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Dramatic Publishing

A VERY SPECIAL MUSICAL

Based on the book by
DANIEL KEYES

Charlie and Algernon

Book and Lyrics
by
DAVID ROGERS

Music by
CHARLES STROUSE



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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DAVID ROGERS and CHARLES STROUSE

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FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON
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(CHARLIE AND ALGERNON)

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CHARLIE AND ALGERNON

A musical for 5 men, 4 women, 1 boy.

CHARACTERS

CHARLIE

ALICE KINNIAN

DR. STRAUSS

DR. NEMUR

MRS. DONNER

LITA

FRANK

CHARLIE'S MOTHER

LITTLE CHARLIE

CHARLIE'S FATHER

Time: The Present.

Place: Various places in Brooklyn and Manhattan, New York.

NOTES: The play is in two acts. (The original New York production was played without an intermission and can be so performed if you prefer.)

A full explanation of scenery and costumes can be found in the Production Notes at the back of this book.

“A show with a heart
about our minds,”
New York Times

“Good medicine for
what ails the world of musical
comedy . . . a small, snappy
and not entirely frivolous
entertainment.”
Washington Post

“A touching, theatrical fable,”
Washington Star

“As vital as the beat of
your own heart.”
London Daily Mail

Charlie and Algernon was presented in New York at the Helen Hayes Theatre by The Kennedy Center, Isobel Robins Konecky, Fisher Theatre Foundation and The Folger Theatre Group with the following cast:

Charlie.....	P. J. Benjamin
Alice Kinnian.....	Sandy Faison
Dr. Strauss.....	Edward Earle
Dr. Nemur.....	Robert Sevrá
Mrs. Donner.....	Nancy Franklin
Lita.....	Loida Santos
Frank.....	Patrick Jude
Charlie's Mother.....	Julienne Marie
Little Charlie.....	Matthew Duda
Charlie's Father.....	Michael Vita

Charlie and Algernon was presented under the title *Flowers for Algernon* at the Queen's Theatre, London, by Michael White in association with Isobel Robins Konecky with the following cast:

Charlie.....	Michael Crawford
Alice Kinnian.....	Cheryl Kennedy
Dr. Strauss.....	Aubrey Woods
Dr. Nemur.....	Ralph Nossek
Mrs. Donner.....	Betty Benfield
Gina.....	Sharon Lee Hill
Frank.....	George Harris
Charlie's Mother.....	Jeanna L'Esty
Charlie's Father.....	Richard Owens

MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT ONE

CHARLIE GORDON	Allice, Dr. Nemur, Lita, S. Alice
I GOT A FRIEND	Charlie
I GOT A FRIEND (Reprise)	Charlie, Alice
SOME BRIGHT MORNING	Dr. Nemur, Alice, Charlie, Dr. Strauss
JELLY DOUGHNUTS AND CHOCOLATE CAKE ..	Mrs. Donner, Lita, Frank
HEY, LOOK AT ME	Charlie, Alice
READING	Charlie, Alice
NO SURPRISES	Alice
MIDNIGHT RIDING	Frank, Lita
DREAM SAFE WITH ME	Charlie's Mother
NOT ANOTHER DAY LIKE THIS ..	Charlie's Mother and Father
SOMEBODY NEW	Mrs. Donner, Charlie

ACT TWO

NOW	Charlie, Alice
CHARLIE AND ALGERNON	Charlie
THE MAZE	Charlie
WHATEVER TIME THERE IS	Alice, Charlie
EVERYTHING WAS PERFECT	Dr. Strauss, Dr. Nemur
CHARLIE	Charlie
I REALLY LOVED YOU	Charlie
WHATEVER TIME THERE IS (Reprise)	Alice

PRODUCTION NOTES

SCENERY. The play is performed in drapes with furniture moved in to suggest various locales. These set pieces must be kept simple and easily-moved so as not to disturb the flow of the action. There should be as few blackouts as possible and no curtains between scenes. In the original Broadway production, this flow was effected by the use of three moving platforms; one right, one left and one upstage. There were also some backdrops that were flown in. While I shall describe these below, if they are impractical for your production, simplification and ingenuity can overcome the problems. I offer alternate suggestions but there are many ways that can be found to achieve an effective production. Furniture can be moved in some cases by the actors. Stagehands can be used in blackouts or, appropriately dressed, even in full view of the audience.

