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*Dramatic Publishing*

# **CHARLIE AND THE GREAT GLASS ELEVATOR**

**ROALD DAHL'S**  
**Fantasy Adventure**  
**for Children**

**Dramatized by**  
**RICHARD R. GEORGE**



**THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY**

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(CHARLIE AND THE GREAT GLASS ELEVATOR)

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## INTRODUCTION

That clever American school teacher, Richard George, who made *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* into a play, has now done the same thing with *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator*. This is a more simplified version of the original than the first one was, and for that reason I think it will be even easier to stage. School plays are hard enough to put on at the best of times, and the over-worked teachers who have to produce and direct them will certainly appreciate this simplicity.

ROALD DAHL

control panel. GRANDPA JOE and MR. and MRS. BUCKET stand near the bed. GRANDMA JOSEPHINE, GRANDMA GEORGINA and GRANDPA GEORGE are in bed.)

NARRATOR. Since the Great Glass Elevator is presently in mid-air, I cannot myself travel right up next to them, but I will introduce them to you from here. The three very old people in the bed are Grandma Josephine, Grandma Georgina, and Grandpa George. As you remember, Grandpa Joe had gotten out of bed to go around the Chocolate Factory with Charlie, so he is standing next to Charlie's other grandparents. The other two standing next to Grandpa Joe are Mr. and Mrs. Bucket, otherwise known as Charlie's parents. Now Mr. Wonka is very easy to point out because he is the super-incredible, wonderfully handsome elderly gentleman known as the world's most famous chocolate-maker extraordinary, standing next to the control panel. And last of all, but certainly not least, is our hero . . . Charlie Bucket. He is a delightful boy. He's the one standing next to Mr. Wonka by the control panel. Mr. Wonka truly loves this boy. Why, he'd have to if he is giving him his entire Chocolate Factory! Yes, Charlie is just like a son to Mr. Wonka. (He looks wistfully off to the side.) Yes . . . well . . . uh . . . I think it's time we got back to our story. The Great Glass Elevator is presently a thousand feet up and cruising nicely. The sky is a brilliant blue. Everybody on board is wildly excited at the thought of going to live in the famous Chocolate Factory. Grandpa Joe is singing. Charlie . . . well . . . he is simply jumping up and down. And look at Mr. and Mrs. Bucket. They're smiling for the first time in years, and the three old ones in the bed are grinning at one another with their pink toothless gums. You know, perhaps if we are quiet . . . I mean very quiet . . . maybe we can hear what is happening on the Great Glass Elevator right now. Shh . . . Yes . . . I can hear

them now. (The NARRATOR exits. ALL come to life.)  
GRANDMA JOSEPHINE. What in the world keeps this thing up in the air?

MR. WONKA. Skyhooks.

GRANDMA JOSEPHINE. You amaze me!

MR. WONKA. Dear lady, you are new to the scene. When you have been with us a little longer, nothing will amaze you.

GRANDMA JOSEPHINE. These skyhooks . . . I assume one end is hooked onto this contraption we're riding in. Right?

MR. WONKA (matter-of-factly). Right.

GRANDMA JOSEPHINE. What's the other end hooked onto?

MR. WONKA (ignoring the question). Every day I get deafer and deafer. Remind me, please, to call up my doctor the moment we get back.

GRANDMA JOSEPHINE. Charlie, I don't think I trust this gentleman very much.

GRANDMA GEORGINA. Nor do I. He dances around.

CHARLIE (leaning over and whispering to the two OLD WOMEN). Please, don't spoil everything. Mr. Wonka is a fantastic man. He's my friend. I love him.

GRANDPA JOE (whispering). Charlie's right. Now you be quiet, Josie, and don't make trouble.

MR. WONKA (exitedly). We must hurry! We have so much time and so little to do! No! Wait! Strike that! Reverse it! Thank you! Now back to the factory! (He claps his hands once and springs two feet in the air with both feet.) Back we fly to the factory! But we must go *up* before we can come down! We must go *higher* and *higher*!

GRANDMA JOSEPHINE. What did I tell you! The man's cracked!

GRANDPA JOE. Be quiet, Josie. Mr. Wonka knows exactly what he's doing.

