

Welcome to Cardinal Stage's sensory friendly performance of

Charlotte's Web

Hello! We're so glad you are joining us for our sensory friendly performance of "Charlotte's Web". This document has some information you may find useful in navigating the theater and learning about the show.

SETTING

Our story happens in three places.

First, Wilbur is born on the Arable Farm, but quickly grows too big to live there.

Second, Wilbur moves into the barn owned by Homer Zuckerman. This barn is made of real wood. It has tools and farm equipment, bales of straw, and a very large spider web. Many animals call it home: Wilbur the pig, Templeton the rat, The old Sheep, Charlotte the spider, and Goose and Gander.

Third, later in the play, some of the character spend two days at the County Fair. The actors hang up signs, add and remove objects, and open or close certain doors to help it feel like we're changing location. The last scene moves back to Zuckerman's barn.

An important feature of our set is two long pieces of silk fabric, which is part of Charlotte's web. Charlotte climbs up in these silks and does tricks in them to represent her spinning the words in her web. When this happens, the lights often dim and change, and music often plays.

The book this play is based on was written in 1952 by E.B. White, but we have chosen to set our production today, somewhere in Indiana.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE STORY?

At the beginning of the play, a little pig has just been born. He's a "runt", which means he's much smaller than his brothers and sisters. Because he's so small the owner of the farm, John Arable, decides to kill him, but is stopped by his daughter Fern. Mr. Arable relents, and allows Fern to raise the piglet "for a little while". Fern names him Wilbur, and takes such good care of him that by five weeks old, he's eating too much to stay with the Arables. Fern becomes upset again at the thought of Wilbur being sold, and Arable decides that Wilbur can live down the road, where Fern's uncle Homer Zuckerman also has a farm.

Homer greets Fern and Wilbur in the barn. Templeton the rat hungers for Wilbur's leftover food but doesn't envy his fate (Wilbur is being fattened up to be slaughtered). Wilbur meets Goose, Gander, Sheep and Templeton. Sheep hints at Wilbur's sad fate, but nobody says it out loud. Wilbur goes to sleep, and we see a brief glimpse of Charlotte in her web.

The next day, rain ruins Wilbur's plans (which he lists for us). Lurvy, Mr. Zuckerman's helper, feeds Wilbur, but Wilbur is too lonely to eat. Lurvy thinks Wilbur is sick. Charlotte offers to be Wilbur's friend, but Wilbur can't tell where her voice is coming from. Homer and Lurvy give Wilbur some bad-tasting medicine. Wilbur doesn't notice Charlotte until she's climbed up into her web and dropped down right in front of him. Meeting Charlotte makes Wilbur feel much better.

The next scene takes place in the summer. The weather is warm, and new goslings hatch. Templeton remarks on Wilbur's weight gain, and Sheep tells him the ugly truth: Wilbur is being fed only to be killed and turned into food for the Zuckerman family. Wilbur is very upset until Charlotte promises to save his life. Gander gives Templeton the one bad egg that didn't hatch. Avery, Fern's brother, comes to get her to come home for supper. He sees Charlotte and tries to capture her with a stick. Fern grabs the stick, and Avery falls down, breaking the rotten egg. The children run away from the bad smell.

That night, Charlotte has an idea for how to save Wilbur. Up in her silks, she weaves threads in her web that spell out "SOME PIG". The next morning, Lurvy sees the words in the web and goes to get Homer. Wilbur doesn't see the web, and thinks the men are returning to kill him. He escapes out a window, causing Homer and Lurvy to chase him outside. Charlotte knows Wilbur won't be safe in the outside world, so she gets Goose and Gander to stop Wilbur. Homer finally sees the words in the web, and the men leave to tell everyone about it. Wilbur is grateful to Charlotte, but she knows that she'll need new words to maintain interest. Goose suggests the word "TERRIFIC". Charlotte and Goose also convince Templeton to bring back a magazine clipping from his next trip to the garbage dump.

