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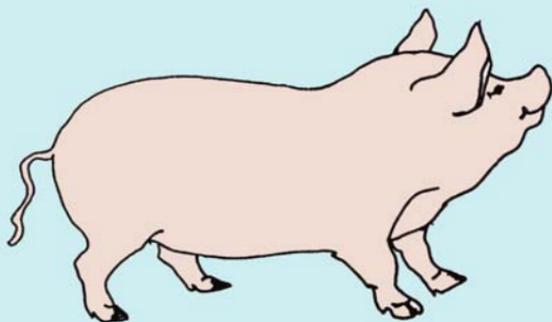
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10 ISBN: 0-87129-258-0

13 ISBN: 978-0-87129-258-2



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Code: C-06



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Charlotte's Web

The Musical

Based upon the story

by E.B. White

Book by

Joseph Robinette

Music and lyrics by

Charles Strouse



The Dramatic Publishing Company
Woodstock, Illinois • Wilton, Connecticut • Melbourne, Australia

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(CHARLOTTE’S WEB)

ISBN 0-87129-258-0

CHARLOTTE'S WEB

A Full-Length Musical
For Four to Nine Men, Five to Ten Women,
Flexible Ensemble Group*

CHARACTERS

FERN ARABLE a young girl
JOHN ARABLE her father
MARTHA ARABLE her mother
AVERY ARABLE her brother
HOMER ZUCKERMAN her uncle
EDITH ZUCKERMAN her aunt
LURVY a hired hand
WILBUR a pig
TEMPLETON a rat
CHARLOTTE a spider
GOOSE, GANDER, SHEEP, LAMB farm animals

Extras

REPORTER, PHOTOGRAPHER, SPECTATORS
TOWNSPEOPLE, JUDGES, FAIRGOERS,
FAIR PERSONNEL, OWL, BAT
UNCLE (a pig), SPIDERS

TIME: The Present.

PLACE: Act I: The Arable Farm—The Zuckerman Barn.
Act II: The County Fair—The Zuckerman Barn.

*See production notes regarding optional music and suggestions for flexible casting and doubling.

VOCAL SELECTIONS

ACT I

- *WHAT A MORNIN' Doc, Sadie, Lurvy
BREAKFAST AT ARABLES Fern, Martha,
Avery, John
WILBUR Fern
*EATING Wilbur
NICE TO MEET YOU Goose, Gander,
Templeton, Lamb, Sheep
WHO SAYS WE CAN'T BE FRIENDS? Charlotte,
Wilbur
SUMMER Homer, Edith, Wilbur, Chorus
CHARLOTTE'S SPINNING SONG Charlotte,
Bat, Owl, Templeton
*FREEDOM NOW! Wilbur, Animals, Charlotte
SOME PIG Homer, Lurvy, Sheep, Charlotte, Lamb
*MAMA, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND ME Fern,
Martha
COUNTY FAIR (and Act I FINALE) Lurvy,
Animals, Chorus

ACT II

- REPRISE: COUNTY FAIR (Act II OPENING) ... Chorus
DON'T Fern, Avery
YOU'RE YOU Charlotte
REPRISE: WILBUR Announcer, Chorus
FINALE Chorus

*These selections are optional. The lyrics have been omitted from the script. However, the music and lyrics do appear in the vocal score and may be reinserted if desired—see production notes for details.

ACT ONE

(Music #A. OVERTURE)

(NOTE: *A prologue, Music #1. "WHAT A MORNING," may be used at this point, if desired—see production notes.*)

SCENE: *The front yard of the Arable's farm. MARTHA removes garments from a clothesline, folds them and puts them into a basket which is held by FERN, who is simultaneously reading a book.*

(Music #1A. "BREAKFAST AT ARABLES")

FERN (*singing*).

WHAT'S THE CAPITAL OF IDAHO?

MARTHA.

I DON'T KNOW.

(*AVERY enters holding two plates.*)

AVERY.