THE PLAYGROUND. This can be as simple as a park bench. As Alice and Charlie move downstage, the upstage area can be blacked out and this set removed and the office set brought in. In the original Broadway production, a swing with only one seat was used for the playground. It was mounted on the upstage platform. There was a wire fence which included a lamp post that was flown in behind it. For this change, the fence backing flew out, the swing platform was withdrawn and, as Alice read the letter, the two side platforms came in. The right platform bore a desk and chair, with Dr. Strauss seated on the edge of the desk. The left held two visitors' chairs, with Dr. Nemur in one of them. A large painting was flown in to dress the set and it flew out to reveal a screen for the Rorschach test which was projected on it. This screen is not necessary. Even with it, the actors played the scene looking out as though the screen were over the audience. Dr. Strauss had a switch with which he changed the pictures. *The mouse table and maze:* The table, waist-high, on wheels is pre-set in the wings D.L. It is pulled in by Dr. Nemur during the scene. *The mouse's maze* is a large rectangle of translucent material so the audience cannot see the mouse run the maze. The mouse, for this scene, was kept in a

square box with no lid which is made out of the same material as the maze so that he was not revealed until Dr. Nemur took him out. In later scenes, the mouse should be kept in a glass aquarium, visible to the audience, that is high enough so the mouse cannot get out. A cage is too difficult to get the mouse out rapidly enough. *Charlie's maze* can be done in several ways. The simplest would be a chest-high horizontal flat with masking on both sides with, perhaps, a maze design on the front. Charlie, on entering it, appears to be running a maze that the audience cannot actually see. More elaborately, this could be a real maze, waist-high. Either variation should be on wheels so it can be rolled in easily when needed. In the Broadway production, the maze hung above and was flown in. It was constructed of lucite bars and was roughly eight feet high, four feet deep, with a mirrored backing.

HOSPITAL SCENE. If Alice is caught in a tight spot for *I Got A Friend*, stagehands can remove the office set quickly and quietly. A hospital bed can be rolled in U.C. as following tape is played. If the bed has a backing wall attached to it, stagehands could easily roll it in from behind, hidden from the audience. In the Broadway production, the bed was on the center platform. The bed is removed in the same way during the scene.

BAKERY. The key prop in this scene is the mixing machine. This looks like a large, six foot version of an ordinary kitchen mixer with a bowl. A mockup can be made. If necessary, a large bowl can cover the blades and, when Charlie turns it on, a whirring sound effect can be used to suggest that it's really working. On Broadway, it worked on a battery. In either case, a red light should be somewhere prominent on it and should go on when Charlie turns the switch. If it is entirely too difficult to manage, Charlie could go offstage to work the mixing machine while the others watch. Beside the machine, there can be a work table or bakery display case. If Charlie is held in a tight spot during the end of *Some Bright Morning*, the set can be placed

during this music. In the Broadway production, the entire bakery worked on the upstage platform. A display case with cakes was left facing off L. and the mixing machine U.C. There was a backing wall that flew in. The wall was attached to the platform so it could hide stagehands moving the set in. After the bakery, the set must be removed as the actors finish *Jelly Doughnuts and Chocolate Cake*. When the song is over, the stage should be bare, allowing Charlie to run and meet the doctors who enter. When the maze is needed, it can be brought on as in the office scene and they can remove it as they leave. Charlie removes the mouse table during the action.

READING SCENE. All that is required is a table and two chairs facing each other. If Alice is held in a tight spot during her chorus of *Hey, Look At Me*, it can be brought in then. Again, a backing wall on a platform would hide the stagehands. Its removal should take place during the second chorus of *No Surprises*. On Broadway, the furniture worked on an upstage platform and a backing wall of blackboard and teaching aids flew in.