That night, Charlotte again climbs up her web and writes a new word: “TERRIFIC”. Next morning, Lurvy, Fern and Homer all see the new word. Templeton returns with a scrap of paper, but is interrupted by Homer, returning with Wilbur’s breakfast and a secret: he’s considering bringing Wilbur to the County Fair.

Templeton’s scrap of paper has the word “RADIANT” on it. Charlotte spins the word while the animals keep a look-out. Charlotte finishes just in time before Homer enters with Mz. Carter, a newspaper reporter. When they see the new word, Homer makes it official: Wilbur is going to the County Fair, and if he wins a blue ribbon he won’t be turned into bacon or ham. Charlotte decides to go with Wilbur to try and help him win at the Fair, even though she has to lay her eggs soon, and they’d be safer in the barn.

The next scene takes place at the County Fair. Everyone is excited, but Charlotte feels more exposed than in the barn. She needs to write another word, because she’s worried about Wilbur’s competition. Uncle, a very large and obnoxious pig, wanders over from the next stall. He claims he’s going to win easily, then kicks over Wilbur’s slop bucket and strolls away. Next, two spectators stroll through. They admire Wilbur briefly, but are more impressed by Uncle’s size. Charlotte tries to keep Wilbur’s spirits up. Templeton brings the word “HUMBLE” to Charlotte, before running off to eat everything in sight. Charlotte reveals this will be the last word she writes. Homer comes looking for Fern, and they go off together to tell John Arable about Fern’s Ferris wheel ride with a boy.

Wilbur tells Charlotte how nice it is to be near her, on his first night away from home. They watch the fireworks together, and then Wilbur sleeps while Charlotte spins the word “HUMBLE” in her new web. She then makes something for herself: an egg sac. Wilbur wakes up the next morning and marvels at both the word and the 514 eggs. Templeton returns, much fatter. He shares some bad news with Wilbur: Uncle has won first prize next door. Wilbur does not get upset, but instead shares his gratitude at having lived a good life, and vows to think about others more often.

Homer and Fern arrive. They marvel at the new word, but are sad that Wilbur didn’t win. Then the President of the Fair arrives with surprising news: Wilbur is receiving a special award, even more important than a blue ribbon! The President practices her speech standing in Wilbur’s stall, and the people leave to get ready. Wilbur is excited and full of gratitude for Charlotte, but is saddened by her news that she’s dying, and won’t return with him to the barn. Wilbur bribes Templeton (with food, of course) to climb and get Charlotte’s egg sac so her children can hatch in the barn. Wilbur says goodbye to Charlotte and exits to go home with her egg sac. Charlotte crawls away and dies, as the Fair is taken down.

The final scene takes place the next Spring. After carefully watching for months, Wilbur runs on to announce that the baby spiders have hatched. The animals watch them climb and sail away on strands of silk, and Wilbur is sad that they're all leaving. But a few decide to stay and live in the barn. Wilbur has Templeton hang his medal up next to Charlotte's web, and dedicates it to his "true friend and good writer".

SENSORY INTENSE MOMENTS

BEFORE YOU SEE THE SHOW: In this production of Charlotte's Web, our intent was to give a feeling of being in a real barn. Therefore, the set is made up of real wood from a barn and many real straw bales are present on stage for the entire show. If you have any allergies or are sensitive to these smells, be sure to make accommodations for yourself before arriving to the show. During the production, the lights above your seats will remain dim but on at all times.

When choosing your seating, consider your sensory needs for sounds. The stage manager will be sitting at a table close to the aisle near the door where he will be pushing a lot of buttons to control the lights and sounds in the production. These buttons make clicking noises throughout the show. If you or your family member has acute hearing, consider sitting to the middle or far end of the seating. Also, there are moments when sudden loud noises occur in this production that might be intense for some audience members. In addition, the lighting will change on the stage sometimes from dark to very bright, and sometimes from bright to dark. Below is a description of these moments listed in sequence with specific times noted so you can be prepared for them (**Contains Spoilers**).