GRANDMA GEORGINA. He's cracked as a crab!

MR. WONKA (yelling). We must go higher! We must go tremendously high! Hold onto your stomachs! (He presses a brown button. The elevator shakes and makes a whooshing noise as if accelerating. ALL clutch one another and the rushing, whooshing sound of the wind outside grows louder and louder.)

GRANDMA JOSEPHINE (yelling). Stop! Joe, you make him stop! I want to get off!

GRANDMA GEORGINA (yelling). Save us!

GRANDPA GEORGE (yelling). Go down!

MR. WONKA (yelling). No, no! We've got to go up!

ALL (except MR. WONKA, shouting). Why up and not down?

MR. WONKA (shouting). Because the higher we are when we start coming down, the faster we'll be going when we hit. We've got to be going at an absolutely sizzling speed when we hit!

ALL (except MR. WONKA). When we hit *what*?

MR. WONKA. The factory, of course!

GRANDMA JOSEPHINE. We'll all be pulpified!

GRANDMA GEORGINA. We'll be scrambled like eggs!

MR. WONKA. That is a chance we shall have to take.

GRANDMA JOSEPHINE. You're joking! Tell us you're joking!

MR. WONKA. Madam, I never joke.

GRANDMA GEORGINA. Oh, my dears! We'll all be lixivated, every one of us!

MR. WONKA. More than likely. (GRANDMA JOSEPHINE screams and disappears under the bedclothes. GRANDMA GEORGINA clutches GRANDPA GEORGE so tight that he looks as if he is changing shape. MR. and MRS. BUCKET stand hugging each other, speechless with fright. Only CHARLIE and GRANDPA JOE keep moderately cool.)

CHARLIE (beginning to act just a little unsure of things). Mr.

Wonka! (He yells above the noise.) What I don't understand is why we've got to come down at such a terrific speed!

MR. WONKA. My dear boy, if we don't come down at a terrific speed, we'll never burst our way back through the roof of the factory. It's not easy to punch a hole in a roof as strong as that.

CHARLIE. But there's a hole in it already. (He continues to yell.) We made it when we came out!

MR. WONKA. Then we shall make another! Two holes are better than one. Any mouse will tell you that.

(The NARRATOR enters in front of the curtain off to the side. Spotlight. The CHARACTERS go to a frozen-action position.)

NARRATOR. Higher and higher rushed the Great Glass Elevator until soon they could see the countries and oceans of the earth spread out below them like a map. It was all very beautiful, but when you are standing on a glass floor looking down, it gives you a nasty feeling. You know, I believe even Charlie is beginning to feel frightened now. Look at the look on his face and notice how tightly he is gripping Grandpa Joe's hand. (The NARRATOR goes into a frozen-action position. Spotlight off. CHARACTERS resume action.)

CHARLIE. I'm scared, Grandpa.

GRANDPA JOE (putting an arm around Charlie's shoulders and holding him close). So am I, Charlie . . . so am I.

CHARLIE (shouting). Mr. Wonka, don't you think this is about high enough?

MR. WONKA. Very nearly, but not quite. Don't talk to me now, please. Don't disturb me. I must watch things very carefully at this stage. Split-second timing, my boy, that's what it's got to be. You see this green button. I must press it at exactly



the right instant. If I'm just half a second late, then we'll go . . . too high!

GRANDPA JOE. What happens if we go too high?

MR. WONKA. Do please stop talking and let me concentrate!  
(The NARRATOR comes out of the frozen-action position. Spotlight on.)

NARRATOR. Now at this precise moment, Grandma Josephine, you might observe, is poking her head out from under the sheets, peering over the edge of the bed, and looking through the glass floor. As you could well imagine, the sight that she beholds is a frightening one. She sees the entire continent of North America nearly two hundred miles below and looking no bigger than a piece of candy. I'm afraid that this is just too much for the old gal to handle. She's very unpredictable! I fear that she just might . . . (Spotlight off the NARRATOR.)

GRANDMA JOSEPHINE (interrupting with a scream). Someone's got to stop this maniac! (She reaches out and grabs MR. WONKA by the coattails and yanks him backwards onto the bed.)