BAR SCENE. This can be as simple as a small bar pushed in upstage by a stagehand dressed as a barman. After pouring drinks needed in the scene, he can exit, returning to remove the bar later. If you want it simpler, stagehands dressed as waiters can bring in a table and three chairs. An extra table and chairs can be used to dress the set. They can be removed during Frank and Lita's dance tag after Charlie exits, leaving the stage clear for Little Charlie's entrance. On Broadway, a table set with three drinks and three chairs came in on the right platform. Another table and pair of chairs came in on the left. Hanging squares outlined in neon were flown in and lights with revolving or flickering jells were used to suggest a disco ambience.

PSYCHIATRIST SCENE. The two chairs from Dr. Strauss' office are brought in after *Dream, Safe With Me*. On Broadway, they came in on the left platform with Dr. Strauss on one. Alternately, he can enter downstage and, if the lights are tight,

stagehands can set the chairs upstage during the first part of his scene.

Act Two. NOW SCENE. On Broadway, this played on a bare stage with a suggestion of the skyline of lower Manhattan by night as a backdrop, as though the scene took place on the Brooklyn Heights Esplanade. If you wish to elaborate, a door to a brownstone could be placed at one side to suggest Alice's house. To establish exterior feeling, a record of street noises could be used at the opening and then blended out.

NEMUR'S OFFICE. A desk and chair are needed and the mouse in a glass container on the desk. They can be set during the blackout as tapes are run. On Broadway, they were on a left wagon with a bookcase behind them for backing. The set must be removed when the spotlight hits Charlie after the words "the way they make us two sound like a song and dance team." The *Charlie and Algernon* routine is done on a bare stage.

CONFERENCE. A podium which Dr. Nemur brings on with him at R. Also needed are the mouse's table and maze which Dr. Strauss brings on D.L. In the Broadway production, the flying maze came in to hover over Charlie's head as he sang *The Maze*.

PARK SCENE. Same as the first scene. It can be set in the blackout during the tape after *The Maze*. It can be removed during the blackout and tape after *Whatever Time There Is*.

COMPUTER ROOM. A suggestion of a computer will establish locale. It can be a machine or, preferably, a wall with flashing lights as a stagehand can be behind it and remove it when necessary. On Broadway, there were flats that flew in to represent the computer. The computer must be removed when Charlie begins his report, leaving the stage bare for montage.

PARK SCENE. This comes back in during Charlie's monologue after *Charlie*.

NOTE: The original New York production was played without an intermission and that is an option you may choose.

COSTUMES:

CHARLIE. Charlie has several changes of costume. All of them are very quick. As his clothes reflect his growing intelligence and, often, the passage of time, they must be made and must be carefully rehearsed. *Act One, Scene One.* Old windbreaker, plaid sport shirt, chino pants, cap, scarf, gloves, sneakers. These clothes must be worn but clean looking. The jacket and trousers should be a few sizes too large for the actor as this will emphasize his clumsiness and contrast with the smarter looking clothes he wears later. *Hospital Scene.* Pajamas, white or pastel but solid color. Bandage that covers his entire head so no hair is visible. Later, for *Progress Reports*, return to the first costume, minus the hat, scarf and gloves. Remove the head bandage and use a smaller bandage on his forehead. This works till after *Hey, Look At Me*. On his return entrance in that number, he should wear well-fitting slacks, a shirt and sweater, good-looking shoes, backpack book bag. *Bar Scene.* Loud, inexpensive looking new sports jacket, shirt, tie and slacks. *Act Two, Now Scene.* Different slacks and conservative, smarter sports jacket, shirt and tie. *Charlie and Algernon Scene.* Knit turtleneck or velour shirt, slacks or jeans. These must be in a dark color like black, navy, or maroon, so the mouse will be visible. Be sure to experiment with the mouse and this costume to make sure the mouse can work on it. The shirt must be a material that the mouse can get a foothold on. Rehearse the mouse wearing these clothes. *Conference Scene.* Extremely smart three-piece suit, white shirt, conservative tie. *Computer Room Scene.* Smart sports jacket, slacks, good looking long-sleeved sports shirt.