**WHY CAN'T FERN SET THE TABLE?
I DID IT YESTERDAY!**

FERN.

HE'S SUCH A PEST TODAY!

EVERY (to MARTHA).

WHY'S HER OMELET BIGGER THAN MINE IS?

(He sets the plates down and picks up an air rifle.)

FERN (to AVERY).

**BET'CHA DON'T KNOW WHAT EIGHTEEN
TIMES NINE IS.**

MARTHA *(speaking)*. Shh! Your father's resting. Must
you two be so noisy? *(Singing.)*

I THINK IT'S BOISE.

FERN *(speaking)*. What's Boise?

MARTHA. The capital of Idaho.

FERN. Why is Papa resting?

MARTHA. Some pigs were born out in the hog house
last night. Your father was up late delivering them.

EVERY. Aww! Why didn't he wake me up?

(JOHN enters. He carries an axe.)

JOHN. Morning all. Martha. *(Singing.)*

**YOU KIDS HAD BETTER HURRY UP AND GET
DONE.**

(Speaking.)

Avery—

(Singing.)

BE EASIER WORKING WITHOUT THAT GUN.

*(He exits as AVERY sets down the rifle and picks up the
plates.)*

FERN.

WHY IS PAPA GOING OUT?

MARTHA.

NOTHING YOU KIDS NEED KNOW ABOUT.

FERN.

**WHY'S HE NOT HAVING HIS BREAKFAST
WITH US?**

AVERY.

**YEAH, HE ALWAYS EATS HIS BREAKFAST
WITH US.**

MARTHA (*speaking*). He has to do something out in the hog house.

AVERY. Yeah, he has to do something out in the hog house.

FERN (*singing*).

**WHY IS HE TAKING AN AXE THERE WITH
HIM?**

AVERY (*speaking*). Yeah—

(*Singing.*)

**WHY'S HE TAKING AN AXE THERE WITH
HIM?**

MARTHA (*speaking*). Well, one of the pigs is a runt. Very small and weak. So your father has decided to do away with it.

FERN. What? He can't do that. Just because he's smaller than the others—that's no reason to kill him. Papa! I've got to stop him.

MARTHA. Fern, stop. Your father's right. The pig would probably die anyway.

(WILBUR, a young pig, runs into the yard. He looks about frantically.)

JOHN'S VOICE *(offstage)*. Where'd he go? How'd he get away? *(FERN runs to WILBUR.)*

FERN. I can't let him do this to you.

(JOHN enters carrying the axe. FERN shields WILBUR. She sings.)

FERN.

**PAPA DON'T KILL HIM, IT'S SO UNFAIR!
'SPOSIN' THAT I'D BEEN REAL SMALL AT
BIRTH,
WHAT WOULD YOU DO THEN?
WOULD YOU HAVE KILLED ME?**

JOHN *(speaking)*. Certainly not. But a little girl is one thing, a runty pig's another.

FERN. I see no difference. This is the most terrible case of injustice I've ever seen. *(WILBUR nods vigorously.)*

MARTHA. Fern! *(Hopelessly to JOHN.)* John! *(FERN and WILBUR fold their hands pleadingly.)*

JOHN *(after a pause)*. Oh...all right. I'll let you take care of it for a little while. *(WILBUR collapses in relief.)*

FERN *(hugging JOHN)*. Thank you, Papa.

MARTHA. You can start him on a bottle, like a baby. I'll go look for one. *(She exits.)*

FERN. What a cute little pig. *(She hugs WILBUR.)*

EVERY. You call that miserable thing a pig? *(WILBUR is offended.)* He's nothing but a runt. *(WILBUR unsuccessfully attempts a "he-man" pose. EVERY laughs.)*

JOHN. Come and eat your breakfast, Avery.

FERN. I'm going to have such a good time with this little pig.

AVERY. Can I have a pig, too, Pop?