MR. WONKA. No, no! Let me go! (Frantically, struggling to free himself.) I have things to see to! Don't disturb the pilot!

GRANDMA JOSEPHINE (shrieking and shaking MR. WONKA wildly). You madman! You get us back home this instant!

MR. WONKA (with a demanding plea). Let me go! I've got to press that button or we'll go too high! Let me go! Let me go! (Finally, in frustration, he signals frantically to CHARLIE.) Charlie! (He shouts.) Press the button! The green one! Quick! Quick! Quick! (CHARLIE leaps across the Elevator and bangs his thumb down on the green button. As he does so, the sound of the Elevator totally stops and there is an eerie silence.) Too late! Oh, my goodness me, we're cooked! (As MR. WONKA says this, the bed is tilted up in the air at one end by means of a rope or wire. ALL behave in a bouncy, floating

fashion.) Now look what you've done! (As all action moves very slowly, it would be quite effective if a strobe light were used during any and all "weightless" times.)

GRANDMA JOSEPHINE. What happened?

CHARLIE. Did we go too far?

MR. WONKA. Too far? I'll say we went too far! You know where we've gone, my friends? We've gone into *orbit*! (ALL look too flabbergasted to speak.) We are now rushing around the earth at seventeen thousand miles an hour. How does that grab you?

GRANDMA GEORGINA. I'm choking! (She gasps.) I can't breathe!

MR. WONKA. Of course you can't! There's no air up here. (He sort of swims across the Elevator to a button marked "OXY-GEN" and presses it.) You'll be all right now . . . breathe away.

CHARLIE. This is the queerest feeling. (He swims about.) I feel like a bubble.

GRANDPA JOE. It's great! It feels as though I don't weigh anything at all.

MR. WONKA. You don't! None of us weighs anything . . . not even one ounce.

GRANDMA GEORGINA. What piffle! I weigh eighty-seven pounds exactly.

MR. WONKA. Not now you don't. You are completely weightless.

GRANDPA JOE. We've got you out of bed as last!

GRANDMA JOSEPHINE. Shut up and help us back! (GRANDPA GEORGE, GRANDMA GEORGINA and GRANDMA JOSEPHINE are trying frantically to get back into bed.)

MR. WONKA. Forget it! You'll never stay down. Just keep floating around and be happy.

GRANDMA GEORGINA. The man's a madman! Watch out, I say, or he'll lixivate the lot of us! (Curtain.)

## SCENE TWO

The NARRATOR enters in front of the curtain, off to the side as usual. Spotlight.

NARRATOR. While the Great Glass Elevator and everybody inside is sort of . . . uh . . . should I say . . . “up in the air,” there are other fantastic things happening. Why, did you know that just two days ago the United States of America successfully launched its first *Space Hotel*? That's right! It's kind of a gigantic sausage-shaped capsule no less than one thousand feet long. It's called Space Hotel U.S.A. and it's a marvel of the space age. (He holds up a newspaper and reads from it.) It's in *all* the papers. It says here that it's got inside it a tennis court, a swimming pool, a gymnasium, a children's playroom and five hundred luxury bedrooms, each with a private bath. It says it's fully air-conditioned. My goodness . . . it's even equipped with a gravity-making machine so that you don't even float about inside it. You can walk normally. It says here at the bottom that the Space Hotel U.S.A. is right now speeding around and around the earth at a height of two hundred and forty miles. Guests are supposed to be taken up and down by a taxi service of commuter capsules blasting off from Cape Kennedy every hour on the hour, Monday to Friday. But as yet there's nobody on board at all, not even an astronaut. (He puts the newspaper down.) I guess the reason for this is that no one really believed such an enormous thing would ever get off the

ground without blowing up. Well, it just goes to show you . . . things are not always as they seem. The launching has been a great success and now that the Space Hotel is safely in orbit, there's a tremendous hustle and bustle to send up the first guests. (He looks around and acts secretively.) Now don't tell anybody, but I even heard a rumor that the President of the United States himself is going to be among the first to stay in the Hotel. Oh well . . . who knows . . . but now listen . . . you can't send guests to a hotel unless there are lots of people there to look after them, and that explains why there is yet *another* interesting object orbiting the earth at this moment. That's right, I said another! Yes, it's a large commuter capsule containing the entire staff for Space Hotel U.S.A. I guess it's got managers, assistant managers, desk clerks, waitresses, bell-hops, chambermaids, pastry chefs and hall porters. You'll never believe it but the capsule itself is manned by those phenomenally famous astronauts, Shuckworth, Shanks and Showler, all of whom are incredibly handsome, clever and brave! Why . . . there they come now . . . duck your heads everybody!