ALICE. Alice is a working woman whose clothes should be attractive but not expensive looking. Reflecting her character, they should be businesslike in the beginning. As her love for Charlie grows, they should become subtly more feminine.

Scene One. Skirt or slacks, blouse or sweater, jacket, coat, long scarf, large, practical handbag. *Hospital Scene.* This is a very quick change but should be as complete as possible to suggest time passage. Again, slacks or skirt, blouse or sweater, jacket. Same handbag. Coat and scarf not necessary. *Reading Scene.* Comparable but different clothes. These are clothes Alice wears to work, simple/and practical. *Act Two, Now Scene.* An attractive "date" dress, not too glamorous. Should have a full skirt for the dance. Small evening bag. *Park Scene.* Attractive summer dress, no handbag which would interfere with action. No change for montage. *Last Scene.* Another summer dress and large handbag. Can be the same handbag as for the first scene.

DR. STRAUSS. A stuffy, conservative man, his clothes should reflect that. *Act One, Scene One.* Lab coat over suit trousers, optional vest, shirt and tie. *Hospital Scene.* He removes his lab coat and adds a suit jacket. Before *Hey, Look At Me*, he wears another conservative suit. *Mother Scene.* Dark, conservative suit. It can be a repeat of the Nemur's Office Scene, a business-suit and tie. *Act 2., Conference.* For public appearance, best suit possible. *Computer Scene.* Lab coat over suit pants and shirt. *Montage* same as for computer.

DR. NEMUR. Younger and less stuffy than Strauss and his clothes reflect this. *Scene One.* Lab coat over slacks, shirt and tie. *Hospital Scene.* Remove lab coat, add sports jacket. Before *Hey, Look At Me*, a lab coat over shirt and slacks. *Nemur's Office.* Shirt, tie and slacks. *Conference.* Business suit or very conservative blazer and slacks, shirt, tie. *Computer Scene.* Lab coat retained for *Montage*.

MRS. DONNER. *Bakery Scene.* Dowdy, ill-fitting pastel colored smock, apron and pastel bulky cardigan sweater, run-down sensible shoes. *Clinic Scene.* Her best clothes, dark bulky coat, scarf, unfashionable hat, purse, low-heeled walking shoes. *Montage.* Bakery costume.

LITA. Bakery Scene. Attractive salesgirl smock in pastel color, the skirt short, her heels high. Crisp, small apron, perky cap in hair. *Bar Scene.* Very flashy dance date dress. *Montage.* Bakery costume.

FRANK. Bakery Scene. Baker's work costume in white or pastel, cotton pants and shirt/jacket. Stained apron. Cap. *Bar Scene.* Flashy shirt and slacks, necklaces.

MOTHER. Simple dress and cardigan sweater that suggest the fashion of twenty years ago.

FATHER. Slacks and shirt that suggest the fashion of twenty years ago.

LITTLE CHARLIE. Windbreaker over sports shirt, cap, chino pants, sneakers. Should suggest Charlie's first costume but a little neater, better fitting.

HOW I TRAINED ALGERNON

P. J. Benjamin



I've trained skunks, monkeys, racoons, opossums, ferrets - and more - but training a mouse was a *little* different. . .

Selecting Algernon: The most important step is choosing the right mouse. Algernon must be a white mouse with pink eyes; not only because the script says so but because such a mouse can be seen by everyone in the audience no matter how large the theatre. Although Algernon is referred to as *he* in the script, and female mice are smaller, I nevertheless used a female because a female mouse is less hyperactive and more easily trained. Besides, they are a lot cuter! Be sure your mouse is under 10 weeks old because, like people, mice have distinct personalities and you want to start training yours before such a personality is developed. Get your mouse from a bona-fide pet shop or laboratory in your area because it will be healthier. No bargains from a 5 and 10 cent store. In picking Algernon, I held a shiny object in one hand and a piece of cheese in the other. The mouse that seemed to be the most active and interested in the shiny object was the one I chose. That type of mouse would be more apt to perform out of curiosity than out of a desire for reward.

