dance music]

SHEEP: In all this excitement Wilbur, I've been noticing how much weight you're putting on.

WILBUR: Oh at my age it's a good idea to keep gaining.

SHEEP: All the same, I don't envy you. I don't like to spread bad news but they're fattening you up to kill you!

NARRATOR: Charlotte's diet and bloodthirsty habits worried Wilbur at first, but he was only suffering the doubts and fears that go with finding a new friend. Underneath her rather bold and cruel exterior, Charlotte had a kind heart and she was to prove loyal and true to the very end.

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