(The scene now shifts to the opposite side of the stage where action takes place with the three astronauts, SHUCKWORTH, SHOWLER and SHANKS. The NARRATOR exits.)

SHUCKWORTH. Attention all passengers, friends, relatives and countrymen . . . this is your captain speaking! In exactly one hour, that's right, you heard it, in exactly one hour . . . we shall link up with the Space Hotel U.S.A., your happy home for the next ten years. (Aside.) Did I say ten years? And any moment now, if you look straight ahead, you could catch your first glimpse of this magnificent spaceship. Ah-ha! I see something there! (He looks forward with a hand over his eyes as in a

salute.) That must be it, folks! There's definitely something up there ahead of us!

SHOWLER. Hey, that isn't our Space Hotel.

SHANKS. Holy rats! What in the name of Nebuchadnezzar is it?

SHUCKWORTH. Quick! Give me the telescope! (He looks through the telescope, holding it with one hand and grabbing a hand microphone with the other.) Hello, Houston! There's something crazy going on up here. There's a thing orbiting ahead of us and it's not like any spaceship I've ever seen, that's for sure!

(Ground Control can now be spotlight in front of the stage but off to the same side as the Commuter Capsule. Another spotlight on the ASTRONAUTS.)

GROUND CONTROL. Describe it at once!

SHUCKWORTH. It's . . . it's . . . it's all made of glass and it's kind of square and it's got lots of people inside it! They're all floating about like fish in a tank!

GROUND CONTROL. How many astronauts on board?

SHUCKWORTH. They can't possibly be astronauts.

GROUND CONTROL. What makes you say that?

SHUCKWORTH. Because at least three of them are in night-shirts!

GROUND CONTROL. Don't be a fool, Shuckworth! Pull yourself together, man! This is serious!

SHUCKWORTH. I swear it! There's three of them in nightshirts! Two old women and one old man! I can see them clearly. I can even see their faces! Jeepers, they're older than Moses! They're about ninety years old! (He passes the telescope to the OTHERS.)

GROUND CONTROL (shouting). You've gone mad, Shuckworth! You're fired! Give me Shanks!

## *PRODUCTION NOTES*

Whenever the Narrator speaks, frozen-action positions can be effectively used.

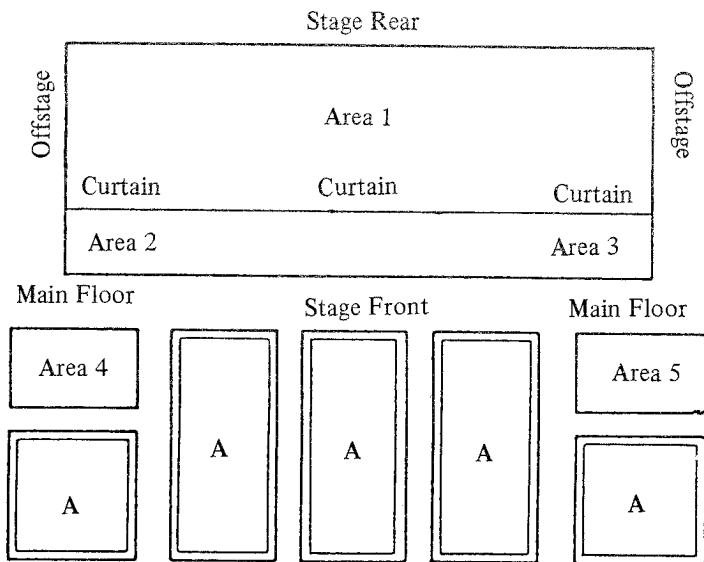
All houselights in the auditorium should be out for the duration of the play.