Living Arrangements: I found it very helpful to buy a book on mice. Aquariums are better than habitrains because they make it easier to get to your Algernon. Mice need a lot of exercise but I didn't put an exercise wheel into his cage until the second week because the first week I wanted him to concentrate on coming to my hand and not to the wheel. It's a good idea to have identical cages at home and at the theatre for Al.

Getting Acquainted: Get ready for a new roommate because, while in training, Algernon must live with you. This way you can keep him on a rigid training schedule. On the first day, feed Al dry mouse food from a pet shop but only feed him a little for the first twelve hours. Cheese will be used only as a reward. I used Brie cheese with Algernon; it was in his contract. After twelve hours (or when Al is a little hungry) put some cheese in your hand on the bottom of his cage for about fifteen minutes. Repeat this as often as possible. If he does not come to your hand after a few times, give him a small piece of cheese anyway just to show him what he's missed. Always - and I do mean always - treat Algernon with respect just as Charlie would do. When he does start to climb into your hand freely, the next step is to raise your hand a few inches and then put him back down. This will make him feel secure even though your hand is moving. Repeat this until you can lift him all the way out of the cage. Use your voice in a soothing manner whenever Al has done something good. My Algernon even learned to respond to his own name. Next, put your furry friend on a flat, secure surface. He will be a little afraid so, after a few seconds, let him come into your hand and then put him immediately back into his cage. After he does this several times, make it a little harder for him by keeping your hand an inch from his face and make him follow it for a few moments before you let him come into it. When he does come into your hand, put him immediately back into his cage. Your hand is now Algernon's security blanket when he is outside his cage. This association of your hand to his cage is the secret for training Al to do tricks.

Wardrobe: Before you train Algernon to run all over your body, it's important that you wear the right clothes. For rehearsal, you should wear a long sleeved sweater (a turtleneck is best) made out of a fabric that Al can climb on easily and not get his feet caught. The sweater should be tight fitting with no ridges, especially at the wrists. The pants that worked best for me were straight legged designer jeans with no creases. Shoes should be made of a soft fabric such as suede with a rounded front. The shoelaces should be replaced with flat elastic and no knots. *NOTE:* For

the actual performance, the same kind of clothing should be used but it should be dark, either black or dark blue. These colors will create a nice contrast to Algernon's white body.

Training: Running Down Your Arm. With an upturned palm, stretch your left arm out in front of you until your hand is parallel to your waist. Place Algernon on the muscle of your left arm. Using your right hand, make him follow it down your arm into your left hand. Then place him in his cage. Repeat this several times until Algernon runs down your arm without your having to lead him. It's very important that Algernon master one trick at a time so he won't become confused. I'd like to point out that, in the beginning, I kept cheese in my left hand but Al never really ate it so I didn't continue to use it. However, I did give him a tiny piece of cheese when I put him back into his cage every time he accomplished a trick.

Climbing Up to Your Shoulder. Place Algernon on your shoulder until he becomes comfortable up there. While standing erect, put him on your stomach. His natural tendency will be to climb up instead of down. If he doesn't, lead him up to your shoulder with an open hand. I found this trick was the easiest for him to learn and it is very effective. After he has done this trick, place him immediately back in his cage. Repeat this as often as possible.

Following. Place Algernon on a hard floor. With your open hand on the floor between your feet and a few inches from Al, lead him while slowly backing up. When you do this, it is important that your feet chug along the floor making a light tapping sound. After a few seconds, let Al come into your hand and put him in his cage. Next time, take your hand away and slowly back up still chugging your feet. Algernon should relate the sound of your shoes to the comfort of your hand and follow you. After a few seconds, place Al in his cage. You can slowly increase the amount of time that he follows you. This trick really knocks 'em dead.