BREAK SPACE: If you need a break at any time from the show, please use our Quiet Space room in the Waldron Arts Center on the first floor. Ushers will be available to assist you to the space via the stairs or elevator.

ADVANCE CUE (visual or plot)	SENSORY INTENSE MOMENT DESCRIPTION	TIME (approximate)
	House lights dim (but never go out) for the curtain speech.	00:00
Fern talks with her mother.	Fern argues with her father.	4:00 - 4:17
Arable tells Fern that Wilbur can go live at her Uncle Homer's farm.	The lights dim momentarily.	7:30
After Wilbur meets Goose, Gander, Templeton and Sheep.	The lights dim. Music plays, followed by the sound of rain.	12:38
Wilbur is fed medicine	Lights shift, the silks lower from the ceiling, and Charlotte climbs them. Music plays as Charlotte suddenly drops down the silks, then does tricks. Musical flourish as the silks raise up.	15:50
After Wilbur meets Charlotte.	Lights dim as the silks raise up.	18:25
Fern feeds Wilbur pineapple-upside-down cake, and the goslings are announced.	Sound effect of the goslings calling for Daddy. Wilbur learns he is going to be killed, and becomes upset.	19:48
Templeton fetches the rotten egg and hides it, the silks descend, and Avery enters.	Avery tries to capture Charlotte. Fern and Avery fight over his stick, and he falls back onto some straw.	22:10 - 22:33
Wilbur falls asleep, and Charlotte forms a plan.	Lights dim, and colored light shines on Charlotte. Music plays. Charlotte does tricks in the silks.	24:23 - 25:30
Lurvy sees SOME PIG in the web, and exits.	Wilbur falls out the window. Homer and Lurvy chase him, with music underneath. Wilbur hides for a moment in the Left-hand aisle, Lurvy and Homer crash into each other, then all 3 run out the audience door and back in a few seconds later.	27:12 - 28:45

The chase ends, and the animals brainstorm new words.	The goslings whine for Daddy again.	30:08
Templeton exits to look for words, and Wilbur exits to lie in the sun.	Lights dim, and colored light shines on Charlotte. Music plays. Charlotte does tricks in the silks.	31:43 - 33:23
The silks lower from the ceiling, and Charlotte climbs them.	Lights dim somewhat. Music plays. Charlotte does tricks in the silks.	38:27 - 40:15
Wilbur exits to take a nap, and Charlotte decides to go with him to the Fair.	Lights dim. Music plays. The actors add/change/take away several objects and elements of the scenery.	42:51 - 43:49
Homer and John Arable exit, and Charlotte comes out of hiding at the Fair.	Uncle, a loud and obnoxious pig, enters through the audience door . He's rude, he kicks over Wilbur's food bucket, and he exits through the audience door .	45:30 - 46:50
Uncle exits.	Two enthusiastic spectators loudly admire Wilbur.	47:37 - 48:19
Fern and Homer leave. The silks lower from the ceiling.	The sound of fireworks in the distance, with some colored lights.	51:58
The fireworks end, and Wilbur goes to sleep.	Lights dim. Music plays. Charlotte does tricks in the silks, then swings close to the ground.	53:20 - 55:56
The President of the Fair enters.	There are three moments where the characters applaud during the President's speech. The audience may clap too. This will be loud.	61:00, 61:44, 62:05
Homer and Wilbur exit.	Lights dim. Music plays. The actors add/change/take away several objects and elements of the scenery.	67:20 - 69:02
Wilbur enters with news that the baby spiders have hatched.	The baby spiders speak over a microphone to the animals, and some of them drop into view where Charlotte's web used to be.	70:42
Wilbur's medal is hung up on the barn.	Music plays. Lights go out momentarily, followed by the actors bowing. The audience applause may be loud.	72:28 - 73:40