The Narrator can be dressed creatively for this play. A space suit or even the appearance of an "observer" from another world could be the costuming focus. The Narrator should have a separate spotlight at all times. A filmstrip projector is acceptable.

The Foreign Premier staging area could be used exclusively for Ground Control. This would free Area Four (see next page) for Presidential Study use only. The Foreign Premier phone conversations would then only be heard over the sound system. This would provide more balance in the use of each staging area.

The loudspeaker should be a sound system in the auditorium with a microphone stand and microphone backstage on the Narrator's side. During loudspeaker sequences, all lines can be read backstage, reducing the need for memorization. During narrations, the microphone should be disengaged from the stand so that the Narrator has the freedom to move about without restriction and perform like an M.C., thus utilizing his/her personality to the fullest.

## STAGING CONCEPT



### KEY

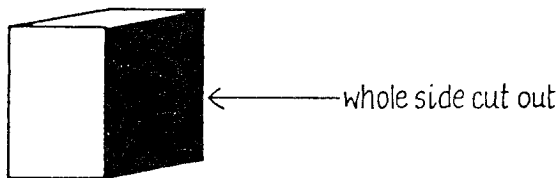
<i>Area 1</i>	<i>Glass Elevator, Hotel Lobby or Chocolate Room</i>
<i>Area 2</i>	<i>Astronauts and Commuter Capsule Front</i>
<i>Area 3</i>	<i>Narrator</i>
<i>Area 4</i>	<i>Ground Control or President's Study</i>
<i>Area 5</i>	<i>Foreign Premiers</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>Audience</i>

The use of spotlights, strobe lights, stage lights and a sound system will enable the audience to become a part of the production, as this approach makes the whole auditorium a stage and eliminates many cumbersome scene changes, creating a fast-moving experience in sight and sound.

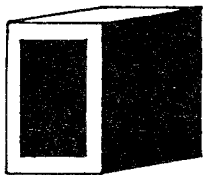
## SCENERY AND PROPERTIES

### *The Great Glass Elevator*

In order to fit everyone inside, you should probably use two large refrigerator boxes. Cut out one whole side of each box.

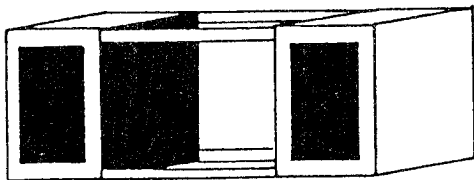


Cut a doorway out of a second side of each box.



Put totally open sides together with both doorways facing out. Connect the two boxes with strong cardboard or wood pieces to make the Elevator big enough for a bed. Attach these to large boxes with wire or nails.





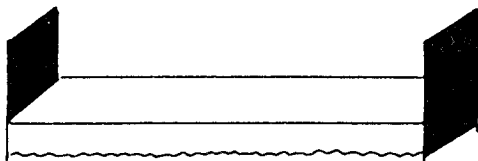
Paint and add glitter, colored transparent paper, a handle for the steel rope, buttons, etc. The Elevator can be moved about on-stage if it is put on a moving platform or pushed. It can also be effective just to have someone behind it, shaking it gently. Lights, particularly strobe-type, flashing at this time will also give added effect.

### *The Grandparents' Bed*

Take four chairs and place them facing each other, two by two. Slightly separate the chairs as shown.



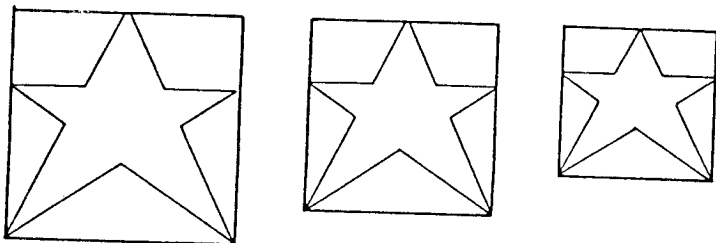
Lay a board across the seats of all four chairs and cover the whole thing with a sheet or blankets.