Climbing Up Your Leg. This one is a toughy. Algernon is now used to your shoe. Next put him on the floor and, with an up-turned palm, let him follow your hand up your shoe and up your leg to mid-thigh. At this point, let Algernon come into your hand and place him in his cage. You will need a lot of patience for this trick. You may have to start out by letting Al come into your hand from the top of the shoe and build up to your calf, knee and, eventually, your thigh. Never let him go higher than that. After he has mastered both following you and climbing up your leg, combine the two tricks. This will be a definite applause-getter.

Tap Dancing. To make Al look like he's tap dancing, place him on one side of the stage with you on the other - about 10 feet apart. You should each have your own spotlight with a smaller one for Algernon, of course. *Choreography Note:* You should tap a count of 8 and then let Al take 8. The drummer should imitate the tapsounds for Algernon. On the 7 and 8 count of your section, end with a light stomp about four inches away from Al. He will start to follow your foot and it will look as if he's dancing on cue for his section. You can repeat this with a count of 4 for each of you and then 2 and then both together.

Special Notes: To make the number most effective, start with the simplest trick and build to a grand finale. Algernon did learn other tricks such as rope and ladder climbing but I found these tricks were too time-consuming for the stage. You may come up with other tricks for your Algernon but let me say this to the person playing Charlie. Be prepared to improvise because sometimes I wasn't sure if I was controlling Algernon or he was controlling me. In either case, the audience loved it and so did I!

P.J. Benjamin

A Note on Algernon.

Algernon should have an understudy who is also trained by Charlie. The "Algernon" that is handled by Dr. Nemur should be a different mouse entirely as each mouse should be handled by only one person.

✿ ACT ONE ✿

During the overture, the curtain rises on a corner of a playground. Seated on a bench or swing, CHARLIE GORDON waits. He is a good-looking man of about thirty, with the mind of an eight year old. He speaks slowly and hesitantly in a rather flat voice. He moves awkwardly and is sweet, ingratiating, anxious to please with a wide and charming smile. CHARLIE is dressed in cheap but clean baggy slacks, sports shirt and windbreaker. He wears sneakers, a cap, gloves. His windbreaker is unzipped and a scarf is flung around his shoulders.

After a moment, ALICE KINNIAN enters looking for CHARLIE. She is a teacher, about thirty, attractive but unconcerned about her appearance. Her energy, concentration and drive are devoted to her work.

As the overture continues, ALICE sees CHARLIE and moves to him. He is pleased to see her and shakes hands with his left hand. She indicates that he should zip up his jacket, then she knots his scarf. He knots the long scarf she wears over her coat, takes her hand and leads her downstage R. As they cross to stage L, the playground set is removed and Dr. Strauss' office appears. As part of the overture, we hear the voices of children singing:

(SONG: "I GOT A FRIEND TODAY")

I GOT A FRIEND TODAY
SOMEONE TO TALK AND PLAY
I GOT A FRIEND.

I GOT A PAL, HE'S SWELL
SOMEONE TO SHOW AND TELL
I GOT A PAL.

NOW THAT I MADE ME A FRIEND OF MY OWN
I'M NOT AFRAID THAT I'LL BE ALL ALONE. . .

This last note is held out and then the overture continues. As they cross the stage, at about C, CHARLIE sees a coin on the ground. Distracted, he stops and tries to pick it up but his gloves prevent it. ALICE kneels and indicates he should take the gloves off. He does, picks up the coin and they continue to stage R. Here, in a conversation we cannot hear, she tells him to wait for her and he exits R. She takes a letter from her pocket and reads it as the overture concludes. We hear Dr. Strauss' voice as ALICE reads.

DR. STRAUSS (taped). Beekman University Clinic, Second Avenue, New York, New York. February Sixteenth. To Ms. Alice Kinnian, Institute for Special Education, Church Avenue, Brooklyn. Dear Ms. Kinnian: Thank you for bringing your pupil, Charlie Gordon, to our attention. Preliminary physical and neurological assessments of the subject have proven satisfactory and we are considering him for our project. We would appreciate a final interview with him on Saturday morning, February twentieth. Sincerely, Dr. Jay Strauss.