JOHN. No. I only distribute pigs to those who are trying to rid the world of injustice. Let's eat.

(He and AVERY exit as MARTHA sticks her head out of the house.)

MARTHA. Fern, honey, I found a baby bottle. I'll pour some warm milk in it. Bring your pig in and give him some breakfast. Say, what's his name, anyway?

FERN. Why, I don't know.

MARTHA. Hurry in now and eat your breakfast. *(She exits.)*

(Music #1B. "WILBUR")

FERN *(singing)*.

**GOT TO GET THE RIGHT NAME FOR HIM.
THE NAME YOU GET GOES WITH YOU ALL
OF YOUR LIFE.**

(Speaking.)

Let's see...

(Singing.)

FRANK? NO, THAT'S A BANKER.

HARRY? HARRY IS A GROCER.

PHILLIP? THAT'S A LAWYER.

BARRY? A COMPOSER.

**GOT TO FIND A NAME, NOT TOO SMALL OR
BIG...**

(Speaking.)

Mike?... No... Christopher? Joe?

(Singing.)

**GOT TO FIND A NAME, PERFECT FOR MY
FIG...**

(Speaking rapidly.)

Willy? No. Willard, Howard, Filbert? Wilbert?

(WILBUR signals that she should shorten the name.)

Wilbur?

(He nods vigorously. FERN sings.)

WILBUR! WILBUR!

**WILBUR, AS LONG AS I'M WHERE I AM
WILBUR, YOU NEVER WILL BE A HAM.
FIN'LLY SOMEBODY TO BABY, IT'S SO NICE,
SEE THAT CURL TAIL, PINK EYES, WORDS
FAIL.**

**WILBUR, I'VE GOT GREAT FOLKS AND TRUE
FRIENDS,
BUT THEY DON'T HAVE A CLUE,
I NEED SOMEONE TO HOLD,
I NEED SOMEONE TO SCOLD,
I NEED A WILBUR LIKE YOU!**

(They dance.)

**FIN'LLY SOMEBODY TO BABY, IT'S SO NICE,
SEE THAT CURL TAIL, PINK EYES, WORDS
FAIL.**

**WILBUR, I'VE GOT GREAT FOLKS AND TRUE
FRIENDS,
BUT THEY DON'T HAVE A CLUE,
I NEED SOMEONE TO HOLD,
I NEED SOMEONE TO SCOLD,
I NEED A WILBUR LIKE YOU!**

(NOTE: Music #2. "EATING" may be used at this point, if desired—see production notes.)

(JOHN enters carrying a slop bucket. MARTHA follows him, holding a baby bottle.)

JOHN. Here you go, pig. Time for a nice bucket of slops.

MARTHA. John, I think we should start him on a baby bottle. (She hands the bottle to WILBUR who sucks on it.)

JOHN. These slops will fatten him up a whole lot quicker. (He sets the bucket in front of WILBUR who delightfully tosses the bottle in the air, with JOHN catching it, and begins to eat from the slop bucket.) And the bigger he gets, the sooner he can be sold. (Alarmed, WILBUR tosses the bucket into the air. JOHN catches it.)

FERN (upset). No, Papa, you can't sell him. You just can't!

JOHN. Fern, honey, that's how we make a living—by selling pigs. (FERN embraces WILBUR.)

FERN. Oh, Wilbur. Wilbur!

MARTHA (after a pause). Listen, everybody. I have a suggestion. Why don't we call the Zuckermans? Your Uncle Homer sometimes raises a pig. And if Wilbur goes there to live, you can walk down the road and visit him anytime you like.

FERN. Oh, yes. Please, Papa.

JOHN (after a pause). That's not a bad idea, Martha. Come along. We'll call Uncle Homer. (FERN and WILBUR embrace in great relief, then shake hands.)

FERN. Can Wilbur come, too?

JOHN. Why not? Maybe we'll let him make the call himself. (He and MARTHA laugh as they start to exit.)