All four Grandparents will now be able to sit up in the crowded bed, facing each other. If one leg of the bed is to be lifted up to show weightlessness, the chairs will have to be fastened together securely.

### *Solar System Stars*

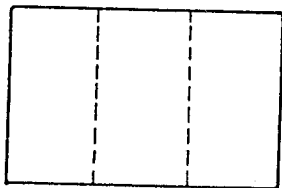
Cut out many cardboard squares of various sizes.  
Paint the stars in the squares and cut them out.



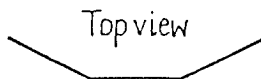
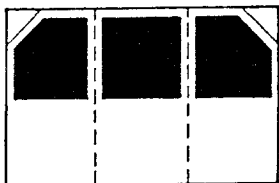
These stars can now be used in outer space scenes, either behind the Commuter Capsule cockpit or behind the Great Glass Elevator. They can easily be hung on curtains or taped to other objects.

### *Commuter Capsule Astronaut Cockpit*

Cut out a large cardboard rectangle. Divide the cardboard into equal thirds, lengthwise, so that it will stand by itself and also allow room for the three Astronauts to sit.



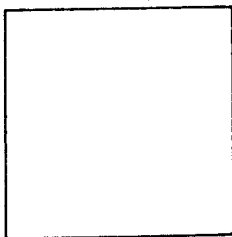
Round the two top corners and cut out the windows as shown below. Paint the steel grey and paint on any desired markings.



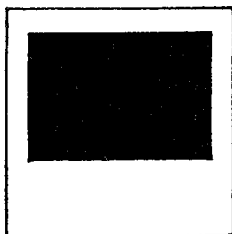
The middle portion should be forward of the two side portions, which should be bent back.

### *The Television Screen*

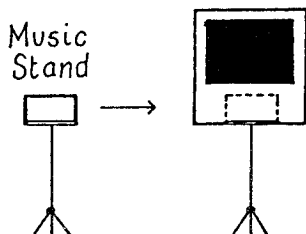
Cut out a piece of cardboard that is square.



Cut out the middle as shown below, leaving an uncut area at least a foot deep at the bottom.



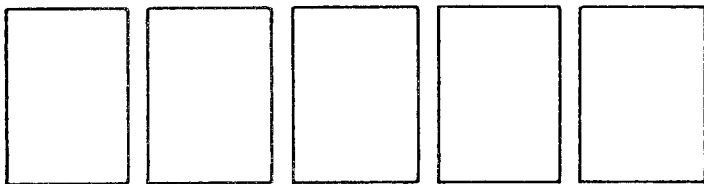
Paint the screen with a control panel at the bottom. Mount it on a music stand so that the control panel covers the back of the stand. Attach with wire.



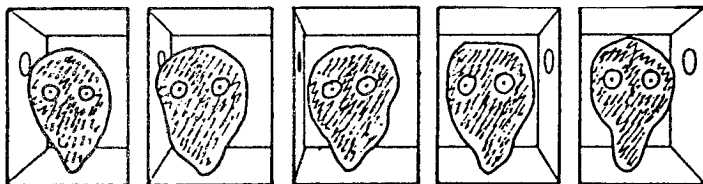
The screen can be used in the Presidential Study or Ground Control. If the Study and Ground Control are going to be in two different places, you may want to make a second screen.

### *Vermicious Knids*

Cut out five large cardboard rectangles.



In the middle of each piece of cardboard, paint a picture of a Vermicious Knid. Paint the rest of the piece to look like an elevator.



Spotlight Two – on the Astronauts. Off after Showler says:  
“This is scary!”

Footlights and Stage Uppers – both fully red and fully blue.

*SCENE THREE:*

Spotlight Three – on the Great Glass Elevator.

Footlights and Stage Uppers – both fully red and fully blue.

Strobe – on.

*Lighting Change*

Spotlight Two – on the Astronauts.

Spotlight Three – off.

Footlights and Stage Uppers – dimmed.

*Lighting Change*

Spotlight Two – off after the President yells: “Silence!  
You’re muddling me up.”

Spotlight Three – on the Great Glass Elevator.

Footlights and Stage Uppers – both fully red and fully blue.

*SCENE FOUR:*

All Lights – off.