ALICE.

(SONG: "CHARLIE GORDON")

HIS NAME IS CHARLIE GORDON,
HE'S FRIENDLY AND SWEET.
AS OPEN AND OUTGOING
AS ANYONE YOU'D MEET.

I MET HIM WHEN HE CAME TO CLASS A WHILE BACK,
HE HAD THAT KIND OF GRIN
THAT TAKES YOU IN
AND MAKES YOU SMILE BACK.

HIS NAME IS CHARLIE GORDON,
NICE LOOKING AND TALL,
SO ANXIOUS TO BE LIKED, HE'D
DO ANYTHING AT ALL.

THINGS DON'T COME EASY FOR HIM, BUT
HE HAS THE GUTS TO TRY.
HIS NAME IS CHARLIE GORDON
AND HE'S QUITE A GUY.

HE'S ONLY CHARLIE GORDON,
A PUPIL. NO MORE.
BUT NOW AND THEN YOU FIND ONE
YOU MUST DO SOMETHING FOR.

HE WANTS SO MUCH TO LEARN YOU ALMOST TASTE IT.
IN SPITE OF WHAT HE IS,
HIS LIFE IS HIS,
DON'T LET HIM WASTE IT.

AND NOT JUST CHARLIE GORDON,
THERE'S OTHER ONES, TOO.
WE'VE REALLY GOT TO HELP THEM
FIND SOMETHING WE CAN DO.

IF NO ONE WANTS TO GIVE A DAMN,
THEN SHOULD WE LET THEM DIE?
BUT THIS ONE'S CHARLIE GORDON
AND HE'S QUITE A GUY.

(As she sings, lights come up on Dr. Strauss' office. There are a desk and chair at R, two visitors' chairs at L. DR. STRAUSS, a man in his fifties who has been driven impatient, seems always to be rushing to his next appointment. His colleague, DR. NEMUR, is in his thirties, attractive, serious about his work but more relaxed. Both are dressed in lab coats. When ALICE finishes, she walks into their scene.)

STRAUSS. Miss Kinnian, thank you for bringing Charlie to see us today.

NEMUR. We just want to recheck some facts and make sure he is willing to undergo the operation.

ALICE. Then it is surgery.

STRAUSS. Of course, now . . . (checking facts on his clipboard) . . . his I.Q. is 68?

ALICE. Yes, but Charlie functions. He has a job at a bakery, cleaning up . . .

NEMUR. Has Charlie any family?

ALICE. No. This woman who runs the bakery looks after him. He doesn't remember his parents. They abandoned him long ago.

CHARLIE (self-deprecating). It's like fa kids.

STRAUSS. Charlie, may I run the tests now?

CHARLIE (nodding and starting back to the chair). When I uz a kid, I allus got bad marks. In school, y'know?

STRAUSS (at desk with projector switch). This is different. It's called a Rorschach Test.

NEMUR (pointing downstage, over the audience's head). You look up at the screen and tell us what you see.

CHARLIE. Thassa test?

STRAUSS. Yes.

CHARLIE. Dumb.

STRAUSS. What is that?

CHARLIE (studying a slide and trying hard). A big ink blot.

STRAUSS. Charlie, people can see pictures in those ink blots.

CHARLIE (agreeing). Oh yeah . . . yeah . . . (To NEMUR.) Where?

STRAUSS. You have to find them. Look, pretend there's something there.

CHARLIE (trying). P'tend . . . p'tend . . . I p'tend somebody spilleded a big bottle of ink.

STRAUSS (clicking the switch for the next picture). Look up at the next picture, Charlie. Does that remind you of anything? Imagine there's something there.

CHARLIE. Imagine . . . imagine . . .

STRAUSS. Yes?

CHARLIE. I imagine whoever spilleded that bottle of ink is gonna get it!

NEMUR (to STRAUSS). Shall we try the maze?

CHARLIE (anxiously). D'I do good? D'I pass?