FERN. It's not funny. He *can* talk, you know.

MARTHA. Oh, Fern. What an imagination! (*ALL exit.*)

(Music #2A. INCIDENTAL: "GOING TO THE
ZUCKERMANS")

(*The scene changes to the Zuckerman barn which contains a large spider web. A moment later, HOMER ZUCKERMAN enters with his wife, EDITH, and LURVY, a hired hand. HOMER carries a pig trough, LURVY holds an armload of straw and EDITH has a broom.*)

EDITH. Homer Zuckerman, I want to know where you plan to keep that pig.

HOMER (*setting the trough down*). Right over here in the barn, Edith. Lurvy, go out there and patch up that piece of fence that's coming down.

LURVY (*setting the straw down*). Sure thing, Mr. Zuckerman. (*He exits.*)

HOMER (*calling to LURVY*). And slide that door back so the pig can't get in there where the cows are.

LURVY (*offstage*). Sure thing, Mr. Zuckerman.

EDITH. Well, I just hope this pig's not going to be more trouble than it's worth.

HOMER. Now, I couldn't turn down Fern, could I? She seemed so desperate. (*LURVY is heard hammering offstage.*) Anyway, she only asked six dollars for it. When the pig gets big enough to kill and eat, he'll be worth a lot more than six dollars.

EDITH (*cleaning up*). Ugh. Dirt, spider webs...

HOMER. Perfect for a pig.

FERN (*offstage*). Uncle Homer! Aunt Edith!

EDITH. Here they are.

(FERN enters with WILBUR.)

FERN. Hi. This is Wilbur.

HOMER *(laughing)*. Oh, he has a name, does he?

(LURVY enters.)

LURVY. All finished, Mr. Zuckerman. *(He spots WILBUR.)* Well, here's our new boarder.

EDITH. Fern, honey, I just opened a big can of peaches. You come in and have a dish with us.

FERN. Okay, thanks. But let me stay with Wilbur just for a minute...till he gets used to his surroundings. *(EDITH, HOMER and LURVY exit. For a moment FERN and WILBUR look about.)* It's very nice here, Wilbur. *(WILBUR smiles.)* And I can come down and visit you almost every day. *(WILBUR nods.)* Now I'd better go. I'll see you tomorrow. *(They wave to each other as FERN exits.)*

WILBUR *(after a moment, looking about)*. It's a very large barn. And old, I'll bet. I like the smell. Hay and manure. Horses and cows. It has a peaceful smell...as though nothing bad could happen ever again in the world. *(A brief pause.)* Fern was right. It is very nice here. *(He yawns, lies down and closes his eyes.)*

(A moment later, a GOOSE enters, followed by a GANDER. They circle WILBUR, studying him carefully.)

GOOSE. Hello, hello, hello.

WILBUR *(a bit startled)*. Who...who are you?

GOOSE. The Goose.

WILBUR. Oh. Hi, Goose.

GOOSE. And this is my friend, the Gander, Gander, Gander.

WILBUR. But I only see one Gander. You introduced me to three.

GOOSE. No, no, no.

GANDER. We tend to repeat, repeat, repeat ourselves.

GOOSE. Do you have a name...besides "pig"?

WILBUR. Yes. They call me Wilbur.

TEMPLETON (*offstage*). Wilbur? That's a pretty tacky name, if you ask me.

GOOSE. Well, nobody, nobody, nobody asked you.

WILBUR. Who was that?

GANDER. Templeton, the rat.

(TEMPLETON, a rat, enters. He carries string, a tin can and an orange.)

TEMPLETON. In person. (*He stares at WILBUR.*) Well, I will admit it's nice to have a pig around the place again. I haven't had delicious, leftover slops in an age.

WILBUR. But the slops will be for me.

TEMPLETON. I'm sure you'll find it in your charitable little heart to share your food with dear old Templeton. Especially if I make a nest right here beside your trough. (*He arranges the straw at one side of the trough and buries the string, can and orange.*)

SHEEP (*offstage*). What's all the commotion in here?