Spotlight One – on the Narrator. Off the Narrator when we see  
the President for the first time.

Spotlight Three – on the President.

Spotlight Two – on Premier Yugetoff. Off after he says: “In  
fact, he reminds me very much of my friend the Prime Minister  
of China.” On again after the President says: “Hello, hello,  
hello!” Off after the President says: “So chew on that, Chu-  
On-Dat!”

*Lighting Change*

Spotlight Two – on the Astronauts after the Chief Financial

Adviser says: "I've balanced the budget!" Off after the President says: "There's no point in getting your boys blown up as well."

Spotlight Three – off at the same time as Spotlight Two.

Spotlight One – on the Narrator. Off the Narrator as the curtain opens to the lobby of the Space Hotel.

Footlights – red, white and blue.

Stage Uppers – red, white and blue.

### *Lighting Change*

Footlights and Stage Uppers – all lights dimmed after Mr. Wonka says: "Anapolala zoonk-zoonk-zoonk!"

Spotlight Three – on the President.

Footlights and Stage Uppers – all red, white and blue, fully on after Ground Control says: "The President of the United States will now address you!" Dim all these lights when Mr. Wonka says: "All the grobes are on the roam!" Bring the lights fully up when Miss Tibbs yells: "Silence! Now, go stand in the corner!"

Spotlight Three – out on the President after Grandma Josephine screams. On after Charlie says: "They're starting to change shape . . ."

Footlights and Stage Uppers – dim all lights when the President says: "What's going on up there?" Bring the lights fully up when Ground Control says: "It's awfully weird . . ."

Spotlight Three – off the President.

### *ACT TWO, SCENE ONE:*

All Lights – off.

Spotlight One – on the Narrator. Off after he or she says: "Let's go . . ." and the curtain opens.

Strobe – on.

Footlights – red and blue on.

Stage Uppers – red and blue on.

All Lights – dim and finally off as the curtain closes while Mr.

Wonka says: "Oh, they're terrible alright, but dreadfully boring and tiresome, very . . . very . . . very . . . boring . . ."

Spotlight Three – on the President.

Spotlight Two – on the Astronauts after the others say: "Tremendous!" to Miss Tibbs' song. Out after the President says: "It's all clear now . . . Thanks to me."

*SCENE TWO:*

Spotlight Three – off.

Strobe – on.

Footlights – red and blue on after first dim.

Stage Uppers – red and blue on after first dim.

All Lights – dim.

Spotlight Three – on the President after Charlie says: "There are a hundred and fifty people inside that thing!"

*Lighting Change*

All Lights – bring back up to red and blue fullness.

Spotlight Three – off on the President after he says: "Why don't you answer me?"

Spotlight One – on the Narrator after Mr. Wonka says: ". . . we'll try to hook on to it somewhere and get a firm hold!"

Off as Grandpa Joe says: "Starboard a bit, Charlie . . ."

Spotlight Two – on the Astronauts very briefly after Mr. Wonka responds: "Never!" to Grandma Georgina. This should only last for a few seconds. Off almost immediately.

Stage Uppers and House Lights – flashed on and off repeatedly but briefly as the Vermicious Knids become Shooting Knids.

Spotlight Two – on the Astronauts very briefly after Grandpa Joe calls out: "Rope gone!" This should only last for a few seconds. Off almost immediately.

All Lights – off after Mr. Wonka says: "We're going through the roof!"

*SCENE THREE:*

All Lights – off until the curtain opens.

Spotlight Two – on the Great Glass Elevator as the curtain opens.

Footlights – red and white on and brought up slowly to full capacity.

Stage Uppers – red and white on and brought up slowly to full capacity.

All Lights except for Spotlight Two – dim as Mr. Wonka reads.

Spotlight Two – on Mr. Wonka as he steps forward to read the letter from the President.

All Lights – brought back up abruptly as Grandpa Joe yells:  
“Yipppeeeeeee!”

Spotlight One, Spotlight Two and Spotlight Three – All move quickly back and forth across the audience as the eight characters pass joyously through the midst of the audience, converging on Charlie and Grandpa Joe as they speak at the end.

Spots – now dance across the room as all exit.