NEMUR. Don't worry about it, Charlie. (NEMUR crosses D. R. and brings in a table, with a maze and a mouse, from the wings.) Now, this is another sort of test.

CHARLIE. I don' see no pictures.

NEMUR. No, Charlie. This is called a maze. And . . . (He takes the mouse out.) . . . and this is Algernon.

CHARLIE (moves excitedly from the chair to NEMUR). Hi . . . Hi, Alger'on . . . He looks like my rabbit's foot. (He takes the rabbit's foot from his pocket and compares them.)

NEMUR. See, the mouse has to find his way through all these little alleyways until he gets through to here. And that makes a buzzer sound and he gets a prize. Some cheese.

CHARLIE. No mouse'd fin' all them holes.

NEMUR. Now watch. (He puts the mouse in the maze.

CHARLIE follows the mouse's progress.)

CHARLIE (excitedly). Go! Go! (The buzzer sounds.) Man, thassa smart mouse!

NEMUR. Charlie, would you like to race Algernon?

CHARLIE (looking at the maze). Aww . . . I couldn' fit in there.

NEMUR. No, Charlie. Algernon races in here and you race in here. (He brings Charlie's maze in. See Production Notes.)

You start over there by Dr. Strauss and go all the way through until you come out here. And your maze is exactly the same as Algernon's.

CHARLIE. An' the one who gets ta the end first wins?

NEMUR. Right.

CHARLIE (to STRAUSS). But I don' like cheese.

STRAUSS. It doesn't matter. We'll just see who wins.

NEMUR. Ready?

CHARLIE (spitting on his hands and readying himself). Okay.

NEMUR. Go! (CHARLIE enters the maze but quickly becomes confused. The mouse's buzzer sounds.)

CHARLIE. Chee! I didn' know mice was so smart.

STRAUSS (leading him from the maze). This one has had a lot of advantages. (NEMUR removes the maze.)

CHARLIE. Does zat mean I won' get operationed? (He is upset.) 'Cause I losted? Please take me. I c'n do better. I could watch Alger'on evvy day an' learn how to do the amazed . . . even if it takes me a long time, I could. I got my rabbit's foot

'n' you 'n' me, we're friends.

NEMUR. You really want that operation, don't you, Charlie?

CHARLIE. I wanna get smart. I don' care if it hurts. I wanna show my frien's at the bakery . . . 'n' talk smart things with 'em like how the President makes dumb mistakes 'n' all. An' when you're smart, you got lotsa frien's to talk to you 'n' ya don' have to be lonely by yaself alla time. (Over his head, the two doctors nod in agreement to each other.)

STRAUSS (calling offstage D.R.). Come in, Miss Kinnian.

(ALICE enters.)

NEMUR. We'd like to go ahead with the operation.

CHARLIE (thrilled). Miss Kinnian, please. Please, Miss Kinnian, kin I get smart?

ALICE. Of course, Charlie. Of course you can get smart.

CHARLIE. Yea! I'm gonna get smart. (To NEMUR.) When?

NEMUR. Well . . . if he can stay now, we'll take him upstairs, begin the prep. . . We can do the operation the day after tomorrow.

CHARLIE. Yea! Yea. Come on. Le's go! (He starts out, suddenly remembers, and turns back to ALICE.) Miss Kinnian, thank you for bringin' me here . . . (He shakes hands with her.) 'N' thank you fer bein' my teacher . . . (He shakes her hands again.) 'N' thank you fer bein' my friend.

ALICE. That's all right, Charlie.

CHARLIE.

I GOT A FRIEND TODAY
SOMEONE TO TALK AND PLAY
I GOT A FRIEND.

CHARLIE and ALICE.

I GOT A PAL, HE'S (SHE'S) SWELL
SOMEONE TO SHOW AND TELL
I GOT A PAL.

(CHARLIE makes his crossed fingers gesture to her again and she repeats it. CHARLIE goes to NEMUR who leads him out D.R. and STRAUSS follows. The spotlight comes up on ALICE. The set blacks out.)