GANDER. It's the old, old Sheep.

GOOSE. And the little, little Lamb.

(The SHEEP and LAMB enter.)

GANDER. We have a new resident.

GOOSE. His name is Wil-Wil-Wilbur.

LAMB (*not enthused*). Oh, yeah. The pig.

SHEEP. Lamb, mind your manners.

LAMB (*not meaning it*). Nice...to...meet...you... Wilbur.

GOOSE (*quickly*). Our sentiments exactly-actly-actly.

(Music #3. "NICE TO MEET YOU")

GOOSE (*singing*).

NICE TO MEET YOU,

GANDER.

NICE TO MEET YOU,

TEMPLETON.

PUT 'ER THERE, PAL.

YOU'RE FROM WHERE, PAL?

LAMB.

HAD YOUR DINNER? GEE, HE'S QUIET.

COULD BE THINNER; HE SHOULD DIET.

SHEEP.

WELL, HELLO, YOU. I'M A SHEEP, DEAR.

GLAD TO KNOW YOU. YOU CAN SLEEP HERE.

GOOSE.

THOUGH A STRANGER, WE RESPECT YOU.

GANDER.

IF THERE'S DANGER, WE'LL PROTECT YOU.

LAMB.

NICE TO MEET YOU, WE'LL TALK LATER.

GOOSE.

WELCOME TO THE-THE-THE-THE ZUCKER-
MAN BARN!

ALL (*except WILBUR*).

WELCOME TO THE ZUCKERMAN BARN!
WELCOME TO THE ZUCKERMAN BARN!
WELCOME TO THE ZUCKERMAN BARN!
WELCOME TO THE ZUCKERMAN BARN!
WELCOME TO THE ZUCKERMAN BARN!
WELCOME TO THE ZUCKERMAN BARN!

GANDER (*aside*).

HE SEEMS NICE, BUT LOOKS CAN FOOL YA.
I KNOW PIGS, AND THEY'RE PECULIAR.

LAMB (*aside*).

HE'LL BE SAD AND QUITE FORSAKEN,
WHEN HE LEARNS HE'LL SOON BE BACON.

TEMPLETON.

ME, I KNOW WHERE THINGS ARE AT, KID.
IT'S MY NATURE; I'M A RAT KID.
CAUSE OF THAT, I'M YOUR CONNECTION,
IT'S TO ME YOU PAY PROTECTION.

SHEEP (*to WILBUR*).

HE'S OKAY, SON — JUST HIS WAY, SON.

GOOSE.

**WELCOME TO THE-THE-THE-THE ZUCKER-
MAN BARN!**

ALL (*except WILBUR*).

**WELCOME TO THE ZUCKERMAN BARN!
WELCOME TO THE ZUCKERMAN BARN!
WELCOME TO THE ZUCKERMAN BARN!
WELCOME TO THE ZUCKERMAN BARN!
WELCOME TO THE ZUCKERMAN BARN!
WELCOME TO THE ZUCKERMAN BARN!**

(NOTE: A third verse and chorus may be added, if desired—see production notes.)

WILBUR (*speaking*). Thank you all very much. Now that I know who you are, let me tell you a little about myself.

LAMB. We know all about you.

WILBUR (*pleased*). You do?

SHEEP. We overheard the Zuckermans discussing you. They plan to keep you nice and comfortable.

LAMB. And fatten you up with delicious slops.

WILBUR (*delighted*). Oh, I *am* going to like it here.

SHEEP. But you know why they want to make you fat and tender, don't you?

GOOSE. Now, now, now, old Sheep. He'll learn soon enough.

WILBUR. Learn what?

SHEEP (*after a pause*). Oh, nothing. Nothing at all. Come along, Lamb.

GOOSE. Well, I have eggs to hatch.

TEMPLETON. And I have trash piles to raid.